

Inspection Report

Course provider: University of Kent

Course approval: PGDip Step Up to Social Work

Inspection dates: 8th – 10th October 2024

Report date:	6 th December 2024
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	27 th January 2025
Date conditions met and approved:	12 th August 2025

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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. Inspections are carried out either on site at the education provider's campus, or remotely using virtual meetings.

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 previously been 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 Kent's PGDip Step Up to Social Work programme was inspected as part of the Social Work England reapproval cycle; whereby all course providers with qualifying social work courses will be inspected against the new Education and Training Standards 2021. The inspection was for reapproval of the PGDip Step Up course only and does not relate to the university's 'top up' MA programme, which is available for students on the Step Up but is not a qualifying programme, and does not run independently of the Step Up.

Inspection ID	UKR3
Course provider	University of Kent
Validating body (if different)	N/A
Course inspected	PGDip Step Up to Social Work
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	20
Date of inspection	8 th – 10 th October 2024
Inspection team	Joseph Hubbard (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Kev Stone (Registrant Inspector) Sally Gosling (Lay Inspector)
Inspector recommendation	Approved with conditions
Approval outcome	Approved with conditions

Language

16. In this document we describe University of Kent as 'the course provider' or 'the university' and we describe the PGDip Step Up to Social Work as 'the course', 'the Step Up', or 'the programme'.

Inspection

17. A remote inspection took place from 8th – 10th October 2024. As part of this process the inspection team met with key stakeholders including students, course staff, employers and people with lived experience of social work.

18. These meetings formed the basis of the inspection plan, agreed with the education provider ahead of inspection. The following section provides a summary of these sessions, who participated and the topics that were discussed with the inspection team.

Conflict of interest

19. No parties disclosed a conflict of interest.

Meetings with students

20. The inspection team met with seven students and graduates of the programme, including two current student representatives. Discussions included admissions, placement provision, reasonable adjustments, assessment, and student voice.

Meetings with course staff

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

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

22. The inspection team met with people with lived experience of social work who have been involved in the course through the university's Partnership Initiative Group (PI Group). Discussions included admissions, readiness for practice, course development and delivery, training and support.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from the regional Step Up lead partner, Kent County Council.

Findings

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

Standard one: Admissions

Standard 1.1

25. The university provided documentary evidence for this standard which confirmed the entry requirements, and stated that the assessment centre is hosted by the university but led by Kent County Council, with involvement from practitioners, academics, and people with lived experience. The admissions process is multidimensional, involving a written assessment, observed group exercise, practice scenario role play, and panel interview. Command of English is assessed through these processes and applicants whose first language is not English are also required to achieve an IELTS score of 7.0, with 7.0 in each component. Applicants' ability to use information technology is evidenced through successful navigation of the online aspects of the admissions process. The details of the admissions process were triangulated at inspection through meetings with the admissions team, course team, PI Group, and students. The inspectors received assurance from employer partners and admissions staff that the university has sufficient involvement in and authority over admissions decisions. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

26. The Step Up website and evidence mapping form confirm that applicants are required to have at least 6 months' full-time (or equivalent part-time) paid or voluntary experience working with vulnerable people. At inspection, the course team and admissions staff confirmed in more detail how this is considered in practice, noting that it includes lived experience as well as paid or voluntary. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

27. Documentary evidence was provided to demonstrate that employer partners and people with lived experience of social work are involved in the selection process. Employer partners shortlist candidates and are represented on interview panels, while people with lived experience assess the observed group activity and practice scenario role play. The inspection team met with people with lived experience from the PI Group, however it was confirmed that while this group are involved in admissions for the university's other social work programmes, a different group of people with lived experience participate in Step Up admissions. Employer partners confirmed that they lead on the admissions process, and that the university has

close involvement and oversight throughout in decision making. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.4

28. The university provided documentary evidence demonstrating their processes for assessing the suitability of applicants' conduct, character, and health. Applicants are given the opportunity to disclose any additional or health needs on the application form. Applicants who pass the assessment centre stage are required to complete a disclosure form outlining any criminal history or engagement with social care services, along with a health declaration. DBS checks are completed for each candidate by their allocated local authority. Where any convictions are declared by the applicant and/or flagged through the DBS check, this is discussed with the applicant, local authority, and university to determine whether the student can proceed to undertake the course. At inspection, it was confirmed that this decision is made by a Virtual Suitability Panel, which is comprised of practitioners from the two local authority partner agencies, along with academic staff. Any disclosures of personal involvement with social care services are assessed with regards to provision of suitable placement opportunities to avoid potential conflicts of interest. Applicants are directed to appropriate student support services should they declare any relevant health condition, including disability services and a specialist support for care leavers. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

29. The university's evidence mapping confirmed that applicants are invited to indicate if they require any reasonable adjustments to the admissions process, and these are put in place as appropriate. It was confirmed that staff involved in the admissions process receive training which includes content on fair assessment and unconscious bias. All university staff are also required to complete training in unconscious bias and diversity in higher education, along with refresher training every three years. Documentary evidence confirmed that there are a number of university-wide equality and diversity policies and strategies in place, including reference to equal opportunities within the admissions policy.

30. During inspection meetings, course and admissions staff confirmed that while equality and diversity data regarding applicants is gathered by central admissions, and national data for the Step Up is gathered by the Department for Education, course level data for the Step Up has not as of yet been monitored or actioned on by the university. The university's central admissions staff confirmed that the social work department have instigated a new annual meeting to engage with this data. However, the first of these meetings had not yet taken place at the time of inspection, therefore inspectors were unable to assess whether the new process would be sufficient to meet the standard.

31. As the standard requires course providers to not only implement but also monitor EDI policies around admissions, the inspection team determined that a condition was necessary against this standard. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. This condition will also be applied to standard 3.9; for details, please see the findings section of that standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 1.6

32. Review of the university's course webpages confirmed that information is provided regarding staff research interests, placement opportunities (including travel requirements), fees and funding, course structure, content, and assessment. Applicants who accept an offer of a place on the course also attend an information session prior to enrolment where they can receive further details about the programme. An FAQs document provides additional information, particularly regarding practical aspects of the course. However, the inspectors determined that there are aspects of the website content which do not currently provide sufficiently clear information to applicants, regarding professional registration and travel for placement. At the time of inspection, the website wording regarding registration stated that "the Postgraduate Diploma will enable graduates to register and practice as a social worker", rather than the required wording of "eligible to apply to register" which is necessary to communicate that registration cannot be guaranteed. In addition, the course specification document contained a reference to the previous regulator, and entry requirement information that did not align with other course documentation.

33. It is indicated throughout course materials that students can also progress to a full MA award if they choose to undertake the dissertation module. Having reviewed the phrasing and communications around these two options across the programme website, programme specification other materials, the inspectors determined that it is not made fully clear to prospective and current students that the PGDip is the qualifying aspect of the course.

34. The information provided regarding travel requirements for placement stated that "students will be required to travel between their home and placement, and will need to have business insurance". Inspectors did not feel this phrasing communicated clearly that students are required to provide and finance their own car for travel to and from placement.

35. The inspection team agreed that this evidence indicated the standard was not met, and a condition was necessary to ensure the university correct and clarify the information provided to applicants regarding professional registration. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet

the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

36. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that students spend the required 200 days learning across different practice settings. This includes 30 skills days for which attendance is mandatory and monitored using an attendance log, as well as one 70-day placement and one 100-day placement. At inspection, several discussions took place with the course team and placements team around how they ensure all Step Up students receive contrasting placement experiences. The university stated that this is taken into account during the placement matching process, with most students spending their first placement in a non-statutory team such as Early Help, and their second placement in a statutory setting. The inspectors asked how this is ensured for Step Up students who are based at Medway Council, as this is a considerably smaller local authority than Kent County Council. The university acknowledged that this is more of a challenge at Medway and that for some students based at Medway, their placements may have been both within a children and family setting. They reported that they are intending to raise this at the next teaching partnership meeting to ensure all students are experiencing contrasting placements.

37. While the inspectors agreed that this standard was met, they felt that the programme would benefit from a recommendation to add a specific checkpoint into the placement matching process where contrasting experience is considered and confirmed. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.2

38. The documentary evidence provided by the university for this standard stated that for the Step Up programme, placements are identified by the employer partners Kent County Council and Medway Council. Each students' placement arrangements are mapped to support their fulfilment of the professional standards and ensure placements will provide students with the required learning opportunities. The placement handbook sets out the roles of the placement tutor, practice educator, and supervisor (where applicable), and outlines the learning outcomes students must meet on placement. A Practice Learning Agreement (PLA) document and meeting lay out the expected learning opportunities, and the student's progress against these is reviewed at a mid-point meeting. The Practice Assessment Panel (PAP) and QAPL (Quality Assurance in Placement Learning) serve as mechanisms for assuring placements are meeting students' learning needs.

39. At inspection, placement team members and practice educators discussed how they work with students and employers to ensure placements are meeting the students' identified

learning needs. For example, reflective practice templates are provided which prompt students to reference and reflect on the professional standards in relation to their developing practice. Students also confirmed that they are aware of the need for them to meet the professional standards through their learning at university and on placement. The inspectors agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.3

40. Documentary evidence was provided ahead of the inspection, confirming that a PLA is completed for each placement setting out requirements in relation to students' induction, supervision, and support. A PLA meeting is then held to confirm mutual understanding of the expectations, and document the agreed induction, supervision, and workload plans. A mid-point meeting is held to review these arrangements and confirm the student is receiving the expected support and progressing appropriately. Students are allocated a placement tutor from the university who attends these meetings and forms part of the support around the student, along with the practice educator. At inspection, practice educators confirmed that the suitability and volume of students' work while on placement is monitored closely, and any issues addressed promptly. Students reported having appropriate support and workloads during their placements, and confirmed that any issues arising around this are resolved. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

41. Documentary evidence provided by the university for this standard demonstrated that a range of processes are in place to establish students' learning needs at the beginning of each placement, and ensure their responsibilities on placement are appropriate. The mid-way review meeting then serves as a checkpoint to ensure the parameters of the PLA are being met. Should a student have any concerns around their responsibilities on placement which they are unable to address with their supervisor, they can raise these with their practice educator or placement tutor. As discussed within standard 2.3, practice educators confirmed that the suitability of students' work while on placement is monitored closely, and any issues addressed promptly. Students reported having appropriate support and workloads during their placements, and confirmed that any issues arising around this are resolved. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

42. Prior to inspection, a module specification was provided for the Readiness for Direct Practice module students undertake to prepare them for practice learning and assess their preparedness. In addition, details of the content of skills days were provided to evidence further preparation for practice which takes place outside of the module itself. Students are required to pass the Readiness for Direct Practice module before they are permitted to begin

their first practice placement. Students also complete a 10-day shadowing activity, which practice educators evaluate their engagement with.

43. During the inspection, discussions took place regarding a recent change to the Readiness for Direct Practice module to allow for a retake within a short timeframe, so that students who require a retake are not unnecessarily delayed in beginning placement. Stakeholders confirmed they had no concerns regarding this change, with practice educators and employers both reporting that students' readiness meets expectations. Students also confirmed that they felt they were appropriately prepared for placement. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 2.6

44. Evidence provided by the university ahead of the inspection indicated that practice educators' experience, qualifications, and registration are reviewed at application stage and confirmed prior to appointment. Regular group sessions are provided to practice educators by the placement manager to support their development in the role, particularly when first in post. Workshops are also offered to practice educators by the university twice a year for their ongoing development, and further workshops are provided three times a year in partnership with Kent County Council. These group sessions and workshops support practice educators' ongoing currency.

45. At inspection, the university were asked how they ensure practice educators' registration and currency on an ongoing basis, and confirmed that they hold a database of all practice educators' required credentials. The database is updated annually by the placement coordinator to confirm all practice educators' qualifications, DBS, and registration, and a record is kept of these checks. The university confirmed that uptake of workshops is not monitored, however a number of quality assurance processes are in place to identify any concerns around a practice educator's currency or skills, such as the Quality Assurance of Practice Learning (QAPL) process. The inspection team determined that the standard was met. Practice educators stated that they feel they would benefit from more opportunities for continuing professional development from the university, and the inspectors felt that a recommendation would be beneficial around this. The recommendation has also been applied to standard 4.11 in relation to supporting PEs' role in assessment. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 2.7

46. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that there is a university whistleblowing policy in place, in addition to a section of the PLA requiring the placement provider to ensure students have access to the provider's own whistleblowing policy. The importance of understanding and following whistleblowing procedures is also included with the Readiness for Direct Practice module. At inspection, students confirmed that they are

aware of the whistleblowing policy. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

47. The university provided documentary evidence ahead of the inspection, including an organisational chart and job descriptions, which demonstrated the governance and management arrangements in place for the course. Within the documentation, confirmation was also provided that the university is committed to delivery of an eighth cohort of Step Up students. The university confirmed that the Head of Social Work liaises with senior management regarding the resourcing and quality assurance of all social work programmes. The Step Up programme also has a designated Director of Studies and Professional Lead, and a team of lecturers who are responsible for content and quality control of modules. The details of these arrangements were discussed with members of senior management at inspection, and it was confirmed that while some governance structures are currently undergoing changes (in the context of the university's move from divisions to schools), the position of social work within the university is secure. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

48. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection indicated that PLAs are in place for all placements which confirm the expectations the university has of placement providers. The procedures in place for responding to placement difficulties or breakdowns are laid out within the PLA for reference should these be needed. If initial discussions or action plans are not effective in resolving concerns, a meeting is called to assess the situation and determine next steps. A flow chart is provided showing the different stages of addressing concerns, along with the support available at each stage. The PLA also covers details regarding necessary consents. Beyond each student's individual PLA, a wider Partnership Agreement was also provided as evidence for this standard – this agreement is in place between the university, Kent County Council, and another local university.

49. At inspection, placement providers and practice educators confirmed that the processes for addressing potential placement breakdown are clear and work well in practice when needed. However, it was also confirmed at inspection that no formal overarching agreements are in place between the university and Medway Council or any of the other placement providers used for Step Up students. The inspectors determined that this standard was therefore not met. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course

would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.3

50. Prior to inspection, the university confirmed that all necessary health and wellbeing policies and expectations are addressed as part of the PLA form and meeting for each placement, and that the student understanding of policies is confirmed. At the mid-point review meeting, these aspects of the PLA are reviewed to ensure the student is receiving sufficient support or agree changes if they are not. An anti-racism statement has also been adopted as part of the PLA to establish and strengthen specific expectations around the support of Black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) students while on placement. In addition, training is provided for practice educators and on-site supervisors prior to each placement beginning, to ensure the students' underpinning support system is robust. As discussed within Standard 2.3, practice educators confirmed at inspection that the suitability and volume of students' work while on placement is monitored closely, and any issues addressed promptly. Students reported having appropriate support and workloads during their placements, and confirmed that any issues arising around this are resolved. Placement staff also confirmed during inspection that a record is kept of current relevant policies for all placement providers and when these are due to expire, at which point the placement team contact placements for updated policy documents. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

51. Documentary evidence provided by the university confirmed that employers have strong involvement throughout the course as the Step Up is an employer-led programme. Along with leading on the shortlisting and admissions process, employers are represented on termly Step Up programme boards, which are chaired by an employer representative. In addition, employers provide input to the course through annual stakeholder events held by the university to gather feedback from employer partners, students, and people with lived experience of social work. Further to this, employers are represented on PAPs for the Step Up and all other social work programs at the university.

52. At inspection, the course team confirmed that placement allocation is also managed collaboratively by employers and the university. Employer partners stated that they provide regular informal input to the programme alongside the more formal routes above. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met. The inspectors did however note that, as in some other areas of the programme, the structures and involvement appeared to be less robust for employers other than Kent County Council. While the inspectors agreed that this standard was met, they felt that the programme would benefit from a recommendation to improve parity of involvement from employers other than Kent County Council. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 3.5

53. Review of the university's documentary evidence submission confirmed that there are a number of quality assurance processes in place for the programme which involve employers, students, and people with lived experience of social work. For example, placements are reviewed annually through the Quality Assurance in Practice Learning (QAPL) forms, which collate feedback from students and practice educators on their placement experiences. These forms are audited every year to ensure learning is picked up and actioned where appropriate. Employers and PI Group members are also represented on the PAP and at the aforementioned stakeholder events.

54. The termly Step Up Board meetings also serve as a form of quality assurance, and directly involve employer partners. Mid-term evaluations are completed by students to ensure any feedback can be reviewed and changes implemented where appropriate and feasible. PI Group members are able to provide feedback or raise concerns through quarterly meetings with the university. External examiners are in place to provide further quality assurance for the programme, along with an annual monitoring report. Students participate in quality assurance through Student Voice meetings which provide an opportunity for students to flag any concerns with the course team. At inspection, students confirmed that issues they raise are responded to by the university and resolved wherever feasible. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 3.6

55. The university's documentary evidence submitted for this standard states that the number of students admitted to each cohort of the program is determined through the Department for Education's commissioning process. This process includes determination of local employers' workforce needs and placement capacity to ensure the programme is aligned with these needs. At inspection, employer partners confirmed that the Step Up provision at the university is aligned with their workforce needs, and has positive outcomes in terms of staff retention of graduates from the Step Up programme. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 3.7

56. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection included a clear and comprehensive job description for the professional lead social worker's role. The lead social worker is registered with Social Work England and their CV confirms they are appropriately qualified for the role. The inspection team concluded that the documentary evidence provided in advance of the inspection was sufficient to demonstrate that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

57. The inspectors' review of the staff CVs provided within the university's evidence submission confirmed that staff are appropriately qualified and experienced. Teaching staff have a wide range of experience and research interests, and there is a workload allocation model in place to ensure fair distribution of activity across the team. At inspection, senior management and course staff confirmed that staff workload and resourcing are kept under review, and gaps in specialist knowledge addressed accordingly. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

58. Documentary evidence provided for this standard confirmed that the university monitors student progression through annual examination boards and re-sit boards, along with students' allocated academic advisors who monitor progression on an individual basis. A university-wide analysis was recently conducted regarding student progression with reference to protected characteristics such as age, sex, and ethnicity. There is also a Student Success study currently ongoing which aims to explore attainment gaps with a view to improving outcomes for students. There are a number of initiatives in place to address awarding gaps and other issues impacting on student outcomes specific for particular demographics, for example the anti-racism statement introduced to PLAs. However, at inspection, Kent County Council confirmed that while they share progression data (including with regards to EDI) reciprocally with the Department for Education, this isn't yet shared with the university.

59. As discussed under standard 1.5, the social work department have instigated a new annual meeting to engage with this data, but the first of these meetings had not yet taken place at the time of inspection, therefore inspectors were unable to assess whether the new process would be sufficient to meet the standard. As the standard requires course providers to not only gather but analyse and use students' progression data, the inspection team determined that a condition was necessary against this standard. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 3.10

60. The evidence submission for this standard outlined the university's commitment to ongoing staff development through regular appraisals, training opportunities, and other professional development prospects. Details were provided of a career development pathway, and a corresponding mentoring policy which serves to provide career development support. Evidence was provided of the range and quality of research being undertaken by the

university's social work academics, including confirmation that the department were ranked second in the country for social work research by the Times Higher Education in 2023. An 'academics in practice' initiative is in place which provides staff with shadowing opportunities at local service providers, though it was acknowledged during the inspection that engagement with this has waned following the pandemic. There is a Professional Development Allowance available for scholarly and professional development activities, along with work allocation points earmarked for scholarly activity. At inspection, course staff confirmed that they maintain proximity to practice through activities such as involvement with the PEPS course and sitting as trustees of relevant charities. The inspection team agreed that this standard had been met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

61. The documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated that the curriculum and learning outcomes have been mapped to both BASW's Professional Capability Framework and Social Work England's Professional Standards. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

62. As discussed within Standards 3.4 and 3.5, annual stakeholder events are held by the university to gather feedback from employer partners, students, and people with lived experience of social work. The university also hosts regular practitioner lectures and workshops and invites employer partners to participate in the design and delivery of these events. Further, employers and people with lived experience are represented on PAPs for the Step Up and all other social work programs at the university. PI Group members are able to provide input through termly meetings with the university, as well as input in the design and delivery of course content such as the Readiness for Direct Practice module.

63. At inspection, employer partners stated that they provide regular informal input to the programme alongside the more formal routes such as the Step Up board. Members of the PI Group stated that they are meaningfully involved in the development of the program, and that their contributions are valued. However, both stakeholder groups reflected that their input in the ongoing development and review of the curriculum felt quite ad hoc, with the Step Up at times getting missed in discussions due to running every other year. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met, but felt the university would benefit from a recommendation to bolster engagement opportunities with stakeholders regarding the Step Up curriculum. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.3

64. As discussed within Standard 1.5, Documentary evidence confirmed that there are a number of university-wide equality and diversity policies and strategies in place, and that students are required to engage with principles of equality and human rights in their assessments. The school has an Athena SWAN bronze award; an Athena SWAN and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) committee meets termly to plan and implement actions. All university staff are required to complete training in unconscious bias and diversity in higher education, along with refresher training every three years. The university's mapping document detailed the range of support that is available to students to maximise accessibility and inclusivity. This includes disability services, academic support services, and aspects of universal design such as ensuring all teaching materials are available one week prior to sessions. The university's digital accessibility policy requires staff to ensure teaching materials meet all students' requirements regarding font, colour, and file type. As noted within Standard 3.3, an anti-racism statement has been adopted as part of the PLA to establish specific expectations around the support of Black and Minoritized Ethnicity (BAME) students while on placement. Work is also ongoing to monitor and address attainment gaps identified for minoritized groups.

65. While the inspectors did not have any concerns regarding the inclusivity of the curriculum, at inspection PI Group members mentioned that they do not have regular EDI training and feel they would benefit from refresher training in this area. As these group members are involved in programme delivery, the inspectors determined that a condition was necessary against this standard. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 4.4

66. Review of the documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that the course team hold meetings twice a year to review and plan changes to the programmes. Additionally, the annual stakeholder review events involve practitioners, students, and PI Group members in identifying any areas of the curriculum which require updating. The termly Step Up Board meetings provide a further opportunity for practitioners and academics to discuss updates in practice, policy or legislation and plan amendments to the course accordingly. Current social work practitioners from partner organisations also contribute to course teaching and help ensure module content reflects current best practice. Course staff also attend the Joint Universities Social Work Association committee meetings to help keep their knowledge and course content up to date regarding research, best practice, and legislation. Library staff send out termly prompts to module convenors to remind them to review and update their module reading lists. During the inspection, course staff were able to provide examples of how they

have used their own research to update and enhance their teaching. The inspection team agreed this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

67. Evidence provided prior to inspection indicated that the programme includes a module dedicated to social work theory (Social Work Processes, Theories and Methods), along with a number of modules featuring content on relevant theories and their applications to practice. The structure of the programme also fosters integration of theory and practice, as students complete their second placement over 4 days a week, leaving one day each week at university to support the integration of their practice learning. Assessments on the programme also require critical reflection of the application of theory to practice. This was confirmed at inspection, with practice educators outlining methods they employ for encouraging students to integrate theory and practice. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

68. The university's documentary submission provided examples of the involvement of other professionals in course teaching, such as delivery of law content by a lawyer, and noted that practice placements provide substantial opportunity for working with other professions. The university notes that as part of the placement portfolio, students are required to provide evidence from two other professionals they have worked alongside during the placement. It was also noted that students on the Step Up have often come from different professional backgrounds and can therefore both bring and gain interprofessional knowledge and experience through learning alongside each other.

69. Discussions with the course team during the inspection confirmed that while students are given opportunities to work with other professions through visiting lecturers and placement learning, there are currently few interprofessional working opportunities within the university itself. It was acknowledged that being based on the Medway campus presents specific challenges in this respect, as the university does not run any legal or allied healthcare professional courses on the campus. However, the Medway campus is shared with other course providers, including one who runs a pharmacy programme at the campus, and the course team have been exploring whether some interprofessional learning could take place with students from this programme. The course team confirmed that they have also been exploring alternative opportunities they could consider within the local community for students to work with other professions.

70. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met, but also determined that a recommendation would be beneficial around exploring avenues for further multidisciplinary working opportunities with learners from other professions. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.7

71. Documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that each module specification includes the designated hours for structured learning and independent learning, which equate to 10 hours per credit. These hours conform to university-wide requirements for face-to-face teaching and independent study. At inspection, employer partners confirmed that students generally arrive on placement well-prepared, and students report that they feel prepared for practice. Staff explained the structures in place to identify and resolve situations when a student's attendance becomes a concern. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.8

72. Review of the documentary evidence for this standard confirmed that a varied range of assessment methods are used across the programme, reflecting the nature of the different modules. Placements are assessed through formative and summative assessments, review meetings, and a practice portfolio. An external examiner system provides independent quality assurance for the reliability and robustness of the programme's assessments. At inspection, the course team confirmed that changes have been made to assessment formats to be more inclusive and to reflect frontline social work practice more closely. The Student Learning Advisory Service (SLAS) provides supplementary support for students where needed, as well as delivering some sessions as standard to all students as part of mandatory course content. Employer partners reported that they have worked with the university on sequencing the modules and support for students to balance placement and academic work in a manageable way. The inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met.

Standard 4.9

73. The university's documentary evidence demonstrated that all assessments are mapped to the professional standards, and that a staged approach to assessment is taken to support students' progression through the course. Discussion with course staff on inspection demonstrated how the assessment methods are sequenced to match student progression through the programme. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

74. The inspectors determined prior to inspection that the Step Up to Social Work Assessment Strategy includes feedback guidance to ensure academics provide consistent, constructive feedback. While formative assessments aren't provided for every module, teaching staff and the SLAS are available to help review sections of draft work ahead of summative assessments where needed. Students also receive feedback during their placements, from their practice educator and on site supervisor, as well as other professionals and people with lived experience of social work. At inspection, students had no concerns around timeliness of feedback, and reported generally receiving constructive and helpful feedback on their assessments. Students also confirmed that they have been able to

seek further detail and guidance beyond the initial assessment feedback where needed. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

75. Prior to the inspection, the university provided staff and external examiner CVs, and outlined the areas of assessment which practitioners and people with lived experience are involved in. Review of the CVs confirmed that staff carrying out assessments are appropriately qualified, and that the external examiners are qualified and registered. Practice educators' qualifications and currency are monitored per the processes outlined in Standard 2.6. The mapping document also confirmed that module assessments are all required to be moderated per the university's credit framework.

76. As discussed within standard 4.3, PI Group members mentioned during inspection that they do not have regular EDI training and feel they would benefit from refresher training in this area. As these group members are involved in carrying out assessment of students, the inspectors determined that a condition was necessary against this standard. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the proposed outcomes sections of this report.

77. As discussed within standard 2.6, at inspection practice educators stated that they feel they would benefit from more opportunities for continuing professional development from the university, and the inspectors felt that a recommendation would be beneficial around this. The recommendation has been applied to this standard in addition to standard 2.6, in relation to how increased CPD opportunities may support PEs in the assessment aspects of their role. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report.

Standard 4.12

78. The university's documentary evidence outlined the range of people whose input contributes to decisions about student progression, including academics, PI Group members, placement service users, and practice educators. The mapping document confirmed the process for assessing students' readiness for practice prior to progressing to placement. The evidence also confirmed that practice educators carry out direct observation of student practice as part of placement assessment. Examination boards and resit boards are held to make formal decisions on students' progression, and a Practice Assessment Panel (PAP) moderates and provides feedback on students' placement portfolios. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.13

79. Evidence was provided of the range and quality of research being undertaken by the university's social work academics, including confirmation that the department was ranked second in the country for social work research by the Times Higher Education in 2023. The programme's module descriptors demonstrate the evidence-informed approach to students' learning, with a particular focus on research within the Social Work Skills and Values module. This was triangulated at inspection, with the course team confirming that they embed expectations around evidence-informed practice throughout the programme. Practice educators confirmed that they feel the programme prepares students to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice. The inspection team determined that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

80. Documentary evidence provided by the university confirmed that students have access to a range of support services including a careers service, counselling service, disability support, and occupational health where appropriate. Welcome week activities include sessions run by the student wellbeing service to introduce students to the services that are available to them. During the inspection, staff from the various support services provided further details of the services available to students, and how they ensure these are accessible to students while on placement as well as on campus. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.2

81. The university's documentary evidence submission confirmed that students have access to a range of resources to support their academic development, including academic advisors, a subject librarian, library resources, study skills programmes through the SLAS, and IT support. The evidence also stated that students have check-in meetings with their academic advisor a minimum of once per term. At inspection, course team and support services staff were able to provide further detail of these resources and how they work for students. It was also confirmed that some academic support sessions are delivered within timetabled course content to ensure all students access these. The inspection team determined that the standard was met.

Standard 5.3

82. As discussed within Standard 1.4, a number of initial checks are undertaken at admissions stage to establish students' suitability for the programme and for social work, including a disclosure and health declaration form and DBS check. Once enrolled, students must complete a further declaration to confirm whether there have been any changes to their health, conduct or character prior to beginning each placement, as part of the Practice Learning Agreement. A Social Work Professional Suitability Procedure is in place which

provides a clear approach that is taken where any concerns arise regarding a student's suitability. At inspection it was confirmed that, where declarations are made at admissions or in the pre-placement declaration form, a decision on suitability is made by the Virtual Suitability Panel, which is comprised of practitioners from the two local authority partner agencies and academic staff. Any disclosures of personal involvement with social care services are assessed with regards to provision of suitable placement opportunities to avoid potential conflicts of interest. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

83. The documentary evidence for this standard indicated that there are a range of appropriate measures and resources in place to support students with health conditions or disabilities where needed. Students are directed to the Student Support and Wellbeing service which incorporates disability services and can work with students to develop an ILP (Inclusive Learning Plan) where appropriate. The ILP outlines a student's reasonable adjustments, and applies to both university-based learning and placement settings. The university also have an ongoing accessibility initiative called OPERA (Opportunity, Productivity, Engagement, Reducing Barriers, Achievement), which works to meet Kent Inclusive Practices (KIPs). These include ensuring all learning resources meet a number of accessibility requirements and are provided at least one week in advance of teaching.

84. Discussions with staff and students during the inspection confirmed the processes in place through the Student Support and Wellbeing service for implementing reasonable adjustments where appropriate. However, a number of students reported having experienced substantial delays in getting reasonable adjustments implemented. Some students also reported finding their ILP not detailed enough to be effective. Support services staff stated the service is prompt, but acknowledged that delays can occur surrounding Disabled Students Allowance (DSA) which is beyond the university's control.

85. The evidence heard at inspection therefore led the inspection team to determine that, while there are structures in place intended to identify and meet students' accessibility needs, these are not always functioning as needed. The inspection team therefore agreed that a condition was necessary for this standard to ensure students' needs are identified and met in a timely manner. Consideration was given to whether the findings identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it was deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard. The inspection team is confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the conditions, monitoring and approval can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) sections of this report.

Standard 5.5

86. Review of the documentary evidence confirmed that clear information is provided to students on the programme website regarding the course content, placements, assessments, and Social Work England registration requirements. This is complemented by information provided through open days, inductions, and materials such as the programme specification and placement handbook. An annual careers and employability fair is held which provides further information regarding the transition to registered social worker, continuing professional development, and the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE). At inspection, students confirmed they are informed about professional regulation and the transition to registered social worker. However, several students also reported receiving late or incorrect information about placements, assessments, and practical arrangements for the programme. The inspection team determined that while the standard was met, the university would benefit from a recommendation to improve communication with students regarding these aspects of the course. Full details of the recommendation can be found in the [proposed outcomes](#) section of this report

Standard 5.6

87. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that the university has a comprehensive Student Attendance and Engagement Policy, and all module guides also include a statement on attendance, which outlines the attendance requirements for all elements of the course. If a student's attendance drops below 80%, this is flagged up within the attendance monitoring system and the student is contacted to discuss and address anything which may be impacting their attendance. The attendance statement also notes that 100% attendance is required at skills days, placement days, and recall days, and any absence from these aspects of the course must be made up. In instances where attendance concerns are not resolved through work with the engagement team, the senior tutor and director of studies contact the student to discuss next steps.

88. At inspection, the approach to attendance monitoring was triangulated and elaborated on, with the senior tutor confirming that attendance data is checked every 2 weeks. It was acknowledged that a lack of attendance could indicate someone is disengaging from the programme due to mitigating circumstances which they may need support for, or in some instances failing to attend in ways that raise concerns around conduct. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

89. As discussed within Standard 4.10, the inspectors determined prior to inspection that the Step Up to Social Work Assessment Strategy includes feedback guidance to ensure academics provide consistent, constructive feedback. While formative assessments aren't provided for every module, teaching staff and the SLAS are available to help review sections of draft work ahead of summative assessments where needed. Students also receive feedback during their placements, from their practice educator and on site supervisor, as well

as other professionals and people with lived experience of social work. At inspection, students had no concerns around timeliness of feedback, and reported generally receiving constructive and helpful feedback on their assessments. Students also confirmed that they have been able to seek further detail and guidance beyond the initial assessment feedback where needed. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

90. Review of the evidence provided prior to inspection confirmed there is a university-wide academic appeals process in place, as well as a complaints procedure. At inspection, students confirmed they had been made aware of the appeals process and knew how to find and use it if needed. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

91. The course leads to a postgraduate diploma in social work, which exceeds the threshold requirement in terms of academic level. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

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

Conditions

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

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

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	Standard 1.5, Standard 3.9	The education provider will evidence that the new processes have been implemented for monitoring EDI data, both at the admissions stage and in terms of student performance, progression, and outcomes.	27 th April 2025	Paragraph 29 Paragraph 58
2	Standard 1.6	The education provider will evidence that they have clarified the information provided to applicants regarding the following: 1. Amendment to course webpage to clarify that graduates are eligible to apply to register with Social Work England. 2. Amendment to course webpage to make it explicit that students are required to source and fund their own car access for travel to and from placement. 3. Amendment to course webpage and other materials to make clear the distinction between the PDGip and MA qualifications, and the status of the PGDip as the qualifying aspect of the programme.	27 th April 2025	Paragraph 32

		4. Amendments to the course specification to remove reference to the previous regulator and provide correct entry requirement information.		
3	Standard 3.2	The education provider will evidence that overarching agreements are in place with all placement providers, to ensure consistent placement experiences for students placed outside of Kent County Council.	27th April 2025	Paragraph 48
4	Standard 4.3, Standard 4.11	The education provider will evidence that all staff and stakeholders who are involved in delivery of the course and assessment of students receive regular EDI training.	27th April 2025	Paragraph 64 Paragraph 75
5	Standard 5.4	The education provider will evidence that they have explored the causes of delays to students' reasonable adjustments being put in place, and implemented solutions wherever possible.	27th April 2025	Paragraph 83

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	Standard 2.1	The inspectors are recommending that the university adds a specific checkpoint into the placement matching process where all students' access to contrasting experience is considered and confirmed.	Paragraph 36
2	Standard 2.6	The inspectors are recommending that the university provides more opportunities for continuous professional development for practice educators.	Paragraph 44

3	Standard 3.4	The inspectors are recommending that the university work to improve parity of involvement from employers other than Kent County Council	Paragraph 51
4	Standard 4.2	The inspectors are recommending that the university considers how it could formalise engagement arrangements with stakeholders in the context of the programme's delivery every two years, including through active planning.	Paragraph 62
5	Standard 4.6	The inspectors are recommending that the university explores opportunities for students to work with learners from other professions.	Paragraph 68
6	Standard 5.5	The inspectors are recommending that the university improve communication with students regarding placements, assessments, and practical arrangements for the programme.	Paragraph 86

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 information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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.	☒	☐	☒
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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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 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	☒	☐	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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, ongoing development and review of the curriculum.	☒	☐	☒
4.3 Ensure that the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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.	☒	☐	☐
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	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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.	☒	☐	☐
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.	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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	1.5, 3.9	The education provider will evidence that the new processes have been implemented for monitoring EDI data, both at the admissions stage and in terms of student performance, progression, and outcomes.	Met
2	1.6	The education provider will evidence that they have clarified the information provided to applicants regarding the following: 1. Amendment to course webpage to clarify that graduates are eligible to apply to register with Social Work England. 2. Amendment to course webpage to make it explicit that students are required to source and fund their own car access for travel to and from placement. 3. Amendment to course webpage and other materials to make clear the distinction between the PDGip and MA qualifications, and the status of the PGDip as the qualifying aspect of the programme. Amendments to the course specification to remove reference to the previous regulator and provide correct entry requirement information.	Met
3	3.2	The education provider will evidence that overarching agreements are in place with all placement providers, to ensure consistent placement experiences for students placed outside of Kent County Council.	Met
4	4.3, 4.11	The education provider will evidence that all staff and stakeholders who are involved in delivery of the course and assessment of students receive regular EDI training.	Met

5	5.4	The education provider will evidence that they have explored the causes of delays to students' reasonable adjustments being put in place, and implemented solutions wherever possible.	Met
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Findings

Condition 1 – The university provided narrative evidence along with records of Annual Social Work Admissions Review Meetings, and Step Up to Social Work Board Meetings. The meeting records indicate that consideration of EDI data has now been established as a standing agenda item in meetings regarding both admissions and student progression. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

Condition 2 – The university provided updated versions of the course webpage and the programme specification, demonstrating that amendments have been made in line with all four components of this condition. The website now uses the correct wording around eligibility to apply for registration, clearly signposts the requirement to source and fund one's own vehicle, and makes clear the distinction between the PGDip and MA. The course specification now provides correct entry requirement information, and no longer includes reference to the previous regulator. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

Condition 3 – The university provided narrative evidence and a template memorandum of cooperation which will be used across all placement providers from the beginning of the 2025/2026 academic year. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

Condition 4 – The university provided narrative and documentary evidence to demonstrate the actions they have taken to ensure all staff and stakeholders involved in delivery of the course and in assessments engage in regular EDI training. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

Condition 5 – The university provided narrative evidence outlining the steps they have taken to explore the issues raised through the inspection around delays to the implementation of reasonable adjustments. While the primary cause identified is delays with DSA funding, which is out of the university's control, the university has taken steps to ensure that aspects which are within their control are as prompt as possible. The inspectors' recommendation is that this condition is now met.

Regulator decision

Conditions met.