

Inspection Report

Course provider: University of the West of England, Bristol

Course approval: PG Dip social work course (Step Up)

Inspection dates: 11th to 13th June 2024

Report date:	23 rd July 2024
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	10 th September 2024
Date conditions met and approved:	20 th December 2024

Contents

Introduction	3
What we do.....	3
Summary of Inspection	5
Language	5
Inspection.....	6
Meetings with students	6
Meetings with course staff.....	6
Meeting with people with lived experience of social work	6
Meetings with external stakeholders.....	6
Findings	6
Standard one: Admissions.....	6
Standard two: Learning environment	9
Standard three: Course governance, management and quality.....	13
Standard four: Curriculum assessment.....	16
Standard five: Supporting students	21
Standard six: Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register	24
Proposed outcome.....	25
Conditions	25
Recommendations	26
Annex 1: Education and training standards summary.....	28
Regulator decision	35
Annex 2: Meeting of conditions.....	36
Findings	37

Introduction

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

What we do

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

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

9. During this time, a draft plan for the inspection is developed and shared with the education provider, to make sure it is achievable at the point of inspection.

10. Once the inspectors and officer are satisfied that an inspection can take place, this is usually undertaken over a three to four day visit to the education provider. We then draft a report setting out what we found during the inspection and if and how our findings demonstrate that the course meets our standards.

11. The inspectors may recommend in this report that the course is approved with conditions, approved without conditions or that it does not meet the criteria for approval. Where the course has been previously approved, we may also decide to withdraw approval.

12. A draft of this report is shared with the education provider, and once we have considered any comments or observations they may wish to provide, we make a final regulatory decision about the approval of the course.

13. The final decisions that we can make are as follows, that the course is approved without conditions, the course is approved with conditions or that the course does not meet the criteria for approval. The decision, and the report, are then published.

14. If the course is approved with conditions, we will write to the education provider setting out how they can demonstrate they have met the conditions, the action we will take once we decide that the conditions are met, and the action we will take if we decide the conditions are not met.

Summary of Inspection

15. The University of the West of England, Bristol's PG Dip social work course (Step Up) 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	UWEBR2
Course provider	University of the West of England, Bristol
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	PG Dip social work course (Step Up)
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	50 students per cohort
Date of inspection	11 to 13 June 2024
Inspection team	Laura Gordon (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Lyn Westcott (Lay Inspector) Jane Reeves (Registrant Inspector)

Language

16. In this document we describe the University of the West of England, Bristol as 'the education provider' or 'the university' and we describe the PG Dip social work course (Step Up) as 'the course'.

Inspection

17. A remote inspection took place from 11th to 13th June 2024. 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 5 students across both teaching sites and including student representatives. Discussions included student support, learning experiences on their placements, feedback they received on their progress and their curriculum.

Meetings with course staff

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

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in the course. Discussions included involvement with admissions, course review and monitoring, teaching and assessment.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners from a number of local authorities across Plymouth, Somerset, Torbay, Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

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 documentary evidence relating to the course admissions process. The entry criteria are set by the Department for Education (DfE) and an initial sift of applications is carried out through Capita. The assessment center is organised by the Southwest regional partnership, known as the Step Up Consortium, and consists of a written exercise, role play, group exercise and interview.

26. During the inspection, the inspection team heard from the admissions team that interviews are undertaken by an academic and employer partner and that all members of the panel mark the written exercise. The admissions team also provided more information about how decisions are reached in collaboration with the employer partners.

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

Standard 1.2

28. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that 6 months' full-time (or equivalent) direct experience is required, either in a paid or voluntary capacity, of working with vulnerable children, young people and/or families, carers or vulnerable adults. The university advised that applicants are asked questions that encourage them to discuss their understanding of social care and relevant previous experience in greater detail.

29. The inspection team met with the admissions team who confirmed that accreditation of prior learning does not apply to the course. They also met with employer partners and practice educators who commented positively about the level of experience that applicants that join the programme have.

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

Standard 1.3

31. Prior to the inspection, the university advised that practice learning coordinators, practitioners, and principal social workers from the Consortium work in close partnership with academic staff at the assessment centre to evaluate, score and moderate their assessment of candidates.

32. During the inspection, the inspection team met with people with lived experience who confirmed their involvement in the group task and that they felt that their contributions were valued.

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

Standard 1.4

34. The university provided evidence of their criminal convictions procedure and their Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) policy. They also confirmed that applicants are required to complete a disclosure application form and a health declaration form before they can register as a student.

35. The inspection team heard more about how disclosures are considered, and DBS checks are carried out from the admissions team.

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

Standard 1.5

37. Documentary evidence was provided of the university's strategy, access and participation plan, inclusive curriculum and practice toolkit and various Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) policies.

38. During the inspection, the inspection team saw a demonstration of the university system for collating and reviewing the EDI data that flows into their continuous improvement tool.

39. The course team advised of the discussions that had taken place about the diversity of the cohort and widening participation.

40. The inspection team noted that EDI training was available but was unclear whether this training was made available to the people with lived experience involved in the admissions process.

41. The course team confirmed during the inspection that EDI training was not currently available to the group of people with lived experience who are involved in the admissions assessment centre processes.

42. The inspection team agreed that in order to ensure equality for all applicants, EDI training should be provided for all people with lived experience involved in the admissions process.

43. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 1.5. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. [Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the proposed outcomes section of this report.](#)

Standard 1.6

44. The university provided evidence of the information available to applicants from the university website, the DfE website and employer partner websites.

45. Further information is provided through Keep In Touch (KIT) days prior to starting the course but the inspection team clarified with the course team during the inspection that this takes place after an offer on the course is accepted.

46. The inspection team agreed that the information about the course that was available to applicants prior to accepting an offer to enable them to make an informed decision was limited. It did not appear to include information about the course modules, assessments, any relevant additional costs, research interests, or placements opportunities.

47. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 1.6. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. [Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the proposed outcomes section of this report.](#)

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

48. Documentary evidence confirmed that students undertake a 70 day and 100 day placement during the course and complete 30 skills days. However, the inspection team noted that the second placement is signed off at 90 days and not 100 days.

49. The inspection team explored this further with the course team during the inspection and heard that a new second placement handbook is currently being developed and will require sign off at 100 days.

50. The inspection team agreed that it is a requirement for all students to complete 200 days of placement learning and as such it was important the university ensure that all students had completed 100 days on their second placement.

51. The inspection team met with members of the placement team who confirmed that most students have two placements within the local authority. They advised that in some circumstances Private Voluntary Independent agencies (PVI) are used for first placement but that they will ensure statutory tasks are completed by students on placement. It is therefore anticipated that statutory tasks will be completed in the second placement.

52. The inspection team met with employer partners who confirmed how they ensure a contrast between the placements by considering evidence from the first placement, and the skills, experience and learning needs of individual students. They advised that the Consortium check for placement contrast and the university will check the end of placement documentation from first placement.

53. The inspection team was unsure from the documentary evidence where the 30 skills days took place across the course and what they covered. There were also inconsistencies across the skills days listed for both teaching sites. Further additional evidence was

requested, and a request was made for this to be a focus of the presentation from the course team during the inspection.

54. The course team advised during the inspection, that all students across both teaching sites, in Bristol and Exeter, receive the same skills day learning.

55. Further documentation was also provided during the inspection about the four induction residential skills days. It was still unclear to the inspection team how practice learning was taking place on some of these days, and they did not always appear to equate to a full day of practice learning.

56. An additional meeting was arranged during the inspection to discuss the skills days further and the course team provided further information about the content and tasks within some of the skills days.

57. The inspection team were provided with an updated skills schedule for the current cohort. Upon review, the inspection team noted that there were differences in the skills days listed between the two teaching sites and there were still some skills days that had not yet been confirmed.

58. The inspection team had concerns about how the skills days were planned for in the course and about the content and length of the skills days in providing practice learning for students in lieu of placement days. The inspection team concluded that they had also not been assured that all students will receive the same 30 skills days across both sites.

59. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that two conditions are set against standard 2.1. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. [Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the proposed outcomes section of this report.](#)

Standard 2.2

60. The university provided a copy of the Practice Learning Agreement (PLA) which sets out the learning opportunities for students on placement and the portfolio covers the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF) domains.

61. During the inspection, employer partners and practice educators advised how they consider the learning level of individual students in respect of their experience, needs and support.

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

Standard 2.3

63. Prior to the inspection the university advised that information for students and practice placement staff is available via the Practice Support Net pages on the university website. They also confirmed that every student is allocated a practice tutor whilst on placement and that the PLA sets out arrangements for placements.

64. The inspection team spoke with employer partners and students who confirmed that induction and support is in place. The practice educators that met with the inspection team also provided information about supervisions and how they work with onsite supervisors.

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

Standard 2.4

66. Documentary evidence received prior to the inspection confirmed that the PLA meeting and interim review meetings are used to assess that students' responsibilities are appropriate to their level and stage of training. The university also confirmed that placements are quality assured through completion of quality assurance placement learning (QAPL) forms.

67. During the inspection, the inspection team met with students who confirmed that they had appropriate responsibilities in their workload. Employer partners also confirmed this and advised that they will consider the learning level of the individual student and where appropriate provide opportunities that stretch students learning.

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

Standard 2.5

69. The programme specification confirmed that the assessment of readiness for direct practice is dependent upon successful completion of the 3 week intensive induction programme, and completion of an assessment on two areas of the PCF providing critical reflections. The assessment is marked by an academic and an employer partner.

70. During the inspection, the course team provided further information about the assessment and confirmed that this is a formative piece of work and is not within a module. As such it is not assessed by the external examiner and does not go through university's internal quality assurance boards.

71. The inspection team met with students who confirmed that they do receive some formative feedback on the assessment and generally found it useful to explore the PCF domains. However, a number of students expressed concerns about being unsure of what was expected of them and did not feel the assessment prepared them for practice.

72. Employer partners and practice educators that met with the inspection team confirmed that they felt students were ready for placement. The employer partners also detailed how they are involved in the assessment of readiness for practice and were positive about the

guidance and structure of the process of dual marking. They confirmed that it also allows for a second review for moderation.

73. The inspection team were concerned that the quality assurance process and monitoring of the readiness for practice assessment, which is a key point of progression, was not as robust as the process in place for other assessments in the course.

74. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standards 2.5 and 4.8. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. [Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the proposed outcomes section of this report.](#)

Standard 2.6

75. Prior to the inspection, the university advised that a process and system for ensuring practice educator standards are recorded is currently being developed with the university's Professional Placement Office.

76. During the inspection, the placement team members that met with the inspection team confirmed that a practice educator's social work registration number is recorded on the PLA, but it was unclear if a check of Social Work England's register is carried out.

77. The placement team also confirmed that they are developing a system of requesting information from employer partners about practice educators and that the currency of practice educators is not currently checked by the university.

78. It came to the inspection team's attention during the inspection, that a practice educator had been placed with a student for placement that did not have the correct qualifications.

79. The inspection team agreed that the currency, training and ongoing registration of practice educators must be routinely checked to ensure that practice educators have the relevant and current knowledge to support safe and effective learning for students on placement.

80. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 2.6. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. [Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the proposed outcomes section of this report.](#)

Standard 2.7

81. Documentary evidence was provided prior to the inspection in the form of the whistleblowing policy, placement information guide which detailed clear processes for students to raise concerns, the Practice Support Net webpages and a dedicated practice support phone line. The PLA also identified a named individual outside of the student's immediate practice learning team who they can contact within the agency, specifically to raise whistleblowing concerns.

82. The students that met with the inspection team confirmed that they felt able to raise any concerns.

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

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

84. The university advised of the various governance mechanisms, the involvement of the Consortium and steering group, programme boards and school board of studies. The module evaluations and reports, student representative and staff Forum (SRSF) and programme management committee (PMC) feed into the programme continuous improvement tool and the annual programme review (APR).

85. During the inspection, the inspection team met with members of the senior leadership team who provided more information about the cluster leads and various roles and lines of accountability.

86. The inspection team asked who the lead social worker was, and this was confirmed. The senior leadership team advised that they were not social workers and the lead social worker feeds into the planning cycle and has contact with the senior leaders at various times of the year.

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

88. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standards 3.1 and 3.7 that the lead social worker have greater involvement with the senior management team to ensure that the course is led by people with direct experience of the social work profession. [Full details of the recommendation can be found in the proposed outcomes section of the report.](#)

Standard 3.2

89. Documentary evidence was provided in the form of the workplace agreement template which the university confirmed was used for this course.

90. During the inspection, the inspection team met with the placement team and employer partners who were able to detail the process for placement breakdown and confirmed the close working relationship between the university and employers.

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

Standard 3.3

92. The responsibilities for ensuring health and wellbeing and that there are sufficient support systems in place for students, are detailed in the workplace agreement between the employer partner and the university.

93. During the inspection, the employer partners confirmed how they provide support to students, beginning even before the placement starts. The students that met with the inspection team also confirmed that they were aware of the policies and support in place. They advised that this is covered in the PLA in which they have to confirm they have read the policies and procedures and comment on why they are important.

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

Standard 3.4

95. Prior to the inspection, the university confirmed that the Consortium and university representatives meet in a steering management meeting on a six weekly basis to share information and examples of best practice. They will also evaluate, monitor and feedback on all aspects of the course.

96. During the inspection, the employer partners that met with the inspection team confirmed their involvement in admissions, KIT days, skills days, the practice quality panel and the marking of the readiness for practice assessment.

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

Standard 3.5

98. Documentary evidence provided by the university indicated that there were a number of quality assurance mechanisms in place across the course such as QAPL forms, module evaluations, the practice quality panel and annual programme review.

99. The inspection team met with people with lived experience who confirmed their involvement in the programme development and that they felt involved in all aspects of the course.

100. As stated under standard 3.4 the employer partners are involved in various aspects of the course and can provide feedback through the Consortium meetings.

101. Student representatives are also invited to this meeting to share their experiences and to act as a conduit between the Consortium and the wider student cohort. Responses to student feedback are provided in a 'You said, we did' format.

102. Student representatives also attend the Student Representative Staff Forums (SRSF) with the programme leader and members of the academic team. It was noted during the inspection from discussions with students that the meetings are held on a Tuesday. Student representatives at the Exeter site were therefore unable to attend due to this being their university study day.

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

104. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standard 3.5 that the scheduling of the SRSF meetings is reviewed to ensure equitable access for all student representatives across both sites. [Full details of the recommendation can be found in the proposed outcomes section of the report.](#)

Standard 3.6

105. The documentary evidence confirmed that the programme is funded by the DfE and that the DfE decides how many places can be offered in each cohort.

106. It was noted by the inspection team that each cohort a Step-Up application is made to the DfE. It was confirmed during the inspection that this is made by the Consortium and involved discussion by both the university and the local authorities who will confirm their individual capacity.

107. During the inspection, the members of the senior leadership team that met with the inspection team confirmed that they considered the size of the cohort across each site and that the maximum tender per cohort would be for 50 students. They also confirmed that there are no capacity issues for placements.

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

Standard 3.7

109. The inspection team were unsure from the documentary evidence who the social work lead for the course who holds overall responsibility for the course was.

110. The inspection team were advised by the senior management team who the lead was, and the inspection team had already received a CV for this individual prior to the inspection. The inspection team were satisfied that this individual is a registered social worker and appropriately qualified and experienced, and therefore agreed that this standard was met.

111. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standards 3.1 and 3.7 that the lead social worker have greater involvement

with the management team to ensure that the course is led by people with direct experience of the social work profession. [Full details of the recommendation can be found in the proposed outcomes section of the report.](#)

Standard 3.8

112. The university provided copies of staff CVs, details of the business planning for staff and workload planning tool. The current course team includes current and former social workers with a range of specialisms and research interests.

113. During the inspection, members of the course team provided further details of research interests and confirmed that staff complete the postgraduate certificate in higher education, and some have their doctorate.

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

Standard 3.9

115. Documentary evidence indicated that student progress and performance is overseen by programme leaders, through annual programme reviews and supported by business intelligence data.

116. During the inspection, the inspection team were shown the business intelligence system and heard more about the series of boards that consider module results and progression.

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

Standard 3.10

118. As referenced at standard 3.8 the documentary evidence provided details about the workload planning tool and research interests of staff. There was also evidence provided relating to the staff appraisal process.

119. During the inspection, the inspection team heard from members of the course team about opportunities to maintain their currency, such as through their journal club. They also referenced having opportunities to return to social work practice, for example by being on fostering panels.

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

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

121. The university provided evidence of mapping the course to the Social Work England professional standards and the PCF domains. These are also covered in the readiness for practice learning and skills days.

122. During the inspection, the students that met with the inspection team confirmed that they are informed of the professional standards.

123. The inspection team noted that the programme specification references the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) as the regulatory body.

124. As Social Work England have been the regulator for social workers since December 2019, the inspectors agreed that this information needed to be amended and updated to reflect the current regulatory body for social workers in England.

125. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standards 4.1 and 5.5. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. [Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the proposed outcomes section of this report.](#)

Standard 4.2

126. As detailed in standard 3.4 the employer partners are involved in various aspects of the curriculum delivery and review.

127. During the inspection, the inspection team met with employer partners and people with lived experience who both provided examples of having input into the teaching, design and review of the course.

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

Standard 4.3

129. The university provided documentary evidence of their EDI strategy and policies, enhancement framework and inclusive curriculum and practice toolkit.

130. The inspection team noted within some of the evidence received prior to the inspection that some concerns had been raised about the Exeter teaching site.

131. During the inspection, the inspection team were provided with examples of reasonable adjustments being available and put in place for students from a range of people.

132. The inspection team met with students across both teaching sites. The students at the Exeter teaching site indicated that they had access to the same online resources as the

students at the Bristol teaching site. The students advised that they did not have any access to printing facilities in Exeter.

133. The inspection team had concerns about the accessibility of equipment for students at the Exeter teaching site and that this could impact on the equity of experience for students in Exeter as a result.

134. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 4.3. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. [Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the proposed outcomes section of this report.](#)

Standard 4.4

135. Documentary evidence detailed the range of research expertise within the course team and that practitioners have input into the delivery of the skills days. Module leaders are also required to review modules and consider the currency of the content.

136. The inspection team heard from members of the course team who gave examples of updates to the curriculum.

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

Standard 4.5

138. The university provided evidence prior to the inspection of the module specifications which indicated how theory and practice are integrated into the course.

139. During the inspection, both the students and practice educators that met with the inspection team confirmed how theory is considered whilst on placement.

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

Standard 4.6

141. The programme specification indicated how various professionals will contribute to the delivery of the course teaching.

142. The inspection team heard specific examples of multidisciplinary learning opportunities during placement and through the university and that there is a skills day involving an advocacy service.

143. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met. However, noted that the examples of opportunities for multidisciplinary learning were not structured timetabled sessions.

144. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is therefore making a recommendation in relation to standard 4.6 that the university look to strengthen the opportunities for multidisciplinary working available to students in the academic element of the course. [Full details of the recommendation can be found in the proposed outcomes section of the report.](#)

Standard 4.7

145. The documentary evidence received prior to the inspection included a breakdown of hours spent in academic learning for each module within the module specifications.

146. The inspection team were satisfied from the documentary evidence that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

147. The university provided a copy of their assessment and feedback policy and confirmed that assessment design is scrutinised through both school and college curriculum review processes. There are standardised college wide marking descriptors, and they use external examiners for all credit bearing modules.

148. There are a range of assessment methods and learning outcomes are linked and aligned to each module assessments.

149. During the inspection, the course team advised of the structure of assessments and confirmed that they have implemented changes to the number of assessments per module increasing from one to two assessments. The course team confirmed that students will need to pass both elements of the module assessment. The inspection team agreed that these changes did not negatively impact the standards.

150. The inspection team noted that formative feedback is provided on the readiness for practice assessment and that summative feedback is not given until July when the first summative assessment takes place. As this assessment is a pass or fail it does not go to the external examiners or through the various boards.

151. The inspection team were concerned that the quality assurance process and monitoring of the readiness for practice assessment was not as robust as the process in place for other assessments in the course.

152. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standards 2.5 and 4.8. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However,

it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. [Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the proposed outcomes section of this report.](#)

Standard 4.9

153. The university provided a copy of the assessment calendar and the programme specification which contained an assessment map.

154. At the time of the inspection, the students that met with the inspection team had only received formative feedback from their readiness for practice assessment.

155. The inspection team noted from the assessment schedule that there appeared to be a bunching of assessments later in the year. As the students that met with the inspection team had not yet reached this stage of the course, they were unable to comment upon any potential impact of this. However, some students did comment upon concerns that some of the learning for modules takes place a long time before they are assessed on it.

156. The inspection team had noted under standard 4.8 that students do not receive any summative feedback until July. They agreed that having assessments too close together would not allow students to implement recommended feedback points for development and improvement before their next assessment.

157. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 4.9. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. [Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the proposed outcomes section of this report.](#)

Standard 4.10

158. Documentary evidence confirmed that students on the course receive both formative and summative feedback which includes an element of feedforward. The university indicated that formative feedback will be provided to students during the taught modules and during supervision on placement and provided a link to their assessment and feedback policy.

159. A copy of the assessment feedback sheet was provided which includes a section to develop a feedback action plan for students.

160. It was noted that students had not completed any summative assessments nor their placement portfolio at the time of the inspection and were therefore unable to comment

upon feedback from them. The inspection team were provided with an external examiner report from a previous cohort which did not indicate any issues with feedback.

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

Standard 4.11

162. Documentary evidence included the external examiner report and CVs for the course team. There is a practice quality panel process in place to consider any issues where students fail their placement.

163. During the inspection, the inspection team met with members of the course team and heard more about the expertise and specialisms within the team.

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

Standard 4.12

165. The university confirmed prior to the inspection that module leads, and programme leads review all students who have failed modules. All students can re-sit a failed assessment and where required have the opportunity to retake a module.

166. A minimum of two direct observations take place in the first placement and three in the final placement and the placement portfolio incorporates service user feedback as well as feedback from the practice educator and/or onsite supervisor.

167. During the inspection, the course team provided further information about how student progression is managed including the provision of mitigating circumstances.

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

Standard 4.13

169. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection detailed how the course modules take an evidence informed approach to practice.

170. During the inspection, the students that met with the inspection team confirmed that they are taught to use evidence informed practice. Specific examples of this taking place within the teaching were provided by the course team.

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

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

172. The university provided links to a number of support services available to students such as counselling, occupational health, wellbeing and careers advice services.

173. During the inspection, the support services that met with the inspection team provided further information about the accessibility of the services to students across both teaching sites.

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

Standard 5.2

175. Documentary evidence indicated that there was a personal academic tutoring system in place with the same tutor for both the academic and placement elements of the course. There are also a range of resources available to students to support with academic skills such as online study skills workshops and workbooks.

176. During the inspection, the inspection team met with a number of students who commented on differing levels of support from personal tutors with issues relating to communication with personal tutors and their responsiveness.

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

178. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is therefore making a recommendation in relation to standard 5.2 that the university ensure regular and consistent support is provided by personal tutors for all students. [Full details of the recommendation can be found in the proposed outcomes section of the report.](#)

Standard 5.3

179. The university provided a copy of their Fitness to study policy, professional suitability and conduct procedure and student conduct policy and disciplinary procedures. Students are expected to complete an annual declaration.

180. During the inspection, the course team provided more information about the processes for fitness to study and professional suitability issues and how students are supported through these.

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

Standard 5.4

182. Documentary evidence was provided with links to information about the disability support service which provides students with an advisor to help develop a plan for reasonable adjustments.

183. During the inspection, examples of reasonable adjustments were provided by the support services, course team and employers confirmed how support continues on placement.

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

Standard 5.5

185. The university provided copies of the programme specification and handbook and module specifications which provide the curriculum for the modules and the teaching and assessment details. The two practice learning modules also provide additional guidance regarding the practice learning elements of the degree.

186. There is a dedicated skills day for the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) and information provided to students about Social Work England and continuous professional development (CPD).

187. The inspection team noted that the programme specification references the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) as the regulatory body.

188. As Social Work England have been the regulator for social workers since December 2019, the inspectors agreed that this information needed to be amended and updated to reflect the current regulatory body for social workers in England.

189. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standards 4.1 and 5.5. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. [Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the proposed outcomes section of this report.](#)

Standard 5.6

190. Documentary evidence confirmed that attendance is monitored through swipe in systems and attendance was monitored for skills days through registration. If students miss skills days, they are required to undertake additional learning to meet the learning outcomes.

191. During the inspection, the course team provided further assurances about the monitoring of attendance across both teaching sites through registers and the MyAttendance and MyEngagement platforms. They also provided information about the process for non-attendance.

192. The students that met with the inspection team confirmed their understanding of the attendance requirements.

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

Standard 5.7

194. Documentary evidence confirmed that students on the course receive both formative and summative feedback which includes an element of feedforward. The university provided a link to their assessment and feedback policy which confirmed a 20 day turnaround for summative feedback to be provided to students.

195. A copy of the assessment feedback sheet was provided which includes a section to develop a feedback action plan for students.

196. It was noted that students had not completed any summative assessments nor their placement portfolio at the time of the inspection and were therefore unable to comment upon the timeliness and meaningfulness of feedback. The inspection team were provided with an external examiner report from a previous cohort which did not indicate any issues with feedback.

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

Standard 5.8

198. Documentary evidence provided information about the university's academic appeals process and complaints procedure. This information is available to students within the course handbook.

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

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

Standard 6.1

200. As the qualifying course is a PG Dip social work course the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

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

Conditions

202. 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.

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

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	Standard 1.5	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that everyone involved in the admissions process receives EDI training.	10 th November 2024	Paragraph 43
2	Standard 1.6	The education provider will provide evidence that applicants are provided with sufficient information about the course prior to them accepting an offer to decide about whether to take up the offer.	10 th November 2024	Paragraph 47
3	Standard 2.1	The education provider will provide evidence of the system in place to ensure that all students have completed 100 days on their second placement.	10 th November 2024	Paragraph 59
4	Standard 2.1	The education provider will provide evidence of how they ensure that all students have the same practice skills days and that these are in line with the expectations of placement learning for this course, particularly in terms of content and length.	10 th November 2024	Paragraph 59

5	Standard 2.5 and 4.8	The education provider will provide evidence of a robust process for ensuring the monitoring and quality assurance of the assessment of student's readiness for practice.	10 th November 2024	Paragraph 74 and Paragraph 152
6	Standard 2.6	The education provider will provide evidence of a robust system of oversight and checking that all practice educators have relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience and are registered practitioners with Social Work England.	10 th November 2024	Paragraph 80
7	Standards 4.1 and 5.5	The education provider will provide evidence that all course documentation relating to the course, has been updated to remove reference to the HCPC.	10 th November 2024	Paragraph 125 and Paragraph 189
8	Standard 4.3	The education provider will provide evidence of how they ensure that students have equitable access to physical learning equipment across both sites.	10 th November 2024	Paragraph 134
9	Standard 4.9	The education provider will provide evidence that they have reviewed assessment scheduling to ensure that they are appropriately timed and sequenced to match student progression through the course, and which allows feedback to support student progression.	10 th November 2024	Paragraph 157

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	Standard 3.1 and 3.7	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider that the lead social worker have greater involvement with the management team to ensure	Paragraph 88 and

		that the course is led by people with direct experience of the social work profession.	Paragraph 111
2	Standard 3.5	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider reviewing the scheduling of the staff and student representative meetings to ensure equitable access for all student representatives across both sites.	Paragraph 104
3	Standard 4.6	The inspectors are recommending that the university strengthen the opportunities for students to learn form and work with other professions in the academic element of the course.	Paragraph 144
4	Standard 5.2	The inspectors are recommending that the university ensure regular and consistent support is provided by personal tutors for all students.	Paragraph 178

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

205. Approved with conditions.

Annex 2: Meeting of conditions

206. 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](#).

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

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

	Standard not met	Condition	Recommendation
1	Standard 1.5	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates that everyone involved in the admissions process receives EDI training.	Met
2	Standard 1.6	The education provider will provide evidence that applicants are provided with sufficient information about the course prior to them accepting an offer to decide about whether to take up the offer.	Met with recommendation
3	Standard 2.1	The education provider will provide evidence of the system in place to ensure that all students have completed 100 days on their second placement.	Met
4	Standard 2.1	The education provider will provide evidence of how they ensure that all students have the same practice skills days and that these are in line with the expectations of placement learning for this course, particularly in terms of content and length.	Met
5	Standard 2.5 and 4.8	The education provider will provide evidence of a robust process for ensuring the monitoring and quality assurance of the assessment of student's readiness for practice.	Met with recommendation
6	Standard 2.6	The education provider will provide evidence of a robust system of oversight and checking that all	Met

		practice educators have relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience and are registered practitioners with Social Work England.	
7	Standards 4.1 and 5.5	The education provider will provide evidence that all course documentation relating to the course, has been updated to remove reference to the HCPC.	Met
8	Standard 4.3	The education provider will provide evidence of how they ensure that students have equitable access to physical learning equipment across both sites.	Met
9	Standard 4.9	The education provider will provide evidence that they have reviewed assessment scheduling to ensure that they are appropriately timed and sequenced to match student progression through the course, and which allows feedback to support student progression.	Met

Findings

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

Standard 1.5

210. The course provider confirmed that all staff involved in admissions complete mandatory training and that people with lived experience who are involved in the admissions process will complete training on interview skills and equality and diversity. They also confirmed that employer partners also complete mandatory training on EDI.

211. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.6

212. The course provider confirmed that as the course is not currently running and not open to applications their relevant web pages were unavailable. However, they provided a

document including information with a full description of the programme, taught modules and placement learning that will be public facing and available to applicants.

213. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met. The inspectors did note that previously the course has been taught in different offsite locations. The inspectors would therefore recommend that the course provider ensures that information is provided to applicants about the potential that teaching may take place away from the university campus, and where possible the location of this teaching.

Standard 2.1

214. The placement handbook and guidance for students and practice educators has now been revised and updated in line with the QAPL process expectations. These provide clear information that students have to complete 100 days for their second placement.

215. Documentary evidence indicating the mapping of skills days has been provided by the university which confirms the parity of skills days across teaching sites and the proposed length of the sessions.

216. The inspectors agreed that sufficient evidence had been provided in relation to both conditions and that this standard was therefore met.

Standard 2.5 and 4.8

217. The course provider confirmed that readiness for practice is subject to the same scrutiny and quality process expected for higher education assessments, including layers of internal marking, moderation and external examination. A copy of the readiness for practice assessment brief and assessment and feedback operational guide was provided.

218. The inspectors noted that the assessment outline indicated that marks will be returned generally 24 hours after submission which implied that there is a short timeframe for the internal review and quality systems outlined. It was also noted that re-submission by students is usually required 48 hours after the initial submission date.

219. The inspectors agreed that both standards were met. The inspectors noted the short timescales and would recommend that marking windows and submission timeframes be reviewed to ensure sufficient time needed for quality processes to be undertaken and to allow time for the consideration any reasonable adjustments that may be needed.

Standard 2.6

220. The course provider confirmed that the practice learning agreement in PebblePad requests that practice educators provide their Social Work England registration number and to confirm if they are either PEPS 2 qualified, or overseen by an appropriately qualified PEPS assessor/mentor.

221. Prior to each placement start, all practice educators are invited to an induction session, which provides information about the Pebblepad system.

222. The inspectors were therefore satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.1 and 5.5

223. The course provider has provided a copy of the updated programme specification which has been updated to remove reference to the HCPC, therefore the inspectors agreed that both standards were met.

Standard 4.3

224. The course provider has submitted commentary confirming that students have access to a face-to-face induction on both campuses, and both cohorts have access to 24/7 online Library support via Chat. All students can access Library 1-2-1 support online and reading lists are made up of electronic resources accessible via any device via their university username and password. They also confirmed that the college business manager is confirming aspects, such as free printing, have parity via reconsideration of the current and future contracts for services in the off-campus location.

225. The inspectors concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

226. Documentary evidence was provided in the form of assessment and feedback mapping for the course. The assessment scheduling for the current programme has now been mapped against the timings of when students are expected to receive feedback. The expectation is that students will receive support and formative feedback in preparation for assessments but also written summative feedback providing clear constructive advice on how they can improve their future work.

227. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

228. Following the review of the documentary evidence submitted, the inspection team are satisfied that the conditions set against the approval of the PG Dip social work course (Step Up) are met.

Regulator decision

229. Conditions Met.