

Education and Training Committee – 5 March 2015

Review of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) approval visits to social work pre-registration education and training programmes in the 2013–14 academic year

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

This paper is intended as an update to the paper reviewing the first year of social work approval visits, which was submitted to the Committee on 14 November 2013. The report details and analyses outcomes from the schedule of approval visits to social work programmes in the second academic year following the transfer of regulation from the General Social Care Council (GSCC), and makes comparisons to the approval visit outcomes for the other 15 professions that the HCPC regulates.

Following the publication of this report on our website on 13 January 2015, we publicised it via a blog piece, posts on social media, and featured it in the January issue of the Education Department's regular stakeholder newsletter, Education Update. We also sent the report directly to all social work programmes with a visit planned from January onwards.

Decision

This paper is for information only. No decision is required.

Background information

- Education and Training Committee paper, 14 November 2013 – Review of the Health and Care Profession Council's approval visits to social work pre-registration education and training programmes in the 2012–13 academic year

Resource implications

None

Financial implications

None

Date of paper

18 February 2015

Review of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) approval visits to social work pre-registration education and training programmes in the 2013–14 academic year

The paper is intended as an update to our previous report, the Review of the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) approval visits to social work pre-registration education and training programmes in the 2012–13 academic year¹. This update considers all approval visits to social work programmes undertaken in the 2013–14 academic year, and should be read in conjunction with last year’s full report.

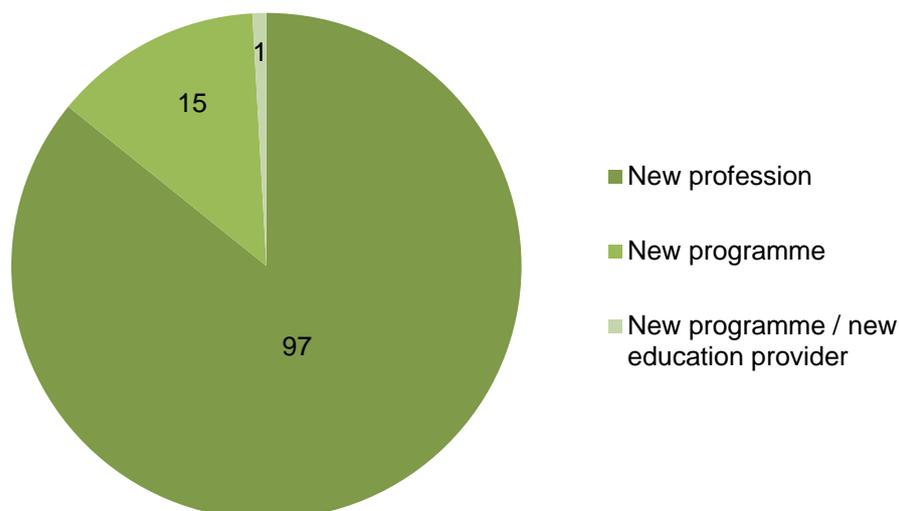
This paper is not intended to be a comprehensive review of social worker education in England. We are still part way through our three year programme of visiting transitionally approved social work programmes, and it is too early to draw full conclusions about the impact of the standards of education and training (SETs) in assuring, and driving improvements in, social work education. We intend to begin a more comprehensive review at the end of the 2014–15 academic year.

The data used in this report is correct as of 4 December 2014.

Visit schedule and outcomes

We undertook 47 approval visits to social work programmes in the 2013–14 academic year. In total, we visited 113 social work programmes at 43 education providers. We visited some education providers twice, once to consider their transitionally approved programme(s), and once to consider new programme(s). This enabled education providers to focus on their existing and new provision separately, especially when the models of training varied significantly.

Graph 1 – social work programmes visited in 2013–14 – by reason for visit



¹ The full report can be found on our website www.hcpc-uk.org/Assets/documents/100042FESWapprovalreview12-13.pdf

We visited 72 programmes in the 2012–13 academic year, compared to 113 this year. This increase was expected as we planned to visit a higher percentage of transitionally approved programmes in year two of the three year visit schedule. Of the programmes visited, 97 were transitionally approved, and 16 were new programmes. One of the new programmes was at an education provider new to providing social work education.

Table 1 Summary of outcomes for social work programmes and all programmes visited in 2013–14

	Social work programmes	All other programmes
Number of programmes visited	113	53
Approval of a programme without any conditions	4	2
Approval of a programme subject to all conditions being met	106	47
Non-approval of a new programme	0	0
Pending	3	4
Withdrawal of approval from a currently approved programme	0	0

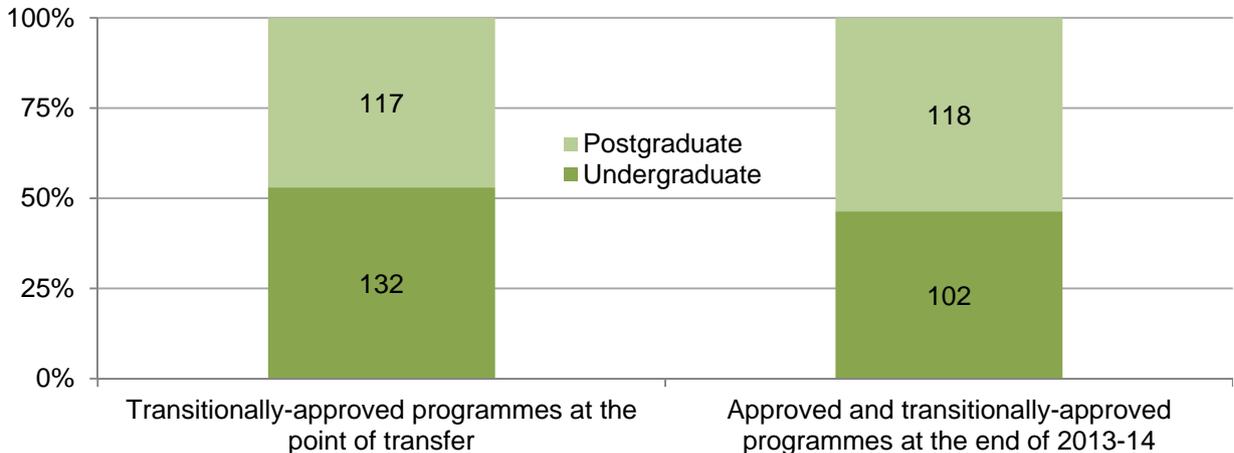
We applied conditions to 109 of the programmes in total, meaning that we did not apply any conditions to four social work programmes. By 4 December 2014, all programmes where conditions were applied had met the conditions and were approved.

Number of programmes and level of award

There has been a reduction in the number of approved programmes since the transfer, from 249 programmes to 220. This is due to education providers closing programmes which removed the need for them to be approved by us.

Of the programmes we visited in 2013–14, 51 were delivered at undergraduate level and 62 were at delivered postgraduate level.

Graph 2 Comparison of programme numbers at the point of transfer and at the end of the 2013–14 – by qualification level



The overall split between undergraduate and postgraduate programmes has shifted since the transfer in August 2012. At the point of transfer, 47 per cent of programmes were delivered at postgraduate level. At the end of the 2013–14 academic year, 54 per cent of programmes were delivered at postgraduate level. This shift is due to education providers asking us to approve more new postgraduate provision than undergraduate provision. Of the sixteen new programmes that we visited this year, fourteen were proposed at postgraduate level and two were proposed at undergraduate level.

Conditions

Conditions are contained in visitors’ reports², are linked to the SETs and require changes to the proposed programme before approval is given.

Table 2 Number of conditions applied to social work programmes compared to programmes from other professions – by reason for visit

	Social work programmes		New programmes from other professions	
SET	Total number of conditions	Average number of conditions per programme	Total number of conditions	Average number of conditions per programme
SET 1	0	0.0	0	0.0
SET 2	101	0.9	25	1.3
SET 3	194	1.8	39	2.1
SET 4	31	0.3	18	0.9
SET 5	68	0.6	39	2.1
SET 6	166	1.5	38	2.0
Total	560	5.1	159	8.0

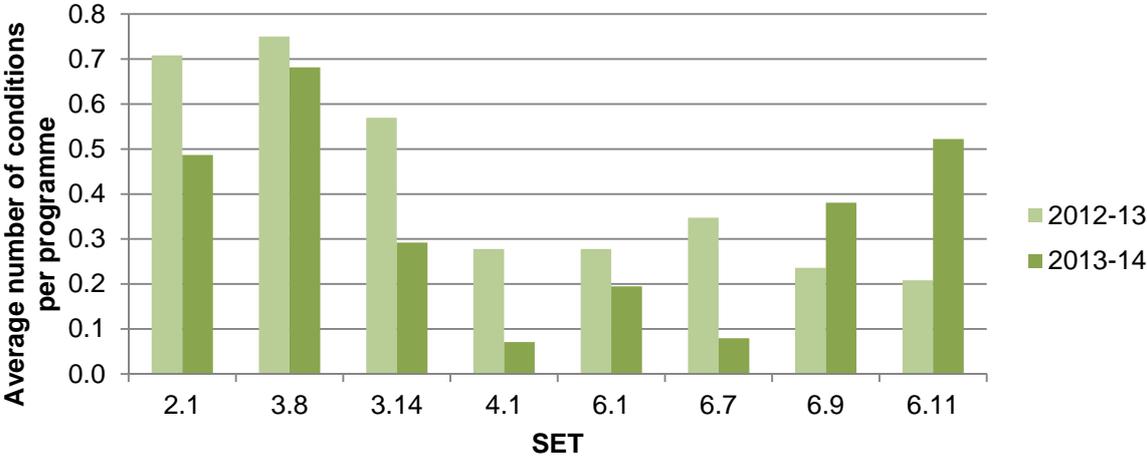
Table 2 compares the average number of conditions applied to social work programmes and new programmes from professions other than social work. On average we applied three fewer conditions per social work programme when compared to new programmes from other professions. We also applied fewer conditions, on average, in all of the broad SET areas.

This could be for several reasons. Firstly, all transitionally approved programmes were approved by another regulator, the GSCC, before they were transferred to us and are already running. These programme would have been used to engaging with regulatory processes before the transfer. New programmes from professions other than social work have not engaged with our, or any other, regulatory requirements before seeking approval. As they are not yet running, they may also be unwilling to commit resources before the programme is approved. We would expect to see resources committed, however, and would therefore apply conditions on approving the programme in these cases.

² For more information regarding the visitors’ reports considered by this paper, please visit our website at www.hcpc-uk.org/education/programmes/approvalreports, where all visitors’ reports are published. A list of all social work programmes visited over the period covered in this paper can be found in appendix 1.

Education providers delivering social work programmes are also getting more used to our regulatory model as time goes on, via their continued engagement with us, and due to the communication work that we have undertaken with the sector.

Graph 3 – Comparison of the SETs with the most conditions applied for social work programmes in 2012–13 and 2013–14



Graph 3 shows the average number of conditions applied per programme, for the SETs where we applied a high number of conditions in either or both academic years. There was a broad range of conditions applied to social work programmes, with only nine out of the 57 SETs receiving no conditions across all social work programmes visited.

As an overall average, we applied 1.8 fewer conditions per social work programme in the 2013–14 academic year when compared to the previous year.

SETs where we applied fewer conditions

We applied fewer conditions to SETs 2.1 and 3.8. Conditions for these standards often focus on the accuracy of the programme documentation, and many of the conditions that we applied in the 2012–13 academic year focused on inaccuracies in terminology considering the change in regulator for the profession.

We applied significantly fewer conditions to SET 3.14. This standard requires education providers to ensure that “where students participate as service users in practical and clinical teaching, appropriate protocols must be used to obtain their consent.” In discussion with education providers in the 2012–13 academic year, there was often a fundamental misunderstanding of this standard, with some assuming that it only applied to students that would be physically manipulated by other students as part of their training. For example, professions such as physiotherapy and occupational therapy may teach manual handling techniques in physical role play sessions. However, this standard also applies to programmes where students take part in role play sessions, or sessions where they share personal information (as examples), in care or psychological professions.

We applied significantly fewer conditions to SET 4.1, and slightly fewer to SET 6.1. These standards ensure the profession specific standards of proficiency (SOPs) are delivered through programmes’ curricula and assessed specifically. In the 2012–13 academic year, conditions were often applied in these areas due to the mapping that was provided as part of the education provider’s documentary submission not clearly

demonstrating where particular SOPs were delivered and / or assessed. This academic year, we saw a marked improvement in the quality of mapping. This was partly due to the work that we undertook with education providers about the importance of accurate mapping. With more comprehensive mapping documents, the visitors were better able to assess how the SOPs were delivered and assessed by programmes.

We applied significantly fewer conditions to SET 6.7, which requires education providers to ensure “assessment regulations must clearly specify requirements for student progression and achievement within the programme.”

We expected to apply fewer conditions to social work programmes as the profession became more familiar with our regulatory requirements over time. Part of the reason for the reduction in the number of conditions applied for SETs 2.1 and 3.8, 3.14, 4.1 and 6.1, and 6.7 this year is due to the work that we undertook with education providers following the analysis conducted last year. We ran seminars aimed at social work education providers who were yet to undertake an approval visit, and were able to directly address the above issues with members of programme teams before their visit. We also included a session about best practice with mapping to our standards at these seminars.

Following the publication of last year’s report, we widely publicised its findings via our blog, on social media, and via our Education Update newsletter. We also sent a copy of the report to all programme leaders for social work programmes that were due to be visited in forthcoming years.

Standards where numbers of conditions increased

The number of conditions for SETs 6.9 and 6.11 increased when compared to last year. Both of these standards are concerned with specific policies and how these are laid out in the programme’s assessment regulations. SET 6.9 is about aegrotat awards not providing eligibility for admission to the Register. SET 6.11 is about the appointment of external examiners. From the conditions applied, there is no clear reason why there were more conditions applied to these areas when compared to last year.

Update on the Student Suitability Scheme

The Social Work Student (England) Suitability Scheme enables the HCPC to:

- provide an opinion, in exceptional circumstances, to a social work education provider on whether an applicant is of suitable character to be admitted to a programme;
- investigate where we consider that the education provider has failed to deal with a credible complaint about a student appropriately;
- consider the outcomes of an education provider’s fitness to practise procedures to determine whether a student should be prohibited from a programme;
- maintain a record of students who are not permitted to participate in a social work programme in England; and
- manage open cases concerning individuals applying to be on the student register maintained by the GSCC and those individuals who are on the GSCC student register.

When we approve a transitionally approved programme it can no longer access the scheme. Once approved, we are satisfied that programmes meet the SETs and therefore have robust systems in place to manage concerns about students.

Between 1 September 2013 and 31 August 2014, we received 20 referrals to the scheme. Of these cases, one was considered by an Assessment Panel or Adjudicator and one individual was included on the prohibited list. On 31 August 2014, there were nine open cases. The Council has been provided with regular management information on the scheme. We intend to review the scheme at the end of the 2014-15 academic year when it is formally closed.

Conclusions

The vast majority of the programmes visited in 2013–14 were recommended for approval subject to meeting conditions. On average, we have applied roughly two fewer conditions per social work programme when we compare this year to last. This is due to our continuing engagement with the profession, and the profession becoming more familiar with our regulatory requirements over time.

We have provide analysis comparing the areas where conditions were applied across the two academic years, and have concluded that we applied fewer conditions in almost every area in 2013–14. Many of the conditions were linked to issues with programme documentation, such as the presence of out of date terminology, lack of clarity with SETs and SOPs mapping, and well established policies and procedures not being reflected clearly, although instances of this were reduced when compared to the last academic year.

This is an important issue for us to pick out for two reasons. Firstly, if the documentation is of a poor standard, we are unable to make a well informed judgement about whether particular standards are met. When we are unable to fully assess and reach a decision on whether a programme meets a standard, we need to apply a condition to ensure that the standard is met. Secondly, and more fundamentally, documentation underpins how the programme runs in every area. We require the documentation to communicate expectations about how the programme will interact with its stakeholders (such as students, practice placement educators, and service users and carers), and that it clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of all parties in the running of the programme.

We also identified issues in relation to key areas of the programme, most prevalently including issues with programme management and resources, and assessments. That is not to say that issues were linked only to these areas, as each programme is assessed on an individual basis and meets the standards in different ways.

We identified a broad range of issues while considering social work programmes, but importantly, all social work programmes which were visited in the 2013–14 academic year have now successfully completed the approval process. In doing so they have demonstrated how they meet our standards of education and training. The vast majority of programmes have implemented changes to ensure our regulatory requirements are met, responding specifically to any conditions applied to programme approval outlined in the visitors' reports. The open-ended approval granted to these programmes will remain in place, subject to meeting our on-going monitoring requirements.

Appendix 1 – List of social work programmes visited in 2013–14 and outcomes

All HCPC reports on programme approval are published on our website. If you would like more information regarding one of the approval visits listed below, please see our website at www.hcpc-uk.org

Education provider	Programme name	Mode	Visit date	Status at 31 August 2014
University of Hertfordshire	MSc Social Work (Step up to Social Work)	Full Time	10 September 2013	Approved
University of Hertfordshire	Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work (Step Up to Social Work)	Full Time	10 September 2013	Approved
Kingston University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	10 September 2013	Approved
Kingston University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Part Time	10 September 2013	Approved
Kingston University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Work Based learning	10 September 2013	Approved
Kingston University	Masters in Social Work	Full Time	10 September 2013	Approved
Kingston University	Masters in Social Work	Work Based learning	10 September 2013	Approved
Kingston University	PG Dip in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Work Based learning	10 September 2013	Approved
Kingston University	PG Dip in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	10 September 2013	Approved
The Open University	BA (Honours) Social Work (England)	Distance Learning	17 September 2013	Approved
University of Bedfordshire	Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Social Work Practice	Work Based learning	24 September 2013	Approved
Manchester Metropolitan University	PG Dip Social Work (Employment based)	Work Based learning	01 October 2013	Approved
University of Winchester	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work	Full Time	01 October 2013	Approved

Surrey and South East London Partnership with Royal Holloway	Step-up Post-Graduate Diploma in Social Work	Full Time	02 October 2013	Approved
University of Salford	Post Graduate Diploma Social Work (Step Up)	Full Time	09 October 2013	Approved
University of East London	Post-Graduate Diploma Social Work (Step Up to Social Work)	Full Time	22 October 2013	Approved
Buckinghamshire New University	PG Dip Social Work	Full Time	30 October 2013	Approved
Oxford Brookes University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	05 November 2013	Approved
Oxford Brookes University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Part Time	05 November 2013	Approved
Oxford Brookes University	MA Social Work	Full Time	05 November 2013	Approved
Oxford Brookes University	MA Social Work	Part Time	05 November 2013	Approved
Oxford Brookes University	PG Dip Social Work	Full Time	05 November 2013	Approved
Oxford Brookes University	PG Dip Social Work	Part Time	05 November 2013	Approved
Havering College of Further & Higher Education	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	12 November 2013	Approved
Havering College of Further & Higher Education	BA (Hons) Social Work	Part Time	12 November 2013	Approved
Canterbury Christ Church University	BA (Hons) in Social Work	Full Time	14 November 2013	Approved
Canterbury Christ Church University	MA in Social Work	Part Time	14 November 2013	Approved

Canterbury Christ Church University	MA in Social Work	Full Time	14 November 2013	Approved
Canterbury Christ Church University	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	14 November 2013	Approved
Canterbury Christ Church University	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Part Time	14 November 2013	Approved
University of Wolverhampton	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	20 November 2013	Approved
University of Wolverhampton	MA Social Work	Full Time	20 November 2013	Approved
University of Wolverhampton	PG Diploma Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	20 November 2013	Approved
University of Brighton	BSc (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	27 November 2013	Approved
University of Brighton	BSc (Hons) Social Work	Part Time	27 November 2013	Approved
University of Brighton	MSc Social Work	Full Time	27 November 2013	Approved
University of Greenwich	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	05 December 2013	Approved
University of Greenwich	BA (Hons) Social Work	Part Time	05 December 2013	Approved
University of Greenwich	MA Social Work	Full Time	05 December 2013	Approved
University of Greenwich	MA Social Work	Part Time	05 December 2013	Approved
University of Greenwich	PG Dip Social Work	Part Time	05 December 2013	Approved
University of Greenwich	PG Dip Social Work	Full Time	05 December 2013	Approved
North West Midlands Regional Partnership / Staffordshire University	Post Graduate Diploma in Step Up to Social Work	Full Time	17 December 2013	Approved
South Essex College of Further and Higher Education	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	30 January 2014	Approved (programme subsequently closed)
University of West London	BSc (Hons) in Social Work	Full Time	30 January 2014	Approved

Ruskin College	BA (Honours) Social Work	Full Time	13 February 2014	Approved
Ruskin College	BA (Honours) Social Work	Part Time	13 February 2014	Approved
Frontline (ARK) and Tilda Goldberg Centre	The Frontline Academy (PG Dip Social Work)	Full Time	25 February 2014	Approved
University of Leeds	BA Honours in Social Work	Full Time	25 February 2014	Approved
University of Leeds	MA in Social Work	Full Time	25 February 2014	Approved
University of Leeds	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	25 February 2014	Approved
University of Portsmouth	BSc (Hons) in Social Work	Full Time	25 February 2014	Approved
University of Portsmouth	MSc Social Work	Full Time	25 February 2014	Approved
University of East Anglia	BA (Hons) in Social Work	Full Time	04 March 2014	Approved
University of East Anglia	MA in Social Work	Full Time	04 March 2014	Approved
Leeds Metropolitan University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	04 March 2014	Approved
Leeds Metropolitan University	MA Social Work	Full Time	04 March 2014	Approved
Leeds Metropolitan University	PG Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	04 March 2014	Approved
University Campus Suffolk	BA (Hons) Social Work	Work Based learning	05 March 2014	Approved
University Campus Suffolk	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	05 March 2014	Approved
University Campus Suffolk	BA (Hons) Social Work	Part Time	05 March 2014	Approved
University of York	BA (Hons) in Social Work	Full Time	06 March 2014	Approved
University of York	MA in Social Work	Full Time	06 March 2014	Approved
University of York	Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	06 March 2014	Approved
City College Norwich	BA (Hons) Applied Social Work	Full Time	11 March 2014	Approved

City College Norwich	BA (Hons) Applied Social Work	Flexible	11 March 2014	Approved
Brunel University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	18 March 2014	Approved
Brunel University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Part Time	18 March 2014	Approved
Brunel University	MA Social Work	Full Time	18 March 2014	Approved
Brunel University	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	18 March 2014	Approved
University of Chichester	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	19 March 2014	Approved
University of Chichester	MA Social Work	Full Time	19 March 2014	Approved
New College Durham	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	19 March 2014	Approved
New College Durham	BA (Hons) Social Work	Part Time	19 March 2014	Approved
University of Sunderland	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	20 March 2014	Approved
University of Sunderland	BA (Hons) Social Work	Part Time	20 March 2014	Approved
University of Sunderland	MA Social Work	Full Time	20 March 2014	Approved
University of Sunderland	MA Social Work	Part Time	20 March 2014	Approved
Goldsmiths College University of London	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	08 April 2014	Approved
Goldsmiths College University of London	MA in Social Work	Full Time	08 April 2014	Approved
University of Sheffield	MA in Social Work	Full Time	09 April 2014	Approved
University of Sheffield	Post Graduate Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	09 April 2014	Approved
University of Bradford	BA Honours in Social Work	Full Time	15 April 2014	Approved
University of Bradford	MA in Social Work	Full Time	15 April 2014	Approved
Southampton Solent University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	16 April 2014	Approved
Southampton Solent University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Work Based learning	16 April 2014	Approved

Buckinghamshire New University	BSc (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	23 April 2014	Approved
Buckinghamshire New University	MSc Social Work	Full Time	23 April 2014	Approved
University of Essex	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	24 April 2014	Approved
University of Essex	BA (Hons) Social Work	Part Time	24 April 2014	Approved
University of Sussex	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	29 April 2014	Approved
University of Sussex	BA (Hons) Social Work	Part Time	29 April 2014	Approved
University of Sussex	MA in Social Work	Full Time	29 April 2014	Approved
University of Sussex	PG Diploma in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	29 April 2014	Approved
University of Huddersfield	BSc (Hons) in Social Work	Full Time	07 May 2014	Approved
University of Huddersfield	MSc Social Work	Full Time	07 May 2014	Approved
University of Huddersfield	MSc Social Work	Part Time	07 May 2014	Approved
Royal Holloway, University of London	Graduate Diploma in Social Work	Full Time	08 May 2014	Approved
Royal Holloway, University of London	MSc in Social Work	Full Time	08 May 2014	Approved
Royal Holloway, University of London	PG Dip in Social Work (Masters Exit Route Only)	Full Time	08 May 2014	Approved
University of Kent	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	13 May 2014	Approved
University of Kent	MA in Social Work	Full Time	13 May 2014	Approved
University of Kent	PG Diploma in Social Work (masters exit route only)	Full Time	13 May 2014	Approved
University of Bedfordshire	BSc (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	20 May 2014	Approved
University of Bedfordshire	MSc Social Work	Full Time	20 May 2014	Approved
University of Hertfordshire	BSc (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	20 May 2014	Approved
University of Hertfordshire	MSc Social Work	Full Time	20 May 2014	Approved

University of Winchester	BSc (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	18 June 2014	Approved
London Metropolitan University	BSc (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	24 June 2014	Approved
London Metropolitan University	MSc Social Work	Full Time	24 June 2014	Approved
London Metropolitan University	Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work	Full Time	24 June 2014	Approved
Middlesex University	BA (Hons) Social Work	Full Time	24 June 2014	Approved
Middlesex University	MA in Social Work	Full Time	24 June 2014	Approved