

Inspection Report

Course provider: University of Sussex

Course approval: BA (Hons) FT and PT, MA, Pg Dip Social Work and Pg Dip Social Work (exit route)

Inspection dates: 6th – 9th June 2023

Report date:	18 th July 2023
Inspector recommendation:	Approved
Regulator decision:	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	18.09.2023

Contents

Introduction	3
What we do.....	3
Summary of Inspection	5
Language	5
Inspection.....	7
Meetings with students	7
Meetings with course staff.....	7
Meeting with people with lived experience of social work	7
Meetings with external stakeholders.....	7
Findings	8
Standard one: Admissions.....	8
Standard two: Learning environment.....	10
Standard three: Course governance, management and quality.....	14
Standard four: Curriculum assessment.....	18
Standard five: Supporting students	23
Standard six: Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register.....	26
Proposed outcome.....	27
Recommendations	27
Annex 1: Education and training standards summary.....	28
Regulator decision	34

Introduction

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

What we do

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

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

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

Summary of Inspection

15. The University of Sussex 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. During the inspection, the inspection team considered three courses: the BA Social Work, MA Social Work and Pg Dip Social Work. As the curriculum and content of the courses shared significant similarities and the course teams worked closely together, they will all be considered within the one report, with any significant differences being outlined clearly.

Inspection ID	USUSR1
Course provider	University of Sussex
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	BA (Hons) Social Work full time and part time. MA Social Work Pg Dip Social Work Pg Dip Social Work (exit route)
Mode of study	Undergraduate and Postgraduate
Maximum student cohort	BA (35), MA/Pg Dip (25)
Date of inspection	6 th – 9 th June 2023
Inspection team	Catherine Denny Education Quality Assurance Officer Lainy Russell (Lay Inspector) Michael Isles (Registrant Inspector)
Inspector recommendation	Approved
Approval outcome	Approved

Language

16. In this document we describe University of Sussex as ‘the education provider’ or ‘the university’ and we describe the BA, MA and Pg Dip Social Work as ‘the course’ or ‘courses’.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 6th - 9th June 2023 in Essex House, where social work is based within the University of Sussex. As part of this process the inspection team planned to meet with key stakeholders including students, course teams and wider university staff, employers and people with lived experience of social work.

18. These meetings formed the basis of the inspection plan, agreed with the education provider ahead of inspection. The following section provides a summary of these sessions, who participated and the topics that were discussed with the inspection team.

Conflict of interest

19. No parties disclosed a conflict of interest.

Meetings with students

20. The inspection team met with a range of students from the BA, MA and Pg Dip, all at different stages of their study. This included student representatives from each course. Discussions included experiences of admission to the course, placements, supervision, curriculum, assessment and student support.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the admissions team, course team, senior leadership team and representatives from student support services including disability support, wellbeing advisors, careers advisors, library staff and academic skills services.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in the university experts by experience network and representatives from an external agency who had contributed towards course delivery. Discussions included involvement in admissions processes, contributions towards the design and review of the course, involvement in course delivery and opportunities to provide direct feedback to students.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including West Sussex County Council, East Sussex County Council, Brighton and Hove City Council, CAF/CASS, Brighton Aldridge Academy, Plumpton College, Sussex Pathways, Emmaus and Brighton Hove and Sussex Sixth Form College. Discussions included involvement in admissions, the management of placement provision and opportunities to contribute to the design and review of the course.

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 submitted a range of documentation which outlined a clear process with a range of activities including a personal statement, individual interview and reflection following a presentation. The information submitted by candidates and designated tasks within the interview process allowed the course provider to adequately assess candidates command of English, ICT skills and capability to meet the academic standards for the course.

26. The inspection team heard that the process in place was mirrored across all courses and the decision to hold interviews remotely had been well received by both candidates and stakeholders involved in admissions processes. It was also highlighted that the process supported international applicants, of which there had been an increase. The course team confirmed that remote interview processes would be reviewed annually to ensure they remained fit for purpose. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

27. For the BA Social Work personal experiences, volunteering or working with young people was explored in relation to prior experience and candidates were asked to reflect on what was learned from these experiences. The course team explained that candidates for the undergraduate routes were reminded not to be discouraged by a lack of experience, as the interview process assessed their potential to train to become a social worker based on their reflections of a wide variety of skills and experiences.

28. For the MA and Pg Dip, candidates were required to possess at least 6 months full time (or equivalent) relevant social care experience in a paid or voluntary setting. The university provided a copy of the social work experience form used as part of the admissions process to capture information which was completed by all candidates.

29. Across the courses, the first question of the panel interview also encouraged candidates to reflect upon their previous experience and explain how this would equip them in the role of a social worker. Further to this, all candidates had the opportunity to reflect upon previous experience within their personal statement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

30. Documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection visit included details of the agreements in place with stakeholders, admissions guidance, templates used by members of interview panels and samples of training for panel members. The inspection team reviewed information from the course provider which detailed how stakeholders were involved in the design and review of admissions processes.

31. During meetings with employer partners and experts by experience, the inspection team clarified which representatives had engaged with the processes outlined above. The inspection team heard that the involvement of employer partners was overwhelmingly through the teaching partnership. For experts by experience, involvement was limited to members of the university network via involvement in panels and through delivery of a presentation to candidates. During a meeting with experts by experience representatives, the inspection team heard that there was a desire for participation in admissions processes from representatives from external networks. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met with a recommendation in relation to expanding opportunities for wider range of stakeholders to engage with admissions processes and design. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 1.4

32. The course provider submitted a range of documentary evidence which outlined the processes to assess the suitability of applicants in relation to their conduct, health and character. The evidence provided confirmed that this process began at the application via completion of questionnaires in relation to criminal records, health and suitability and was developed throughout the admissions process via interview and at the offer stage, where enhanced disclosure and barring service (DBS) checks were also undertaken. The inspection team were assured that this process was understood by the central admissions team, school administrator and course admissions tutor via conversations held during the inspection visit.

33. Through meetings with employer partners, the inspection team heard that the university included colleagues in practice in discussions relating to suitability and adopted a proactive approach to ensuring that additional needs could be met both on the course and through placement activity. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

34. The inspection team were able to review the university Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy, anti-racist and inclusive practice in recruitment training and welcome letter for the courses prior to the inspection event. The university outlined how they monitored EDI issues via analysis of applicant data and how they were proactive in ensuring that students were aware of how to disclose any health issues or reasonable adjustments required during the interview process. This was corroborated by staff from the central admissions team who were well equipped to support student queries.

35. During meetings held as part of the inspection, the course provider explained that they had seen an increase in the number of international students applying to the MA social work course. The increase in the cultural and ethnic diversity on the course also linked in with some issues being raised in relation to cultural and racial issues experienced in practice.

36. The course team explained that they had responded to these issues by working directly with the teaching partnership. The teaching partnership organised training on issues such as unconscious bias and microaggressions for members of interview panels and the school organised the same training for academic staff. The inspection team were assured that, whilst issues in relation to EDI existed, the course provider demonstrated that they were proactive in their response to these and were confident in supporting students with a wide range of protected characteristics. As a result of the findings outlined, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

37. The university provided links to their public facing website which included comprehensive information on the programmes being considered as part of this inspection. In addition, the inspection team were also provided with copies of prospectuses, open day presentations, handbooks, information for panel members and reading lists. Within the documentation provided, information was given about the structure of the course, associated costs and options for funding, placement information, the role of the regulator and staff profiles which detailed the research interests of the course team.

38. During meetings with students, the inspection team heard that almost all felt well prepared to make an informed decision about taking up an offer of a place on the course. Where students did not feel prepared, this related to their understanding of the Pg Dip and the ability to apply to this course from the outset. Some student representatives reported being unable to find information specific to the course on the university website. Following further exploration of the website and discussions with the course team, the inspection team were unable to find evidence as to why this information would not have been accessible and confirmed that there was clear guidance about the nature of the course available publicly. As a result, the inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

39. The course provider submitted clear mapping and documentation which outlined how practice placements were allocated across the courses being inspected. This included course handbooks, practice education handbooks, details of the South Coast Regional Centre (SCRC) teaching partnership and placement overviews for all programmes. The inspection team were able to see clear evidence that all students receive 170 days of practice learning

on the courses which is delivered in both Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) and statutory settings. Students also receive 30 days of practice development workshops.

40. During a meeting with students during the inspection, some concerns were raised about the provision of statutory placements for all on the courses. The inspection team explored this further with the director of practice learning and course team who explained that all students had experience of a placement with statutory social work tasks, although these might not be always delivered in a local authority setting. The inspection team also heard how the university was developing further links with statutory social work provision through the development of a relationship with a local NHS trust who provide mental health provision and intervention.

41. The co-director of practice learning outlined the provision of practice development workshops which were available across the courses and delivered to students for 30 of their 200 days of practice learning. The workshops were delivered jointly by the university and practice colleagues, known as Practitioners who Teach (PwT) and explored a range of topics such as working with substance misuse and domestic violence, children in care, adult mental health and working with disabled children and adults. The inspection team were confident that students had access to a variety of practice experiences which met the requirements of the standard and, as a result, agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.2

42. As outlined in standard area 2.1, the inspection team were assured that the university had access to a wide range of placements, which had the potential to offer students access to a range of social work tasks to support their ability to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards. During meetings with the director of practice learning, the inspection team heard further details about how the university undertook appropriate matching processes to ensure that placements were able to meet student's individual developmental needs.

43. The director of practice learning described the ways that she had worked with course leads and academic advisors to ensure placement matching was appropriate. The inspection team heard that each student has a student profile which was used to support placement allocation and tasks whilst on placement. This was reviewed by the course team, academic advisors and practice educators (PEs) who used it to inform planning and supervision.

44. To review the effectiveness of the placement allocation process, the course teams aimed for a minimum of 30% moderation of placement portfolios via Practice Assessment Panel (PAP), however they explained that they were above target at 50% moderation for the academic year. In addition to PAP discussions, the director of practice Learning also collected individual and cohort feedback from students in relation to placement to support a review of the process. The inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met.

Standard 2.3

45. Alongside the placement matching process outlined in relation to standard 2.2, all students also completed a profile and placement matching form to support the matching process. The profile form identified prior experience, geographical location, learning and support needs and personal responsibilities that needed to be considered during placement, including where support and reasonable adjustments were required. Consent was gained from students to share information contained within the profile form with members of the social work department and practice colleagues.

46. Upon completing the matching process, the university sent copies of the practice education handbook to all agencies which included details of roles and responsibilities of practice supervisors, PEs and PECs. Upon commencing placement, students developed a Practice Learning Agreement (PLA) alongside practice colleagues which explicitly outlined individual student needs, consideration of safety and wellbeing and any planned induction activities. Consent was gained from students to share their students disability support form with the partners providing the placement. Students also completed a part 2 of their profile form to identify and potential conflicts which was only seen by the director of practice learning. The PLA meeting, chaired by the academic advisor, ensured that all involved in student induction and support had a clear understanding of their responsibilities, including planned supervision.

47. During meetings held as part of the inspection visit, the inspection team heard from employer partners that all students had a set induction period and employers spoke confidently and knowledgeably about how induction and support on placement was managed. PEs confirmed that they were a key figure of support for students from induction and throughout placement, offering regular and supportive supervision. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

48. As referenced in previous standard areas, all students held personal/professional development plans to support their practice journey. Employer partners commented on how these plans were used to support workload allocation and identify areas for development. Placement providers also outlined their understanding of the developmental journey from placement one to placement two and the need to tailor responsibilities to fit with this.

49. Students spoke positively about their workload on placement and did not raise any concerns in relation to the appropriateness of tasks. Students explained that sessions held by the director of practice learning prior to placement supported them to understand the nature of the tasks they would be involved in. In 2022/23, following student feedback, the director of practice learning provided an additional session for students on their first

placement, 5 weeks after starting their placement. The purpose of this session was to check in with students after their induction. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

50. Students across all social work courses took part in a readiness for direct practice module prior to their first placement. At the end of the module, students were required to engage in a viva with a panel assessment which required a pass before placement could begin. Panels comprised of academic staff, practitioners and an expert by experience who all offered feedback to students and supported pass/fail decision making. The inspection team heard positive feedback from employer partners about students' preparedness for placements following their engagement in the readiness for direct practice module. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

51. Documentary evidence submitted by the education provider demonstrated that there were robust and effective systems in place to monitor the qualifications, character and currency of PEs involved in course delivery. All data was kept on a central database which was managed by the director of practice learning and reviewed regularly. The inspection team were also able to review materials provided to PEs to support them in their role which were comprehensive and provided appropriate guidance.

52. During a meeting with a selection of PE representatives, the inspection team heard that the university provided a wide range of support to PEs in the form of workshops, peer support networks and Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPs) training. PEs commented that they felt well prepared to undertake their role and explained that working with the university had supported their professional development. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

53. Mapping and documentary evidence submitted by the course provider detailed appropriate processes and policies which supported students and other stakeholders to raise concerns in relation to the conduct of individuals or organisations. These were well understood by students and the inspection team heard that student representatives were confident to share concerns of varying significance with the course provider. The inspection team also heard an example of where a student had raised a concern about the behaviour of a PE whilst on placement. This was responded to rapidly by the director of practice learning who offered mediation and a change of PE to enable the student to continue with their placement. They also ensured appropriate interventions were in place to address the issues raised. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

54. Prior to the inspection visit, the university submitted documentation which outlined internal governance planning in place for all social work courses alongside information about the structures within the wider teaching partnership and with other stakeholders. The inspection team also reviewed copies of minutes from qualifying courses management committee meetings, which offered clear details about the range of topics discussed across the whole of social work education at the university. Members of the senior leadership team were able to articulate how these processes at a course level fed into wider university quality monitoring procedures.

55. The inspection team heard about the different roles that had been implemented by the university such as directors of teaching and learning, directors of student experience and directors of practice learning which ensured that key areas of provision received strategic leadership from within the school. Within the wider course team, staff had specific areas of responsibility such as leading admissions or work with the university experts by experience group. The inspection team heard details about how staff members regularly changed their areas of responsibility on the course to ensure that they had a wide range of experiences. Further to this, the course team were able to articulate where external stakeholders, such as experts by experience or employer partners supported quality monitoring processes. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

56. All provision in relation to practice learning was overseen by the director of practice learning who ensured that all agreements were signed and fit for purpose. The inspection team were able to review copies of the agreements used with agencies including those used within the teaching partnership and outside agencies, such as those from the PVI sector. The inspection team agreed that all documentation appeared fit for purpose and provided explicit detail about expectations from all involved in placements. These agreements were further supplemented by copies of the practice education handbooks for each course which provided details about specific roles.

57. The education provider also submitted detailed information about the processes in place to manage placement difficulties. The inspection team heard that where informal issues arose, students were required to take ownership of any necessary changes supported by their PE or placement supervisor who completed a clear SMART action plan in conjunction with the student.

58. Where concerns escalated beyond the informal stage, involvement of university based professionals increased to include the academic adviser who chaired and minuted concern resolution meetings. Where concerns persisted, placements could reach the stage of

termination in which a formal meeting would identify issues and support provided to address these.

59. Any terminated placements were presented at PAP, along with supporting documentation. At all stages the director of practice learning maintained oversight which provided insight into any common or unusual themes that might present themselves. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

60. Evidence provided in advance of the inspection outlined the auditing processes in place for all placements which was overseen by the director of practice learning. This included review of policies and procedures held by the placement provider, such as those relating to health and safety and EDI. The availability of policies was further confirmed after induction to placement via the PLA form.

61. During the inspection visit, the inspection team further explored the auditing process and how this was managed operationally. The course provider confirmed that audit visits took place for all placements and were led by the director of practice learning. During the pandemic, these were managed remotely however they had since returned to a face-to-face visit. During audit visits, the university expectations for placement were shared and the opportunities for students on placement were explored. The course provider explained that all potential placement providers had a cooling off period following this meeting to ensure that they understood expectations and were able to commit to offering practice learning opportunities. By having oversight of this process, the university was able to identify any themes arising from placement providers and took action to address these collectively. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

62. All employer partners involved in the delivery of the course had the opportunity to attend the qualifying courses management committee referenced in relation to standard 2.1. In addition to this, partners were encouraged to contribute towards course delivery via designing and facilitating skills development workshops and supporting admissions and suitability processes. The inspection team heard details of an event hosted by the university which incorporated employer partners and other stakeholders sought feedback on the delivery of social work education within the university. The inspection team heard from employer partners who had not yet had the opportunity to contribute to course design and review, however, they were assured by the course team that there was ongoing development in this area to widen participation. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

63. As referenced in relation to standard 3.4, the inspection team heard that the university had developed processes which ensured that employer partners were able to contribute towards formal review of the course as well as supporting with delivery on specific modules.

64. During the inspection event, the inspection team met with a variety of representatives from the university experts by experience network as well as representatives from external networks who had engaged with social work education at the university. Engagement included attendance at formal departmental and committee meetings as well as through supporting panels in relation to readiness for practice. During meetings with representatives, the inspection team heard that there had been varying experiences for those from the two networks and there was a desire for a wider range of opportunities to engage with social work courses. The university acknowledged that some of the work in relation to the extended experts by experience network was ongoing and needed to incorporate a wider range of experiences from members. The inspection team agreed that the recommendation in relation to standard 1.3 was also applicable here. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

65. Student feedback was monitored via formal routes such as committee meetings and submission of documentation, however there was also the opportunity for ongoing verbal feedback. The inspection team were able to see evidence of where student feedback had effected change on the courses, however some students were unable to identify this within meetings held as part of the inspection. The course team explained their plans to strengthen the feedback loop with students which included a 'you said, we did' approach which could be shared amongst cohorts.

66. On balance of evidence, the inspection team were satisfied that there was sufficient involvement of employers, students and people with lived experience to satisfy them that the standard was met with a recommendation specific to the extension of involvement from both experts by experience networks, as outlined above.

Standard 3.6

67. Documentary evidence submitted prior to the inspection outlined the processes in place within the teaching partnership to consider student numbers in line with the local workforce and labour market plan. The inspection team were able to review minutes of meetings which outlined the annual framework for capacity discussions and included consideration of placement allocation for future cohorts. Within the minutes provided, the inspection team were able to see evidence of how capacity was challenged centrally by the university and, during the inspection, heard that the course team were confident to defend proposed numbers offering a sound rationale for this.

68. During review of documentation and via discussions with representatives from the teaching partnership, the inspection team heard that there had been some challenges over

recent years in relation to placement capacity. The course team explained that there had been a decrease in placements available alongside an increase in admissions to the MA, however work was ongoing to build capacity across agencies, as outlined in previous standard areas. The inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met.

Standard 3.7

69. The inspection team were provided with details of staff expertise and CPD across the courses, alongside a copy of the course governance and management plan. The details of the lead social worker for the courses were included within this, as well as details of their registration with Social Work England. In addition to being appropriately qualified and experienced, the inspection team recognised that the member of staff maintained a key professional role as a lead practitioner within Brighton and Hove Children's Services, ensuring that there was a good understanding of key issues and developments within practice. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

70. As referenced within standard 3.7, the university provided documentation which detailed the experience and skills of staff across the courses. The inspection team were satisfied that there was a wide range of experience and expertise to support the delivery of social work education across undergraduate and postgraduate routes. During the inspection visit, all staff were able to provide details about how their individual knowledge and expertise was shared across the course teams. Furthermore, the structures in place and defined areas of responsibility for course team staff ensured delivery of effective courses. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

71. Documentary evidence submitted in advance of the inspection provided details of module assessment boards and progression award boards which were key in supporting evaluation of student performance, progression and outcomes. At a modular level, the board would compare and contrast student performance, progression and outcomes for each module against data from previous cohorts. The progression and award boards would review progress and awards for each student per course with input from the external examiner.

72. In addition to the formal routes detailed above, the course provider was also able to provide evidence of EDI action planning which aimed to address issues identified through placement experiences of some students, with a focus on racially minoritised and international students. These activities had resulted in the development of a mentoring project for PEs outside of the teaching partnership supported by PEC's and students. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

73. As outlined in previous standard areas, the inspection team were able to review documentary evidence which outlined details of CPD and research activity that members of the course teams had been involved in. The course team were able to speak to the ways in which they were able to learn from each other and how the professional lead across the courses offered key links back into practice. Through meetings with the senior leadership and course teams, the inspection team were assured that research was a central element of the university structure with members of staff being granted study leave. Through meetings with members of the experts by experience network, the inspection team also heard about the ways in which they were involved in staff research activities alongside students on the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

74. Documentary evidence demonstrated that the course had been mapped to the Social Work England Professional Standards, the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) and the Knowledge and Skills Statements (KSS) for children and families and adults. The university explained that the courses were underpinned by a relationship based, practice led and research minded approach to support the development of knowledge, values and skills in social work. Students were encouraged to develop their reflective practice throughout the course, taking ownership of their professional development and demonstrating, on a progressive basis, their level of capability, standards of proficiency and ethical commitment. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

75. The course provider submitted a detailed narrative and supporting documentation to outline the ways in which key stakeholders were involved in the design, review and delivery of the course. This detailed the involvement of experts by experience and practice colleagues in admissions processes and through the delivery of taught content on the course. The inspection team were able to hear examples of how experts by experience, placement providers and PECs had designed content and facilitated delivery on modules across the courses. As outlined in previous standard areas, there was also representation from wider stakeholders on readiness for practice panels, board of studies, departmental meetings and via the qualifying courses committee. Recent developments following stakeholder feedback included a redesigned practice learning module, practitioner informed problem based learning and a review of anti-oppressive practice, which was cascaded to other modules. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

76. Documentary evidence provided detail of the ways in which the course curriculum had been designed with EDI principles in mind and how procedures to support the course were embedded in a human rights perspective. Inspectors reviewed details of module teaching which provided explicit examples of EDI themes being covered in course delivery, such as workshops in anti-racist practice. The inspection team heard details of current work being undertaken by the course teams, including decolonisation of the curriculum and further exploration of anti-oppressive practice across the courses.

77. The inspection team reviewed wider documentation provided by the university such as the institutional EDI policy and details of meetings of the schools EDI committee, which detailed priorities for the school over the academic year. During meetings with representatives from the university, the inspection team were also made aware of work undertaken to ensure that the campus was accessible to all students and actions such as timetabling changes were implemented to support students with specific needs. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

78. Documentary evidence outlined the structures in place to ensure that all staff had provision within their workload to remain engaged with contemporary developments in social work through their research and scholarship activities. During the inspection event, the course team were able to provide examples of times where their research activity had informed changes to the curriculum. There were also clear examples of how the course team had been influenced by colleagues in practice and allowed this to inform course delivery. As a result of the evidence provided, the inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.5

79. The course provider outlined how the integration of theory into practice was central to social work courses and was explored through a range of sources such as workshops, reflective writing and skills based self-assessments. Students were required to reflect upon their capabilities in this area when developing their personal/professional development plan which supported activities on placement. Practice educator representatives highlighted how the personal development plans supported their planning and supervision with students. They also recognised the vital role they played in supporting students to develop their ability to apply theoretical knowledge to practice based situations, providing some practical examples of the methods they had used to do this.

80. During meetings with MA students and a selection of employer partners, the inspection team heard some concerns about a lack of confidence in students being able to apply theory to practice or that the teaching of this concept had felt abstract. Some students expressed a wish to have more input from the university about practical resources to support this skill.

The inspection team explored this with the course team who explained that this may have been due to their understanding of the skills and confidence in their abilities. The course team drew attention to evidence which supported the standard via course materials such as module descriptors and course handbooks and demonstrated an understanding of their responsibility to develop student confidence during the course. The inspection team agreed that, on balance, the standard was met.

Standard 4.6

81. The course provider submitted details of the ways in which they ensured that students were able to access multidisciplinary learning opportunities both through taught content and whilst on placement. A second year PG Dip/MA social work module titled 'Organisations and Interprofessional Practice' and third year BA social work modules titled 'Understanding Organisations, Management and Interprofessional Practice' offered explicit examples of professionals from other disciplines supporting delivery of taught sessions. Examples of professionals who had supported in this area included barristers, a community paediatrician, substance misuse nurse and occupational therapists. The course team also spoke to planned opportunities to offer student exchanges with the law school at the university so that social work students could learn key court skills and further links with students and colleagues from education courses to understand the ways that the professions were linked. Moving forward, the course team explained that they hoped to extend multidisciplinary learning opportunities to work with mental health and housing services to help strengthen student understanding of adult safeguarding issues. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

82. The course provider clearly outlined how the number of hours spent in structured academic learning was sufficient to ensure that students met the required level of competence. This was linked to explicit university expectations in relation to module credits and time spent in taught and self-directed learning. There was rationale provided of the approach to the weighting of direct teaching throughout the courses which supports the students stage of development. The explanations provided by the university were supported by course handbooks and teaching timetables. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

83. The university submitted an overview of how they ensured that their assessment strategy was rigorous, fair and transparent, supported by feedback that supported ongoing learning and development. There was a range of assessment strategies used on the courses including written case studies, presentations, vivas and exams which ensured that student's breadth of knowledge and skills was appropriately assessed. Student representatives

explained that they were clear about assessment expectations and recognised what was required from them within assessment tasks. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

84. The course provider submitted evidence of how modules on the courses were mapped to Social Work England's Professional Standards and the PCF. This information was contained within the education providers course handbooks which were accessible to all students. The inspection team agreed that the sequencing of assessments was appropriate, demonstrating how students build their knowledge and skills from foundation skills earlier in the courses through to placement preparation and sector specific modules. The inspection team also agreed that the use of a viva to show readiness for practice provided a positive opportunity for students to demonstrate their professional development. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

85. Prior to the inspection visit, the course provider submitted details of university and school assessment policies which underpinned feedback practices on the course. These policies outlined the expectation that all students were entitled to receive feedback that was clear, full and fair which supported their ongoing learning. Documentation provided further detail of expectations in relation to formative and summative feedback for modules with the expectation being that all written assignments were required to provide constructive written feedback. The course provider explained that summative feedback followed a standardised, strengths-based process to ensure consistency. All students were entitled to access a tutorial with their academic advisor to ask questions in relation to feedback, or the module convenor in the event of a failed assignment. Feedback expectations within the practice environment were clearly outlined within practice education handbooks.

86. During a meeting with student representatives, the inspection team heard that there had been occasions where students felt that feedback had been inconsistent and varied by marker. Students questioned whether all marking was moderated to ensure that there was a shared experience. In addition, there were occasions where students had experienced feedback that went outside of the 15 day timescale prescribed within assessment and marking policies. The inspection team questioned this during meetings with the course team and heard that changes in the staff team had an impact in this area, however the course teams had engaged in a calibration exercise to review their approaches. The course team recognised that there was an ongoing need to review feedback across student cohorts and provide additional guidance to staff. This work had commenced through the production of guidance for staff on assessment regulations that was accessible and user friendly.

87. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met with a recommendation in relation to sharing details of the actions that they had undertaken to address student concerns across all course cohorts. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.11

88. As referenced within previous standards, the inspection team reviewed details of the qualifications, experience and expertise of staff which were appropriate. The inspection team also reviewed details of the oversight of external examiners for social work courses which was managed by the university's academic quality and partnerships service. The current external examiners for the courses were appropriately qualified and on the register. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

89. The course provider detailed the range of systems used to manage student progression, including details of the professionals responsible in supporting decision making. The inspection team heard that course co-ordinators had oversight of all progression and assessment for their course and worked in conjunction with the school's curriculum and assessment officer to manage this. University systems included module assessment boards and programme assessment boards which included heads of school, internal markers and external examiners.

90. Progression and assessment in relation to practice learning was monitored via PAP which was convened at the mid and end point of placement. PAP's included representation from the director of practice learning, academic advisors, practitioners, PEs, experts by experience and the relevant course coordinator. During the PAP, attendees reviewed feedback on student portfolios, which included details of direct observations, and considered any trends or concerns in relation to practice experiences across all cohorts. Following review at PAP, all students were entitled to receive feedback to support their future progression. As a result of the evidence provided, the inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

91. Following review of evidence and through feedback received during meetings held as part of the inspection, the inspection team agreed that research and evidence was central to the courses from the outset. The course mapping demonstrated that research modules were evident in both the undergraduate and postgraduate routes and such modules were supported by staff from library and academic services. The inspection team recognised that the course team modelled being research active across the courses and encouraged participation in research from both students and members of the experts by experience networks. Meetings with PEs also provided evidence of how students were encouraged to

be evidence informed in their practice which further supported the standard. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

92. Documentary evidence outlined the range of facilities and resources available to students via the student centre to support their health and wellbeing. A selection of the specific support available included counselling, residential life team, medical support, disability advice, careers and employment and visas and immigration. Student representatives spoke positively about the resources available and provided examples of when this had supported their study. Members of the course team demonstrated an awareness and understanding of services and were able to effectively sign post students where necessary.

93. During a meeting with representatives from the student centre, the inspection team heard that there had been an increase in demand for services and that this had been responded to by increasing staffing in key areas and developing a triage service. Teams had also developed good links with external agencies who could offer support to students on key issues or where there was a more specialist need. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

94. The course provider submitted details of the academic support services available to students via charts which showed the division of student experience structure and the course governance and management plan. The management of resources to support student learning was overseen by the head of department in conjunction with the school director of student experience. The documentation provided outlined that the academic development of students was supported by academic advisors, course staff, library services, the skills hub and canvas, an online virtual learning environment.

95. The role of the academic advisor was highlighted as being central to student support and students were supported to understand the role via descriptors within the course handbooks. Whilst the inspection team agreed that this information was clear and appropriate, discussions held as part of the inspection highlighted that there had been differences in experience for students in relation to this role. Some student representatives highlighted that there was not always a standardised approach to the role which resulted in a lack of consistent support. Some students also highlighted that changes to their academic advisor had been challenging to manage.

96. The inspection team explored the concerns raised with the course team who highlighted that changes to the course teams, as highlighted in reference to a previous standard, had

impacted some student's experiences. The course team explained that there was a desire to revisit the expectations in relation to the role to ensure a more comparable student experience for all. The inspection team recognised that the views presented were not indicative of the entire student cohort and saw evidence that the role was defined and being reviewed. As a result, the inspection team agreed that, on balance, the standard was met with a recommendation in relation to formalising plans to ensure that the academic advisor policy was implemented consistently. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 5.3

97. The inspection team reviewed details of the institutional suitability for professional practice policy alongside the social work specific suitability policy provided within the course handbooks. Details within the course handbooks outlined processes from pre-course suitability through to processes when concerns were raised on the course and the stages involved in the suitability procedure. Expectations in relation to the annual renewal of suitability declarations were also included within the handbooks.

98. The inspection team heard that, where concerns had arisen for students on the course, the initial cause for concern process was supportive and sought to address early difficulties. There was an appropriate escalation process which involved relevant staff should concerns be persistent or increase in complexity. Where formal procedures were initiated, the course team explained that appropriate professional representation was sought to form panels. Where this related to fitness to practice, professionals from employer agencies were involved in decision making and where concerns related to fitness to study, the course team sought appropriate representation from student support services. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

99. Through review of documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection visit and through discussions with the disability support service, the inspection team were able to gain an understanding of the wide range of support available to students with additional needs. The inspection team heard that services adopted a proactive approach to supporting students by initiating contact as early as admission to the course. Detail was provided of the allocation of cases with the most complex needs receiving direct support from a disability advisor. Where needs were identified during study, the team were able to access educational psychology assessments and had good links with GP services to ensure that information to support specific diagnoses could be shared.

100. The inspection team explored the processes in place for students who had learning support plans in place and how the university ensured collaboration across internal staff and with staff in practice settings. The disability support team provided a comprehensive

overview of how needs were shared internally and outlined the system in place to highlight levels of need on systems for ease of access. Within the system, the central support team were also able to view when the plans had been reviewed, allowing them to prompt staff who needed to know key support details. At a practice level, the team explained that they were able to act in an advisory capacity for placement providers and could also offer some links with occupational therapy services where appropriate. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

101. The university provided documentary evidence to support the standard in the form of course handbooks, teaching partnership agreements and the practice development workshop handbook. The documentation outlined how the university provided information about the curriculum, assessment, registration requirements with Social Work England and the need to engage in CPD post registration. During the inspection visit, the inspection team heard that there were sessions provided across the courses to support transition to qualified social worker, which were supported by employer partners and the careers service. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

102. Documentation provided in advance of the inspection outlined the university attendance and engagement policy, with more specific guidance provided to social work students through the course handbooks. The inspection team recognised that the expectations had been refined to ensure their suitability for a programme that leads to professional registration. There was clear guidance available of the minimum expectations in relation to placement days and the arrangements in place for situations where days were missed due to extenuating circumstances. Where practice development days were missed, these were followed up appropriately and students were set reflection tasks or required to attend an alternative date. Student representatives were clear about these arrangements and expectations were communicated effectively. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

103. As referenced in relation to standard 4.10, some concerns were raised in relation to the consistency of academic feedback received by some students, however the inspection team were able to hear about the activities being undertaken by the course team to address this. In relation to practice based feedback to students, the inspection team recognised that additional opportunities had been woven into planning to support student development, such as a pre-midway workshop offered to students by the director of practice learning. This workshop extended to PEs to ensure that any issues were identified and addressed in a timely manner. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

104. The course provider submitted details of their academic appeals policy which was detailed and appropriate. The details of the policy were understood by both students and staff, and it was readily accessible through the course handbooks and via the university website. Further to this, students were also provided with details of information about the independent review through the office of the independent adjudicator for higher education. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

105. As the qualifying courses are a BA (Hons) Social Work and MA/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

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	1.3, 3.5	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider expanding the range of experiences and representation within the expert by experience network, to ensure broader representation of experiences in admissions, curriculum review and direct teaching. The inspectors are recommending that the university consider sharing details of actions undertaken in relation to engagement of experts by experience with all members of the experts by experience network.	Paragraph 31 Paragraph 64
2	4.10	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider sharing details of actions undertaken in relation to student feedback on assessments with all student cohorts.	Paragraph 87
3.	5.2	The inspectors are recommending that the university formalise their plans in relation to review of the academic advisor guidance and share this with students.	Paragraph 96

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.