

Inspection Report

Course provider: New College Durham

Course approval: BA (Hons) Social Work

Inspection dates: 7th – 9th November 2023

Report date:	04.01.2024
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	26.02.2024
Date conditions met and approved:	07.11.2024

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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. New College Durham, BA (Hons) Social Work, 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. During the inspection, the inspection team also considered proposed changes to the course which had been implemented from September 2023.

Inspection ID	NCDR1
Course provider	New College Durham
Validating body (if different)	The Open University
Course inspected	BA (Hons) Social Work
Mode of study	Undergraduate
Maximum student cohort	25
Date of inspection	7 th – 9 th November 2023
Inspection team	Catherine Denny Education Quality Assurance Officer Aidan Worsley (Lay Inspector) Beverley Blythe (Registrant Inspector)

Language

16. In this document we describe New College Durham as ‘the education provider’, ‘the college’ or ‘the course provider’ and we describe the BA (Hons) Social Work as ‘the course’.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 7th to the 9th of November at the Framwellgate Moor Campus where New College Durham is based. 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 seven students across all years of the course, two of which were student representatives. Discussions included admission to the course, placement experiences, teaching, learning, assessment and accessibility of student support services.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with New College Durham Higher Education (HE) staff members from the course team, senior leadership team, admissions 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 course providers experts by experience group. Discussions included involvement in admissions processes, involvement in course design and delivery, experiences of involvement in assessment and feedback and access to support in their role.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including Durham County Council, Pioneering Care Centre, Beamish and Pelton Primary School, Foundation UK, Together for Children (Sunderland), Gateshead Council as well as two independent practice educators.

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 outlined that the course provider had adopted regionally agreed processes in relation to admissions which had been historically developed by the North East Social Work Alliance (NESWA). The process included an interview day, during which shortlisted candidates were required to complete a written test, engage in group discussion and complete a face to face interview. The course provider outlined that the case study within the written test and subject matter in the group discussion assessed candidates' potential to develop the knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards, as well as their academic abilities and command of spoken English. Minimum entry requirements and the online process by which applicants completed their application provided further assurance about their skills in relation to the standard.

26. During their documentary review, the inspection team queried whether the course team had reviewed the questions used within interview processes. Information received from representatives from NESWA stated that they had stopped sharing questions amongst universities to avoid applicants having an unfair advantage when being interviewed by multiple regional providers. The course provider confirmed that they had not adapted any of the materials used as they were considered appropriate for the process, included guidance for those involved in interview panels and had been aligned to the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). The inspection team agreed that the standard was met with a recommendation in relation to the review of interview questions to ensure they were fair and fit for purpose. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 1.2

27. The course provider outlined their approach to prior relevant experience, both in relation to formal recognition of prior learning and prior lived experience. Documentary evidence demonstrated that applicants with prior lived experience of social work were able to access the course with a reduced UCAS tariff score, however it remained unclear to the inspection team how this was standardised across the admissions process. The course team acknowledged that this was an area for development and were keen to receive guidance on how this process could be consistently applied.

28. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team agreed that the course provider demonstrated that applicants prior relevant experience was considered as part of the admissions process in line with the requirements of the standard and, as such, the standard was met. However, it was agreed that a recommendation in relation to formalising this process to ensure standardisation was appropriate. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 1.3

29. Documentary evidence submitted prior to the inspection included details of a group discussion activity, this was observed by an interview panel, which included either a person with lived experience of social work and/or a professional, alongside a member of the course team. Further to this, the inspection team heard that external stakeholders sat on interview panels and played an active role in asking questions of candidates. Student representatives commented that panels had included the stakeholders referenced above and this was further confirmed by representatives from the course providers Experts by Experience (EBE) group, although they expressed a desire to increase their involvement where possible. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

30. The suitability process outlined by the course provider included details of a self-declaration which was completed by all candidates prior to their interview and details of any prior convictions being declared through the UCAS form. Members of the interview panel had the opportunity to discuss any declarations with candidates during the one to one interview held as part of the selection process. The course team explained that, where declarations had been made, advice could be sought from colleagues in practice to gain a further layer of assurance around decision making.

31. In relation to occupational health processes, the course provider explained that this was managed by an external company. Completed forms would be screened and then information would be sent back to the course team for further action if required. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

32. The course team provided an overview of their commitment to widening participation on the course through attracting a diverse cohort from the local community, including those already employed within the social care sector looking to advance their careers. The inspection team also heard details about how candidates could access reasonable adjustments through the admissions process such as completing written elements of the process on a computer.

33. During the inspection visit, the inspection team were keen to better understand how the course team gathered information in relation to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) during the admissions process and how this was used to inform admissions processes. The course team provided examples of data they gathered however this was within limited parameters and the inspection team were unable to see clear examples of how this was then used to shape future admissions processes. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met with a recommendation in relation to widening the parameters of EDI data gathered, and developing a strategic approach to the use of this. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 1.6

34. The course provider gave an overview of the ways in which they ensured that candidates were able to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the course. This included welcome presentations and website information which provided details about module content, assessments, placements and a career as a social worker. Student representatives involved in meetings held as part of the inspection also commented that they felt well informed about the course at the admissions stage. The inspection team were also able to review the programme specification which provided further detail on the topics outlined above.

35. When reviewing the programme specification, the inspection team observed some inaccuracies in the information provided to students. This included reference to Social Work England's 'standards of proficiency' rather than the professional standards and links to the education and training standards instead of the professional standards which students needed to be aware of. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

36. The course provider outlined how 200 days of practice learning were delivered throughout the course. This included a 15 day shadowing placement in year 1, a 70 day placement in year 2 and a 100 day statutory placement in year 3 of the course. A further 15 skills days were identified as being delivered across the programme and included workshops, placement preparation sessions, guest speakers, mock interviews and educational visits.

37. Whilst the inspection team agreed that the overview provided appeared to meet the requirements of the standard in relation to number and types of placement, a query was raised in relation to the oversight of skills day attendance. The inspection team learned throughout the inspection visit that there were more than 15 potential skills days that students could attend and, in order to make up the required 200 days, these would be recorded in the student's personal development record which was then signed off by a tutor. The inspection team queried how it was possible for the tutor to ensure that there had been attendance at the sessions and that the sessions recorded were appropriate as skills days. At the time of the inspection, there was not a clear mechanism in place for verifying this.

38. The inspection team concluded that, as a core requirement of the standard, there needed to be better oversight of this aspect of practice learning and the course team needed to demonstrate how they were confident that monitoring of this was robust. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.2

39. The course team explained that all students completed a learning needs form prior to placement allocation which supported them to allocate appropriate placement experiences based upon students' prior knowledge or needs. The course team had a list of providers that they worked with year on year and explained that they were in the process of researching new providers that could potentially be added to this list moving forward. When new providers would be added, the course team were able to describe their intended processes to quality assure the placement via a review of the learning environment, discussions about policy and procedures, intended learning objectives and health and safety site visits.

40. During the inspection, the inspection team were provided with a self-assessment document that had been completed by the current course team and this identified a need to develop clearer placement descriptors and quality assurance processes around placements. Whilst the actions identified moving forward were deemed appropriate, the inspection team were unable to determine what quality assurance had taken place for placements already allocated to students, particularly those commencing in the new term. The course team explained that they had not been able to complete the checks as outlined above and there appeared to be a reliance upon providers having been used by previous iterations of the course team.

41. During discussions with student representatives and employer partners involved in meetings held as part of the inspection processes, the inspection team did not hear that there were any significant concerns about the learning opportunities provided on placement. Whilst this was reassuring, the inspection team still identified a lack of oversight from the course provider about the learning opportunities being provided for upcoming placements, particularly those due to commence in January 2024.

42. As a result of the concerns outlined above, the inspection team set an area of immediate assurance against these placements which required the course provider to complete immediate work to evidence that all placements allocated for January 2024 could provide suitable learning opportunities that allowed students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards. The course provider was also required to provide documentary evidence that offered detail about the agreements in place with providers to meet the learning objectives for the placement, the types of learning opportunities available within the service, and the expected tasks and responsibilities aligned to the students' stage in their training.

43. Following the inspection visit, the course provider submitted a newly developed Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) document. The course provider outlined how this had been created to provide assurance that all placements would be structured to enable students to access the appropriate learning opportunities. The placement audit and information QAPL had been adapted to include information on specific learning objectives, details about the work environment and reference to disability accessibility.

44. The course provider also submitted a copy of a spreadsheet which detailed where QAPL's had been sent, received and verified by the course team to ensure that the placement offered an appropriate practice environment. The spreadsheet also included details of practice educators within each setting. This had been completed for placements accommodating students in year 2 and 3 of the course from January 2024. Further to this, the inspection team were able to review a sample of completed QAPL's which included placement specific details, learning opportunities available and details of key policies in place.

45. Whilst the inspection team were satisfied that the questions contained within the QAPL were appropriately detailed, they observed that not all documents provided had been completed to the same standard or with the same level of detail. They agreed that, if these were to be used on an ongoing basis to capture information in relation to placement provision and currency of practice educators, there would need to be ongoing monitoring of the quality of the information provided. The evidence provided assured the inspection team that placements identified for January 2024 were able to provide suitable learning opportunities and support the development of student knowledge and skills but it was agreed that a condition was also appropriate in relation to this standard to ensure that there was a consistent procedure and process in relation to the quality assurance of

placements on an ongoing basis. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.3

46. Documentary evidence provided as part of the inspection process included the placement handbook and samples of student profiles. Within the placement handbook, the inspection team observed an induction checklist and details of learning agreement meetings. All learning agreement meetings were expected to include attendance of practice educators or work based supervisors, a representative from the course provider and the student, which enabled discussions about plans for appropriate induction activities and ongoing support and supervision.

47. During meetings held as part of the inspection, the inspection team heard that there had been a lack of clarity around the use of the placement handbook for some students. Where this had occurred, it was suggested that this was addressed by the knowledge and support of the practice educator supporting the student. Following a review of all evidence received during the course of the inspection, the inspection team agreed that, whilst the processes described appeared to be fit for purpose, there was, at times, a lack of oversight from the course team about how these processes were being implemented effectively. Where this happened, the success of placement arrangements could be reliant upon the knowledge and experience of placement providers. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

48. The inspection team also proposed that a recommendation should be set against this standard in relation to the range of supervision opportunities available to students on placement. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.4

49. As with standard 2.3, the inspection team were provided with samples of student profiles as evidence to meet this standard. The inspection team also considered the placement handbooks for the course. Whilst the evidence reviewed and feedback from stakeholders involved in the inspection indicated that roles and responsibilities for students were suitable, the inspection team agreed that the lack of formal placement descriptors and oversight from the course provider impacted upon this standard being met. As a result, the inspection team agreed that the condition applied to standard 2.2 and 2.3 was also relevant

to this standard area. Full details of the condition can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.5

50. The course provider submitted a copy of a module guide titled 'Communication and intervention skills for social workers' which included the assessment of readiness for direct practice. The assessment was made up of an interview with a service user followed by a written reflective piece which was assessed by the course team. The inspection team were satisfied that the module guide provided details to students about the learning objectives and provided a good understanding of what students were being assessed against.

51. Representatives from the EBE network also had access to the same materials and were provided with guidance about their approach to the interview by the course team. The inspection team were satisfied that the timing of the point of readiness was appropriate and that there were the required procedures in place when students did not pass this assessment on the first attempt. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

52. The course provider submitted an overview of the details collected by the placement coordinator to provide assurance that practice educators were on the register and had the required knowledge and skills to support safe and effective learning. Narrative was also provided that outlined some of the processes in place to provide ongoing training and support to practice educators in their role.

53. During the inspection visit, the inspection team were eager to see what monitoring systems looked like in practice. The new placement leader for the course was able to show the inspection team a spreadsheet which had been developed at the start of the academic year to gather relevant information, however, this was still in the process of implementation and some details on the spreadsheet required further checking and review.

54. At the time of the inspection, some of the training provided to practice educators appeared to be outdated. The course team explained that training for practice educators had been historically provided by NEWSA, however the course provider was working towards the implementation of a practice educator forum which would ensure they had oversight of the training provided and provide an arena in which best practice could be shared.

55. Whilst the inspection team, agreed that the plans in place for oversight of this standard appeared to be appropriate, they were not able to see evidence of these being implemented effectively at the time of their visit. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet

the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.7

56. Information in relation to raising concerns whilst on placement was contained within the placement handbooks submitted by the course provider. The placement learning agreement meeting template also provided detail about students being made aware of organisational whistleblowing policies. Student representatives that the inspection team met with demonstrated a good awareness of where to take concerns if they arose and also articulated how guidance could be found within supporting documentation. Representatives from different stakeholder groups confirmed that, where concerns of any nature had arisen, the course provider had responded appropriately, ensuring effective support. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

57. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection visit included school, curriculum and quality structures and staff roles and responsibility outlines. Whilst the inspection team were able to see details of staffing arrangements for the course, they were unable to see details of how governance of the course was ensured through the documentation provided.

58. During a second evidence submission, the inspection team were able to review minutes from a selection of course team meetings, validation minutes from the Open University and higher education (HE) forum minutes. Upon reviewing this documentation, the inspection team felt that there was a lack of consistency in how meetings were conducted and an absence of a task and finish approach to actions identified. It also became apparent to the inspection team that some of these meetings had only recently been implemented following a period of disruption for the course team over the previous academic year.

59. When discussing governance arrangements with the course provider, it was clear that there were efforts to re-establish regular monitoring systems and there was evidence of self-assessment activities that had taken place to help identify next steps. Whilst this was identified as a positive development, the inspection team agreed that this was not a result of current governance arrangements identifying a need for review but due to the course team responding to ongoing issues as a result of the disruption for the course team referenced above. Furthermore, the inspection team were unable to review an action plan as a result of the self-assessment activity undertaken and a lack of clarity about when issues would be addressed.

60. The inspection team agreed that the mechanisms in place at the time of the inspection were not robust enough for a professional qualifying course and there was a concern that some mechanisms, such as course team meetings, could become overwhelmed by trying to address too many competing issues within this workstream. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.2

61. Documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection visit included a narrative about the oversight of placements and a spreadsheet which included details of providers that the course team worked with. However, within the evidence provided the inspection team were unable to review any examples of any formal agreements that were in place with providers that demonstrated their commitment to providing placement experiences which would meet the requirements of the standard.

62. During the inspection visit, the course team were asked about the processes in place when beginning a new relationship with a placement provider. The placement lead explained that there was a desire to broaden the placement opportunities available on the course and that members of the course team were using their links from practice to develop new connections. In setting up a new placement, there would be a process of arranging initial meetings, sharing documentation and conducting site visits. When the inspection team queried what level of assurance was in place for current providers, the course team provided some detail on how relationships within NESWA offered some level of regional assurance, however, when meeting with representatives from the teaching partnership, it became clear that placement oversight was not a part of their current work-stream priorities. As a result, the inspection team were unable to assure themselves that there were any formal agreements in place for current placement providers.

63. Following a review of the documentation submitted and after consideration of the evidence received during meetings held as part of the inspection, the inspection team agreed that the condition applied to standard 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 was also relevant in relation to this standard. Full details of the condition can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.3

64. The course provider explained that all placements being used by the college had received a site visit from their institutional health and safety team. Relevant policies and procedures in place within the organisation were also referenced within placement learning

agreement (PLA) meetings. The course team also explained that they maintained open communication with placement providers, used feedback from QAPL documentation to inform placement planning and both students and placement providers commented that the course team were quick to respond to issues when they arose.

65. Whilst the inspection team acknowledged good practice in relation to health and safety visits and course team responsiveness to issues on placement, concerns remained in relation to the formal quality assurance processes in place. As outlined in previous standard areas, the inspection team considered the work identified by the team in relation to developing descriptors for placements and implementing formal agreements with providers. They agreed that ongoing work was required to enable the course provider to be assured of the quality and content of placement experiences, including necessary policies and procedures, prior to student allocation. As a result, the inspection team agreed that the condition applied to standards 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 3.2 was also relevant here. Full details of the condition can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.4

66. The course provider outlined that employer partners were involved in the course through delivery of lectures, acting as guest speakers, supporting with the allocation of practice education and via being involved in contributing towards the assessment of students whilst on placement. The inspection team were eager to better understand how employer partners were involved in ongoing programme governance, through membership of formal groups and committees.

67. During meetings with the course team and employer representatives, the inspection team heard that one local authority had been involved in course design via providing feedback on a proposed module. The same local authority also fed into preparation for the course's validation with their awarding body. The course team also outlined that employers would be involved in course team meetings, held every six weeks, however at the point of the inspection, the inspection team were only able to see evidence of one course team meeting having taken place. As a result, the inspection team concluded that current arrangements required embedding to be effective, and a consistent approach to the engagement of all employer partners was required.

68. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.5

69. As outlined in the previous standard area, the inspection team were not able to see consistent processes in place to demonstrate how all employer partners were involved in regular and effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems for the course. During the course of the inspection, employers spoke of positive relationships with the course team and a desire to support with delivery but the inspection team agreed a more strategic approach to this involvement was required.

70. In relation to the engagement of people with lived experience of social work, the inspection team heard that there was a desire for the university EBE network to become more involved in wider course level activity, though they acknowledged their engagement in admissions and role play activities. Representatives acknowledged that there had been an initial course team meeting that they had been invited to, but this was in its early stages of development. There was also a desire to be involved in meaningful course design and be viewed as co-educators on the course.

71. Student representatives commented that they had opportunities to engage with the course team via the inclusion of student representatives in course team meetings. The addition of an independent forum for students within the college structure also provided further opportunity to provide feedback on the course, with all representatives stating that they felt listened to.

72. The inspection team acknowledged that the course team had developed a 'strategies and standards document' as part of their evidence submission which outlined their hopes for stakeholder engagement moving forward however, at the time of the inspection, there was no evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness of this. As referenced in standard 3.1, there was also a concern that course team meetings in their current design could become overwhelmed by a range of themes and issues which would impact upon their effectiveness. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.6

73. Documentary evidence submitted as part of the inspection outlined how the Advanced Curriculum Manager worked alongside the Head of School to analyse information in relation to student retention and recruitment to support planning in relation to student numbers on the course. The course team also explained how they engaged with employers both independently and through the teaching partnership to discuss student numbers, placement

capacity and workforce planning which fed back into college discussions and planning. During a meeting with the senior leadership team, representatives also outlined their understanding of numbers in relation to viability of the course and capacity to expand their offer within current arrangements.

74. Whilst the inspection team did not observe any issues in relation to placement capacity and employers felt communication in this area was effective, there was some concern about the current capacity within the course team to deliver beyond their current numbers. The inspection team acknowledged that there were areas of development for the team which would require additional workload planning and therefore did not feel that an increase would be advisable at this time. On balance of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met, but agreed that this recommendation would be impacted if there was a plan to increase cohort numbers beyond the current level.

Standard 3.7

75. Documentary evidence submitted to support this standard included a job description for the professional lead for the course and details of the post holder's registration with Social Work England. As a result of the evidence provided, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

76. The inspection team reviewed details of the course team structure which included six members of staff at a full time equivalent of 4.6. This included an advanced curriculum manager and five members of academic teaching staff. During the inspection, the inspection team also met with wider college staff who supported the delivery of the course in areas such as admissions, quality management, leadership and student support and welfare. The inspection team were also provided with details of professionals in practice who contributed towards course delivery as guest lecturers on specific modules. The inspection team expressed some concern that the current course team could be operating on high student to staff ratios, though there was a recognition that this was supported by the addition of external speakers.

77. The inspection team heard that a strength of the current course team was their recent experience of, and links to, current social work practice and that this enhanced learning opportunities for students. However, there was not clear evidence of expertise in social work education management and delivery of a social work qualifying programme. The inspection team also observed that there was a reliance upon the external examiner to be able to support in some areas of course delivery which were outside the remit of the role. The inspection team further recognised that, through the course teams' own self-assessment and the findings of the inspection, capacity would be required within strategic

social work education management to enable the course to meet Social Work England's Education and Training standards.

78. Upon balancing the evidence submitted as part of the inspection and through meetings held with the course provider, the inspection team agreed that the current capacity of the course team in relation to their knowledge and expertise in social work education and training needed to be enhanced. The inspection team agreed that this related directly to the condition applied to standard 3.1. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.9

79. During the inspection, the course team provided a demo of their data monitoring system and gave details about the intelligence this provided to them in relation to the analysis of student performance and progression. The course team explained that the system supported them to identify trends in relation to the course which were then fed up to the senior leadership team in the form of written reports. The system also provided further detail to support student at risk discussions and identified appropriate actions, which included offering additional targeted support for issues such as academic writing skills or liaising with wider college support services to offer bespoke interventions. Detail was also provided in relation to university wide EDI issues that had been initiated in response to cohort and data trends, such as work to decolonise the curriculum. The inspection team agreed that there was evidence of a formal system in place and, as a result, agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

80. Documentary evidence outlined how all course team staff had a personal development plan. The plans outlined specific learning goals along with details of attendance at conferences and other external learning events which would enhance their understanding of social work practice. Details were also provided of the ways in which staff would then share acquired knowledge with the wider course team to enhance delivery of the course. The inspection team also heard that staff were provided with three development days per academic year to support their ongoing professional development as well as the opportunity to complete scholarly activity such as PGCE's.

81. The inspection team heard about the support available to staff through the wider college network which included the provision of teaching and learning mentors who were able to support with staff knowledge of delivery on a higher education course. This was noted as being helpful to all staff, particularly those who had joined the team from a practice based background. All course team staff also have the opportunity to return to social work practice every two years to ensure their currency remained relevant.

82. The inspection team were keen to hear about the support in place for contributing speakers and lecturers on the course. The course provider outlined the provision of the practitioner input group which was currently being developed to support regular speakers on the course, which was seen as a positive addition to supporting all educators on the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met with a recommendation in relation to continuing to strengthen the provision of support for guest lecturers on the course. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

83. The course provider submitted copies of documentation that demonstrated how the curriculum was mapped to the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and Social Work England professional standards. Each module was also mapped to the professional standards as seen in the module specification documentation. The course provider also submitted mapping to the education and training standards, however it was noted that these standards applied to the delivery of the course as a whole and was not required at a curriculum level. The inspection team were satisfied that both the content and structure of both versions of the course provided appropriate opportunities for students to develop the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards. As a result the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

84. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection outlined the course providers commitment to seeking and incorporating the views of employers in the design and implementation of the curriculum. During the inspection, the inspection team heard that a partnering local authority had provided direct input into the curriculum in preparation for the course validation and, as a result, further details had been added on local, contextual issues.

85. Whilst the inspection team were satisfied that some work had taken place in support of this standard, they observed that this was limited and time bound, and further work was required to embed the views of employer partners in ongoing development and review. As a result, the inspection team agreed that the condition applied to standards 3.4 and 3.5 was also relevant in relation to this standard. Full details of the condition can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.3

86. Upon reviewing the design of the curriculum and individual module descriptors for both the versions of the course, the inspection team were able to see that there was clear

consideration of EDI principles and relevant legislation and guidance in the design of the curriculum. Some of the proposed changes to the course further supported this standard in their relevancy to current EDI topics and themes. The course team were also able to reflect upon where they had made specific changes based upon student experiences and feedback, and the commitment to reflecting upon learning and sector developments was clearly evident through course team discussions. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

87. The course provider provided an overview of their commitment to continuous improvement and adaptation of their curriculum to ensure that the course remained dynamic and responsive to developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice. The inspection team were able to review documentation such as module handbooks and the programme specification to support them in reaching a recommendation against this standard and were satisfied that this provided a good overview of course developments and the rationale for these. The inspection team observed that there was clear evidence of content within both versions of the course that was current and topical and, as a result, agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

88. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection visit provided details of the ways in which students were supported to integrate theory into practice throughout the course. Upon reviewing the module descriptors, handbooks and placement arrangements for both versions of the course, the inspection team were able to see ways in which students were incrementally supported to link theory to practice throughout their studies. The inspection team agreed that the use of reflective sessions and case studies was particularly supportive of this standard. Conversations held with a range of stakeholders during the inspection provided further evidence to support the initial review and as a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

89. The course provider demonstrated a commitment to multidisciplinary learning through their placements and module design. The course team were able to provide examples of interprofessional learning through different modules which included guest speakers who shared their experiences of working with services. Where visitors supported on the course, they were able to provide an overview of the challenges they faced in relation to social care issues and offered advice on how best to manage these.

90. The course team also spoke about their desire to use facilities such as a mock hospital ward on campus, alongside a social worker from the community hospital discharge team, to

provide further opportunities for students on the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

91. The inspection team were provided with timetables for each year of the course to demonstrate how students received the required number of learning hours throughout their study. At documentary review, the inspection team were satisfied that these provided an appropriate level of direct input.

92. The inspection team raised concerns about apparent issues for current year three students during the previous academic year in relation to missed learning. This was evident through a range of sources available to the inspection team during the inspection process, where it was suggested that significant amounts of teaching was not provided on some modules due to staff absence and there were not sufficient opportunities for students to catch up on this. Student representatives did acknowledge that there were efforts to provide input for students however, at the point of inspection, this had not been fully provided.

93. The course team responded to these concerns by providing a narrative on how some missed learning was made up by self-directed learning opportunities but that this was not substantial and confined to two modules. The course team also explained that students had successfully passed assessment points which provided reassurance of their knowledge. The inspection team agreed, however, that this did not correlate to the evidence received, and as such further exploration of this was required as a matter of urgency due to the impact this could have on students' knowledge and preparedness for their final year placements. As a result, the inspection team agreed that the course provider needed to provide an immediate area of assurance that evidenced that the course team had fully investigated issues in relation to missed learning during the previous academic year and, where appropriate, had produced a plan which identified how gaps in learning would be addressed.

94. Following the inspection visit, the course provider submitted details of a student voice activity that had been completed by a HE quality enhancement manager who was not part of the course team. This was to offer a level of independence from course team staff and allow for student views to be shared freely. In addition to this, the course provider submitted a narrative of where agency or supply pool staff had been used over the previous academic year to account for staff absences and ensure students were able to access the required learning hours.

95. Despite the evidence provided, the inspection team still lacked clarity about the volume and detail of the sessions missed. As a result, the inspection team agreed that two conditions were necessary against this standard; one in relation to fully addressing the issue

of missed learning and another to provide assurance about how a similar situation would be managed in the future. Full details of the conditions can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.8

96. Documentary evidence submitted throughout the inspection offered an overview of the assessment strategy for the course which demonstrated a range of assessment methods being implemented to ensure students were assessed against the necessary knowledge and skills. The course team were able to provide details of changes that had been made to the assessment strategy which included an academic writing module to support the development, as well as the opportunity for students to complete formative essays and receive feedback prior to their final assessed piece. Student representatives also commented that they felt there was a well-rounded assessment strategy which gave the opportunity for them to develop and showcase a range of skills.

97. The inspection team heard that the course team ensured consistency in the marking of assessment via the process of second marking and the offer of support for newer members of the team to ensure that their approach was in line with college requirements. A report provided by the external examiner also offered positive feedback on the consistent application of the marking scheme. As a result, the inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.9

98. The course provider submitted an assessment schedule within their documentary evidence, however the inspection team were eager to see this mapped against the course timetable to understand the spacing of assessments on the course. This was provided by the course team and demonstrated that this had been considered in the design of the assessment schedule. During meetings with students and members of the course team, the inspection team also heard that where pinch points in the assessment schedule had been observed, there were efforts to adapt these to ease pressure on students during busy periods or whilst on placement. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

99. The institutional assessment policy outlined the timeframes in which students were expected to receive feedback on their assessments. The inspection team triangulated this with student representatives who commented that they were happy with the timeliness of feedback. This was further supported by evidence within the National Student Survey (NSS) responses.

100. When asked about the quality of feedback received, students commented that feedback was strong and offered constructive criticism that supported them to improve. Where additional detail was required to support written feedback, students commented that the course team were very responsive in offering support and signposting to university services that could offer further advice. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

101. The inspection team were able to review copies of staff CVs and details of the external examiner for the course which provided assurance of the experience and qualifications of those involved in assessment. The inspection team also heard about the college's commitment to offering input for new staff in relation to marking and assessment, which was particularly supportive for members of the social work team who had recently joined from practice. Further to this, people with lived experience of social work who contributed towards assessment and feedback demonstrated a good understanding of their role within this and understood how to use marking rubrics to support their judgements. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

102. Documentary evidence provided in support of this standard included reports from the external examiner, assessment schedules and placement handbooks. During the inspection visit, the inspection team were eager to understand more about the process in place in relation to the use of placement panels to support decision making in relation to progression. Through conversations with members of the course team, the inspection team heard that there was an ad hoc approach to placement reporting and judgements and that this was largely dealt with by tutors. As a result, the mechanisms around confirming assessments rested largely with college staff.

103. The inspection team considered whether there was an appropriate range of people involved in making decisions in relation to student progression and concluded that, whilst the involvement of employers in this area of the course could be strengthened, it met the requirements of the standard. This was due to the contributions of practice educators and placement supervisors in direct observations of practice. Furthermore, the course team's self-assessment identified that they were planning to consider implementation of a placement panel. As a result, the inspection team proposed that the standard was met with a recommendation in relation to the development of this panel. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.13

104. The course team submitted a range of curriculum documentation in support of this standard, including details of how they had responded to feedback and included additional

input in relation to critical research skills earlier in the course within the new course design. The inspection team were able to review module descriptors and agreed that the content of the curriculum in this area was strong and supported students to adopt an evidence informed approach to practice. As a result the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

105. The course provider submitted an overview of the support services and resources available to students on the course which included their advice, support and careers (ASC) service, personal tutor provision and tailored HE learner support team. Through the ASC service, students were able to access support in relation to funding, counselling, careers and wider welfare needs through referrals to specialist services where appropriate. During meetings held with students during the visit, the inspection team heard that there had been strong support in relation to providing adjustments for pastoral, health and learning needs both in the college and whilst on placement.

106. The inspection team agreed that the course provider had developed a personalised and robust approach to supporting students and recognised the types of issues students may face based upon the route they were studying. The evidence provided suggested that there were layers of protection built around the student when they faced difficulties to offer support whilst issues were resolved. The course provider had also considered the arrangements in place for students to access support via telephone, online or face to face. As a result, there was reassurance that student needs would not be missed whilst they were on placement, for example. Based upon the evidence received throughout the reapproval process, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

107. The inspection team were satisfied with the evidence provided in advance of the inspection visit which included a thorough overview of the provision in place to support students' academic development. During the inspection visit, staff from academic and library services were also able to offer further details about how their services supported student development. A specific area of provision that had been developed was the library service which had increased resources and was agile in response to student demand. The course team had also incorporated discreet sessions from colleagues within academic support services into the curriculum which further enhanced knowledge and understanding in this area.

108. The personal tutor system in place on the course was deemed as appropriate by the inspection team. Students accessed four tutorials per year which were in addition to placement meetings. The inspection team received a range of feedback to assure them that

the relationships between tutors and students were strong and offered constructive feedback to support student development. Student representatives valued their relationships with their tutors and the impact this had upon their academic development. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

109. In order to demonstrate how student suitability was reviewed on an ongoing basis, the course team provided details of their annual self-declaration process and processes around fitness to practice (FtP) concerns, including how these were managed alongside employers. The inspection team were assured that there was a process in place from the outset of the course in relation to assessing suitability and that the course team appropriately utilised the expertise of partners in practice in relation to industry specific requirements. The course team were clear that this was an important area of process as it was essential that they ensured the right people were on the course. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

110. The inspection team were able to review copies of institutional policies and procedures which outlined the processes in place to ensure that supportive and reasonable adjustments were made for students with additional needs. The inspection team were satisfied with the content of policies but were keen to hear about the implementation of these and student experience.

111. During meetings with New College Durham HE staff, the inspection team heard that students were allocated a learning support advisor, where appropriate, who could explore what reasonable adjustments students may require. Some representatives explained that discussions might be required to determine what was a reasonable approach, however this was discussed in partnership with the student and appropriate staff and an ongoing dialogue was maintained. Student representatives were able to give examples of some of the reasonable adjustments that had been made to enable access to learning and spoke positively about the resources in place from the course provider. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

112. Inspectors were able to review the programme handbook, placement handbooks and module specifications for the course in support of this standard. Within the documentation, the inspection team could see how students were made aware of curriculum content, assessments and placement arrangements. The inspection team also observed that there was a module added to the new version of the course to prepare students for practice and

this included an appropriate focus upon the transition to registered social worker and role of the regulator. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

113. Documentary evidence submitted in support of this standard provided clarity to the inspection team about the expectations of attendance on the course which was outlined as 100%. Documentation also outlined the requirement to make up missed practice learning days before completing a placement. The course team provided insight into the monitoring of attendance which was managed through an online system called ProMonitor and through logs of attendance at placement which were signed off by practice educators.

114. Where there were concerns about student attendance, appropriate interventions were implemented to address this, and individuals could be added to the student at risk register which was closely monitored by college staff. During meetings with student representatives, the inspection team heard that students had a robust understanding of attendance requirements. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

115. As outlined in standard 4. 10, the inspection team were able to review details of the college assessment policy which described the expected processes to ensure that students were provided with feedback to support their ongoing development. The module handbooks provided during the inspection also offered detail about feedback expectations and meetings with students did not identify any concerns in relation to the quality of feedback received from either course team or practice based staff. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

116. The course provider submitted copies of their academic appeals policy and assessment and moderation appeals procedure. The inspection team were satisfied that the approach was suitable and illustrated a clear process in place which met the requirements of the standard. During the meetings held as part of the inspection, the inspection team heard further detail about the appeals procedure from the director of higher education, which was robust and appropriate to the level of the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

117. As the qualifying course is a BA (Hons) Social Work, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

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

Conditions

119. 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.

120. 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 1.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that the programme specification for the course accurately references Social Work England's professional standards and the role of the regulator to support students to make an informed choice about taking up a place on the course.	By 26 th April 2024.	Paragraph 35
2	Standard 2.1	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that the course team has assurance that students have attended all skills days on the course and that there is an appropriate process in place for monitoring and addressing attendance issues, where required.	By 26 th August 2024.	Paragraph 38
3	Standards 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.2, 3.3	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that there is a consistent procedure and process in relation to the quality assurance of placements. This will include the development of consistent placement descriptors, documentation such as service level agreements or memorandum of understanding which include expectations in relation to induction and supervision processes,	By 26 th August 2024.	Paragraph 45 Paragraph 48 Paragraph 49 Paragraph 60 Paragraph 65

		groups will be invited to contribute their views and expertise towards course delivery on an ongoing and regular basis.		
7	Standard 4.7	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates which level 5 modules were impacted by staff absence, the dates of missed sessions and the specific actions taken to address missed learning during the previous academic year.	By 26 th April 2024.	Paragraph 95
8	Standard 4.7	The education provider will provide evidence of how they will ensure that, in the event of staff absence, students will spend enough time in structured academic learning for them to meet the required learning outcomes for the course.	By 26 th August 2024.	Paragraph 95

Recommendations

121. 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 1.1	The inspection team are recommending that the course provider consider reviewing the questions used within interviews.	Paragraph 26
2	Standard 1.2	The inspection team are recommending that the course provider consider consulting with local higher education partners to formalise the process in relation to prior experience of social work.	Paragraph 28
3.	Standard 1.5	The inspection team are recommending that the course provider consider widening the parameters of the EDI themes that they report on in relation to admissions and further develop organisational awareness of this.	Paragraph 33
4.	Standard 2.3	The inspection team are recommending that the course provider consider providing guidance to practice educators and work based supervisors in	Paragraph 48

		relation to arrangements for joint supervision of students whilst on placement.	
5.	Standard 3.10	The inspection team are recommending that the course provider strengthen their arrangements for supporting the knowledge and understanding of guest lecturers on the course.	Paragraph 82
6.	Standard 4.12	The inspection team are recommending that the course provider formalise its arrangements for the implementation of a placement panel.	Paragraph 103

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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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 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.	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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.	☐	☒	☐
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.	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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 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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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, 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.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
4.9 Ensure that assessments are mapped to the curriculum and are appropriately sequenced to match students’ progression through the course.	☒	☐	☐
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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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.	☒	☐	☐
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

122. 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](#).

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

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

	Standard not met	Condition	Recommendation
1	1.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that the programme specification for the course accurately references Social Work England's professional standards and the role of the regulator to support students to make an informed choice about taking up a place on the course.	Condition met.
2	2.1	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that the course team has assurance that students have attended all skills days on the course and that there is an appropriate process in place for monitoring and addressing attendance issues, where required.	Condition met.
3	2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.2, 3.3	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that there is a consistent procedure and process in relation to the quality assurance of placements. This will include the development of consistent placement descriptors, documentation such as service level agreements or memorandum of understanding which include expectations in relation to induction and supervision processes, and processes for ongoing monitoring and review.	Condition met.

		The course provider will be able to evidence that there is robust management and oversight of placement provision within current course management and governance arrangements.	
4	2.6	The education provider will be able to provide evidence of a system which monitors and reviews the knowledge and currency of practice educators involved in course delivery to ensure that they have the relevant knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning. This will include up to date information and outline how the information will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.	Condition met.
5	3.1 and 3.8	The education provider will be able to provide evidence of a robust management and governance plan which provides clarity in relation to the roles and responsibilities of all involved in course management. There will be clarity about how all governing groups interact and contribute towards overall delivery, resourcing and quality management for the course. The education provider will also provide evidence of how they have provided capacity within the course team to ensure that there is support to develop adequate knowledge and experience in relation to both social work practice and social work education management.	Condition met.
6	3.4, 3.5 and 4.2	The education provider will provide evidence of arrangements for ensuring that there are regular and effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems between the college and external stakeholders.	Condition met.

		Evidence provided will demonstrate the different ways that these stakeholder groups will be invited to contribute their views and expertise towards course delivery on an ongoing and regular basis.	
7	4.7	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates which level 5 modules were impacted by staff absence, the dates of missed sessions and the specific actions taken to address missed learning during the previous academic year.	Condition met.
8	4.7	The education provider will provide evidence of how they will ensure that, in the event of staff absence, students will spend enough time in structured academic learning for them to meet the required learning outcomes for the course.	Condition met.

Findings

125. This conditions review was undertaken as a result of conditions set during the reapproval process for the course as outlined in the original inspection report above.

126. After the review of documentary evidence, the inspection team are satisfied that the conditions set against the reapproval of the BA (Hons) Social Work course, are met.

127. In relation to the first condition set against standard 1.6 the course provider submitted evidence which illustrated that the programme specification and information contained on the course website accurately referenced Social Work England. The inspectors agreed that the information provided illustrated appropriate references which would support applicants to make an informed choice about taking up a place on the course. This condition is now met.

128. In relation to the second condition set against standard 4.7 the course provider submitted various teaching and learning resources which identified the level 5 modules which were impacted by staff absence. These included the learning outcomes within the mental health social work module and adults' social work module. Mapping of the learning outcomes to the professional standards illustrated to the inspectors how these had been

covered within the curriculum. In addition, the inspectors reviewed evidence which highlighted the registration of attendance on affected modules, where delivery had been impacted. The inspectors reviewed documentary evidence which demonstrated the learning outcomes within the Mental Health for Social Workers module which had been impacted by staff absence. This also demonstrated how they had been taught and assessed through different modules within the course. Therefore, the inspectors felt that this evidenced how lost learning had been compensated for. This condition is now met.

129. In relation to the third condition set against standard 2.1 the course provider submitted a Skills Days Synopsis which outlined typical skills days' activity and an attendance tracker which was used to monitor each student's attendance at every skills day. Further documentary evidence outlined the process the course provider would use to deal with insufficient completion, which included appropriate opportunity to identify gaps and complete them in all 3 years of the course. This condition is now met.

130. In relation to the fourth condition set against standards 2.2, 2.3, 2.4, 3.2 and 3.3, the course provider submitted a range of evidence which highlighted some quality assurance processes applicable to monitoring the quality of placements, such as QAPL documentation. It also submitted a placement descriptor document for students and a job description for the placement co-ordinator outlining tasks, as well as the Practice Panel which was used to review portfolios and reports. After their initial review of the evidence submitted the inspectors requested further evidence from the course provider.

131. As part of a second submission, the course provider submitted a QAPL document which highlighted aspects of oversight in relation to practice educators' currency and qualifications. Additionally, they submitted a Service Level Agreement template which stipulated the responsibility of the placement provider and their provision of induction and supervision for students on placement. A further document submitted as evidence presented an overview of how the placement management and governance feeds into broader arrangements at the university. The Employer Advisory Board meetings and the Placement Management meetings were noted by the inspectors as key components of the overall management of placements. The HE Academic Standards and Quality Board added oversight of social work practice placements and reviewed QAPL reports and outcomes from practice panels. The inspectors were assured that the evidence provided illustrated clear and relevant governance and reporting structures, and recommend that this condition is now met.

132. In relation to the fifth condition attached to standard 2.6 the inspectors again requested supplementary evidence after the initial evidence submission. As part of this the inspectors reviewed a register which was used to record and monitor qualifications, Social Work England registration, currency and attendance at practice educators' forums. In addition, the inspectors reviewed the Practice Educator Quality Assurance Process document which outlined the quality assurance audit process undertaken by the placement

coordinator. The Placement Coordinator: work tasks document, detailed the work carried out to provide quality assurance of practice educators. This condition is now met.

133. In relation to the sixth condition attached to standards 3.1 and 3.8 the inspection team reviewed a first submission of evidence prior to requesting further evidence. The inspectors reviewed the School, senior management and Higher Education and Quality structure charts, which showed evidence of the management structures in place for the course. Additional evidence provided contained detailed narrative on how the social work course was positioned within quality and resourcing structures and decision-making processes. As part of this, the inspectors noted that social work would be joining the Employer Advisory Board meetings, and along with the new Placement Management meetings and Curriculum and Academic Standards meetings, this demonstrated a robust governance structure.

134. The inspectors reviewed evidence which illustrated the training academic course staff were able to access, including the provision of time to engage with it. The inspectors agreed that, alongside the evidence provided in relation to governance and quality management for the course, there was evidence of support for the course team to develop in relation to both social work practice and social work education management. This condition is now met.

135. In relation to the seventh condition attached to standards 3.4, 3.5 and 4.2, the inspection team returned to the course provider to request further evidence. The course provider subsequently submitted a planned schedule of meetings for 2024 and 2025, including for the HE Academic Standards and Quality Board, team meetings and the Employer Advisory Board meetings. Contextual information was also provided in terms of the remit of the meeting groups and committees, and how they involved relevant stakeholders. The course provider submitted detailed narrative and an action plan which outlined their plans for enhancing the involvement of stakeholders such as employer partners by extending invitations and identifying particular stakeholders from local authorities with strategic responsibilities. Overall, the inspectors agreed that the evidence demonstrated that there were now regular monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems in place which would facilitate the contributions of views and expertise held by external stakeholders. This condition is now met.

136. In relation to the eighth condition attached to standard 4.7, the course provider submitted a detailed strategy to ensure that in the event of staff absence, students would still gain sufficient time in structured academic learning. The strategy had 5 component parts. They included recruitment of 2 appropriately qualified social workers to the supply group; ensuring lesson plans were accessible and shared; a tracking system to monitor any impacted teaching sessions through staff absence; additional workshops to reinforce course content, and utilising support from experienced colleagues from the Social Care department. In addition, the inspectors reviewed the spreadsheet designed to work as the tracking system. This aimed to capture missed learning opportunities, learning outcomes covered in a session and provision of compensatory sessions, if applicable. The inspectors

concluded that this demonstrated the course provider's own assurance processes to mitigate against the impact of staff absence in order to ensure students receive required structured academic learning. This condition is now met.

Conclusion

137. The inspection team is recommending that as the conditions have been met, the course be approved.

138. It should be noted that all qualifying social work courses will be subject to reapproval under Social Work England's 2021 education and training standards.

Regulator decision

Approved.