

Inspection Report

Course provider: Oxford Brookes University

Course approval: MA Social Work and PGDip
Social Work

Inspection dates: 7th – 10th March 2023

Report date:	11 th May 2023
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	24 th July 2023
Date conditions met and approved:	TO BE ADDED

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Introduction

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

What we do

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

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

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

Summary of Inspection

15. Oxford Brookes University's MA Social Work and PGDip Social Work, full time and part time courses 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. The university had also proposed changes to the course to be implemented from September 2023, which they planned to teach out, and the inspection team included these as part of this inspection.

Inspection ID	OBUR1
Course provider	Oxford Brookes University
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Course inspected	MA Social Work & PGDip Social Work, including changes
Mode of study	Full and part time
Maximum student cohort	60 across both undergraduate and post graduate routes
Date of inspection	7 th – 10 th March 2023
Inspection team	Daisy Bragadini - Education Quality Assurance Officer Michelle Loughrey – (Lay Inspector) Lee Pollard – (Registrant Inspector)
Inspector recommendation	Approval with conditions
Approval outcome	Approval with conditions

Language

16. In this document we describe Oxford Brookes University as 'the education provider' or 'the university' and we describe the MA Social Work and PGDip Social Work as 'the course'.

Inspection

17. A remote inspection took place from 7th – 10th March 2023. 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 7 students from both undergraduate and postgraduate courses, 2 of whom were student representatives. Discussions included their placement learning opportunities, their curriculum, feedback processes, student support, information about their course and an understanding of the social work profession.

Meetings with course staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the academic teaching team, staff involved in practice placements, staff involved in admissions and selection, specialist support staff and senior managers.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in admissions, student assessment, course changes and feedback. Discussions with the Voices of Experience group included how they participated on the courses, which included assessing practice learning, participating in interviews, designing questions for the admissions process, delivering lectures, providing feedback and being involved in decision making processes.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including practice educators and employer partners from the local authorities and the private, voluntary and independent sector.

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. Evidence provided to the inspection team prior to the inspection included the interview questions used as part of the admissions process, the written test and level 7 marking rubric. Applicant's ICT skills were checked and assessed at multiple points through the requirements set out within the application process, and entry qualifications, including English qualifications, were checked. The inspection team met with the admissions staff at the university and gained insight into how they organised each stage of the assessment for applicants, including providing a contextual offer to applicants who may not have possessed all the academic entry criteria. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

26. The inspection team were referred to the individual interview questions which were asked during the interview and facilitated assessment of prior relevant experience. The written test and personal statement were also used as part of the assessment for prior relevant experience which was initially screened by the central admissions department. On occasion, where there was uncertainty about the nature of relevant experience, the social work department team were consulted with. At postgraduate level, the team required that applicants demonstrated experience of paid or voluntary work with vulnerable people, which lasted typically for one year. The inspection team advised that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

27. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were provided with minutes of the annual admissions review meeting which illustrated how a range of different stakeholders were involved in the admissions processes and its review. Both employer partners and people with lived experience of social work were involved in the interviews and supported development and modification of questions asked during the admissions process. The inspection team heard that a briefing session was provided to the interview panel and group discussions were held after interviews to decide on the outcome. Through meetings held with employer partners and people with lived experience of social work, the inspection

team heard that they felt their contributions were valued, respected and were attributed with equal recognition throughout the admissions process. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

28. The course provider submitted a range of sources of evidence in relation to this standard. They included the Rehabilitation of Offenders Declaration Letter, the faculty's DBS policy, a decision-making rubric, guidelines in relation to reasonable adjustments and examples of questions raised in assessing suitability. During the interview and written test, the professional standards were used to assess a candidate's suitability. Once in receipt of an offer, candidates were required to complete a Professional Fitness to Practice Clearance questionnaire, which formed part of the assessment undertaken of conduct, health and character. Further evidence provided and gained through meetings held with admissions staff provided assurances to the inspection team about processes followed on occasions when disclosures were made, how occupational health assessments were completed, and the enhanced DBS screening process undertaken. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

29. The inspection team were provided with the admissions policy, induction information, information on the DBS process followed, which included the decision-making rubric, guidelines for reasonable adjustments and accessible learning and the race equality strategy. The university was committed to charter marks, achieving both the Race Equality Charter and the Athena Swan Gender Equality Award. The equality and diversity policies in place were monitored annually. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report focused on how the university managed equality and diversity issues and linked to the Access and Participation group. The inspection team were also provided with detail of contextual offers made to applicants and, during meetings held with admissions staff, gained understanding of how applicants were supported with additional needs. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

30. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were able to review the Postgraduate Social Work Open Event presentation and interview day presentations, which included information about the staff and teaching team, the curriculum content, methods of assessment, placement opportunities and information on Social Work England. The

postgraduate web page included relevant information about various aspects of the course and was updated annually. The inspection team met with a specialist Social Work Course Administrator who was able to provide detailed and individualised information for applicants applying to the course. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

31. The inspection team were provided with documentary evidence which showed how the 200 days of practice learning for continuing students involved shadowing days, skills days, module skills days within the Skill Development and Professional Communication module, and the first and second placements. For the new version of the course, students will complete 10 skills days, with a choice from 15 on offer, shadowing days, placement preparation days, module skills days and their 2 practice placements. During the inspection the inspection team had the opportunity to explore how students utilised a dedicated online learning platform, which supported their learning from skills days and monitored attendance. The inspection team were also provided with the Placement Identification Postgraduate Freshers document, which helped to inform how a contrasting placement was secured aligned with individual students' learning needs and prior experience. Additionally, the inspection team were also presented with evidence to show how students were provided with a statutory placement, usually within the local authority, health trusts or statutory agencies. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

32. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were provided with the Practice Education Handbooks for the current and new programmes, and the Practice Learning Agreement. Academic Advisers attended the Practice Learning Agreement and Midway Review Meetings along with practice educators and supervisors. In addition, the Quality Assurance for Practice Learning (QAPL) process allowed the course team to ensure students were provided with learning opportunities which enabled students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards. Within the meeting with students the inspection team were able to hear that students felt their placements provided them with appropriate learning opportunities where they felt able to learn and develop new skills. The inspection team advised that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

33. Evidence provided in relation to this standard was contained within the Practice Learning Agreement document which included a checklist for the induction, with an expectation for it to last for a minimum of 2 weeks. Within the Practice Learning Agreement (PLA) meeting, supervision, resources, workload and sources of support were discussed and agreed. Group and peer supervision, along with protected time for reflection, were also discussed in the PLA meeting. Roles and responsibilities of all those involved in a student's practice learning experience were outlined within the Practice Education Handbook. Clear guidelines and processes were evident to help manage and inform the ongoing learning experience, such as the Midway Review meeting and assessment, to ensure students were well supported. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

34. Prior to and during the inspection the inspection team were able to review a range of evidence which illustrated how the course team ensured students' responsibilities were appropriate to their stage of training. During the induction process, students were supported by their practice educator to identify individual learning needs which were recorded within the PLA document. The inspection team gained awareness of an emphasis placed on an individual's learning development and not exclusively an agency's provision of learning opportunities. During meetings held with practice educators, students and staff involved in practice learning, the inspection team heard how progress was built on from previous assessments and learning objectives, and that robust and clear targets were set and reviewed during a student's placement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

35. The inspection team were provided with evidence which outlined how students underwent assessed preparation for direct practice. Students were assessed within the module 'Skill Development and Professional Communication', where they completed an observed interview and critical reflection. As part of students' preparation for direct practice they also completed a DBS and occupational health check. The Practice Education Handbook clearly outlined all stages students must have completed, which included the necessity to be in receipt of an email confirming their suitability, which they were required to retain throughout placements. The inspection team advised this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

36. The inspection team were provided with a range of sources of evidence in relation to how the university ensured practice educators were registered, and had relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience. This included documentation which showed the processes followed when practice educators were new, workshops which were offered and Currency and Re-accreditation Guidance. During the inspection the inspection team had the opportunity to review the practice educator register, oversight of which was maintained by the Social Work in Practice committee. Robust governance processes ensured relevant information in relation to practice educators was regularly reviewed, with support from the Practice Education Unit. Attendance at workshops held for practice educators was monitored and attendees received certificates. Peer supervision for independent practice educators, workshops on how to support struggling students and students in crisis, along with supervision skills and individual support to regain currency, was offered by the university. The inspection team advised that this standard was met.

37. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standard 2.6. Details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations table through this link](#).

Standard 2.7

38. Prior to the inspection the inspection team reviewed documentary evidence which illustrated the processes which were followed to ensure policies were in place for students to challenge unsafe behaviour and wrongdoing. On receipt of the completed PLA documents, students were sent an email outlining how concerns on placement were to be managed. This included a link to the university's practice education web page and information about whistleblowing, bullying and harassment. For the new version of the course, and within placement preparation days, students will be involved in an activity to further develop knowledge about how to raise a concern. During the inspection the inspection team heard examples of how students had been supported to use relevant policies and how the PLA and Midway review meetings were opportunities to review policies in place. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

39. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team reviewed evidence which outlined the governance plan, lines of accountability and responsibility and processes followed to maintain strategic management of the courses. As part of the department of Sport, Life Sciences and Social Work, academic staff within the course team were members of a range

of academic boards and sub committees. External stakeholders such as employer partners, Voices of Experience and students were also part of the quality assurance mechanisms, and their feedback and contributions fed into these committees. The inspection team were provided with the policies and processes followed during academic and periodic reviews. Additionally, the inspection team met with a group of senior managers who provided further assurances in relation to how the courses were delivered, managed and resourced effectively. The inspection team advised that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

40. The inspection team reviewed documentary evidence in relation to this standard which included the Memorandum of Cooperation and Information Sharing Agreement between Oxfordshire County Council and the university, and the Oxfordshire County Council Social Work Academy Board and Social Work Education Group (SWEG) terms of reference. Within these groups strategic planning and placement and practice educator capacity were managed. During the inspection the inspection team met with a wide range of employer partners, representing various placement providers. Discussions with them provided an opportunity to triangulate documentary evidence which showed how processes were student centred, how the placement matching process was considered and detailed, and how placement breakdown was managed. Staff involved in practice learning from the Practice Education Unit, practice educators and employer partners recognised the significance of the PLA meeting and paperwork, in terms of agreements between the course provider and placement provider and provided useful examples of contingency planning. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

41. The inspection team reviewed evidence of the policies and procedures in place in relation to students' health, wellbeing and risk. They were made available within the Practice Education Unit web page and embedded within the PLA paperwork. Within the expectations for the induction students received on placement, the inspection team were informed that placement providers were required to support students to engage with the policies and understand how they could access support and guidance. Information about how students could access the support systems in relation to these policies was laid out within the PLA paperwork, discussed at the PLA meetings, and made available on the Practice Education Unit web page. The purpose and nature of supervision was also described within these sources and students were aware of how to recognise the need for support, and where to find it. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

42. Within the Memorandum of Cooperation between the university and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), the inspection team were able to review the expectations within the working relationship the university maintained with employer partners. This was explored during meetings held with employer partners and the inspection team understood that employer partners were involved in consultations for the proposed course changes, interviews for applicants, teaching and learning on skills days, placement allocation and quality assurance evaluation processes. The Subject Committee offered a formal mechanism for employer feedback to be gathered and through the SWEG meetings, placement allocation was addressed. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

43. The inspection team were provided with the university's policy and procedures governing monitoring and evaluation systems, which included annual reviews, validation and programme development frameworks. External examiner reports included feedback on the course and noted that assessments and availability and provision of resources had been effective. Module convenors gained feedback through module evaluations and students described in-class feedback being gathered. Within Subject Committee and Admissions Review meetings, students, people with lived experience of social work and employer partners were involved in course plans and reviewed activities. The Practice Assessment Panel provided further opportunity for relevant stakeholders to provide feedback, offer opinions and contribute to change. During the inspection the inspection team heard numerous methods of feedback collection from a broad range of stakeholders involved in the course. The work carried out by the Global Majority Collective exemplified how the course strove for feedback and used it to pursue improvements. The QAPL process followed at the end of the placements and considered analysis of feedback this produced provided further examples. The inspection team advised that this standard was met.

Standard 3.6

44. Within both documentary evidence submitted prior to the inspection and during meetings held with employer partners and senior managers, the inspection team gained insight into how the university aligned student numbers and placement capacity. Narrative evidence submitted and discussion with senior managers illustrated how the faculty oversaw student numbers and aspects of resourcing. Within SWEG, and supported by the Memorandum of Cooperation with OCC, consideration was able to be applied to regional placement capacity. The inspection team found evidence of strong working relationships with current placement providers, including within the private, voluntary and independent

sector, and also of work being undertaken to develop new sources of placements. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

45. Evidence provided in relation to this standard included the CV for the lead social worker who held overall professional responsibility for the course. This included evidence of registration with Social Work England, appropriate qualifications and extensive and expert experience. Further evidence of alternative members of the team who also possessed these relevant attributes was provided, and the inspection team were advised that they were also available to deputise. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

46. Prior to the inspection the inspection team reviewed course staff CVs, a list of qualified and professionally registered teaching staff, details of a range of academic awards recently received by the course team focused on areas such as equality, diversity and inclusion, collaboration and innovation, and examples of relevant specialist subject knowledge and expertise. Examples were also provided of course staff members who were currently still working as social workers, staff with trustee roles and staff running their own community organisations. During the meetings held with the course team, senior managers, employer partners, people with lived experience of social work and students, the inspection team gained a broad understanding of how an effective course was being delivered. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

47. Through exam and subject committees and module reviews, university staff were able to collect and evaluate information on students' performance, progression and outcomes. The Academic Performance Tracking Tool was utilised to supply subject committees with relevant progression data, collected through module and annual reviews. During the inspection the inspection team heard how equality, diversity and inclusion data was tracked through from application stage to the end of the students' course. Examples of how analysis of data on students' attainment had informed changes to assessments and had shown an improvement in attainment outcomes was shared. The work of the Global Majority Collective was illuminated during meetings, which allowed the inspection team to gain insight into how improvements to student experiences and achievements was recognised in the context of an anti-racist university experience. The inspection team advised that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

48. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team were informed that the course team held annual staff development days which supported the team's professional aims and practice skills. Overseeing the support offered to staff to maintain their knowledge and skills was a Personal Development Review system. A range of examples of how the team were currently maintaining their knowledge and practice skills included external part time employment in practice, voluntary roles with charities, further academic study, and research on practice topics. The team ran a book club for staff and were working with the Hope Africa University in Burundi to carry out research and explore placement opportunities in East Africa. The inspection team were also informed about how the Programme Lead has delivered international workshops with a European Schools of Social Work project, which have explored the relationship between local and global social work. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

49. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team were provided with evidence which demonstrated how all the modules have been mapped to the overarching PCF, Knowledge and Skills Statements and professional standards. Evidence of how the content of the curriculum and the learning outcomes are mapped to the professional standards was found in the Professional standards mapping for qualifying social work courses document prepared for inspection. Within the meeting held with students, evidence was heard of an awareness and understanding of the professional standards.

50. During meetings with the course team, this area was further explored. This included a discussion relating to the proposed format of mapping students will be provided with, from September 2023 (none are currently available to students): the inspection team reviewed evidence of this through Moodle, the virtual learning platform. Within the PLA documentation, the Midway Review and the Holistic Assessments used during students' placements, students' learning was set against the relevant frameworks and the professional standards.

51. The inspection team agreed that whilst assessed learning outcomes had been mapped on the Professional Standards Mapping for Qualifying Social Work Courses document prepared for inspection, course documentation was not in place to demonstrate when and how students have learning opportunities that allow them to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours so they can meet the professional standards. Therefore, the inspection team agreed that this standard was not currently met.

52. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against 4.1 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 [conditions table](#).

Standard 4.2

53. Through a review of the documentary evidence and meetings during the inspection, the inspection team heard how the Voices of Experience group was involved in the interviews at admissions, the introductory weeks of the course, teaching on modules, Skill Development and Professional Communication, assessing students for readiness for direct practice and through the Practice Assessment Panel. The Voices of Experience group met monthly to review the work they were involved in and various aspects of the course and curriculum. A representative from their group then attends the Annual Review and Subject Committees, sharing the views from the group. The group also produced the Guide for Partnership Working with Service Users. Various other sources of evidence illustrated how employer partners and practitioners were involved in teaching on particular modules, influenced the content of modules to maintain contemporary themes and models, and were involved in Subject Committee meetings. The inspection team advised that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

54. Evidence submitted in relation to this standard included module descriptors which identified where principles of equality, diversity and inclusion and human rights were taught and explored. Marking rubrics included reference to these principles to further embed them within students' learning and assessment. Support networks worked to implement and progress action plans, which were informed by areas within the training provision, viewed to require development. During the inspection the inspection team were provided with the Decolonising Action Plan which was being developed into a 3-5 year strategy. They also met with members of the Global Majority Collective who were involved in a reverse mentoring project alongside academic staff and provided feedback to the course team on the progress made to decolonise the curriculum. The Placement Profile template was viewed as further evidence of how the university requested and embedded individual needs of students in relation to equality frameworks. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

55. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were provided with documentary evidence which illustrated the range of ways the course team ensured the course was continually updated. Examples of how this was managed were evident in the range and depth of engagement course team members had in research and national and international social work networks. Specialist practitioners and representatives from the local authority were involved in teaching on the course, staff members continued to work in practice which enabled current practice methods and themes to inform the curriculum, and research developments were revisited habitually as part of the monthly course team meeting. Additionally, the course team described how staff's involvement in practice placement learning, and in particular, the assessment of the last placement, facilitated a process of bringing learning and current practice from students and their placement experiences back to the course team. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

56. The inspection team were provided with clear indications of where in the curriculum students were taught about theory and how they could integrate it within their practice. Within the module Skill Development and Professional Communication, both practice placements and placement preparation days, students were supported to develop their skills to apply theoretical knowledge and models to practice. In the module Children, students were introduced to child development and attachment theories. The course team informed the inspection team that they utilised the expertise of placement providers and on reflected the key models and theories used in practice, in the students' curriculum. As an example, they explained that, recently, this had resulted in a shift to focus on Motivational Interviewing and Restorative Practice models of practice. Meetings held with practice educators and students further affirmed to the inspection team that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

57. Evidence in relation to this standard was reviewed by the inspection team and included opportunities provided to students through skills days, placement preparation days, shadowing opportunities and teaching within modules. During the meeting held with students the inspection team heard about a variety of opportunities which were provided to students. These involved placement experiences within adolescent mental health and targeted youth services where students learnt about a range of specialist assessments completed by different professionals. A Simulation and Immersive Learning Strategy was intended to facilitate the embedding of interprofessional learning opportunities within the

faculty and examples of the opportunities planned to be available were current, sufficiently complex and broad in scope. The inspection team advised that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

58. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team were provided with evidence which illustrated how all learning outcomes within taught modules were aligned to specific time allocated for teaching, reflecting, writing and reading. University Regulations informed the appropriate allocation of time spent in structured academic learning, and the Programme Handbook illustrated the content of the course clearly. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

59. Preceding the inspection, the inspection team were provided with essay marking rubrics which were aligned to each level of study throughout the programme. Information provided to students within their induction presented clear detail on how they would be assessed throughout their course and included an opportunity to receive formative feedback on draft assignments to support their final submissions. The inspection team were assured that students had available to them various sources of information containing detail of different forms of assessment, and associated support they would receive, some of which was available through Moodle. The inspection team were given a range of examples which illustrated how the course team designed sensitive and responsive assessment mechanisms, which considered protected characteristics of students and a range of strengths. Evidence reviewed by the inspection team clearly showed alignment between assessment and the skills students were required to develop to meet the professional standards, and these were guided by university quality standards. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

60. Within the evidence submission there was demonstration of how the course team considered the timing of assessments for students and staggered them where necessary. The evidence highlighted how the course team had utilised feedback and allowed it to inform the current assessment timetable, which carefully considered the timing of placements and students' workload and progression. Assessment schedule information was provided to students within the Programme Handbook and was also available through Moodle. The inspection team were also able to review evidence which showed how learning outcomes were carefully aligned to students' progression on the course, and were designed

to facilitate timely and meaningful skill development. The inspection team advised that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

61. In relation to this standard the inspection team were able to review evidence which illustrated how students received formative, summative and placement activity feedback. Students were provided with individual and class feedback and were given additional tutorial sessions and formative feedback, if work was required to be resubmitted. Whilst on placement, students received both formative and summative feedback from their practice educator, supervisor and academic adviser. Students could expect to be able to utilise their feedback, received through their holistic assessment, to either carry forward to their second placement or their Assessed and Supported Year of Employment (ASYE). The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

62. The inspection team were provided with evidence of policy and procedures followed in the recruitment and oversight of external examiners and their role. Information was also provided about the external examiners currently carrying out the role, along with recent reports. The inspection team reviewed a range of evidence which demonstrated how the university ensured those responsible for completing assessments possessed appropriate expertise. The inspection team advised that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

63. Evidence of the systems in place to manage students' progression included the Programme Handbook, the Programme Specification, marking rubrics, the Practice Education Handbook, and information on Moodle in relation to issues arising on placement. Clear processes were in place covering details for failed modules and placements, marking thresholds and how students were supported to progress on their course. This included an action plan implemented for students on placements and the work of the Practice Assessment Panel, which reviewed failed placements. The roles of practice educators, supervisors and academic staff were stipulated within the Practice Education Handbook and included expectations for direct observations of practice. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

64. The inspection team were able to review evidence which illustrated how the course embedded teaching of an evidence informed approach to practice. During their induction, postgraduate students were provided with access to an online database and were supported by the subject librarian. Situated within the modules Children, Applied Research Methods, and the Dissertation module, the inspection team found clear evidence of how students were taught, supported and encouraged to develop an evidence informed approach to practice, underpinned by skills and knowledge related to evaluation. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

65. Prior to the inspection the inspection team were provided with information about the services available to students for counselling, careers advice and occupational health. They were able to review the guidelines for Reasonable Adjustments, Accessible Learning Arrangements and Inclusive Practice and the Occupational Health referral form. During the meetings with students and specialist support services, the inspection team were able to gain a comprehensive overview of the services provided to students, how they connected with each other, methods of accessing support and how staff facilitated a 'no wrong door' policy. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

66. The inspection team were provided with the Academic Advising Introduction presentation which outlined the role and expectations for Academic Advisers. Students were able to access tutorials and study skills resources, have an Individual Support Plan and receive individual learning support from the Inclusive Support Service for particular learning needs, such as dyslexia. Embedded within the first year module Evidence in Professional Practice, students accessed information and learning in relation to academic integrity and included skills such as referencing, summarising and paraphrasing. Additionally, the inspection team reviewed evidence which demonstrated the internal recognition received by the course team of the support provided to students through the university validation process. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

67. In relation to this standard the inspection team reviewed the Standards of Conduct Pre-registration document, the Letter of Fitness to Practise and a Freshers' Week presentation.

During the induction week and year 1 modules, students were provided with explicit and clear teaching on the expectations required of them if aspects of their health, criminal justice issues or involvement with statutory services changed. Students were required to engage in an online declaration of suitability process prior to undertaking each of their placements, which was managed by the Practice Education Unit. During the meeting held with students, the inspection team gained appropriate assurances that the students were aware of the processes and procedures they were required to follow. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

68. Documentary evidence submitted ahead of the inspection described how the course team implemented reasonable adjustments, which had been recommended by the Inclusive Support Service. During the meeting held with students, the inspection team heard examples of how individualised support had been provided for students to enable them to progress through their course. Students were required to complete a Placement Profile template where they had the opportunity to highlight additional needs, which required consideration while they were on placement. During the Practice Learning Agreement meeting, needs were identified, and plans of support were also discussed and arranged. The inspection team advised that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

69. The inspection team reviewed evidence of students being provided with numerous sources of information about their course. Within the Programme Handbook, Freshers' Week and Transition Day presentations, particular modules and bespoke communication from module leads, students were provided with relevant and timely information. This included information about assessments, placements, the curriculum and transitioning to becoming a registered professional, for example. The Practice Education Handbook also contained detailed information about all aspects of a student's placement. The inspection team were able to view Moodle, which students accessed to find current information on lectures, reading lists, assessment dates and course updates. The inspection team advised that this standard was met.

70. The inspection team explored the way in which the professional standards mapping was shared with students, and noted that students would benefit if it were presented as part of their course documentation. This was discussed with the course team who agreed that students may benefit from a more 'digestible' document.

71. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standard 5.5. Details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations table through this link](#).

Standard 5.6

72. The inspection team identified a variety of methods that were used to communicate to students about parts of the course which were mandatory. These included the Practice Education Handbook, placement preparation workshops, placement timesheets to record attendance and skills days. There were clear processes of recording attendance of lectures, skills days and placement days, and students were informed about the expectations to complete mandatory parts of their course. Evidence from the meetings with students and practice educators enabled triangulation of the evidence and inspectors were assured about how concerns surrounding non-attendance were addressed. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

73. The inspection team were provided with the university's guidance on feedback, which provided the framework of expectations for feedback on students' work. During the discussions held with students the inspection team heard that feedback was timely and effective in supporting their development. They heard clear examples from a variety of students who felt that their successes on the course was attributable, in part, to the constructive and encouraging nature of the feedback they had received. The inspection team were provided with the opportunity to review a range of examples of feedback provided through Moodle, and noted the level of detail it contained and personalised nature of its presentation. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

74. In relation to this standard an effective process for students to make academic appeals was illustrated to the inspection team. They were provided with a link to the university's web page which contained all relevant information required to apply for an appeal. Information for students to access, along with guidance about how to apply was available to students on the university website, which they were guided to through their Programme Handbook. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

75. As the qualifying course is an MA Social Work and PGDip Social Work course, the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

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

Conditions

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.

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 4.1	The education provider will provide evidence that shows how the content of the curriculum, and the learning outcomes are mapped to the professional standards and other related frameworks, building on the mapping work already undertaken by the course team.	24 th October 2023	Paragraph 52

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	2.6	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider including detail of CPD within the oversight held for practice educators, building on existing records to include attendance of CPD events provided by the university.	Paragraph 37

2	5.5	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider the format they use to present relevant information to students about how and where they will gain the knowledge and skills necessary to meet professional standards by the time they complete the course. This could be completed by building on the mapping work already undertaken by the course team.	Paragraph 71
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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

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](#).

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

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

	Standard not met	Condition	Recommendation
1			

Findings

Regulator decision