

Inspection Report

Course provider: Birmingham City University

Course approval: BSc Social Work, MSc Social Work, PgDip Social Work (exit route)

Inspection dates: 12th – 15th March 2024

Report date:	24.04.2024
Inspector recommendation:	Approved
Regulator decision:	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	07.05.2024

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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.
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 been previously 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. Birmingham City University, BSc Social Work, MSc Social Work and PgDip Social Work (exit route) were 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 reapproval inspection also considered changes to the courses which were due to be implemented from September 2024.

Inspection ID	BCUR1
Course provider	Birmingham City University
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	BSc Social Work MSc Social Work Pg Dip Social Work (exit route)
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	BSc – 120 MSc - 25
Date of inspection	12 th – 15 th March 2024
Inspection team	Catherine Denny (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Jane Jones (Lay Inspector) Mary Macdonald (Registrant Inspector)

Language

16. In this document we describe Birmingham City University as ‘the education provider’ or ‘the university’ and we describe the BSc and MSc as ‘the course(s)’.

Inspection

17. A remote inspection took place from 12th – 15th March 2024. 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 5 BSc students from years 1, 2 and 3 of the course and 3 MSc students from years 1 and 2 of the course. There were 2 students in attendance who held the role of student representative for their course. Discussions included their experience of admission to the courses, placement induction, supervision and support, opportunities to provide feedback on the courses, curriculum, assessment and experiences of university support services.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the course teams, those with responsibility for the management of placements, senior leadership team, admissions, data and insights and student support services.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in the university Experts by Experience (EBE) network. Discussions included their involvement in admissions processes, training and support to undertake their role, and opportunities to influence course design and delivery.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Childrens Trust, Barnardo's, SWIS (Social Workers in Schools) Matrix, Change Grow Live and Social Work in Schools.

Findings

24. 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

25. Documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection demonstrated that there was a shared approach to admissions processes across both courses. All shortlisted applicants were required to undertake an admissions assessment which consisted of an individual interview, written exercise and role play task which assessed their suitability and potential to develop relevant social work skills and knowledge. The entry requirements for both courses were clearly outlined on the course provider website and ICT skills were appropriately assessed via the online nature of interviews.

26. The admissions process was informed and supported by a range of stakeholders and the inspection team heard about how the process remained under regular review, via moderation and consultation, to ensure it remained robust and fit for purpose. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

27. The course provider demonstrated that there were clear processes in place to explore candidates prior experience and learning for both courses. Where candidates were able to evidence significant and relevant experience but lacked the formal entry requirements, a portfolio route was available which was judged by social work academic staff in liaison with the central admissions team.

28. All applicants to the courses were required to outline their previous experience during their application, via a personal statement, and at interview where they were asked to outline how they would apply their previous experience to their learning on the course. The inspection team agreed that a wide range of prior experience was evident via their meeting with student representatives. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

29. The inspection team heard how the West Midlands Teaching Partnership (WMTP) had developed best practice guidance in relation to admissions which was adopted by the university. Documentary evidence outlined how all interview panels for the courses included an academic, social work practitioner and person with lived experience. Practice Educator

(PE) representatives also shared that they were invited to join interview panels where possible. Representatives from all stakeholder groups shared that they felt their views were valued in the admissions process and that they were able to influence decision making.

30. The inspection team heard that the course provider was open to feedback from all stakeholders about the design of their admissions processes and examples were provided of where changes had been made as a result of this feedback. One example was provided by representatives from the Experts by Experience (EBE) network, who had a dedicated admissions lead, and was able to offer input into the design of the role play element of admissions on behalf of the wider network. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

31. To assess suitability, the course provider required applicants to submit references as part of their application to the course and undergo enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks and an occupational health assessment. To ensure that the processes were completed at the point of entry to the course, the DBS process began at the point of offer to successful applicants. Further to this, all applicants were required to sign a declaration, prior to interview, which outlined any involvement with relevant statutory services, criminal services and prior social work education.

32. The inspection team heard that there had been an increase in international applicants to social work courses at the university. As a result, the course provider clearly outlined that if an applicant had been in the UK for less than 6 months, they would be required to provide an equivalent to the DBS check from their home country which would need to be translated by an identified company, before being shared with the university. Whilst this had caused some delays for applicants, the university showed an awareness of the issue and worked to communicate the process clearly. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

33. The inspection team heard that the course provider adopted an inclusive approach to admission to the course. This was demonstrated via their planning for open days, which offered opportunities for applicants to speak to members of the course team and student support services directly, and arrangements to support those without access to IT to conduct interviews in specific environments. Representatives from student support services and admissions teams also provided examples of reasonable adjustments that had been provided for applicants with needs in relation to hearing and vision as well as neurodiversity.

34. To ensure that all staff and stakeholders involved in admissions had awareness of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) principles, the course provider adopted a tiered approach to training. Level 1 of the training available was mandatory for all partners, with

other levels being focused upon personal, developmental needs. A member of the course team maintained a spreadsheet which included the details of all stakeholders involved in admissions and included reference to training undertaken. Updates of training were required on an annual basis and anyone who had not completed mandatory training was not able to take part in interview panels. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

35. Documentary evidence provided in support of this standard included links to the website pages for both courses, admissions presentations, links to the research interests of lecturers involved in course delivery, placement information and employability information. During the inspection, the inspection team heard how open days provided further information to support applicant decision making and conversations with members of university staff were also readily available. Feedback from student representatives was positive and all agreed that the information provided was detailed and sufficient in supporting them to make a decision about whether to accept a place on the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

36. The course provider outlined how students on both courses were required to complete 170 days in placement based learning and 30 skills days. For the BSc, the course had been designed to deliver the majority of skills days within a standalone module. For the MSc, skills days were spread throughout the duration of the course. In both circumstances, the inspection team found that skills days were clearly identifiable within module specifications. The course team articulated a clear rationale for their choice of skills day topics, and these were informed by wider stakeholders such as employer partners and EBE colleagues. There was a clear plan in place to monitor attendance at skills days and appropriate catch up tasks in place where necessary.

37. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection demonstrated that there was a clear contrast between placements for both courses and that appropriate statutory tasks were in place. This was supported by the contributions of employer partners, PEs and student representatives. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

38. Documentary evidence outlined the university's approach to auditing all placement opportunities provided on the courses. The purpose audits of the audits was to ensure that placements were fit for purpose and were able to provide the required learning opportunities for students to gain the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the

professional standards. The inspection team also learned that there was an annual review process in place to ensure that established placements remained appropriate. Furthermore, the completion of Quality Assurance in Placement Learning (QAPL) documentation following each individual placement offered insight into any issues with the suitability of placements.

39. The inspection team heard that, where concerns had been raised by students and practice educators about the appropriateness of placements, the course team were responsive to this and implemented actions to address concerns. Student representatives also acknowledged that, where they had queried the relevance of placements or assigned tasks, they were supported by PEs or later reflected that developmental opportunities had been provided. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

40. Documentary evidence reviewed by the inspection team outlined how students on both courses engaged in a preparation for placement week at the university ahead of their first and second placements. These sessions ensured that students were aware of placement expectations and key documentation, such as placement portfolios.

41. The inspection team noted that both courses offered a structured induction programme at the start of placement and this was understood by both students and employer partners. A change to the induction programme for new versions of the course was outlined, with the mandatory induction period reducing to 5 days, which was as a result of student feedback. In addition to the structured induction period, students also had a Placement Learning Agreement (PLA) meeting within the first three weeks of their placement commencing. Students also received mandatory tutorials with their Personal Tutor (PT) ahead of their mid-point review.

42. To ensure that all staff involved in supporting students on placement had a good understanding of expectations, the university offered PE placement briefing and preparation sessions. PEs reported that they had a good understanding of expectations and the inspection team heard there was a consistent approach to supervision in relation to the frequency, length and content. In some situations, however, there appeared to be a lack of consistency from onsite supervisors and in these situations there was an overreliance on the offsite PE to bridge this gap. Where concerns were raised however, the course team were responsive to addressing these and students were positive about the support they had received.

43. During the inspection visit, the inspection team heard about the course teams' plans to review the personal and practice tutor roles and responsibilities to move towards there being a single person fulfilling both roles and acting as one point of contact. The inspection team agreed that this development would support the course team to strengthen provision in relation to this standard area.

44. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met, with a recommendation in relation to the attendance of new onsite supervisors at placement briefing sessions to ensure that all expectations and requirements are understood. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.4

45. The course provider outlined how the expectations for placements on both courses had been matched to the relevant levels within the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and that this was highlighted to students and placement staff within the practice placement portfolios. The role of the PE supported students to understand the range of learning opportunities available within placements and also to apply theory to practice. Where there had been some hesitancy from students about the relevance of some placement learning opportunities, the course team demonstrated appropriate awareness and were addressing this by incorporating learning into taught sessions. Some student representatives also provided examples of where they were able to build upon first placement experiences within their final placements. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

46. Both courses included a module titled 'core skills for practice' which was completed ahead of placement one and included skills days and a skills based assessment, which ensured that students were ready for professional practice. The successful completion and passing of this module was a prerequisite for placement. Students offered positive feedback on the module, and this was supported by employers and PEs who agreed that students were generally well prepared for placement based learning.

47. Documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection outlined that there had been some low attendance at preparation for placement sessions for BSc students in the previous academic year. Employer partners also recognised that there had been some individual cases where the level of professionalism for some students had required development, however these situations had already been identified and were well supported by the university. The course team also outlined actions they had taken to address attendance issues on the BSc and attendance figures for the most recent cohort had improved as a result. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

48. To ensure the registration, knowledge and skills of PEs involved in course delivery, the university followed two processes based upon whether PEs were onsite or offsite. For onsite PEs, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was in place with employer partners in addition to the WMTP which outlined the responsibility of employers to maintain checks and records. For offsite PEs, the course provider had a checking and monitoring system in place and also offered access to Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) training. In

addition to the above, the registration and currency of PEs was checked through the completion of individual student documentation completed as part of the PLA for each placement.

49. To support PEs to maintain their knowledge and currency in relation to the role, the course provider offered workshops and briefings throughout the academic year. PE representatives that the inspection team met with were positive about their experiences of these sessions and felt well supported by the course team. The inspection team also heard some offsite PEs had the opportunity to work closely with the course team supporting the delivery of the course as guest lecturers and as part of admissions processes. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

50. The practice portfolios and placement handbooks for both courses offered details about the processes in place to raise concerns about unsafe behaviour or practices encountered by students. Students were also made aware of the relevant policies in place within organisations at the start of their placement. Where concerns were raised, students demonstrated an awareness of what to do and felt comfortable to do so, with many reporting that they felt supported by the course team. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

51. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection outlined the faculty structure, resources available to support the course and information about the quality assurance processes in place, which included the Course Monitoring and Enhancement (CME) policy and procedure, and information about the Social Work Partnership Board. The overarching quality assurance policy provided by the university gave an overview of the ways in which the various quality monitoring strands worked together.

52. During the inspection event, members of the senior leadership team articulated how the governance processes at a college and faculty level interacted to maintain the quality of the course. The Social Work Partnership Board maintained a focus on working with external stakeholders and offered a further level of scrutiny of university action planning to enhance the course. The inspection team heard clear examples of how the above processes had resulted in positive change for both courses in response to identified issues.

53. During conversations with the course team, the inspection team heard how various members of academic staff were involved in the different workstreams within the WMTP. The learning from these workstreams offered further opportunities for staff to feed into

course developments and improve the quality of experiences for students. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

54. For both courses, the inspection team were able to view documentary evidence which included partnership agreements and placement based learning documentation which offered further details around the responsibilities of employer partners. In addition to the documentation, the course provider offered regular briefings for employers to reiterate expectations and offer updates. During meetings with relevant stakeholders, the inspection team were assured that expectations were clearly understood.

55. In relation to placement breakdowns, evidence demonstrated that there was a process in place which was understood by all. The inspection team were assured of the effectiveness of the process through examples being offered of where it had been necessary to implement it. As a result, the inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.3

56. As outlined in the previous standard, the course provider had agreements in place with placement providers which outlined expectations and the requirements for settings to have the necessary policies and procedures in relation to health, wellbeing and risk. The course provider also outlined their process for auditing new placements which included checks of the areas referenced above, with individual placement agreement meetings offering an additional level of scrutiny.

57. During meetings with the relevant stakeholder groups during the inspection, the inspection team heard how student information was shared between professionals, with appropriate consent, to ensure that any additional needs were understood and could be supported effectively. The positive relationships between the university and placement providers also ensured there were good levels of communication in relation to changing or emerging needs. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

58. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection outlined how employer involvement in the course was ensured via the partnerships in place through the WMTP, the Social Work Partnership Board, stakeholder involvement in quality days and via the Practice Assessment Panel (PAP). The inspection team were keen to understand more about the details of quality days as these had been a mechanism for employer partners to offer feedback on the developments to the curriculum for both courses. The course provider submitted copies of presentations, minutes and feedback from these days and during meetings held as part of the inspection, partners confirmed that they had been able to contribute towards course development. Examples were given of how the course team had

enhanced teaching in relation to safeguarding and considered the balance of teaching for children and adults social work within the new versions of the course.

59. Further to the examples provided above, the inspection team heard that the university took a proactive approach to involving employers in the delivery of teaching on the course. A pilot for a consultant social worker role within the WMTP provided further evidence of the links between practice and academics. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

60. As outlined in standard 3.4, the inspection team were provided with a range of evidence and examples which demonstrated the involvement of employers in course monitoring and improvement systems.

61. Through their review of documentary evidence and conversations held as part of the inspection, the inspection team were able to see the structures in place to enable EBE colleagues to contribute towards course development and design. There were designated members of the network who were involved in the different aspects of course delivery (such as admissions and core skills) and all commented that they felt that they had full involvement and were valued as partners. Furthermore, the inspection team heard that the EBE network had representation on the Social Work Partnership Board and were also invited to contribute towards quality days and curriculum review.

62. In relation to the involvement of students in monitoring and improvement systems, the inspection team reviewed evidence of student forums which were held on a quarterly basis, information about module feedback opportunities and attendee lists from course quality days. The inspection team also heard that students were invited to contribute to the delivery of open days for the courses, course design workshops and previous students were able to support with the delivery of placement preparation weeks.

63. The inspection team agreed that documentary evidence, and the evidence received through meetings held as part of the inspection, demonstrated that there were effective processes in place and that there was a feedback loop in place for all stakeholders. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.6

64. The inspection team were assured that there were discussions about recruitment numbers, placements and capacity on an ongoing basis through the university's relationship with the WMTP. The course provider demonstrated a measured approach to recruitment to the courses based upon their knowledge of placement capacity. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

65. The details for both courses' leaders were reviewed and their registration checked on the Social Work England Register. The inspection team agreed that both were appropriately qualified and experienced and therefore agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.8

66. Documentary evidence outlined the staffing ratios in place for both courses which were deemed appropriate. All staff involved in the delivery of the courses were registered social workers with a wide range of skills and experiences. The inspection team observed that the course provider was responsive when areas of expertise were required, for example in relation to law teaching of the BSc and addressed gaps swiftly. The inspection team heard from all stakeholder groups that staff capacity across both courses meant that responses to queries or concerns were swift and dealt with appropriately.

67. In relation to the staffing support outside of the designated course teams, the inspection team observed ample support from other areas of the university, such as admissions and student support, and there was evidence of good working relationships. The addition of guest lecturers to support with the delivery of key areas was also well received by student representatives. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

68. During the inspection event, the inspection team were able to see live examples of the ways in which data systems were used to evaluate information about student cohorts. The addition of a data specific role within the school was utilised by the course teams to support their understanding of the diversity of their cohorts and identify any specific themes. Evidence received throughout the inspection process demonstrated that staff responded appropriately to issues arising from data, such as attendance issues for specific cohorts, and implemented actions to drive improvements. The inspection team also observed that the CME process added another layer of information about student progression and outcomes to the course teams, which they were required to respond to via course monitoring plans. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

69. Documentary evidence outlined how all staff across the courses were allocated research and scholarly leave through a workload management tool. In addition, all academic staff were members of the Social Work Education, Policy and Practice (SWEPP) research cluster which provided access to webinars and conferences as well as support for research. Staff CVs demonstrated that a number of members of staff were research active and all had the opportunity to engage in Continuous Professional Development (CPD) through the course providers relationship with the WMTP. Further to the above, staff took part in mandatory development days through the university and received additional study time when engaged

in PhD activity. Members of the course teams were positive about their experience of CPD. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

70. The inspection team reviewed mapping documentation for both courses which demonstrated how they had been aligned to the PCF, Social Work England Professional Standards and the relevant QAA benchmarks. This was evident for both the current and new versions of the course. The inspection team noted that mapping was clear and consistent across all documentation, demonstrated progress over time and was understood by all stakeholders. This was evidenced through discussions with student representatives and PEs, who had in depth knowledge of the curriculum and were able to apply this within practice based learning.

71. The rationale for changes to the courses was clear and based upon developing best practice and feedback from stakeholders. An example of this was demonstrated through the development of a linear learning model for the BSc to support students to build their knowledge and skills. Where changes to the courses were proposed, the course teams had a plan to communicate these effectively to stakeholders through briefings and updated documentation. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

72. As referenced in previous standard areas, the inspection team were able to see clear evidence of how the course provider engaged with stakeholders to involve them in various aspects of course development and delivery. During meetings with stakeholder groups, the inspection team heard positive feedback about experiences of working with the course teams and there was good engagement where opportunities were offered. The changes proposed to the curriculum for both courses had included contributions from employers and the university EBE network, as evidenced through minutes from quality day sessions. Employer partners were also able to make direct links between their feedback on elements of curriculum content that had been reflected in the new course design. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

73. Documentary evidence outlined how the courses were designed in accordance with university guidance in relation to EDI and legislative frameworks, including provision to ensure that students with additional needs were able to access appropriate intervention and support during their study. Throughout the course of the inspection, the inspection team heard further evidence in support of the standard, including the work being performed by the university to diversify their student cohort to reflect the local

demographic, and efforts from a university wide perspective to decolonise the curriculum. The course teams also explained how they had responded to feedback from stakeholders during quality days in relation to diversifying their assessment strategies and introducing concepts such as critical race theory and the impact of trauma on migration families. The development of new versions of the course also considered how EDI issues could be interwoven across modules rather than being delivered as a standalone topic. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

74. The ongoing development of the curriculum across the courses was well evidenced within documentation. The relationships with the WMTP and practitioners supporting with course delivery ensured that the course teams remained abreast of practice developments and the research activity of academic staff also offered opportunities for findings to be filtered into course development and delivery.

75. Specific examples of how the course had been updated in relation to relevant developments in practice and legislation included the addition of a 'contemporary issues in practice' module which reflected the dynamic nature of social work practice, and discrete modules to accurately reflect safeguarding practices in both adults and children's social work. Through the CME process, the inspection team were assured that there were mechanisms in place to ensure that this would be an ongoing feature of course development. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

76. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection outlined how the integration of theory into practice was ensured through planned module content and assessed learning outcomes for both courses. This evidence was further supported during the inspection event as the inspection team were able to hear examples of how assignments reinforced this skill and placements provided further opportunities to apply theory in practice based situations. During meetings with students and PEs, the inspection team heard clear examples from students of the ways in which they had been supported to apply theoretical knowledge, and PEs spoke positively about the learning that students brought from the university into practice scenarios. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

77. During their review of documentary evidence, the inspection team discovered the ways that students on the courses were able to learn about and from other professions through the addition of visiting lecturers. During the inspection event, this was further explored to support the inspection team to understand what opportunities students had to learn with and alongside other professions. The course team outlined that the simulation suites as part

of skills day provision offered opportunities for students to better understand the nature of other disciplines. The inspection team also heard about the university led international conference week where students would learn alongside students from other professional backgrounds. On the MSc, the research methods of enquiry module was delivered as a cross faculty module and therefore included different professional disciplines.

78. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met with a recommendation in relation to strengthening cross course professional learning opportunities to support the developing relationship with school settings for placements. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.7

79. The module specifications for both the BSc and MSc outlined the number of hours spent in structured academic learning, directed placement learning and private study. For both courses, the modules had been validated and were in line with university guidance on hours and credits. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

80. The inspection team considered changes to the assessment strategy for both courses as part of the reapproval process. For both courses, the inspection team agreed that the assessments in place were appropriate to meet the learning outcomes for modules but that there was an academic focus with the use of essays being seen throughout modules. As a result of feedback from the External Examiner (EE), the course team had reviewed their approach and developed a wider variety of assessment methods which enabled students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills in a range of ways, such as through the use of case studies. The movement towards a 20 credit module structure also supported the review of the assessment strategy and the proposed tasks. The inspection team agreed that there was clear evidence of the course team responding to feedback in their new assessment strategy and this had been well received by both students and practice partners. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

81. For both courses, the assessment mapping documentation linked appropriately to the curriculum and demonstrated a scaffolded model which developed learning incrementally over the duration of the courses. There were no concerns raised by stakeholder groups about progression through the courses. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

82. Through their review of evidence, the inspection team observed that there had been some concerns raised about feedback received on the current BSc programme and how this

aligned to the learning outcomes for modules. The inspection team saw that the course team had responded to these issues in the new course design and developed a new marking rubric and moderation tasks to improve the consistency of feedback received by students.

83. During meetings held as part of the inspection, the inspection team heard that feedback received in all settings was generally positive and constructive. This included feedback received from PEs whilst students were on placement. There was also assurance that assessment and marking policies were clear and being adhered to. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

84. Documentary evidence received in advance of the inspection included CVs for course team staff which demonstrated that there was a wide range of qualifications and experience for all involved in assessments. Module leads for both courses were responsible for overseeing the assessment process and moderation was completed by nominated staff members. In addition to the course team qualifications and experience, the inspection team were assured that PEs involved in the assessment of students were also appropriately qualified, experienced and on the register. The registration of EEs involved in course delivery was checked and their CVs reviewed to ensure that they were appropriate. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

85. The course provider outlined the processes and procedures in place to manage students' formal progression throughout both programmes. Progression was awarded at the Programme Assessment Boards which were attended by EEs involved in the courses. An overview of arrangements for managing the progression of practice learning was also provided for both the current and new versions of the courses which was deemed appropriate.

86. During the inspection event, the inspection team explored the personal tutor system in place and its effectiveness. All staff acting as tutors were able to follow student progression through an online system and the student support and retention team produced regular reports to outline any barriers to progression. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

87. For both the BSc and MSc, there was clear evidence of how students were supported to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice through module design and assessment methods. Students' skills and knowledge were developed over time on the BSc with year 1 being focused on demonstrating knowledge and awareness of social work skills and knowledge underpinning practice, year 2 encouraging students to develop analytical skills

and year 3 requiring students to critically analyse and reflect within modules. For the MSc, students were assessed against critical analysis and thinking in each module and also engaged in two research modules. For the new versions of the courses, the proposal to modify assessment strategies to include more case study elements offered further support of this standard.

88. The inspection team were offered further assurance that students would develop evidence-informed approaches underpinned by knowledge and understanding in relation to research and evaluation through the research activity of lecturers on the courses. PE representatives also discussed their role in this area through supporting students to be curious, which included promoting self-directed study. This was further supported by the range of academic support available to all students within the university. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

89. Within the course handbooks, the inspection team were able to review details of the support services available to students which included counselling, occupational health and careers advice and support. During the inspection event, representatives from key services outlined the different ways that students could access support which included face to face appointments, online sessions and chat functions. The services in place were deemed effective and there were appropriate escalation processes in place where required.

90. Where necessary, there was support that was specific to social work (i.e. through careers advice) and all staff involved in supporting students received training on the support available to enable them to signpost if required. As well as offering support to students via central university services, representatives spoke about their role in empowering students to request support within the workplace environment. During a meeting with students, the general feedback on the availability of services was positive. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

91. In relation to the academic support available to students, the inspection team heard about the offer available through the library and Academic Development Department (ADD). The library offered all students access to a 24/7 chat function and the availability of eBooks and digitised texts. There was evidence of good relationships between the library and academics involved in course delivery to ensure that there was an understanding of the resources required to support students on the courses. The ADD offered 1:1 sessions with students to address specific skills and was well resourced with a specialist team.

92. The role of the personal tutor was outlined, and the course teams spoke of their intention to move towards personal and practice tutors being the same member of staff in the next academic year, which would offer consistency of support to students. During a meeting with student representatives, the inspection team heard that the academic support available to students was well received and accessible whilst on placement due to mixture of face to face and remote resources. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

93. To ensure the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health, the course provider required students to share a hard copy of their DBS check with employers at the start of each placement. Part of the practice placement portfolio also required students to declare that there had been no changes to their suitability through completion of a signed declaration. In addition, students were reminded of their responsibility to inform their PE and practice or personal tutor of any changes to their health status following completion of an occupational health assessment at the start of the course.

94. The inspection team also reviewed the university's Fitness to Practice (FtP) policy which was deemed appropriate. Student representatives demonstrated a good awareness of the procedure and examples were given by the course team of where they had been proactive in addressing conduct and professional behaviour. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

95. Documentation provided by the university offered details about the range of support available and the process for receiving reasonable adjustments on both courses. The inspection team heard that the disability support service was well resourced, and students were provided with access to screening services as well as referrals for assessments, such as dyslexia. Where reasonable adjustments were deemed necessary, the team developed support plans which included details of needs and provision. The timescales for support plans were outlined as being 10 days from receipt of the required information, though delays in receiving the relevant information could be a cause for delay in some circumstances. The inspection team heard that staff from the disability support service could work with placement providers where needs were complex, offering a 3-way meeting or discussion to discuss implementation.

96. As well as offering support for long term needs, the disability support service also spoke about their ability to offer reasonable adjustments where there was a short term need such as injury. There were also appropriate processes in place to support students to return to study following a break, for example in the event of pregnancy. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

97. The documentation received in support of this standard included course handbooks, information from the Moodle platform, placement portfolios and examples of presentations from call back days whilst students were on their final placement. The inspection team agreed that the documentation was comprehensive, and students demonstrated a good awareness of their curriculum, assessments, placements and transition to registered social worker. The inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met but agreed that a recommendation in relation to updating course documentation to detail the proposed changes to the oversight of the practice and placement tutor roles was appropriate. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 5.6

98. The course handbooks for the courses included details about mandatory 100% attendance for placements and skills days, and expectations in relation to attendance at academic sessions, though these did not have a clear threshold. During the inspection event, the inspection team heard that attendance was closely monitored using a system called PRESTO. There were appropriate processes in place to flag if a student was showing poor attendance at which point a member of staff would intervene through the use of a 1:1 meeting. Where sessions were missed (for example a skills day session), the course team would set appropriate tasks to enable students to catch up. Through discussions with student representatives, the inspection team heard that there was a clear understanding of attendance expectations across both courses. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

99. As outlined in standard area 4.10, the inspection team heard positive examples of where feedback had supported student development. Student representatives agreed that feedback was constructive and received in a timely manner. There was also evidence of the course team responding to student feedback in this area. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

100. The inspection team were satisfied that there was an appropriate process in place to enable students to make academic appeals, which appeared effective. This was clearly referenced within course handbooks. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

101. As the qualifying courses are a BSc and MSc Social Work, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

The inspection team recommend that the course be approved.

Recommendations

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 inspection team are recommending that the university consider making the attendance of new onsite supervisors at pre-placement briefings a requirement prior to student allocation.	Paragraph 44
2	Standard 4.6	The inspection team are recommending that the university consider increasing cross course interprofessional learning opportunities within the School of Education and Social Work to improve understanding of the role of social work within education.	Paragraph 78
3.	Standard 5.5	The inspection team are recommending that the course provider update course handbooks and other documentation which references the personal and practice tutor role to ensure clarity of understanding of who will undertake this role for future cohorts.	Paragraph 97

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.

