

Inspection Report

Course provider: De Montfort University

Course approval:

BA (Hons) social work

MA social work

PG Dip social work (masters exit route)

Inspection dates: 19 to 22 November 2024

Report date:	12 th December 2024
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	20 th February 2025
Date conditions met and approved:	6 th June 2025

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Introduction

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

What we do

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

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

officer if they have any queries that may be able to be addressed in advance of the inspection.

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. De Montfort University's BA (Hons) social work, MA social work and PG Dip social work (masters exit route) 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	DMUR1
Course provider	De Montfort University
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	BA (Hons) social work MA social work PG Dip social work (masters exit route)
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	BA – 50 students per cohort MA – 20 students per cohort
Date of inspection	19 to 22 November 2024
Inspection team	Laura Gordon (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Joanne Benn (Lay Inspector) Christine Stogdon (Registrant Inspector)

Language

16. In this document we describe De Montfort University as 'the education provider' or 'the university' and we describe the BA (Hons) social work, MA social work and PG Dip social work (masters exit route) as 'the course' or 'courses'.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 19 to 22 November 2024 at the Heritage House building where education provider is based. As part of this process the inspection team planned to meet with key stakeholders including students, course staff, employers and people with lived experience of social work.

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

Conflict of interest

19. No parties disclosed a conflict of interest.

Meetings with students

20. The inspection team met with 8 BA students and 11 MA students across all years of the courses and including student representatives. Discussions included admissions, course content, placements, feedback, assessments, and support.

Meetings with course staff

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

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in the Lived Experience Advisory Forum (LEAF). Discussions included admissions, support and training, feedback and involvement in all aspects of the course.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including Leicestershire County Council, Cafcass, Rutland County Council, Refuge Care Ltd, Living Without Abuse, and the Zinthiya Trust.

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. Documentary evidence was provided about the open day presentation, programme specification and online website information which indicated the academic requirements for both courses. The competence of ICT skills is tested through the online submission of an application and suitability to meet the professional requirements is assessed by declaration and online interview.

26. During the inspection, the inspection team met with members of the admissions team who confirmed that BA course applicants complete a personal statement and interview, and MA course applicants complete a work experience form and interview. The admissions team confirmed that the personal statement and work experience form are used to consider applicants' command of English.

27. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 1.2

28. The university provided evidence prior to the inspection of the interview questions, work experience declaration and the relevant marking criteria for both. The BA course does not have any formal requirements around prior experience, but this is considered through the questions at interview. The MA course requires 400 hours of paid, voluntary or personal relevant experience where applicants hold a 2.1 degree (800 hours if applicants hold a 2.2 degree).

29. The members of the admissions team explained that if applicants to the MA course do not hold the required hours of work experience at the point of application, they can state how this will be acquired before a set deadline. This will then be checked via a reference.

30. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 1.3

31. The documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection indicated that interviews are undertaken by an academic and either a person with lived experience,

practice educator, or employer partner. It also advised that people with lived experience are also consulted on the admissions process.

32. During the inspection, the inspection team met with people with lived experience who confirmed their involvement in interviews and in the review and setting of interview questions.

33. The employer partners that met with the inspection team confirmed that they had not had any involvement in any element of the admissions process. It was noted that there was an indication of interest in being involved in the future.

34. The inspection team clarified with the admissions team, how often employer partners and practitioners participate in the admissions process. The admissions team confirmed that they have two practice educators that will come in and assist with interviews where needed, but that the interview panel largely consists of an academic and a person with lived experience.

35. The inspection team were therefore unable to conclude that they had seen evidence of consistent and direct involvement of employer partners and placement providers in the admissions process.

36. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 1.3 in relation to the approval of both 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 outcomes section of this report.](#)

Standard 1.4

37. Documentary evidence was provided of the suitability for social work policy, suitability assessment proforma and the suitability declaration which indicated a clear and robust process for considering health, conduct and criminal convictions.

38. The admissions team gave examples during the inspection of the process for criminal convictions and health declarations. They confirmed that where needed reasonable adjustments are identified and support is put in place.

39. They also confirmed that in relation to the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) they have a system for checks, and that they have oversight of where the applicants are within this process. If international applicants are considered then overseas checks are completed (applicable only for the BA course), although it was noted that there are no current international students on the course.

40. The inspection team were therefore satisfied that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 1.5

41. The university provided a copy of their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy and Empowering University Strategy. The university confirmed that admissions tutors review the process annually and this includes a review of admissions data to identify any issues and trends. The analysis from these reviews is presented at the programme management board (PMB) which meets 3 times a year.

42. During the inspection, the admissions team provided more information about how data is collected, used and assessed annually and how this is fed up via the university processes.

43. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 1.6

44. The documentary evidence was provided of the open day presentation and links to the course pages on the university website with information for both courses on the entry requirements, curriculum content and assessments. They also contained details about social work tasks and responsibilities along with costs, bursaries, structures of the courses, eligibility to apply to register following successful completion of the course, professional requirements of the regulator and the generic nature of the social work qualification.

45. During the inspection, the inspection team met with students from both courses. The students confirmed that for previous cohorts there had been issues with communication and information during a period of high staff turnover. However, it was noted for more recent cohorts that this had improved. The inspection team heard from some students that they had experienced a delay in receiving their start date resulting in them missing the induction.

46. The inspection team explored this further with the admissions team who confirmed that the start date is on the conditional offer letter that is sent out to all applicants. They acknowledged that there can be delays in students receiving their final letter as this cannot be sent until they receive all of the information needed and that this can hold up the process.

47. However, they confirmed that if induction is missed all of the information is available to students online and students are supported with a plan to make up the learning.

48. The inspection team therefore concluded that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

49. The university provided copies of the programme handbooks and specifications, placement learning handbook, practice learning portfolios and guidance for both courses. These confirmed that students undertake two placement experiences of 70 days and 100 days and an additional 30 skills days. Placements offer a contrasting experience across child and adult services, and at least one placement is statutory. All 100 day placements have statutory elements enabling students to meet the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF).

50. The inspection team met with students across both courses who were clear about the attendance requirements and confirmed that they had received contrasting placements.

51. The placement team confirmed that there is no issue with lack of placements and that they often have placements leftover. They confirmed that statutory placements are mostly offered to students, but that they have a number of Private, Voluntary, Independent (PVI) agencies available if needed.

52. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 2.2

53. The placement learning handbook details the learning opportunities available to attain the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards on qualification. There is a student profile and matching process, and the Practice Learning Agreement (PLA) identifies the learning opportunities on the placement and matches them to the learning needs of the student.

54. Learning opportunities are checked at the PLA meeting and midway review and the Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) process is used to evaluate the placements and their learning opportunities.

55. The students that met with the inspection team were clear about the Social Work England professional standards and confirmed that their placements gave them lots of learning opportunities and were positive about their experiences.

56. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 2.3

57. The PLA sets out the expectations of the distinct roles of tutor, practice educator, workplace supervisor and student. It also provides clarity from the start of placement around induction, supervision, support and assessment. Workload was also defined at the PLA meeting. Midway meetings are used to identify any gaps in learning and progress to ensure the placement is proceeding appropriately.

58. Students that met with the inspection team confirmed that they received an appropriate induction. The inspection team heard that some students had had issues with supervision but were satisfied that the necessary systems for supervision were in place.

59. The practice educators that met with the inspection team confirmed that the PLA is used to ensure support and structure for the placement.

60. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 2.4

61. The placement profiles, matching and PLA all contribute to the learning opportunities being aligned to the learning needs of individual students. The PCF and Social Work England professional standards are used to ensure opportunities are at the required levels of learning.

62. The inspection team met with students across both courses who provided positive responses about their placement responsibilities. The practice educators that met with the inspection team also confirmed that students were provided sufficient stretch in their learning.

63. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 2.5

64. For the BA course, students are required to complete and pass all level 4 work before progressing to placement, including a communications exercise assessed by people with lived experience, reflective accounts, analysis of an ethical dilemma and application of theory and legislation. Students are required to meet the readiness for practice criteria before a placement can be allocated. For the MA course, students are also required to complete and pass all of year one before progressing to placement in year two.

65. Students that met with the inspection team confirmed that the communications exercise and skills days were useful in preparation for placement.

66. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 2.6

67. The university confirmed prior to the inspection that all practice educators are registered social workers and have completed or are undertaking practice educator qualifications PE1 and PE2. A series of practice educator workshops are offered 3 times a year, and practice educators are encouraged to attend. The purpose of these workshops is for practice educators to keep up to date with their knowledge base and current developments, share practice experience and develop networks across agencies. A record of attendance is maintained for these workshops.

68. During the inspection, the placement team confirmed how they check offsite practice educator training, currency, public liability insurance and registration. The placement partners who employ their own practice educators also keep their own records, and the university consult with the agency about currency and training. Practice educator information is recorded on the PLA, held centrally and reviewed and checked by the placement team.

69. The inspection team therefore concluded that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 2.7

70. There is a process for raising concerns, within the placement and programme handbooks, and information about raising concerns is also provided within the PLA and placement induction. The concerns process follows a Stage 1 process of action planning and a stage 2 process resulting in investigation where concerns have not been resolved.

71. During the inspection, the inspection team heard a reluctance from some students to raise concerns that might lead to them failing the placement. However, other students were supportive of their peers to raise concerns and articulated the reasons why this was important.

72. The course team confirmed that they acknowledge difficulties for students in raising concerns and that they provide support to students to encourage them to follow the concerns process. They confirmed that all failed placements go through the Practice Assessment Panel (PAP) for consideration and review.

73. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

74. Documentary evidence was provided prior to the inspection detailing the structures, roles and responsibilities surrounding the course. This includes regular Programme Management Boards (PMB), which monitor the management and quality of

the courses and allows issues to be raised and solutions to be identified. There is an Annual Enhancement Review (AER) and action plan, and the Practice Assessment Panel (PAP) meet three times per year to ensure the practice elements of the courses are managed appropriately.

75. During the inspection, the inspection team heard from members of senior management how feedback from these processes feed into the higher university structures and committees. The senior team also provided further information about the systems in place for course changes and plans for resourcing of the courses. It was noted that there had been some previous issues with staffing over the last year, but the inspection team were satisfied that these had now been resolved.

76. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 3.2

77. Documentary evidence included a template agreement for placement providers and included a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with one local authority. The PLA meeting is used to establish the learning opportunities and responsibilities during placement. There was also a clear section in the PLA regarding consent when working with service users.

78. The employer partners and practice educators that met with the inspection team were clear about the concern process and the course team gave examples of placement breakdown.

79. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 3.3

80. The PLA documentation considers the health, wellbeing and risk to the student and reasonable adjustments are discussed where necessary with students. The placement handbook details the responsibilities of the placement provider who is required to sign the DMU Placement Provider Health & Safety Agreement.

81. Students confirmed they are given health and safety policies to read at the start of the placement. It was noted by the students that met with the inspection team that there have been some circumstances where reasonable adjustments on placement had been delayed.

82. Both the course team and placement providers acknowledged delays with reasonable adjustments and the course team confirmed that they had had discussions with the disability service about these issues.

83. The inspection team were therefore satisfied that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 3.4

84. Documentary evidence indicated employer partner involvement in the QAPL feedback following placements and in PAP meetings to discuss placements and review placement portfolios.

85. The employer partners that met with the inspection team were unable to confirm any involvement in management and review of the course, other than placement issues through the PAP and the QAPL feedback.

86. The inspection team heard from the course team that there was previously a stakeholder meeting and had received the terms of reference in anticipation of the university looking to reinstate this group. However, at the time of the inspection it was not something that employer partners that met with the inspection team were aware of.

87. The inspection team noted that employer partners appeared to have strong involvement in discussions surrounding placements, but that involvement across other areas of the course did not appear to currently be robust or consistent.

88. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standards 3.4 and 3.5 in relation to the approval of both 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 outcomes section of this report.](#)

Standard 3.5

89. Documentary evidence detailed the Annual Enhancement Review (AER) process, QAPL process, module evaluations, and Programme Management Board (PMB) which all contributed to the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of the courses.

90. It was noted that the PAP included employer partners, people with lived experience and practice educators and this was confirmed by these groups during the inspection.

91. The people with lived experience that met with the inspection team were members of a group called LEAF. They confirmed that they had been involved in the review of the courses content and have access to the module content. They confirmed that they feel supported in their involvement with access to training and can provide feedback on the courses, with examples given of changes that they had influenced.

92. Student Voice feedback is collected a minimum of three times a year, and module and course level feedback are collected annually from students at all levels of the

course. Student feedback from all levels is used to inform the AER. There are student representatives on both courses, staff student meetings and students also sit on the PMB.

93. The students that met with the inspection team provided examples of feedback that they had provided that had led to changes to the courses.

94. As noted under standard 3.4, the employer partners that met with the inspection team appeared to have strong involvement in discussions surrounding placements, but involvement across other areas of the course did not appear to currently be robust or consistent.

95. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standards 3.4 and 3.5 in relation to the approval of both 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 outcomes section of this report.](#)

Standard 3.6

96. Documentary evidence indicated a structured 3-year strategy for cohort numbers that considered admission numbers against capacity and placement availability. The required placement numbers are discussed at the PAP with placement leads and placement co-ordinators and addressed at the PMB.

97. The senior team members that met with the inspection team confirmed that maximum cohort numbers for the BA course are 50 students per cohort and 20 students per cohort for the MA course. They confirmed that student numbers are capped based upon placement capacity and that currently they have a surplus of placements.

98. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 3.7

99. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed the current social work lead who holds overall responsibility for the programme. The inspection team were satisfied that this individual is a registered social worker and appropriately qualified and experienced.

100. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

101. Documentary evidence was provided of staff CVs, team roles and module staff allocations. All the 11 staff who teach on the BA and MA courses are qualified and experienced social work practitioners. There are a variety of areas of experience and specialism within the team and some of the staff are researchers. There are also guest and associate lecturers who bring their specialist knowledge and other professionals such as solicitors, police officers, health professionals and lawyers involved in the teaching of the course.

102. It was noted by the inspection team that over the last year there had been a significant turnover in staff. The inspection team sought clarity around staffing and the temporary use of part time hourly staff. The inspection team were assured that the staffing issues have now been resolved.

103. The inspection team heard that the staff student ratio was 1:15 from senior management and that new staff are encouraged to complete the postgraduate certificate in education. (PGCE).

104. The inspection team met with the course team who confirmed that new staff involved in marking assessments are supported to understand the marking rubrics and expectations.

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

Standard 3.9

106. The university advised that there is an annual review of data sets regarding progression and achievement which are considered as part of the Annual Enhancement Review (AER) cycle. Emerging trends are addressed in the AER action plan and data is reviewed at the Programme Management Board (PMB).

107. During the inspection, the course team provided more information about how central data is disseminated to the team and used, including EDI data. They confirmed that data can be pulled at various levels, such as individual, module, school level, and that they can see attendance and other metrics. The university also has a commitment to addressing the awarding gap.

108. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 3.10

109. The university confirmed that there are training programmes and regular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) events for staff, including training for staff undertaking new roles. Additionally, within the team shadowing opportunities have been organised with the local authority to allow staff members to better understand

areas of practice they are unfamiliar with, or to maintain knowledge of current practice. Team members can also take part in peer teaching observations.

110. During the inspection, the course team provided examples of the opportunities available to them to maintain their currency, such as maintaining close links to practice, support to undertake research, audits of areas of practice, co-production with case studies and testing with local authorities. Staff either had undertaken or were undertaking their PGCE, PhD or MA in education and the senior team confirmed that time and support was built into staff workload and appraisals.

111. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

112. The university provided copies of the programme specifications, programme handbooks and module specifications. Module learning outcomes were mapped against Social Work England professional standards, the PCF, and Knowledge and skills statements for children and adults, and progression points were clearly identifiable within the programme handbooks.

113. It was noted that the university is implementing block teaching across all its courses and that the BA and MA courses for social work will be looking to implement this from September 2025. The course team provided timetables for the current courses and options for the new block teaching.

114. It was noted by the inspection team that the changes to the teaching would not result in any changes to the course content, assessment, placements or any of the progression points across the courses. The inspection team were therefore satisfied that the proposed changes would not impact the standards. The course team were advised that if there were any further changes to proposal, they would need to seek further advice from Social Work England.

115. The students that met with the inspection team were clear that Social Work England's professional standards were embedded across the courses.

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

Standard 4.2

117. The documentary evidence indicated that people with lived experience participate in the review of course content and delivering teaching. This was confirmed during the inspection by the people with lived experience that the inspection team met with.

118. There is a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with one local authority for a mutually beneficial learning and development hub to support both students and social care staff employed by that local authority.

119. Practitioners are involved through the PAP, teaching skills days, and delivering taught sessions across both courses. The employer partners that met with the inspection team confirmed some involvement in the teaching of the course.

120. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

121. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team noted that there was some involvement of employer partners and practitioners in the teaching of the course but that this could be strengthened with consistent involvement in the design and review of the curriculum. The inspection team is therefore making a recommendation in relation to standard 4.2 for both courses that the university review and enhance the involvement of employer partners and practitioners in the design and review of the curriculum. [Full details of the recommendation can be found in the proposed outcomes section of the report.](#)

Standard 4.3

122. Documentary evidence was provided of the university's EDI strategy, Empowering University strategy and the Universal Design for Learning Approach which facilitates students with a variety of learning differences to access education. It was noted that the 4 pillars of university wide strategy of Learning for Life, Knowledge Creation, Empowering People and Partnerships with Purpose are embedded in the courses from a strategic level.

123. The range of assessments across the courses support different learning styles and the PLA covers students learning needs at the start of placement.

124. During the inspection, members of support services provided examples of how they support diverse levels of academic learning. They emphasised that students were treated as individuals and provided examples of reasonable adjustments that could be provided.

125. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 4.4

126. The university confirmed that practitioners are brought in to deliver guest lectures to maintain currency of practice issues. The curriculum uses an evidence-based and research-informed approach, with lecturers all having time allocated to maintain and update their knowledge and updating the curriculum is part of the annual monitoring of the courses. The social care learning and development hub also regularly holds

lectures on new and emerging areas of research or practice, which staff are encouraged to attend.

127. During the inspection, the course team provided a variety of examples of updating the curriculum in line with changes across a number of mechanisms.

128. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 4.5

129. Documentary evidence of the programme and module specifications for the course confirmed that theory and practice are integrated into students' learning and that the module assessments integrate theory and practice to evidence sound understanding and application.

130. The students that met with the inspection team confirmed that practice helped embed their learning. The course team provided examples of a wide spectrum of theories across different areas of social work practice that are then applied to case studies and practice.

131. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 4.6

132. The university confirmed prior to the inspection that on each level of both courses, students are required to participate in at least one inter-professional learning event. This requires students to attend an event with students from across the faculty, including other professional courses, to work collaboratively to complete set tasks and activities. The events use a problem-based learning approach, presenting inter-professional groups of students with case studies, situations or descriptions of lived experiences and ask students to consider possible practice approaches and strategies, or alternative routes of practice that could have resulted in better outcomes.

133. During the inspection, the practice educators that met with the inspection team confirmed that they will seek interprofessional learning opportunities for students as part of placement learning.

134. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 4.7

135. The documentary evidence in the form of module specifications provided clarity that the level of academic teaching is aligned to the credits for the module.

136. The inspection team considered the proposed move to block teaching and noted that the level of teaching will not be impacted. The students across both courses will receive the same teaching prior to placement as with the current courses.

137. The inspection team therefore concluded that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 4.8

138. Documentary evidence was provided in the form of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy, Assessment and Feedback policy and assessment schedules for both courses. The university advised that assessments are linked to academic learning outcomes and are also linked to different aspects of Social Work England's professional standards, and the PCF. There is a variation in the type of assessments to allow students to show a variety of skills and support a range of abilities or learning styles and allows different forms of communication to be assessed.

139. Students can access a copy of the assessment schedule from the beginning of each academic year. A course rubric has been developed to ensure consistent and fair marking processes across modules. Additionally, the standardisation of marks for criteria such as writing and referencing is in place to ensure fairness and parity in marking approaches within the team.

140. During the inspection, the course team provided further details about how formative assessments are used both formally and informally across all modules. They also confirmed that the formative and summative assessments in one module, inform the work that the students are doing across the modules.

141. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 4.9

142. Documentary evidence of guidance and policies surrounding assessments was provided as stated above under standard 4.8. The assessments for both courses are mapped to the learning outcomes and appropriately sequenced.

143. The course team and students confirmed that there had been improvements made to the spacing of assessments in line with student feedback and that the assessment burden had been reduced. It was also noted that the proposed move to block teaching will also support students with the timing of assessments.

144. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 4.10

145. A course rubric has been developed to ensure consistent and fair marking processes across modules. Additionally, the standardisation of marks for criteria such as writing and referencing is used to ensure fairness and parity in marking approaches. All assignment feedback should include 3 specific areas for development for each student. Formative and summative feedback is provided across the courses.

146. During the inspection, the inspection team heard from students across both courses that there had been inconsistencies with feedback and that some of the feedback received had not been felt to have been constructive nor supported their development needs.

147. It was noted by the inspection team that there had been a high turnover in staffing over the last year which had resulted in a number of temporary and new permanent members of the course team.

148. The inspection team met with the course team who confirmed that new staff involved in marking assessments are supported to understand the marking rubric and expectations. They confirmed that they will be holding a development day to focus on discussing consistency in marking.

149. The inspection team concluded that there were appropriate systems and processes in place for feedback. They noted that the course team had implemented changes in response to student feedback and therefore agreed that this standard was met across both courses.

150. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team noted that there had been evidence suggesting a lack of consistency around feedback and that feedback was not always seen to be constructive and supportive. The inspection team is therefore making a recommendation in relation to standards 4.10 and 5.7 for both courses that the university consider reviewing their marking processes to ensure constructive and supportive feedback that is meaningful to students is provided consistently. [Full details of the recommendation can be found in the proposed outcomes section of the report.](#)

Standard 4.11

151. The university provided evidence of staff CVs prior to inspection which demonstrated a range of experience across the course team. Both courses have two external examiners, who are registered, qualified and experienced social workers with external examiner experience. The course team can also undertake peer observations to maintain quality.

152. The placement team confirmed that practice educators that participate in the assessment of placement portfolios are checked to ensure that they are registered social workers and appropriately qualified.

153. The people with lived experience that met with the inspection team confirmed they receive appropriate training to undertake assessments and have access to all the course content and additional training if needed.

154. The course team confirmed that new staff are supported and given the information needed to undertake the assessment of students.

155. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 4.12

156. The university provided details of the PAP, QAPL processes and exam board structures that are in place for both courses prior to the inspection. There were clear progression points noted within the programme documentation and completion of all modules in the first year forms the readiness for practice assessment which must be passed before placement can be started.

157. There are clear expectations around direct observations of practice within the PLA and placement handbook. Feedback across the courses is provided to students by members of the LEAF group involved in teaching, practice educators and service users whilst on placement.

158. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 4.13

159. Documentary evidence was provided in the form of the programme handbooks and specifications and the individual modules specifications for both courses. The university advised that evidence-based practice is consistently discussed and encouraged throughout teaching on both courses. Students must use evidence to support their reasoning in assessments, and some assignments across the course specifically require evidence-based practice to be discussed.

160. The MA course includes a research methods module and dissertation, and the BA course includes a research informed practice module and research project to support student's development of evidence-based approaches. It was noted that on the PG Dip masters exit route students are still required to complete the research methods module.

161. Additionally, during the inspection, the inspection team heard that a number of members of the team are actively involved in research activities, which is incorporated into teaching across the courses.

162. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

163. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection detailed the various support services available to students through a single point of contact called the Student Gateway. Students can gain support for mental wellbeing, arrange assessments for learning differences, receive wellbeing support, gain information about finances and receive disability, study skills or keyworker support. The university has a dedicated employability and careers team, called DMU Works. Students are able to contact them directly for advice and support, or to find work or volunteering opportunities. Where students have disclosed specific learning or support needs on the self-declaration form, they are directed to support services at an early stage.

164. During the inspection, the inspection team met with staff from support services who provided further details about the accessibility of services including whilst on placement.

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

Standard 5.2

166. The university confirmed that students are allocated a personal tutor for pastoral and academic development, and they will also have a placement tutor to provide support regarding placement and practice. There are online resources for academic development and numerous library resources available to students.

167. The support staff that met with the inspection team confirmed that students have access to various workshops including for academic writing, a dedicated librarian, and that there is specialist carers support and international student support available.

168. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 5.3

169. Students are required to self-declare prior to starting the course, prior to placement and annually. Students can be referred to the university fitness to practise process and where concerns are raised on placement there is a 2 stage concerns process to address issues. Students sign a working together agreement which is based on the Social Work England professional standards and code of conduct.

170. During the inspection, the course team provided examples of the concerns processes being implemented.

171. The inspection team therefore concluded that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 5.4

172. Prior to the inspection, the university advised that if health or learning needs are declared by a student reasonable adjustments are implemented to support their learning. The university uses a Universal Design for Learning approach to support students with additional needs. This includes ensuring that all learning materials are in accessible and editable formats. There is recording of lectures using DMU Replay to allow students to listen back to sessions and students are offered specific support such as extra time in exams, or access specific equipment or software.

173. The PLA meeting is used to discuss support needs on placement and students are encouraged to disclose these prior to placement matching so that support needs can be taken into consideration when approaching providers. The team have implemented some specific strategies in relation to this and provided examples of these.

174. During the inspection, further examples of reasonable adjustments were provided from support staff, the course team, employer partners and students. It was noted by students that met with the inspection team that there have been some circumstances where reasonable adjustments on placement had been delayed. The course team confirmed that they had had discussions with the disability service about these issues.

175. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 5.5

176. The programme handbooks, placement handbook and virtual learning environment (VLE) provided students with information about the courses. The programme handbooks outline the curriculum, processes for placements, assessment schedule, student requirements, and information regarding professional registration and CPD. The VLE also includes module handbooks and specifications, module resources, placement guidance portfolio documents and templates, assessment guidance, and reflective log templates.

177. The university advised that in the final year of both courses there is an employability event, which includes information on how to register with professional bodies and requirements for CPD. The final year modules are focused on developing professional practitioners and aimed towards supporting students into practice and the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

178. The students that met with the inspection team confirmed that they had access to appropriate information and received details about the ASYE and careers.

179. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 5.6

180. The placement and programme handbooks set out clear expectations to students about attendance requirements. Attendance is monitored through a swipe system and signing registers. There are clear expectations around the completion of placement days and retrieval procedures for missed skills days.

181. The course team confirmed that lectures are recorded and can therefore be accessed to make up missed learning. Attendance is closely monitored and will trigger a meeting with the personal tutor if it falls below the university requirements. The students that met with the inspection team were clear about the attendance requirements of both courses.

182. The inspection team therefore agreed that this standard was met for both courses.

Standard 5.7

183. As noted in the above standards, evidence was provided by the university of moderation processes and marking rubrics for both courses. Formative and summative feedback is provided across the courses, and all assignment feedback should include 3 specific areas for development for each student.

184. However, as noted under standard 4.10, the students that met with the inspection team advised that there had been inconsistencies with feedback and that some of the feedback received had not felt constructive nor supported their development needs.

185. Students also confirmed that feedback was generally timely and any significant delay in feedback appeared to be isolated to a period of significant staff shortages.

186. The inspection team concluded that there were appropriate systems and processes in place for feedback. They noted that the course team had implemented changes in response to student feedback and therefore agreed that this standard was met across both courses.

187. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team noted that there had been evidence suggesting a lack of consistency around feedback and that feedback was not always felt to be constructive and supportive. The inspection team is therefore making a recommendation in relation to standards 4.10 and 5.7 for both courses that the university consider reviewing their marking processes to ensure constructive and supportive feedback that is meaningful to students is provided consistently. [Full details of the recommendation can be found in the proposed outcomes section of the report.](#)

Standard 5.8

188. Documentary evidence was provided of the academic appeals process and appeals form. The academic appeals process is clearly outlined in the programme handbooks and in the academic regulations. The process is managed outside of the

social work team to ensure impartiality and students must submit an appeal form, a statement and any supporting evidence within 21 days of receiving assessment board results.

189. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met for both courses.

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

Standard 6.1

190. As the qualifying courses are a BA (Hons) social work, MA social work and PG Dip social work (masters exit route) the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

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

Conditions

192. 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.

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

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	Standard 1.3	The education provider will provide evidence of meaningful direct involvement of employers in the admissions process.	20 th May 2025	Paragraph 36
2	Standards 3.4 and 3.5	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates employer involvement in the management, monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems in place across both courses.	20 th May 2025	Paragraph 88 and Paragraph 95

Recommendations

194. 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	Standard 4.2	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider undertaking a review to enhance the involvement of employer partners	Paragraph 121

		and practitioners in the design, development and review of the curriculum.	
2	Standards 4.10 and 5.7	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider reviewing their marking processes to ensure constructive and supportive feedback that is meaningful to students is provided consistently.	Paragraph 150 and Paragraph 187

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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.			
Learning environment			
2.1 Ensure that students spend at least 200 days (including up to 30 skills days) gaining different experiences and learning in practice settings. Each student will have: i) placements in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences; and ii) a minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing experience of sufficient numbers of statutory social work tasks involving high risk decision making and legal interventions.	☒	☐	☐
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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.			
2.7 Ensure that policies and processes, including for whistleblowing, are in place for students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures and organisational wrongdoing, and report concerns openly and safely without fear of adverse consequences.	☒	☐	☐
Course governance, management and quality			
3.1 Ensure courses are supported by a management and governance plan that includes the roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability of individuals and governing groups in the delivery, 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.	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
3.5 Ensure that regular and effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems are in place, and that these involve employers, people with lived experience of social work, and students.	☐	☒	☐
3.6 Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which includes 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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendatio n given
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, 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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
necessary to meet the professional standards.			
4.9 Ensure that assessments are mapped to the curriculum and are appropriately sequenced to match students' progression through the course.	☒	☐	☐
4.10 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	☒	☐	☒
4.11 Ensure assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise, and that external examiner(s) for the course are appropriately qualified and experienced and on the register.	☒	☐	☐
4.12 Ensure that there are systems to manage students' progression, with input from a range of people, to inform decisions about their progression including via direct observation of practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.13 Ensure that the course is designed to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice, underpinned by skills, knowledge and understanding 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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.	☒	☐	☐
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	☒	☐	☐
5.4 Make supportive and reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the professional standards, in accordance with relevant legislation.	☒	☐	☐
5.5 Provide information to students about their curriculum, practice placements, assessments and transition to registered social worker including information on 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			

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendatio n given
6.1 The threshold entry route to the register will normally be a bachelor’s degree with honours in social work.	☒	☐	☐

Regulator decision

195. Approved with conditions.

Annex 2: Meeting of conditions

196. 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](#).

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

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

	Standard not met	Condition	Recommendation
1	Standard 1.3	The education provider will provide evidence of meaningful direct involvement of employers in the admissions process.	Met
2	Standards 3.4 and 3.5	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates employer involvement in the management, monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems in place across both courses.	Met

Findings

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

Standard 1.3

200. The course provider provided evidence of stakeholder meetings that discussed recruitment and involved employer representation. There was also evidence of employer participation in interviews, review of interview questions and an intention to widen the pool of participants in interviews.

201. The inspectors agreed that this standard is now met.

Standard 3.4

202. Documentary evidence in the form of minutes from the stakeholder group meetings indicate involvement of employer partners in the review of EDI trends and willingness from employers to be more involved in teaching and assessment on the courses.

203. The inspectors agreed that this standard is now met.

Standard 3.5

204. As stated in the standard above, the course provider has provided evidence of stakeholder meeting minutes that involve discussions with employer partners. Evidence was also provided of employer involvement in a number of teaching activities, as part of the readiness for practice assessment panel, and further opportunities for the involvement of practitioners that had been identified by the course provider.

205. The inspectors agreed that this standard is now met.

206. Following the review of the documentary evidence submitted, the inspection team are satisfied that the conditions set against the approval of the BA (Hons) social work, MA social work and G Dip social work (exit route) are met.

Regulator decision

207. Conditions Met.