

Education quality assurance – Course change review report

Report date:

07/03/2023

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Documentary review details

Inspection ID	UWL1363
Course provider	University of West London via Ruskin College
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Course name	B Social Work
Mode of study	Full time
Proposed first intake	01/09/2023
Maximum student cohort	15
Review type	Course change
Review team	Catherine Denny – Education Quality Assurance Officer Rebecca Khanna – Lay Inspector Louise Hernon – Registrant Inspector
Review team recommendation	There is insufficient evidence to show how the course meets the standards and the course change doesn't meet the criteria for approval.
Outcome	Not approved.

About the review

This is the second course change request received in relation to the proposal to deliver the B Social Work course at Ruskin College via the University of West London. The B Social Work was approved by Social Work England in October 2021, this course change relates specifically to the request to deliver the course at the Ruskin College campus which is now part of the University of West London. The previous course change report, dated 19.12.2022, determined that there was insufficient evidence to show how the course met the standards impacted by the change to deliver at Ruskin College, and was not approved.

Following the regulatory decision, there were a series of communication between the Education Quality Assurance Team and staff at the University of West London where feedback was given about the standard areas that were not met.

The university submitted a further course change request which included new mapping and evidence in May 2023. This was shared with appointed inspectors for documentary review.

Findings

The previous course change request identified 13 standards that would be impacted by the proposed changes and following a series of documentary reviews by the appointed inspectors, the regulator decision confirmed that 8 standards remained unmet.

A summary of the impacted standards and outcomes from the previous change request are summarised below:

1. The following standards were identified as being impacted by the course change request 1.6, 2.2, 2.6, 3.1, 3.2, 3.6, 3.8, 4.1, 4.2, 4.6, 5.1, 5.2 and 5.5. Of these, the university provided evidence to the inspection team of their ability to meet standards 4.1, 4.6, 5.1 and 5.2 via their proposed course model. There was insufficient evidence to satisfy the inspection team that standards 1.6, 2.2, 2.6, 3.1, 3.2, 3.6, 3.8, 4.2 and 5.5 were met.
2. Standards 1.6, 2.2, 2.6, 3.1, 3.2, 3.6, 3.8, 4.2 and 5.5 were directly impacted by the proposed change and required further evidence to satisfy the inspectors that the university would continue to meet the standards. They related to provision of practice education, course governance, engagement of external stakeholders in curriculum and delivery and student support.

Course change mapping was submitted to the Education Quality Assurance Team on Friday 5th of May 2023. This was supplemented with additional information on the 30th of May 2023 following a Ruskin College social work stakeholder event which included prospective students, employer partners and practitioners. A new inspection team was appointed to review the course change request and documentary evidence, which included access to the previous regulatory report. Inspectors completed their review on the 21st of June 2023.

The inspection teams review of each of the impacted standards is outlined below.

[Standard 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.](#)

Inspectors were provided with copies of site maps, a prospectus, an overview of student services for Ruskin College and a B Social Work handbook. Whilst inspectors acknowledged that the evidence provided gave more information about the location of the course and the availability of support for students, they observed some inconsistent communication across documentation and an absence of key information in relation to placement provision.

Inspectors noted that the course handbook outlined that completion of the course provides ‘eligibility to register with Social Work England as a social worker’ rather than ‘eligibility to apply to register with Social Work England’.

The inspection team also noted that the updated handbook provided the following information, *‘placements are divided into 30 study skills days at level 4, a minimum of 70- days in placement at level 5, and a minimum of 100-days in placement at level 6, where possible, to enable students to observe and engage in social work in practice and consolidate their learning both in the classroom and through guided study’*. The inspection team were concerned that the statement ‘where possible’ suggested that it could not be guaranteed that students would receive their full 200 days of practice-based learning. In addition, the inspection team observed that Social Work England guidance states that information will be provided in relation to placement opportunities. At the time of review, there was not sufficient information available about placement opportunities within the Oxfordshire area.

As a result, the inspectors agreed that this standard was not met.

Standard 2.2: Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.

The inspection team acknowledged that the university had held the Ruskin College social work stakeholder event which included attendance from two local authority representatives. The inspection team also had sight of correspondence in which a local authority partner expressed their desire to support placement provision for the course provider and a list of organisations and contact names that the university had engaged with.

Despite the above documentary evidence, the inspection team observed that there was no formal commitment to the provision of placements and some correspondence acknowledged that their support would be dependent upon student numbers and their commitment to other Higher Education Institutions (HEI’s) in the area. Inspectors raised concern about the lack of formal documentation in place with organisations to outline their commitment to placement provision or predicted numbers of placements available. Whilst there was a recognition that placement provision would be an ongoing consultation between the university and local providers, there was an absence of strategic oversight or planning, such as terms of reference for a working group or membership for how this work would be progressed.

The inspection team agreed that this standard was not met.

Standard 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.

The inspection team reviewed the course providers narrative which outlined that relationships with local practice educators had been established during the transition of students from a previous social work course at Ruskin College to the University of West London. The course provider also highlighted that they offer a Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) Course at their London campus which would be available to practice educators supporting students at Ruskin College.

Despite the above commentary, the inspection team were not assured that there was appropriate strategic planning to ensure that there would be ample availability of practice educators for students entering onto the course.

The inspection team reflected that no specific evidence had been provided in support of this standard and as a result agreed that the standard was not met.

Standard 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.

The inspection team reviewed information in relation to the governance and management of the course. There was assurance that staff were appropriately experienced and qualified as evidence through the submission of staff CV's. The inspection team were also assured that a course coordinator had been appointed to the course.

Whilst inspectors were satisfied that the course was led and delivered by people with direct experience of the social work profession who held appropriate qualifications, there was no assurance that the resourcing implications of delivering social work education across two sites had been appropriately explored, nor was there assurance that the proposed model was sustainable. The inspection team noted an absence of clarity in relation to the time tutors would spend supporting delivery across campuses and how this has been factored into workload planning.

The inspection team agreed that this standard was not met.

Standard 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.

The inspectors reviewed documentation which outlined the content of, and attendance at, the stakeholder event held in May 2023. The course provider also submitted a list of agencies that they had engaged with to discuss prospective placement provision for the course. As with standard 2.2, the inspection team observed that there was no firm assurance provided by stakeholders that they were committed to offer placements, had ample availability of practice educators to support placements or evidence of strategic planning in relation to placement provision.

In addition to the absence of prospective placement capacity, the inspection team also observed an absence of any formal agreements which outlined expectations for practice placements which meet Social Work England requirements and the needs of learners on the course.

The inspection team agreed that this standard was not met.

Standard 3.6 - Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which includes consideration of local/regional placement capacity.

Course change mapping submitted by the university highlighted plans to expand social work provision year on year at Ruskin College and a commitment to expanding staffing resource as

cohorts increase. The inspection team noted that there was an absence of a workforce development plan or other strategy supporting the growth of the programme. Whilst there were planned numbers for the increase in student cohorts, this was not linked to staffing or an expansion of placement provision, as required by the standard.

The inspection team agreed that this standard was not met.

Standard 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.

The inspection team agreed that the concerns raised in relation to standard 3.1 were also applicable for this standard. The absence of a plan for staff deployment across campuses or detail relating to which staff would teach specific sessions did not provide assurance that there was appropriate staffing to deliver an effective course.

The inspection team agreed that this standard was not met.

Standard 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.

The inspection team reviewed the stakeholder event report provided by the university which included detail about the involvement of a person with lived experience who spoke about their contribution to the already established course at the University of West London. The stakeholder event also included representation from employer organisations within the local areas.

The inspection team were unable to find any evidence of the next steps for wider stakeholder involvement or actions identified following the stakeholder event. The inspection team also observed that there had been offers made to prospective applicants to the course but there was not information provided about how stakeholders were involved in recruitment activities.

The inspection team agreed that this standard was not met.

Standard 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.

The inspection team reviewed the new course handbook that had been developed by the course provider which was bespoke to Ruskin College. It was acknowledged that the new handbook provided a wider range of information about student services, course overview, structure, assessment, qualification and staffing. There was a lack of information available in relation to placements and expectations on placement, Social Work England registration requirements or Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

The inspection team agreed that this standard was not met.

Conclusions

The inspection team concluded that there continued to be significant areas of the Education and Training Standards that remained unmet by the course provider. Despite some standard areas being highlighted as being unmet during a previous course change report, there was no substantial additional evidence provided to support these standards being met.

As a result of the above, the inspectors are recommending that, currently, there is insufficient evidence to show how the course meets the standards and the course change doesn't meet the criteria for approval.

Regulator decision

Not approved.