

Inspection Report

Course provider: University of Worcester

Course approval: BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship

Inspection dates: 9th – 11th April 2024

Report date:	7 th June 2024
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	22 nd July 2024
Date conditions met and approved:	11 th December 2024

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Introduction

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

What we do

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

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

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

Summary of Inspection

15. The University of Worcester's proposed BA Social Work Degree Apprenticeship was inspected for approval against Social Work England's Education and Training Standards 2021.

Inspection ID	UWOR_CP372
Course provider	University of Worcester
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Courses inspected	BA (Hons) Social Work Degree Apprenticeship
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	15
Date of inspection	9 th – 11 th April 2024
Inspection team	Joseph Hubbard (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Mary MacDonald (Registrant Inspector) Bradley Allen (Lay Inspector)
Inspector recommendation	Approved with conditions
Approval outcome	Approved with conditions

Language

16. In this document we describe the University of Worcester as 'the course provider' or 'the university' and we describe the proposed BA Social Work Degree Apprenticeship as 'the course', 'the apprenticeship', or 'the programme'.

Inspection

17. A remote inspection took place from 9th – 11th April 2024. As part of this process the inspection team met with key stakeholders including students on existing programmes, 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 a number of students from across several year groups of the existing BA and MA Social Work programmes. Discussions included admissions, assessment, student support services, and student voice.

Meetings with course staff

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

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in the design and delivery of the university's social work programmes through the IMPACT group. Discussions included admissions, readiness for direct practice, course development and delivery, training and support.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including Herefordshire County Council and Worcestershire County Council. They also met with a number of practice educators, including 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. The university provided documentary evidence for this standard which confirmed their entry requirements, and the various aspects of the admissions process. The admissions process is multidimensional, involving an interview, group exercise, and written exercise.

26. Applicants must have GCSE grade 4 or equivalent in English, or a minimum IELTS score of 7.0 for students whose first language is not English, to ensure they have a good command of English. Applicants' information technology skills are assessed through self-declaration of IT skills, as well as applicants' participation in online aspects of the application process. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

27. The mapping commentary provided by the university states that the entry requirements for the apprenticeship include a minimum of 3 months' prior relevant experience. Prior experience is then confirmed and assessed during the interview process; the interview questions provided are designed to allow the applicant to elaborate on their relevant experience. At inspection, the inspection team triangulated with the admissions team to confirm details of how experience is considered at interview and taken into account in the decision-making process. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

28. Documentary evidence was provided to demonstrate that employer partners and PWLE will be involved in the design and delivery of the admissions process for the proposed apprenticeship. The programme specification states that selection days will have involvement from employers and people with lived experience, all of whom will be appropriately trained. The selection process guide provided also states that employers and people with lived experience will be involved in the design and review of the admissions process as well as carrying out admissions assessments. During the inspection, the inspection team met with people with lived experience from the IMPACT group, who confirmed they have had meaningful involvement in the admissions process for existing programmes, and receive regular training for their involvement. Employer partners

confirmed that they have been involved in designing the admissions process for the proposed apprenticeship. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.4

29. The university provided documentary evidence demonstrating their processes for assessing the suitability of applicants' conduct, character, and health. Applicants are required to complete a health declaration, occupational health check, and enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The documentation stated that employers would be responsible for carrying out candidates' DBS checks and confirming these with the university's apprenticeship office. At inspection, the admissions team and apprenticeship office were able to confirm that there is a robust and documented process in place for working with employers to ensuring that apprentices' DBS checks have been completed. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

30. While the inspectors agreed that the requirements of this standard were met by the evidence provided, they did note that the declaration document did not include any checks regarding whether applicants have had involvement with social care themselves. Although this is not required by the standard, the inspectors felt that the university would benefit from a recommendation to include this, in order to flag up both potential support needs and considerations around appropriate future placement allocation. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 1.5

31. Documentary evidence was provided prior to the inspection indicating that there is a university-wide equality and diversity policy in place, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy Statement, which underpins and informs the university Admissions Policy. This is further supported by details provided within the programme specification which outline the role of EDI policy in social work programmes and admissions. In line with this documentation, the university website includes information for applicants about how to request reasonable adjustments for admissions. It was confirmed at inspection that all staff involved in admissions receive regular mandatory Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) training. It was also confirmed that there is regular monitoring of diversity data at admissions stage, and actions are taken in response to this data where appropriate. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

32. For their documentary evidence submission for this standard, the university provided indicative evidence such as web pages and open day literature for their existing programmes, as documentation and a website for the apprenticeship was not yet available. Review of the documentation for current programmes suggested that all of the information required by this standard was provided, and at inspection students confirmed that they

were given all of the information they needed to make informed decisions as to whether to undertake their programme. By the point of the inspection, the apprenticeship website and informational materials were available and provided by the course team, and inspectors were able to confirm that all of the required information is included in these materials. The inspectors therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

33. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection indicated that students would spend the required 200 days of learning in contrasting practice settings. This includes a 70-day and 100-day placement, and 30 skills days as part of the Skills Development module. Attendance on placement is recorded using an e-portfolio and monitored by the student's practice educator. The university keeps agency profiles of each placement setting which outlines the statutory tasks available, to ensure that every student is allocated at least one placement which meets the definition of a statutory setting. The inspectors had some questions regarding the type and volume of content covered in skills days, and how the university has ensured that the content will amount to a full 30 days' worth of activity, particularly as some content is planned to be undertaken virtually and/or as self-directed tasks. The university acknowledged that the version of this module which apprentices will complete is still under development, as changes will be made to ensure the content is appropriate for apprentices.

34. Inspectors determined that further assurance would be needed to confirm that the various taught, virtual, and self-directed aspects of the module add up to the full 30 days required, particularly as the content of the module was still under development. The inspection team therefore agreed that this standard was not met, and a condition is being recommended against the standard. Consideration was given as to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 2.2

35. The documentary evidence provided by the university for this standard included a programme specification, individual placement module specifications, and e-portfolio handbooks. This documentation demonstrated evidence of providing opportunities on placement for apprentices to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards. An individual needs assessment is also completed for each student to ensure individual learning needs are matched to placement learning opportunities. The educational aims and learning outcomes of the programme are focussed on apprentices

developing the necessary practice skills and knowledge for social work practice. At inspection, employer partners provided assurance that they are experienced in ensuring apprentices access contrasting placements to meet their learning needs. Practice educators confirmed that they are experienced in working with apprentices from other course providers, and are therefore confident in ensuring apprentices are treated as students rather than additional staff. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 2.3

36. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection included a number of documents which set out the expectations for placements in relation to students' induction, supervision and support. Practice educators and onsite supervisors attend a Joint Practice Briefing to confirm mutual understanding of these expectations, and the agreed induction, supervision, and workload plans are documented within the Practice Learning Agreement. A mid-point meeting is held to review these arrangements and confirm the student is receiving the expected support and progressing appropriately. At inspection, course staff, placement providers, and practice educators confirmed that there are clear lines of communication established which ensure a shared understanding of expectations around appropriate support and workload. Employers and practice educators confirmed that staff at the university are accessible and supportive when any issues arise, with neutral support provided by the university for all parties when concerns are raised. It was also confirmed that all placements are visited and audited, and provided with feedback annually from the Quality Assurance of Practice Learning (QAPL) process. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

37. As discussed within standard 2.3, expectations and requirements for students' responsibilities and workload are established through the Joint Practice Briefing and documented within the Practice Learning Agreement. The mid-point meeting provides an opportunity, alongside regular supervision, for any concerns to be raised and addressed around the appropriateness of students' responsibilities. At inspection, employers and practice educators confirmed that strong relationships with the university ensure that any concerns are communicated clearly and promptly addressed. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 2.5

38. Prior to inspection, the university outlined the details of the Skills Development module which is designed to prepare students for direct practice and formally assess their ability to practise safely. The assessment for this module includes an e-portfolio and a simulated interaction with a member of the IMPACT group. These assessments have been mapped to meet the skills and knowledge required for the 'Readiness for supervised practice' level of

the PCFs (Professional Capabilities Framework). As discussed within standard 1.4, all students must provide a DBS check, health declaration, and occupational health assessment prior to enrolment on the programme. Students are required to pass the Skills Development module before they are permitted to begin their first placement. At inspection, IMPACT group members confirmed that they are involved in the assessment of students' readiness for direct practice, and are well supported for their involvement. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.6

39. Prior to inspection, the university provided details of the processes that are in place to ensure practice educators are able to support safe and effective learning. As well as holding the appropriate level of PEPS qualification, all practice educators are required to be registered with Social Work England. The practice learning team monitor and record these details on a register to ensure all practice educators meet the requirements, including checking their registration and currency annually. Review of practice educators' work is also included in wider quality assurance processes such as placement audits and the annual QAPL. At inspection, practice educators confirmed that regular refresher training and continuing professional development opportunities are provided to support them in their role. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

40. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that there is a university whistleblowing algorithm in place, which students are directed to from the programme handbook. A section of the agency profile document also requires the placement provider confirm they have a whistleblowing policy in place. The placement handbooks state that students must report any concerns about unethical or unsafe practice and signposts to the whistleblowing algorithm. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

41. The university provided documentary evidence ahead of the inspection which confirmed there is a clear governance structure in place for the programme, which is established in the School of Allied Health and Community. The school management team is made up of the head and deputy head of school along with each constituent Head of Department. A university-wide Strategic Plan is in place which guides the overarching strategy for all departments. An organogram was provided as part of the documentary evidence to outline the governance structure within the university.

42. The head of department oversees the standards and resourcing of social work programmes, while the course leaders hold responsibility for the development and delivery of each social work programme. The management and quality assurance of the courses is overseen through mechanisms such as the Social Work Steering Group, Staff Student Liaison Committee, Annual Evaluation Report, and external examiners. Additional layers of quality assurance are in place for the proposed apprenticeship through the university's apprenticeship office. The details of these structures and processes were discussed and confirmed at inspection. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

43. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection indicated an apprenticeship training agreement document is in place which outlines the requirement for placements to provide education that meets the required standards. All placements are quality assured using the Work Based Learning Audit form to ensure they are appropriate. At inspection, stakeholders demonstrated a shared understanding of the requirement for employers to provide placements that meet the education and training standards and professional standards, as well as the processes to follow in response to any concerns. Employers and practice educators spoke positively of how past examples of placement breakdown have been handled. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

44. Prior to inspection, the university confirmed that they confirm placement providers have the relevance policies and procedures in place via the Agency Profile and Health and Safety Questionnaire. In addition, the Student Placement Risk Assessment Record must be completed for each individual student's placement to confirm the placement's ongoing compliance with requirements. The QAPL process also serves to flag up any issues with placement providers meeting students' health and wellbeing support needs. At inspection, support services staff demonstrated an awareness of the need for support services to be accessible for students while on placement where needed. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

45. Documentary evidence provided by the university confirmed that employers are directly involved in programme design and review through participation in the Social Work Steering Group, and have further input through the West Midlands Social Work Teaching Partnership. Monthly meetings are also held between the head of department and the head of a regional social work academy, and the university's practice facilitator holds 6-weekly meetings with local authorities for the purpose of planning placement provision. At inspection, employer partners confirmed they have a strong relationship with the university

and reported having been involved in the development of the apprenticeship as well as existing programmes. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

46. Review of the university's documentary evidence submission confirmed that there are a number of quality assurance processes in place for the programme which involve employers, students, and people with lived experience of social work. A number of routes are in place for student participation in course improvement, such as Course Evaluation Surveys, the NSS (National Student Survey), and the Staff Student Liaison Committee. The programme is subject to a university-wide Annual Evaluation Report process which draws from these student feedback sources. Employers' and IMPACT group members' input is received through the Social Work Steering Group and the teaching partnership programme board.

47. Placements are reviewed annually through the QAPL process, which collates feedback from students and practice educators on their placement experiences. The QAPL forms are audited every year to ensure areas for improvement are identified and actioned where appropriate. External examiners provide a further quality assurance mechanism for the programme. At inspection, students confirmed that they have the opportunity to contribute to programme improvements through the above routes, and employers and IMPACT group members confirmed they have regular meaningful involvement in course development and quality assurance. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 3.6

48. The university's documentary evidence submitted for this standard confirmed that stakeholder consultations have been held which included discussion of proposed student numbers and placement capacity for the apprenticeship. The documentation also indicated that this has been consulted on through the teaching partnership's Workforce Planning Working Group, which monitors recruitment to social work programmes regionally. The university state that they annually review their student numbers for all programmes and discuss these with employer partners to ensure alignment with both placement provision and workforce needs. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.7

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

Standard 3.8

50. The inspectors' review of the staff CVs provided within the university's evidence submission confirmed that staff are appropriately qualified and experienced, and have a wide range of specialist knowledge. At inspection, workload allocation and resourcing were discussed with senior management, who confirmed that an audit of staff capacity had recently been undertaken and an additional member of staff approved as a result. Senior management expressed commitment to resourcing all programmes proportionately to student numbers. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.9

51. Documentary evidence provided for this standard included an Annual Evaluation Report which evidenced that there are mechanisms in place to gather and assess data about students' performance and progression. Analysis of this progression data includes a range of protected characteristics to identify and address potential attainment gaps. The university also publishes Transparency Information outlining progression data by various characteristics at programme level. The head of department and course leader are required to assess trends in students' progression data, and to make changes to assessments or teaching and learning where necessary. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

52. The evidence submission for this standard included staff CVs which demonstrated that the academic team are engaged in a wide range of activities to ensure their knowledge is current and relevant to practice. Staff engage in shadowing of social work practitioners, continuing professional development and research activities. At inspection, the course team and senior management team outlined the mechanisms that are in place to support staff development, including an annual appraisal system with twenty days a year allocated for research, and support in place for staff pursuing additional qualifications. It was discussed that some staff are also still in practice alongside their academic role, for example as best interests assessors. The inspection team agreed that this standard had been met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

53. The documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated that the apprenticeship curriculum has been mapped to BASW's Professional Capability Framework, Social Work England's Professional Standards, the relevant QAA Benchmark Statements, and the required degree apprenticeship standards. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met on the basis of the documentation provided.

Standard 4.2

54. As discussed within standards 3.4 and 3.5, review of the university's documentary evidence submission confirmed that there are a number of mechanisms for the ongoing development of the curriculum programme which involve employers (including practitioners) and people with lived experience of social work. There is employer and IMPACT group representation on the Social Work Steering Group, and further practitioner feedback is collated through the QAPL process. Employers and practitioners also participate in review of the curriculum through annual stakeholder events, and through participation in the teaching partnership. At inspection, employers and IMPACT group members confirmed they have regular involvement in the development and review of social work programmes at the university through these mechanisms, and have been consulted on the proposed apprenticeship specifically. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

55. As discussed within standard 1.5, documentary evidence was provided prior to the inspection indicating that there is a university-wide equality and diversity policy in place, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy Statement, which underpins and informs the university Admissions Policy. This is further supported by details provided within the programme specification which outline the role of EDI policy in social work programmes and admissions. In line with this documentation, the university website includes information for applicants about how to request reasonable adjustments for admissions. It was confirmed at inspection that all staff involved in admissions receive regular mandatory Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) training. It was also confirmed that there is regular monitoring of diversity data at admissions stage, and actions are taken in response to this data where appropriate.

56. As noted within standard 3.9, students' progression data is analysed across a range of protected characteristics to identify and address potential attainment gaps. The documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that principles of anti-oppressive practice are reflected in the learning outcomes at both programme and module level, as well as being included in the assessment criteria for all assessed work. Values around equality, diversity, and inclusion also feature in the university's graduate attributes. At inspection, examples were provided of specific areas in the design of the programme where equality, diversity and inclusion principles have been embedded. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

57. Review of the documentary evidence for this standard included staff CVs which showed that members of the team are actively engaged in research and a range of social work related projects. Examples were also provided of how the Social Work Steering Group contributes to the ongoing review and update of curriculums in the department. There is an annual staff planning and development day held which provides a further opportunity to

review and update course content to reflect developments in research, legislation, and best practice. At inspection, the course team discussed staff involvement in social work practice, including through shadowing opportunities, and employers confirmed there is mutual exchange of knowledge with the university through sessions run at by academics at local authorities and vice versa. Practice educators stated that up to date information is regularly provided to them by the university regarding practice developments and course content. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

58. Evidence provided prior to inspection indicated that the integration of theory into practice is a consistent theme within practice learning and is reflected in the learning outcomes and assessment requirements for taught content. The documentary evidence presented a number of examples of how theory and practice are integrated throughout the programme. A number of the academic modules on the programme explicitly require students to make links between theory and application in practice, and the marking rubric ensures that each assessment features criteria regarding application of theory to practice. Practice educators are expected and supported to provide learning opportunities that encourage students to integrate theory and practice. At inspection, the course team and practice educators elaborated on how they support students to embed theory into their developing practice. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

59. The university's documentary submission provided examples of opportunities throughout the programme where students have the opportunity to work with and learn from other professionals. The Skills Development module includes multidisciplinary simulations to further support interprofessional learning and working in a simulated practice setting. Practice placements provide further substantial opportunity for working with other professions in a direct practice context. At inspection, the course team confirmed that as interdisciplinary learning opportunities are embedded within module content, apprentices' access to these will not be limited by them having less time on campus than other students. Students on current programmes confirmed that they have found the interdisciplinary learning opportunities provided by the university and on placement to be valuable. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.7

60. Documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that the designated hours of structured academic learning required are clearly stated in the programme specification, and conform to university-wide requirements. These requirements are governed by the University of Worcester's Taught Courses Regulatory Framework (2022), which stipulate 10

hours of academic study are required per academic credit. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met on the basis of the documentation provided.

Standard 4.8

61. Review of the documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that assessment strategies for the programme conform to the university-wide Assessment Policy. The assessment strategy outlines how assessments develop across the programme in order to follow students' progression. A range of assessment methods are used across the programme, including exams, presentations, portfolios, and simulations. Placement assessments are moderated through the QAPL process, and an external examiner system provides external scrutiny of standards of assessments. At inspection, the course team stated that they have made the programme less heavily reliant on written assessment in order to reflect the variance in students' confidence with written work. Students confirmed that they felt assessments were varied and fair, providing them with the opportunity to identify and demonstrate their strengths. The inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met.

Standard 4.9

62. The university's documentary evidence confirmed that assessments are mapped to programme learning outcomes, as detailed in the programme specification. The course handbook lays out how assessments are sequenced across the programme. The marking criteria for assessments progress from level to level, and learning outcomes are sequenced to become increasingly complex. Assessment mapping is reviewed at annual team development days to ensure the level and complexity of assessments develops as the programme progresses. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

63. Module descriptors provided prior to inspection confirmed that students on the programme receive formative and summative feedback to support their development over time. Every module has both a formative and summative assessment, and there is a statement in the programme handbook outlining the purpose of formative assessment. A marking and feedback calibration exercise is carried out once a year to review consistency of assessment feedback. The agreed principles for student feedback include annotation, feedback and feedforward, and the use of a marking rubric to ensure consistency of grading. There is a meeting template in place to structure students' meetings with their personal tutor, which includes a prompt to discuss assessment feedback to further support the student's development. At inspection, students reported that assessment feedback is on the whole helpful and consistent, and module leaders are available for further detail when needed. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.11

64. Review of course staff CVs prior to the inspection confirmed that staff carrying out assessments are appropriately qualified and experienced. At inspection, people with lived experience who are involved in assessments stated that they are provided with appropriate training and support for their participation. The inspection team concluded that while there were no concerns regarding staff qualifications and registration status, this standard could not be met as an external examiner had not yet been appointed for the programme.

65. The inspectors agreed that a condition was needed against this standard in order that the external examiner's qualifications and registration status can be assessed once they are appointed. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 4.12

66. The university's documentary evidence outlined that the systems in place to manage students' progression are in accordance with academic regulations, with additional course-specific requirements due to the course's status as a professionally regulated programme. There are a range of people who contribute to decisions about student progression, including academic staff, IMPACT group members, placement service users, and practice educators. The placement portfolio confirmed that students must undergo three successful direct observations as part of placement assessments, two of which are carried out by the practice educator and one of which can be delegated to the on-site supervisor. Students have the opportunity to re-submit failed assessments and repeat failed modules where appropriate. In addition to these mechanisms, apprentices' progression will also be monitored through the required tripartite meetings. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.13

67. Evidence was provided ahead of inspection that evidence-based practice is embedded throughout the curriculum of the programme. There is an explicitly research-focussed module, Understanding Research in Practice, in the second year of the programme. In the third year, a dissertation module provides the opportunity for students to develop in-depth, evidence-based knowledge in a chosen area of social work practice. Students have access to databases and research material through the university's library services. At inspection, practice educators confirmed that the university uses current research, policy and guidance in teaching, and communicates this content to practice educators for highlighting within practice learning. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

68. Documentary evidence provided by the university confirmed that students have access to a range of support services, including a careers service, counselling service, and occupational health where appropriate. Students are made familiar with key support services during their induction, and there is further signposting within the course handbook for reference throughout the programme. The Professional Development module also includes a learning outcome regarding developing resilience and self-care. At inspection, support services staff confirmed details of the services available and demonstrated an awareness of the need for support services to be accessible for students while on placement. Students confirmed that their first point of contact for support is their personal tutor, who will then signpost to any further support services that may be beneficial. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.2

69. The university's documentary evidence submission confirmed that students have access to a range of resources to support their academic development, including academic mentors (this role will be 'apprenticeship tutor' for apprentices), a subject librarian, library resources, and the Writers in Residence scheme which provides support with academic writing. Apprenticeship tutors receive specific training in supporting apprentices, including shadowing existing apprenticeship tutors in other departments. The TEL (Technology Enhanced Learning) service provides support to students with use of any technology needed throughout their programme. At inspection, support services staff were able to provide further detail of these resources and how they work for students. Students on current programmes reported that their academic tutor has been accessible and helpful. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 5.3

70. As discussed within standard 1.4, the university provided documentary evidence demonstrating their processes at the admissions stage for assessing the suitability of applicants' conduct, character, and health. Applicants are required to complete a health declaration, occupational health check, and enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The documentation stated that employers would be responsible for carrying out candidates' DBS checks and confirming these with the university's apprenticeship office. At inspection, the admissions team and apprenticeship office were able to confirm that there is a robust and documented process in place for working with employers to ensure that apprentices' DBS checks have been completed.

71. The mapping and evidence for this standard confirmed that following the initial suitability checks at admissions stage, students are required to complete Conduct, Health,

and Safety declarations annually at each enrolment. However, on reviewing this document the inspectors noted that the phrasing of the form does not make explicit the requirement for students to declare any new cautions or convictions which may have occurred following their initial DBS check. It was confirmed at inspection that while the university recommends that employers use the DBS update service, it does not mandate this and so changes to a students' DBS status would not be automatically flagged up. The inspectors therefore agreed that this standard was not met, and that a condition was necessary against the standard to ensure that students receive clear instruction to notify the university of any new cautions or convictions. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 5.4

72. As discussed within standard 1.5, documentary evidence was provided prior to the inspection indicating that there is a university-wide equality and diversity policy in place, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy Statement, which underpins and informs the university Admissions Policy. This is further supported by details provided within the programme specification which outline the role of EDI policy in social work programmes. In line with this documentation, the university website includes information for applicants about how to request reasonable adjustments for the admissions stage. It was confirmed at inspection that all staff involved in admissions receive regular mandatory Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) training. It was also confirmed that there is regular monitoring of diversity data at admissions stage as well as student progression data by various protected characteristics, and actions are taken in response to this data where appropriate.

73. Following enrolment, students disclosing the need for reasonable adjustments are supported by the Disability and Dyslexia Service to identify and put in place the reasonable adjustments they require. The course handbook includes a statement of commitment to support for students with disabilities, and there is an Inclusive Assessment policy in place. At inspection, Disability and Dyslexia service staff demonstrated clear understanding of the nuances of supporting apprentices including how the funding landscape differs, and confirmed that students can get support with 'working diagnoses' if unable to access full assessment. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

74. Review of the documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that comprehensive information is provided to applicants to give a clear picture of the requirements of the course. Programme and module documentation provides information on the academic and

practice curriculum requirements, assessment, resits, and mitigating circumstances. The university has a careers service who provide advice and support in seeking employment. Preparation for registered practice and for the ASYE is addressed as part of the Professional Development module. By the point of inspection, the programme website was also available for review and the inspectors were able to confirm that this references and directs to the professional standards. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 5.6

75. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that the mandatory attendance requirements for all elements of the programme are laid out in the programme handbook. The handbook states that all modules are mandatory and that students are expected to attend all teaching. Attendance on practice placement is also addressed, with confirmation that additional placement days will be required if any days are missed. Further details were sought at inspection regarding attendance requirements and monitoring processes. Attendance at taught content is monitored through an electronic system, and module leads are responsible for flagging up and addressing any concerns around student attendance. If a student misses three sessions or three weeks, an initial email is sent to the student to discuss the reason for their absence and any support they may need. For placement attendance monitoring, the apprenticeship office has an established process for liaising with employers to record and share attendance information for apprentices. Attendance at skills days is monitored, and students are required to complete make-up activities for any skills days they miss.

76. At inspection, students were clear about the attendance requirements for skills days and placement days, but had a less clear understanding of the implications of missing taught content. Students felt that it could be made clearer what happens if they don't attend enough taught content, both in terms of their place on the programme and their ability to quality and register as a social worker. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met, as the handbook and attendance policy do provide information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory. However, as the handbook information does not provide details around attendance monitoring processes and implications, and students reported not being fully clear on these, the inspectors felt that the university would benefit from a recommendation to clarify this information. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 5.7

77. As discussed within standard 4.10, module descriptors provided prior to inspection confirmed that students on the programme receive formative and summative feedback to support their development over time. Every module has both a formative and summative assessment, and there is a statement in the programme handbook outlining the purpose of formative assessment. A marking and feedback calibration exercise is carried out once a

year to review consistency of assessment feedback. The agreed principles for student feedback include annotation, feedback and feedforward, and the use of a marking rubric to ensure consistency of grading. There is a meeting template in place to structure students' meetings with their personal tutor, which includes a prompt to discuss assessment feedback to further support the student's development. At inspection, students reported that assessment feedback is on the whole helpful and consistent, and module leaders are available for further detail when needed. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.8

78. Review of the evidence provided prior to inspection confirmed there is a university-wide academic appeals procedure in place. The procedure is available on the university website and signposted to from the course handbook. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met based on the documentation provided.

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

Standard 6.1

79. As the qualifying course is a BA (Hons) Degree Apprenticeship, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met for the programme.

Proposed outcome

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

Conditions

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

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

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	2.1	The course provider will evidence that the various taught, virtual, and self-directed aspects of skills days content amount to the full 30 days required.	14 th October 2024	Paragraph 33
2	4.11	The course provider will evidence that an external examiner has been appointed for the programme who is appropriately qualified and registered.	14 th October 2024	Paragraph 64
3	5.3	The course provider will evidence that students are explicitly required to declare any new cautions or convictions as part of ongoing suitability checks.	14 th October 2024	Paragraph 70

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
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1	1.4	The inspectors recommend that the university amends its suitability checks at admissions stage to include questions regarding lived experience of receiving social work and social care services.	Paragraph 29
2	5.6	The inspectors recommend that the university provides further clarity within the student handbook regarding the implications of missed attendance at taught content.	Paragraph 75

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: 1. have the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards 2. can demonstrate that they have a good command of English 3. have the capability to meet academic standards; and 4. have the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes.	☒	☐	☐
1.2 Ensure that applicants' prior relevant experience is considered as part of the admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.3 Ensure that employers, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work are involved in admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.4 Ensure that the admissions processes assess the suitability of applicants, including in relation to their conduct, health and character. This includes criminal conviction checks.	☐	☐	☒
1.5 Ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.	☒	☐	☐
1.6 Ensure that the admissions process gives applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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: 5. placements in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences; and 6. a minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing experience of sufficient numbers of statutory social work tasks involving high risk decision making and legal interventions.	☐	☒	☐
2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.	☒	☐	☐
2.4 Ensure that on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.	☒	☐	☐
2.5 Ensure that students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting.	☒	☐	☐
2.6 Ensure that practice educators are on the register and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.	☒	☐	☐

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

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

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

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
4.10 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	☒	☐	☐
4.11 Ensure assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise, and that external examiner(s) for the course are appropriately qualified and experienced and on the register.	☐	☒	☐
4.12 Ensure that there are systems to manage students' progression, with input from a range of people, to inform decisions about their progression including via direct observation of practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.13 Ensure that the course is designed to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice, underpinned by skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to research and evaluation.	☒	☐	☐
Supporting students			
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including: 7. confidential counselling services; 8. careers advice and support; and 9. occupational health services	☒	☐	☐
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.	☒	☐	☐
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	☐	☒	☐

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

Regulator decision

Approved with conditions.

Annex 2: Meeting of conditions

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

Inspectors will undertake the conditions review and make recommendations to Social Work England's decision maker.

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

	Standard not met	Condition	Inspector recommendation
1	2.1	The course provider will evidence that the various taught, virtual, and self-directed aspects of skills days content amount to the full 30 days required.	Met
2	4.11	The course provider will evidence that an external examiner has been appointed for the programme who is appropriately qualified and registered.	Met
3	5.3	The course provider will evidence that students are explicitly required to declare any new cautions or convictions as part of ongoing suitability checks.	Met

Findings

Regarding the condition against standard 2.1, the university provided a document breaking down the skills days and summarising how these amount to the require 30 days. The document outlines how the days and hours mapped to the activities for each day, demonstrating that the 30 days are all accounted for. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

For the condition on standard 4.11, the university confirmed that they have now appointed an external examiner, and provided a nomination form detailing the appointee's details, background and experience. The register was checked and the appointed external examiner is currently registered with Social Work England. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

To evidence the condition on standard 5.3, the university provided an amended Student Placement Conduct and Health and Safety Agreement, which explicitly states that the student is required to inform the university of any subsequent police cautions, convictions or reprimands. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

Regulator Decision

Conditions met.