

Inspection Report

Course provider: University of Essex

Course approval: BA (Hons) Social Work and MA and PGDip (exit route) Social Work

Inspection dates: 16th – 19th May 2023

Report date:	12 th July 2023
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	1 st September 2023
Date conditions met and approved:	25 th January 2024

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Introduction

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

What we do

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

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

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

Summary of Inspection

15. The BA (Hons) Social Work and MA and PGDip (exit route) Social Work courses at the University of Essex 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	UER1
Course provider	University of Essex
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Courses inspected	BA (Hons) Social Work and MA and PGDip (exit route) Social Work
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	BA (Hons) Social Work Southend 45 Colchester 25 MA Social Work & PGDip (exit route) Colchester 45
Date of inspection	16 th – 19 th May 2023
Inspection team	Daisy Bragadini - Education Quality Assurance Officer Bradley Allan - Lay Inspector Kevin Stone - Registrant Inspector
Inspector recommendation	Approval with conditions
Approval outcome	Approval with conditions

Language

16. In this document we describe the University of Essex as ‘the education provider’ or ‘the university’ and we describe the BA (Hons) Social Work and MA and PGDip (exit route) Social Work courses as ‘the course’ or ‘the courses’.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 16th – 19th May 2023 at the Colchester campus, which is one of the sites where the University of Essex is based. The BA (Hons) Social Work course is delivered at the Southend campus and since 2022 has also been delivered at the Colchester campus. The MA and PGDip (exit route) is delivered from the Colchester campus. 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 who were involved in the delivery of the courses at both the Southend and Colchester sites. To achieve this outcome, meetings were planned as a combination of in person, exclusively remote and hybrid. The course provider requested that a change to the dissertation modules within the 2nd year of the postgraduate route be considered as part of this inspection. Details of this will be outlined within the body of the report.

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 held 2 separate meetings with students from the undergraduate and the postgraduate routes. The inspection team met with 4 undergraduate students studying at the Colchester campus and 7 undergraduate students from the Southend campus, who represented various stages of study. The inspection team also met with 7 postgraduate students studying at Colchester, from both years 1 and 2 of their course. Student representatives were present in both meetings. Discussion topics included their applications to the courses, experience on practice placements, various types of support available to them, their curriculum and learning at university, and their experience of giving and receiving feedback.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the course teaching teams for both courses, programme leaders, personal tutors, specialist support staff, practice placement staff and senior managers.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work, the Service User Reference Group (SURG), who have been involved in the admissions processes, assessed students as part of their readiness for practice and participated in course design. Topics of discussion included how they worked with the university, how they provided feedback on the course and how well supported they felt in their roles.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including staff from Essex County Council, Thurrock Council and Southend-on-Sea City Council. The inspection team also met with onsite and independent practice educators. Topics discussed included policies and procedures used for practice placements, how they worked with the course provider and how students were supported to learn and progress.

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 the inspection the inspection team reviewed the Applications and Interview Process document. A holistic assessment process was described and consisted of a written task which required applicants to respond to a case study, using evidence offered through links to research that the candidates could access during the application process. Capability to meet academic standards was assessed through the personal statement for the undergraduate candidates, and the application letter submitted by postgraduate students. Candidates were also required to attend an interview which assessed their potential to develop relevant knowledge and skills. Candidates' command of English was reviewed through appropriate entry requirements which were checked by the admissions team. ICT skills were assessed through the application process and included email communication, access to digital resources and attendance at the online interview. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

26. The inspection team were informed that the admissions team reviewed applications and selected applicants who were able to demonstrate relevant experience. Applicants were expected to outline paid or voluntary experience in a relevant setting. Where necessary, the admissions team consulted with the admissions tutor, programme lead or divisional lead to aid decision making. During the meeting held with admission staff the inspection team heard examples of profiles of applicants who could be offered support to integrate into university study after prolonged periods spent away from formal study. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

27. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team were provided with evidence which described the involvement of employer partners and people with lived experience of social work within the admissions processes. This included the Guidance for Interviewers and Applications and Interview Process documents. Candidates were interviewed by a panel consisting of relevant stakeholders and a member of staff from the academic team. During meetings with admissions staff and the Service User Reference Group (SURG) the inspection team explored relevant representatives' involvement. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

28. The inspection team reviewed a range of evidence which illustrated the processes followed by the course provider to assess applicants' suitability. The Student Membership and DBS Checks Policy and Procedure outlined the processes followed by the university. In addition, the inspection team were provided with evidence of the requirement of an occupational health check and enhanced DBS check. The university's Student Progress team held oversight of management of the criminal conviction checks for international applicants and all candidates were required to make a declaration of suitability for training in social work. The interview process which was supported by the SURG further facilitated an assessment of applicants' character. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

29. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were provided with the university's equality, diversity and inclusion policy. Policies and processes governing complaints in relation to the

admissions process were also provided and their application was explored further during meetings with staff involved in admissions. Applicants were provided with contact details throughout their applicant journey to enable them to have questions answered and request support. The Applicants' Interview Guide provided the inspection team with further evidence of how applicants could request reasonable adjustments. The Widening Participation Plan was also provided to the inspection team and highlighted the work undertaken with schools to target outreach work based on widening participation indicators. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

30. The inspection team reviewed information provided to applicants through the webpages for both courses. These pages provided information on research interests and areas of expertise of staff, the professional standards and placement opportunities. Open days and opportunities to contact the social work team were provided for applicants to find out about their selected course and ask questions. During the meetings held with students the inspection team heard that the students on both courses felt well informed and supported to choose to take up their offers on their chosen training routes. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

31. Prior to the inspection the inspection team reviewed the Placement Learning Handbooks and Placement Workbooks which stipulated the placement requirements for all students on the courses. Students were provided with contrasting settings for their placements with at least one within a statutory setting. The requirements for attendance at the placement days were expected to be recorded and authorised within the Practice Workbooks. Meetings held with students assured the inspection team that practice placements were providing students with appropriate contrast and experiences.

32. Both preceding the inspection and during, the inspection team explored the detail relating to the provision of 30 skills days. Evidence provided illustrated that some skills days were embedded within module activity and some sat outside this. The inspection team, within meetings with the course team, explored how the university maintained oversight of the completion and attendance at the skills days. The inspection team were unable to be assured that the university was able to guarantee that the completion of 30 skills days was being monitored through a robust and clear process.

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

Standard 2.2

34. The inspection team were provided with a range of evidence which outlined how the university provided appropriate learning opportunities for students on their placements. This included an outline of the role of the placement coordinator's role which detailed various roles and responsibilities in relation to quality assurance of placements. In addition, the inspection team were provided with the Placement Audit Form, the Placement Feedback Form and the Memorandum of Cooperation used with placement providers. The placement matching process was explored with staff involved in practice learning and discussed with students. Students confirmed that they were provided with opportunities on placement to help them gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

35. In relation to the provision of induction, supervision, support and a realistic workload for students whilst on placement, the inspection team were referred to a range of evidence. This included the Placement Audit Form, the Placement Feedback Form and the Memorandum of Cooperation used with placement providers. These illustrated the foundation of agreement that placement providers would provide students with the relevant elements connected to this standard as part of their placements. Further agreement and planning were established at the Practice Learning Agreement meeting and monitored through the midway meeting and within the final report. During discussions with students the inspection team heard that students were provided with support, access to resources and a realistic workload. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

36. The inspection team were able to review the placement audit process which supported the ability of the university to ensure students' responsibilities whilst on placement were

appropriate. Quality assurance processes supported placement providers to provide their students with tasks and activities which aligned to their stage of training and development. Numerous staff were involved in the monitoring of students' responsibilities, including personal tutors, placement coordinators, placement providers and practice educators and supervisors. Students expressed confidence in the appropriate nature of responsibility they were given whilst on placement and practice educators described how they managed and monitored the work provided to students. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

37. As part of their assessed preparation for direct practice students were required to complete and submit a Preparation for Practice Workbook. This portfolio of work documented their learning and development which was reviewed by placement coordinators and the SURG. Outcomes of this assessment were then reviewed by a Practice Assessment Panel with input from placement providers and practice educators. Clear and robust processes were illustrated to the inspection team applicable to cases when students were deemed not ready to carry out practice learning. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

38. Prior to the inspection the inspection team reviewed an anonymised record of independent practice educators which recorded experience of supporting students. Initial registration for all practice educators required information relating to registration and relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience. The inspection team were aware that the placement coordinators, in collaboration with other education providers, delivered a programme of events to support professional development of practice educators. Topics for these workshops included Focus Group Participation and a race equality conference.

39. The inspection team were unable to review sufficient evidence which assured them that the course provider maintained oversight of all practice educators, both independent and those working for the local authority, involved in the delivery of the course. The inspection team concluded that a mechanism which enabled the course provider to ensure all relevant elements outlined in this standard were regularly updated had not been demonstrated.

40. 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 these courses. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to

ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section.

Standard 2.7

41. The inspection team reviewed the Practice Learning Handbooks and Placement Workbooks which outlined the processes and expectations related to whistleblowing and challenging unsafe behaviours. The inspection team were also directed to the role the placement audit played in ensuring relevant policies were provided to students whilst on placement. During meetings held with students the inspection team heard that students were confident in their awareness of how to raise concerns and the support which was available to them if they required it. In addition, the inspection team were also able to assess evidence of students being taught explicitly about professional challenges and safeguarding, for example, in a range of modules within both courses. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

42. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to 2.7. Please find the detail of the recommendation in the [proposed outcome](#) section.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

43. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were provided with an overview of the management and governance plan for the course. This included an Organisational Structure document which illustrated roles and responsibilities. Narrative evidence described the roles and lines of accountability and the functions of teams and individuals. The inspection team met with a wide range of staff including senior and School managers, leaders and specialist support staff. Within these meetings they heard that strategic educational priorities were incorporated into the course design and delivery. In addition, they were able to see that the management teams at the university were supportive of the recent delivery of the undergraduate course from the Colchester campus. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

44. Within the documentary evidence submitted, the course provider evidenced a clear and robust quality assurance process which was followed to establish agreements with placement providers. The inspection team reviewed the mechanisms in place which sought to provide practice learning which met the relevant standards. This included the Memorandum of Cooperation, the Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) process, the Practice Learning Agreement and monitoring processes used during and at the conclusion of placements. The inspection team met with the employer partners and practice educators and heard how placement breakdown was managed for students and contingency planning was implemented. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

45. The inspection team were provided with the Practice Placement Audit which informed the quality assurance process followed by the Placement Coordinator. As part of this process placements were checked to ensure they had the necessary policies and procedures in place for students and included support systems in place. The Placement Handbooks and Practice Placement Workbooks provided information on health and safety and student support and helped to ensure policies were provided and read by students whilst on placement. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

46. During a meeting held with students, the inspection team heard about delays which had been experienced whilst waiting for placement providers to implement reasonable adjustments, such as specialised equipment, for example.

47. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standard 3.3. Please find the detail of the recommendation in the [proposed outcome](#) section.

Standard 3.4

48. The narrative documentary evidence outlined the various ways in which employers were involved in the course. This included examples of their involvement in reviews and re-design of elements of the course, such as the admissions questions, for example. The inspection team reviewed evidence of the Steering Group's work and the Practice Assessment Panel, which highlighted the ways in which employers have been included in the monitoring of the course. The Inspection team explored the work undertaken by the Eastern Social Work Action Network, which included practitioners and members of the SURG, and they were assured about employers' role in the allocation of practice education. Practitioners were also regularly involved in delivering lectures to students, which was a core element of

various modules on the courses. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

49. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team reviewed evidence in relation to the periodic review process which included students and employers and was implemented every 5 years. The inspection team were provided with the Periodic Review document, the Divisional Lead Report and Steering Group and SURG meeting minutes. These outlined that employers and people with lived experience were involved in providing feedback and opinion on how improvement to the courses could be made. The inspection team reviewed meeting minutes from the Student Voice Group which exemplified the processes in place for students to be part of evaluative processes and inform change. During the inspection, the inspection team discussed the monitoring and improvement systems relevant stakeholders were involved in. They heard examples from students of change which had resulted from their feedback, employers who engaged in monitoring and evaluation, and people with lived experience of social work who were invited to provide their perspectives on the courses. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.6

50. The inspection team reviewed the Eastern Social Work Area Network (SWAN) meeting minutes and the documentation which was submitted in support of the delivery of the undergraduate programme at the Colchester campus. This documentation illustrated the range of employer partners, along with other course providers in the region and organisations the university works with, who consider student numbers, placement availability and resourcing. Within the SWAN meetings issues such as recruitment and retention and the Assisted and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE) were discussed, which supported the course leaders' ability to plan strategically to take account of employer needs. During the meeting held with senior managers the inspection team heard about clear planning processes which included senior managers and divisional and programme leads. These processes allowed recruitment numbers and placement capacity to be matched and were carried out in Spring and Autumnal planning cycles. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

51. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standard 3.6. Please find the detail of the recommendation in the [proposed outcome](#) section.

Standard 3.7

52. The inspection team were provided with evidence which illustrated that the lead social worker for both courses held overall professional responsibility for the course. They were also assured that the lead was appropriately qualified, experienced and on the register. During meetings held with the course team and divisional staff, the inspection team were able to hear and review a range of examples of the work carried out by the social work lead. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

53. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were provided with an organisational chart. This outlined the roles and responsibilities and the range of staff working at both the Southend and Colchester campuses with clear remits at both. During meetings held with course staff involved in the delivery of the courses, the inspection team heard about a wide range of specialisms, expertise and research interests held by the staff. Meetings with senior managers, students, practice educators and employer partners corroborated evidence that the course was sufficiently resourced and effectively run. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

54. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team reviewed information about how the progress and attainment of students was reviewed. Through annual monitoring reports module leads summarised student achievement and progression. Information from these reports was used to analyse cohort and programme outcomes in relation to diversity which enabled the team to identify issues of access to assessment, for example. Further evidence reviewed included how data was shared with the School of Health and Social Care which informed identification and discussion of awarding gaps. The inspection team were provided with the School's undergraduate and postgraduate Annual Review of Courses which addressed data in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, and subsequently informed the action plans which stemmed from them. During discussions held at the inspection the inspection team were informed that although attainment gaps had been identified on other programmes within the School, the data for the social work courses did not show any significant anomalies. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

55. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team were provided with a link to the university's website which contained the relevant continuing professional development procedures and policies. During meetings held with the course managers the inspection team explored the opportunity staff were provided with for routes to permanency and how they were supported to develop professionally. In addition, the inspection team were informed that staff roles within the team were regularly rotated in order to supply staff with experience of new areas of practice. During the meeting held with senior managers, the inspection team heard that the current workload allocation model was undergoing a review, that a staff development fund was available and staff were encouraged to join research groups and peer review teaching. During various meetings the inspection team heard about a wide range of research projects which staff were leading which involved close collaboration and engagement with professional practice and work with local authorities. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

56. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team reviewed the programme specifications which outlined the aims and learning outcomes for the courses and were mapped to relevant frameworks. The module outlines were reviewed by the inspection team which further illustrated how the course content was designed to enable students to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards. Evidence was provided to show how all modules were mapped to the professional standards through mapping documentation. Through a combination of review of documentary evidence described here and meetings with relevant groups the inspection team were assured that the course was delivered to enable students to demonstrate their ability to meet the professional standards.

57. However, some of the relevant documentation submitted contained references to the previous regulator and did not reflect the current regulatory environment. As a result, the inspection team concluded that this standard could not be met and subsequently recommend that a condition be applied.

58. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 4.1 in relation to the approval of these courses. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section.

Standard 4.2

59. The inspection team were provided with meeting minutes from the division of social work's steering group which included representatives from groups of people with lived experience of social work, employers and practitioners. This provided a regular mechanism for relevant stakeholders' views to be incorporated into the design and review of the course. Evidence was reviewed by the inspection team of consultation with different groups which highlighted the decision making processes followed by the course team. Members of the SURG group were involved in modifying elements of the admissions process and attended curriculum review meetings. Employer partners the inspection team met with described input they had contributed to the course. Examples included the placement matching process for students with complex needs, admissions questions used at interview, placement and timetabling issues and how students were supported to apply theory in practice. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

60. Evidence in relation to this standard included learning outcomes within the courses which illustrated how the courses were designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles and legislative frameworks. The inspection team were referred to particular modules within the courses which showed further examples of this. During meetings the inspection team learnt about various research projects including one which involved students researching the local community's assets, sessions delivered by the equality, diversity and inclusion lead from the British Association of Social Work (BASW), access to support from the Student Union, wellbeing and mental health services, and the School's lead for equality, diversity and inclusion work in collaboration with the Global Majority Group. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

61. Prior to the inspection the inspection team reviewed evidence which illustrated the processes followed by the course team to ensure the courses were continually updated. This included gathering feedback from employer partners and people with lived experience of social work as part of the annual review cycle of the courses. Feedback was able to inform changes and update elements of the course. As part of the evidence the inspection team reviewed steering group meeting minutes and external examiner reports, along with examples of changes which had been made to modules on the postgraduate course in direct response to the learning needs of their cohorts. During the meetings held with the course team and employer partners the inspection team heard about practitioners involved in teaching on the course and members of course teaching staff with very recent experience of

professional practice. These examples illustrated how students were being taught in line with current practice, policy and research.

62. As part of the inspection the inspection team reviewed a change which was proposed for the postgraduate course. The inspection team were provided with a module change request form and a new module proposal form, for the change to be brought in from October 2023. The change involved a modification of the 2 dissertation modules by reducing their credits from 45 to 30. The course team proposed to relocate 15 credits into a new module, Using Research and Evidence in Social Work Practice, to be located in the first year of the postgraduate course. The rationale for the change was based on an increase in international students combined with an identified need to strengthen and develop the teaching to support students' research skills. The course team explained that the new module was required to support teaching of research methods and also there was an identified need to provide a consistent experience to students early on in their course of learning about methodology and selection of research topics. The team explained that they proposed to deliver the new module to the current year 1 postgraduate students in the autumn term of 2023/24, which will be in their 2nd year of study. Ordinarily the module will be delivered and assessed in the first year of the course.

63. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

64. In relation to this standard the inspection team reviewed evidence of modules which contained explicit teaching of theory and practice models through course content. During the meetings held with students the inspection team heard confident and detailed examples of how they were able to apply theoretical understanding during their practice placements. Further exploration of how students were supported to integrate theoretical frameworks whilst carrying out practice learning took place in a meeting held with practice educators. Practice educators exemplified a range of teaching skills which they employed with their students and the inspection team heard how high expectations were applied to students and their ability to integrate theory and practice. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

65. Prior to the inspection the inspection team heard that the majority of interprofessional learning occurred during practice placements. The inspection team reviewed the Practice Placement Audit form which assisted the team in identifying whether students would be offered opportunities to learn from other teams, with scope to enhance learning

opportunities if necessary. The inspection team were also provided with further evidence which highlighted that students were provided with opportunities to engage with other professions through their skills development days. Examples of these included a visit to Garon Park, an integrated community wellbeing provision, and the Asset Based Community Development project. During the meetings held with students, the inspection team heard examples of guest speakers including from the police, midwifery, housing services, youth crime agencies, refugee charities, international social work, colleagues from the law department and nursing. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

66. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standard 4.6. Please find the detail of the recommendation in the [proposed outcome](#) section.

Standard 4.7

67. In relation to this standard the inspection team reviewed the module outlines which indicated the associated number of credits and study hours linked to each module. Students completed these hours through lectures, seminars and tutorials. The Learner Engagement Activity Portal (LEAP) was the university's centralised attendance and engagement mechanism and tutors held responsibility for maintaining oversight of students' attendance. During meetings held with course staff the inspection team explored the use of this system and how students could be best supported to use it well. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

68. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team reviewed narrative documentary evidence and the external examiners reports. The inspection team were informed that the most recent review of the assessment strategy found that students were provided with appropriately challenging assessments and that these were appropriately linked to the outcome and aims of the course. It also recommended that the timing of assignments should be subject to ongoing review alongside the views of students. The inspection team were also provided with the School of Health and Social Care's guidance on marking and feedback and the School's assessment feedback policy. They also reviewed the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy document which they were informed was in the process of being revised. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

69. Evidence reviewed prior to the inspection assured the inspection team that this standard was met. Evidence reviewed included module guides and the Module Outcomes and Assessments documents for both courses. The inspection team were informed that the Professional Capabilities Framework was also used to support appropriate progression of assessments which was evident in the module guides. In addition to this, evidence contained within the external examiner's reports provided assurances that assessments were mapped to the curriculum and appropriately sequenced.

Standard 4.10

70. Module outlines for both courses illustrated to the inspection team that students were provided with a range of summative and formative assessments throughout their training. Whilst on their placements, students were provided with ongoing assessment from their practice educators and supervision sessions. During the meetings held with students the inspection team heard numerous examples of how students had received support with assessments such as a presentation for a law module and formative feedback which had contributed significantly to their progression. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

71. Prior to the inspection the inspection team reviewed the Outline of Division Personnel document. This provided detailed evidence of the qualifications, experience, research interests, specialisms and registration status of all staff involved in the delivery of teaching and assessments on the courses. The inspection team were assured that assessments were carried out by individuals with appropriate expertise. The course team were also able to ensure that practice educators and people with lived experience of social work who were also involved in assessing students were appropriately qualified and experienced. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

72. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team reviewed the documentary evidence including clear systems of module review and moderation. The inspection team reviewed a module lead report and moderation records, which contained feedback, reflection and analysis of the outcomes of the module. Assessments of students' learning, progression and direct practice whilst on placement was carried out by practice educators who were qualified and experienced. Further assessment was undertaken by practitioners and members of the SURG as part of the Practice Assessment Panels and ensured that a range of

people were involved in the oversight of the learning completed by students. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

73. Clear evidence was submitted in relation to this standard which highlighted particular modules in each year of study on both courses which actively promoted and embedded an evidence informed approach to research and evaluation. The modules showed how students were provided with these learning opportunities which had been carefully sequenced across the years to enable incremental progression. The dissertation module change for the postgraduate course, explored further in relation to standard 4.4, exemplified how course staff had considered the needs of students' learning in relation to research and evidence. Placement documentation in the form of the practice workbooks required students to integrate evidence into the development of their direct practice and decision making skills. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

74. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were provided with information about the support which was made available to students on the courses. This included confidential counselling services and occupational health services. The Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity team provided a range of services for students and information was provided through their website, student handbooks and personal tutors. Employability services at the university were able to offer guidance and support about becoming a registered social worker and future professional careers. The students the inspection team met with were confident about the services on offer, and there was a consistency in provision across both Southend and Colchester campuses. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

75. The inspection team were able to review the information provided to students within the student handbook, which included support through the personal tutor system. The Skills for Success team embedded their provision within teaching on the course and offered individual and group workshops. The inspection team heard from students that they found the opportunity to submit draft work for feedback prior to completing a full assignment helpful in informing their development and improving their work. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

76. Prior to and during the inspection, the inspection team were provided with evidence which illustrated a thorough and effective process to ensure ongoing suitability of students. Within the student and placement handbooks and the placement workbook, students were provided with the processes required to be adhered to in relation to conduct and the professional nature and requirements of the courses. Each year students were required to complete a formal declaration regarding their health, suitability and criminal conviction status. This was then recorded within the Practice Education Management System and used to manage the allocation of practice placements. The inspection team agreed that this statement was met.

Standard 5.4

77. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team were provided with the Student Wellbeing and Inclusivity Service (SWIS) Structure document, which provided an oversight of roles and responsibilities included within the provision across the campuses. During the meeting held with specialist support services, the inspection team heard that the SWIS implement disability reports and reasonable adjustments and allocate support workers, where necessary. The inspection team also heard that personal tutors support students' requests for adjustments, for specialist equipment, for example, and could recommend occupational health assessments. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

78. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standard 5.4, which also connects to the recommendation for standard 3.3. Please find the detail of the recommendation in the [proposed outcome](#) section.

Standard 5.5

79. The inspection team were provided with a range of evidence prior to the inspection which illustrated the ways in which students were provided with information about their curriculum, including practice placements and assessments. The inspection team heard how students were provided with relevant information at appropriate times throughout their courses, such as within their induction week, within handbooks and through their online learning platform, Moodle. Information and teaching about transitioning to a registered social worker was embedded within particular modules on the courses. Within meetings, students described the lectures provided by employer partners on topics such as interviews,

job applications and their Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE) as being informative. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

80. In one meeting with the students from the postgraduate course, the inspection team heard about delays to the start of their placements and how the students were managing these. This was further explored with the course team. The inspection team heard how some issues relating to a new digital placement allocation system had led to some delays in placement matching. The course team explained that until the system has been modified to meet the specific needs of social work placements, they had reverted to the previous processes in place.

81. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standard 5.5. Please find the detail of the recommendation in the [proposed outcome](#) section.

Standard 5.6

82. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team were able to review the information which was made available to students on both courses about the parts of the courses where attendance was mandatory. Both the Student and Practice Learning handbooks detailed the expectations in relation to the mandatory parts of the course and placement days and hours which were expected. Conversations held with students provided evidence that they were clear in relation to the expectations around attendance at placement days, and at university.

83. However, the inspection team felt that there was a lack of sufficient evidence which showed how expectations around attendance at and recording of skills days was provided to students. The inspection team heard from some students that they were unsure of the expectations in relation to attendance at skills days, and the requirement to monitor and record them. In connection with the comments made and the condition set under standard 2.1, the inspection team felt that the systems in place to monitor and record the completion of skills days required an enhanced degree of clarity.

84. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 5.6 in relation to the approval of these courses. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the courses would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the courses would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the courses would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section.

Standard 5.7

85. During the inspection the inspection team were provided with insight into the centralised system which was utilised to provide students with timely feedback within 20 days, stipulated for students within the student handbook. Students who met with the inspection team described meaningful and constructive feedback which was provided in both summative and formative assessment. The inspection team also heard an example of the course team modifying when they provided feedback to students to help reduce anxiety associated with waiting for results. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

86. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were provided with the assessment and marking policies, an assessment policies summary document, the academic appeals procedure and a form to request work to be re-marked. During the meetings held with students from both the undergraduate and postgraduate routes, the inspection team were assured that students were clear about the processes and options available to them if they required an academic appeal. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

87. As the qualifying courses are a BA (Hons) Social Work and MA and PGDip (exit route) Social Work course, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

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

Conditions

89. 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.

90. 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	Standards 2.1 & 5.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that all students are completing 30 skills days and that the mechanisms for recording and monitoring the attendance of students on these days is robust and clear.	1 st December 2023	Paragraph 33 Paragraph 84
2	Standard 2.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates they have developed systematic mechanisms which allows the education provider to have full oversight of all the practice educators they work with. This will include the monitoring of their skills and experience and currency in their practice and registration with Social Work England.	1 st December 2023	Paragraph 40
3	Standard 4.1	The education provider will provide evidence which demonstrates that all course documentation including the course specification, module outlines	1 st December 2023	Paragraph 58

		and placement audit reflect the current regulatory environment and professional standards where appropriate.		
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Recommendations

91. 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	2.7	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider including specific reference to whistleblowing policies within their placement audit form.	Paragraph 42
2	3.3 & 5.4	The inspectors are recommending that, where possible, the university consider strengthening the support they offer to local authorities to implement timely reasonable adjustments for students whilst on their practice placement.	Paragraph 47 Paragraph 78
3.	3.6	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider continuing to work closely with placement providers to design placement matching processes and mechanisms which minimise risk of delay to the start of placements.	Paragraph 51
4.	4.6	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider strengthening students' opportunities to work with and learn from other professionals during their study at university.	Paragraph 66
5.	5.5	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider improving the information they provide to students in relation to anticipated placement start dates to help support and manage student expectations.	Paragraph 81

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

92. Approved with conditions.

Annex 2: Meeting of conditions

93. 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](#).

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

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

	Standard not met	Condition	Recommendation
1	2.1 & 5.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that all students are completing 30 skills days and that the mechanisms for recording and monitoring the attendance of students on these days is robust and clear.	Condition met.
2	2.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates they have developed systematic mechanisms which allows the education provider to have full oversight of all the practice educators they work with. This will include the monitoring of their skills and experience and currency in their practice and registration with Social Work England.	Condition met.
3	4.1	The education provider will provide evidence which demonstrates that all course documentation including the course specification, module outlines and placement audit reflect the current regulatory environment and professional standards where appropriate.	Condition met.

Findings

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

97. After the review of documentary evidence, the inspection team are satisfied that the conditions set against the reapproval of the BA (Hons) Social Work, MA Social Work and PGDip (exit route) courses are met.

98. In relation to the first condition which was set for standards 2.1 and 5.6 the course provider submitted evidence which outlines how they ensure all students complete 30 skills days and how their attendance is monitored in a robust and clear way. The University has modified their attendance monitoring system (LEAP) to record skills days separately from module attendance. Practice Learning Handbooks have been amended to reflect expectations of skills days attendance and the requirement to make up days missed. Personal Tutors are responsible for monitoring attendance and facilitating contingencies. This standard is now met.

99. In relation to the second condition which was set for standard 2.6 the course provider submitted evidence to show how they ensure all practice educators are registered with Social Work England and hold relevant experience, skills and currency. The university course team have worked with placement providers to agree a procedure for securing oversight of all practice educators supervising students on placement. They have introduced the use of the Systematic Mechanism of PE Oversight document which is shared with placement providers at the start of each placement and is required to be completed and returned to the placement coordinator within 10 working days. The document requires the placement provider to confirm that practice educators are registered with Social Work England, appropriately qualified and experienced, and where necessary, mentored or supervised by an appropriately qualified practice educator. This standard is now met.

100. In relation to the third condition which was set for standard 4.1 the course provider submitted evidence to demonstrate that relevant course documentation reflects the current regulator and the professional standards. The course provider submitted updated versions of the programme modules, course specification documents, placement coordination, quality assurance and memorandum of cooperation documents. The inspection team were assured that the course team had sufficiently updated their course documentation, where appropriate, to make accurate reference to Social Work England and the professional standards. This standard is now met.

Conclusion

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

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

Regulator decision

Approval.