

Inspection Report

Course provider: Middlesex University

Course approval: PGDip Social Work Step Up

Inspection dates: 12th – 14th December 2023

Report date:	07.02.2024
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	19.2.24
Date conditions met and approved:	12.3.24

Contents

Introduction	3
What we do.....	3
Summary of Inspection	5
Language	5
Inspection.....	6
Meetings with students	6
Meetings with course staff.....	6
Meeting with people with lived experience of social work	6
Meetings with external stakeholders.....	6
Findings	7
Standard one: Admissions.....	7
Standard two: Learning environment	9
Standard three: Course governance, management and quality.....	12
Standard four: Curriculum assessment.....	17
Standard five: Supporting students	21
Standard six: Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register	24
Proposed outcome.....	25
Conditions	25
Recommendations	25
Annex 1: Education and training standards summary.....	26
Regulator decision	33
Annex 2: Meeting of conditions.....	34
Findings	34
Conclusion.....	34
Regulator decision	35

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

Inspection ID	MUR3
Course provider	Middlesex University
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Course inspected	PGDip Social Work Step Up
Mode of study	Full time, accelerated
Maximum student cohort	30
Date of inspection	12 th – 14 th December 2023
Inspection team	Daisy Bragadini – (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Michelle Loughrey - (Lay Inspector) Kev Stone - (Registrant Inspector)

Language

16. In this document we describe Middlesex University as 'the education provider' or 'the university' and we describe the PGDip Social Work Step Up as 'the course'.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 12th – 14th December 2023 at the Hendon Campus where the course is delivered. 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. Cohort 7 of the course graduated in March 2023 and cohort 8 was due to commence in January 2024.

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 6 members of the course alumni. 5 were graduates from cohort 6, who qualified in 2021, and 1 was from cohort 7, who graduated in 2023.

Discussions included the admissions process, their curriculum, practice placements, support they received and feedback.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the teaching and assessment team, student support services, staff responsible for practice placements and admissions and the senior leadership 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 admissions processes and assessment of students. The inspection team met with members of Children's Active Involvement Service (CAIS) and the university's service users' and carers' group, Involve. Discussions included their involvement in the admissions processes, how they were supported to carry out their role and how they provided feedback in order to influence the course.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners from all 6 London council boroughs within the North Central and East London Regional Partnership (NCEL RP), including Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Camden, Islington and Barnet. The inspection team also met with the Programme Manager of the course from Islington council, the lead partner local authority.

Findings

24. In this section we set out the inspectors' findings in relation to whether the education provider has demonstrated that it meets the education and training standards and that the course will ensure that students who successfully complete the course are able to meet the professional standards.

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

25. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were provided with the webpage to the course information which outlined the application process managed through the Department for Education (DfE). The webpage managed by Islington Council, the lead partner in the partnership, was also shared and further detailed the application requirements. Applicants' academic and language qualifications were assessed by the Capita team through their application, and ICT skills were assessed as part of the various stages of the application process. Candidates who were invited to the assessment centre completed 4 activities including an interview, role play, online written exercise and group activity including a reflection task. The inspection team were confident that a holistic, multi-dimensional assessment process covered the requirements of the standard, which was met.

Standard 1.2

26. The inspection team reviewed evidence which illustrated how prior relevant experience was considered as part of the admissions process. During the first sifting stage of the application process, social work managers were involved from across the partnership to assess prior experience held by applicants. As a requirement of the course, candidates were required to have at least 6 months paid or voluntary experience with children, young people, families or vulnerable adults. Candidates were required to outline this experience within the application form and during their interview. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

27. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team were provided with meeting minutes from the Delivery Group meetings held by the NCEL RP which included the university. Together with the Programme Manager and course team from the university, the group met on a monthly basis where admissions processes were discussed. The course provider collaborated with people with lived experience of social work who were members of both the CAIS and Involve group, as well as those recruited by the DfE. The advisory board, managed by the DfE, was attended by the Programme Manager for the previous 2 cohorts which enabled direct involvement in the assessment materials. The inspection team were provided with evidence of the feedback which had been provided by members of the CAIS group on the questions asked at the group exercise, and which had also been incorporated by the advisory board. During meetings held with employer partners, CAIS and Involve groups, the inspection team gained further assurances that these groups were involved in the admissions processes. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

28. The inspection team reviewed a range of evidence which outlined the processes followed to assess the suitability of applicants. An initial declaration of suitability was required as part of the application form and the regional partnership sift process involved a decision-making process where candidates had made a positive declaration. The university completed a suitability check covering health, criminal record and safeguarding issues, completed online. A clear process was evidenced for the inspection team in relation to the processing of disclosures which involved the Programme Leader, Director of Programmes and the Programme Manager. The university completed the enhanced DBS process once application forms had been received and the inspection team were provided with the link and guide sent to applicants to guide them through this process. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

29. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were provided with evidence to show how the DfE had supported work to ensure applicants from underrepresented groups and those with protected characteristics were enabled to apply to the course. This had supported the work of the course provider to implement and monitor their equality and diversity policy and the inspection team were provided with diversity data in relation to applicants. The Delivery Group meetings were used to analyse and identify learning in relation to this data and implement necessary changes. During the meeting held with staff involved in admissions, the inspection team heard about the provision of unconscious bias training

delivered by the local authority equality, diversity and inclusion lead. All university staff completed mandatory training, including on the Equality Act 2010, and staff were able to provide examples of the reasonable adjustments provided for applicants where appropriate. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

30. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team reviewed the DfE website which included information on requirements for applying, training and funding, and information about qualification leading to eligibility to apply for registration. Information was available on the Islington course page on a range of different aspects of the course and included feedback from past students. The course provider delivered Information Events hosted alongside the Programme Manager who was also available to be contacted by email to answer questions and facilitate contact with graduates from the course. During the assessment centre days, a briefing presentation was delivered with an additional opportunity for candidates to ask questions. The inspection team were also provided with evidence to show the contact days offered once candidates had accepted their offer of a place on the course. During the meeting held with graduates of the course, the inspection team heard that they had positive experiences of the admissions processes and clear expectations of the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

31. The inspection team reviewed evidence which illustrated the provision of 2 contrasting placements. The first was typically located within adult services and the final placement was within children and families' statutory services. Within the Social Work Professional Practice Placement Handbook, the inspection team were able to review the expectation of 170 days in placement and the completion of 30 skills days. The inspection team were provided with the timetable which showed over 31 skills days with an additional 10 days of Expert in Practice days, covering a range of current topics and delivered by practitioners from the local authority. As part of the placement portfolio, practice educators were required to verify attendance on placement days and attendance at and engagement with skills days was monitored by the Programme Leader. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

32. As part of the evidence submission the inspection team reviewed the regional partnership's Memorandum of Understanding which outlined the responsibility of the local authority partners alongside the course provider to secure and manage appropriate placements. In addition, the inspection team reviewed the course contract specification which outlined placement requirements and heard that all placements, both new and existing, were quality assured each year. The Placements Quality Assurance Meeting (PQAM) met termly to monitor the quality of the placements and involved members of the course team and placement providers. The inspection team reviewed feedback from students completed after their placements which reflected that students felt they received appropriate and effective learning opportunities. The Practice Learning Agreement, Midway Report and feedback gathered from practice educators further supported the mechanisms in place to ensure the provision and suitability of the learning opportunities on placement. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

33. The inspection team reviewed the Practice Learning Agreement which included an induction checklist covering practical elements of the placement and resources. Evidence outlined that the practice educator or supervisor were required to ensure that the checklists had been completed prior to the Practice Learning Agreement meeting taking place. The inspection team were provided with completed copies of agreements and Midway Reports which illustrated how aspects of safety and workload were addressed and monitored. During the meetings held with practice educators and students the inspection team heard that these processes worked effectively, and students felt supported on placement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

34. The inspection team reviewed the Practice Learning Agreement documentation which aligned learning opportunities with the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) for both the 1st and 2nd placements. In addition, the inspection team were provided with completed Midway Reports which highlighted how students' progress was assessed and future learning needs were identified. Learning opportunities provided through practice placements were discussed within the Delivery Group meetings and the Programme Manager maintained quality assurance oversight by reading all Practice Learning Agreement meeting paperwork and Midway Reports, and gathering feedback from students after completion of their placements. During the meeting held with staff involved in practice learning the inspection team heard that the placement tutor worked closely with placement staff to plan and

monitor learning opportunities to ensure they were matched to students' progression. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

35. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team reviewed documentary evidence which outlined how students underwent assessed preparation for direct practice. Prior to commencing their first placement, students completed the Readiness for Direct Practice module, where they were required to meet the corresponding PCF level for a first placement. As part of this assessment students were required to complete a role play exercise and write a 2000-word essay and 2000-word case study. During the meeting held with staff involved in practice learning the inspection team explored how students who failed an aspect of this assessment were supported and how the course provider was able to assure themselves that the assessment process was adequately robust. During the meeting held with students the inspection team heard how they had felt the assessment provided them with the essential knowledge and preparation required to start their placements. Practice educators were further able to corroborate this evidence and described the students on the course as being well prepared and skilled at the start of their practice learning. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

36. Prior to the inspection the inspection team reviewed narrative and supporting documentary evidence. A sample of the Practice Educator register held by the local authority was shared with the inspection team which captured interests of practice educators, but not details of professional registration, training or currency. Narrative evidence supplied informed the inspection team that the professional registration number for each practice educator was recorded on the front page of the Practice Learning Agreement. During the meeting held with staff responsible for practice learning the inspection team explored the process followed in relation to this and heard that the Placement Tutor was responsible for checking the registration status for each practice educator prior to the start of the placement. The inspection team heard that those practice educators who were engaged in practice educator training were supervised by a mentor who assessed and completed reports on the practice educator.

37. Documentary evidence included the Social Work Professional Practice Placement Handbook which outlined the role of the practice educator, and the Practice Educator Workshops provided by the university. Although support forums for Practice Educators were not mandatory, attendance was monitored, and the regional partnership maintained a register. One example shared in the meeting with practice learning staff was a session run

by the Programme Manager on students who were struggling. Briefing sessions and supporting documents were provided by the partnership to all practice educators which included relevant information on the course and expectations for placements. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

38. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standard 2.6. Detail of the recommendation can be found [here](#).

Standard 2.7

39. Prior to the inspection the inspection team reviewed documentary evidence which highlighted that both placement provider and university whistleblowing policies were required to be checked as part of the induction process. Also included within the Practice Learning Agreement was the procedure for dealing with concerns, disagreements and complaints. Within the placement handbook the role of the practice advisory panel was outlined which included experienced practice educators, representatives from partner agencies, the Director of Programmes, Programme leader and the Placement Academic Lead. This panel was responsible for overseeing practice learning within social work programmes, including concerns or complaints raised. The placement handbook also included the processes which governed concerns or complaints from students whilst on placement and the whistleblowing procedure. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

40. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team reviewed a range of documentary evidence which outlined the management and governance systems in place to manage the course delivery. They reviewed the Organisational and Faculty map which included detail of how the Faculty of Health Social Care and Education was structured through Heads of Department in Mental Health and Social Work, the Director of Programmes and the Programme Lead. The Learning and Teaching and Academic Planning & Quality Committees supported the quality assurance of the course and reported on a termly basis. The inspection team reviewed evidence which showed how the Education Monitoring and Enhancement process worked to monitor student experience, synthesising and analysing relevant data. During the meeting held with the senior management team these mechanisms were explored and the inspection team were able to hear about how resourcing considerations were managed.

41. The course was managed for the DfE by the NCEL RP and through the Programme Manager who was employed by the lead partner authority, Islington. The role involved management of the programme, provision of support for the local authorities and university in the delivery of academic and practice placement learning, and to co-ordinate with and feedback to the DfE.

42. The inspection team were also able to review evidence which outlined the purpose and work of the regional partnership, the Steering Group involving representatives from the local authorities, and the Delivery Group.

43. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

44. In relation to this standard the inspection team reviewed the Student Bursary Contract for cohort 8, the regional partnership's Memorandum of Understanding, completed Practice Learning Agreements and the placement handbook. Agreement was in place between the local authorities to provide 2 contrasting placements, support for the students and education and assessment. During the meetings held with the employer partners and the practice learning staff, the inspection team heard about how roles and responsibilities were managed and contingency placements planned for. This involved assessing each student's progress and learning needs against relevant frameworks to plan for appropriate learning opportunities to be provided.

45. During the meeting held with staff involved in practice learning the inspection team heard how consent was gained by students on placement for their practice learning and direct observations. Discussions at the Practice Learning Agreement meeting covered consent and was expected to be part of the induction process led by the practice educator. The inspection team also heard that as part of the role play assessment for readiness for direct practice, students were taught how to request consent on both an initial and ongoing basis.

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

Standard 3.3

47. Prior to the inspection the inspection team reviewed minutes of the monthly Delivery Group meetings, where the support needs of students were discussed and reviewed. Within the Practice Learning Agreement documentation, the inspection team were able to review evidence which showed how the induction plan included issues such as the support students required, health and safety, risk management and both agency and university

policies and procedures. Midway meetings and reports were used to monitor and adjust needs of students whilst on placement. Feedback from students on their placements highlighted positive experiences in relation to the support they received whilst on placement. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

48. The course was a DfE funded programme, employer led through the NECL RP which involved 6 local authorities. The Delivery Group meetings were held monthly and facilitated the management of the course, including aspects such as teaching, timetabling, feedback and employability. This group's remit also included review of the curriculum and a process of continuous improvement. The Stakeholders meeting was held 3 times a year and involved representatives from all 6 local authorities within the partnership. Course feedback and monitoring was enabled within these meetings and included practice leads who were involved in teaching on the course. The inspection team reviewed further evidence which outlined the 10 employer-led Expert in Practice Sessions delivered on the course and the Action Plan for cohort 8 which amalgamated feedback from the Programme Manager, practice educators, students and the Programme Voice Group. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

49. In relation to this standard, the inspection team reviewed minutes from the Programme Voice Group which enabled students to feedback on all aspects of the course and covered elements such as modules and learning resources. The inspection team were also provided with examples of feedback received from Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL). During the meeting held with students, the inspection team heard examples of some of the changes which had been made in response to their feedback and how the managers of the course had been responsive and listened well to their requests.

50. Feedback from employers was gained through both the monthly Delivery Group meetings and the termly Social Work Stakeholder meetings and included a range of different aspects of the course. Meeting minutes were also provided from the Placements Quality Assurance Meetings and feedback from practice educators was collected through the QAPL process.

51. Meeting minutes were also provided from the regular meetings held with the Involve group consisting of people with lived experience of social work and carers. Within this meeting attendees were invited to review a range of elements of the course and provide feedback and perspective on how the course was being delivered. Participants of the CAIS

group were involved in admissions, induction and curriculum planning, and the inspection team were able to review the meeting minutes shared and hear examples during the meeting held with them.

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

Standard 3.6

53. Following a review of the documentary evidence and a meeting held with senior managers at the university, the inspection team were able to understand the strategy in place to manage student numbers and placement provision. The inspection team reviewed the Memorandum of Understanding for cohort 8, the invitation and application form from the regional partnership and the Bid Application Feedback Letter. Members of the partnership attended partnership Education Network meetings which included planning for placements within each of the boroughs. The university provided practice educator training which supported the provision of practice educators for placements and placement capacity planning. During the meeting held with senior managers, the inspection team heard that the strategy followed by the university considered a range of details such as placement needs from other social work courses, including timing, and securing new placements with employer partners. 2 new staff had been recruited to support the delivery of the course for cohort 8 and the administration and placement practice teams were well resourced to support the team's placement planning. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

54. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team were provided with the CV for the lead social worker in place for the course. This evidence illustrated that the lead was appropriately qualified, experienced and registered. During the meetings held with the course team the inspection team were able to understand the role and responsibilities held by the lead social worker and how they managed the overall professional responsibility of the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

55. In relation to this standard the inspection team reviewed the Social Work Staff List and the staff CVs. The inspection team were informed that the majority of the 15 members of the teaching team were registered social workers, and they were satisfied that they held appropriate qualifications, experience and expert subject knowledge. Throughout the

duration of the inspection the inspection team were able to triangulate evidence they had reviewed in order to see that the team were delivering an effective course with positive outcomes for their students. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

56. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team reviewed evidence which illustrated how data on the diversity of applicants was collected for cohort 8 by Capita, the organisation who facilitated the recruitment stage of the course. Additionally, the evidence outlined how the Delivery Group reviewed data on attainment of students and monitored implications for the future needs of students. The Educational Monitoring and Enhancement information showed how data in relation to recruitment, continuation, attainment awards, employability and feedback from students was considered and fed back into the course and its delivery. Grades and pass rates for each module were provided to the external examiner to use as part of their overall assessment of the course.

57. The inspection team were provided with data in relation to the last 3 cohorts of the course and informed that this data guided the changes and developments made to the course in order that students' needs were continuously met. As part of the evidence submission received prior to the inspection, the inspection team were provided with an example of how the latest and most detailed equality, diversity and inclusion data had been analysed. They were informed that the data would be presented and discussed at the Autumnal Delivery Group meeting in preparation for the planning for cohort 8. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard had been met.

Standard 3.10

58. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team were provided with narrative evidence which highlighted a range of ways in which the course staff were supported to maintain their knowledge of professional practice. This included attendance and presentations delivered at workshops and practice forums, engagement with European research groups, publishing articles and reviews, and engagement in practice, such as with fostering agencies, guardianship services, adult social care and expert court assessments. During the meetings held with the course team and senior managers, the inspection team explored this area further. The inspection team heard of staff engaged in practice and research, staff who had reviewed core legal texts, staff who sat on editorial boards for journals and some who taught on continual professional development courses. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

59. In relation to this standard the inspection team were provided with the module narratives which illustrated that all module learning outcomes were mapped to both the PCF and the professional standards. In addition, the inspection team were provided with the professional standards mapping form which outlined how the modules were providing the students with learning opportunities which enabled them to develop the knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards. The Keeping Warm Days prior to the course starting, Readiness for Direct Practice and Preparation for Placement days were highlighted by the course team as opportunities for students to learn about professional practice and the links to professional standards. Students explained that they were required to link the professional standards in their essay writing and were encouraged to talk about them within their tutor groups. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

60. In relation to this standard the inspection team were provided with meeting minutes from the Delivery Group. These provided evidence to show that employer partners from the teaching partnership were involved in reviewing the curriculum, maintaining an overview of the course and its content, utilising feedback to make improvements, and timetabling, for example. During the meeting held with representatives from the 6 boroughs, the inspection team heard examples of topics discussed at the meetings and heard that placement providers were able to feed into and inform the curriculum, suggesting amendments to the law module, for example, and be provided with timetables prior to the course starting.

61. The inspection team were also able to review statements and meeting minutes from meetings held with both the Involve service user and carers' group and CAIS. The evidence outlined involvement by both groups in admissions, curriculum development, delivery of the course, readiness for direct practice assessments, and case studies. One example of evidence submitted prior to the inspection highlighted the detailed feedback which the CAIS group had provided on the group exercise assessment used in the admissions process. The inspection team were able to triangulate the evidence during the meeting with people with lived experience of social work who also expressed that they felt supported by the university to carry out their roles on the course.

62. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

63. Prior to the inspection the inspection team reviewed evidence of how the course supported students in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion principles. The inspection team were provided with the Middlesex Strategy to 2031 which included a focus on the promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion.

64. Processes were in place for students to gain support and advice about how reasonable adjustments could be made through the Care and Concern service and the provision of occupational health assessments. Learning Support Forms were used to plan for individual learning and assessment needs of students and the Dyslexia and Disability Service provided assessments for diagnosis as well as specialised support.

65. The inspection team were provided with information on the Diversity Repository which was a bank of materials to enable the development of understanding of issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusion. During the meeting with the course team, the inspection team heard examples of how rights and anti-oppressive practices were taught and promoted, and how skills days facilitated reflection and opportunities to challenge preconceived ideas. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

66. During the inspection the inspection team met with the subject librarian who illustrated how they worked alongside the course team to ensure learning resources were current and accessible. Through the Employability Day and the 10 Expert in Practice sessions the students were able to receive teaching informed by contemporary statutory professional practice. Teaching materials and resources were reviewed annually and reading lists reflected this. During the meeting with senior managers the inspection team heard how staff were supported to maintain connections with practice, which included the regular circulation of research papers: that 88% of staff were on a practice teaching development route. Additionally, during the course team meeting, the inspection team heard how the team remained committed to maintaining currency aligned to practice and how each year of delivery was different to the last. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

67. The inspection team were able to review the module content for Theory and Readiness for Direct Practice and Life Course where students were able to learn how to apply theory to practice. Assessments completed by students during the practice placements required them to apply theoretical understanding to real cases they had been working with, and these were evident within the completed examples of the Practice Learning Portfolios and Midway Reports. Whilst meeting with practice educators the inspection team explored how

students were supported to learn how to integrate theory with practice. The majority of the group expressed that they felt students possessed a solid theoretical knowledge, and that they used supervision to develop application skills. Other views included the opinion that there were some gaps in students' ability to apply theory and attributed this to the relatively short duration of the fast-track route. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

68. As part of the evidence submission the inspection team reviewed the programme of interprofessional workshops delivered for students in the Health, Social Care and Education departments, of which the students were expected to attend at least 2. Topics within the workshops covered subjects such as perinatal mental health, deaf awareness and eating disorders. Completed first and second placement final reports highlighted learning opportunities students had been provided with to work with and learn from other professions. The programme of Expert in Practice sessions was developed alongside employer partners who were enabled to offer expert staff to cover topics such as substance misuse and children with disabilities. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

69. In relation to this standard the inspection team were provided with narrative evidence which outlined that students were expected to attend a range of different learning forums including workshops, lectures and seminars. The inspection team reviewed the Teaching Timetable Hours and the Programme Handbook which included the module narratives and associated teaching hours. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

70. During the presentation provided to the inspection team at the start of the inspection, the course team delivered a clear overview of the range of assessments utilised on the course, and the rationale behind their design. Whilst the inspection team explored how the course team ensured assessments were fair and robust they heard about how placements may be paused, or students supported through a period of interrupted study. As part of the evidence submission the inspection team were able to review the university's regulations governing assessment and progression, and the Middlesex Assessment Design Guidance. Reports from the external examiner for the course were provided and reflected a reliable

assessment strategy which supported students' development. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

71. The inspection team reviewed a range of evidence which illustrated how the curriculum was designed to facilitate progression and enhance the development of skills. Examples of how legal concepts were taught through modules and practice placements exemplified how teaching and learning material was designed to match students' accumulation of knowledge. Students were required to pass their Readiness for Direct Practice assessment before undertaking their first practice placement and passing this placement, prior to progressing to their final 100-day placement. The inspection team reviewed the marking rubric which demonstrated how assessments and learning outcomes were linked. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

72. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were provided with the external examiner report for the course which highlighted strengths in relation to feedback given to students and the use of the internal moderation processes. Feedback students received on formative assessments was able to be utilised to inform their development and progression which was supported through tutorials. Students were provided with transparent and clear information about their feedback within their Programme Handbook, which detailed marking, second marking and moderation processes. Students provided further assurances to the inspection team and described their satisfaction with response times, feedback content and opportunities to attend consultations to gain further guidance where necessary. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

73. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team were provided with evidence of the new external examiner recruited to the course and confirmation of professional registration was established. The course provider submitted the relevant section of the Academic Quality Handbook which outlined the expectations set out for external examiners to follow. Staff CVs were provided and exemplified a range of appropriate expertise and experience. People with lived experience of social work were supported to undertake their roles effectively which included completing assessments of students. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

74. The inspection team reviewed completed Practice Learning Assessments which evidenced the range of people involved in managing students' progression at the midway and final points. They included practice educators, practice supervisors, people with lived experience of social work, personal tutors and other professionals working with students. A minimum of 5 direct observations were expected to be completed during practice placements and feedback from people with lived experience of social work informed the summative assessment for Readiness for Direct Practice. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

75. Within the external examiner's report, the inspection team noted that improvements in relation to input for research informed practice were identified, and was also explicitly taught in the Social Work Research module. During the meeting with practice educators the inspection team heard about the use of students' presentations in group supervision, where students were provided with the opportunity to share new evidence. Practice educators also described how students were encouraged to use service user evaluations and feedback to inform practice and explain evidential reasoning to support decision making. Further evidence in support of this standard was provided within the module narratives for Social Work Theory and Readiness for Direct Practice, Law and Advanced Social Work Practice and Life Course Development. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

76. Evidence reviewed prior to the inspection outlined the provision of health and wellbeing services at the university which students were able to access while they were on placements. The course Programme Handbook outlined the services available to them, which included counselling and mental health services, and disability and dyslexia support. Through the UniHub, the university provided employability support. The inspection team were able to review the employability presentation designed for the specific needs of the students on the course which included learning about the Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE) and taking part in role play interviews with employer partners. Occupational health services were also provided for students and the inspection team reviewed evidence in relation to their use by a student on the course. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

77. Documentary evidence reviewed in relation to this standard illustrated the support available to students at course level and that which was provided through the Learning Enhancement Team and the library and specialist librarian. Maths, statistics, academic writing and language skills were provided for through the team and available to students who requested help. The personal tutors working with students were able to refer to a Progression and Support Advisor to offer more specialist guidance in areas such as managing periods of illness, changing courses, and navigating additional support services. During the meeting held with students, the inspection team heard a range of examples of students who felt satisfied with the support and guidance they had received, and the contact and support provided from their personal tutor and tutor groups. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

78. As part of the evidence submission, a process of continuous monitoring of students' suitability was outlined. This process included checks on the conduct, health and character of all students as they progressed through the course, completed in close partnership with employer partners. Support and guidance were on offer for those students who raised issues or difficulties in relation to their suitability. At the start of the course all students were required to complete a declaration of suitability and then move on to pass their Readiness for Direct Practice prior to starting their first placement. Through the Faculty's Health and Disability Support Panel, occupational health assessments were reviewed, and reasonable adjustments were planned. The Care and Concern process, managed centrally, enabled concerns, including in relation to conduct to be raised. Within the course handbook students were made aware of the Fitness to Practise processes and policy and the inspection team reviewed the Fitness to Practise policy document.

79. During the meeting held with the course team the inspection team explored the process for assessing ongoing suitability and the course team reflected that although they were satisfied that the processes currently in place were sufficient, it may be helpful for them to introduce an annual online declaration of suitability, which they implement for their other social work courses. However, given that the course is 14 months in duration, the inspection team concluded that the processes in place were adequate to meet the requirements of the standard, which was met.

Standard 5.4

80. Evidence in relation to this standard included details of the Health and Disability Panel which reviewed occupational health assessments and made recommendations for adjustments required. Students were made aware of the processes involved for the provision of reasonable adjustments within their Programme Handbook and personal tutors were available to guide them where further information was necessary. During the meeting held with professional support services, the inspection team heard that a Learning Support Form was sent to the course team where required and was used to liaise with the placement provider. Examples of support provided within placements included assistive technology, and the inspection team noted that an inclusive and comprehensive approach was taken to responding to the individual needs of students. In addition, the inspection team understood that adjustments were considered in relation to how students were able to meet the professional standards at the point at which they completed their course and concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

81. Evidence submitted prior to the inspection included how the course team used the Information Events, Keeping Warm Days and course induction to provide essential information to students about their course. The Programme Handbook included information for students on the resources and support available to them, details of their modules, requirements for registration and the ASYE, the assessment schedule and key policies. The Professional Practice Placement Handbook contained information in relation to practice placements and associated requirements. The inspection team experienced a demonstration of the virtual learning environment where students were able to access information about assessment deadlines, online resources and library services, for example.

82. A small number of documents related to the provision of practice placements contained references to the previous regulator, and in particular made reference to the Guidance on Conduct and Ethics and Standards of Proficiency held by it. As a result, the inspection team will be recommending a condition is applied to this standard to ensure all documentation is updated and accurately reflects the current regulator's requirements.

83. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against 5.5 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcome](#) section.

Standard 5.6

84. Documentary evidence outlined the process in place to monitor attendance on the course, which included the use of electronic registers. Students were required to attend at least 75% of the course in order to be permitted to complete the assessment. Within the Programme Handbook students were provided with the information about the parts of the course which were mandatory. Attendance concerns were shared with the Programme Manager and host local authority and when the inspection team met with the students, assurances were received that they were clear about the expectations for attendance. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

85. In relation to this standard the inspection team were referred to particular guidance laid out within the Programme Handbook, where information was provided about the feedback students would receive. University regulations stipulated the timeframes associated with the provision of feedback, which should be received 15 days after submission. The inspection team noted the comments provided by the external examiner in relation to the feedback provided to students. These included robust processes in place, a good use of internal moderation and provision of points for development along with acknowledgment of successes. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

86. For students who wished to make an academic appeal, information was provided for them within the Programme Handbook. On the university's Unihub web page students could access information about how to apply and the inspection team were provided with the university's regulations on academic appeals. During the meeting held with the team responsible for delivering professional support services, the inspection team explored academic appeals. They were informed that the course had not received an academic appeal to date and that staff had focused on sufficiently aligning assessments and marking with assessment criteria. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

87. As the qualifying course is a PGDip Social Work Step Up the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

88. The inspection team recommend that the course be approved with 1 condition. It will be monitored for completion.

Conditions

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

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

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	5.5	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates all course documentation accurately reflects the current regulator's requirements.	19.3.24	Paragraph 81

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	2.6	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider formalising the mechanisms they currently have in place to ensure that all practice educators are registered and have relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience.	Paragraph 36

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

Approval with conditions.

Annex 2: Meeting of conditions

92. 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](#).

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

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

	Standard not met	Condition	Recommendation
1	5.5	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates all course documentation accurately reflects the current regulator's requirements.	Condition met.

Findings

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

96. After the review of documentary evidence, the inspection team are satisfied that the condition set against the reapproval of the PGDip Social Work Step Up course is met.

97. In relation to the condition which was set against standard 5.5 the course provider submitted updated documentation. This included the Placement handbook, Preparing for a Step Up Student for PEs and PSs, and the Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) overview of student feedback form. This evidence demonstrated that course documentation accurately reflects the current regulator's requirements. In addition, the course provider provided assurance that all practice placement documentation had been reviewed and checked to ensure accuracy of information. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Conclusion

98. The inspection team is recommending that as the condition has been met, the course be approved.

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

Regulator decision

Approval.