

Inspection Report

Course provider: University of Bristol

Course approval: MSc Social Work & PG Dip (exit route)

Inspection dates: 16th – 19th July 2024

Report date:	17 September 2024
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	10 December 2024
Date conditions met and approved:	24 th April 2025

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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. The University of Bristol and their MSc Social Work and PG Dip (exit route) courses were inspected as part of the Social Work England reapproval cycle; whereby all course providers with qualifying social work courses will be inspected against the new Education and Training Standards 2021.

Inspection ID	UBRISR1
Course provider	University of Bristol
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	MSc Social Work and PG Dip (exit route) Reapproval of current courses and approval of new courses (with changes)
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	40
Date of inspection	16 th – 19 th July 2024
Inspection team	Kate Springett (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Michelle Loughrey (Lay Inspector) Michael Isles (Registrant Inspector)

Language

16. In this document we describe the University of Bristol as ‘the education provider’ or ‘the university’ and we describe the MSc Social Work and PG Dip (exit route) as ‘the courses’. As part of the inspection, the education provider sought reapproval of the MSc Social Work and PG Dip (exit route) as well as approval of a new versions of the MSc Social Work and PG Dip (exit route). This was as result of a restructure which reduced the number of taught credits on the programmes.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 16th – 19th July 2024 at the University of Bristol where the education provider 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 students across all cohorts of the current course, as well as recent graduates. Student representatives were also in attendance. Discussions included, but were not limited to, the admissions process, placements, student contributions to the course, feedback, assessments and support.

Meetings with course staff

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

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 social work forum. Discussions included involvement with admissions, course review, teaching, and assessment.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including Bristol City Council, Avon & Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership Trust, South Gloucestershire, North Somerset Council and Somerset Council.

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. Prior to inspection, the education provider provided narrative and evidence in relation to entry to the course. This included the programme prospectus, course entry requirements and examples of the written test and interview questions used during the application process.

26. The education provider demonstrated that their entry criteria ensured that applicants would have the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards, as if an applicant did not meet the academic standards, prior relevant experience was also considered.

27. The education provider ensured that applicants had a good command of English as there were minimum requirements, being GCSE grade C, or equivalent, and a written test, which were assessed by both admissions tutors.

28. The education provider required applicants to submit an online application, personal statement, CV, references and then undertake an online written test and interview. This assured the inspection team the application process enabled the applicant to demonstrate their ICT skills as well as academic ability .

29. The inspection team were satisfied that the assessment process was holistic, and agreed this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 1.2

30. Narrative provided prior to inspection outlined that prior relevant experience was taken into consideration throughout the admissions process. This included in the personal statement, CV and interview.

31. The inspection team met with admissions staff who confirmed that the admissions process offered opportunities for applicants to demonstrate prior relevant experience and that this was considered by the education provider.

32. The inspection team also met with forum members, who were people with lived experience of social work (PWLE). During this meeting, PWLE placed emphasis on the importance of prior relevant experience and examples of this being considered were provided.

33. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 1.3

34. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated that interview panels included an academic member of staff, a social worker practitioner, and a member of the forum (PWLE). Evidence also showed that PWLE were involved in the selection of the journal article for one of the admissions tasks.

35. The inspection team met with employer partners and placement providers, who confirmed they were part of the admissions process; they gave examples of this, which included being involved in an equalities meeting. The purpose of this meeting was to ensure the admissions process was equitable and attracted candidates from different backgrounds.

36. During the inspection week, PWLE confirmed that they were all involved in the admissions process, and they told the inspection team that they felt their involvement and views were valued and equal.

37. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 1.4

38. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated that all applicants must complete a declaration of suitability, and there was a process in place to appropriately consider and manage disclosures, including past offences or other relevant circumstances. The evidence submitted showed that all students underwent an enhanced disclosure and barring service (DBS) check.

39. When the inspection team met with the course team, the course team explained the process followed when a declaration is made in relation to conduct/character. This included having the involvement of PWLE and placement providers in assessing whether they would be comfortable engaging and working with the applicant in the future.

40. The inspection team were keen to hear about the process for ensuring international students were suitable for the course. Admissions staff explained that an international certificate of good conduct (overseas criminal conviction check) was obtained for any international applicants.

41. The education provider stated in their evidence submission narrative that applicants were not required to disclose health conditions or impairments as part of the declaration, and this was only necessary when it would impact on fitness to study or practice. Evidence

presented demonstrated that health declarations may result in a referral to the education provider's occupational health service, and there was a process in place to deal with these declarations.

42. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 1.5

43. Evidence provided prior to inspection included the education provider's admissions procedure and principles, which included a university-wide commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and links to the EDI policy. During the inspection, the inspection team sought and obtained examples of how the policy was implemented across the admissions process.

44. The inspection team met with admissions staff who advised that they advertise university open days on their website as being inclusive to all. In addition to this, during the interview day there was a presentation which included information on the support available to students and the diversity of student cohorts. There was also an opportunity for applicants to ask staff questions on a one-to-one basis. The inspection team also heard that reasonable adjustments were considered as part of the admissions process.

45. The inspection team heard that EDI data was collected and analysed as part of the admissions process. They were told that this helped the education provider determine whether they attracted a diverse pool of candidates, which led to consideration of what could be done to increase diversity in student cohorts.

46. Narrative provided by the education provider stated that those involved in the admissions process are provided with online EDI training, and this was triangulated during the inspection.

47. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 1.6

48. The evidence presented to the inspection team prior to the inspection displayed a vast range of information which was provided to applicants. This included the course webpage, course prospectus and interview day information schedule. The inspection team agreed that the prospectus provided relevant information to applicants as it addressed placements, support, research interests and careers.

49. The inspection team were keen to hear about the range of information provided to international students. The admissions team explained that there was a separate website for international students which contained information including, but not limited to, accommodation, visas, support, money advice and approaching academic life in the UK.

50. The inspection team explored whether students were informed about additional costs to expect during the course. Admissions staff stated that DBS checks were paid for by the

education provider, and information was provided to students about the costs of travel to and from placement. There was also information on whether a car would be required or not. When the inspection team met students, their responses in relation to travel costs were mixed. However, the inspection team were satisfied sufficient information on costs was contained within the course prospectus, which was provided prior to enrolment.

51. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

52. Evidence provided prior to inspection confirmed that students undertook a 70 day placement, a 100 day placement, as well as 30 skills days.

53. The inspection team thought that the skills days provided by the education provider were valuable and relevant. The inspection team discussed attendance in practice settings with the course team. It was understood that placement days were monitored, and students had to complete the 70 and 100 days placements. In relation to skills days, students had to complete a log of each skills day to declare their attendance. If a skills day was missed, there was a contingency plan in place and students had to make up any learning missed.

54. The inspection team heard from employer partners and placement providers that there was a placement matching process where placements were considered for each student, individually.

55. During the inspection, the inspection team heard about the makeup of placements and that the first placement was in the PVI sector (private, voluntary and independent) and that the second placement was in a statutory setting. Students confirmed that their placements were contrasting.

56. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met for the current course. However, the course team advised the inspection team that they were redesigning the skills days' timetable for the new course. Although they guaranteed 30 skills days, the timetable and content had not been finalised, and therefore the inspection team agreed that the standard was not met for the new course.

57. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 2.1 in relation to the approval of the new courses. 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 [proposed outcome](#) section.

Standard 2.2

58. Narrative provided by the education provider described the process in place for ensuring students have suitable placements. This was evidenced by the practice learning opportunity proforma, which set out placement details that included supervision arrangements, risk assessments and learning opportunities aligned to the professional capabilities framework (PCF) and the SWE Professional Standards.

59. As detailed in standard 2.1, the inspection team heard about the makeup of placements, that the first placement was PVI sector, and that the second placement was in a statutory setting.

60. The inspection team met with placement staff who explained the process that was in place for onboarding new placement providers. This included an onsite visit to the placement provider by the practice learning coordinator. The inspection team also heard that the education provider communicated well with placement providers, so that they knew what was expected of them in relation to the quality of placements.

61. The inspection team sought to triangulate the quality of placements with students and heard there were mixed experiences within the student cohorts, specifically around the placement provider and students' understanding of what the student social worker role was. Despite some negative experiences around this, students reported that these issues were raised, and they were well-supported by the education provider to resolve them.

62. The inspection team explored this further with the course team. There was acknowledgment from the course provider around some placement providers' lack of knowledge of the student social worker role, and they gave examples of how this was being addressed. The inspection team heard that the student social worker role was discussed in the placement learning agreement (PLA) as well as on placement preparation days. In addition to this, the course team confirmed that training was provided to all placement providers.

63. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 2.3

64. Prior to the inspection, the education provider outlined how all students are provided with an induction and receive 1.5 hours of supervision per week from their practice supervisor. In addition to this, the narrative stated that the PLA includes ensuring that students have access to all necessary resources, whilst on placement.

65. The placement handbook provided documentary evidence to demonstrate that the student has an induction, supervision, support and a realistic workload. For example, the supervision record reviewed student workload with a focus on support.

66. During the inspection, the inspection team met with practice educators who spoke about the length and detail of the induction provided to students when they began their placements. Practice educators also confirmed that students had access to support systems whilst on placement.

67. Students' experiences of induction were mixed; however, they told the inspection team that they felt supported by the education provider and any concerns were quickly rectified.

68. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 2.4

69. Narrative provided prior to inspection stated that all student placements were tailored to a level that is aligned with each individual student. This was further evidenced by the placement matching process. The education provider advised that knowledge, experience and individual learning needs were considered by the placement coordinator, following submission of a student's placement application form.

70. During the inspection, the inspection team heard from staff involved in practice-based learning about how the placement matching process ensured students were provided with appropriate learning opportunities within their placements, and that the PLA was critical to ensuring this. In addition to this, the inspection team heard how one of the placement partners, South Gloucestershire Council, used a high support and high challenge model to enable students' responsibilities to increase within and across the placements. The inspection team heard that students' progress was tracked in supervision sessions and at the mid-point review.

71. The inspection team were keen to explore the differences between the first and second placement when they met with practice educators. Practice educators explained that there was an increase in autonomy and expectations during the second placement, and that there was more focus on practice compared to the first placement.

72. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 2.5

73. Prior to the inspection, the education provider gave a detailed explanation of the readiness to practice process, including a range of assessments which all formed part of a portfolio. The process involved the practice assessment panel and there was opportunity for resubmission/re-sit in the event of a failed assessment.

74. The inspection team identified that the readiness for practice module included contributions from the course team, placement providers, practice educators and PWLE.

75. When the inspection team met with students, they discussed the benefit and value of working with PWLE as part of their preparation for practice.

76. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 2.6

77. The education provider provided narrative and evidence to demonstrate that there was a robust system in place for checking off-site (independent agencies) practice educators' Social Work England registration status, and their current knowledge and skills. This information was triangulated during the inspection where the form for auditing off-site practice educators was discussed. The audit form included elements such as experience, qualifications, DBS checks and registration.

78. The inspection team were assured that the standard was met in relation to off-site practice educators.

79. The inspection team were keen to explore how the education provider completed the above checks for onsite practice educators. During the meeting with staff involved in practice-based learning, the inspection team heard that the course team trust that onsite (local authority employed) practice educators are registered with Social Work England and have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience, as they were employed by the local authority.

80. The inspection team noted that the PLA included the Social Work England registration number of the practice educator; however, the inspection team did not feel assured that there was a process for checking their registration status and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience.

81. The inspection team also heard that there was a practice learning opportunities form in circulation which asked for the practice educators registration number; however, this form is yet to be finalised and circulated to all onsite practice educators.

82. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 2.6 in relation to the approval of all courses. 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 [proposed outcome](#) section.

Standard 2.7

83. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection demonstrated that students were made aware of the whistleblowing procedure in the course handbook, and that the

whistleblowing policy was also set out in the practice learning handbook. Narrative provided stated that students must confirm whistleblowing policies were made available to them, and that these were read during their induction on placement. This was triangulated with students during the inspection.

84. The inspection team met with students who confirmed they were happy with whistleblowing policies and felt confident in raising a concern, if required. Students reported that they knew where to find information on whistleblowing during placements as this was made clear when they began the placement.

85. The course team discussed whistleblowing during the inspection and explained that this was embedded throughout the course as expectations were outlined in the practice learning handbook, and also referred to in the preparation for placement days. Additionally, the course team reported having an open email policy and students could reach out to their personal academic tutors, if needed.

86. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

87. Narrative and evidence provided prior to inspection outlined the governance structure in place at the university. This included the departmental structure and academic management structure.

88. The inspection team thought it was unclear as to how the course director linked to the middle and senior management; however, this was comprehensively explained to the inspection team during the meeting with the senior management team. The inspection team agreed that there was a clear structure in place in terms of governance, and were satisfied the course was led by people with relevant experience of the social work profession.

89. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 3.2

90. Documentary evidence provided in the form of service level agreements demonstrated that consideration was given in relation to the quality of placements. Further to this, the practice learning handbook outlined roles and responsibilities of the placement provider to ensure the required standards were met on placement.

91. Additionally, the PLA ensured that placements were suitable for students for them to meet the required standards. The PLA meeting involved the practice supervisor, practice educator, student and personal academic tutor.

92. The inspection team were keen to explore how consent was sought from service users during student placements. The course team explained that supervisors are required to talk to service users about students being involved and that students must properly introduce themselves. In addition to this, there was a consent form in the handbook where students confirm they have sought consent to work with the service user.

93. The inspection team were satisfied that the PLA and practice learning handbook addressed the concerns/placement breakdown process. They noted that whilst there was a formal process for concerns, there was consideration to find person centered resolutions.

94. The inspection team heard examples from both PVI sector and local authority placement providers of placement breakdowns. It was clear that there were effective processes in place to deal with any placement breakdowns and this resulted in positive outcomes. The inspection team heard consistently that the education provider was supportive in helping the parties involved in placement breakdown.

95. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 3.3

96. In the education providers' evidence submission, the practice learning handbook was provided which gave placement providers and students guidance on expectations in relation to students' health and safety on placement.

97. The inspection team met with practice educators who spoke about how student inductions varied from placement to placement, but these aligned with the placement handbook in relation to policies. The range of policies in place included, but were not limited to, whistleblowing procedures, health and safety, lone working, and supervision.

98. The university website provided easily accessible information on all aspects of support services which were available to students. During the inspection, it was made clear to the inspection team that all services continued to be available to students whilst on placement, and this included students being able to access support 'out of hours'. This was triangulated in the student meeting where students said they were aware of the services available.

99. The inspection team heard from staff involved in practice-based learning that although students had regular supervision on placements, students were told they could ask for support at any time. As well as having a practice educator and practice supervisor, they also had peer support sessions and their personal academic tutors to go to for support if necessary.

100. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 3.4

101. Prior to inspection, the education provider explained in their narrative how employers were involved in the course: multiple examples were provided.

102. The submission included documentary evidence which demonstrated how employers were involved in the planning, delivery and development of the programme via the programme advisory group, for which minutes of a meeting were provided.

103. The inspection team met with employers during the inspection week who explained how they were involved in the course. Employers provided examples of their involvement which included, but was not limited to, teaching on the course, being involved in admissions, equalities meetings, practice assessment panels, and review and development of the curriculum and placement matching.

104. Employer involvement in teaching was sought on an annual basis by the programme director, and this included delivering guest lectures and skills days.

105. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 3.5

106. Narrative provided by the education provider stated that the units and elements in the MSc Social Work programme's curricula were subject to monitoring and evaluation, had improvement systems in place, and evidence was provided to support the same. This included an Education Action Plan which was part of an annual review.

107. In relation to employer involvement, this is detailed in standard 3.4. This included employers being involved in the equalities meeting as part of the admissions process, and the review and development of the curriculum.

108. The inspection team reviewed evidence of student involvement in monitoring, evaluation and improvement. This was demonstrated by having student representatives both at course and school level, and students having the opportunity to provide unit feedback.

109. The course team gave examples of how improvements to the course had been made and explained that students were informed of actions in response to their feedback.

110. During the meeting with students, they confirmed that changes had been made following feedback being provided to the programme director by course representatives. The inspection team heard that feedback was sometimes given even when not requested, and students felt this was well-received.

111. Documentary evidence was provided to show how PWLE were involved in the evaluation and improvement of the programme. This was triangulated during the meeting with forum members, where it was heard how they were involved in all aspects of the course. Forum members felt their voices were heard and valued equally.

112. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 3.6

113. Prior to inspection, the education provider explained in narrative that they have a ready supply of high-quality practice learning opportunities available to students, and the practice learning coordinators continue to explore new placement opportunities within the region.

114. The education provider acknowledged in their evidence submission and during the inspection week, that there had been a decline in student numbers due to other training routes attracting students. However, the course team explained that they had a strategy in place and that they had worked to build relationships with agencies within the sector. This was confirmed by placement providers as they felt the relationships were good and providers spoke highly of students.

115. The inspection team explored student numbers and were advised that cohorts of 15-20 students are planned. There was, currently, no pressure in finding statutory placements.

116. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 3.7

117. Prior to inspection, the inspection team reviewed the course director's CV and confirmed they were a registered social worker, and had the appropriate qualifications.

118. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 3.8

119. Prior to the inspection, documentary evidence was provided which gave an overview of the composition of the course team.

120. The inspection team noted that the majority of the team were registered with Social Work England, and there was a wide variety of practice experience within the team.

121. The inspection team met with the course team during the inspection where their expertise was triangulated. Course team members talked about their backgrounds/experience and about being research active, all of which fed into the design and delivery of the curriculum.

122. The inspection team were satisfied that staff had relevant and specialist subject knowledge and expertise, and agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 3.9

123. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated that student performance, progression and outcomes were evaluated. The inspection team heard that data was shared not only at school and facility level, but was also analysed on an individual student basis.

124. The inspection team explored data use during the inspection and heard how EDI data was managed at course level, which also linked to EDI data collected at admissions. It was explained that the analysis of EDI data looked at broad themes due to student cohorts being small and the education provider not wanting individual students to be identified.

125. The inspection team agreed this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 3.10

126. The inspection team reviewed detailed narrative prior to the inspection which explained how academic staff were supported to maintain their knowledge in relation to professional practice. Examples included working in professional practice in paid and voluntary roles, and participating in the university's training and development programmes.

127. During the inspection week, the inspection team heard from the course team that they were supported to maintain their knowledge, complete CPD and undertake research, through university study leave.

128. Further to this the course team explained that the research they undertook resulted in their ability to develop the curriculum.

129. The inspection team agreed this standard was met for all courses.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

130. In relation to the current course, narrative provided explained that Social Work England attended the welcome week to give a talk to students about what it means to be a social worker, and students are introduced to Social Work England's professional standards. This was triangulated during the inspection week when the inspection team met with the course team.

131. It was also demonstrated that students were given a broad range of information relating to social work throughout the taught modules, and the inspection team saw how the units linked to the professional standards in the Element Outlines. The inspection team agreed the standard was met for the current course.

132. For the new course, the course team explained that teaching was being revised to reflect the reduction in credits. The course team explained the changes stating that frameworks would remain focused on the professional standards.

133. During the inspection, the inspection team were not able to see evidence of how the new course would be mapped to the professional standards. The education provider confirmed that this work is ongoing.

134. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against 4.1 in relation to the approval of the new course. 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 [proposed outcome](#) section.

Standard 4.2

135. As detailed in standard 3.5, the evidence submission included documentary evidence which demonstrated how employers and practitioners were involved in the planning, delivery and development of the programme via the programme advisory group. This was triangulated during the meeting with employers, where it was also heard they felt involved, valued and listened to.

136. PWLE told the inspection team that they were involved in forum meetings which took place multiple times per year, as well as specific curriculum consultation events in which they had been involved in designing the new curriculum. PWLE reported that they felt heard and were able to put their views across, and they were keen to emphasise their involvement and inclusion.

137. The inspection team agreed this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 4.3

138. Prior to inspection, the inspection team reviewed evidence showing there were EDI policies in place in order to meet legislative requirements.

139. The inspection team agreed that course content was delivered in line with the education provider's EDI policies. The course team showed a keen awareness of the importance of human rights and legislative frameworks, and shared examples of how this was embedded in the curriculum, such as through domestic violence case studies, and challenging bias in decision making.

140. Further to this, the inspection team met with stakeholders who explained that there were processes in place for supporting applicants and students with health impairments, and examples of reasonable adjustments were given.

141. The inspection team were satisfied this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 4.4

142. Narrative provided by the education provider emphasised that the course was delivered by staff who are actively researching, and documentary evidence provided during the inspection week showed how the education provider was keeping up to date with policy and practice.

143. During the inspection, the course team shared information about their research practices. Examples of how the course was updated included academic staff working in practice, and bringing their knowledge and experience from practice to the course.

144. The inspection team found that teaching was structured so that academics with specific expert knowledge delivered the appropriate sessions. In addition to this, the education provider had annual course reviews and participation from stakeholder groups.

145. The inspection team were satisfied this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 4.5

146. On review of documentary evidence, the inspection team agreed that the teaching provided incorporated the integration of theory and practice via the units and workshops. Students were provided with additional information on this in the course handbook.

147. The inspection team met with employers and practice educators who gave examples of ways students were encouraged to integrate theory into their practice, and how theories were part of their academic learning.

148. Practice educators stated that they asked students questions on theory and considered cases on a theoretical basis during supervision sessions. The inspection team heard that students were strong on theories when they began placements and students were well prepared.

149. The inspection team were satisfied this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 4.6

150. Narrative provided prior to inspection stated that students were taught by qualified academic staff from other professions. This was triangulated during the inspection when the inspection team met with students who confirmed multidisciplinary learning via guest lecturers. Examples were provided which included a lecture on drugs and alcohol, a 2-day family therapy workshop, and a mock child protection conference.

151. In addition to lectures/teaching from other academic staff, students explained that they learned from other disciplines during their placements, for example, doctors, police and prison staff.

152. The inspection team were satisfied this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 4.7

153. The inspection team reviewed narrative and documentary evidence provided by the education provider. The inspection team agreed that evidence presented demonstrated that the hours spent in structured academic learning was appropriate and sufficient to enable students to meet the professional standards on the current course.

154. For the new course, the course team advised that there were plans to reduce taught content time by 50% which was aligned to the reduction in credits (from 320 to 180). The inspection team noted that there was a university-wide regulation in place for teaching hours linked to unit credits, and the inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 4.8

155. Evidence submitted prior to the inspection included an assessment strategy and an assessment handbook. These demonstrated that assessments included both formative and summative assessments. These were reviewed by the external examiner who was positive about the content of assessments and the rigour of the process.

156. The education provider was able to show that they considered the design of assessments, which were related to practice, to ensure that students have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards.

157. The inspection team noted that there was not an assessment handbook for the new course; however, they had sight of unit plans/detail of the planned assessments.

158. The inspection team were satisfied this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 4.9

159. Narrative provided prior to the inspection informed the inspection team that assessments were planned appropriately, and the education provider considered the appropriate amount of learning prior to assessments. Consideration was given to the timing of assessments, for example, the number of assessments reduced whilst students were on placement.

160. The assessment strategy was provided prior to inspection, which the inspection team agreed was appropriate.

161. The inspection team noted that one of the driving factors in the restructure and introduction of the new courses was the pinch points in the assessment cycle, which were identified by students. The inspection team heard that the number of assessments in the new courses had been reduced following student feedback.

162. The inspection team were satisfied this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 4.10

163. Prior to inspection, the inspection team reviewed the student handbook where there were feedback policies and marking criteria. In the evidence submission, the education provider gave various examples of ways in which feedback was provided to students throughout the course. This included assignment feedback, and feedback whilst on placement, both formally and informally.

164. The inspection team met with students to triangulate the evidence received prior to inspection. Students confirmed that they received feedback throughout the course, and that this was developmental and received within stated timeframes.

165. The inspection team were satisfied this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 4.11

166. Prior to inspection, the university provided registration details of the academic team who are registered social workers. The inspection team also reviewed information to show academic staff had appropriate and relevant experience.

167. CVs and registration details were provided for two external examiners, one specialising in children and families social work and the other specialising in adult social work.

168. The inspection team noted that one external examiner was leaving the post. This was explored with the course team who explained they were in the process of recruiting a new external examiner.

169. The inspection team agreed that as there was an existing external examiner who was appropriately qualified and experienced, the standard was met for all courses.

Standard 4.12

170. Documentary evidence confirmed that there were systems in place to manage students' progression.

171. During the inspection, many examples of managing progression were provided which included an exam board and an exceptional circumstances committee.

172. The inspection team heard about how practice supervisors were supported to work with students and practice educators. When a practice educator was on-site, they fulfilled the functions of both the supervisor and the educator. They provided feedback to students on direct observation of practice, in midway reviews, and through holistic assessment at the end of a placement.

173. The inspection team also met with PWLE who confirmed they were involved in giving feedback to students, and this was triangulated in the student meeting. The inspection team were satisfied this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 4.13

174. Prior to the inspection, narrative was provided which demonstrated how an evidence-informed approach was integrated into the course delivery and units.

175. During the inspection week, the course team explained that the new course focuses more on scenario-based assessments to allow students to demonstrate having an evidence informed approach.

176. The inspection team met with practice educators who stated that students were aware of how their practice was informed by evidence and how this approach developed as the placement progressed.

177. The inspection team were satisfied this standard was met for all courses.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

178. The documentary evidence received prior to the inspection detailed the range of comprehensive support services available to students. This included a counselling service, careers advice, and an occupational health service.

179. During the inspection, the inspection team met with support services staff and were able to triangulate the information provided prior to the inspection. Support staff gave a wide range of examples of when services had been used, and explained the range of support available, and the different ways in which students could access these. This included access to services through the night and at weekends.

180. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 5.2

181. Prior to inspection, the inspection team were informed that every student had a personal academic tutor. During the inspection, the team heard that the personal tutor encompassed the whole of the students' learning journey as they remained with them throughout the course. Students spoke very positively about the support from personal tutors, when they met with the inspection team.

182. The inspection team heard that there was also support available for students who had returned to study after a period of time away from academic learning. In addition to this,

there was a study skills team who offered core skills sessions, such as how to be an academic learner.

183. Other resources included a library with access to relevant resources/materials, out of hours tutorials, and online support.

184. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 5.3

185. Prior to inspection, narrative explained how the education provider ensured the suitability of students during admissions, entry to the course, readiness for direct practice, placement as well as throughout the course. The various ways to ensure suitability included an annual declaration of suitability and an enhanced DBS check.

186. The inspection team agreed that processes in place were robust; however, they sought to triangulate this information. The course team were able to confirm the above and heard about the process followed when a concern is raised at the application stage. Students also spoke about the processes in place.

187. The inspection team met with practice educators who gave examples of how they ensure ongoing suitability, which included having daily contact with students and checking phone calls, emails and case notes. Practice educators also confirmed they understood the procedure to follow if they identified any concerns in relation to conduct, character or health.

188. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 5.4

189. Narrative provided prior to inspection explained that students were not required to disclose protected characteristics; however, students were informed that sharing such information allowed the education provider to support them to explore any reasonable adjustments. The programme handbook demonstrated that students were made aware of the support services available, if needed.

190. When the inspection team met with support staff, they explained that students are encouraged to share relevant information which may require reasonable adjustments at an early stage, and that this was also welcome at any stage of the course.

191. The disability team explained the different services/schemes available to students, and provided examples of reasonable adjustments made for students, including whilst on placement. Additionally, the inspection team heard that the education provider keeps track of students who are in receipt of adjustments, to ensure they remain appropriate and meaningful.

192. The inspection team thought that there was a good range of reasonable adjustments and that services were accessible.

193. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 5.5

194. The inspection team reviewed documentary evidence prior to inspection and saw information provided in the programme handbook in relation to the curriculum, placements and assessments. There was also a practice learning handbook and an assessment handbook which provided further information to students.

195. The inspection team also reviewed the induction timetable which contained an introduction to Social Work England as the regulator. The course team and students shared that the regional engagement lead from Social Work England delivers a session about becoming a social worker.

196. Students confirmed that they were familiar with the requirements for registering with Social Work England and were aware of the assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE).

197. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 5.6

198. Prior to inspection, the inspection team reviewed the programme handbook which clearly outlined attendance requirements and the process in place for when students missed learning.

199. During the inspection the course team were able to confirm the information in the handbook with the course team. The inspection team heard that there was an established system in place for monitoring attendance.

200. When the inspection team met with students, they confirmed they were aware of the requirements for attending placement and skills days and they knew attendance to academic learning was also compulsory.

201. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 5.7

202. The inspection team reviewed documentary evidence which showed the external examiner gave positive feedback on the education provider's assessment marking.

203. During the inspection the inspection team met with students who stated that they had received timely feedback on assessments which was helpful and developmental.

204. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Standard 5.8

205. The inspection team reviewed the programme handbook which included information on the appeals process and signposted students to the appeals procedure.

206. The inspection team noted there was a robust process for academic appeals and therefore agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

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

Standard 6.1

207. As the qualifying courses are Msc Social Work & PG Dip (exit route) the inspection team agreed that this standard was met for all courses.

Proposed outcome

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

Conditions

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

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

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	Standard 2.1 [new courses only]	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates skills days are mapped across the new curriculum.	10 March 2025	Paragraph 52
2	Standard 2.6	The education provider will provide evidence that they have a centralized system for checking the registration of practice educators, and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience.	10 March 2025	Paragraph 77
3	Standard 4.1 [new courses only]	The education provider will provide unit plans to demonstrate how the new courses are mapped to the professional standards.	10 March 2025	Paragraph 130

Annex 1: Education and training standards summary

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

Standard	Met	Not Met – conditio n applied	Recommendati on given
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.	☒ Current courses	☒ New course s	☐
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,	☐	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – conditio n applied	Recommendati on given
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.	☐	☒	☐
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,	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – conditio n applied	Recommendati on given
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 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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – conditio n applied	Recommendati on given
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	☒ Current courses	☒ New course s	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – conditio n applied	Recommendati on given
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	☒	☐	☐

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

Standard	Met	Not Met – conditio n applied	Recommendati on given
in relation to research and evaluation.			
Supporting students			
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including: i. confidential counselling services; ii. careers advice and support; and iii. occupational health services	☒	☐	☐
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.	☒	☐	☐
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	☒	☐	☐
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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – conditio n applied	Recommendati on given
requirements for continuing professional development.			
5.6 Provide information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory.	☒	☐	☐
5.7 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.	☒	☐	☐
5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.	☒	☐	☐
Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register			
6.1 The threshold entry route to the register will normally be a bachelor's degree with honours in social work.	☒	☐	☐

Regulator decision

Approved with conditions.

Annex 2: Meeting of conditions

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

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

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

	Standard not met	Condition	Recommendation
1	2.1 [New course only]	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates skills days are mapped across the new curriculum.	Condition met
2	2.6	The education provider will provide evidence that they have a centralized system for checking the registration of practice educators, and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience.	Condition met

Findings

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

With respect to the condition set against standard 2.1, the education provider submitted documentary evidence demonstrating there is a comprehensive record of anticipated skills days, which have a breadth of topics over the 2 years, and include skills for practice, interprofessional learning opportunities and integration of theory.

The inspectors agree that the skills days are mapped to the curriculum and therefore the condition around standard 2.1 is met.

With respect to the condition set against standard 2.6, the education provider has provided documentary evidence which includes an excel spreadsheet demonstrating they have oversight of PEs registration, and current knowledge, skills and experience.

The inspectors' recommendation is that these conditions are now met.

Regulator decision

Conditions met.