

Inspection Report

Course provider: University of York

Course approval: MA Social Work, MSocW (Hons) Social Work, PG Dip Social Work (exit route), BA (Hons) Social Work Practice (exit route)

Inspection dates: 18th to 21st April 2023

Report date:	15th June 2023
Inspector recommendation:	Approved
Regulator decision:	Approved
Date of Regulator decision:	7 th August 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 York's MA Social Work, MSocW (Hons) Social Work, PG Dip Social Work (exit route) and BA (Hons) Social Work Practice (exit route) was inspected as part of the Social Work England reapproval cycle; whereby all course providers with qualifying social work courses will be inspected against the new Education and Training Standards 2021.

Inspection ID	UYR1
Course provider	University of York
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	MA Social Work MSocW (Hons) Social Work PG Dip Social Work (exit route) BA (Hons) Social Work Practice (exit route)
Mode of study	Full time
Maximum student cohort	20 for MA Social Work 25 for MSocW (Hons) Social Work PG Dip Social Work (exit route) BA (Hons) Social Work Practice (exit route)
Date of inspection	18/04/2023 – 21/04/2023
Inspection team	Caroline Reynolds - Education Quality Assurance Officer Jo Benn - Lay Inspector Paula Eaton-Perkins - Registrant Inspector
Inspector recommendation	Approved
Approval outcome	Approved

Language

16. In this document we describe the University of York as 'the education provider' or 'the university' and we describe the MA Social Work, MSocW (Hons) Social Work, PG Dip Social

Work (exit route) and BA (Hons) Social Work Practice (exit route) as 'the course(s)' or 'the programme(s)'.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 18th to 21st April at the School for Business and Society, Church Lane building, University of York campus where the school is based. As part of this process the inspection team planned to meet with key stakeholders including students, course staff, employers and people with lived experience of social work.

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

Conflict of interest

19. No parties disclosed a conflict of interest.

Meetings with students

20. The inspection team met with students from the MA Social Work and MSocW (Hons) Social Work courses who were at different stages of their study. Discussions included teaching, learning and assessment including the receiving of meaningful feedback on their progression and performance, their placement experiences, access to student and academic support services, their reflections on the admissions process, input into course improvements, and preparedness for practice.

Meetings with course staff and senior management

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with university staff members from the social work course team including the programme lead and the course leads, the dean of the school, chair of the Board of Studies, the school project manager, the associate dean for teaching and learning, and senior lecturers. The inspection team also met with staff involved in selection, admissions and widening participation processes and activities.

Meeting with support services

22. The inspection team met with staff involved in providing support services, including the academic librarian, the student services manager, student support and advice co-ordinator and the disability practitioner.

Meeting with practice-based learning and placement provision staff

23. The inspection team met with staff involved in practice-based learning and placement provision including the director of practice learning and placement leads, and practice educators (PEs). Discussions included placement capacity, placement processes including placement breakdowns and monitoring, support mechanisms whilst students are on placement, placement attendance and professional currency of PEs.

Meeting with people with lived experience of social work

24. The inspection team met a broad group of people from the Service User Participation and Advisory Group (SUPA Group). Discussions included their involvement in the admissions process, their engagement with student learning and assessments, and their involvement in the programme design, development and evaluation of the course.

Meetings with external stakeholders

25. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including several members of the Yorkshire Urban and Rural Social Work Teaching Partnership (YURSWTP). The YURSWTP comprises of two higher education institutions, four local authorities and a large number of private, independent and voluntary (PIV) sector organisations. Several PIV organisations attended the meeting including representatives from Barnardo's and St Leonards' Hospice.

Findings

26. 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

27. Prior to the inspection, the university confirmed that the admissions processes were the same across the social work programmes, and extensive evidence was provided in relation to the selection and admissions procedures. The capability to meet the academic standards required of the course are assessed via the entry requirements and the interview process. The admissions assessment process involves a written test, individual interview with members of the SUPA group, and a group work task. It is an online process which was adopted during the COVID pandemic, and this has continued. The inspection team heard that conducting the processes online has resulted in increased attendance by candidates and interview panel members. ICT skills are assessed via the candidate's ability to navigate the process and complete the written test and time is given to candidates to prepare.

28. Following the latest annual review of the process, the inspection team heard how it has been simplified; the group task has been updated to ensure that it works better online and international candidates can carry out their admissions assessments at a time which considers the time zone differences. Panel members are given information about expectations and scoring to demonstrate capability. The inspection team agreed that the university had a robust, holistic and comprehensive approach to entry onto the course and were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 1.2

29. The inspection team reviewed comprehensive evidence relating to the admissions process, which included documentation and information on the university's website. Past experience is considered through the candidate's personal statement, and this is further explored in the interview day assessments. Experience is reviewed on an individual basis, and prior skills and work experiences including volunteering are considered, in addition to the demonstration of appropriate values. In the meeting with students they elaborated on how the university drew out their past experiences and how they were able to reflect on them. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.3

30. The inspectors heard how members of the SUPA Group and employer partners are involved in the admissions process. During the inspection meetings, they commented on their ability to come together, share information and findings, and give feedback on the candidate's performance at interview days. Some members of the SUPA Group commented on experiencing difficulties with having the interview process online in terms of fully judging candidates, and one of the group who has a visual impairment explained that they rely on others to help describe the candidate's body language. All parties understood what was expected of them and overall they felt valued and listened to.

31. The information that panel members provide is utilised by the admissions tutor to draw upon multiple perspectives when assessing the capability and potential of each candidate. In the meeting with students, some commented on the intensity of the admissions process and outlined how they felt supported. The inspectors reviewed comprehensive admissions documentation including the marking guidance. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.4

32. The inspection team were able to review the processes in place for assessing the suitability of applicants, including in relation to their conduct, health and character. All candidates complete a Declaration of Suitability, a health declaration, provide references via the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) application process, and a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check is carried out on entry to the course. All health declarations are screened by occupational health and then referred to the Fitness to Practise (FtP) panel if appropriate. Candidates are encouraged to request any reasonable adjustments prior to the assessment process. In the meeting with admissions staff examples were given as to how they had supported applicants with physical impairments. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 1.5

33. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team reviewed the university's Equality and Diversity Policy for Students, the 2022 Admissions Policy and the Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25. Equality and diversity monitoring takes place, including the analysis of demographics of university students. The inspectors heard that all parties involved in the interview process undertake training in unconscious bias and this training is offered to SUPA Group members.

34. During the meeting with students, some mature students spoke of having no prior or limited experience of using a computer and this added to the stress of participating in interview tasks, particularly in relation to how to use Zoom. Reasonable adjustments are made for disabled candidates, including the provision of additional time for the written test. The inspectors determined that this standard was met. In relation to the mature 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 1.6

35. The inspectors reviewed comprehensive documentation and website information prior to the inspection including the open day presentation, the interview day presentation and the invitation to interview. The inspectors heard that on the interview days there are opportunities for candidates to ask further questions about the course. The inspectors agreed that there is clear detailed information provided to applicants to enable them to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on the course and this was corroborated in the meeting with students. In meetings with staff they outlined how the university supports the widening participation agenda including the review of bursaries and the consideration of students who may have additional needs. The inspectors concluded that this standard was met.

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

36. The inspectors reviewed the Practice Learning Handbook and module outlines prior to the inspection. The course includes a 70 day placement, a 100 day placement, and 30 skills days. The times of the placements differ across the course depending on if this is the MA or MSocW (Hons) and the start times of placements can differ depending upon placement provider capacity and the structure of the course allows for this. The course team explained that both placements are in different practice settings, and they provide contrasting experiences, with at least once placement in a statutory setting. In year two of the MSocW (Hons), students undertake a 10 day practice experience in a community or social care setting to enable students to experience work in social care at first hand.

37. The Placement Offering forms, reviewed by the inspectors, set out how specific placement settings meet the statutory placement definition and considers what work the placement can offer to support a student in evidencing that they meet the required descriptor levels for the Professional Capabilities Framework (PCF). The Independent Practice Panel (IPP) assists the School for Business and Society in overseeing the quality assurance of practice learning opportunities and provides independent input into the assessment of students in relation to practice. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.2

38. As outlined in standard 2.1 the inspectors reviewed the Practice Learning Handbook, which sets out how the professional standards are met during both placements. The Placement Offering forms set out the activities and work to be undertaken during the practice placements and these are mapped against the PCF descriptors. The midway and final checklist and feedback form assess students' progress against the PCF. The module descriptors make reference to the PCF and set out how the modules will prepare students for practice.

39. The inspectors agreed there is clear evidence which shows how students' progress through the course enables them to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards. In the meetings with PEs and employer partners, they outlined the work that goes into the placement matching process to meet the professional standards and student needs. In the meeting with students they talked about some of their practice placement experiences and the processes undertaken, including their interviews and personal reflection opportunities. Some mature students spoke of difficulties with their work life balance, specifically in relation to at times, receiving late information about their placements. This made it difficult for them to plan childcare for their dependents. Overall students were complimentary about the support they received and felt they had a good range of learning opportunities. The inspectors concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 2.3

40. As outlined in standards 2.1 and 2.2, the inspectors reviewed the Practice Learning Handbook which sets out the roles and responsibilities of students, the university liaison, PE and work based supervisor. The inspectors also reviewed the Placement Learning Agreement which sets out the student specific learning goals, placement work including the induction, training and learning opportunities, risk management, general support and guidance around supervision and assessment and evaluation. Students complete a placement application form which includes information about practical support needs such as travel and accessibility and learning needs. This document outlines that students have a responsibility to request an occupational health referral, risk assessment or student support plan if required.

41. The inspection team heard that a pre-placement induction takes place and the placement agreement is developed with all parties. There is a midway and final review, and an action planning process in place to address any concerns in between these points. The inspectors also heard that the university liaison, PE and work based supervisor supports students whilst on placement, and QAPL Placement Feedback Forms are available for students to complete. The feedback form covers induction, support, supervision, resources and provides an opportunity to recommend changes. The PE and/or work based supervisor are also asked to complete a feedback form. During the meeting with PEs, the inspection team were able to understand how the support mechanisms work in practice.

42. During the meeting with students they provided examples of the support they had received from their PEs and supervisors whilst on placement, as well as outlining aspects of their inductions, and the continued access to university resources such as the library and student support services. The inspectors were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 2.4

43. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team reviewed the Practice Learning Handbook which clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of those involved in supporting students, and they reviewed the detailed information on the experiences and learning opportunities appropriate for each stage of training which is related to the PCF. The inspectors also reviewed the Placement Learning Agreement which sets out the students' responsibilities. As outlined in standard 2.3, to help monitor students' experiences, they are asked to provide feedback via the QAPL Placement Feedback Form on the various elements of their placements. During the meeting with students, they provided examples of the variety of learning experiences they had experienced. During the meeting with PEs they outlined examples of contrasting practice learning opportunities, and how responsibilities are increased as students progress through the course. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.5

44. The inspection team reviewed documentary evidence and heard how students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice, the timings of which differ according to the course. For the MA, students must complete the social work skills in practice module prior to their first placement and for the MSocW (Hons), the module is completed in year two. For all courses, skills days cover topics related to preparation for practice. The inspectors heard that students are assessed through role play and critical reflection assignments on their performance, and this involves members of the SUPA Group and PEs. In the meetings with SUPA Group members and PEs, they stated that they felt students were ready for direct practice in service delivery settings.

45. The inspection team heard that the IPP assists with the oversight of quality assurance of practice learning opportunities, and provides independent input into the assessment of students in relation to practice. The inspectors concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 2.6

46. The inspectors heard that upon applying to be a PE for the social work programme, PEs must complete a profile document, provide their Social Work England registration number, copies of their social work qualification and PE qualification(s) and DBS status, and provide a reference. PEs self-assess their currency against a flow chart, and the university offers PEPs courses, including refresher training. The inspection team reviewed the Practice Learning Handbook which sets out clear information, including additional support workshops which PEs can attend. In the meeting with PEs they outlined that they include their Social Work England registration number on reports, and they spoke of the training opportunities available to them including refresher training sessions if they have had a break in between students. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 2.7

47. Prior to the inspection, the inspectors reviewed the Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures documentation together with information available on the university's website. Whistleblowing information in relation to placements is provided within the Practice Learning Handbook and Practice Learning Agreement. In the meeting with students, some students provided examples of where they had raised minor concerns and they felt they could report them openly without fear of adverse consequences. The course team gave an example of a concern raised whilst a student was on practice placement, they outlined the process that was followed and the support that was put in place for the student, including the arrangements that were made for a new placement. The inspectors were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

48. The inspection team heard from the senior management team and the course team how the programmes are supported by robust management and governance structures which provide the support and quality assurance for the programmes. The inspectors heard how the social work courses have recently been moved into the School for Business and Society and the courses sit at the heart of the school.

49. The inspectors reviewed the lines of accountability and role descriptors of key individuals including the programme leads, head of social work and the associate dean. The school is governed by a number of committees which include the Board of Studies, the School Teaching Committee, the Board of Examiners, Fitness to Practise committee and the

IPP. The inspectors heard that the committees report into the strategic management team, and there is an established partnership in place with the YURSWTP.

50. The inspection team heard how the YURSWTP come together as a whole teaching partnership to look at good practice examples, and employer partners gave examples of how they are involved in course governance, management and quality assurance of the social work courses. Early discussions take place in relation to placement numbers to ensure there is capacity. Policy documentation also reviewed by the inspectors indicate that students are actively encouraged to become part of the governance groups including the staff student forum. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.2

51. Documentary evidence showed that effective working relationships are in place between the university and the YURSWTP, and workforce demands and placement capacity are appropriately reviewed. The YURSWTP partners sign a Consortium Agreement which establishes the basis for providing education and training on practice placements.

52. The Placement Learning Agreement clearly outlines the roles and the responsibilities of placement providers regarding their responsibilities for providing learning opportunities and student support, and there is a clearly documented process for action planning and review. Placements are monitored by the director of placements, and twice per year work takes place with the placement administration team to look at numbers and placement opportunities. During the inspection, the inspection team heard that placement breakdowns are rare, but a clear process is in place which includes action planning to address issues as they arise, and this helps to minimise the risk of placement breakdown. In the meeting with PEs, they outlined the process and the support students receive including moving students to alternative placements. Students are encouraged to have transparent conversations with their PE, and there is action planning in place between the university liaison and PEs. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 3.3

53. Placement audits are conducted prior to placements being set up to ensure that policies and procedures in relation to students' health, wellbeing and risk are in place. These assess the potential risk and the support required to mitigate risks. PEs commented about choosing placement settings carefully and provided an example of ensuring a student with mobility issues was allocated placements in suitable environments due to accessibility requirements. Another example was provided where a student with carer responsibilities was provided with practical arrangements and emotional support during their practice placements.

54. The Practice Learning Agreement requires placement providers to confirm that appropriate health and safety, whistleblowing, lone working and equality and diversity

policies are in place. Placement monitoring and feedback processes were outlined during the inspection, including the requirement for PEs and students to complete feedback forms. The course team outlined that students are informed about placements as early as possible, so they know what to expect and where they are going. Students are interviewed as part of the process and are given support in preparing for the interviews. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.4

55. The inspectors concluded that documentary evidence demonstrated that employer partners, PEs and the SUPA Group are involved in many aspects of the course including the admissions processes, curriculum development, monitoring, delivery and review. This was further corroborated during the inspection meetings. All parties conveyed the positive relationships they had developed with university staff. The inspectors were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.5

56. Documentary evidence provided to the inspectors stated that a periodic review of the course is carried out every six years and this involves academic staff, students and employer partners. Recommendations are then reviewed and monitored by the Board of Studies. Students are able to feedback informally through academic supervision, and through formal channels including the university's student voice. It was further evidenced that students are involved in numerous processes including reviewing modules, governance and in providing placement feedback, and the Policy for Student Representation ensures that students are embedded within the governance structure for learning and teaching. Course representatives attend the department teaching committee, Board of Studies and the staff student forum to raise issues related to teaching and learning. Practice learning placements are aligned to the BASW QAPL processes, and practice experiences are monitored through PEs and the student feedback processes.

57. The inspectors heard that the SUPA Group are involved in the monitoring and evaluation processes, and the group meets bimonthly and provides feedback through the group's academic lead. The SUPA Group terms of reference, reviewed by the inspectors indicate the extent to which they are involved in the social work programmes. The recruitment of new members of the SUPA Group is organic and this involves existing members of the group recommending people and identifying underrepresented groups.

58. During the inspection, an example was given where one of the PEs highlighted to the course team that they felt students were not prepared in terms of their knowledge of the Care Act. This was taken on board and sessions were delivered to students. In the meeting with students, the student representative outlined the many opportunities they have to

feed back to the course team and talk through issues. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.6

59. Evidence provided by the university showed that the number of students admitted onto the course aligns to a clear strategy that includes consideration of the local/regional placement capacity. This takes place through the YURSWTP which includes local authority and private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers. The strategy is informed by the partnership's labour market plan which provides analysis of recruitment and retention, and the supply and demand of social workers within the region. Student numbers are discussed at the quarterly Teaching Partnership Placement Workstream meetings and as outlined in standard 1, the admissions procedures for the programmes are closely aligned to ensure that recruitment targets are met. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.7

60. The inspection team reviewed the curriculum vitae (CV) of the head of social work who has professional responsibility for the social work courses at the university. The head of social work is a qualified registered social worker. His CV outlined his extensive experience of practice, research, training and programme leadership. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 3.8

61. Prior to the inspection, the university provided the CVs of the social work staff team which demonstrated their qualifications and diverse experiences, including their social work experience, registration information and research activities. The head of social work, the dean of the School for Business and Society and the strategic management team is responsible for ensuring there is sufficient staff to deliver the social work programmes, including covering absences and they are supported by the university's Human Resources Department. The dean of the school outlined that the course team were seen as research leaders and pioneers in terms of the social work provision. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

62. Following a review of documentary evidence, the inspection team concluded there is a formal process in place to check performance, progression and outcomes throughout the courses. The inspection team heard that preventative work is undertaken to avoid problems with progression. The IPP provides oversight over progression issues in relation to the practice learning placements and makes recommendations when additional student support is required. Progression and achievement is monitored through the Board of Examiners and

a proactive approach is adopted within modules including formative work to aid students in achieving the module learning outcomes. Academic support is available from supervisors, who work with students to address learning needs.

63. The inspectors heard that data on equality, diversity and protected characteristics is collected from students during the admissions process and this is used by the course team to help monitor student progression through the course in addition to reviewing gender inequalities. The inspection team heard how students who are care leavers and those estranged from their families are supported by a bespoke team, and consideration is given to students with caring responsibilities in terms of potential impacts on their studies and their attendance. Data is reviewed annually and due to low cohort numbers, the team are careful about looking at trends, to avoid the possibility of identifying individuals. The university outlined that a new associate dean responsible for equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) was appointed last year and they are looking at staff and student issues. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 3.10

64. The inspection team concluded that there is a structured approach to staff development. New academic staff are required to complete the PgC in Academic Practice during their probationary period. As outlined in standard 3.8, the review of CVs demonstrated the range of skills and experiences of staff, including their involvement in research activities. Research active staff are provided with time and research leave to undertake research in relation to professional practice. The review of the staff workload allocation document showed that time is allocated for scholarships to enable staff to maintain their knowledge, and there is an annual allowance provided for attendance at external conferences and training courses.

65. An annual performance development review is in place for academics to monitor and set goals in relation to the professional practice requirements. The inspection team heard that regular team meetings are in place, and these provide a space for sharing innovations and best practice, and the course team are piloting an approach to bring academics and practitioners together in practice settings to think about issues, and co-develop solutions. The inspection team heard that the YURSWTP hold conferences, monthly workshops and continuing professional development (CPD) activities for PEs. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

66. The inspection team reviewed all course module learning outcomes which are mapped to the PCF and the professional standards and heard that the programmes have been designed in accordance with the university's Good Practice in Programme Design Policy,

which ensures that the programmes are designed around a set of coherent principles and values.

67. The course team outlined that student feedback is fed into the course and YURSWTP partnerships meetings, and meetings with PEs take place to review the programmes. The SUPA Group outlined the ways in which they are involved in the content, structure and delivery of the programmes. In the meeting with employer partners and PEs, they felt that students were ready for practice at the end of the course and students spoke of the key elements within the course which prepared them for professional practice. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.2

68. As a strategic partner, the YURSWTP is actively involved in all aspects of the course development, delivery and evaluation, including the admissions processes. During the inspection employer partners spoke of their experiences of being involved in the various aspects of the course and the inspection team heard that regular meetings are held to discuss placements, teaching involvement, curriculum content and research.

69. The SUPA Group meet regularly and following a review of the minutes of the group's meetings, this demonstrated their involvement in the recruitment, teaching and assessment activities. During the meeting with members of the group, they outlined the ways in which they are involved, and gave examples of their contribution to the course including interviewing and scoring candidates, contributing to teaching on modules, and the assessment of students. Members of the group are also involved in the IPP which reviews and quality assures placement providers, placement reports and PEs. All parties stated that they felt listened to and valued and positively spoke about their strong and productive relationships with the course team. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.3

70. Evidence presented to the inspection team showed the comprehensive approach to the course design in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles, and human rights and legislative frameworks. As outlined in standard 4.1, the courses follow the university's good Practice Programme Design policy requirements which is underpinned by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusive Learning Strategy 2017-2022. This ensures that issues around inclusivity and support are addressed and there is a strong emphasis on promoting health and wellbeing, including support for disabled students, and students with mental health conditions. Student support plans identify where students can request extensions as reasonable adjustments, and plans identify physical and learning environment accessibility requirements. There are leave of absence processes in place and flexibility regarding teaching and learning as outlined in the university's Maternity and Parental Leave Policy.

71. The inspection team reviewed the student support services website information and heard that staff receive mandatory training in areas such as equality and diversity, unconscious bias and digital accessibility. Access requirements for students on placement are considered by the placement team and during the placement application stage. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.4

72. The inspectors heard that the annual performance development review process includes discussion of teaching and module development, and each module is reviewed annually by the module leader to ensure that it is current and responsive to research developments, legislation, government policy and best practice. Outside of these reviews, the team holds regular meetings to discuss the running of the courses and consider new ideas and developments. Students are encouraged to feedback on each module and feedback goes to the module leader for review, and there are opportunities for students and student representatives to give informal feedback throughout the courses including the regular staff student forums.

73. As outlined in standard 3.8 the inspection team reviewed the CVs of the academic staff, 75% of staff are registered social workers and are therefore required to maintain their currency and fulfil their CPD requirements.

74. As outlined in standard 3.5, an example was provided where feedback was given to the course team about developing student understanding of the Care Act by introducing further learning about this. This was acted upon by the course team. During the meeting with students, they positively commented about how the course team deliver relevant and current seminars. From the inspection team's review of the virtual learning environment there are a number of resources available which students can access, and these include videos on current practice issues. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.5

75. The inspection team heard how the integration of theory, research and practice is core to all modules on the MA, and in specific modules in years 3 and 4 of the MSocW (Hons). The placement modules give students the opportunity to apply and reflect on the research and theory used in placement practice, and students participate in five Professional Development Groups (PDGs). The inspectors heard how the PDGs are reflective practice groups which run alongside placements to help students to link theory and research to practice. The midway and final placement reports require students to apply theory to their practice, and the dissertation enables students to undertake an in-depth piece of research in a practice area of their choice. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.6

76. Placement learning documentation reviewed by the inspection team showed the breadth of opportunities for students to learn in multidisciplinary settings, and the placement audit process assesses the capacity of the placement provider to offer multidisciplinary learning opportunities. The inspectors heard that university staff work together to create interdisciplinary learning opportunities, including working alongside colleagues from Health Sciences to deliver interprofessional education sessions with midwifery students on sessions such as the Death Café. Schwartz Round interdisciplinary reflection practice sessions run four times per year, and in the meeting with students they corroborated the range of multidisciplinary opportunities available to them. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.7

77. As outlined in previous standards, the courses are designed based upon the principles identified in the Good Practice Programme Design policy, this identifies how modules are structured in terms of credits and the appropriate amount of contact time to support student learning. The module descriptors and course timetables reviewed by the inspectors outlined the amount of contact time students receive. The Guide to Assessment also reviewed by the inspection team outlined that students are assessed via a range of formative and summative assessments, and students meet with their academic supervisor once per term to discuss feedback and progression. Progression points at the end of each year ensure students met the academic and practice requirements. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.8

78. All programmes at the university are assessed in line with the university's assessment strategy outlined in the Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback 2022-23 documentation which was reviewed by the inspection team. The Board of Examiners oversee the assessments, and the assessments are mapped to the PCF. The courses are designed to assess students in a range of assessment types including essays, reports, and practical role play, and assessments are staggered throughout the programmes. The inspection team heard that SUPA Group members are involved in the programme design and in delivering teaching, as well as carrying out assessments and this was evidenced in the Skills for Social Work Practice module.

79. The inspectors reviewed the clear marking guidance, and information on resits and exit routes. Robust systems are in place to identify where students are having difficulties and support systems are in place. In the meeting with employer partners, they were confident that students who complete the programmes have the required knowledge and skills

necessary to meet the professional standards, and in the meeting with students they understood the required expectations.

80. During the inspection, the inspection team identified that there were some issues in relation to formative assessments regarding how they support student learning. The course team indicated that sequencing issues would be resolved in part with the move to semesterisation (the balancing out of teaching and assessments across the academic year). The inspection team agreed that this standard was met and would like to attach a recommendation to this standard to strengthen formative assessments, and to monitor the impact of semesterisation and the sequencing of assessments. Further details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations section](#) of this report.

Standard 4.9

81. The inspection team concluded that, following a review of documentary evidence which was further corroborated during the inspection meetings, course assessments are mapped to the different academic levels and to the PCF and they are appropriately staged to avoid assessment overloads. The inspectors heard how ongoing issues are addressed through further monitoring and through the regular review processes. The inspectors were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 4.10

82. As outlined in standard 4.8 the inspection team reviewed the Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback 2022-23 together with Guide for Assessment website information which provides links to the Guide to Assessment, Exceptional Circumstances Policy, and the Student Guide to Progression and Awards. Information about assessment processes and expectations are provided to students, and the course team outlined that the assessment feedback target is 25 days. The inspectors heard that some formative assessments take place within modules to enable students to receive timely feedback. Students academic performance is overseen by academic supervisors, and supervisors meet with students each term to discuss their progress and support.

83. On practice placements, students receive weekly supervision from their PE, and they participate in five Professional Development Groups (PDGs) which are linked to five skills days. The Placement Learning Agreement reviewed by the inspection team sets out the student specific learning goals and provides guidance around supervision, assessment and evaluation.

84. Students outlined that on occasion, some assignments come together and felt there was little time to utilise the feedback, however, they agreed that the feedback was clear and helpful. As outlined in standard 4.11 below, students spoke of the low quality of feedback they receive from graduate teaching assistants and they have raised these concerns with the course team. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 4.11

85. As outlined in previous standards, the inspection team received the CVs of the staff team, together with the CVs of the External Examiners who are qualified social workers registered with Social Work England. The procedures relating to the appointment and support of the external examiners are outlined in the Guide to Assessments which was reviewed by the inspection team, together with the university's policy on the use of external expertise.

86. During the meeting with students, they spoke of issues specifically in relation to the quality of feedback they receive from the graduate teaching assistants. The inspectors were satisfied that this standard was met and in addition would like to attach a recommendation to this standard to strengthen the way in which graduate teaching assistants provide meaningful feedback to students. Further details of the recommendation can be found in the [recommendations section](#) of this report.

Standard 4.12

87. Exam boards formally monitor progression through the stages of each course, as outlined in the Guide to Assessment, Standards, Marking and Feedback 2022-23 which was reviewed by the inspection team. Prior to starting their first practice placement students need to successfully complete the Social Work Practice Skills module, and this module includes the participation of members of the SUPA Group. Employer partners are invited to take part in marking and in providing feedback to students.

88. During practice placements, PEs assess students against the PCF and they undertake observations of direct practice. Formal recording of progression is recorded on the midway and final reports, and the IPP review and quality assure placement providers, placement reports and PEs. The inspectors concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

89. The university provided documentary evidence which showed that programmes are structured and designed to develop an evidence-informed approach to practice. Research knowledge and skills are incorporated into the programmes to develop students' understanding in relation to research and evaluation. In addition to the formal learning opportunities, students have access to a range of research seminars and workshops hosted by the YURSWTP and the School for Business and Society. The inspection team heard how the Curiosity Partnership within the School has developed wide links with other local authorities to enhance research capability and knowledge exchange.

90. The CVs of the course team which were reviewed by the inspectors showed the breadth of research expertise, and the inspection team heard how the team draw upon their research within their teaching, and staff have allocated research time. Students are

supported to apply research knowledge and skills in their practice learning placements by PEs, and academic supervisors provide support on student academic development. Students have access to a range of support services including academic writing skills workshops. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

91. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team reviewed the university's student health and wellbeing webpages which provided information about the services and support available to students. The inspection team reviewed the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021-2025 which details a clear implementation policy. In the meeting with student support services, they outlined that there is an Open Door trained counsellor who is based within the school and a second counsellor has recently been appointed. They offer students confidential counselling services. There is a student wellbeing officer who works as an intermediary with the counsellors. Students can receive up to six appointments and have access to group appointments and preventative workshops.

92. The inspectors reviewed the careers advice and support information and heard that whilst most students at the university have limited access to occupational health services, social work students have special access to occupational health assessments and support. The student hub is the first point of contact, and they signpost students to the relevant support services.

93. In the meeting with students they spoke positively about student support and academic support services and provided examples of how they had accessed the central services, including receiving support from the library and support with academic writing. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.2

94. The inspection team heard about the range of support available to students to support them in their academic development. Academic supervisors offer support and advice including overseeing academic performance and addressing pastoral needs. In practice placement, students are allocated a PE. During the inspection meetings, the inspectors heard how student needs are considered and referred.

95. Following a review of evidence by the inspectors, there are a range of services offered to students including the Writing Centre, Maths Skills Centre, Academic Skills Community and access to online Skills Guides. The inspection team also reviewed comprehensive information about additional support including the support available for mature students, students with disabilities, and those with caring responsibilities, together with the support available for students who are experiencing financial difficulties. The inspection team heard

about the recent introduction of a dedicated family room within the library which enables parents to bring in their young children. The inspection team concluded that this standard was met.

Standard 5.3

96. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team heard that students' conduct, character and health is assessed through different means. Academic supervisors meet with students regularly and if there are concerns, they provide help and support or signpost students to the university's support services. Whilst on practice placements, university liaisons maintain contact with students to discuss their progress and to assess their conduct, and mid way meetings are put in place. The inspection team reviewed the FtP Policy and the FtP process. Appeals processes are in place and students can access further advice and support through the university's Students Union. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.4

97. Students are encouraged to declare additional needs and reasonable adjustments during the admissions process, and prior to starting practice placements. PEs provide support on practice placements, and there is a flexible approach and processes in place to make adjustments if required.

98. As outlined in standards 5.1 and 5.2, there is a wide range of services available to students to enable them to progress through the course to meet the professional standards. This includes disability support services and occupational health services. The learning disability practitioner supports students who have a range of learning difficulties and academic support plans are put in place which include recommendations for access to library services and assessments. Academic support plans are approved by the student and shared with the student's academic supervisor and the exams office. This is a working document that is reviewed and rolled over to each academic year. The inspection team heard about the disabled student allowance process and the interim support which is available to enable students to access equipment and assisted software technology. In the meeting with students, they spoke of the support they received such as extensions to assessments, and access to additional equipment.

99. The inspection team were able to understand the referral processes and how the needs of students were monitored. In the meeting with students they gave examples of how they had been supported, including the support they received for complex needs. During the inspection, the inspection team were given a demonstration of the virtual learning environment, and heard how accessibility adjustments are met, including improvements to search functionality and the breaking up of content to make it easier for students to access information. Audio recordings of lectures and support documents for skills days are

available, together with useful links to videos which cover a variety of topics such as safeguarding. The inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.5

100. The inspection team reviewed the course handbooks and the placement learning handbooks. There is clear information within these documents in relation to the curriculum including the modules, course expectations, practice learning, assessment, progression requirements, and the transition to registered social worker information including the requirements for CPD as set out in the professional standards. The inspectors heard about the accessible careers advice and support and the team run regular career day events. During the inspection, students stated that they were aware of the registration process and the requirements for CPD. The inspectors agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 5.6

101. The course programme sites reviewed by the inspection team set out the clear expectations regarding attendance. There is an expectation that social work students attend all scheduled teaching sessions, and there is a minimum requirement of 80% attendance of classes. The undergraduate and postgraduate handbooks reviewed by the inspectors includes a specific section on attendance, and within that is a link to the university attendance regulations. Systems are in place for authorised absences and within the practice learning handbook it is clear that attendance is required for the 200 placement days.

102. Students are expected to scan in for lectures and seminars and this is monitored by the student engagement team. Staff are notified if student attendance drops below 50%, and academic supervisors contact students to carry out welfare checks and offer support if required.

103. Students were aware of what was required regarding mandatory attendance, and they were aware of emails that are sent out if their attendance drops. Some students spoke of issues with changes to timetabling and room changes, this particularly affected mature students who have dependents and those students who have part-time jobs. The course team outlined that there was a period of difficulty with room bookings, and improvements have been made to try and keep changes to a minimum. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

Standard 5.7

104. Within evidence reviewed by the inspection team, which included the Guide to Assessments 2022-23, the guide to assessment webpages, and the course marking matrixes, the inspection team concluded that there is a clear process in place for giving feedback. Some modules include formative assessments within the modules to assist students in

meeting the learning outcomes. All modules include summative assessments and feedback is provided. Academic supervisors discuss academic progress with students at least once per term, and this is set out in the undergraduate and postgraduate handbooks, reviewed by the inspection team. Feedback on written work is provided within 25 days and this was corroborated in the meeting with students.

105. During the inspection, students spoke about issues with some assignments being bunched together, and following conversations with the course team the inspectors were satisfied that these would be smoothed out and addressed with semesterisation. Students spoke of not always recognising formative feedback, and this was discussed with the course team during the inspection. The inspection team were assured that this standard was met.

Standard 5.8

106. Prior to the inspection, the inspectors reviewed the university policy on complaints and appeals which sets out the process for students to make academic appeals. Students who raise complaints or appeals are supported by the university's Students Union. In the meeting with students, one student representative spoke of supporting students through the process, and students were aware of where to find the information. The inspection team were satisfied that this standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

107. As the qualifying courses are MA Social Work, MSocW (Hons) Social Work, PG Dip Social Work (exit route) and BA (Hons) Social Work Practice (exit route), the inspection team agreed that this standard was met.

Proposed outcome

108. The inspection team recommend that the course be approved.

Recommendations

109. 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	1.5	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider sending out information to applicants regarding how to use Zoom.	Paragraph 34
2	4.8	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider how formative assessments are used to support student learning without increasing student workloads, and to monitor the impact of semesterisation and the sequencing of assessments.	Paragraph 80
3.	4.11	The inspectors are recommending that the university consider making improvements to the way in which graduate teaching assistants provide meaningful, high quality feedback to students about their learning.	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	☒	☐	☐

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