



# Qualifying Education and Training Standards Guidance

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## Contents

Introduction	3
Structure of this document	4
Standard 1: Admissions	5
Standard 2: Learning environment	12
Standard 3: Course governance, management and quality	14
Standard 4: Curriculum and assessment	21
Standard 5: Supporting students	29
Standard 6: Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register	36
Further information	37
Annex 1: Language used in this guidance	38

## Introduction

This document provides guidance on Social Work England’s qualifying education and training standards. These are the standards against which we will assess and approve social work education and training courses. The aim is to ensure that students who successfully complete a social work course can meet our professional standards and can apply to be registered with us.

We want to encourage education and training providers to develop new courses, and providers of existing courses to structure or deliver them in different or innovative ways. Therefore, we have avoided setting detailed requirements for how you should meet the standards. Instead, we approve and monitor how you have achieved the required outcomes, the policies and processes you have in place, and how you implement, review and evaluate them.

This guidance explains the purpose for each standard, provides further explanation and definitions, and in some cases, suggests how you could show that you meet the standard. The education and training standards apply to all social work qualifying routes, including:

- Undergraduate and post graduate courses
- Full and part-time courses
- The social work degree apprenticeship
- Alternative training routes and courses.

This guidance document is written for education providers who are delivering approved social work education and training courses, or who are preparing to apply for approval of a new social work qualifying course. The guidance will also be useful for practice education providers and others who work with and alongside education providers.

To help you understand this guidance document, we have provided an explanation of the language we use in annex 1.

## Structure of this document

We have divided the main text of this document into six sections, to reflect the six areas of the standards, and have provided detailed guidance against each individual standard.

The six standard areas are:

**Standard 1:** Admissions

**Standard 2:** Learning environment

**Standard 3:** Course governance, management and quality

**Standard 4:** Curriculum assessment

**Standard 5:** Supporting students

**Standard 6:** Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register.

We recommend that you read the following documents alongside this guidance:

**1. Guidance on practice placements for social work students**

This provides guidance against the requirements relating to practice education, as set out under standard 2, and additional guidance against standards 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 4.3 and 4.6 and 5.4.

**2. Guidance on the assessment of social work students**

This provides guidance against standards 4.8, 4.9, 4.10, 4.11 and 4.12 and additional guidance against 3.9, 5.4 and 5.8.

## Standard 1: Admissions

**Standard:** Admissions processes must be robust, transparent, ensure that applicants meet course entry requirements and involve a range of stakeholders.

**Outcome:** Social work courses recruit students who have the capability and suitability to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards and become registered upon completion of the course.

Education and training providers will:	Guidance
<p>1.1 Confirm on entry to the course, via a holistic/multi-dimensional assessment process, that applicants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Have the potential to develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards.</li> <li>ii. Can demonstrate that they have a good command of English.</li> <li>iii. Have the capability to meet academic standards.</li> <li>iv. Have the capability to use information and communication technology (ICT) methods and techniques to achieve course outcomes.</li> </ul>	<p>It is important to ensure that social work courses recruit students who have the capability and potential to meet the professional standards to become registered upon completion of the course.</p> <p>The following elements could be included in your admissions processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Written exercises that applicants complete before coming for the selection event. These could include personal statements or essays, and could assess, for example, applicants' ability to analyse and present written information, motivation to become a social worker, knowledge of the social work profession and relevant policies and legislation.</li> <li>• Written tests that applicants complete during the selection process. These could assess applicants' command of English, ability to analyse and present written information, motivation to become a social worker, knowledge of the social work profession and relevant policies and legislation and ICT skills.</li> <li>• An interview with a selection panel. This could assess applicants' command of English, communication skills, experience of working or volunteering in social care fields, motivation to become a social worker, knowledge of the social work profession and relevant policies and legislation. The panel could include teaching staff, social workers, practice educators, employers and people with lived experience of social work. It is important to consider the types of questions used by the interview panel, which should</li> </ul>

	<p>test for the values and behaviours expected of social workers in accordance with the professional standards. You may find it helpful to consider using ‘values-based’ interview questions. These are questions which are structured to prompt candidates to share examples of how they have demonstrated a particular value (such as compassion, empathy, integrity or working collaboratively) in their personal or working life.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An observed group discussion. This could assess applicants’ communication skills, including listening skills and ability to communicate as part of a group. In an observed group discussion, applicants are put in small groups and asked to discuss a topic. Observers mark applicants based on their performance. Observers could include teaching staff, social workers, practice educators, employers and people with lived experience of social work.</li> <li>• A role play, where applicants interact with actors in a simulated setting. This could assess applicants’ command of English, communication, listening and interpersonal skills and, depending on the nature of the role play, motivation to become a social worker.</li> </ul> <p><b>English language requirements</b></p> <p>Applicants must demonstrate that they have a good command of English. For UK applicants this will typically be GCSE English at grade C, or 4, or above. Non-UK applicants should achieve a minimum score of 7.0 overall in the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) assessment (or an equivalent assessment).</p> <p>Your process should also make sure that reasonable adjustments are made to allow disabled applicants (for example, deaf applicants) to demonstrate their English language and communication skills.</p>
<p>1.2 Ensure that applicants’ prior relevant experience is considered as part of the admissions processes.</p>	<p>Your admissions process should include a consideration of applicants’ prior relevant experience, and you should be able to demonstrate how this has impacted on your decision-making in relation to admissions. Prior experience could include, for example, working with children, families or</p>

	<p>adults within social care or other relevant settings. Applicants should demonstrate that their prior experience has helped them to develop relevant knowledge and skills, which will support them to work towards meeting the professional standards by completion of the course.</p>
<p>1.3 Ensure that employers, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work are involved in admissions processes.</p>	<p>Employers, placement providers and people with lived experience of social work should be directly involved in the selection processes. They should be considered for membership of interview and group observation panels.</p> <p>It can also be beneficial to involve these groups in the design of the selection processes. For example, if you are thinking about reviewing your processes or introducing new panel interview questions, you could involve these groups in developing new questions or processes or ask them for their feedback on existing processes.</p> <p><b>For more information about the effective involvement of people with lived experience in social work education, please see 4.2.</b></p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>You should have a process for assessing whether applicants' conduct, character and health are suitable for them to train as social workers. This process can be referred to as a 'declaration of suitability for social work' where students are required to declare the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any criminal convictions, cautions, reprimands or warnings received in the UK or in other countries. This declaration is in addition to providers carrying out criminal record checks for applicants, further details below.</li> </ul>

- Any disciplinary record or unprofessional conduct, such as having disciplinary findings against them by a professional body or having employment terminated for unprofessional behaviour or misconduct.
- If they have lived experience of social work themselves and/or that they will seek medical guidance on any new or existing worsening health condition that occurs during their course, including during practice placements.

You should carry out criminal record checks, at an 'enhanced' level, with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) as part of your admissions process. It is important that your requirements for criminal record checks at admission are appropriate and safe for students entering a social work course.

For social work apprenticeships and other employment-based routes, if a student already holds an enhanced level DBS check with their employer, and this check is deemed satisfactory, then you may not need to carry out an additional DBS check during the admissions process. You must, however, be able to demonstrate that you have a robust and documented process for ensuring that such a DBS check exists, that it is valid, and that it meets your requirements.

It can be beneficial to involve employers in deciding what your requirements for criminal record checks should be, so that successful applicants are less likely to encounter any issues with regard to their criminal record check when they go on placements (as placement providers may run their own checks which may have different requirements to yours) or start practising as a social worker.

In making an admissions decision about someone who has a criminal record, you should consider whether it might affect their suitability to work with people with lived experience of social work and/or affect the public's confidence in the profession.

Applicants who declare that they have lived experience of social work may need, or be entitled to, support. For example, if they are a care leaver they could be entitled to financial support during their course. Applicants who have had, or currently have, lived experience of social work may also need special arrangements to be made for their course. For example, they should not undertake placements in organisations where they have received, or currently receive, services.

In line with legislation, students should not be required to disclose any short or long term physical or mental health conditions. However, it is reasonable to expect students to declare that they are willing and able to identify and manage their own needs in a way that avoids any risk to people with lived experience of social work or themselves. This should be supported by any reasonable adjustments that the student needs as described in requirement 5.4. You should consider involving occupational health services at the admissions stage if you or an applicant would like to discuss the support they may need during the course.

You should make students aware of the consequences of not declaring something which may affect their suitability for social work, or their ability to meet the requirements of the course. For example, if a student chooses not to declare an issue relating to conduct which later comes to light, they may then find themselves subject to fitness to practise proceedings in line with your institution's fitness to practise policy. If a student does not declare a health condition, then they may not receive the reasonable adjustments necessary to support them to meet academic or placement requirements.

If your students will need to travel to placements by car due to the geography and transport infrastructure of your locality, you may want to consider asking students to declare as part of the admissions process that they have a driving licence, the use of a car, and appropriate insurance.

	<p>This does not apply to students who are unable to drive because of a health condition or impairment.</p>
<p>1.5 Ensure that there are equality and diversity policies in relation to applicants and that they are implemented and monitored.</p>	<p>It is important to ensure that your admissions processes are in line with equality, diversity and inclusion principles. You may wish to consider the following when designing and administering your admissions process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How prepared admissions staff are to answer questions from applicants or prospective applicants with health conditions or impairments.</li> <li>• How clear it is to applicants and prospective applicants that talking about their health condition or impairment in personal statements, written exercises, observed group work or interviews will not impact on decisions taken about whether they are offered a place on the course.</li> <li>• How accessible the assessment process is for applicants and whether reasonable adjustments should be made.</li> <li>• The training provided to staff involved in the admissions process in equality, diversity and inclusion.</li> </ul>
<p>1.6 Ensure that the admissions process gives applicants the information they require to make an informed choice about whether to take up an offer of a place on a course. This will include information about the professional standards, research interests and placement opportunities.</p>	<p>You should provide information to applicants about the following things (this is not an exhaustive list):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The role of a social worker, and the types of tasks/responsibilities that a social worker has.</li> <li>• The costs of the course, including accommodation and other associated costs where relevant, and any options for funding.</li> <li>• The structure, content and delivery of the course, including placements, and the methods of assessment.</li> <li>• That completing the course successfully is not a guarantee that they will be able to register with Social Work England, and the information about registration requirements.</li> </ul>

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|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The role of Social Work England and professional regulation.</li><li>• That the social work qualification is generic and prepares them for practice in all social work contexts.</li><li>• The research interests of staff who teach on the course, and any opportunities for students to undertake or be involved in research projects.</li></ul> |
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## Standard 2: Learning environment

**Standard:** The learning environment must provide education and training opportunities that enable students to develop their skills and knowledge across all areas of social work, gain required experience in practice settings and meet the professional standards in supportive, supervised and safe settings.

**Outcome:** Social work courses deliver, in partnership with practice placement providers, practice learning experiences that support readiness to practice at point of graduation. This includes providing learning opportunities that reflect and allow students to learn from the diversity of the communities they will work with.

Please see separate guidance document, 'Guidance on practice placements for social work students' for standard two.

### Education and training providers will:

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.
- ii. A minimum of one placement taking place within a statutory setting, providing sufficient numbers of statutory social work tasks involving high risk decision making and legal interventions.

2.2 Provide practice learning opportunities that enable students to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to develop and meet the professional standards.

2.3 Ensure that while on placements, students have appropriate induction, supervision, support, access to resources and a realistic workload.

2.4 Ensure that on placements, students' responsibilities are appropriate for their stage of education and training.

2.5 Ensure that students undergo assessed preparation for direct practice to make sure they are safe to carry out practice learning in a service delivery setting.

2.6 Ensure that practice educators are on the register and that they have the relevant and current knowledge, skills and experience to support safe and effective learning.

2.7 Ensure that policies and processes, including for whistleblowing, are in place for students to challenge unsafe behaviours and cultures and organisational wrongdoing, and report concerns openly and safely without fear of adverse consequences.

### Standard 3: Course governance, management and quality

**Standard:** Social work courses must be governed, resourced and managed using effective and transparent processes in collaboration with employers and people with lived experience of social work. There must be processes to monitor and manage the quality and delivery of courses.

**Outcome:** Social work courses are governed, managed, continually improved and administered to a consistent quality and resourced sufficiently to ensure they meet the expectations of the regulator.

Education and training providers will:	Guidance
<p>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.</p>	<p>It is important that courses are governed and managed effectively and that responsibility for each aspect of the course is clear. You should have a management and governance structure in place which sets out clear roles and responsibilities for both individuals and groups.</p> <p>It is important that your course is led by people with direct experience of the social work profession. Course leaders should be registered social workers with appropriate additional educational qualifications and experience. However, we recognise that there may be circumstances where it is possible and appropriate for a course to be led by someone who is not a registered social worker. If this is the case, you must be able to show how you make sure they are appropriate for the role and have access to the necessary information and resources about social work.</p> <p>In addition to course leaders ideally being registered social workers, you should appoint a lead social worker to your management team. Further guidance on the lead social worker role can be found at 3.7 below.</p>

<p>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. Ensure placement providers have contingencies in place to deal with practice placement breakdown.</p>	<p><b>Please see separate guidance document, ‘Guidance on practice placements for social work students.’</b></p>
<p>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.</p>	<p><b>Please see separate guidance document, ‘Guidance on practice placements for social work students.’</b></p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>It is important that you work collaboratively with employers to manage and monitor your course and allocate placements. You should consider having employers represented in your management and governance structure and groups.</p> <p><b>Please also see separate guidance document, ‘Guidance on practice placements for social work students.’</b></p>
<p>3.5 Ensure that regular and effective monitoring, evaluation and</p>	<p>It is important that you can show how you monitor and evaluate your course’s quality and effectiveness and the systems that are in place. This includes processes which allow you to</p>

improvement systems are in place, and that these involve employers, people with lived experience of social work, and students.

continuously gather information on quality and effectiveness, as well as to respond to any identified risks, challenges or changes.

Where relevant, you should also use this information as a way of continuously improving your course.

The processes you use should be appropriate to the course and may include the following:

- Carrying out internal and external quality audits.
- Regularly carrying out critical reviews of your course.
- Regularly collecting and analysing feedback from students, educators and people with lived experience of social work.
- Analysing complaints from students.
- Analysing concerns raised by students, educators and others, for example about the safety or wellbeing of people with lived experience of social work.
- Carrying out quality audits of placements.
- Carrying out monitoring and evaluation with placement providers.

You should also include people with lived experience of social work in your processes for the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of your course. This could include, for example:

- Obtaining the views of and feedback from people with lived experience who have been involved in your course.
- Involving people with lived experience in module or course reviews, or in developing new modules or courses.

**For more information about the effective involvement of people with lived experience in social work education, please see 4.2.**

<p>3.6 Ensure that the number of students admitted is aligned to a clear strategy, which includes consideration of local/regional placement capacity.</p>	<p>It is important that students can complete high quality placements in appropriate settings, that allow them to undertake learning opportunities which will help them develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours to meet the professional standards by the time they complete their course. Further information about placement settings, content and quality can be found in our guidance relating to standard 2 about placements.</p> <p>When considering the number of students you admit, you should take account of placement capacity in your local area and ensure that each student will be able to undertake placements that meet our standards. This should be set out in a strategy document. Your approach to identifying placements for your students should allow you to take steps to establish new placements if required, for example if you want to increase your intake of students or if you stop using particular placements for any reason and need to identify alternatives. Planning for placements for your students should be carried out responsibly and you should consider how it could affect other social work courses in the same geographical area.</p> <p>You may also wish to consider workforce planning information for your locality or region to help inform the numbers of students that you admit to a course, and your placement strategy. This could include, for example, information about the expected future recruitment and retention of social workers in your area, and/or the types of skills or roles that will be needed.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>It is important to appoint a lead social worker to your management team who will take overall professional responsibility for the course and be involved in the development and delivery of the curriculum. This person should have a recognised social work qualification and be a registered social worker.</p>

	<p>Responsibilities of your course’s lead social worker could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing expert professional advice on all aspects of your course and curriculum.</li> <li>• Keeping up to date with practice and policy developments and using this information to assist with the review and ongoing development of your curriculum and courses.</li> <li>• Engaging with key stakeholders including social workers, employers and placement providers, to help ensure that the course reflects regional issues and priorities.</li> <li>• Spending time back in practice to keep abreast of current practice and policy developments and to maintain/update practice skills and experience.</li> <li>• Providing expert professional advice on issues relating to students’ suitability and fitness to practice.</li> </ul>
<p>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.</p>	<p>The number of staff you require will depend on the cohort size of your course. You should be able to justify the number of staff you have in place and the proportion of their time that they spend working on the course in relation to the practical requirements of the course, the number of students, their needs and the learning outcomes to be achieved. We do not set staff-to-student ratios. Instead, we consider the staffing within the overall context of the education you provide.</p> <p>You should ensure you have appropriately qualified and experienced staff in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Admissions and marketing.</li> <li>• Course design and development.</li> <li>• Curriculum design and development. You may wish to consider appointing academic leads with specific responsibility for the curriculum and learning outcomes for particular years, phases or modules of the course.</li> <li>• Assessment design, development and delivery.</li> <li>• Teaching and supervising, including practice educators and placement supervisors.</li> <li>• Professional development. We suggest that a lead social worker should be responsible for professional development, see 3.7 above.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality management.</li> <li>• Student support and welfare.</li> </ul> <p>Your staff team should include sufficient numbers of registered and experienced social workers to ensure that students learn about professional practice from those who have direct experience of delivering social work services.</p> <p>You should have arrangements in place to review the number of staff involved in the course and to deal with situations such as staff absences.</p> <p>You should ensure that you have adequate support from your higher education institution in human resources, finance and ICT to deliver your course effectively and consider existing staff resources when proposing additional courses.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p><b>Please see separate guidance document, 'Guidance on assessment of social work students.'</b></p>
<p>3.10 Ensure that educators are supported to maintain their knowledge and understanding in relation to professional practice.</p>	<p>It is important that you support educators to maintain the currency of their knowledge and understanding in professional practice. By 'educators' we mean individuals who are involved in teaching, tutoring or assessing. This includes people who are permanently part of the course staff team, and sessional or visiting lecturers.</p>

You could consider the following approaches to supporting educators:

- Supporting academic staff to spend time back in practice
- Staff development strategies
- Training
- Mentoring schemes
- Professional development portfolios.

## Standard 4: Curriculum and assessment

**Standard:** Courses must be designed to enable students to develop the required behaviours, skills, knowledge and understanding to meet the professional standards.

**Outcome:** Social work courses are shaped by the needs and insights of academia, employers, practitioners and people with lived experience of social work. This is to ensure a continually evolving curriculum which is evidence-informed, matches the contemporary demands of the whole sector, is delivered by appropriately qualified and experienced professionals, and produces informed, capable, prepared and motivated graduates who deliver safe and effective services.

Education and training providers will:	Guidance
<p>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.</p>	<p>It is important that students can demonstrate that they can meet the professional standards by the end of their training. Throughout a course, students must have the opportunity to learn about professional conduct and to demonstrate an understanding of which types of behaviour are appropriate for a professional and which are not. This should include learning about how context affects professional decision making.</p> <p>In particular, students need to be aware of their obligations to meet the professional standards when they qualify and apply for registration, as well as throughout their future professional practice. They set out our expectations regarding a social worker’s behaviour and cover their ethics, decision-making, communication and interaction with people with lived experience of social work, colleagues and others. Meeting those standards is an essential part of being fit to practise.</p>

	<p>You should have documentation that clearly shows how the content of your curriculum and the learning outcomes are mapped to the professional standards. You should also have documentation that shows when and how students have learning opportunities that allow them to develop knowledge, skills and behaviours so they can meet the professional standards. Each student that completes the course should be able to meet all the professional standards regardless of any optional modules they have chosen.</p> <p>The following professional guidance may be helpful to inform your curriculum and you should consider mapping your curricula to this guidance so you can show how it is reflected in your course:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Professional Capabilities Framework for Social Work in England, published by the British Association of Social Workers in 2018.</li> <li>• The Knowledge and Skills Statement for Child and Family Practitioners, published by the Department for Education in March 2018.</li> <li>• The Knowledge and Skills Statement for Social Workers in Adult Services, published by the Department for Education in March 2015.</li> </ul>
<p>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.</p>	<p>In order to effectively involve people with lived experience you need to go beyond just seeking their feedback. Think about how you can work collaboratively with them in order to ensure that the course is shaped by their views, needs and insights. This could involve working collaboratively with individuals, or with groups such as advocacy or support groups.</p> <p>The principles of co-production may help you in thinking about ways in which you can work effectively with people with lived experience. Coproduction can be defined as working together with people as equal partners in the design, delivery and review of social work education.</p>

The Social Care Institute for Excellence<sup>1</sup> suggests that coproduction needs to be based on the following key principles:

- **Equality** - no one group or person is more important than another, and everyone has skills, knowledge, abilities and other assets to bring to the process.
- **Diversity** - coproduction should be inclusive for all communities and groups.
- **Accessibility** - ensuring that everyone has the same opportunity to take part in an activity fully, in the way that suits them best.
- **Reciprocity** - ensuring that people receive something back for putting something in. This may also include ensuring that you have appropriate policies and systems in place to pay people with lived experience for their time.

People with lived experience of social work could be involved in, and help you to co-produce, the design, development and delivery of the curriculum in the following ways:

- Admissions and selection, for example as part of the interviewing panel or by contributing to the formulation of interview questions and other aspects of the admissions and selection process.
- Developing teaching approaches and materials.
- Planning and developing the course, for example by giving their perspective and feedback on the content of curricula and the methods of teaching, which could include formal membership of curriculum development and governance groups.
- Teaching and learning activities, for example by giving presentations, facilitating seminars, contributing to small group work with students and mentoring students.
- Feedback and assessment, for example by providing feedback directly after interactions with students during placements or contributing to the development of feedback and

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<sup>1</sup> Social Care Institute for Excellence (2015), Co-production in social care: what it is and how to do it. SCIE Guide 51, available at <https://www.scie.org.uk/publications/guides/guide51/>

	<p>assessment processes which could include formal membership of assessment development and governance groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation, for example by being part of provider quality management visits to placement providers or committee membership.</li> </ul> <p>It is also important to consider the views of employers and practice educators when you design and develop your curriculum and be able to demonstrate how these views have helped to shape it. You should consider holding regular meetings with these groups to gather their feedback on the curriculum and use this to inform curriculum review and continuous improvement.</p>
<p>4.3 Ensure that the course is designed in accordance with equality, diversity and inclusion principles, and human rights and legislative frameworks.</p>	<p>You should consider equality, diversity and inclusion principles when designing your course and supporting systems and processes. Areas you may wish to consider include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring that your course is designed and delivered in accordance with your organisation's equality and diversity policies, and that all students are treated fairly, including whilst on placement, regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership or pregnancy and maternity.</li> <li>• Publishing processes and policies for supporting students with physical and mental health conditions and promoting these amongst staff and students.</li> <li>• Promoting health and wellbeing for your students through activities and student services, and by empowering students to take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing.</li> <li>• Supporting and encouraging students to declare physical and mental health conditions if they need to.</li> <li>• Making the physical environment of your course accessible for disabled students, for example by having ramps, automatic doors and lifts.</li> <li>• Having equipment and materials to help students with health conditions or impairments learn, such as hearing loops in lecture theatres or printing documents on coloured paper.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Considering the physical environment at placement locations, assessing if there are placement locations that are suitable for disabled students and prioritising these for disabled students if necessary.</li> <li>• Ensuring that assessments are constructed and scheduled in a way that allows reasonable adjustments to be made for students, for example more time for a student to complete an assessment or opportunities for additional breaks.</li> </ul> <p><b>Please also see separate guidance document, ‘Guidance on practice placements for social work students.’</b></p>
<p>4.4 Ensure that the course is continually updated as a result of developments in research, legislation, government policy and best practice.</p>	<p>It is important to ensure that your curriculum stays relevant and that you update it regularly in line with research and developments or changes in legislation, government policy and current best practice. For example, you may consider being able to show how the design of the curriculum predicts or reflects changes in practice or services, developments in the profession’s research and evidence base, advances in technology, changes in the law and changes in people with lived experience of social work’s needs and expectations. Also, you may want to consider how to reflect feedback on employability (from students and employers), changes in workforce development and lifelong learning, and developments in professional and regulatory practice, including research and guidance.</p>
<p>4.5 Ensure that the integration of theory and practice is central to the course.</p>	<p>We expect theory and practice to be combined within both the theory and practical parts of the course. By ‘practical parts of the course’ we mean practice based learning as well as practical learning in an academic setting.</p>

	<p>Theory and practice must be linked and must support each other. For example, students must have the opportunity to learn theory and understand why it is important, but also to reflect on and learn how to apply theoretical frameworks in practice.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>It is important for students to learn how to work with and learn from colleagues from other professions. By ‘other professions’ we mean other health and social care professions and professions outside of health and social care, for example law or psychology. Improving the quality of care for people with lived experience of social work should be the key factor in deciding which other professions or occupational groups are relevant to students on a course.</p> <p>You may wish to consider employing teaching staff from other professions to help deliver your course, for example by giving lectures, leading seminars or small group work, or acting as academic tutors for students.</p> <p>Placements are a key opportunity for students to work with, and learn from, other professions. You may want to consider how your documentation sets out when and how students will undertake learning opportunities during placements should identify opportunities that will allow them to work with other professions.</p> <p><b>Please also see separate guidance document, ‘Guidance on practice placements for social work students.’</b></p>
<p>4.7 Ensure that the number of hours spent in structured academic learning under the direction of an educator is sufficient to ensure that</p>	<p>You should ensure that students spend enough time in structured academic learning for them to meet the required learning outcomes and meet the professional standards by the time they complete the course.</p>

<p>students meet the required level of competence.</p>	<p>Structured academic learning may include classroom learning, group based learning, and blended or distance learning, but does not include time spent on practice placements.</p> <p>We do not set a minimum number of required hours for structured academic learning, instead we will consider this within the overall context of the education you provide.</p>
<p>4.8 Ensure that the assessment strategy and design demonstrate that the assessments are robust, reliable and valid, and that those who successfully complete the course have developed the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards.</p>	<p><b>Please see separate guidance document, ‘Guidance on assessment of social work students.’</b></p>
<p>4.9 Ensure that assessments are mapped to the curriculum and are appropriately sequenced to match students’ progression through the course.</p>	<p><b>Please see separate guidance document, ‘Guidance on assessment of social work students.’</b></p>
<p>4.10 Provide timely and meaningful feedback to students on their progression and performance in assessments.</p>	<p><b>Please see separate guidance document, ‘Guidance on assessment of social work students.’</b></p>
<p>4.11 Ensure assessments are carried out by people with appropriate</p>	<p><b>Please see separate guidance document, ‘Guidance on assessment of social work students.’</b></p>

<p>expertise, and that external examiner(s) for the course are appropriately qualified and experienced and on the register.</p>	
<p>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.</p>	<p><b>Please see separate guidance document, 'Guidance on assessment of social work students.'</b></p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>It is important that students learn how to use evidence from research and other sources to inform and systematically evaluate their practice.</p> <p>By 'evidence informed practice' we mean the ability to gather, use, analyse and evaluate evidence in order to inform decision making and enable effective practice. Evidence may come from research, audit and evaluation or feedback from people with lived experience of social work, for example.</p> <p>Development of evidence informed practice could be achieved through student centred and independent learning, teaching and assessment strategies, as well as student led research where appropriate. You should make sure that the course encourages students to develop analytical skills and research appreciation that is relevant to the profession.</p>

## Standard 5: Supporting students

**Standard:** Students must receive appropriate educational and pastoral support.

**Outcome:** Social work students have effective educational and pastoral support to progress through their course and develop the knowledge and skills necessary to meet the professional standards when they qualify.

Education and training providers will:	Guidance
<p>5.1 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their health and wellbeing including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Confidential counselling services;</li> <li>ii. Careers advice and support; and</li> <li>iii. Occupational health services.</li> </ul>	<p>It is important that students can access resources to support them to manage their health and emotional wellbeing, including whilst they are on placement. These skills will enable them to practise safely when they start work for the first time as a newly qualified social worker. You should regularly review your counselling, careers advice and occupational health services to ensure they are providing appropriate support for social work students.</p>
<p>5.2 Ensure that students have access to resources to support their academic development including, for example, personal tutors.</p>	<p>It is important that students can access resources to support their academic development. You should have processes in place to ensure that students have access to regular feedback on their academic progress, such as a personal tutor system. These processes should also support students who need additional help with particular aspects of their course.</p> <p>These processes should be in place for all students, but in particular you may want to consider how to support:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mature students</li> <li>• Disabled students</li> <li>• Students who must take periods of planned or unplanned leave from the course</li> <li>• Students with caring responsibilities</li> <li>• Students with financial difficulties.</li> </ul>
<p>5.3 Ensure that there is a thorough and effective process for ensuring the ongoing suitability of students' conduct, character and health.</p>	<p>As students progress through their course it is important to check that their conduct, character and health remains suitable for the practice of social work and that they can interact safely with people with lived experience of social work and others. You should have processes in place to continually reassess students' suitability and deal with any concerns about students, including expecting students to provide information (such as a self-declaration) about any issues relating to their character or health.</p> <p>In assessing this information, you should consider whether the conduct, character or health-related issue could affect a student's ability to meet the professional standards or to practise safely and effectively once they are qualified.</p> <p>Concerns about a student could be raised by anyone involved in the course, such as practice educators, other students or people with lived experience of social work (for example, if a student has acted in a way that does not meet the professional values and behaviours that we expect).</p> <p>The processes you have in place should be fair and supportive, focused on helping and supporting students to deal with concerns raised about their conduct, health or character where appropriate. However, they should also be effective and allow for an appropriate range of outcomes. For example, concerns about a student's conduct may show that they need extra support or, in serious cases, that they are not suitable to continue the course. If such information comes to light near the</p>

end of a course, an appropriate outcome could be to provide an award which does not provide eligibility to apply to the register.

We do not see having a health condition or impairment as a barrier to becoming a social worker. However, if you believe that a student will not be able to cope with a career in social work due to a physical or mental health condition, the relevant staff members should talk to the student about the concerns. You should also seek independent medical advice about the student's condition and make reasonable adjustments for the student if this is possible and could help. If these steps do not resolve the concern, you should consider using fitness to practise processes to decide about the student's suitability to remain on the course.

#### **Student fitness to practise**

Each higher education institution (HEI) will have its own fitness to practise procedure, which may be applicable to students enrolled on courses that lead to qualification in several different professions. These should take into consideration the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) 'good practice framework – fitness to practise procedures' and Social Work England's fitness to practise process.

The OIA's good practice framework gives guidance for providers in designing fitness to practise procedures and in handling individual cases.

We are unable to give HEIs specific advice on individual fitness to practise cases, but can provide guidance on principles, such as how to approach decision making.

	<p>Where a fitness to practise concern relates to a student, we do not normally need to be informed. However, we would expect to be informed of any fitness to practise conditions at the point a student completes a course.</p> <p>HEIs must not permit a social work student to graduate where fitness to practise concerns are under consideration, or where concerns have been raised but they have not yet been considered. HEIs must have considered all fitness to practise concerns and reached a determination on them before the social work student can be permitted to graduate.</p> <p>Where a fitness to practise concern involves a registered social worker (working in an academic, practice or other setting), this should be referred to us.</p> <p><b>Student placements</b></p> <p>The OIA’s fitness to practise good practice framework says that HEIs ‘should take care to distinguish between a student’s failure to achieve the standard necessary to pass the placement, and a student’s fitness to practise. A student who fails to achieve the necessary standards might expect an opportunity to extend the placement or repeat it so that they can improve their practice. A student who is found to be unfit to practise will not be able to continue unless the provider agrees supportive improvement measures to give the student an opportunity to remedy the issues identified with their practice’.</p>
<p>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</p>	<p>We expect you to make supportive and pragmatic adjustments for students to the way you deliver the course, including for those who have long term health conditions and impairments, while also abiding by the Equality Act 2010. You should take account of any adjustments you have made when considering how a student can meet the professional standards at the end of their course.</p>

<p>accordance with relevant legislation.</p>	<p><b>Please also see separate guidance document, ‘Guidance on practice placements for social work students.’</b></p> <p><b>Please also see separate guidance document, ‘Guidance in the assessment of social work students.’</b></p>
<p>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 (CPD).</p>	<p>Students should be provided with information about all aspects of their course, including but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information on the curriculum, including information on core and optional modules.</li> <li>• Information on practice placements, including details of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ The number, length and timings of placements.</li> <li>○ Placement providers and placement locations.</li> <li>○ What students can expect whilst on placement, including for example, information about support, supervision and resources.</li> <li>○ How students will be assessed on placement, including when and in what formats assessments will take place.</li> <li>○ <b>Please see separate guidance document, ‘Guidance on practice placements for social work students’ for more information.</b></li> </ul> </li> <li>• Information on assessments, including details of the timing and format of assessments, pass marks for individual assessments, and policies about resits, mitigating circumstances, reasonable adjustments, academic appeals and complaints. <b>Please see separate guidance document ‘Guidance in the assessment of social work students’ for further details.</b></li> <li>• Information on career pathways and what to expect when taking up a role as a registered social worker, including information about the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE), and information about requirements for CPD as set out in the professional standards.</li> </ul>

<p>5.6 Provide information to students about parts of the course where attendance is mandatory.</p>	<p>It is important to ensure that students attend the parts of the course that are essential to them meeting the professional standards by the time they qualify. You should identify the parts of your course where attendance is mandatory and make this clear to students. Students should also be made aware of any consequences of missing mandatory parts of the course.</p> <p>In some cases, it may be appropriate to state that attendance on specific days or modules is mandatory, while in other cases it may be more appropriate to expect a student to achieve an average attendance over the course of the course.</p> <p>You must have systems in place to monitor attendance and to take appropriate action if students fail to attend the mandatory parts of the course. If a student has genuine reasons for failing to attend a mandatory part of the course, you must make arrangements for them to gain this knowledge before they complete the course.</p> <p>Poor attendance can be a sign that a student is experiencing health concerns, and students should be encouraged to declare any health concerns that are affecting their attendance.</p> <p>Poor attendance can indicate an issue with a student's character or conduct. You should consider this when investigating poor attendance and take appropriate action if a student's character or conduct gives cause for concern.</p> <p><b>Please see separate guidance document 'Guidance on practice placements for social work students' for information about students' attendance in relation to practice placements.</b></p>
<p>5.7 Ensure students are provided with feedback throughout the course</p>	<p>Students should be provided with feedback throughout their course in relation to areas including:</p>

<p>to support their ongoing development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formative (informal) assessments</li> <li>• Summative (formal) assessments</li> <li>• Placement activities.</li> </ul> <p>Students should be supported to use this feedback to help inform their current and ongoing development needs. For example, you may wish to encourage students to keep a reflective journal which they can take forward with them and build on during their AYSE and ongoing CPD.</p>
<p>5.8 Ensure there is an effective process in place for students to make academic appeals.</p>	<p><b>Please see separate guidance document ‘Guidance on assessment of social work students.’</b></p>

## Standard 6: Level of qualification to apply for entry onto the register

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

**Outcome:** Social work students who successfully complete approved courses are eligible to apply to join the social work register.

Education and training providers will ensure:	Guidance
6.1 The threshold entry route to the register will normally be a bachelor's degree with honours in social work.	<p>The threshold entry route for new entrants to our register is normally a bachelor's degree with honours in social work.</p> <p>This standard contains the word 'normally'. This is to show that you may be able to design a course which leads to a different qualification, but which meets these standards and the professional standards, and so can still be approved by us. By law, we could not refuse to approve a course just based on the form of award.</p> <p>For people who qualified through different routes in the past, other qualifications may be accepted for entry onto our register.</p>

## Further information

We have provided a range of guidance materials supporting the standards for education and training:

- Education and training standards guidance
- Guidance on the assessment of social work students
- Guidance on practice placements for social work students.

All our standards and guidance are available on our [website](#).

## Annex 1: Language used in this guidance

In this context the definition for 'people with lived experience of social work' includes carers.

Throughout the document 'we', 'us' and 'our' refers to Social Work England and 'you' refers to the education and training provider, including those involved in leading or managing the course.

We have used the term 'student' throughout this document. We use this to mean anyone learning, studying or training on a course that will lead to them being eligible to apply to join our register. The term includes trainees, apprentices and practitioners in training or work-based learning.

We have also used the term 'educator' throughout the document. We use this to mean an individual who is involved in teaching, assessing or aiding learning. This can include people who are permanently employed and others who help to deliver the course such as sessional or visiting lecturers and practice educators.

The term 'staff' is used more broadly to refer to anyone involved in delivering the course. This could include educators as well as those involved in other areas, such as managing or administering the course.

Many statements contained in the guidance sections of this document use verbs such as 'should', 'may' or 'could'. This is because the guidance is not meant to set additional requirements to those set out in the standards. We use words such as 'should', 'may' or 'could' in the guidance to indicate something which is recommended but not an absolute requirement, or in areas where we would expect you to consider how you meet the standards.