

Inspection Report

Course provider: Edge Hill University

Course approval: PG Dip Social Work (Step Up)

Inspection dates: 9th - 12th July 2024

Report date:	23.08.2024
Inspector recommendation:	Approved
Regulator decision:	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	07.11.2024

Contents

Introduction	3
What we do.....	3
Summary of Inspection	5
Language	5
Inspection.....	6
Meetings with students	6
Meetings with course staff.....	6
Meeting with people with lived experience of social work	6
Meetings with external stakeholders.....	6
Findings	7
Standard one: Admissions.....	7
Standard two: Learning environment	9
Standard three: Course governance, management and quality.....	11
Standard four: Curriculum assessment.....	14
Standard five: Supporting students	18
Standard six: Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register	20
Proposed outcome.....	21
Recommendations	21
Annex 1: Education and training standards summary.....	22
Regulator decision	28

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. Edge Hill University's PG Dip Social Work (Step Up) was inspected as part of the Social Work England reapproval cycle; whereby all course providers with qualifying social work courses will be inspected against the new Education and Training Standards 2021.

Inspection ID	EHUR3
Course provider	Edge Hill University
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	PG Dip Social Work (Step Up)
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	50
Date of inspection	9 th – 12 th July 2024
Inspection team	Catherine Denny (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Sarah McAnulty (Lay Inspector) Graeme Currie (Registrant Inspector)

Language

16. In this document we describe Edge Hill University as 'the education provider' or 'the university' and we describe the PG Dip Social Work (Step Up) as 'the course'.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 9th – 12th July 2024 at the Ormskirk university campus where Edge Hill University 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 5 students who were studying on the course. Discussions included experience of admission to the course, supervision and support on placements, curriculum, assessment and provision of student support services.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the course team, senior leadership team, admissions, staff involved in practice based learning and representatives from student support services.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in social work courses within the university. Discussions included their involvement in admissions processes, curriculum development, assessment of readiness for direct practice and how their feedback was sought on the course.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners from across the Learn Together Partnership (LTP) which included council representatives from Cheshire West and Chester, Halton Borough, St Helens Borough, Knowsley, Liverpool City, Sefton, Warrington Borough and the Wirral.

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 course provider outlined the ways in which the university worked alongside the Learn Together Partnership (LTP), who commissioned the course under the Department for Education (DfE) national Step Up to Social Work scheme. The course provider submitted a range of documentary evidence which demonstrated that there was a clear, multi-dimensional assessment process in place for the course which assessed candidates against the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). It was clear where different aspects of the process assessed command of English, capability to meet professional and academic standards and grasp of ICT. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

26. In line with DfE requirements, all applicants to the course were required to have at least 6 months full-time (or equivalent) direct experience working with children, young people and families. The inspection team were able to see how this was reviewed within the admissions process by nominated officers within the LTP. Prior experience was also explored through direct interviews with candidates which included an academic representative from the university. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

27. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection outlined how employers and people with lived experience (PWLE) of social work were involved in sifting activities, simulated practice exercises and interview panels. During the inspection visit, the inspection team also heard that employers played a role in suitability discussions and 'keeping warm' events. Employer representatives confirmed that they were able to offer feedback on the nature of admissions processes and this was considered by university staff. Students offered further assurance that admissions processes included a range of stakeholders who contributed towards feedback and decision making. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

28. The course provider outlined how applicants conduct, health and character was assured via completion of a self-declaration form, occupational health check and an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. The inspection team heard that during the initial phase of the application process the sifting of applications included consideration of suitability, which was then shared with the LTP and university. Where potential concerns were identified, a suitability panel was convened which included representation from a range of stakeholders. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

29. The course provider outlined how Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) data was gathered by the DfE at the onset of the application process and analysed to inform communications. Local authorities had access to communications which were tailored to their demographics and encouraged recruitment from a diverse pool of applicants. At the point that applications reached the university, institutional EDI policies were implemented to ensure a fair and equitable experience.

30. During meetings with students and university staff, the inspection team heard that there were good processes in relation to identifying and supporting the additional needs of applicants. Reasonable adjustments were made where necessary, such as the provision of additional time, and student support services were proactive in their engagement with applicants. The inspection team also heard about the training available to LTP and university staff involved in admissions in relation to topics such as unconscious bias. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

31. Documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection demonstrated that comprehensive information was provided to applicants both at initial application and upon receiving an offer to study on the course. This included reference to all aspects of the standard. During the inspection visit, the course provider also shared further details about the provision of 'keeping warm' events and engagement opportunities for successful candidates. The course leader explained that this was a conscious decision, made by the university and partnership, to bring candidates up to speed with the requirements of the course and expectations. The impact of this had been positive with the course provider reporting reduced numbers of attrition. Student representatives spoke positively about the information and engagement received prior to starting the course. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

32. The course provider offered a clear overview of how they ensured all students on the course engaged in a minimum of 200 days of practice based learning. This was met via a 70 and 100 day placement, alongside 30 skills days delivered by the university. The inspection team were keen to understand how the university ensured contrast in placements, as both placements were within statutory children's services. The course team explained that this was ensured via the teams in which placements would take place, i.e. a first placement might be within a children with disabilities service, whilst the second would take place in a front door assessment service. This was monitored via routine meetings such as the mid-point review, to ensure that there was a focus on contrasting experiences. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

33. Evidence provided throughout the inspection offered assurance that there were monitoring arrangements in place to ensure that placements were effective. This included pre-placement assurance checks, review of feedback from Practice Educators (PEs) and review of Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) documentation. Strong links with the Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership (CMSWTP) offered further assurance that there was a clear understanding of placement requirements amongst the course team.

34. During meetings held as part of the inspection, the inspection team heard further details about the nature of placements being utilised on the course. The course leader demonstrated a clear understanding of the individual circumstances of providers and a knowledge of newer placements that required additional support. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

35. Documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection outlined how students were encouraged to arrange pre-placement meetings with relevant staff, including their PE, prior to placement commencing. This offered the opportunity for discussions in relation to induction, supervision and support and was followed by the formal Practice Learning Agreement (PLA) meeting, which offered an opportunity to review plans to ensure they remained effective. During meetings with student and PE representatives, the inspection team heard that the processes in place were effective. Students were supported to meet their individual needs and were also confident to articulate where they required additional challenge. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

36. As outlined in the previous standard area, there were effective processes in place to allocate workload responsibilities for students, which were followed by regular review to ensure they remained appropriate. The addition of drop in sessions for new PEs and placement providers also ensured that there was a clear understanding of workload expectations. Student representatives were able to provide examples of where their workload had been amended both to reduce expectations or offer more challenge or experience where appropriate. Regular touch points to discuss placement issues at the start of university skills day sessions offered further assurance that workload issues could be identified and addressed. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

37. Documentary evidence outlined the necessary requirements for students to be able to commence their placement. This included an enhanced DBS check, a satisfactory occupational health assessment or disclosure and successful completion of the Assessed Readiness for Direct Practice (ARDP) assessment sequence. The assessment comprised of a role play with PWLE representatives, which included a discussion and observation element. Stakeholders involved in meetings held during the inspection agreed that students were well prepared for practice and had a good range of experience for different environments. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

38. The inspection team observed clear processes in place to manage the oversight of PEs at both a university and partnership level. Where PEs were employed within local authorities, the gathering of the required documentation was managed by the LTP, however the university had access to this to ensure oversight. Pre-placement forms and the PLA meeting also offered an additional layer of assurance in relation to PE registration and currency. Through the university and CMSWTP, the inspection team saw evidence of a range of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for PEs to develop their knowledge and skills within the role. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

39. Documentation submitted in support of this standard included the programme handbook, guidance for staff, templates used within placement environments and information from the CMSWTP. All provided clear guidance in relation to the processes for raising concerns about the practice of colleagues or organisational wrongdoing. During a meeting with student representatives, the inspection team witnessed confident students who understood processes which should be followed in the event of concerns being raised. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

40. The narrative and documentary evidence submitted by the course provider outlined the governance arrangements in place for the course, which included details of staff responsibilities and accountability at a faculty and course level. The inspection team were also supported to understand the programme structure, boards and committees which were in place to ensure the quality of the course.

41. During the inspection visit, the course provider was able to demonstrate how local level issues were fed through these structures to a board level, which was supported by clear minutes and actions. Stakeholders were also informed of changes on the course through consistent communications such as articles and emails. In addition to the university governance structures in place, the inspection team learned how the LTP fed into the monitoring and review of the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

42. The evidence provided by the university clearly demonstrated how formalised agreements were in place with all local authorities within the LTP. These agreements included key contact details, an overview of practice learning opportunities, induction arrangements, points of contact and processes for raising concerns. Both the course team and nominated individuals from the LTP were able to outline expectations and practices in relation to placement agreements, demonstrating they were embedded within the partnership.

43. During the inspection visit, the inspection team explored the processes in place for managing placement breakdowns. There was a clear focus on early intervention which was articulated by all stakeholders. An example was provided of a situation where placement showed signs of breakdown but joint working between the course team and provider, along with the implementation of action planning, prevented this from happening. In addition to this, the inspection team heard an example of a placement that could not be maintained and the process for a student to be allocated an alternative placement. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

44. Placement agreement and PLA documentation clearly articulated the expectations for providers to have the necessary policies and procedures to support student wellbeing. Where individual student issues had arisen, all stakeholders were clear on their role and expectations and the university acted as a central stakeholder to ensure that concerns were addressed. The inspection team were assured that new partners involved in delivery were

supported to understand expectations and the appropriate records were in place to evidence this. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

45. Due to the nature of the Step Up programme being reliant upon partnership with employers, the inspection team were able to see clear evidence of the engagement of employers at each stage of the programme. In relation to placement provision and the allocation of PEs, the inspection team heard how one local authority within the partnership took a lead in this area but incorporated the views of all partners in recommendations or decision making. The university also ensured that all partners were encouraged to offer feedback on individual placement experiences. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

46. As referenced in relation to standard 3.3, there was clear evidence of employer engagement in practice allocation which included review of the effectiveness of placements. Further to this, the inspection team heard examples of how employers had fed into course design and review through delivering lectures on the course, and also via offering their views on the disruptive nature of university skills days on placement learning. As a result of employer feedback, the inspection team learned that changes had been made to timetables which had a positive impact. Employer representatives were also welcomed onto programme boards and effective arrangements were in place to ensure that feedback was shared with the wider partnership.

47. Within the documentary evidence provided, the inspection team saw a range of mechanisms through which the course team sought input from students on the course. During conversations held as part of the inspection, students confirmed that they were consulted on changes or proposals for the course as well as being encouraged to feed into these. Examples provided included agreed response times to emails, an increase in interactive sessions and changes to the timing of modules.

48. In relation to the engagement of PWLE in course monitoring, evaluation and review, the inspection team heard that a representative from the university network sat on the faculty board. PWLE representatives were also encouraged to provide feedback on proposed changes to assessments. Furthermore, the course team received specific input from a care leaver participation group about the need for more of a focus on Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DOLS) for 16-18 year olds in care settings. As a result of this feedback, there was bespoke training which was coproduced by the university and network representatives to inform future delivery. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.6

49. The course provider outlined the contractual agreements in place with the partnership to provide education for 15-50 students, based upon funding received from the DfE. The course team outlined how actual numbers had varied year on year, but this was in line with the national picture.

50. Within the university, there was a good understanding of numbers for the course and staffing available to support. The inspection team also heard about the development of a Workforce Allocation Model (WAM), led by the university which would further support strategic planning. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

51. The inspection team were able to review the CV and registration for the course lead and agreed that this was appropriate. As a result, the inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.8

52. The course provider submitted a range of CVs for staff involved in course delivery which demonstrated a wide range of experience and expertise. Where additional resource was required, the course team could utilise associate tutors and visiting lecturers to offer additional capacity. The senior leadership team at the university were able to clearly articulate how the course fit in with their other social work provision, despite its delivery being unique. This was further supported through discussions with wider university services, such as student support, who had worked with the course team to tailor their input for students on the course. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

53. The course provider outlined the mechanisms in place to ensure that data analysis and evaluation was routinely used to support course development. Individual students were presented at programme and award boards which required strong understanding of their individual data and progression. Throughout the inspection visit, the inspection team heard the course lead and staff speak confidently about students on the course, demonstrating strong knowledge of their individual needs or circumstances. There was a strong understanding of attrition rates for the course, though these had remained low as a result of preparation and intervention where required. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

54. Documentary evidence highlighted how all staff were allocated staff development and training time within their annual appraisal which included encouragement to engage in

practice opportunities. Examples of practice related activity included working as mental health professionals, sitting on fostering panels and acting as PEs. The senior leadership team demonstrated a clear commitment to research and staff development within the faculty and examples were provided by staff about the range of research activity they had been or were involved in. The membership of the university within the CMSWTP offered further opportunities for staff to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice. As a result, the inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

55. The course provider submitted a clear and comprehensive overview of their course content and structure, highlighting how this has been mapped to the relevant frameworks. During meetings held as part of the inspection, the course team articulated how modules had been developed to ensure that they were bespoke to the needs of the course and allowed students to acquire the relevant skills and knowledge for practice. Student representatives spoke confidently about programme content and made reference to how the course developed their knowledge of the professional standards and Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). The inspection team also explored how the course, whilst having a focus on children and families social work, prepared students for social work as a generic profession. The inspection team heard clear examples of how adult social care had been woven into the curriculum to complement student learning. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

56. As referenced in relation to standard 3.5, there were a range of examples provided about how employers and PWLE were given the opportunity to influence curriculum review. Further examples were provided by local authority leads within the LTP, who explained that they were able to raise suggestions about theory development and assessments via board meetings, which were then considered by the course provider. Representatives from a local care leavers group had also been given the opportunity to develop training and teaching sessions on the course which was supported by the course lead. As a result of the evidence provided, the inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

57. Initial review of documentary evidence demonstrated that there was a university wide EDI strategy which all courses were expected to adhere to. During their initial review of evidence, the inspection team were unable to see clearly defined links between the EDI strategy and teaching on the course, however further exploration during the course of the inspection demonstrated an individual and bespoke approach to module development. This included incorporating contemporary social work issues which had a clear EDI lens.

Conversations with the course team also highlighted their consideration of their personal circumstances or privilege, and the actions they had taken to ensure students had access to a range of individuals for support.

58. The inspection team also heard examples of how the course had been designed with accessibility in mind through the addition of hybrid learning options, recorded content and live streams for students with health needs. Assessments were also inclusive by design and met a wide range of learning styles. This was complemented by the provision of a robust student support offer which ensured more bespoke reasonable adjustments could be provided where required. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

59. As referenced in previous standard areas, the course provider had taken an individualised approach to curriculum development which allowed for the content to be regularly reviewed to meet student need. This included allowing content to be adapted following feedback from colleagues in practice about contemporary and localised social work issues. As a result of this, employers commented on students being well prepared for practice. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

60. As outlined in standard 4.4, students were provided with a robust knowledge of contemporary social work practice through lectures and university skills sessions. The result of this was that students were well prepared to implement their learning in placement, with practitioners commenting on their confidence at applying theory into practice. The investment in the development of PEs offered further support of this standard, as they demonstrated an understanding of how to make links between theory and practice, utilising a range of resources to support students to make explicit links. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

61. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection outlined how students were able to learn with, and from, other professions through placement and via the contributions of other professionals in course teaching. Staff involved in placement planning were clear about how they ensured students were engaging with other disciplines via their engagement in multi-agency conferences. This was monitored via planned placement meetings and addressed where opportunities had not been afforded to students.

62. The inspection team heard about the provision of faculty interprofessional learning days, however it had been challenging for Step Up students to access these historically due to timing and their location at a different teaching site. The course team explained that they

were conscious that they wanted Step Up students to access the same experiences as students on other social work courses, so had considered timetables and allocated budget to transporting students to the main campus. This would enable students to experience learning alongside other social work students and students from other disciplines such as counselling, nursing, police and paramedics.

63. Whilst Step Up students had not accessed interprofessional learning days, they had been able to access case studies which included the perspectives of other professions, virtual reality resources and were granted membership to the Association of Child Protection Professionals (AOCPP), a multidisciplinary organisation with a wealth of resources. The inspection team agreed that there was evidence of activity to ensure students were developing an understanding of other professions and planned activity would further support this. As a result, the inspection team agreed that the standard was met with a recommendation to continuing to develop interprofessional learning groups and days with students from other disciplines. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.7

64. The expectations for attendance at placement and skills days were clearly set out for students and reiterated at several points in their learning journey. Mapping documentation provided by the university, along with the programme handbook, offered clarity about modules, hours and sequencing. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

65. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection demonstrated that there was a varied assessment diet which included essays, reports, presentations, interviews, exams and practical assessment opportunities. Clear marking criteria was provided. The course provider outlined how they ensured that assessments reflected the reality of social work practice through their use of authentic, case based scenarios. Students were clear about the learning outcomes being assessed and how these linked to the professional standards. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

66. The programme specification for the course demonstrated how assessments had been mapped to the curriculum and learning outcomes for the course. Further details regarding the nature, timing and requirements of assessments were communicated via module handbooks.

67. During the inspection visit, the course team outlined where they had adapted their assessment strategy due to feedback from students and partners. This had resulted in the assessment for a law module moving to pre-placement to support student understanding.

Student representatives also shared their experiences of the course team being responsive to feedback about the timing of assessments and their acknowledgement of the intense nature of the course. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

68. Documentary evidence, including the programme handbook and module specifications, provided details about formative and summative feedback expectations and processes. Placement documentation also outlined the expectations for students to receive direct feedback on their practice via their PE and other key staff.

69. During the inspection visit, the course team provided an overview of institutional expectations which required staff to identify areas of strength, as well as areas for development. Staff highlighted their commitment to feedforward marking to support development, as well as ensuring close alignment with learning objectives to support student understanding of progress.

70. Due to the intense nature of the course, the course team discussed the need to have a strong understanding of student progress and the need to be responsive to development. This included offering recap sessions around specific topics and academic skills and focused feedback within assignments. Student representatives confirmed that this had been their experience, with bespoke feedback being provided in a timely manner. Where further detail or clarification was required, students explained that they could approach members of the course team for individual conversations. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

71. The External Examiner (EE) for the course had been newly appointed and during the inspection, the inspection team confirmed that they were appropriately experienced and on the register. There was a wide range of experience outlined within the staff team and for new staff, the inspection team learned that there was clear support and training to ensure they understood assessment expectations. This was further supported by the offer of the Pg Cert qualification for all staff. Where PWLE were involved in assessing ARDP, they were provided with bespoke support to fulfil their role. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

72. As outlined in relation to standard 3.9, the inspection team heard about the processes which were in place for making decisions about student progression through the course. This included detailed discussions at programme and award boards which considered their individual data and progress. In addition to consideration of academic progress, the inspection team heard that students were observed 3 times during their practice placement

which was formally reported on via planned review meetings and the placement portfolio. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

73. Documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection outlined how research, scholarship and professional practice informed module content across the course. The close proximity of staff to social work practice and research also provided further assurance of how the course maintained an evidence based approach. Course staff explained how students were always encouraged to look at the evidence base behind the theory in order to build their research awareness and engage in critical discussions within the classroom. The impact of this on practice was observed by staff supporting placements who observed students who were able to engage practice based discussions, acting as a critical friend to colleagues within local authorities. As a result, this inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

74. The course provider directed the inspection team to relevant website pages which provided details of the range of services available to support students' health and wellbeing. Services included counselling, wellbeing workshops, money advice, careers and health focused support as well as a range of more bespoke advice in relation to specific topics. As Step Up students were not based at the central campus, the inspection team sought to understand how the university ensured they received the same offer of support. The inspection team heard that there had been careful consideration of this through planned visits to the Alder Hey site and consideration of online resources where appropriate. The inspection team explored student experiences of accessing services during the inspection and heard that all representatives felt well informed and able to access support when required. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

75. The provision available to support students' academic development included library support, which included postal loans and online reading lists. The inspection team heard that print stock was generally reducing across the university to move towards a larger bank of digital stock. Library services also offered academic mentoring, 1:1 support for students to develop specific skills as well as targeted group workshops.

76. In relation to Personal Tutor (PT) provision, the course team explained that students were not nominated a named PT, but were invited to select a preference for tutorials from course team staff. Student representatives were clear of this arrangement and felt that,

when they had reached out for support or requested a tutorial, this need was met. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

77. The processes for ensuring the suitability of students were initiated pre-entry to the course and checks reverified on entry. This was in response to the shorter, intense nature of study and the time between commencing the course and starting first placement. From the outset, students were made aware of their obligation to disclose any information which might impact upon their suitability for practice. Where issues regarding suitability arose, the course provider and partnership had appropriate provision in place to review these and make recommendations. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

78. Documentary evidence outlined the provision of disability support services who were able to offer reasonable adjustments to students with specific needs or disabilities. Links to the course provider website provided a wide range of potential needs that students might experience, along with resources and suggestions about how these needs might be supported. During a meeting with representatives from support services, the inspection team heard that a proactive approach was taken to supporting needs and the shared ethos of staff was to ensure students were supported to achieve their potential. This approach was mirrored by course team staff who could provide specific examples of adjustments that had been accommodated on the course. Students also spoke positively about how services had worked together to meet their needs during their study. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

79. From the outset, students were provided with a wealth of information about the course, in varied formats, to support their decision to undertake study. There was evidence of a considered approach to information sharing, which included clear expectations regarding preparation for study, placement and supportive reading. Once on the course, students were provided with detailed induction information and bespoke induction to individual modules. The programme handbook also provided information about the programme structure, staffing, skills days, professional standards and placements. Student representatives were positive about the information they had received and felt well informed throughout their time on the course. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

80. Both documentary evidence and feedback from staff confirmed that there was a minimum attendance expectation of 95% for the course. Skills days and placement days were mandatory and arrangements were made where students had missed any of these days. In order to ensure close monitoring of attendance, students signed in on registers and online attendance was logged by staff leading the session. The inspection team also monitored student interaction with online resources to ensure sufficient engagement. The course team explained that student statistics were shared with partners in the LTP to support their model of early intervention where students were struggling. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

81. As referenced in relation to standard 4.10, there were clear guidelines in place to ensure that students received feedback that was both meaningful and timely to support their development in future assessments. Student representatives felt that feedback had supported their development throughout the course and where further input or clarification was required, this was offered swiftly by the course team. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

82. Documentary evidence showed that there was a clear process in place to support students to make academic appeals. During the inspection, the inspection team heard that the case work team, which sat within the student's union, offered bespoke advice and support to students. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

83. As the qualifying course is a Pg Dip Social Work, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

The inspection team recommend that the course be approved.

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	4.6	The inspectors are recommending that the university continue to develop provision to support interprofessional learning for students on the course, such as interprofessional learning groups and cross disciplinary learning days.	Paragraph 61

Annex 1: Education and training standards summary

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

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.			
Learning environment			
2.1 Ensure that students spend at least 200 days (including up to 30 skills days) gaining different experiences and learning in practice settings. Each student will have: i) placements in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences; and ii) a minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing experience of sufficient numbers of statutory social work tasks involving high risk decision making and legal interventions.	☒	☐	☐
2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.	☒	☐	☐
2.4 Ensure that on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.	☒	☐	☐
2.5 Ensure that students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting.	☒	☐	☐
2.6 Ensure that practice educators are on the register and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.	☒	☐	☐

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

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

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

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

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

Regulator decision

Approved