Inspection Report

Course provider: University of Chester

Course approval: MA Social Work & PG Dip Social Work (masters exit route)

Inspection dates: 25– 27 March 2025

Report date:	21 May 2025
Inspector recommendation:	Approved with conditions
Regulator decision:	Approved with conditions
Date of Regulator decision:	04 July 2025
Date conditions met and approved:	

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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 2018[1], and the Social Work England (Education and Training) Rules 2019.

4. You can find further guidance on our course change, new course 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 appearance of bias in the approval process.

8. The inspectors complete an assessment of the evidence provided and advise the

[1] https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2018/9780111170090/contents

officer if they have any queries that may be able to be addressed in advance of the inspection.

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- or 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, without conditions or that it does not meet the criteria for 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 decision about the approval of the course.

13. The 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 it we decide the conditions are not met.

Summary of Inspection

15. Course details: University of Chester wish to run a three to six year part time MA Social Work course.

Inspection ID	CPP491
Course provider	University of Chester
Validating body (if different)	
Course inspected	MA Social Work PG Dip Social Work (masters exit route)
Mode of Study	Part time
Maximum student cohort	5
Proposed first intake	January 2026
Date of inspection	25-27 March 2025
Inspection team	Kate Springett (Education Quality Assurance Officer) Monica Murphy (Lay Inspector) Debbie Brown (Registrant Inspector)

Language

16. In this document we describe the University of Chester as 'the education provider' or 'the university' and we describe the MA Social Work as 'the course'.

Inspection

17. An onsite inspection took place from 25-27 March 2025 across the Warrington campus where the education provider 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 five current students from the full time MA Social Work course (three from year one, and two from year two). Two of the students were also student representatives for their year of study. Discussions included admissions, placements, skills days, feedback, and involvement of stakeholders on the course.

Meetings with university staff

21. Over the course of the inspection, the inspection team met with the course team. In addition to teaching, some members of the team also had roles within the course which included pastoral support and personal academic tutors. Discussions included placements and skills days, stakeholder involvement, interprofessional learning, equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and professional development. The inspection team also met with the senior management team, admissions staff, the international student office, pastoral and well-being support staff, the chaplain, academic skills staff, and library staff.

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. The inspection team met with three people from Focus On Involvement, which is a regionally based group of approximately 130 experts-by-experience who participate in health and social care university based learning. Discussions included their involvement in the admissions process, training and

support, and involvement on the course more generally.

Meetings with external stakeholders

23. The inspection team met with representatives from placement partners including employers from local authorities, and private, independent and voluntary organisations. Discussions included different aspects of placements, for example; placement breakdown, whistleblowing, and wellbeing of students.

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. Documentary and narrative evidence provided prior to inspection included the application process, shortlisting/admissions criteria, and interview/assessment documentation. The documentation demonstrated that the process was thorough and robust.

26. Entry to the course via a holistic/multidimensional assessment process was outlined as there was a written application, presentation, interview and group assessment. Completion of the above mentioned tasks provided the course provider with confidence applicants had the potential to meet academic standards, and develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards.

27. Additionally, the application process enabled the course provider to consider whether an applicant had a good command of English and had the ability to use information and communication technology (ICT). This was demonstrated as the applicant applied online, and the interview was conducted over Microsoft Teams.

28. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.2

29. Documentary evidence provided in support of this standard included the course providers admissions requirements/criteria, and the interview assessment and score sheet.

30. When the inspection team met with the course team, they heard that there was no transfer of credits from non-social work courses, however consideration of transfer of credits from other social work course was considered, but on an individual basis.

31. The inspection team also heard that the course provider considered applicants lived experience, as to whether to offer a place on the course. Additionally, the inspection team had sight of interview questions which form part of the application, and there was clear focus on prior relevant experience.

32. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 1.3

33. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated that people with lived experience of social work (PWLE) were involved in the group activity, which was part of determining which applicants were offered a place on the course.

34. When the inspection team met with PWLE, they confirmed the same, and explained they were not only involved in the delivery of the group activity, but the design too.

35. PWLE reported they felt included, that their voices were heard and their opinions valued by the course provider.

36. In relation to employer partners and placement providers' involvement in the admissions process, minimal documentary evidence was provided to support this. When explored during the inspection, the course team advised the inspection team that they had sought practitioner involvement, but their engagement was unreliable.

37. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 1.3 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the proposed outcome section.

Standard 1.4

38. From a documentary point of view, there was clear information provided to applicants about there being a requirement for an enhanced disclosure and barring

service (DBS) check. In addition to this, there was a self declaration form for students to complete in relation to suitability.

39. When the inspection team met the course team, they heard about the process in place for when something was flagged on the DBS or disclosed. The process included panel consideration as to whether it would be appropriate to offer an applicant a place on the course. The panel included both university staff, and employer partners.

40. When the inspection team met with students from other social work provision, they confirmed that they underwent the DBS check and completed relevant declarations. Students, including international students felt that the course providers expectations on suitability were clear, and they had to complete declarations relevant to conduct, character and health.

41. The inspection team were satisfied that the standard was met.

Standard 1.5

42. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated that EDI policies were in place and there was mandatory EDI training for academic staff.

43. The inspection team were keen to hear about any training PWLE were involved in and were informed that PWLE undertake EDI and bias training via their employer, however this was monitored by the course provider.

44. Discussions during the inspection included the use of EDI data. The inspection team were assured that the course provider collected data in relation to EDI charactistics, which fed into their recruitment strategies.

45. The course provider explained they were aware of areas where further work needed to be done, and examples of this were provided, such as the recruitment of male students.

46. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 1.6

47. Prior to inspection, there was a lack of documentary evidence submitted for the inspection team to review. However, during the inspection, the inspection team heard about open days and online open days for both home and international students from the course team.

48. The inspection team felt assured that applicants were given adequate information which would enable them to make an informed choice of whether to accept a place on the course.

49. This was then triangulated with students on the full time course, who confirmed they were fully aware of the relevant course information, and any associated costs.

50. Evidence provided prior to inspection was the full time MA Social Work web page, however as the inspection team had not seen a draft website for the part time course, they could not be assured the standard was met.

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

Standard two: Learning environment

Standard 2.1

52. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection demonstrated that students must complete 170 days in a practice setting, in addition to 30 skills days. In relation to the placement days, placement handbooks made it explicit there was a requirement for PWLE to give consent to participation in and recording direct observation.

53. The course team informed the inspection team of the process and monitoring which ensured students received different practice placement allocations and experiences sufficient to undertake statutory social work tasks, determine risk and make interventions.

54. Students reported having knowledge of what skills days were, and knew they had to complete 170 placement days, and 30 skills days. In addition to this, students on the full time course confirmed they had contrasting placements. The inspection team felt assured this would also apply to the part time course.

55. The course team confirmed there were contingencies in place for if a skills day or placement day was missed.

56. The inspection team felt assured that the standard was met.

Standard 2.2

57. Narrative and documentary evidence provided demonstrated that the Practice Learning Agreement (PLA) meeting included a section on placement learning opportunities which asked placement providers to outline those available to students, ensuring that learning opportunities offered to students were to a sufficient standard.

During the placement, there was a mid-point review meeting, where it could be identified if the placement was insufficient in any way.

58. In addition to this, the inspectors understood that the second placement was always statutory, and there was a clear progression between the two placements.

59. The inspection team heard during the inspection that the course provider was committed to the practice component, and they had a multiplicity of placements. Students on the full time route supported the same, and were positive about their placements, and placement providers confirmed that students were ready for placement.

60. The inspection team felt that documentary evidence and discussion with the course team, stakeholder employers and students confirmed there were sufficient learning opportunities in practice to enable students to gain a variety of knowledge and practice skills necessary to develop and meet professional standards, and therefore, the standard was met.

Standard 2.3

61. Prior to inspection, documentary evidence was submitted which demonstrated that there were processes in place to ensure that students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload whilst on placement. Evidence included the placement learning agreement and the student mid-point placement review.

62. During the inspection week, the inspection team met with the course team, placement providers and practice educators (PEs) and heard about student inductions and support mechanisms available whilst on placement. They also heard about how realistic workloads were managed by placement providers.

63. The inspection team felt assured placements were managed and appropriate for students.

64. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

65. Following a review of the evidence, it was understood that on placements, there was a lecturer in practice who was not a social worker, but there would be an independent mediator should the need arise.

66. The inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standard 2.3. We recommend that the course provider consider broadening the requirements of the lecturer in practice learning to include social work qualified staff, in the interests of equity and professional knowledge to mediate.

Standard 2.4

67. Documentary evidence provided demonstrated that students' responsibilities were considered on an individual basis to ensure they were appropriate, and this was outlined in the placement learning agreement.

68. PEs advised that they had the ability to engage students further, if appropriate, and their placements could be negotiated depending on the students' skills and experience.

69. First placements were mostly in the private, voluntary and independent sector which stakeholders agreed provided an enriched student experience with opportunity to practice fundamental skills.

70. When the inspection team met with students on the full time course, they advised that their responsibilities were appropriate, they felt a sense of progression from placement to placement, and final year students felt they would be ready to practice at the end of placement.

71. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 2.5

72. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated that there was assessed preparation for direct practice, as part of the course. This module was composed of a role play and a workbook, weighted 50% each. It was also made clear that students could not go out on placement prior to passing the module.

73. The inspection team understood, based on documentary evidence, that PWLE were involved in the module, and this was confirmed/triangulated by PWLE as part of the inspection.

74. The inspection team were satisfied that students understood professional expectations and safe service delivery including when and how to seek help, and agreed the standard was met.

Standard 2.6

75. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection included the placement handbook. This identified the role, responsibilities and conduct of work based supervisors and PEs.

76. Discussion with the Chair of Cheshire and Merseyside Social Work Teaching Partnership (CMSWTP) indicated there was a systematic process for collating and recording professional register checks by CMSWTP which included confirming the currency of PEs and continued professional education.

77. In addition, each local authority also maintained a PE register. The placement team confirmed PE currency and registration was always checked before a student was allocated to a PE, and therefore the inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 2.7

78. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection included policies relating to safeguarding and whistleblowing.

79. During the inspection, PEs reported that whilst there was some hesitance among students on the full time course to report concerns, this was negated as there were opportunities for students to provide feedback once the placement was complete. Additionally, support and encouragement was given for students to raise any issue or concern whilst on placement.

80. Students told the inspection team that they were aware of the relevant policies and knew who to talk to if they had to raise a concern.

81. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard three: Course governance, management and quality

Standard 3.1

82. Evidence and narrative provided prior to inspection informed the inspection team that there was a clear structure of management at programme, school and faculty levels, and the inspection team felt they understood the role and expectation of the programme lead.

83. When meeting with the Senior Management Team (SMT) the inspection team were informed how the programme fits into the plans of the university and were assured the SMT had oversight of the proposed part time course.

84. The inspection team felt the SMT were committed to supporting the course development and there was evidence of strong collaboration with the teaching partnership.

85. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 3.2

86. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated there were placement agreements with the teaching partnership, and the partnership had responsibility for developing potential placements.

87. During the inspection, the inspection team heard how there was active development of placements, and the placement learning agreement contributed to ensuring the placement met relevant standards.

88. The inspection team felt assured there was a strong collaborative relationship between the course team, placement team and the teaching partnership and heard there were processes in place to deal with placement breakdown.

89. Students on the full time course reported that they had good relationships with their personal academic tutors (PATs), and this was confirmed by placement providers.

90. The inspection team were assured that there were processes, if necessary, to reallocate in the event of irrevocable breakdown, and additionally, if a placement broke down, the university responded quickly to ensure continuity of placement.

91. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 3.3

92. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated there were policies and procedures in place in relation to student health, wellbeing and risk whilst on placement.

93. During the inspection, both the course team and PEs gave examples of relevant and appropriate measures deployed to support students in placement areas.

94. The inspection team heard that when students on the full time course disclosed any disability, placement providers worked in collaboration with the university to provide support and reasonable adjustments.

95. When the inspection team met with students on the full time course, they confirmed that support for disabilities and additional needs was timely and appropriate.

96. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 3.4

97. Documentary evidence provided demonstrated there was a robust and secure Teaching Partnership in place, and there was evidence that employers were invited to programme committees, and were involved in the course including monitoring admissions, teaching, and course completions.

98. The inspection team were able to review meeting minutes and were assured the standard was met.

99. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team are making a recommendation in relation to standard 3.4. We recommend that the course provider consider reviewing their processes so as to include representation from all stakeholders, with a focus on stakeholder management and monitoring of the course.

Standard 3.5

100. Documentary and narrative evidence provided prior to the inspection confirmed that processes were developed to audit, monitor and evaluate all aspects of the course which include stakeholder involvement.

101. This was triangulated during the inspection. The teaching partnership were able to confirm the same, and additionally, PWLE reported being able to give feedback to students.

102. Students informed the inspection team that they had a voice and course representatives on the full time course were aware of the process of gathering feedback from peers and how this was fed into more formal meetings with the school.

103. Non-student representatives also reported feeling comfortable to offer feedback on module evaluations, as well as on a more informal basis, such as talking to their tutor.

104. The course team confirmed that a number of changes were made to assessment scheduling as a result of student feedback.

105. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 3.6

106. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated there was a Recruitment, Induction and Retention Plan.

107. The inspection team understood that the part time course would be suitable for 5 students and felt assured that there were sufficient placement opportunities available.

108. They heard that the number of part time students was considered in conjunction with student numbers on the full time MA course, where numbers are limited to 30.

109. The inspection team heard that there was flexibility with numbers, but the total part time and full time students would not exceed 35 in any year of the course.

110. The inspection team felt assured that there was strong collaboration between the university and the teaching partnership and there was confidence that there was adequate placements and resources for the course.

111. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 3.7

112. Prior to inspection, the inspection team reviewed the course leads' CV and confirmed they were a registered social worker and had the appropriate qualifications.

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

Standard 3.8

114. Prior to the inspection, documentary evidence was provided which gave an overview of the course team, and demonstrated they had a range of professional social work interests.

115. The inspection team noted that the majority of the team were registered with Social Work England, and there was a wide variety of practice experience within the team.

116. The inspection team were satisfied there was sufficient staff to resource the course and agreed that this standard was met.

Standard 3.9

117. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated there were robust mechanisms in place to evaluate information concerning student performance, progression and outcomes.

118. The inspection team had sight of demographic data and noted there were no attainment gaps. When the inspection team met with the course team they heard about how they considered data, including on EDI.

119. The inspection team heard how there were support mechanisms in place for students, including additional support for international students and an independent PE was in place to support black and ethnic minority students.

120. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 3.10

121. During the inspection week, the inspection team heard many examples of how educators were supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice.

122. Staff members on the course team reported completing doctorates and PGCE's, being involved in practice, completion of fellowships and being research active.

123. The inspection team also felt that there was a commitment by the senior leadership team to support educators to maintain knowledge, understanding and currency.

124. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard four: Curriculum assessment

Standard 4.1

125. Documentary evidence provided prior to the inspection includes the programme specification and handbook which clearly identified that professional standards were mapped across the modules and integrated throughout the programme.

126. In addition to this, the inspection team felt assured during the inspection that students on the full time course understood links between theory and practice, plus the importance of the professional standards.

127. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 4.2

128. Documentary and aural evidence provided demonstrated that there was a robust and collaborative teaching partnership in place, and there was evidence employers were significantly involved in how the part time course was developed and delivered.

129. Documentary and narrative evidence indicated modifications to the assessment on the full time course, and that practitioners participated in the revised marking process for student placement portfolios.

130. During the inspection, PWLE also confirmed that they had input into the curriculum and assessment, and felt their feedback was valued by the course team.

131. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 4.3

132. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection included the student charter and equality policy which demonstrated the course was designed to consider the principles of EDI, human rights and legal frameworks.

133. During the inspection, the inspection team met with support services who provided aural evidence of extensive support services which take EDI principles into consideration.

134. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.4

135. Documentary evidence was provided that demonstrated module and assessment amendments for the full time course. During the inspection, the course team advised that the research module and papers used would remain current and considered on an annual basis.

136. The inspection team felt assured this would apply to the part time course, and agreed the standard was met.

Standard 4.5

137. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated that theory was integrated into the programme learning outcomes and could also be seen within module descriptors.

138. This was not only confirmed and triangulated with students during the inspection, but PEs informed the inspection team that they felt students on the full time course were prepared in terms of their knowledge base when they go on placement.

139. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 4.6

140. During the inspection, the senior management team advised the inspection team that strategic development of interprofessional education was not yet formalised. Despite this, the course team were able to provide examples of interprofessional learning as part of the course. This included students working with and learning from other disciplines whilst on placement, a taught session at the university from someone working with homeless people, and stakeholders describing to students how they work with others.

141. The course team advised the inspection team they had plans to develop a safeguarding based joint learning session with students of other health and allied professions.

142. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

143. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standard 4.6. We recommend that the course provider consider addressing the pace of developing interprofessional education from a workable strategic perspective and implement from an operational perspective.

Standard 4.7

144. Evidence submitted prior to inspection demonstrated that the hours spent in structured academic learning under the direction of an educator was appropriate.

145. The inspection team felt that not only were the hours appropriate, but these were monitored sufficiently, with attendance being recorded.

146. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.8

147. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection included the assessment schedule for the course. As the course was part time, the modules were elongated to enable delivery. The inspection team felt it was clear the modules were mapped to the professional standards, and there were clear progression points.

148. There were options for assessment which the inspection team felt enabled students to showcase their abilities based on their learning styles, however there was a lack of equivalence in the types of assessments as the options were the choice of a 4000-word essay/portfolio or a 15-minute recorded presentation.

149. Despite this, the inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

150. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is making a recommendation in relation to standard 4.8. We recommend that the course provider reconsider parity of esteem in assessment and equivalence in assessment weighting where students have more than one option to select for module assessment**.**

Standard 4.9

151. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated how the assessment strategy was sequenced and where progression points were situated.

152. The inspection team felt there were no pinch points, and therefore students would not likely feel overwhelmed or overloaded.

153. Information was made available to students through the virtual learning environment and signposted at each academic year commencement.

154. Students on the full time course confirmed they knew and understood all course requirements, and the inspection team felt assured this would be reflected in the part time course.

155. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.10

156. The programme handbook indicated that feedback was offered on students' draft work, as well as formative or summative assessment.

157. During the inspection, students on the full time course confirmed they got feedback, which was timely, developmental, and constructive.

158. In addition to this, PWLE and PEs provided assurance that students received feedback in both academic and practice environments.

159. The inspection team felt assured the same would apply to the part time course and agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 4.11

160. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team reviewed the course team CVs that demonstrated they had the appropriate expertise to undertake student assessments.

161. Evidence provided demonstrated there was an EE for the full time MA course, however this person was ineligible for the part time course as they were not registered with Social Work England. As a result, the inspectors were not assured that this element of the standard was met.

162. Following a review of the evidence, the inspection team is recommending that a condition is set against standard 4.11 in relation to the approval of this course. Consideration was given as to whether the finding identified would mean that the course would not be suitable for approval. However, it is deemed that a condition is appropriate to ensure that the course would be able to meet the relevant standard, and we are confident that once this standard is met, a further inspection of the course would not be required. Full details of the condition, its monitoring and approval can be found in the proposed outcome section.

Standard 4.12

163. Documentary and narrative evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated that there were various groups who managed students' progression, including the assessment board, PEs, and PWLE.

164. The inspection team were assured by the course team that systems to manage students' progression were effective and the assessment strategy was aligned with the university assessment boards.

165. PWLE reported that they contributed to student assessment through commenting on presentations and simulated activities. Additionally, PEs confirmed the minimum number of direct student supervisions required, and were proactive in how they ensured adequate supervision of students.

166. The inspection team felt assured that this standard was met.

Standard 4.13

167. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection included staff CVs which demonstrated research activity took place. Additionally, the inspection team reviewed module descriptors which commonly referred to research and evidence.

168. During the inspection, the course team confirmed their research activity, and the inspection team triangulated with the course team that the research modules enabled students to develop an evidence informed approach to their studies.

169. Library services explained there were many relevant resources available to students including IT literacy, which helps students develop skills to enable research.

170. The inspection team heard students knew the importance of research, and PEs worked with students to encourage reflecting on research when working in practice.

171. The inspection team felt assured that this standard was met.

Standard five: Supporting students

Standard 5.1

172. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated there were the following services available at the university; careers, occupational health, and wellbeing which included counselling.

173. During the inspection, the inspection team met with support services who provided more detail on the support services listed above.

174. The inspection team felt that the services were extensive and understood services were available to all students in addition to this. Examples of using the services were provided and students reported having knowledge of the services available.

175. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.2

176. Documentary evidence provided demonstrated that there was a personal academic tutor (PAT) appointed for each student for the duration of the course who has responsibilities for academic, pastoral and personal development.

177. During the inspection week, support was explored further and the inspection team heard from various stakeholders, including students that there were both formal and informal support and contact with students, which included email support and face to face support.

178. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.3

179. Documentary evidence provided confirmed there was a process for checking students' ongoing suitability regarding health, conduct and character, and this was completed by students completing an annual declaration.

180. Evidence provided demonstrated there was also a robust process which was followed in instances where declarations were made.

181. The inspection team understood that should anything change following signing the declaration, the expectation was students make the course team aware of the same.

182. Students were able to confirm they were aware of the process, and the inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.4

183. Documentary evidence provided demonstrated there was a Disability & Inclusion Team and reasonable adjustments extended to students on placement.

184. The inspection team agreed there was a clear process for identifying support needs during placement, and they felt there was a comprehensive and seamless service to make reasonable adjustments for those who made declarations.

185. During the inspection, the inspection team heard that additional support or needs were often not picked up or disclosed prior to starting the MA, however there were still mechanisms in place to support these students, and additionally, students who did not meet the threshold for assistance under Disabled Students' Allowance could still access some assistance.

186. The inspection team understood that any support required, whether in or outside of placement was recorded in a reasonable adjustment plan, and examples of reasonable adjustments were provided.

187. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 5.5

188. Prior to inspection, the inspectors had sight of documentary evidence which demonstrated information was given to students on; the curriculum, placements, continuing professional development (CPD), assessments, Social Work England registration, and the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE).

189. Current students on the full time course confirmed they were aware of their timetable including placement allocation and assessment points for their course. They also understood the transition from student to registered social worker, and CPD.

190. The inspection team agreed that the standard was met.

Standard 5.6

191. The inspection team reviewed the course handbook which outlined the attendance policy, and it was understood university attendance required students to sign-in via an app. The inspection team felt attendance requirements were made clear in documentary evidence.

192. During the inspection, the inspection team heard that attendance was monitored and if concerning, would alert the students' personal academic tutors, and students on the full time course confirmed they were aware of attendance requirements.

193. The inspection team were satisfied that clear attendance information was provided to students, and this would also apply to the part time course.

194. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 5.7

195. Documentary evidence provided prior to inspection demonstrated that there was a requirement for assessments to be graded within 20 working days.

196. The inspection team understood that placement achievement was checked and verified through a moderation panel, after checking by the student's personal academic tutor.

197. Students on the full time course reported feedback was timely and constructive. Additionally they informed the inspection team they could get feedback on draft work, as well as summative assessments.

198. The inspection team agreed the standard was met.

Standard 5.8

199. Prior to the inspection, the inspection team reviewed the academic appeals policy, which was available for students to find through the programme handbook.

200. The inspection team felt the policy was clear, and heard during the inspection that students could get support and assistance on making academic appeals, if required.

201. The inspection team felt assured students were aware of the appeals policy, and agreed the standard was met.

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

Standard 6.1

202. As the qualifying course is MA Social Work, the inspection team agreed that this standard is 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 are binding and 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, we are proposing the following condition for this course at this time.

	Standard not currently met	Condition	Date for submission of evidence	Link
1	Standard 1.3	The education provider will provide evidence that there is a plan for the inclusion of employers and placement providers representation in admissions processes.	04 October 2025	Paragraph 33
2	Standard 1.6	The education provider will provide evidence that a candidate facing webpage for the part time MA Social Work is created. This must include information applicants require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on a course (information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities).	04 October 2025	Paragraph 47
3	Standard 4.11	The education provider will provide evidence they will appoint an appropriate external examiner.	04 October 2025	Paragraph 160

Recommendations

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

	Standard	Detail	Link
1	2.3	The inspectors are recommending that the course provider considers broadening the requirements of the lecturer in practice learning to include social work qualified staff, in the interests of equity and professional knowledge to mediate.	Paragraph 61
2	3.4	The inspectors are recommending the course provider consider reviewing their processes so as to include representation from all stakeholders, with a focus on stakeholders' management and monitoring of the course.	Paragraph 97
3	4.6	The inspectors are recommending that the course provider consider addressing the pace of developing interprofessional education from a workable strategic perspective and implement from an operational perspective.	Paragraph 140
4	4.8	The inspectors are recommending that the course provider reconsider parity of esteem in assessment and equivalence in assessment weighting where students have more than one option to select for module assessment.	Paragraph 147

It should be noted that all qualifying social work courses will be subject to re-approval under Social Work England's 2021 education and training standards.

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	☐	☒	☐

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include 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	☒	☐	☐

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

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

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

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

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

Standard	Met	Not Met – condition applied	Recommendation given
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.

Inspectors will undertake the conditions review and make recommendations 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	Inspector recommendation
1			
2			
3			

Findings