

Inspection Report

Course provider: Middlesex University

Course approval: MA Social Work and PgDip Social Work

Inspection dates: 21st March 2023 – 24th March 2023

Report date:	29 th March 2023
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	14 th June 2023
<i>(Delete if not required)</i> Date conditions met and approved:	18.09.2023

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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. Middlesex University MA Social Work and PgDip Social Work 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	MUR1
Course provider	Middlesex University
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	MA Social Work and PgDip Social Work
Mode of study	Postgraduate
Maximum student cohort	60
Date of inspection	21 st – 24 th March 2023
Inspection team	Catherine Denny - Education Quality Assurance Officer Sally Gosling - Lay Inspector Gary Dicken - Registrant Inspector
Inspector recommendation	Approved with conditions
Approval outcome	Approved with conditions

Language

16. In this document we describe Middlesex 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 21st – 24th March 2023. During the inspection, the inspection team considered the current version of the courses alongside proposed changes. The course team explained that the content of the MA and PgDip was the same, apart from the dissertation element for the MA, and that this would be maintained within the new course structure. As part of the inspection 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 students who were at different points in their study as well as some who had completed their studies and were in employment. Within the student group, there was representation from three student voice leads and two international students. Discussions included experiences of admissions processes, support on placement, including management of roles and responsibilities, experiences of providing feedback, curriculum, assessment and student support.

Meetings with course staff

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

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in the university's service user and carer group titled Involve@MDX. Discussions included group members' involvement in admissions, curriculum delivery, involvement in the design and review of the course and opportunities to provide feedback on the course.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from local authority partners including Barnet, Islington, Hackney and Haringey as well as NHS representatives and private and voluntary partner organisations. Discussions included their understanding and experience of

the university processes and procedures in place to manage student placements and experience of course management and monitoring.

Findings

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

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

25. The university provided an overview of the entry requirements and admissions processes for the courses supported by the university website which detailed expectations to prospective candidates. The inspection team were able to review documentation used during the admissions process to test applicants' ability to demonstrate that they had the necessary knowledge and skills in key areas. Through meetings with stakeholders, the inspection team heard that the process was easy to access and understand and confirmed a holistic approach to testing skills and understanding. The course team shared that interview questions were tailored to ensure that interview panels were able to test applicants' preparedness for either version of the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

26. The university explained that all applicants were required to have at least three months of relatable experience which could be achieved via paid employment, volunteering or personal experience. Applicants' were able to evidence this throughout the admissions process from UCAS application to interview. During meetings with the course team and admissions colleagues, the inspection team were assured that an inclusive approach was taken to prior experience and all members of the team involved in admissions were able to offer appropriate advice to candidates about what experiences could usefully be evidence for consideration. The inspection team also heard that constructive feedback was given to candidates who required further experience prior to re-applying to be part of a future cohort of the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

27. Evidence provided by the university outlined the involvement of members of Involve@MDX, employers and placement providers in admissions processes. During meetings with representatives from the above stakeholder groups, the inspection team heard that some representatives were invited to contribute to the design of interviews, such

as consulting on the content of questions and tasks. The university explained that their goal would be to always have representation from both employers and Involve@MDX on interview panels, however where this was not possible, an interview might proceed with an academic and one other external stakeholder representative. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

28. Evidence provided by the course provider outlined the process in place to assess the suitability of applicants. This included the process to obtain DBS checks, declaration of suitability and health related issues or disabilities that may require adjustments. During meetings with admissions staff, the inspection team heard that there was a need to act quickly within the process due to the accelerated nature of the course. Employer representatives confirmed their engagement in reviewing declarations made during admissions to ensure suitability. The course team explained that any health declarations would be referred to occupational health to ensure adjustments could be considered from the point of entry to the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

29. The course provider submitted a copy of their Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policy and a narrative of its application within admissions processes. The university ensured that EDI principles were consistently applied by providing training to staff on key topics and policies. The inspection team queried how members of Involve@MDX receive training and heard that, whilst they did not have the same level of training as members of staff, they could access recordings on topics such as unconscious bias which had been developed by the staff team and received briefings ahead of interview.

30. Through discussions with members of staff involved in admissions and student representatives, the inspection team heard that there were a range of reasonable adjustments that could be made to ensure admissions processes remained accessible. Members of the admissions team explained that they were able answer questions in relation to reasonable adjustments centrally but could also contact the course team directly where additional detail was required. The inspection team queried the actions taken to identify potential EDI trends in relation to applicants to the course and heard that some analysis was taking place led by the course team. The course team also explained that they were trying to target specific demographics where possible as part of their widening participation strategy. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

31. Detailed information in relation to the courses was provided via the university website which included details of costs, course content, delivery and careers, including reference to the regulatory body and eligibility to apply to join the register post qualification. Information

was also provided regarding the proposal to extend the length of the course from 14 months to 17 months for future prospective candidates which was considered as part of the inspection activity. Alongside information provided on the website, the inspection team also heard that open day events organised by the university provide more in-depth information about the course and provide an opportunity for candidates to ask additional questions. Student representatives confirmed that both the website and open day events were a useful source of information which prepared them to make an informed decision about whether to apply to or accept an offer of a place on the courses.

32. The inspection team queried how the university ensured that prospective candidates were well informed about the intensity of studying on an accelerated course. The course team confirmed that this was explored in detail via interview questioning to ensure that prospective candidates were equipped to meet the demands of study. Interview questions also explored students' awareness of potential placement experiences and the need to travel if they live outside of the direct geographical area of the university. All students who met with the inspection team confirmed that they felt informed about the course through the admissions process and were provided with clear information to support their decision making. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

33. Through review of documentary evidence and discussions with the course team, the inspection team were assured that all students complete the required 200 days in practice through a combination of placement and skills days. The relationships between the university and practice settings were strong which ensured good communication in relation to the availability of placements and experiences offered and gave assurance that there were ample discussions about the need for contrasting experiences.

34. During meetings with students, some concerns were raised about the level of contrast between placements as well as the relevance of learning opportunities provided in some non-statutory settings. Through discussions with the course team, the inspection team were assured that appropriate actions were taken in such circumstances and one example was given of a student placement being amended due to insufficient contrast. The inspection team also heard that there were consistent efforts from practice educators (P.E's) and university staff to examine learning opportunities on placement to ensure they remained appropriate. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

35. The inspection team reviewed the placement learning agreement (PLA) documentation alongside an example of agreements in place between the university and placement providers. Within both documents there was evidence of the emphasis placed upon

identifying and articulating appropriate learning opportunities to students through placement induction and supervision. The course team also outlined the importance of preparation for placement sessions in sharing expectations of placement with students. The inspection team were assured that the range of placements used across the courses and mechanisms in place to highlight learning opportunities were sufficient and so agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

36. The documentary evidence submitted to support the standard included samples of PLA meetings and midway and final reports, which detailed arrangements for induction and supervision and the monitoring of this. Student representatives confirmed that they had received induction to placements and the plan for this had been shared with them. Some students reported that there had been inconsistencies in their experiences of ongoing support where they had an offsite P.E. This was due to a potential lack of in-depth knowledge about how to link learning experience to specific frameworks held by onsite supervisors who weren't from a social work background.

37. During a meeting with P.E representatives, the inspection team heard that many P.E's had sessions with onsite supervisors to ensure that they had a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Course team representatives also explained that specific training could be offered where required from the university. The inspection team agreed that there were mechanisms in place to address issues that might arise but questioned whether a more proactive approach to training for all staff involved in placement might address inconsistencies. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met with a recommendation in relation to the training provided for onsite supervisors. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.4

38. As with the previous standard, the PLA, midway and final review documentation provided details of the agreed student roles and responsibilities for placement, linked to the appropriate levels of the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). The course team explained that all placement documentation must be reviewed by the placement tutor prior to sign off, allowing the university to maintain oversight of the roles and responsibilities being provided to students. Student representatives confirmed that they felt that the tasks allocated to them were appropriate and there had not been concerns raised in relation to the levels of casework they were expected to undertake. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

39. The university shared details of the readiness for direct practice module which included input relating to a wide range of skills and knowledge to support transition to placement,

including focused skills days to prepare students for direct practice. The course team highlighted that this module must be passed prior to commencing placement. Alongside the assessment of readiness for practice, which includes a role play exercise assessed by academics and representatives from InvolveMDX, students must have a DBS check and declare any changes to their suitability to practice.

40. During a review of course documentation, the inspection team identified some queries in relation to the sequencing of the readiness for direct practice module and the start of first placement, suggesting that the placement may commence prior to completion of the module. During a meeting with the course team, it was confirmed that the readiness for practice assessment takes place in October and goes through an assessment board in November, prior to placement starting. The inspection team identified that documentation could cause some confusion in its current form and that clarity across all course documentation was required. 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](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.6

41. Documentary evidence provided as part of the inspection outlined how P.E's were required to record their Social Work England registration number through the PLA form at the beginning of each placement. The university also outlined the arrangements in place for providing Practice Educator Professional Standards (PEPS) training for both offsite and onsite P.E's who were new to the role. Where a professional had already completed their PEPS training but not supported a student within a two-year time frame, the university provided refresher training which was completed prior to being allocated a student.

42. In relation to record keeping of the registration, training and currency of P.E's, the inspection team heard that the university keeps a register of offsite P.E's which is regularly updated by members of the course team. For onsite P.E's, this responsibility is delegated to the local authority, however a member of the course team requests data to verify this is sufficient. The inspection team also heard about other incentives for P.E's working with the university which included P.E of the year where feedback is given on the support provided to students and the regular training opportunities to maintain currency. Where training was utilised, there was positive feedback from both students and P.E's. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

43. Information in relation to whistleblowing and raising concerns was provided through the practice placement handbook. The clarity of this information was explored during a meeting with student representatives from the courses who confirmed that they understood the policies and processes in place should a concern arise. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

44. The inspection team reviewed the faculty and wider organisational map which demonstrated staffing for the course, lines of accountability and involvement of wider stakeholder groups. During the inspection, members of the course team and senior leadership team provided further evidence to assure the inspection team that the course was an essential part of the wider social work provision and was valued by the other disciplines within the school. The inspection team also heard about the internal quality assurance processes that the course had been subject to, in order to ensure that resources and provision were being adequately managed. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

45. The university provided an example of their Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) documentation which was agreed by the university and placement providers within local authorities and detailed the commitment to provide appropriate learning opportunities in line with the relevant standards and frameworks. For Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) sector organisations, a 'review of new placement form' is completed and used as evidence of agreements in place. During discussions with the placement team within the university, it was discussed that the MoU documentation may be valuable to use across all placement providers to ensure a consistent approach.

46. Where placement difficulties occurred which could not be resolved, the university explained that there were appropriate processes in place to be followed to secure a new placement. In their aim to avoid placement breakdowns, course team representatives held fortnightly placement tracking meetings to review the effectiveness of placements and provide intervention where there may be early issues identified. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met with a recommendation in relation to implementing a consistent placement agreement with all providers. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.3

47. The inspection team heard that a member of university staff visited all organisations prior to formalising any agreement to offer a student placement. During these initial visits, the member of staff checked relevant policies and procedures on site and asked for relevant serial numbers (e.g. in relation to insurance policies). During the PLA meetings, placement providers and students also sign part of the PLA to acknowledge policies are in place and have been shared with the student. During meetings with placement providers, the inspection team heard that organisations maintained close working relationships with the university if any specific health and wellbeing needs were identified for students during placement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

48. Documentary evidence submitted by the university outlined that employers are involved in the courses through placement allocation, co-teaching, employability days and through stakeholder meetings. During meetings with representatives from employer organisations, the inspectors were given examples by some partners about the range of activity they had been involved in from admissions through to delivery and evaluation of the course. Some employer representatives in attendance explained that they had not been involved in the course beyond placement allocation but would be eager to offer their input into teaching around specialist areas and reviewing module content.

49. The inspection team highlighted the desire from a range of employer partners to be more formally engaged with the course during conversations with the course team. The course team agreed that they were eager to widen representation of employer partners on the course and some early planning was in place. The inspection team identified that some messages around participation in stakeholder meetings may not be shared as widely as the university would hope and suggested ways in which this might be remedied for future cohorts. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met with a recommendation in relation to widening employer representation. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.5

50. The documentary evidence provided to support this standard included copies of Quality Assurance of Placement Learning (QAPL) documentation and minutes from programme voice group meetings, stakeholder meetings and Involve@MDX meetings. Through documentation it was possible to see some of the mechanisms in place to encourage engagement from key stakeholders in different aspects of the course and forums where feedback could be offered.

51. Through conversations with representatives from the above stakeholder groups, the inspection team heard that there had been some positive opportunities for representatives

to offer feedback which had resulted in some changes to the course, including some changes to modules and course length that were being considered as part of this inspection activity. Some representatives explained that the changes were welcomed but they hadn't always been made aware of how their feedback was being actioned. All representatives who attended meetings shared that these were planned and happened frequently, with Involve@MDX meeting as frequently as 2-3 times a term. As with standard 3.4, some employers commented that they hadn't had the opportunity to be involved in course review meetings but would welcome the opportunity to in the future. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met but agreed the recommendation applied to standard 3.4 was also relevant for this standard. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.6

52. The inspection team reviewed minutes from stakeholder meetings where placement capacity and planning were discussed. The course team explained that they were responsive to workforce demands and open to discussing future numbers based upon this. The inspection team also heard that the academic dean for the faculty sits on the local integrated care system board which incorporates discussions around future workforce planning for provision in specific discipline areas. Any intelligence from these board meetings is then fed in at a course team level.

53. At the time of the inspection, the course team explained that their current numbers were stable, and that placement provision was in place to meet this. Any increase to numbers would be the result of careful planning with local partners to ensure that placements were available. The relationship between the admissions team and course team ensured that the number of applications to the course were regularly reviewed to support future planning discussions. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

54. Documentary evidence confirmed that there were appropriate arrangements in place for the lead social worker for the course who was suitably qualified and registered. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

55. The inspection team reviewed the CV's of course team staff involved in the delivery of the course which demonstrated a range of expertise and practice experience. Discussions held during the inspection confirmed that all staff were full time and dedicated to the delivery of the courses. Visiting lecturers were invited to contribute towards delivery on specialist topics which was planned by the course team each year. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

56. Achievement and diversity data at a course level provided by the university was reviewed by the inspection team alongside information relating to the development of a mentoring scheme for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups to support achievement on the programme. Whilst the implementation of the scheme was a welcome addition to the course, it was not clear how the success of the pilot was being monitored against a specific issue. The inspection team also queried how some other gaps identified in relation to the data analysis provided were being addressed by the course team, however found there was not a consistent approach to using student data to support action planning and improvement.

57. Through conversations with the course team during inspection, it was evident that there was a commitment to responding to any issues identified in relation to student data to improve outcomes. Despite this, the inspection team observed that there was an apparent lack of formal process or oversight in relation to how data is used to inform action planning and improvements at a course level. 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. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.10

58. The university provided an overview of the arrangements in place to support staff development and knowledge in relation to professional practice. This included 33 hours per year for social work staff to engage in research activity and/or practice-based learning and 4 weeks per year for all university staff to engage in other Continuous Professional Development (CPD) activities alongside supporting new staff to acquire their Post Graduate Certificate (PgCert) in Higher Education. Representatives from the senior leadership team explained that all staff have an annual review meeting where they set individual targets and are able to link CPD and training requests to these. Alongside formal requests, staff are also encouraged to engage with the university's online repository of resources to support their professional development. The inspection team also heard about the range of research activity the course team was involved in and how this contributes to course design and review. As a result, the inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

59. The university submitted their programme handbooks and module narratives to demonstrate how the courses were mapped to the professional standards and PCF's. The course team outlined the ways in which they had structured the delivery of key topics to fit the accelerated nature of the programme. During their review of documentation, the

inspection team identified some inconsistencies between the language used in learning outcomes and the how these were measured. The inspection team also highlighted that some language used in relation to mastery might not be appropriate for students' stage of study. The course team acknowledged where there could be some adaptation of language to ensure clarity and were open to discussion around this as part of the changes to the courses. As a result of, the inspection team agreed that condition applied to standard 2.5 was also relevant to this standard. Full details of the condition can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.2

60. The inspection team reviewed minutes from stakeholder meetings and Involve@MDX minutes which demonstrated the involvement of employers and people with lived experience in different elements of the course. During meetings with representatives from both stakeholder groups, the inspection team heard that employer agencies and Involve@MDX are involved in admissions interview panels and contribute towards the design of interviews by giving feedback interview panel questions. Some employers provided input into teaching by supporting delivery and people with lived experience explained how they were often asked by lecturers to give their views on teaching materials. The inspection team also acknowledged that the proposed changes to the courses would further support the development of this standard with the addition of a contemporary issues module focused on engagement with both stakeholder groups.

61. As highlighted within previous standard areas, some employers that the inspection team met explained that they were eager to contribute towards course delivery but had not yet had the opportunity. Further to this, whilst some practitioners welcomed the changes to the course described above, they were not aware that these changes were occurring and expressed a desire to be involved in the development of module learning and teaching content. The inspection team agreed that the recommendation applied to standards 3.4 and 3.5 was also relevant against this standard. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.3

62. Through review of documentary evidence, the inspection team were able to see evidence of the course being designed in accordance with EDI principles from admission through to curriculum content, assessment methods and student support. During a meeting with student support services, it was outlined how the university adopts an inclusive approach to learning on the course and all materials that are developed are in accordance with British Dyslexia Association (BDA) guidelines. Specialist members of the central student support team worked closely with members of the course team to ensure all aspects of course delivery were as accessible as possible from the outset. Student representatives were positive about the approach adopted by the university and this improved their ability

to access the course where additional needs were a factor. International students also highlighted the support offered by the university to enable them to experience success in their studies. The addition of the BAME mentoring initiative was also seen as supporting this standard. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

63. The narrative submitted highlighted the plans the university had to update the courses annually to ensure currency in relation to research, legislation and best practice. The course team also highlighted that some of the proposed changes to the courses, including the contemporary issues module, had occurred because of internal review and a desire to remain current. The inspection team heard about some of the forums in place with external stakeholders where curriculum content and course design were discussed. The law module was cited as a specific example of where feedback had been acted on by making updates and directly involving legal professionals in its delivery.

64. During a meeting with the senior leadership team, an overview of the courses engagement with other review frameworks was outlined. This included annual evaluation activities, the portfolio development committee and the faculty assurance committee. The university also outlined the ways in which staff research feeds into course design and the ways in which staff can share their research interests with students on the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

65. The course team outlined their approach to embedding skills in relation to applying theory to practice. This included a staged approach, starting with the introduction of concepts which were revisited throughout modules with increasing focus and depth during the programme. The rationale in relation to the order of teaching was also explored, with the course team explaining that certain modules occurred prior to placement as they would develop skills in relation to report writing, observational skills, reflection and use of self. The timing of the dedicated theory module was also planned so that students would have real life case examples from their placement to apply to taught theory sessions.

66. The inspection team discussed some of the feedback they had received from P.E's in relation to students difficulties applying theory to practice whilst on placement. Whilst P.E's recognised that part of their role was to support the development of this skill, there was some suggestion that further input was required from the university. The inspection team were assured that, as the university develops its ways of working and communications with onsite supervisors and P.E's, the practice in relation to this standard would be enhanced. Further to this, the condition applied to standards 2.5 and 4.1 which requires further clarity around the content and delivery of course and module documentation, will also support

students understanding of where they will be taught skills in relation to the application of theory into practice. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

67. The university submitted a copy of their interprofessional learning symposium which included sessions on a range of topics that were made available to students between October and June. The course team explained that there was an expectation that students would attend at least 2 sessions from those available. During conversations with student representatives, the inspection team heard that a session held with social work, nursing and midwifery was helpful in supporting knowledge about other professions that they would be likely to work with in placement. The course team also highlighted their plans to increase their use of university resources such as a purpose built flat and mock hospital ward where role play scenarios could take place. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

68. Module specifications provided by the university provided an outline of the number of hours allocated for study on each module, including direct teaching, independent study and placement. The inspection team agreed the number of hours in structured academic learning was appropriate and as a result, agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.8

69. The inspection team reviewed programme handbooks which provided detail in relation to the course assessment strategy and design. Review of documentation demonstrated that there was a wide range of formative and summative assessments used on the course which were mapped to the learning outcomes identified. The proposed changes to the courses were also set to diversify the range of assessments further. Assessments used were mapped against Social Work England professional standards and clarity was provided in relation to the need to pass all modules prior to qualification.

70. During conversations with the course team, the inspection team queried some of the language and descriptions used within the module narratives. For example, there was a query in relation to how the assessment on the readiness for practice module successfully tested the learning outcomes. The course team confirmed that there was a combination of assessments used within the module and agreed the module narrative could be amended to make this clearer. The inspection team agreed that the condition applied in relation to standards 2.5 and 4.1 was also relevant against this standard. Full details of the condition can be found in the [conditions](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.9

71. The course team provided a narrative in relation to the sequencing of assessments and how these supported student progression on the course. The inspection team also heard

about how proposed changes, including the early sequencing of the law module ahead of final placement, would further enhance the skills students required to support practice. During conversations with the course team, further clarity was provided in relation to the approach and the rationale for changes which assured the inspection team that the standard was met.

Standard 4.10

72. Module descriptors indicated frequent use of formative assessment which provided opportunities for ongoing feedback to support student development. Within documentation provided by the university, the inspection team saw that all students should expect feedback on formal assessments within 15 days and that this should be both constructive and detailed. During meetings with student representatives, the inspection team heard that their experience was as outlined in the programme handbooks and individuals commented that the feedback they received was of a high quality and this supported their development. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

73. The inspection team were satisfied that all staff involved in marking and assessment were appropriately qualified and had a good range of experience and expertise. The external examiner used on the course was also appropriately qualified and registered with Social Work England. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

74. The inspection team explored the ways in which the course team managed progression points due to the accelerated nature of the programme. Within the current course structure, the transition from first to second placement occurred within a 3 week window. If there were delays, this could impact upon students commencing their second placement. During a meeting with student representatives, the inspection team heard that there had been some fragmentation in cohorts as a result of this.

75. The course team assured the inspection team that whilst progression points were tight, these were well managed by staff to avoid delays for students as much as possible. The course team also highlighted that any students who were delayed were encouraged to participate in all other aspects of the course to avoid further impact on their study. In order to ensure that students maintained positive tutorial experiences, the course team reconfigured placement tutorial groups following first placement so that similar experiences could be shared. The inspection team also acknowledged that the proposed changes to the courses meant that there would be a longer 4 week window between placements for future cohorts with an assessment board during this time. It was agreed that this would further support any challenges with ensuring students were able to progress in a timely manner.

76. The inspection team further discussed how the condition applied to standard 3.9 would also support the course team to manage issues relating to student progression that may occur. In conducting more structured analysis at a course level, there would be a better understanding of any specific trends or barriers occurring within cohorts that might impact progression for students. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

77. The documentation submitted during the inspection outlined the university's approach to developing an evidence informed approach to practice. This was seen through module descriptors and was a particular focus with social work theory and research module content. As referenced in previous standard areas, the inspection team also heard about how the research active members of the course team ensured that their research was woven into the course and shared with students. Student representatives also commented on the ways in which practice educators supported the development of evidence-based practice whilst on placement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

78. The university provided a comprehensive overview of the support available to students on the course including links to services such as counselling, health and wellbeing, occupational health, financial advice and employability services. The inspection team were also able to see evidence of where support services were embedded in course delivery, i.e. through induction or the provision of an employability day.

79. During a meeting with representatives from support services the inspection team heard how evening and weekend appointments were offered to ensure equal access to support for students on all programmes. There were also links highlighted with local organisations to provide specialist support where this could not be offered by the university. The university also demonstrated that they had responded to the increase in international applicants by offering access to counselling services in approximately 140 languages.

80. During a meeting with student representatives, the inspection team heard that there had been positive experiences of student support services and students explained that where support was required, this was provided quickly and in a joined up manner with all involved. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

81. As with standard 5.1, the university provided links to a wide range of academic services available to support students on the course. These services included the library, study support, academic writing advice and information about personal tutors. Staff from these services spoke to the inspection team about the ways in which they linked up with the

course team to provide bespoke support as well as planned input through the curriculum. Student experiences of personal tutors were positive with representatives explaining that they were responsive to needs and liaised well with staff from other areas of the course, including placements. The university also outlined the provision that had been developed to support students with caring needs or those awaiting receipt of disability living allowance to enable them to maintain positive progress on the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

82. The university process for maintaining suitability was outlined within admissions guidance, programme handbooks and placement handbooks. This included students completing appropriate checks at the start of the course and submitting suitability declarations prior to any placement activity. The course team and student support services highlighted that the aim where concerns occurred was to offer support for students which was provided through the university care and concern process. Information relating to Fitness to Practise (FtP) processes was also provided to the inspection team to outline what would happen in the event that concerns were significant or impacted ability students' ability to study or practise safely. The course team highlighted that employer partners were involved in such processes to advise and offer contributions. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

83. The inspection team heard about the mechanisms in place to provide reasonable adjustments to students from admissions through to study on the course. The management of this, including referrals to occupational health where necessary, was outlined within the programme handbooks for the courses.

84. During meetings with staff who contribute to the management and delivery of the course, the inspection team heard about some of the adjustments that had been made to support this standard. These included the addition of a health and disability panel within the faculty which review occupational health assessments and agreed ways forward with advice from employer representatives. There was also discussion about proposed changes to learning support plans to ensure these captured information about the nature of needs and how support could be transferred to the placement environment. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

85. Students were able to access information in relation to curriculum, assessment, placements and transition to Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) via the course handbooks. Student representatives confirmed that they felt well informed about the course through the information available. Employer partners also shared their

experiences of supporting with employability days to support transition to ASYE and commented that students were usually well prepared for employment. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

86. The mandatory aspects of the course were clearly articulated through documentation made available during the inspection. The course team explained how they maintain a proactive approach to monitoring attendance so that early intervention can be provided where necessary. Staff also highlighted that their remit stretched beyond physical attendance and focused on how well students engaged with different aspects of the course including lectures, seminars and workshops. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

87. As outlined within standard 4.10, students shared positive feedback on their experiences of receiving feedback on the course. Representatives agreed that feedback was timely and developmental and where delays had occurred, these were clearly articulated to students and extended timeframes remained short. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

88. The programme handbooks provided clear guidance on the processes in place to manage academic appeals. The inspection team queried whether there had been any patterns in relation to academic appeals however the course team explained that queries were infrequent and had not highlighted any common themes. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

89. As the qualifying courses are an MA Social Work and PgDip Social Work, 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	Standards 2.5, 4.1, 4.8	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that all course documentation has been updated to show accurate timescales of modules, clarity around assessments and consistent use of appropriate language in relation to intended learning outcomes.	14.09.2023	Paragraph 40 Paragraph 59 Paragraph 70
2	Standards 3.9	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates their approach to analysis, monitoring and evaluation at a course level and student cohort level. This will include reference to who has responsibility for this, the areas of focus and the frequency in which they will conduct analysis and evaluation activities.	14.09.2023	Paragraph 57

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	2.3	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider providing training for onsite supervisors in relation to the expectations for student support and development, particularly in settings where students require an offsite P.E.	Paragraph 37
2	3.2	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider implementing a consistent placement agreement form or a consistent approach to memoranda of understanding and placement agreements across all placement providers, including those in PVI sectors"	Paragraph 46
3.	3.4, 3.5, 4.2	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider widening the representation of employers in course delivery, design and review and adopt a more targeted approach in their communications with organisations.	Paragraph 49 Paragraph 51 Paragraph 61

Annex 1: Education and training standards summary

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
Admissions			
1.1 Confirm on entry to the course, via a holistic/multi-dimensional assessment process, that applicants: i. have the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards ii. can demonstrate that they have a good command of English iii. have the capability to meet academic standards; and iv. have the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes.	☒	☐	☐
1.2 Ensure that applicants' prior relevant experience is considered as part of the admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.3 Ensure that employers, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work are involved in admissions processes.	☒	☐	☐
1.4 Ensure that the admissions processes assess the suitability of applicants, including in relation to their conduct, health and character. This includes criminal conviction checks.	☒	☐	☐
1.5 Ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.	☒	☐	☐
1.6 Ensure that the admissions process gives applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.			
Learning environment			
2.1 Ensure that students spend at least 200 days (including up to 30 skills days) gaining different experiences and learning in practice settings. Each student will have: i) placements in at least two practice settings providing contrasting experiences; and ii) a minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing experience of sufficient numbers of statutory social work tasks involving high risk decision making and legal interventions.	☒	☐	☐
2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.	☒	☐	☐
2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.	☐	☐	☒
2.4 Ensure that on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.	☒	☐	☐
2.5 Ensure that students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting.	☐	☒	☐
2.6 Ensure that practice educators are on the register and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
2.7 Ensure that policies and processes, including for whistleblowing, are in place for students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures and organisational wrongdoing, and report concerns openly and safely without fear of adverse consequences.	☒	☐	☐
Course governance, management and quality			
3.1 Ensure courses are supported by a management and governance plan that includes the roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability of individuals and governing groups in the delivery, resourcing and quality management of the course.	☒	☐	☐
3.2 Ensure that they have agreements with placement providers to provide education and training that meets the professional standards and the education and training qualifying standards. This should include necessary consents and ensure placement providers have contingencies in place to deal with practice placement breakdown.	☒	☐	☒
3.3 Ensure that placement providers have the necessary policies and procedures in relation to students' health, wellbeing and risk, and the support systems in place to underpin these.	☒	☐	☐
3.4 Ensure that employers are involved in elements of the course, including but not limited to the management and monitoring of courses and the allocation of practice education.	☐	☐	☒
3.5 Ensure that regular and effective monitoring, evaluation and improvement systems are in place, and that these involve	☐	☐	☒

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
employers, people with lived experience of social work, and students.			
3.6 Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which includes consideration of local/regional placement capacity.	☒	☐	☐
3.7 Ensure that a lead social worker is in place to hold overall professional responsibility for the course. This person must be appropriately qualified and experienced, and on the register.	☒	☐	☐
3.8 Ensure that there is an adequate number of appropriately qualified and experienced staff, with relevant specialist subject knowledge and expertise, to deliver an effective course.	☒	☐	☐
3.9 Evaluate information about students' performance, progression and outcomes, such as the results of exams and assessments, by collecting, analysing and using student data, including data on equality and diversity.	☐	☒	☐
3.10 Ensure that educators are supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice.	☒	☐	☐
Curriculum and assessment			
4.1 Ensure that the content, structure and delivery of the training is in accordance with relevant guidance and frameworks and is designed to enable students to demonstrate that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards.	☐	☒	☐
4.2 Ensure that the views of employers, practitioners and people with lived experience of social work are incorporated into the design,	☐	☐	☒

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
ongoing development and review of the curriculum.			
4.3 Ensure that the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles, and human rights and legislative frameworks.	☒	☐	☐
4.4 Ensure that the course is continually updated as a result of developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.5 Ensure that the integration of theory and practice is central to the course.	☒	☐	☐
4.6 Ensure that students are given the opportunity to work with, and learn from, other professions in order to support multidisciplinary working, including in integrated settings.	☒	☐	☐
4.7 Ensure that the number of hours spent in structured academic learning under the direction of an educator is sufficient to ensure that students meet the required level of competence.	☒	☐	☐
4.8 Ensure that the assessment strategy and design demonstrate that the assessments are robust, fair, reliable and valid, and that those who successfully complete the course have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards.	☐	☒	☐
4.9 Ensure that assessments are mapped to the curriculum and are appropriately sequenced to match students' progression through the course.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
4.10 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development.	☒	☐	☐
4.11 Ensure assessments are carried out by people with appropriate expertise, and that external examiner(s) for the course are appropriately qualified and experienced and on the register.	☒	☐	☐
4.12 Ensure that there are systems to manage students' progression, with input from a range of people, to inform decisions about their progression including via direct observation of practice.	☒	☐	☐
4.13 Ensure that the course is designed to enable students to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice, underpinned by skills, knowledge and understanding in relation to research and evaluation.	☒	☐	☐
Supporting students			
5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including: I. confidential counselling services; II. careers advice and support; and III. occupational health services	☒	☐	☐
5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.	☒	☐	☐
5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
5.4 Make supportive and reasonable adjustments for students with health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through their course and meet the professional standards, in accordance with relevant legislation.	☒	☐	☐
5.5 Provide information to students about their curriculum, practice placements, assessments and transition to registered social worker including information on requirements for continuing professional development.	☒	☒	☐
5.6 Provide information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory.	☒	☐	☐
5.7 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.	☒	☐	☐
5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.	☒	☐	☐
Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register			
6.1 The threshold entry route to the register will normally be a bachelor's degree with honours in social work.	☒	☐	☐

Regulator decision

Approved 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	2.5, 4.1, 4.8	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that all course documentation has been updated to show accurate timescales of modules, clarity around assessments and consistent use of appropriate language in relation to intended learning outcomes.	Condition met.
2	Standards 3.9	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates their approach to analysis, monitoring and evaluation at a course level and student cohort level. This will include reference to who has responsibility for this, the areas of focus and the frequency in which they will conduct analysis and evaluation activities.	Condition met.

Findings

In relation to the condition set against standards 2.5, 4.1 and 4.8, the course provider submitted copies of the modules narratives for the course which included tracked changes to demonstrate where changes had been made. The inspection team noted that the changes provided clarity on when each module was delivered, expectations of students' learning at pre-registration level, any pre-requisites in relation to the completion of modules and the nature of assessments. The university provided assurance that amendments had been approved via the University Planning and Quality Committee and changes would be reflected in wider course level documentation. As a result, the inspection team agreed that this condition was now met.

In order to assure the inspection team that the condition in relation to standard 3.9 was now met, the course provider submitted documentation which outlined a new Educational Monitoring Enhancement (EME) process and a mental health and social work departmental action plan. Upon reviewing the evidence provided, the inspection team were assured that documentation indicated that there was a more coherent and regular approach to analysis, monitoring and evaluation at a course and student cohort level. The documentation indicated the structure, nature and frequency of the process and included details of responsibilities for staff within the department. The specific departmental action plan offered information about specific areas of focus for the course team and the reasons why these areas had been selected. As a result of the information provided, the inspection team agreed that this condition was now met.

Regulator decision

Approved.