

Inspection Report

Course provider: University of Hertfordshire

Course approval: BSc (Hons) Social Work FT, BSc (Hons) Social Work PT, MSc Social Work FT, MSc Social Work PT, BSc (Hons) Social Work FT (2024), BSc (Hons) Social Work PT (2024), MSc Social Work FT (2024), MSc Social Work PT (2024)

Inspection dates: 4 to 7 July 2023

Report date:	12 October 2023
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	29 November 2023
Date conditions met and approved:	27 March 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. The University of Hertfordshire's BSc (Hons) Social Work FT, BSc (Hons) Social Work PT, MSc Social Work FT and MSc Social Work PT were inspected as part of the Social Work England reapproval cycle; whereby all course providers with qualifying social work courses will be inspected against the new Education and Training Standards 2021.

16. During the inspection, the University of Hertfordshire stated that their BSc (Hons) Social Work FT, BSc (Hons) Social Work PT, MSc Social Work FT and MSc Social Work PT programmes would be updated for delivery in September 2024, and documentary evidence was submitted regarding these updated programmes. These updated programmes were also inspected against the Education and Training Standards 2021.

17. During the same inspection, the University of Hertfordshire's Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip) Step Up to Social Work course was also inspected as part of the Social Work England reapproval cycle. The majority of meetings across the inspection were held jointly. Details of the Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip) Step Up to Social Work course inspection is covered in a separate report.

Inspection ID	UHR1
Course provider	University of Hertfordshire
Validating body (if different)	
Courses inspected	BSc (Hons) Social Work FT BSc (Hons) Social Work PT MSc Social Work FT MSc Social Work PT BSc (Hons) Social Work FT (2024) BSc (Hons) Social Work PT (2024) MSc Social Work FT (2024) MSc Social Work PT (2024)
Mode of study	As above
Maximum student cohort	50 for BSc (Hons) Social Work FT 5 for BSc (Hons) Social Work PT

	50 for MSc Social Work FT 5 for MSc Social Work PT 50 for BSc (Hons) Social Work FT (2024) 5 for BSc (Hons) Social Work PT (2024) 50 for MSc Social Work FT (2024) 5 for MSc Social Work PT (2024)
Date of inspection	04/07/2023 – 07/07/2023
Inspection team	Caroline Reynolds - Education Quality Assurance Officer Jo Benn - Lay Inspector Lee Pollard - Registrant Inspector
Inspector recommendation	Approved with conditions
Approval outcome	TO BE ADDED

Language

18. In this document we describe the University of Hertfordshire as ‘the education provider’ or ‘the university’ and we describe the BSc (Hons) Social Work FT, BSc (Hons) Social Work PT, MSc Social Work FT, MSc Social Work PT, BSc (Hons) Social Work FT (2024), BSc (Hons) Social Work PT (2024), MSc Social Work FT (2024), MSc Social Work PT (2024) as ‘the course(s)’ or the programme(s)’. The BSc (Hons) Social Work FT, BSc (Hons) Social Work PT, MSc Social Work FT, MSc Social Work PT are described as the ‘programmes taught out’.

Inspection

19. An onsite remote inspection took place from 4th to 7th July at the College Lane Campus, University of Hertfordshire. 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. These meetings formed the basis of the inspection plan, agreed with the education provider ahead of inspection.

20. Following the onsite inspection, the inspection team requested documentary evidence from the course provider to enable them to consider the courses for reapproval. The initial documentary evidence provided by the university was in relation to the courses commencing in 2024. Further meetings were held with the course provider on 16th August and 18th August 2023. The inspection team met on 17th August 2023 to consider the evidence against the Social Work England Education and Training Standards 2021.

21. The following section provides a summary of these sessions, who participated and the topics that were discussed with the inspection team.

Conflict of interest

22. No parties disclosed a conflict of interest.

Meetings with students

23. The inspection team met with a broad range of students who were on the courses being taught out, and who were on different stages of their student journey. Discussions included their reflections on the admission process, practice placement experiences, access to the university's support services and how they are involved in the design, monitoring, evaluation and ongoing development of the programmes.

Meetings with course staff and senior management

24. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the social work course team including the professional lead for the social work courses, the programme leads for the BSc (Hons) and MSc social work programmes, the head of Midwifery and Social Work department, the dean and deputy dean of the Health and Social Work School, and the assistant associate dean for academic quality assurance. The inspection team also met with staff involved in selection and admissions processes including admissions tutors. The inspection team were given a demonstration of Tableau.

Meeting with people with practice-based learning and placement provision staff

25. The inspection team met with staff involved in practice-based learning and placement provision including the placement team leaders. Discussions included practice setting and learning opportunities, placement breakdowns and audit processes.

Meetings with pastoral and academic support services staff

26. The inspection team met with the dean of students who oversees the pastoral support services, the academic support lead and the information manager who is the specialist subject librarian for social work. Discussions included students' access to pastoral and academic support services, the level of support provided to students and how reasonable adjustments are put in place.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

27. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who are involved in the programmes, including the trainer co-ordinator from Carers in Hertfordshire and a representative from Herts Viewpoint. Discussions included the extent of their involvement in the programmes, and their experiences of taking part.

Meetings with external stakeholders

28. The inspection team met with representatives from employer partners and placement providers including representatives from the West London Alliance, Hertfordshire Partnership Foundation Trust, Hertfordshire County Council and Phoenix Community Care. Discussions including their involvement in the admissions process, the management, monitoring, evaluation and ongoing development of the courses, and the practice settings and learning opportunities students experience. The inspection team also met with a number of practice educators (PEs) who currently teach, supervise and assess students on their placements.

Findings

29. 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

30. Prior to the inspection, the programme leads provided a clear overview of the admissions assessment process including the entry requirements. The inspectors reviewed the admissions information on the university website, admissions presentation, interview questions and scoring sheet, the interview day schedule and the candidate information sheet. All candidates must complete a written exercise, take part in a group discussion and attend an individual interview. The inspectors heard that information and communication technology (ICT) skills are tested at the interview stage; candidates must be able to

communicate using virtual platforms as interviews are held online. During interview days candidates complete an essay on their tablet or computer, and assignments are forwarded by email to the admissions team on the day of the interview. During the meeting with students, they reflected on their experiences of the admissions process, including what was involved and how the tasks were carried out. Overall, students reflected positively on their experiences.

31. For the BSc (Hons) programmes, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) entry requirements for A levels and BTEC were clearly evidenced, including the requirements for English language and mathematics. For the MSc programmes, a relevant first degree normally at 2:1 or above is required however candidates with a 2:2 who have extensive social care experience may be considered. Candidates are required to demonstrate an English language capability with an overall average of International English Language Testing Scheme (IELTS) seven with no less than seven in any band. The evidence clearly demonstrated the multi-dimensional approach to selection, and activities were mapped to the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). The inspectors concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

32. The inspectors reviewed documentary evidence provided by the programme leads including the interview questions, scoring and scheduling, admissions information on the university's website and the admissions day presentation slides. The inspectors heard that for the BSc (Hons) programmes, students must meet the academic criteria through the personal statement on UCAS to show their relevant previous experience. For the MSc programmes, the inspectors were informed that students should evidence and demonstrate that they have the relevant social care experience through their personal statement and via interview questions which require candidates to demonstrate and draw upon their experience to inform their responses. All candidates are encouraged to demonstrate relevant paid, voluntary, or life experience of social work.

33. During the inspection meeting with those involved in the admissions processes, the inspection team explored the consistency of assessing prior experience, and how this is uniformly ensured. It became evident that particularly during the initial screening of applications, there was no consistency in the approach to review candidates relevant prior experience. Following a review of the evidence and from discussions held during the inspection, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 1.2 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions table](#).

Standard 1.3

34. Prior to the inspection, the programme leads outlined that the admissions process is supported by Hertfordshire Social Work Teaching Partnership, and people with lived experience of social work. For the MSc programmes this was evidenced within the Admissions Day Schedule for the group exercise and interview panel, and in the agenda and minutes from the Teaching Partnership meetings where admissions is a standing agenda item. For the BSc (Hons) programmes this was evidenced within the Social Work Admissions Day information. During the inspection the inspection team met with a range of employers who outlined how they are involved in the admissions process, the role they play and ways in which they input into the design of the process.

35. During the inspection meeting with people with lived experience of social work they outlined that whilst they were involved in the admissions processes including inputting into the design of the interview, all those present within the meeting outlined that there were issues in a number of areas including the late notification of admissions activities, training and support including the logistical arrangements such as arranging car parking, receiving feedback and aftercare. Whilst they felt that co-production and communications had recently been improved, all those present felt this could be improved further. Following the review of documentary evidence and from discussions held during the inspection, the inspectors determined that this standard was met. In relation to the involvement of people with lived experience of social work within the admissions process, the inspection team would like to attach a recommendation to this standard. Further details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations section](#) of this report.

Standard 1.4

36. The programme leads outlined that all applicants complete a self-disclosure form prior to attending the admissions day, this requires them to declare any involvement with the police, any disciplinary matter or involvement with social care. The inspectors reviewed the self-disclosure form. If a criminal matter is declared candidates are required to attend a formal panel meeting to establish suitability to progress onto the course. The inspectors heard that the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) panel consists of a range of professionals from social care including an external employer, someone from an allied health profession, a colleague from the social work teaching programme and a senior manager. For the MSc programmes, academic and employment references are taken up prior to being accepted onto a programme.

37. All students who gain a place on one of the programmes must complete an Occupational Health assessment during their first year of study to ensure their suitability for practice. The programme leads outlined that students cannot undertake any placement until they are cleared by Occupational Health. This was clearly referenced within the BSc, MSc and Step Up to Social Work Placement Handbook and Portfolio Guidance. During the meeting with

students they recalled the self-disclosure process and the need to self-declare. The inspection team concluded that the admissions processes assess the suitability of applicants and were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

38. The inspectors reviewed the university's Equality and Diversity Policy prior to the inspection. The policy covers the admissions processes, including ensuring that the monitoring of admissions in relation to diversity is in place. The policy addresses staff training in regard to equality and diversity and during the inspection the course team and admissions staff outlined that mandatory equality and diversity training is in place for all staff. The MSc programme lead supplied a sample of the course performance monitoring admissions dashboard information for review and outlined how this is used in the annual review process. Further evidence in response to monitoring equality and diversity activities was provided by the programme leads.

39. During the inspection meetings, employers who were involved in the admissions process outlined that they have equality and diversity training within their own institutions. During the meeting with people with lived experience of social work who were involved in the admissions interviews and activities, they stated that they did not receive equality and diversity training. Carer organisations outlined that they arrange their own equality and diversity training for their carers who are involved with the university's admissions processes. During the meeting with the admissions staff, they highlighted that joint training with partners and people with lived experience of social work should be in place ready for September 2023. Following the review of evidence, the inspectors determined that this standard was met. In relation to consistency of equality and diversity training for all parties involved in the admissions activities, and people with lived experience of social work being suitably prepared for admissions activities as outlined in standard 1.3, the inspection team would like to attach a recommendation to this standard. Further details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations section](#) of this report.

Standard 1.6

40. The programme leads outlined that prior to the interview days candidates are sent additional information about the courses. During the interview days candidates are given a formal presentation which provides essential information about the course to support them to make an informed decision about accepting a place. The inspectors heard that following the interview day, candidates are given further opportunities to seek clarification by asking interviewers and the admissions tutor about the course.

41. Documentary evidence provided by the university included the Admissions Briefing – Overview of the Day, the Admissions Candidate Schedule of the Day, the Admissions Day Presentation, and the Social Work Admissions Day Extra Information. The presentation

provided clear information about the programmes including the core information, support, placement information and details of the Hertfordshire Social Work Teaching Partnership. The inspectors also reviewed the course details on the university's website which provided the key information including professional accreditation and module information. As outlined in standard 1.1, during the meeting with students, they positively reflected on the admissions processes and the information provided to them to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

42. Within the range of documentation provided by the programme leads which included the Programme Handbooks, the BSc, MSc and Step Up to Social Work Placement Handbook and Portfolio Guidance and the Programme Specifications, the requirement that students spend at least 200 days, including up to 30 skills days gaining different experiences and learning in practice settings is clearly set out. However, in some of the documentation provided to the inspectors, the requirements during the COVID pandemic were conveyed.

43. The inspectors were informed that placements take place in contrasting settings; first placements are likely to be within the voluntary sector and final placements within statutory social work services and this involves students undertaking high risk decision making and legal interventions. The 30 skills days are spread across each year of the programmes. The BSc (Hons) Programme Handbooks clearly set out the intended learning outcomes, the teaching and learning methods and the assessment strategy. For the MSc the intended learning outcomes are set out within the Programme Specification. During the inspection, the course team outlined that students were not allowed to pass the programmes without undertaking the required number of mandatory days in practice learning. During the meeting with students, they knew of the requirement for spending at least 200 days gaining different experiences and undertaking learning in practice. The inspectors determined that this standard was met. In relation to the COVID pandemic information within some documentation, the inspection team would like to attach a recommendation to this standard. Further details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations section](#) of this report.

Standard 2.2

44. Clear documentary evidence provided by the programme leads outlined that practice learning opportunities enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards. This was outlined within the Programme Handbooks, and the BSc, MSc and Step Up to Social Work Placement Handbook and Portfolio Guidance. The course documentation clearly demonstrated the range of

knowledge and skills required. Learning opportunities are established at the Placement Learning Agreement meeting and a university tutor oversees this process. Documentation also states that all placements are audited to ensure there are appropriate learning opportunities available, and once a placement is established the university's legal department undertakes a formal agreement outlining the required expectations of placements.

45. During the meeting with the social work course team and staff involved in practice-based learning and placement provision, examples were provided of the practice settings and learning opportunities which students undertake, this included casework and safeguarding tasks, supporting PEs with report writing, mental health capacity assessments and attending court. The inspectors heard from employer partners that PEs are the case holders and the student's role is to observe, shadow and learn, with the intention of taking on some of the work towards the end of their placement with the support of their PE. Examples of the types of placements were provided, these included local authorities and Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) placement providers such as Safer Places (a refuge domestic abuse charity), Origin Housing (committee housing, care and support services), Phoenix Community Care (housing and support to children and young asylum seekers and refugees) and Helping Herts Homeless. Placement staff outlined that students complete a form with their placement choices, and staff try and match students to their preferred placement. The team outlined how they ensure practice learning opportunities met the professional standards, and talked through the audit processes, including what happens when placements are considered unsuitable and when concerns are raised.

46. During the inspection meetings with PEs and students, they talked about the wide range of experiences available to them and provided examples of learning opportunities in both statutory and voluntary settings, including how they were able to develop their skills and knowledge of working with service users. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

47. The BSc, MSc and Step Up to Social Work Placement Handbook and Portfolio Guidance reviewed by the inspection team clearly identifies the need for students to have appropriate inductions. Students are expected to have been provided with a two to four week induction, and receive regular supervision of one and half hours per week which is recorded in the Placement Learning Agreement. This also includes information on the support available to students. The Placement Learning Agreement includes an induction checklist and practical arrangements which is completed by the PE or onsite supervisor to ensure that the information is checked and recorded. The BSc, MSc and Step Up to Social Work Placement Handbook and Portfolio Guidance clearly identifies the roles and responsibilities of PEs, including the requirement for checking their qualifications. As outlined in standard 2.2, placements are audited to ensure they provide suitable learning environments for students,

this is outlined within the BSc, MSc and Step Up to Social Work Placement Handbook and Portfolio Guidance.

48. During the inspection meetings, further insights were gained on the requirements for students to have realistic workloads, including the need to take students' needs into account within the Placement Learning Agreement meetings. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

49. The inspection team reviewed documentary evidence including the BSc, MSc and Step Up to Social Work Placement Handbook and Portfolio Guidance and the Placement Learning Agreement. Within this documentary evidence, it is clear that the students' stage of training expectations is considered within the audit process to ensure that the learning opportunities are appropriate for the students' stage of education and training. A university tutor oversees the Placement Learning Agreement, which records and discusses the level of responsibilities for the stages of training. The Placement Learning Agreement references the PCF including the requirement that the relevant level must be demonstrated to achieve a pass. The Placement Learning Agreement clearly states that the document must be signed by the PE, student and a university tutor. The document is used as a working document throughout the placement by the student and the PE to set out and review learning outcomes for the placement, to record assessments and to review progress and achievement in line with the principles of the progressive assessment. During the inspection, students spoke positively about their responsibilities whilst on placement, and felt these were appropriate for their stage of education and training. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

50. The inspectors reviewed the Skills for Practice DMDs for all programmes; students undertake the readiness for practice modules to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in service delivery settings. On the MSc programmes students are inducted on the PCF and professional standards on their skills modules. They must undertake a 20-minute interview with a carer and a 10-minute interview with an actor on a case study they choose to research on. During these activities they are assessed by PEs, tutors and people with lived experience of social work. Students then write a reflect account detailing their learning across the PCF domains and demonstrate understanding of essential social work knowledge, values and skills including demonstrating how they have met the professional standards.

51. On the BSc (Hons) programmes, the DMD Skills for Practice One documentation was reviewed. This module is undertaken during year one of the programme. The module content supports students to develop their understanding of key social work principles

techniques that they can draw upon to establish professional relationships with people across a range of diverse user groups. This enables students to evaluate their practice through feedback and self-reflection. The inspectors heard that students attend placements on year two of the programme; they must successfully complete all year one modules before they are able to progress onto year two. All summative assessments must be passed before students can progress onto practice placement. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

52. The BSc, MSc and Step Up to Social Work Placement Handbook and Portfolio Guidance was reviewed by the inspectors. This detailed the role of the on-site PE, the off-site PE and on-site supervisors. This clearly demonstrated that every student on placement should have the supervision of a PE who is a registered social worker who has achieved stage two of their practice educator training, and that ideally the PE will also be accredited by the university.

53. Prior to the inspection, the programme leads confirmed that placements are audited to ensure that prospective PEs are on the register. The inspectors reviewed the Audit Form which captures the details of PEs including their social work qualification, and PE training information. These audits are reviewed every two years. From the evidence provided and during the inspection meetings, it was not clear what other mechanisms are in place including the checks to ensure newly appointed PEs are registered. During the meeting with PEs, it became apparent that no oversight was in place by the university, and regular reviews were not in place to review PE's knowledge, skills and experience. There was an assumption that PEs would be registered social workers. During the inspection, all PEs outlined that they had not been asked to provide any information about their training to the university. Following a review of the evidence and from discussions held during the inspection, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 2.6 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions table](#).

54. During the inspection, the inspectors spoke to students on the taught out programmes. A number of them expressed fear in talking to their PE about issues that arise whilst they are on placement, due to the fear of failing. In relation to this feedback, the inspection team would like to attach a recommendation to this standard. Further details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations section](#) of this report.

Standard 2.7

55. The inspectors heard that the university have policies in place to govern whistleblowing and these ensure students carry out whistleblowing safely and with confidence in the process. The university's Whistleblowing Policy was reviewed by the inspection team, together with the Programme Handbooks which included details of raising and escalating concerns whilst on placement. The inspectors were satisfied that a robust process is in place that supports students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures, organisational wrongdoings, and report concerns openly and safely without fear of adverse consequences. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

56. From the documentary evidence provided by the university, it is clear that there is a well-established university wide governance structure in place. The university operates in accordance with the terms of its Articles and Instrument of Government, these determine the overarching governance framework within which the university functions, including the requirements for a Board of Governors and Academic Board. At programme level governance is managed by a Programme Committee and the inspectors reviewed the Programme Committee Constitution for the BSc (Hons) and MSc programmes. Documentary evidence states that the Programme Committee for the MSc programmes meet twice per year, and two to three times per year for the BSc (Hons) programmes and these involve people with lived experience of social work, employer representatives and student reps. These meetings discuss issues and set out the course of actions. The Programme Handbooks detail the programme management including the structure of the programme modules, skills for practice, practice placements, and the support for student learning.

57. During the meeting with the senior management team, they explained the interface with the academic board and the accountability mechanisms, including the quality assurance governance structure which demonstrated how the evidence provided works in practice. The inspectors heard that the programme leads, and module leads develop close working relationships with students to capture their informal feedback. Formal mechanisms are in place to capture formal feedback at the mid and end of module reviews and through the student voice questionnaires.

58. Data is recorded on Tableau to enable continuous improvements, and this is linked to the Continuous Enhancement Process (CEP). During the inspection, the senior management team explained that the CEP is always current and reflects the actions that are in progress; completed actions can be archived. The inspectors reviewed the university's Guidance on Continuous Enhancement Process which applies to the continuous monitoring of all the taught programmes of study. The inspectors were in agreement that the course is

supported by a robust management and governance plan which includes the roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability and governing groups in the delivery, resourcing and quality management of the course and therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

59. The inspectors heard that there is a formal agreement in place for each placement. An audit is completed at the start of the placement and a formal agreement is developed with each placement provider. Formal meetings are held to ascertain that the provider has the necessary resources to support students whilst on social work placements.

60. The inspectors reviewed the Practice Learning Agreement document which provides evidence of the arrangements for students and the consent required for the duration of the placement. The BSc, MSc and Step Up to Social Work Placement Handbook and Portfolio Guidance details the professional requirements for practice learning and partnership working and sets out the process for placement concerns and fitness to practice issues, suitability, and termination of placement. During the meeting with placement staff, they outlined the clear process for placement breakdowns, which they refer to as placement terminations. The inspectors heard that a placement provider will not be used again in the event that there has been a placement breakdown.

61. In the meeting with employer partners, the inspection team heard how they work with the university to manage placement breakdowns and they outlined the processes that are in place. Some spoke of the challenges where students have not been open and honest in terms of their capabilities or personal circumstances thus causing some placement difficulties. All employer partners spoke positively about the relationship they have with the university. The inspection team were satisfied that agreements with placement partners are in place to provide education and training that meets the professional standards, and training qualifying standards, including the necessary consents and the procedures to deal with practice placement breakdowns. The inspectors concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

62. The Placement Learning Agreement reviewed by the inspection team sets out that by the end of the practice placements, students should demonstrate that they can practise capably and achieve the standards set out in the PCF. The agreement is a working document that is used regularly throughout the placement by the student and the PE to set out and review the learning outcomes for the placement, to record assessments and to review progress and achievement in line with the principles of progressive assessment. The Placement Learning Agreement sets out the induction checklist and the practical arrangements to support the student, including confirmation that there have been no changes to the student's DBS status, that they have not been subject to any safeguarding

investigations or enquiries, and that the student has informed the placement provider of any existing health conditions.

63. The BSc, MSc and Step Up to Social Work Placement Handbook and Portfolio Guidance set out the roles of the off-site PE, on-site supervisor and the health and safety requirements. These ensure that all students have the right to expect to be provided with a safe placement environment and are treated in accordance with applicable legislation including the Health and Safety at Work Act and the Equality Act. This documentary evidence provided by the university demonstrated that placement providers have the necessary policies and procedures in place in relation to students' health, wellbeing and risk, and support systems to underpin these. During the meetings with placement staff, PEs and employer partners, the inspection team were able to understand how the policies and procedures work in practice. The inspectors were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

64. The inspectors heard that for all programmes employers are involved in different elements of the course, including the management and monitoring and the allocation of practice education. The programme leads outlined that the Hertfordshire Social Work Teaching Partnership (HSWTP) work streams support the overall social work programmes at the university including the research initiatives.

65. The inspectors reviewed a range of documentation which evidenced the involvement of employers. For the BSc (Hons) programmes this included the Programme Committee meeting minutes dated March 2023. For the MSc programmes, this included the Programme Committee minutes dated December 2022, and the Programme Committee Constitution. This documentation highlighted the opportunity for employers to raise matters and contribute to discussions on the curriculum, design, content and organisation of the programmes. The inspectors also reviewed the Minutes of the HSWTP Practice Education minutes dated March 2023, which was attended by many PEs in both adult and children's services at Hertfordshire City Council, where matters such as governance and quality assurance were discussed.

66. Within the meeting with employer partners, they outlined how they are involved in the courses, and how the university seeks their contribution for example through Programme Committee meetings and delivering on sessions with students such as their direct work with adults and children. They felt listened to and valued. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

67. Prior to the inspection, the programme leads outlined that the monitoring and evaluation of the programmes take place by the Programme Committees, the Practice Assessment Panel (PAP), and continuous enhancing planning. The programme is subject to a

process of continuous improvement via the CEP as outlined in standard 3.1. Feedback is obtained from a number of sources including employers, students, external examiners and placement providers (both voluntary and statutory). This feedback is used to inform an ongoing action plan. The university provided an example CEP Action Plan which detailed issues and actions. The Programme Committees oversees the progress against the CEP Action Plan and the actions are endorsed by the associate dean for academic quality.

68. The inspection team reviewed documentary evidence including the Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) feedback form which is used by PEs and students to assess the quality of the placement provision and inform future practice. The quality of student portfolios is monitored by the PAP.

69. During the meeting with employer partners, examples were provided of how they are involved in the programmes including delivering on sessions and being involved/invited to Programme Committee meetings. Employers felt that their contribution is always sought, and they felt listened to and valued.

70. The inspectors heard that there are a number of opportunities for students to provide feedback on any aspect of their course. This is via informal and formal meetings which occur on a regular basis and these opportunities provide a forum for communicating and programme monitoring. Student representatives sit on the Programme Committees. Students can also be involved in improving the quality of the programmes and School provision through focus groups, representation on the School Academic Committee, and being involved in periodic reviews.

71. During the meeting with the people with lived experience it became apparent that other than carer organisations, individuals themselves were not involved in the design, monitoring, evaluation and ongoing development of the course, and there did not appear to be a consistent framework for their involvement and engagement. However, there was some acknowledgement from the university that this was something that they intended to improve upon. Following a review of the evidence and from discussions held during the inspection, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 3.5 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions table](#).

Standard 3.6

72. The university outlined that prior to agreeing the numbers to be recruited onto the programmes, discussions take place to ascertain whether sufficient placement opportunities are available. The inspectors heard that formal mapping with employer partners takes place early in the recruitment cycle to ensure suitable placements are in place, and the

programme leads confirmed that they take the number of students that can be accommodated across all the available placement providers. The inspectors reviewed the HSWTP Student Pathway and Development meeting minutes dated March 2023 where recruitment, admissions and placements was discussed. In the meeting with the senior management team, the inspectors heard that continual dialogue takes place with employer partners. During the annual planning cycles, all forums and meetings inform the processes, including how the business plans can be delivered. These planning activities inform the numbers to be recruited onto the programmes and continual horizon scanning is carried out to look for other opportunities. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

73. The inspection team reviewed the curriculum vitae (CV) of the social work lead who has professional responsibility for all the social work courses at the university. The professional lead is a qualified registered social worker. Their CV outlined their qualifications and experience, research projects and publications. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

74. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team reviewed the CVs of the social work course team including the BSc (Hons) and MSc programme leads. Their CVs demonstrated their experience, qualifications, registration information and research activities. During the inspection, the inspectors met with the programme leads and members of the social work course team who provided further insight into the programme design, development and delivery. The inspection team were satisfied that the programmes have appropriately qualified and experienced staff and agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

75. The university outlined that it monitors and responds to all aspects of student performance from admissions, through assessment to completion via a Tableau data system. The system was demonstrated during the inspection enabling the inspectors to fully understand how the system works in practice. Data is analysed and employed as part of the action planning process which is overseen by the Programme Committees. The inspectors reviewed specimen Tableau data, which records a wide range of data including equality and diversity data on the applications, offers and acceptances onto the programme, module fail rates and trends, and awards data. The CEP Action Plan reviewed by the inspection team showed the actions arising from the data recorded on the Tableau system. The inspection team agreed that the university evaluates information about students' performance, progression and outcomes and were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

76. The programme leads outlined that the close partnership with Hertfordshire Social Work Teaching Partnership allows for the development and delivery of training and shadowing opportunities across adults, children's and mental health services with the teaching partnership. The Staff Development Policy outlined the self-managed research and scholarly activity, and all members of the course team have 20 days allocated to scholarly activity; this includes practice related research, attendance at conferences, and the development of practice-based publications.

77. The professional lead for social work outlined that the team are reminded and encouraged to take up training and professional development opportunities. New members of staff undertake a suite of induction training, and there is a regular cycle of mandatory training which includes equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI), General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and health and safety. As outlined in standard 3.8, the inspectors reviewed the CVs of the course team which demonstrated their strong links with practice. The inspectors heard that members of the team are currently or had very recently worked in practice, that research is conducted alongside practitioners, research is practice facing and team members undertake shadowing opportunities. During the inspection, the course team commented that the encouragement and support is in place, and the opportunities are available to them. The inspection team concluded that educators are supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice and agreed that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

78. During the meeting with employer partners, there was a mix of feedback on whether they felt the course content prepares students to meet the professional standards. Some employers spoke positively about the preparedness of students, whilst others stated that it is dependent upon the student having a good understanding of social work policy, the capability to transition in terms of their resilience and ability to manage case work, and their ability to put theory into practice.

79. The inspection team were informed that the programmes have been designed and constructed following the principles of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Benchmark Statements for Social Work, the PCF and the Knowledge and Skills Statements for Both Adults and Children. The internal university influences include the university's Strategic Plan, the Graduate Attributes and the Hertfordshire Learning Principles. At a modular level the programmes have been mapped to the professional standards and the modules mapped to the programme learning outcomes. For each of the programmes, the inspectors reviewed the Programme Handbooks, the Programme Specifications and the DMDs which set out the module aims, intended learning outcomes, module content and assessment. The inspectors were satisfied that the programme

content, structure and delivery of the training is in accordance with the relevant guidance and frameworks to enable students to demonstrate that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to meet the professional standards, and therefore concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

80. The documentary evidence provided by the programme leads provided insight of the critical approach to course developments. The Programme Committee minutes dated December 2022 provided for the MSc programmes showed the involvement of a person with lived experience, an employer partner, course team members and student representatives. The inspectors heard that the Programme Committee takes place twice per year. The Programme Committee minutes dated March 2023 for the BSc (Hons) programmes evidenced the involvement of student representatives, course team members, and employer partners. The person with lived experience who was invited to this meeting sent their apologies.

81. The programme leads provided the Hertfordshire Social Work Teaching Partnership (HSWTP) Student Pathway and Development meeting minutes, one dated February and one dated March. The meeting minutes demonstrated the involvement of a wide range of employers, and people with lived experience of social work. The inspectors heard that these meetings take place on a monthly basis. The formal committee structures reviewed by the inspection team demonstrated the membership structure and the importance of stakeholders input into the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum. The programme leads outlined that employers and people with lived experience of social work are involved in skills development, admissions processes, assessments and modules. The programme leads also provided information that a collaborative approach is taken within the periodic review of the programme, and the inspectors reviewed the Period Review Planning Meeting minutes dated September 2022 for the MSc, PG Dip Step Up to Social Work, and the BSc (Hons). This demonstrated the involvement of stakeholders within the reviews of the programmes.

82. During the inspection meetings, employers and practitioners provided examples of how they were involved in the programmes. During the meeting with people with lived experience of social work, they too provided examples of how they were involved in admissions, and how they inputted into teaching and learning. The people with lived experience of social work who were present in the inspection meeting expressed concerns about how well they were involved in the programmes and felt that co-production could be improved. Overall, they expressed that their involvement was 'tokenistic', and they did not feel supported and valued. The inspection team concluded that the strategic oversight of the involvement of people with lived experience was missing.

83. Following a review of the evidence and from discussions held during the inspection, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 4.2 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the [conditions table](#).

Standard 4.3

84. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team reviewed documentary evidence including the University's Equality and Diversity Policy, the Programme Handbooks, and DMDs. The programme leads outlined that all social work courses operate under the University's Equality and Diversity Policy, and it was clear from the Programme Handbooks that equality and diversity occur at programme level including practice learning. The DMDs reviewed by the inspectors included the Ethics, Values and Anti-discriminatory Practice modules, Law and Policy modules and Practice Contexts modules. These evidenced that all programmes are designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles, human rights and legislative frameworks. The inspectors were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

85. Programme leads outlined that all programmes are continually updated and revised via the ongoing action planning cycle which is monitored by CEP as outlined in standards 3.1 and 3.5. The CEP seeks feedback from the external examiners, students, employers and module leads. The Programme Committees consolidate these changes and oversees their implementation. The monthly HSWTP Student Pathway and Development meetings ensure the ongoing relevance of the curriculum to workforce, policy, and legislative developments. This was evidenced within the CEP Action Plan, the Periodic Review documents, the Programme Committee agendas and the Programme Committee Constitutions, all of which were reviewed by the inspectors.

86. During the inspection, the course team outlined how the CEP Action Plan works in practice, and how the courses are currently reviewed and updated in line with developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice. This was further discussed within the meetings with PEs and students. There were some observations provided by students that the programmes were more focused on children's social work, and less on adult social work in terms of legalisation and its application. The inspectors determined that this standard was met. In relation to the student feedback, the inspection team would like to attach a recommendation to this standard. Further details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations section](#) of this report.

Standard 4.5

87. Prior to the inspection, the programme leads outlined that the programmes are underpinned by social work values derived from theoretical concepts which have been informed through research and practice. Theories are woven through the various programme modules which are then integrated into practice placements. The inspection team reviewed a range of documentary evidence including the Programme Handbooks, the Programme Specifications which included the learning outcomes and teaching and learning methods, and the programme DMDs where the programme philosophies and the incorporation of theories and practice is evidenced. The inspectors concluded that theory and practice is central to the courses, and these are introduced in the academic learning components and during practice placements. Integration is enhanced through student's reflective accounts. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

88. The inspectors heard that the principles and experience of multidisciplinary practice are incorporated into all programmes, and these are embedded within the modules and inter-professional working during practice placements. The inspector team reviewed the programme DMDs, these outlined the specific opportunities for multi-professional learning. For the MSc programmes, the concepts of multidisciplinary practice are embedded within the Practice Contexts, Practice Learning One and Two, and the Human Growth and Development modules. Within the BSc (Hons) programmes, multidisciplinary learning is embedded within the Inter-Professional Practice for Social Workers One and Inter-Professional Practice for Social Workers Two modules. The inspectors heard that placement tutors ensure that opportunities for inter-professional working are available as part of student's placement experiences and is reflected in the feedback documentation from other people which students collate as evidence throughout their placement. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

89. The inspectors reviewed all the programme DMDs which provided evidence of the number of hours students spend in structured academic learning under the direction of an educator. The inspectors also reviewed the Programme Handbooks and Programme Specifications which set out the programme structure and progression. It was clear within the documentary evidence that the distribution of hours varies according to the programme and the module content. The inspectors heard that in addition to classroom hours and scheduled online learning, every module has directed independent study. Students are expected to attend all taught sessions and the skills sessions are mandatory. The inspectors were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

90. Documentary evidence provided by the programme leads, including the Programme Specifications detail how each module maps to the learning outcomes and sets out the assessment strategies to ensure that students who successfully complete the course have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards. The inspectors heard that all programmes have a range of assessments, and all summative assessments are designed to achieve the module learning outcomes. The inspectors also reviewed the university's Assessment for Learning Principles and Guidance 2012 which supports staff in delivering an enhanced assessment process that values assessment for learning. During the inspection, students talked about their awareness and preparedness for the difference assessments. Overall, they felt prepared and stated that support is available to them. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.9

91. Prior to the inspection, the programme leads outlined that all programmes have placed an emphasis on the incremental development of assessments, all assessments have been sequenced to avoid bunching and they match to the taught phases of the programmes to enable students to learn progressively. The inspection team reviewed the Programme Specifications which outlined the intended learning outcomes and the outlined programme structure, together with the Programme Handbooks which set out the structure of the programme. During the inspection students spoke positively about their assessment spacing and that written and verbal feedback is provided to them. The inspectors concluded that all assessments are designed to meet the learning outlines at module level and agreed that assessments are mapped to the curriculum and are appropriately sequenced to match students' progression. The inspectors were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

92. The inspectors heard that all students are provided with a personal tutor which offers feedback throughout the course to support their ongoing development, together with providing guidance and pastoral support. The programme leads outlined that written feedback is provided on each module throughout the programmes, and following assignment feedback students can book one to one tutorials for additional guidance and feedback if they desire. Documentary evidence, including the Programme Handbooks reviewed by the inspection team set out the assessment regulations. During the inspection, students spoke of their experiences of receiving feedback and stated that lecturers run drop-in sessions, sometimes in the evening which they can attend. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

93. As outlined in standards 3.7 and 3.8, the inspection team reviewed the CVs of the social work course team and the head of the social work programmes which demonstrated that

they are appropriately qualified and experienced. The inspectors heard that external examiners are checked as part of the application process to ensure that they are qualified and on the register. The CV of the current external examiner was reviewed, which demonstrated their academic and professional qualifications, programme experience, research, consultancy and scholarly activities. The inspection team concluded that assessments are carried out by people with the appropriate experience, and the external examiner is appropriately qualified, experienced and registered. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.12

94. The inspectors concluded that there are clear processes in place to manage students' progression, with an input from a range of people, including exam boards and PAPs, and students are formally observed on three occasions in each practice placement. Placement portfolios are assessed by PEs, and these are monitored by the placement tutor, a sample of portfolios is reviewed by a practice assessment panel composed of university staff, employer representatives and PEs. The Board of Examiners oversees the progression of students throughout the programmes. The inspectors reviewed a range of documentary evidence including the BSc, MSc and Step Up to Social Work Placement Handbook and Portfolio Guidance which sets out the professional requirements for practice learning, partnership working and the PAP, and the Programme Handbooks set out the role of the Board of Examiners. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

95. The programme aims and learning outcomes clearly evidence the importance of enhancing student understanding of research and evaluation, this was evidenced within the Programme Specifications and the Programme Handbooks reviewed by the inspection team. The inspectors concluded that a critical approach is encouraged when reflecting on practice and during the underpinning of theoretical concepts. Whilst evidence and research underpin all programme modules, there are research specific modules throughout all the programmes. At a module level, assessments call upon students to apply evidence to their practice within their assessments and analysis and this is expressed verbally and in writing. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

96. The inspectors heard that all students on the programmes have a personal tutor who provides pastoral and academic support, and students are encouraged to liaise with their personal tutor to discuss any pastoral needs. The inspectors reviewed the university's pastoral student services website information and heard that the university has a full suite of confidential counselling services including individual counselling, group counselling,

online and self-help resources, and mental health advice to support students to help deal with emotional and psychological difficulties during their studies and practice placements. This includes a free 24/7 helpline if students need immediate emotional support. The mental health advice team offers a range of support and adjustments for study; they offer practical skills to manage a mental health difficulty and liaise with the NHS or other university services. Social work students must have occupational health clearance before starting their placement as outlined in standard 1.4 and students are encouraged to declare health issues.

97. The careers and employment service are open to all current students and graduates for up to four years after their course ends. The service offers daily video, phone, and in-person appointments with careers advisors. The inspectors heard that appointments are available at both of the university's campuses – College Lane and De Havilland. All students have access to CV and interview resources, including support with preparing for interviews.

98. In the meeting with employer partners, they outlined how they put reasonable adjustments in place to support students, and provided information on how the placement co-ordinator looks at individual student needs and works with the PE and the employer partner to put these in place. Some employers highlighted that students are not always forthcoming at informing the university, PEs and employers of their needs.

99. The inspectors heard from students who spoke positively about the support they received and the ways in which this is signposted to them. Some students spoke of accessing financial support, and support for personal issues, and students added that lecturers and personal tutors go above and beyond to support them. The inspection team were satisfied that students have access to resources and support for their health and wellbeing and concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

100. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team reviewed the Programme Handbooks and the Personal Tutor Pack 2022 provided by the university. The Personal Tutor Pack outlines the role, key responsibilities and duties of the personal tutor, including the requirement for the planning and scheduling of structured programme meetings. This ensures students know how to contact them, providing tutees with feedback and the opportunities to discuss their progress, as well as offering them guidance.

101. Information contained within the Programme Handbooks outlined that students are given the name of their personal tutor at the beginning of their first academic year. Personal tutors provide pastoral support and academic guidance throughout the duration of their course. Prior to the inspection, the inspectors were informed that personal tutors should arrange a meeting at least twice per year, and during the inspection, the inspectors heard that personal tutors reach out to their students at least once per term. The course team

commented that there is a spreadsheet on SharePoint where each personal tutor records when they have met with a student, and this includes a coding system to record any issues. The programme leads and other members of the course team can access this information, so they know when the students were contacted, the outcome of issues, and the responses given.

102. The inspectors heard from the dean of students regarding the range of support available for mature students, disabled students, students with caring responsibilities and those who have financial difficulties. The dean of students outlined that all student support goes through one central hub and the inspectors reviewed the student services online information.

103. During the inspection, the information manager outlined that sessions are run on searching for literature in relation to the modules on the programme and they outlined that students have two pathways to access academic support; through physical pathways such as study clubs or drop in sessions, and online services such as the library chat function and online tutorials/workshops that cover a range of themes including referencing, critical writing, research skills and plagiarism. Bookable one-to-one appointments are available, and students can book these online. The inspectors heard that a new coaching service has recently been introduced; students are offered four to five sessions over a semester and topics covered include career planning.

104. The inspectors heard that there are a range of student networks, events and activities open to all students, including non-academic networks such as the student parent network and international student events, and students have access to IT digital skills support. The inspectors agreed that students have access to academic support which transitions throughout the programme and beyond and therefore agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

105. As outlined in standard 1.4, the inspectors reviewed documentary evidence which demonstrated that students undergo an occupational health screening and DBS check prior to starting the programme and students must make a self-declaration at the start of their placements to confirm their ongoing suitability. Failure to declare any health or criminal convictions which affect their ongoing suitability are dealt with under the university's Fitness to Practise Policy; this was reviewed by the inspection team. Fitness to practise information is included within the Programme Handbooks and is readily available on the university's website.

106. Within the MSc Programme Handbook, it clearly states that 'any situation that gives rise to questioning of the student's fitness to practice, may be referred to the School's fitness to practise officer'. This also applies to health issues which impact upon a student's performance, as well as matters of behaviour or professional conduct. The BSc (Hons)

Programme Handbook outlines that ‘the university will investigate all allegations made against a student on a professional programme that questions their fitness to practise’. During the inspection, the School’s fitness to practise officer talked through the process for a fitness to practise case, and they acknowledged the impact this has on a student particularly in regard to their mental wellbeing; they outlined that support is provided to them. The documentary evidence showed that there are clear processes in place for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students’ conduct, character and health and therefore the inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

107. During the inspection, the dean of students provided an overview of the pastoral support services including on campus and online information which is available to all students. The university’s wellbeing service provides specific advice and support for all students who have, or think they might have, a disability, mental illness or a health condition and students are encouraged to contact the service at the beginning of each term so a meeting can be arranged, and an individual Study Needs Agreement (SNA) can be drawn up. Students are also encouraged to provide information in relation to disability during their Placement Learning Agreement meeting to ensure their needs are met. The SNA, which was reviewed by the inspectors is a formal agreement between a disabled student and the university to identify the support and adjustments that will be provided to remove unnecessary barriers.

108. The Programme Handbooks give an overview of the support available to students if they have disclosed a disability, including that help is available to obtain appropriate support and adjustments for study. Students are advised to contact the Disability Services for information on potential sources of funding to pay for disability related requirements. Within the MSc Programme Handbook, the Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) Needs Assessment Service and the university’s Disability Fund is specifically referenced.

109. The Occupational Health Referral Form facilitates the occupational health assessments. This logs the reasons for the referral and records the specific advice that is required from occupational health in relation to numerous circumstances including, for example, being fit for placement, medical problems that are likely to be made worse by placement and adjustments and modifications that would be required. The dean of students outlined that not all candidates and students disclose disabilities but the university always works with students in terms of their consent so they can access additional help and support. The inspection team concluded that students are provided with support and reasonable adjustments for health conditions or impairments to enable them to progress through the course and agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

110. The inspectors reviewed the online information about the programmes on the university's intranet, together with documentary evidence including the Programme Handbooks, the BSc, MSc and Step Up to Social Work Placement Handbook and Portfolio Guidance, the Assessment Handbook (MSc) and all programme DMDs.

111. Documentation states that that students are required to demonstrate their ability to practice in accordance with the professional standards, and following the successful completion of all modules and practice placements on the programme students can apply to register with Social Work England.

112. During the meeting with students, they outlined that they are constantly taught and informed about the future requirements for continuing professional development (CPD) and Social Work England's registration process. They outlined that they have opportunity to speak to alumni and employers about job opportunities and felt that they were well prepared for their assessed and supported year in employment (ASYE), and support was provided to them for job interviews. The inspectors concluded that information is provided to students about their curriculum, practice placements, assessments, and transition to registered social work including information on requirements for CPD and agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

113. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team reviewed documentary evidence including the Programme Handbooks, the BSc, MSc and Step Up to Social Work Placement Handbook and Portfolio Guidance and DMDs, which provided information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory. The Programme Handbooks clearly state that students are expected to complete practice assessments whilst undertaking placements and to document attendance to fulfil the requirements of the professional standards. Students are expected to attend all timetabled sessions and assessments, and attendance is a professional obligation. All modules on the programmes have an attendance component of 80% and students cannot pass a module unless they attend this proportion of classes. If students are unable to attend due to ill health or personal circumstances, they are advised to contact the module lead and complete tasks to make up their attendance. Students are advised that skills days are compulsory, and students cannot complete the programme and qualify unless they have completed these mandatory days. The inspectors heard that attendance is checked routinely using a registration and swipe-card system. Non-attendance is monitored and failure to attend sessions without a justifiable reason is treated seriously and may be brought to the attention of the Board of Students. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

114. The University's standard for the return of marked work is four weeks. During this period, work is marked and it is internally moderated. Students are given written feedback on every piece of submitted work. This includes scaled feedback against the marking criteria, written commentary on the strengths and points for developing work further. Following the receipt of feedback students can meet with the marker for amplification and clarification of the points raised. Information on assessment timing and feedback is expressed within the course documentation including the Programme Handbooks and the School of Health and Social Work Assessment Handbook 2022-23, which were reviewed by the inspection team. In addition to marker feedback, the course team have developed a means of supporting students to reflect upon and implement feedback as an incremental process. This process encourages students to employ the marking criteria to grade their own work on submission and consider previous feedback and implement this in current and future submissions. The inspection team concluded that the university provides timely and meaningful feedback to students on their profession and performance and were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

115. Students are able to make academic appeals regarding the assessment process in line with the university's assessment principles, this is presented within the Programme Handbooks. Students are required to follow the Request for a Review of an Assessment Decision process. This process and the associated form is available on the university's intranet, together with information on the informal and formal academic appeals process. The inspectors heard that students are encouraged to seek additional feedback if they are unsure once they have received their assessment results, and the Students' Union Advice and Support Centre offers guidance and support on academic appeals. The inspectors were satisfied that there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals and agreed that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

116. As the qualifying courses are the BSc (Hons) Social Work FT, BSc (Hons) Social Work PT, MSc Social Work FT, MSc Social Work PT, BSc (Hons) Social Work PT (2024), MSc Social Work FT (2024), MSc Social Work PT (2024), the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

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

Conditions

118. 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.

119. 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	1.2	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates a systematic and consistent approach to the assessment of applications as part of the initial admissions screening process.	Friday 12 January 2024	Paragraph 32
2	2.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates the oversight of practice educators, and the regular review of their knowledge, skills and experience.	Friday 12 January 2024	Paragraph 52
3	3.5	The education provider will provide evidence that there is a systematic approach to the effective engagement and inclusion of people with lived experience of social work within the course monitoring, evaluation, and improvement, and that they receive appropriate training to carry out these activities.	Friday 12 January 2024	Paragraph 67

4	4.2	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates the effective strategic oversight of the process and management of the views of people with lived experience of social work in the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum including providing appropriate training to support them in carrying out these activities.	Friday 12 January 2024	Paragraph 80
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Recommendations

120. 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	1.3	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider reviewing and enhancing the involvement of people with lived experience of social work within the admissions processes including their involvement in the development of the admissions processes, in carrying out interviews and in providing them with effective support and training.	Paragraph 34
2	1.5	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider mandatory equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training for all parties involved in admissions activities, and ensuring that all interview panel members are suitably prepared.	Paragraph 38
3.	2.1	The inspectors are recommending that the university ensure that student facing documentation is updated regarding the requirement to complete 200 days gaining different experiences and learning in practice settings. Documentation provided to the inspection team conveyed the requirements during the COVID pandemic.	Paragraph 42

4.	2.6	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider how improvements could be made to ensure that in the event that students have issues whilst on placement, they do not fear talking to their PE.	Paragraph 52
5.	4.4	The inspectors are recommending that the university ensures that the courses are continually updated in relation to adult law, and this is monitored in terms of its effectiveness and transparency for students.	Paragraph 85

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.	1.2	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates a systematic and consistent approach to the assessment of applications as part of the initial admissions screening process.	Condition met
2.	2.6	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates the oversight of practice educators, and the regular review of their knowledge, skills and experience.	Condition met
3.	3.5	The education provider will provide evidence that there is a systematic approach to the effective engagement and inclusion of people with lived experience of social work within the course monitoring, evaluation, and improvement, and that they receive appropriate training to carry out these activities.	Condition met
4.	4.2	The education provider will provide evidence that demonstrates the effective strategic oversight of the process and management of the views of people with lived experience of social work in the design, ongoing development and review of the curriculum including providing appropriate training to support them in carrying out these activities.	Condition met

Findings

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

With respect to the condition set against standard 1.2 the education provider submitted written evidence of guidance to those shortlisting regarding the possible experience that may be considered. The inspection team were advised that short listing will be undertaken by the admissions team providing some consistency of approach and random sampling will be undertaken for audit purposes.

With respect to the condition set against standard 2.6 the education provider submitted documentary evidence which included a an expressions of interest form for practice educators, a briefing task for practice educators, an application form and a flow chart to outline the ratification process for checking registration and CPD. These checks will be undertaken prior to the allocation of a student.

With respect to the condition set against standard 3.5 following a meeting with people with lived experience of social work the education provider agreed that feedback would be provided as outlined in the university's 'How to Guide' which was submitted in evidence. The inspection team were also provided with a link to a mentimeter form, which would be used as a standardised approach for gathering feedback at the end of each session. The inspection team felt that this provided evidence of engagement with people with lived experience of social work clearly showing collaboration around the role moving forward.

With respect to the condition set against standard 4.2 the education provider submitted documentary evidence which included a training record, feedback on periodic review, and meeting minutes. The inspection team agreed that this showed sufficient evidence of collaboration with people with lived experience of social work and their role moving forwards including training.

The inspectors are recommending that the conditions are met.

Regulator decision

Approved.