

Inspection Report

Course provider: University of the West of England, Bristol

Course approval: BSc (Hons) Social Work

Inspection dates: 28th – 30th March 2023

Report date:	22 nd May 2023
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	14 th June 2023
Date conditions met and approved:	22 nd January 2024

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Introduction

1. Social Work England completes inspections as part of our statutory requirement to approve and monitor courses. Inspections form part of our process to make sure that courses meet our [education and training standards](#) and ensure that students successfully completing these courses can meet our [professional standards](#).
2. During the approval process, we appoint partner inspectors. One inspector is a social worker registered with us and the other is not a registered social worker (a 'lay' inspector). These inspectors, along with an officer from the education quality assurance team, undertake activity to review information and carry out an inspection. This activity could include observing and asking questions about teaching, placement provision, facilities and learning resources; asking questions based on the evidence submitted; and meeting with staff, training placement providers, people with lived experience and students. The inspectors then make recommendations to us about whether a course should be approved.
3. The process we undertake is described in our legislation; the Social Worker Regulations 2018¹, and the Social Work England [\(Education and Training\) Rules 2019](#).
4. You can find further guidance on our course change, approval and annual monitoring processes on our website.

What we do

5. When an education provider wants to make a change to a course, or request the approval of a new course, they are asked to consider how their course meets our education and training standards and our professional standards, and provide evidence of this to us. We are also undertaking a cycle of re-approval of all currently approved social work courses in England following the introduction of the Education and Training Standards 2021.
6. The education quality assurance officer reviews all the documentary evidence provided and will contact the education provider if they have any questions about the information submitted. They also provide advice and guidance on our approval processes.
7. When we are satisfied that we have all the documentary evidence required to proceed with an inspection we assign one registrant and one lay inspector. We undertake a conflict of interest process when confirming our inspectors to ensure there is no bias or perception of bias in the approval process.
8. The inspectors complete an assessment of the evidence provided and advise the officer if they have any queries that may be able to be addressed in advance of the inspection.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2018/9780111170090/contents>

9. During this time a draft plan for the inspection is developed and shared with the education provider, to make sure it is achievable at the point of inspection.
10. Once the inspectors and officer are satisfied that an inspection can take place, this is usually undertaken over a three to four day visit to the education provider. We then draft a report setting out what we found during the inspection and if and how our findings demonstrate that the course meets our standards. Inspections are carried out either on site at the education provider's campus, or remotely using virtual meetings.
11. The inspectors may recommend in this report that the course is approved with conditions, approved without conditions or that it does not meet the criteria for approval. Where the course has previously been approved we may also decide to withdraw approval.
12. A draft of this report is shared with the education provider, and once we have considered any comments or observations they may wish to provide, we make a final regulatory decision about the approval of the course.
13. The final decisions that we can make are as follows, that the course is approved without conditions, the course is approved with conditions or that the course does not meet the criteria for approval. The decision and the report are then published.
14. If the course is approved with conditions, we will write to the education provider setting out how they can demonstrate they have met the conditions, the action we will take once we decide that the conditions are met, and the action we will take if we decide the conditions are not met.

Summary of Inspection

15. The University of the West of England, Bristol's BSc (Hons) Social Work course was inspected as part of the Social Work England reapproval cycle; whereby all course providers with qualifying social work courses will be inspected against the new Education and Training Standards 2021. The inspection was for reapproval of the existing course and approval of an updated new version of the course. As there were minimal differences between the courses in relation to the standards, this report covers and applies to both versions of the course.

Inspection ID	UWER1
Course provider	University of the West of England, Bristol
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Course inspected	BSc (Hons) Social Work – current and new
Mode of study	Full time ²
Maximum student cohort	58
Date of inspection	28 th – 30 th March 2023
Inspection team	Joseph Hubbard (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Priscilla McGuire (Lay Inspector) Louise Hernon (Registrant Inspector)
Inspector recommendation	Approved with conditions
Approval outcome	Approved with conditions

Language

16. In this document we describe University of the West of England, Bristol as 'the education provider' or 'the university' and we describe the BSc (Hons) Social Work as 'the course'.

² The current version of the course offered a part-time route which is now closed for recruitment. Remaining part-time students are in their 3rd year of study, and the part-time version of the course is due to close once they have completed their studies.

Inspection

17. A remote inspection took place from 28th – 30th March 2023. The inspection was initially planned to be on-site but was made remote due to rail strikes scheduled over the inspection dates. As part of this process the inspection team planned to meet with key stakeholders including students, course staff, employers and people with lived experience of social work.

18. These meetings formed the basis of the inspection plan, agreed with the education provider ahead of inspection. The following section provides a summary of these sessions, who participated and the topics that were discussed with the inspection team.

Conflict of interest

19. No parties disclosed a conflict of interest.

Meetings with students

20. The inspection team met with eight students from across all three year groups and met separately with a second year student representative who was unable to attend the group meeting. Discussions included placement experiences, breakdown of placement, practice education, readiness for practice, feedback, support services, interprofessional learning, and assessment.

21. At the time of the inspection, the impact of recent academic strike action was under discussion between students and senior management through appropriate channels. As the strike impacts do not reflect usual or ongoing practice, they were not considered relevant in assessing the course against the standards.

Meetings with course staff

22. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the course team, admissions team, senior management, practice-based learning team, and support services.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

23. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in the course through the university's HUB Group. Discussions included admissions, course development, training, and support.

Meetings with external stakeholders

24. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including Bristol City Council adults' services, South Gloucestershire Council, Wiltshire Council children's services, and charity Caring for Communities & People.

Findings

25. In this section we set out the inspectors' findings in relation to whether the education provider has demonstrated that it meets the education and training standards and that the course will ensure that students who successfully complete the course are able to meet the professional standards.

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

26. The university provided documentary evidence for this standard, confirming their entry requirements, interview questions, and interviewing and scoring guidance. The details of the admissions process were triangulated at inspection through meetings with the admissions team, course team, and students.

27. The inspection team discussed whether an additional element of written assessment beyond the personal statement may be valuable in confirming command of written English, particularly as it is possible for applicants to receive outside assistance in writing their personal statement. However, as the standard does not require this and no evidence was received which indicated concern around academic writing ability, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

28. The course team and admissions staff confirmed on inspection that prior experience is taken into account at interview, as well as often being included in applicants' personal statement. The programme website also notes that prior experience will enhance an application, and admissions staff confirmed there is a standardised process across the university regarding consideration of accredited prior learning where applicable. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

29. Documentary evidence was provided to demonstrate that employer partners and people with lived experience of social work are involved in selection interviews alongside academic staff.

30. During the inspection, the inspection team met with people with lived experience from the HUB Group, who confirmed they have meaningful involvement in interviews and decision-making about applicants. Employer partners also confirmed at inspection that they are involved in interviews, and have been invited to participate in reviewing the interview questions. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.4

31. The university provided documentary evidence demonstrating their processes for assessing the suitability of applicants' conduct, character, and health, including policies for DBS checks and fitness to study.

32. At inspection, the course team outlined the procedure for instances where applicants declare a conviction, which includes a risk assessment and suitability decision. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

33. Documentary evidence was provided prior to the inspection showing that the university implements a range of equality and diversity policies and uses a values-based recruitment system.

34. During inspection meetings, admissions and course staff confirmed that there is a specific section on the application form for applicants to state if they require reasonable adjustments. If an applicant does disclose that they need reasonable adjustments, the disability team are notified and confer with the course team to put the necessary adjustments in place.

35. Staff confirmed that applicants who disclose having lived experience themselves are designated a point of contact at UWE Cares who support care leavers and others with lived experience of social work. It was also confirmed at inspection that interviewers receive mandatory annual EDI training. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.6

36. Review of the university's course webpages confirmed that clear information is provided regarding fees, assessments, modules, placements (including potential travel requirements), accommodation, and entry requirements. The website states that graduates of the course will be eligible to apply for Social Work England registration.

37. On inspection, the course team confirmed that there is an email address provided on the website which potential applicants can (and do) use to ask any questions necessary to inform their decision of whether to apply. They also confirmed that a number of virtual and in person open days are held each year, with current student ambassadors in attendance.

Students confirmed that the website and open days provided all the information they needed when deciding to apply. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

38. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that students spend the required 200 days learning across at least two practice settings. This includes 30 skills days for which attendance is mandatory and monitored. As some of the statutory placements cited were noted to be outside of traditional statutory settings (i.e. local authorities), the inspectors brought questions to inspection regarding how the university ensures sufficient statutory tasks are undertaken within these placement settings.

39. Practice learning staff were able to confirm that there are a number of procedures in place for ensuring all students have sufficient statutory tasks, and additional checks for students on statutory placements outside of local authorities. These checks include having a meeting early on with the placement provider to make clear the volume and type of activities that will be required.

40. Staff noted that as only a few students per year undertake their statutory placement outside of local authorities, the university has sufficient capacity to monitor those placements particularly closely to ensure the requirement for statutory tasks is being met. The inspectors triangulated this with Practice Educators, who confirmed that it is rare for a student to be placed outside of a local authority for their statutory placement, that the requirement for sufficient statutory tasks is set out within the practice learning agreement, and that this is monitored with particular care in non-statutory settings.

41. The inspectors also noted from the documentary evidence that the university had acknowledged some recent difficulties identifying sufficient placements; they brought questions to inspection regarding how this is being addressed. Practice learning staff confirmed that they have been proactive in asking existing placements to take more than one student at a time, enquiring as to whether placements have additional sites available which could be utilised, and making use of team members' networks to explore new potential placements.

42. Inspectors determined that their queries around statutory tasks and placement availability had been satisfactorily addressed at inspection and agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.2

43. The documentary evidence provided by the university for this standard included a number of forms and guides used as part of their Quality Assurance of Placement Learning (QAPL) processes. They confirmed that students, practice educators, and practice tutors are

prompted to complete evaluations of each practice placement they undertake. This placement evaluation data is then reviewed by relevant practice learning staff to ensure feedback can be actioned where applicable for the benefit of the following cohort.

44. The university acknowledged within their evidence submission that they are in the process of bolstering the auditing aspect of their quality assurance of placements. For the current academic year, they have adopted a Placement Opportunity Form which all new providers were required to complete. This form is then reviewed by the Practice Placement Office and course staff to ensure the quality of the placement opportunity prior to any student being placed there. For existing placements, a Tried and Tested Placement Review Form is being implemented to collect quality assurance data and feed this back to placement providers. Standard Workplace Agreements are also being put in place with all placement providers to formalise agreed standards of provision.

45. At inspection, students from across the year groups reported that overall they are getting the opportunities they need from placements. It was noted that students felt communication between the university and practice learning staff could be improved; this is addressed in more detail as part of standard 2.6. Practice learning staff confirmed that the Placement Opportunity Form and Tried and Tested Placement Review Form have now been implemented. They also confirmed that existing placement providers are required to check and confirm their information annually for the university to review and ensure the placement is still appropriate.

46. The inspectors were conscious that some of the processes for ensuring placement quality have been implemented fairly recently and will need embedding long term. However, as the processes were already in place at the time of the inspection, the inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met.

Standard 2.3

47. Comprehensive documentary evidence was provided ahead of the inspection, including a Practice Learning Agreement and Placement Information Guide which set out the standards required of placements. Discussion with practice learning staff on inspection confirmed that there are both initial structures in place to check placements have the required induction and support systems, and processes to flag up and resolve any problems arising around student support once on placement.

48. Students spoke positively about the support and induction they received on placement, and the university's intervention in cases where difficulties arose. Employer partners similarly confirmed that generally there is a positive partnership between themselves and the university to address and resolve any issues around student support.

49. Several employer partners did note instances where students' access needs were either not identified or not communicated to the provider until after placement had begun, leaving

little time for reasonable adjustments to be put in place to support a successful placement. The employer partners state they have raised this with the university and been told they will start having conversations with students in year one around learning needs to help flag up potential difficulties sooner.

50. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met but determined that the feedback from employer partners warranted a recommendation around improving early identification of students' access needs. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.4

51. Documentary evidence provided by the university for this standard demonstrated that there are several ways of ensuring students' responsibilities on placement are appropriate. The QAPL feedback cycle flags up potential issues with placement providers on an annual basis, and an initial practice learning agreement meeting establishes expectations for the student's responsibilities. Interim review meetings and quarterly formative assessments then provide check-ins regarding the student's responsibilities and progression against the Placement Learning Agreement (PLA). Should a student have any concerns around their responsibilities on placement which they are unable to address with their practice supervisor, they can raise these with their practice educator, practice tutor, or personal tutor.

52. At inspection, Practice Educators and practice-based learning staff were asked how issues with workload or responsibilities are handled, and both groups were able to confirm how the processes above ensure this is largely avoided and addressed if it does arise. Practice Educators stated that they are able to negotiate well with placements around providing responsibilities which meet students' different learning needs. They confirmed that they feel able to advocate for students to make sure they're not being treated as a member of staff. The inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met.

Standard 2.5

53. Prior to inspection, module specifications were provided for two modules students undertake in year 1 to prepare them for practice learning and assess their preparedness. These modules include content on communication, assessment skills, and professional behaviour, as well as a four-day observational placement at a local authority. Students are required to pass these modules before they can go on their first practice placement.

54. The inspection team discussed readiness for placement with employer partners and Practice Educators during the inspection, and neither group had concerns about students' preparedness for direct practice. Any potential issues picked up during the 4-day observational placement can be fed back to the university to be addressed ahead of a student's first practice placement. Before starting their first placement, students also

undertake communication skills work which is co-facilitated with people with lived experience (HUB group members). The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.6

55. Evidence provided by the university ahead of the inspection indicated a potential lack of oversight of Practice Educators' (PEs) registration and currency. The university stated that for PEs employed by local authorities, they rely on the local authority to ensure the PE is appropriately qualified and registered. For independent PEs, the university has recently begun asking them to complete an audit form to confirm details such as their qualifications, DBS, and Social Work England registration number. The university acknowledged in their evidence submission that their system for ensuring PEs are registered and qualified is currently under development.

56. At inspection, PEs confirmed that in late 2022 the university had requested for the first time that they provide information such as their registration number and DBS, but had not asked about currency of knowledge. Practice based learning staff confirmed that, having sent out the audit forms last year, they now have a spreadsheet of registration numbers and qualifications for every independent PE. For PEs based at local authorities, staff confirmed they had contacted all LA placement learning coordinators to request confirmation of local audit processes for checking PEs' registration and currency. They stated that while they have always asked PEs to state their qualifications, they are now asking for certificates to make this process more robust.

57. The inspection team recognised that work is currently underway to ensure this standard is met in the future, but on review of the evidence available at the time of inspection they agreed that the standard was not met. A condition is therefore being recommended against this standard to ensure that the course provider achieves the required oversight of Practice Educators' registration, qualifications, and currency. Consideration was given as to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 2.7

58. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that there is a whistleblowing policy in place in addition to a whistleblowing phone line for student use. The Practice Learning Agreement includes a contact person for students to raise any concerns with, and the placement guide provides key contacts for other types of concerns students may have.

59. During the inspection, students and staff were able to provide examples of how concerns had been satisfactorily addressed when raised. A demonstration of the PebblePad portfolio platform confirmed that the whistleblowing policy is provided on the platform for reference. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

60. The university provided documentary evidence ahead of the inspection which demonstrated the governance and management arrangements in place for the course. Quality assurance processes include an external examiner and continuous improvement tool, as well as a student forum and regular module evaluations. The details of these arrangements were triangulated with members of senior management at inspection, and the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

61. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection indicated that practice learning agreements are in place for all placements. The university acknowledged in their evidence that at the time of submission (November 2022), work was still underway to implement workplace agreements and annual auditing for every placement provider. Diagrams were provided illustrating the processes for raising and escalating concerns, for both students and staff.

62. At inspection, practice-based learning staff confirmed that working agreements are in place for all new providers, and audits have taken place of existing providers to confirm they can provide placements which meet the professional standards and education and training standards. Contingencies for placement breakdown are included in the working agreement and also provided on the digital portfolio platform PebblePad.

Standard 3.3

63. Prior to inspection, the university confirmed that all placement providers and practice educators are directed to the university's policies and support systems regarding student health, wellbeing, and risk. These are primarily accessed through Practice Support Net where the policies and guides are available to review. Practice educators and workplace supervisors are also invited to an induction session and a 'Managing Practice Placements' course where the relevant policy information is reiterated.

64. At inspection, staff confirmed that necessary policies are addressed and discussed as part of the practice learning agreement for each placement, and that the student and employers' understanding of policies is confirmed. The university also stated that they check policies and visit the proposed placement environment before any provider is approved. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

65. Documentary evidence provided by the university confirmed that employer engagement events have been held to discuss subjects such as programme design, placements, and student performance. There is also a collaborative forum between local universities and employers to consider placements and allocations. At inspection, employer partners reported having a good dialogue with the course team informally as well as through the more formal routes above. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

66. Review of the university's documentary evidence submission confirmed that there is a formal quality assurance review process in place for the programme, including a continuous improvement tool. Regarding stakeholder involvement in improvement work, there is an employer board, HUB Group (people with lived experience), and a student rep forum. Placement and module evaluations are also undertaken on a regular basis.

67. During the inspection, students confirmed that the student forum has impact when they raise issues or ideas, and employer partners reported having open regular communication with the university. Members of the HUB Group spoke positively of their experience working with the university across various aspects of the course, and reported feeling engaged and valued in this work. Course staff were able to provide examples of how stakeholder input had contributed to improvements made to the programme. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.6

68. The university's documentary evidence submitted for this standard covered the overall strategy for the programme regarding the university's 2030 strategy. The submission stated that discussion with employer partners had confirmed the current output of graduates was meeting local need with no demand for higher admission numbers.

69. On inspection, members of senior management explained the strategy regarding admissions and confirmed that admissions numbers remain stable with no intention of expanding. Course staff confirmed that the university meets three times a year with the Social Work Employers Board to discuss and map placement capacity. Senior management staff confirmed that while there is always some degree of placement scarcity, their admissions numbers are aligned with local placement capacity, and they are taking steps to build further resilience in this area (as outlined under standard 2.1, paragraph 4). The inspection team concluded that this standard had been met.

Standard 3.7

70. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection included a clear and comprehensive job description for the lead social worker's role, covering delivery and development of the

course. The lead social worker is registered with Social Work England and their CV confirms they are appropriately qualified for the role. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was sufficient to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

71. The inspectors' review of the staff CVs provided within the university's documentary evidence confirmed that staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Teaching staff have a wide range of experience and research interests, and there is a clear business planning cycle to plan academic staff to student ratios. At inspection, senior management confirmed they automatically backfill roles and include an additional 20% when calculating workforce needs to build in resilience for illness and other absences. Senior staff confirmed that specialist visiting lecturers come in to cover specific areas of expertise as needed. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

72. Documentary evidence provided for this standard included a continuous improvement tool data report and annual programme review (APR) for the course, with the annual review mechanism being informed by ongoing reflection through the continuous improvement tool. The submission confirmed that Field and Award Boards consider module results and student progression in their decision-making, in accordance with UWE Academic Regulations. Programme Leaders have oversight of student progression via award board ratification and quality assurance processes. Business intelligence data including performance and EDI data are accessible to all module and programme leaders for analysis and reflection.

73. During the inspection, staff confirmed that the programme does have an awarding gap of two percentage points between Black and minority ethnicity students and white students, noting that the gap is smaller in Social Work than in the wider School. They outlined steps they have been taking to address this, including appointing a college director for equality, decolonising course literature, reviewing images used in course material, and diversifying participants in simulation learning. A student advocate has also been introduced to support Black and minority ethnicity students; the advocate runs weekly safe spaces and works with the various services to ensure they are providing culturally appropriate support. Having identified that assignments with aspects of criticality appear to be a problem area for many students, further support has been offered through library services to address this. Staff state that all these efforts appear to be making a difference, as the awarding gap has been decreasing. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

74. The university's scholarly activity guidelines indicate a commitment to facilitating staff research and continuing professional development, and staff CVs confirm that they are involved in activities such as research projects and doctorate degrees.

75. At inspection, it was confirmed that the university have a large staff development budget where staff can apply for conferences, courses, etc to keep their own learning current. Several staff in the social work team had previously been self-funding their PhDs which are now being fully funded by the university. Within the workload model used by the university, protected time is allotted automatically for scholarly activity. Staff were able to cite examples of ongoing professional development and research projects they had been supported to undertake alongside their role. The inspection team agreed that this standard had been met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

76. The documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated that the curriculum and learning outcomes have been mapped to both BASW's Professional Capability Framework and Social Work England's Professional Standards. At inspection, employer partners confirmed that they find graduates they employ from the course are prepared for practice. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

77. The university's documentary evidence submission stated that people with lived experience and employer partners are involved at all levels of curriculum design and review. The HUB group were involved in the design of the current programme and have also been involved in the development of the new programme, through participation in consultation events and module authoring teams.

78. During the inspection, members of the HUB group confirmed that they have meaningful involvement in course design and development. Practitioners confirmed that there had been both formal consultations and ongoing informal dialogue with employer partners regarding the design of the course. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

79. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection included the university's Equality Diversity and Inclusivity Strategy, an Enhancement Framework which ensures all new and existing courses demonstrate inclusivity, and a number of university-wide equality and diversity policies which inform curriculum design. Awarding gaps are monitored and proactively addressed as part of the Continuous Improvement Tool for each programme.

80. On inspection, staff were able to confirm that despite some limitations due to older buildings across the campus, the physical environment is accessible for students, staff and service users. Regarding accessibility on placement, any student requiring reasonable adjustments is supported by the disability service to ensure their access needs are met both on campus and on placement. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

81. Review of the documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that module leaders are required to report annually on their modules and prompted to review the module content and ensure any new research, legislation, policy, or best practice is integrated. Current social work practitioners from partner organisations also contribute to ensuring each module reflects current best practice. During the inspection, teaching staff were able to provide examples of how they have been able to use their own research interests in their teaching. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

82. Clear links between theory and practice were reflected in the module specifications, learning outcomes, and assessments provided by the university prior to inspection. This was triangulated at inspection, with students stating that theory was embedded in their practice learning. Practice educators spoke in detail about how central the linking of theory and practice was to their role, methods they used for this, and how much they valued this aspect of their work. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

83. The university's documentary submission provided examples of the involvement of other professionals in course teaching, including solicitors and health staff. The submission also notes that students on placement will often be involved in multidisciplinary working teams.

84. Discussions with students and staff during the inspection indicated that while students are given opportunities to work with other professions through visiting lecturers and placement learning, there was minimal evidence of interprofessional working opportunities within the school itself.

85. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met, but also determined that a recommendation would be beneficial around providing multidisciplinary working opportunities with other professions in the school. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.7

86. Documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that each module specification includes the designated hours for structured learning and independent learning, and that these conform to the university-wide requirements for face-to-face teaching and independent study.

87. At inspection, employer partners confirmed that the UWE graduates they have employed have been well-prepared for practice, and final year students report that they feel prepared for practice and for their ASYE. Staff explained the structures in place to flag up and address situations when a student's attendance may not be sufficient to meet the required competence level. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.8

88. Review of the documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that varied assessment methods are used across the programme, including presentations, simulated assessments, and written assessments. All assessments are mapped to the learning outcomes identified for each module, and an assessment and feedback policy is in place with clear assessment grade descriptors. Placements are assessed through formative and substantive assessments, review meetings, and a practice portfolio. An external examiner system provides independent quality assurance for the reliability and robustness of the programme's assessments.

89. Conversations with students and employers during the inspection confirmed that graduates are well-prepared to meet the professional standards on graduation. The course team outlined the range of moderation processes in place for assessment feedback, including pre-standardisation and review of the grade spread and range after marking. The course team noted that students had previously provided feedback around assessment bunching and have taken this into account in the design of the new course by spreading assessments out more across the academic year. The inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met.

Standard 4.9

90. The university's documentary evidence included an assessment map outlining how and when students are assessed throughout the course. Discussion with course staff on inspection demonstrated how the assessment methods are sequenced to match student progression through the programme. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

91. The inspectors determined prior to inspection that the university's assessment feedback form is thorough, and includes designated space for the student to record their own reflection on the feedback. The course handbook includes an outline of the feedback

procedures and deadlines for feedback to be provided. Review of a redacted feedback form confirmed that the feedback was clear and gave specific constructive guidance; the form also actively encourages conversation between the student and the marker following feedback.

92. At inspection, students had no concerns around timeliness of feedback, and reported receiving constructive and helpful feedback overall, with occasional exceptions. Staff were able to detail the quality assurance processes which are in place to pick up and address potential anomalies like this in assessment marking. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

93. Prior to the inspection, the university provided staff and external examiner CVs, and a guide for both internal and external examiners. Review of the CVs confirmed that staff carrying out assessments are appropriately qualified, and that the external examiners are qualified and registered. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was able to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

94. The university's documentary evidence outlined the criteria for progression through the course and confirmed that practice educators carry out direct observation of student practice as part of placement assessment. There is a guide to direct observation available, and information provided on the portfolio platform (PebblePad) regarding the expectation of direct observations. Students have the opportunity to re-submit failed assessments and repeat failed modules where appropriate. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met based on the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection.

Standard 4.13

95. The module specifications provided for both the current and new course confirm that links between research and practice are made throughout the programme content. The current curriculum includes a research skills module, and the new curriculum includes a research proposal project. The introduction to the practice portfolio makes clear the expectation that the portfolio content will be underpinned by theory and include references to academic texts. Module learning outcomes include references to being able to understand and use research within practice.

96. At inspection, students confirmed that the programme content and delivery emphasise the importance of evidence-informed practice. Practice educators discussed their various methods for embedding research and theory in student learning, and shared that they particularly value this aspect of the role. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

97. Documentary evidence provided by the university confirmed that students have access to a careers service, counselling services, chaplaincy, and occupational health. There is a policy framework in place for student behaviour and health which outlines procedures for dealing with concerns regarding students' wellbeing or behaviour.

98. Staff provided further details of the support services available during the inspection, including a 24/7 helpline, termly wellbeing phone calls to all students, and suicide prevention training for all staff. Students overall spoke highly of the support services available in terms of both wellbeing and more practical support such as careers advice and reasonable adjustments. Students are made aware of the support available through sessions at the start of the academic year, information on the website and Blackboard, and at designated information points on each campus. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.2

99. The university's documentary evidence submission confirmed that students have access to a range of resources to support their academic development, including personal tutors and practice tutors, a specialist librarian, library resources, study skills programmes, and IT support. At inspection, staff were able to provide further detail of these resources and how they work for students. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 5.3

100. Review of the documentary evidence prior to inspection confirmed that there is a clear policy in place to deal with concerns regarding student wellbeing or behaviour, as well as a professional suitability policy. The university has a contract with an occupational health provider to assist with assessment, advice, and guidance around students' fitness to practice. Students are required to complete an annual declaration regarding health and character, and the placement information guide stipulates that students must declare any criminal conviction they may receive during their course. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met based on the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection.

Standard 5.4

101. The university provided their policies on reasonable adjustments and neurodiversity prior to the inspection, along with details of their disability service and occupational health process. Discussions with staff and students during the inspection confirmed the processes in place through the disability service and occupational health for assessing student needs and implementing reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

102. As noted under standard 2.3, several employer partners did note instances where students' access needs were either not identified or not communicated to the placement provider ahead of placement. The employer partners state they have raised this with the university and been told they will start having conversations with students in year one around learning needs to help flag up potential difficulties sooner. While this information does have some relevance to standard 5.4, it was felt to be appropriately addressed by the recommendation under standard 2.3. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

103. Review of the documentary evidence confirmed that clear information is provided on the course website regarding the course content, placements, assessments, and Social Work England registration requirements. This is complemented by information provided through open days, inductions to each year of the course, and materials such as module specifications and placement information packs.

104. At inspection, staff confirmed that the careers fair is timetabled for all students, and that resources are provided to any students unable to attend to ensure they receive the necessary information regarding the transition to ASYE and Social Work England registration. There is a session delivered by a Social Work England Regional Engagement Lead in the first year of the course regarding the professional standards and registration. A discussion is also included as part of final year placements regarding feedback students can carry forwards into their ASYE. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 5.6

105. The course outline and information on the programme website make it clear that all attendance is compulsory, and module specifications outline the contact time for each module. There is an electronic system for students to record their attendance, and another system to measure engagement which provides a further means of flagging up if a student may be struggling. Staff were able to provide further detail at inspection of the systems in place to monitor attendance and take action where appropriate.

106. Discussion with students during the inspection confirmed they are clear that skills days and recall days are mandatory and need to be made up if missed. However, students weren't fully clear on the requirements around attendance at course teaching, and there was no minimum attendance policy in place for this. Students were aware that all placement days were mandatory, but they did not feel clear around the consequences or options available should they miss days on placement, for example due to illness or caring responsibilities.

107. The guidance for this standard states that attendance requirements and consequences of missing mandatory content should be made clear to students; as students indicated these

were not clear to them, the inspection team agreed that this standard was not met. A condition is therefore being recommended against this standard to ensure that the course provider takes steps to improve students' understanding of attendance requirements and consequences of missing mandatory aspects of the course. Consideration was given as to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 5.7

108. As discussed within standard 4.10, the inspectors determined prior to inspection that the university's assessment feedback form is thorough, and includes designated space for the student to record their own reflection on the feedback. The course handbook includes an outline of the feedback procedures and deadlines for feedback to be provided, confirming feedback is provided for formative and summative assessments, as well as placement activities. Review of a redacted feedback form confirmed that it gave specific constructive guidance; the form also actively encourages conversation between the student and the marker following feedback.

109. At inspection, students reported receiving constructive and helpful feedback throughout the programme, with occasional exceptions related to specific markers. Staff confirmed that during the final placement review meeting, students are encouraged to take constructive feedback forwards into their ASYE. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

110. Review of the evidence provided prior to inspection confirmed there is a university-wide academic appeals process in place, as well as a complaints procedure. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met based on the documentary evidence.

Standard six: Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register

Standard 6.1

111. As the qualifying course is BSc (Hons), the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

The inspection team recommend that the course be approved with conditions. These will be monitored for completion.

Conditions

Conditions for approval are set if there are areas of a course that do not currently meet our standards. Conditions must be met by the education provider within the agreed timescales.

Having considered whether approval with conditions or a refusal of approval was an appropriate course of action, the inspection team are proposing the following conditions for this course at this time.

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	Standard 2.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates a fully implemented process of ensuring oversight of all practice educators' (including independent): 1. Registration 2. Qualifications 3. Currency of knowledge and skills	3 months from date of regulator decision; 14/09/23	Paragraph 57
2	Standard 5.6	The education provider will provide evidence that they have taken steps to make it clear to students: 1. Which parts of the course are mandatory for them to attend 2. Any minimum attendance requirement for parts of the course 3. What the consequences and/or remedial options are if mandatory aspects of the course are missed (including information about resits, sick days during placement, etc.)	3 months from date of regulator decision; 14/09/23	Paragraph 107

Recommendations

In addition to the conditions above, the inspectors identified the following recommendations for the education provider. These recommendations highlight areas that the education provider may wish to consider. The recommendations do not affect any decision relating to course approval.

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	Standard 2.3	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider how they might improve early identification of students' access needs, to increase the opportunity students have of accessing reasonable adjustments as early in the programme as possible.	Paragraph 50
2	Standard 4.6	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider developing further opportunities for interprofessional learning within in the school.	Paragraph 85

Annex 1: Education and training standards summary

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
Admissions			
1.1 Confirm on entry to the course, via a holistic/multi-dimensional assessment process, that applicants: i. have the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards ii. can demonstrate that they have a good command of English iii. have the capability to meet academic standards; and iv. have the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes.	☒	☐	☐
1.2 Ensure that applicants' prior relevant experience is considered as part of the admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.3 Ensure that employers, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work are involved in admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.4 Ensure that the admissions processes assess the suitability of applicants, including in relation to their conduct, health and character. This includes criminal conviction checks.	☒	☐	☐
1.5 Ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.	☒	☐	☐
1.6 Ensure that the admissions process gives applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.			
Learning environment			
2.1 Ensure that students spend at least 200 days (including up to 30 skills days) gaining different experiences and learning in practice settings. Each student will have: i) placements in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences; and ii) a minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing experience of sufficient numbers of statutory social work tasks involving high risk decision making and legal interventions.	☒	☐	☐
2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.	☐	☐	☒
2.4 Ensure that on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.	☒	☐	☐
2.5 Ensure that students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting.	☒	☐	☐
2.6 Ensure that practice educators are on the register and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
2.7 Ensure that policies and processes, including for whistleblowing, are in place for students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures and organisational wrongdoing, and report concerns openly and safely without fear of adverse consequences.	☒	☐	☐
Course governance, management and quality			
3.1 Ensure courses are supported by a management and governance plan that includes the roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability of individuals and governing groups in the delivery, resourcing and quality management of the course.	☒	☐	☐
3.2 Ensure that they have agreements with placement providers to provide education and training that meets the professional standards and the education and training qualifying standards. This should include necessary consents and ensure placement providers have contingencies in place to deal with practice placement breakdown.	☒	☐	☐
3.3 Ensure that placement providers have the necessary policies and procedures in relation to students' health, wellbeing and risk, and the support systems in place to underpin these.	☒	☐	☐
3.4 Ensure that employers are involved in elements of the course, including but not limited to the management and monitoring of courses and the allocation of practice education.	☒	☐	☐
3.5 Ensure that regular and effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems are in place, and that these involve	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
employers, people with lived experience of social work, and students.			
3.6 Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which includes consideration of local/regional placement capacity.	☒	☐	☐
3.7 Ensure that a lead social worker is in place to hold overall professional responsibility for the course. This person must be appropriately qualified and experienced, and on the register.	☒	☐	☐
3.8 Ensure that there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, with relevant specialist subject knowledge and expertise, to deliver an effective course.	☒	☐	☐
3.9 Evaluate information about students' performance, progression and outcomes, such as the results of exams and assessments, by collecting, analysing and using student data, including data on equality and diversity.	☒	☐	☐
3.10 Ensure that educators are supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice.	☒	☐	☐
Curriculum and assessment			
4.1 Ensure that the content, structure and delivery of the training is in accordance with relevant guidance and frameworks and is designed to enable students to demonstrate that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
4.2 Ensure that the views of employers, practitioners and people with lived experience of social work are incorporated into the design,	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
ongoing development and review of the curriculum.			
4.3 Ensure that the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles, and human rights and legislative frameworks.	☒	☐	☐
4.4 Ensure that the course is continually updated as a result of developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.5 Ensure that the integration of theory and practice is central to the course.	☒	☐	☐
4.6 Ensure that students are given the opportunity to work with, and learn from, other professions in order to support multidisciplinary working, including in integrated settings.	☐	☐	☒
4.7 Ensure that the number of hours spent in structured academic learning under the direction of an educator is sufficient to ensure that students meet the required level of competence.	☒	☐	☐
4.8 Ensure that the assessment strategy and design demonstrate that the assessments are robust, fair, reliable and valid, and that those who successfully complete the course have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
4.9 Ensure that assessments are mapped to the curriculum and are appropriately sequenced to match students' progression through the course.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
4.10 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	☒	☐	☐
4.11 Ensure assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise, and that external examiner(s) for the course are appropriately qualified and experienced and on the register.	☒	☐	☐
4.12 Ensure that there are systems to manage students' progression, with input from a range of people, to inform decisions about their progression including via direct observation of practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.13 Ensure that the course is designed to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice, underpinned by skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to research and evaluation.	☒	☐	☐
Supporting students			
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including: I. confidential counselling services; II. careers advice and support; and III. occupational health services	☒	☐	☐
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.	☒	☐	☐
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
5.4 Make supportive and reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the professional standards, in accordance with relevant legislation.	☒	☐	☐
5.5 Provide information to students about their curriculum, practice placements, assessments and transition to registered social worker including information on requirements for continuing professional development.	☒	☐	☐
5.6 Provide information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory.	☐	☒	☐
5.7 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.	☒	☐	☐
5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.	☒	☐	☐
Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register			
6.1 The threshold entry route to the register will normally be a bachelor's degree with honours in social work.	☒	☐	☐

Regulator decision

Approved with conditions.

Annex 2: Meeting of conditions

If conditions are applied to a course approval, Social Work England completes a conditions review to make sure education providers have complied with the conditions and are meeting all of the [education and training standards](#).

A review of the conditions evidence will be undertaken and recommendations will be made to Social Work England's decision maker.

This section of the report will be completed when the conditions review is completed.

	Standard not met	Condition	Recommendation
1	Standard 2.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates a fully implemented process of ensuring oversight of all practice educators' (including independent): 1. Registration 2. Qualifications 3. Currency of knowledge and skills	Met
2	Standard 5.6	The education provider will provide evidence that they have taken steps to make it clear to students: 1. Which parts of the course are mandatory for them to attend 2. Any minimum attendance requirement for parts of the course 3. What the consequences and/or remedial options are if mandatory aspects of the course are missed (including information about resits, sick days during placement, etc.)	Met

Findings

1. The conditions review was undertaken as a result of the conditions set during the course approval as outlined in the original inspection report above.
2. Evidence provided for the condition on standard 2.6 included evidence of an induction process for practice educators (PEs) and a quarterly forum for reflection and learning. A quality assurance policy was provided which lays out the conditions required to be a PE for the University of the West of England. A spreadsheet and PE audit form were also provided to evidence the process in place for ensuring oversight of PEs' registration, qualifications, and currency.
3. The university provided evidence of meeting the condition for standard 5.6 in the form of an attendance guide, which sets out the mandatory parts of the course and actions taken to address any absence from these. Programme and module handbooks were provided which set out the attendance requirements for the course, and how students may be required to make up missed learning. The procedure for attendance monitoring of placement days, including skills days, was outlined within the narrative evidence submission.
4. Following the review of the documentary evidence submitted, the inspection team are satisfied that the conditions set against the approval of the BSc Social Work are met.

Regulator decision

Conditions met.