Subject Benchmark Statement

Early Childhood Studies

March 2022

Contents

About this Statement

This document is a QAA Subject Benchmark Statement for Early Childhood Studies (ECS) that defines what can be expected of a graduate in the subject, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies. Subject Benchmark Statements also describe the nature and characteristics of awards in a particular subject or area. Subject Benchmark Statements are published in QAA's capacity as a membership organisation on behalf of the higher education sector. A summary of the Statement is also available on the QAA website.

Key changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement include:

- a revised structure for the Statement which includes the introduction of cross-cutting themes of:
    - equality, diversity and inclusion
    - education for sustainable development
    - employability, entrepreneurship and enterprise education
- a comprehensive review updating the context and purposes of Early Childhood Studies, including course design and content in order to inform and underpin the revised benchmark standards.

How can I use this document?

Subject Benchmark Statements are often used by higher education providers in the design and development of new courses in the relevant subject, as they provide a framework for specifying intended learning outcomes in an academic or vocational discipline. They are also used as a reference point when reviewing or revalidating degree courses. They may be used by external examiners in considering whether the design of a course and the threshold standards of achievement are comparable with other higher education providers. They also provide professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with the academic standards expected of students.

Subject Benchmark Statements provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with a course but are not intended to represent a national curriculum in a subject or to prescribe set approaches to teaching, learning or assessment. Instead, they allow for flexibility and innovation in course design within a framework agreed by the subject community.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of courses in Early Childhood Studies
- a prospective student thinking about undertaking a course in Early Childhood Studies
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of Early Childhood Studies (ECS) graduates.

Relationship to legislation and regulation

The responsibility for academic standards lies with the higher education provider who awards the degree. Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them by their relevant funding and regulatory bodies. This Statement does not interpret legislation, nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements.

The regulatory status of the Statement will differ with regard to the educational jurisdictions of the UK. In England, Subject Benchmark Statements are not sector-recognised standards as set out under the Office for Students' regulatory framework. However, they are specified as a key reference point, as appropriate, for academic standards in Wales under Quality Assessment Framework for Wales and in Scotland as part of the Quality Enhancement Framework. Subject Benchmark Statements are part of the current quality requirements in Northern Ireland. Because the Statement describes outcomes and attributes expected at the threshold standard of achievement in a UK-wide context, many higher education providers will use them as an enhancement tool for course design and approval, and for subsequent monitoring and review, in addition to helping demonstrate the security of academic standards.

Additional sector reference points

Higher education providers are likely to consider other reference points in addition to this Statement in designing, delivering and reviewing courses. These may include requirements set out by PSRBs and industry or employer expectations. QAA has also published Advice and Guidance to support the Quality Code which will be helpful when using this Statement, for example, in course design, learning and teaching, external expertise and monitoring and evaluation.

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Subject Benchmark Statement can be found in QAA's Glossary. Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Statement where appropriate.

1   Context and purposes an Early Childhood Studies degree

Context

1.1   The first Early Childhood Studies (ECS) degrees were created in 1992, conceptualised as an interdisciplinary and multi-professional area of study. The aim was to provide a research base, firstly, for the study of early childhood as an academic discipline and, secondly, for the education of those working with babies, young children and families in the early childhood period. This period is commonly defined as from conception until the age of eight.

1.2   Early Childhood Studies is now an established discipline focusing on the holistic development of infants and young children from conception to the age of eight. Early Childhood Studies draws upon research and professional practice from health, education, social work, psychology, sociology, philosophy, history, cultural studies, legal studies, politics, economics and neuroscience.

1.3   Early Childhood Studies degrees enable graduates to progress to a wide range of professional roles. Over the last three decades, graduates have contributed to the development of early childhood policy and research. Its graduate workforce has taken on management and leadership roles and many are employed in a wide range of associate professions in education, health and social work; and/or are continuing with postgraduate studies.

1.4   In whatever capacity they work, ECS graduates' breadth of knowledge means they are well placed to advocate for babies and young children, their families and the early childhood professions. They facilitate the right of children to actively participate in their world, recognising each child and all children's uniqueness. Their knowledge enables them to advocate for young children's needs, voice, rights, development and learning while celebrating diversity and promoting inclusion.

1.5   Early Childhood Studies, as a discipline, draws upon established, marginalised and contested knowledge. Drawing on a wide range of academic discourses, it examines multiple childhoods and professional roles within current global, national and local contexts to achieve social justice as a fundamental human right. Early Childhood Studies degrees enable graduates to understand the impact of events, such as adverse childhood experiences, or evolving contexts, such as societal, economic or environmental deterioration that exacerbate inequalities, working as agents for change within a sustainability agenda. Students of ECS are encouraged to recognise the historical, current and potential future social, environmental and economic distribution challenges facing children and families. Integral to their study is the importance of taking a critical view of sustainability in local, systemic, national, environmental and global challenges and developments that impact on inclusion and equality among increasingly diverse societies.

1.6   The ECS Subject Benchmark Statement can apply to the full range of degree courses offered within early childhood, which can include foundation degrees; BA (Hons) top ups as a progression from foundation degrees; BA (Hons) full or part-time degrees; master's and doctorate provision. Students and graduates are enabled to further develop their knowledge, understanding and skills to enhance the development of new and innovative knowledge, research and practice in the field of early childhood as well as drive professionalisation of the workforce. Early Childhood Studies degrees need to be responsive to changes, including developments in technical qualifications and apprenticeships. The

Level 6 Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies (ECGPC) have been developed to strengthen a graduate-led early childhood workforce.

Purposes of an Early Childhood Studies degree

1.7   The underpinning aim of ECS is to critically study and develop early childhood research and practice and how this may be implemented in early childhood practices across local, national and global contexts. By drawing upon the range of disciplines relevant to the study of multiple early childhoods, ECS aims to examine the lived experiences of young children, families and communities, locally, nationally and globally.

1.8   Early Childhood Studies degrees advocate for social justice by drawing on the knowledge and understanding of the holistic nature of young children's development, well-being, participation and learning, and young children as active participants in the lives and practices of families, societies and cultures. Early childhood studies promotes play as a key element of young children's experiences and critically examines how their physical, emotional, cognitive and social development, learning, participation and well-being is grounded in the environments we, as adults, develop and sustain for and with them. Early Childhood Studies graduates recognise the importance of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in young children's lives, now and in the future.

1.9   Early Childhood Studies degrees take account of the sociocultural context of children's lives when studying the complexities of families and children's development, well-being, participation and learning from conception onwards. The interdisciplinary nature demonstrates the importance of both the complex and interactive continuum of growth and development, and the significance of early childhood across cultures and societies. In response to the nature and importance of holism, course structures aim to incorporate all aspects of development, well-being, participation and learning, such as the importance of play, the family and community roles, the environment, the impact of economic distribution, stress, risk factors, policies and legislation.

1.10   Early childhood studies aims to give students insights into the complexity, interrelatedness, challenges and intricacies of constructions of professionalism, professional identity and multi-professional practice in a diverse work and living context of early childhood.

1.11   Early childhood studies aims to make students agents of change through understanding the implications of theory and research in early childhood practice. Students are enabled to critically analyse, evaluate and develop pedagogical contexts and approaches, informed by different fields of study in working with babies, young children, families and communities.

1.12   Students develop knowledge, understanding and analysis of the processes that shape multiple early childhoods and children's lives in a way that fosters critical evaluation. This is supported by presenting multiple perspectives, drawing on a range of subject areas (see paragraph 1.2). This includes an understanding of the contested and changing nature of the concept of childhood, ethical principles and children's rights, both locally, nationally and globally, and the philosophies, beliefs and attitudes that inform them.

1.13   Active engagement in research and enquiry are significant parts of ECS. This entails students developing critical awareness and the ability to reflect upon self and others. Students gain a critical understanding of the processes and methodological and ethical debates required to conduct and complete research. They are encouraged to develop the reflexivity necessary to explore the political, cultural, social and economic factors embedded in research and practice.

Characteristics of an Early Childhood Studies degree

1.14   The development of degree courses has been rapid since the late 1990s and there are shared characteristics which are included in all courses.

1.15   An ECS degree can provide a starting point for further postgraduate training and/or qualifications in a wide range of further disciplines.

1.16   The ECS degree is characterised by the benchmark standards which describe the minimum (or threshold) level of achievement reached by all graduates with a bachelor's and master's degree in the subject.

1.17   Early Childhood Studies degrees are offered in the four nations of the UK. Each nation has its own distinctive early childhood policies, curricula, qualifications and level of education requirements. It is important that each Early Childhood Studies degree and their relevant assessments are mapped to the national requirements for recognition purposes.

1.18   Successful achievement of Level 6 Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies (ECGPC) aims to strengthen a graduate early childhood workforce. The competencies are written and reviewed by the Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network (ECSDN) and, as such, membership of this organisation is an expectation for institutions offering this opportunity.

1.19   Level 6 ECGPC provides students with assessed placement opportunities to critically apply theory to practice in a range of early childhood settings and/or schools, social care and health settings. This will enable students to develop graduate skills in the application of the interdisciplinary early childhood knowledge base to reflective practice (see Appendix 1: Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies). However, the competencies are not an expected outcome for all Early Childhood Studies degrees; a professional qualification for work in early childhood settings may not be appropriate for all learners or providers.

1.20   Early Childhood Studies degrees often provide opportunities to critically explore theory and research in practice. The ECGPC provide opportunities to strengthen this area. If awarding institutions indicate that completing the degree allows students to practice in early years settings, they must ensure they comply with the requirements of the nation that the student studies in.

1.21   In the countries or localities of the UK where English is not the first language, there may be requirements to address the relevant language of the area.

1.22   There can be variations in approaches between different higher education providers; this is partly because ECS is a dynamic and evolving discipline. It is important therefore that both content and approach by any one provider promotes a range of perspectives relevant to academic and professional developments.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Vision

1.23   Early Childhood Studies undergraduates and postgraduates should continually interrogate the language, perceptions and entrenchment of dominant systems of thought, within concepts of knowledge and power. Recognition and commitment to agency, equal rights and inherent dignity of all humans form the foundation of social justice. Equality is positioned as an ethical consideration of each person's multiple identities and experiences

and a fundamental human right in relation to supporting and advocating for anti-oppressive knowledge generation and practice.

Mission

1.24   Undergraduate and postgraduate students in ECS courses experience teaching and learning practices that challenge dominant knowledge within pedagogical spaces which enable greater representation for marginalised voices. Students will be challenged to think critically about different realities and form their own pedagogical judgements, bearing in mind the concepts of equality, diversity and inclusion for the development of continued reflective practice. There will be evidence of institutional proactive systems of support and inclusive structures.

1.25   Every ECS degree programme will be meaningful, equitable and connected to scholarship and practice in studies of young children and their families which are underpinned by the principles of social justice. Early Childhood Studies courses will respect each graduate's own identity, values and unique knowledge that they bring to the pedagogical space. Early Childhood Studies degree courses should enable personal and theoretical critical reflection on a wide range of theories, early childhood practice (0-8 years) and across disciplines. For practice placements to enable the students to practice in early years settings, the placement and the assessments must comply with the guidance provided by each nation. However, this is not the sole purpose of placements and students should be gaining experience across the age range up to eight years and across the discipline areas of health, social care and education.

1.26   If ECS courses of study offer work-based/placement opportunities they must be well-defined, mentored, monitored, accessible and supervised for graduates to develop an understanding of how theory and practice are linked to support inclusive practice across a breadth of disciplines when working with young children and families.

Education for sustainable development

Vision

1.27   To create a critical awareness of the ecological study of early childhood for sustainability in the global context.

Mission

1.28   Our mission enables a multifaceted understanding of how sustainability can be achieved by appreciating the importance of early childhood holistic development, equity of opportunity and well-being and how these impact on sustainable futures for all.

1.29   Education for Sustainable Development is referred to as an aspirational ongoing process of addressing social, environmental and economic concerns to create a better world.

1.30   Education for Sustainable Development is referred to as the process of creating curriculum structures and subject-relevant content to support and enact sustainable development.

1.31   These definitions, accessed from QAA's and Advance HE's [Education for Sustainable Development Guidance Principles](#), allow students on ECS degrees to consider and critically evaluate the interrelatedness of the values that underpin ecological sustainability. Students can support young children and communities to understand what this means at a local, national and global level. Our aim is to give every child the best start in life

through adopting an interdisciplinary approach to early childhood. This is defined as seeing the child in context as a responsible citizen of the world. Early Childhood Studies degrees enable graduates to make informed decisions and take responsibility for present and future generations. Degrees should provide opportunities for the exploration of sustainability, social justice, democratic action and advocacy at different levels, with a focus on the personal, professional, community, national and global contexts. Therefore, ECS graduates demonstrate an understanding of how ecology and the sustainability of societies are linked by a response based on social justice.

Entrepreneurship and enterprise education

Vision

1.32   Undergraduate and postgraduate students in ECS courses recognise the political nature of the work in the field of early childhood addressing societal, historical and systemic inequalities, both in the workforce and among children and families. Taking social responsibility and acting as agents of change, they work within a philosophy of building and sustaining successful relationship with stakeholders and external agencies. As a part of their professional practice and advocacy, they challenge inequalities.

Mission

1.33   ECS students and graduates contribute to a professional workforce leading and inspiring innovative practice and transforming practice and professional relationships, settings and services. Responsive to change and challenge, students and graduates will be well placed to add significant social, cultural and economic value to society. They contribute to, and work together to, support the ongoing development and professional recognition of the sector through knowledge and practice exchange.

1.34   Recognising the importance of engaging in personal professional development and underpinning theory, students and graduates encourage an ethos, whereby research informs practice and practice informs research.

1.35   Early Childhood Studies students should be developing behaviours, attributes and competencies suited to early childhood professions at different levels, such as taking initiative, making things happen, reflecting, communicating, pivoting and adapting, taking responsibility, networking, developing personal effectiveness and managing risk taking. Attributes and values include open-mindedness, proactivity, curiosity, self-efficacy, flexibility, adaptability, self-determination and resilience.

1.36   Ultimately, the aim is for graduates and postgraduates to be professionals who are critical thinkers, open minded, responsive, adaptable and can communicate, negotiate and influence decision making. Students are to be provided opportunities to develop:

- confidence in professional intuitive decision making and in identifying opportunities
- creative problem-solving skills
- innovative and strategic thinking
- negotiation and communication skills, including critical digital literacy
- leadership
- collaboration between children, colleagues, employers and students to develop knowledge and trustful relationships through mutual respect
- open-mindedness through acknowledgement of diversity, capability, competencies, skills and knowledge, and support inter-dependent responsiveness in collaborative learning interactions

- recognition and respect of the uniqueness of each individual and the value they bring.

2   Distinctive features of an Early Childhood Studies degree

Design - defining principles

2.1   Courses in ECS aim to give students an understanding of early childhood from conception to the age of eight, and of multiple childhoods. Early childhood is defined as the period from conception to eight years old (including peri natal health) where children's development is influenced by the environment and the people that surround them. Early childhood is much more than preparation for primary school. It is concerned with holistic development across the domains of social, emotional, cognitive and physical to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing ([UNESCO](#)). Conception to eight years takes into account global definitions of early childhood - for example, UNESCO; *The 1001 Critical Days* (Leadsom et al 2013). This context is understood as encompassing both time and geographical space, and encompassing the contexts of family and community, and children's and family services. The focus is on the unique development of the child in context and the implications for practice. Practitioners need to develop knowledge of the intricacies of supporting the development and learning of all children and the local situations in which they live. Degrees should be knowledgeable about the requirements of social justice, children's rights, children's culture and equality, and diversity and inclusion, and ensure that this encompasses supporting the development, well-being, participation and learning for multiple childhoods.

2.2   The interdisciplinary nature of ECS takes account of the breadth of children's lives when studying the complexities of families and children's development, well-being, participation and learning. In this way interdisciplinarity demonstrates the importance of both the intricate and interactive continuum of development, well-being, participation and learning, and the significance of multiple childhoods across a range of cultures and societies. In response to the nature and importance of holism, course structures aim to incorporate all aspects of development, well-being, participation and learning as well as the family's role, the impact of economic and other stress factors, the risks within the environment, and the legislation aimed at safeguarding and caring for children. The courses aim to consider theory in relation to practice which enables students and graduates to develop supportive relationships with children and their families. Early Childhood Studies degrees aim to enable students to evaluate and develop appropriate pedagogical approaches to work with babies, young children, families and communities. These communities may include other professionals with whom the graduate works.

2.3   Early Childhood Studies degrees aim to present multiple perspectives and, as stated in paragraph 1.2, to draw on a range of subject areas. This enables students to understand and analyse the processes that shape childhood and children's lives in a way that fosters critical evaluation, and which includes an understanding of the contested and changing nature of the concept of childhood, ethical principles and children's rights.

Accessibility

2.4   The course design will ensure that those choosing to study Early Childhood Studies are able to think in ways that are creative and innovative. Courses will consider ways to be inclusive and to ensure that the teaching and assessment are accessible to a diverse community. This may include decolonising the curriculum and providing support for disabled students and students with diverse requirements.

2.5   There are a range of possible pathways students could have taken before they join degree courses, and these may include vocational, apprenticeships, academic or

non-standard routes. Modes of delivery might be different to ensure all students have sufficient and appropriate access; examples include part-time, full-time and distance learning. Depending on the route selected, some students may attend placements, while others who study part-time and work/volunteer in the sector may not be required to complete placement experiences. It might also be important to consider the needs of international students to allow them to contextualise their own experiences and prepare them for their future roles.

2.6   It is important to include digital aspects of provision during the teaching of students; this could include the use of assistive digital technology, blended learning and assessment. This type of digital inclusion supports graduate employability through working with relevant employers and finding innovative ways to work alongside young children and families.

2.7   Degree content should include a range of modes of delivery, for example face-to-face, online, flipped learning, group work, individual study, mirroring practice environments in simulated classrooms, or in placements located in a broad range of locations and professional environments. This ensures students can develop both a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary experience alongside an understanding of multiple childhoods and their families. Examples include:

- social care
- health
- social enterprises
- local authority
- family and community support
- charities and not-for-profit organisations
- policy environments
- outdoor learning environments, for example forest schools, beach schools, river schools
- early years settings, childminders and schools.

2.8   Assessments and dialogue also need to be accessible and should be varied to allow the student to develop the academic and practice skills to understand the needs of young children, families and communities. Where possible, these assessments should reflect real-life situations to support future employability. Assessments should also support and demonstrate awareness of the range of learning opportunities and styles of all students, building on the knowledge and skills they have, helping them develop new knowledge and skills, and being flexible enough to enable reasonable adjustments. They should include the use of assistive technology to support accessibility. Early Childhood Studies degrees should offer a range of assessment methods that would benefit student understanding of the breadth and praxis nature of the discipline. These are outlined in more detail in section 3 of this Statement. Assessments should also ensure that they remain contemporary in terms of developing digital skills which encourage graduates to develop and sustain a wide range of digital platforms for communication and teaching purposes.

2.9   Whatever assessment strategy is selected, it should be commensurate with the level of the degree and build on any academic and vocational assessments students may have undertaken before joining the degree.

2.10   Physical and digital provision should be accessible for all students. This should provide spaces for reflection and debate on the subject and, as such, the emotional environment for students should be accepting of difference, including different viewpoints. These environments should be open to critical, constructive and research-informed debates to enhance the understanding of the breadth of topics covered in ECS degree courses.

Attending to these matters will help to foster and construct a learning community that includes staff, students and other partners in the workplace (where appropriate).

Progression

2.11   Early Childhood Studies degrees offer students rich and varied progression routes into employment and/or further study. Over the course of a degree with honours (FHEQ Level 6; FQHEIS Level 10), an ECS student will progress from one year of study to the next, in line with the regulations and processes for each institution. However, it is expected that each year would see the attainment of certain levels of knowledge, expertise and experience which builds towards the final achievement of meeting all of the threshold-level subject-specific and generic skills listed in this Statement. Upon graduation from an undergraduate degree, it would be expected that a student who had achieved a second-class degree or higher would be capable of, and equipped for, undertaking postgraduate study or an associated discipline.

2.12   Joint honours undergraduates will achieve elements of the specific and generic skills for the subject but will add others according to the subjects covered in a joint programme; these should also complement progression to master's and/or doctoral study.

2.13   Integrated master's degrees (FHEQ Level 7; FQHEIS Level 11) are available in the UK and comprise a four-year full-time course or a part-time course of not less than five and not more than eight academic years. In a standard three-year undergraduate honours degree course, students may exit earlier and be eligible for a Certificate of Higher Education, a Diploma of Higher Education, or an honours degree depending upon the levels of study completed to a satisfactory standard. Scottish bachelor's degrees with honours are typically designed to include four years of study, which relates to the structure of Scottish primary and secondary education.

2.14   Early Childhood Studies degrees should be designed to encourage critical reflection, engagement with the academic field, and to develop high-quality practice across all aspects of early childhood. It is expected that teaching and learning is balanced across a range of disciplines and does not heavily focus on one discipline (for example, early education) at the expense of others. This should take account of research-informed debates and current and developing legislation and guidance. There should be scope for students and graduates to progress into their chosen career pathways.

2.15   These Subject Benchmark Statements can apply to the full range of degree courses offered which can include BA (Hons), top-ups as a progression from foundation degrees, BA (Hons) full or part-time degrees, and master's provision. This encourages students and graduates to further develop their knowledge, understanding and skills. There should be the potential to progress to doctoral study (professional doctorate or PhD) which can enhance the development of new and innovative knowledge and practice in early childhood.

2.16   Where a suite of qualifications is developed, they should make clear how their design shows a deepening understanding of theory, research, practice, policy and legislation. This understanding should reflect a deepening understanding of EDI and sustainability. For courses that offer a practice placement option, the design of these placements and assessment should consider the requirement for those working in the Early Childhood Education and Care sectors across all four UK nations. However, these placements should offer an opportunity to develop a multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary experience with an understanding of multiple childhoods and families, not only in early years settings and schools.

Flexibility

2.17   Degrees can be designed to be full-time, part-time, distance learning, blended learning (which includes a mix of online and face to face), or fully online. This will allow for those choosing to study early childhood to do so in a way that is suited to their individual needs. When determining the approach(es) to be used it is important to consider those who are looking to attend a higher education provider on a full-time basis, and those who are working or volunteering and studying simultaneously.

Partnership

2.18   The linking of theory and practice is integral throughout the whole degree. In addition, some honours degrees encourage professional and practice development and may offer the opportunity for students to meet the requirements of statutory or regulatory bodies, through the structure and content of the course. There are likely to be regional and national variations in these requirements, and students may also have to meet other criteria in addition to the ECS degree.

2.19   Working in partnership with multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary practice forms a crucial part of ECS degrees, foundation degrees, apprenticeships and master's provision. This can be in the form of placement opportunities or exploring employability opportunities through courses that do not have placements. Early Childhood Studies degrees should strive to demonstrate the multidisciplinary nature of the discipline itself through links with local, regional, national and international partners.

2.20   Successful achievement of Level 6 ECGPCs meets the Level 3 requirements in England (with assessed practice) and, in addition, makes a significant contribution to strengthening a graduate-led early childhood workforce across all four nations and internationally. Higher education providers must make it clear whether or not they offer ECGPS to potential students to ensure transparency when students apply for degrees. Level 6 ECGPC provides students with assessed placement opportunities to critically apply theory to practice in a range of early childhood settings and/or schools, social care and health settings. This will enable students to develop graduate skills to further support children, to link to employability and in the application of the interdisciplinary early childhood knowledge base to reflective practice (see Appendix 1: Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies). However, as discussed in paragraph 1.19, the competencies are not an expected outcome for all ECS degrees; a professional qualification for work in early childhood may not be appropriate for all learners or providers. There may also be different requirements for home nations students and students should discuss these options with their provider.

Monitoring and review

2.21   A major feature of academic quality assurance and enhancement at a higher education institution is having in place monitoring and regular review processes for the courses it delivers. Degree-awarding bodies routinely collect and analyse information and undertake periodic course review according to their own needs. They will draw on a range of external reference points, including this Statement, to ensure that their provision aligns with sector norms. Monitoring and evaluation is a periodic assessment of a course, conducted internally or by external independent evaluators. Evaluation uses information from both current and historic monitoring to develop an understanding of student achievement or inform future course planning.

2.22   Externality is an essential component of the quality assurance system in the UK. Higher education providers will use external reviewers as part of periodic review to gain an

external perspective on any proposed changes and ensure threshold standards are achieved and content is appropriate for the subject.

2.23   External examination currently in use across the UK higher education sector also helps to ensure consistency in the way academic standards are secured by degree-awarding bodies. Typically, external examiners will be asked to comment on the types, principles and purposes of assessments being offered to students. They will consider the types of modules on offer to students, the outcomes of a cohort and how these compare to similar provision offered within the UK. External examiners produce a report each year and make recommendations for changes to modules and assessments (where appropriate). Subject Benchmark Statements, such as this one, can play an important role in supporting external examiners in advising on whether threshold standards are being met in a specific subject area.

2.24   External examiners should have the required specialist knowledge and understanding to be able to ensure the quality of courses and, where applicable, practice placements and the attainment of Graduate Practitioner Competencies. Examiners need to be flexible to the range of course designs but be aware of the core principles in this Subject Benchmark Statement which should underpin all degrees. They should also be aware of the different types of courses offered (with the required level for these), and the potential for a variety of delivery models when they examine provision.

2.25   Courses with professional and vocational outcomes may also require evaluation and accreditation from professional and regulatory bodies. These are usually done through a combination of assessed visits and reviews of academic work. The Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network provides further advice on the ECGPC. Higher education providers must be current members of this network to offer this as an embedded or extra certification option to students.

3   Content, teaching, learning and assessment

Content

3.1   Studying for a bachelor's degree with honours in Early Childhood Studies provides graduates with a diversity of skills that prepares them not only to pursue postgraduate studies, but also to enter a variety of employment areas. These skills have been divided into subject-specific and generic skills. Subject-specific skills are those that relate closely to subject knowledge and/or are an integral part of any Early Childhood Studies honours degree. Generic skills are transferable skills that are not so closely tied to the subject matter of early childhood studies.

3.2   However, it is important to bear in mind that this distinction is an artificial one since the differences between subject-specific and generic skills are not always clear cut. The multidisciplinary nature of the subject area means that ECS equips students with a wide range of subject-specific and generic skills. The intention is to offer steady supported progression towards competence, criticality, independence and reflexivity in both academic and practical work.

Subject-specific skills

3.3   Individual courses will have different emphases but, in general, an ECS graduate is expected to be able to:

- reflect upon a range of psychological, sociological, health, historical, educational and philosophical perspectives and consider how these underpin different understandings of babies, young children and childhood

- apply multiple perspectives to early childhood issues, recognising that early childhood studies involves a range of research methods, theories, evidence and applications

- use skills of observation and analysis in relation to aspects of the lives of babies and young children with reasonable adjustments to support accessibility where required

- integrate ideas and findings across the multiple perspectives in ECS and recognise distinctive approaches to relevant issues

- constructively critique theories, practice and research in the areas of child development, well-being, participation and learning for multiple childhoods

- demonstrate knowledge and awareness of the skills needed for different pedagogical approaches, including:
    - the necessary depth and strength of relationships with individual babies and children, children in groups, and the facilitation of the building of relationships between babies and children
    - the formation and promotion of mutually respectful relationships with families, colleagues, other professionals and communities

- evaluate and develop their own pedagogical values

- reflect on the importance of the natural environment and being outdoors to support the growth, development, knowledge and understanding of all young children and their families

- critically explore, examine and evaluate the significance of the cultural, historical, and contemporary features of various policies, institutions and agencies, locally,

nationally and globally, regarding babies' and young children's development and the concept of childhood more widely

- demonstrate a strong understanding of the pedagogy of play from a range of disciplinary perspectives

- plan for - and where appropriate implement - curriculum, assessment, evaluation and improvement of creative learning opportunities, taking account of young children's health and emotional well-being

- lead, support and work collaboratively with others and demonstrate an understanding of working effectively in teams with parents, carers and other professionals

- demonstrate an understanding of how to plan for - and where appropriate implement - meeting and promoting children's health, well-being, protection and safety and the conditions that enable them to flourish

- produce critical arguments for improvements to multiagency and multi-professional practices for babies and young children

- use skills of observation and analysis in relation to aspects of the lives of babies and young children

- reflect upon the ethics of studying babies and young children and their families and communities

- generate and explore hypotheses and research questions relating to early childhood in an ecological context

- carry out empirical studies ethically, involving a variety of methods of data collection, including observations relating to early childhood in an ecological context analyse data relating to early childhood

- present and evaluate research findings in early childhood

- demonstrate a critical understanding of the interrelationships between political, economic, cultural and ideological contexts, locally, nationally and globally, in the lives of children and their families and communities

- recognise and challenge inequalities in society, and embrace an antibias approach

- recognise agency, give voice to and, where appropriate, act as an advocate for babies, young children, families and communities.

Generic skills

3.4   An Early Childhood Studies graduate is expected to be able to:

- present information to others in appropriate forms, including having a sense of audience, online or offline

- demonstrate empathy, active listening skills and develop strategies to protect against burn out from 'emotional labour'

- offer and justify an informed point of view, drawing upon a range of theoretical positions

- comprehend and use data effectively

- communicate with others and reflect upon one's own and others' skills, beliefs, understandings and views

- generate, define and refine questions and make critical judgements and evaluations

- reflect on different perspectives, and critically evaluate them to arrive at supported conclusions

- access, retrieve, organise and use a range of sources of information, including primary sources, and critically evaluate their relevance

- engage with research and practice and the uncertainties of developing knowledge and understanding

- use the communication skills necessary to converse, debate, negotiate, persuade and challenge the ideas of others, with reasonable adjustments for disabled students if required

- have insight and confidence in leading and working collaboratively with others

- be sensitive to contextual and interpersonal factors, taking account of the complexity of factors that shape behaviour and social interaction and form the basis of problems and interpersonal conflict

- be sensitive to the importance of enhancing cooperation to maximise the effectiveness of individual skills

- write for different purposes, including but not limited to persuasion, explanation, description, evaluation and judgement, recount, recap, hypothesis and summary

- engage in critical evaluation and analysis

- use digital technology and social media appropriately in a range of contexts and reflect on the experiences

- become more independent, resilient, responsible and pragmatic and develop as an autonomous learner.

Teaching and learning

3.5   The teaching and learning strategies used in ECS help students achieve an awareness of the ethical concerns within the subject, especially in the conduct of empirical studies and practice. The focus of individual courses varies, but as the subject is based on the principle of developing independent, critical students who are insightful advocates of children, courses are generally designed to:

- help the student understand how to use human and material (including digital) learning resources, develop digital literacy and competence and how to engage others in reciprocal learning relationships

- assist the student to assume increasing responsibility for defining their own learning course and evaluating their progress

- encourage the student to be self-aware and to organise new learning and problem solving in a way that connects with present knowledge

- encourage the student to critically self-assess their own learning progress, development and achievement

- encourage and assist the student to find and access wider support available in the institution to suit individual learner needs.

3.6   Therefore, the teaching strategies and learning experiences reflect an increasing proportion of individualised and self-directed learning approaches. Students are encouraged to take personal responsibility for achieving the learning outcomes through their own efforts. They are expected to supplement the knowledge presented through additional enquiry and discussions.

3.7   Independent and group study using reflection, analysis, enquiry, synthesis and evaluation are essential elements in learning.

3.8   Approaches to teaching and learning value personal, theoretical, cultural and practice-based experiences and explore how they complement and enrich each other. There is a requirement to support students in reflecting on their own childhoods, on experience in early childhood settings and in exploring the relationship between these personal experiences and the theoretical perspectives that enable students to make sense of them developing their cultural competence. Personal reflection on childhood experiences can be a painful experience and emotional support for students is an essential part of teaching strategies in these cases.

3.9   Engagement with practice is a key feature of approaches to teaching and learning in ECS. Opportunities are provided for students to participate in curriculum development, to contribute to assessment and evaluation, and to improve creative learning opportunities - while continually taking account of young children's health and emotional well-being. Approaches to teaching and learning include opportunities for students to plan for provision that ensures children's health, welfare and safety needs are met and promoted, taking account of the conditions that enable them to flourish. Students are enabled to develop their own cultural competence, valuing cultural identity as well as being provided with opportunities to lead, support and work collaboratively with others. They have a strong understanding of co-production with children, parents, carers and other professionals.

3.10   ECS degree courses may offer the opportunity for students to develop and extend their professional practice and/or qualifications through meeting the requirements of statutory or regulatory bodies. In these cases, where such practice is assessed in the early childhood setting, students are provided with appropriate mentoring support by the higher education provider, statutory/regulatory body (where appropriate) and the mentor in practice in order to support them in the development of the professional skills needed for such work.

3.11   Culturally responsive, innovative and inclusive teaching and learning approaches in ECS enable students to take a more critical stance to the theories, findings and approaches of the subject as they come to recognise the contested nature of its concepts and practices. This commonly involves a change from initially supported and guided study to more independent and self-directed study. Throughout, a variety of learning and teaching strategies with an emphasis on active learning, supports the acquisition of subject knowledge, as well as generic and subject-specific skills and abilities.

Assessment

3.12   The choice of assessment methods is clearly related to the learning objectives and enables students to demonstrate theoretical, subject-specific and generic skills and their understanding of the ways in which they complement and enrich each other. Reasonable adjustments should be made for disabled students if required.

3.13   Assessment methods in early childhood studies may include, but are not limited to:

- formal examinations (which can be seen, unseen or open book)
- multiple-choice tests
- assessed essays
- practical and other reports
- use of digital technology such as blogs, vlogs, podcasts, website pages, e-portfolios, and e-posters
- case studies
- culturally appropriate artefacts

- academic posters
- portfolios
- critical reflections of practice
- formal assessment of performance in oral presentations and debates, including seminar and individual or group presentation; written and verbal assessments
- practical assessments, webinars, conferences
- project-based assessments
- role play scenarios
- creation of practical and digital resources
- virtual placement scenarios
- vivas
- dissertations.

3.14   Students may also be assessed for their practice in an appropriate range of health, social care and early childhood settings. This is a requirement if students are completing the graduate practitioner competencies. To ensure that the full range of skills and inclusivity is being developed by a course, a diversity of innovative assessment methods is encouraged. Assessment criteria are explicit, inclusive and anticipate that critical thinking skills will develop progressively.

3.15   Where ECS degree courses offer the opportunity for students to meet the requirements of statutory or regulatory bodies or develop and extend their professional practice, assessment of performance may be included. Such assessment is carried out using a variety of means listed within paragraph 3.13, including reflection on practice, professional discussions, appropriate digital methods, portfolios of evidence and/or direct observation of practice. These may include artefacts including photographs, videos, or e-portfolios. Such assessment may be undertaken in the higher education provider, virtually and in a wide range of diverse early childhood placement settings.

3.16   The range and breadth of assessment is designed to enable students to demonstrate possession of a variety of subject-specific and general skills and qualities expected of a graduate, and an increasing degree of independence and autonomy in their studies. Assessment feedback and feed forward should be in sufficient depth to allow students to reflect on their achievement and inform their progress.

4 Benchmark standards

4.1 The following benchmark standards are divided into four categories:

- **threshold standards** are the minimum standards necessary for a student to graduate with a single bachelor's degree with honours in Early Childhood Studies

- **typical standards** are those that a typical Early Childhood Studies student would be expected to attain

- **excellent standards** are those that the highest attaining Early Childhood Studies student would be expected to achieve

- **postgraduate standards** are those that are achieved by students who reflect advanced scholarship and understand how knowledge is advanced through research, thereby creating new insights within early childhood studies.

4.2 The standards are phrased in terms of what knowledge or skills an ECS graduate at that standard (threshold, typical, excellent and postgraduate) is expected to be able to demonstrate. These standards may also be reflected upon for those teaching on and designing foundation degrees; BA (Hons) top-ups as a progression from foundation degrees; childhood studies degrees; BA (Hons) full or part-time degrees; master's degrees and those designing future apprenticeships in the sector. The areas of knowledge and skills are the same at each level, but typical standards are more securely demonstrated than the threshold, and excellent standards reflect a high level of proficiency and understanding.

4.3 All ECS graduates should acquire a measure of the skills required by the discipline as set out in the standards below; although the range of skills demonstrated and the degree of competence exhibited will vary depending on whether students take single honours, joint honours or Early Childhood Studies modules within a broader degree course.

4.4 Although some skills are specific to particular areas of study, others are pervasive through the discipline. It would, therefore, be inappropriate for each Early Childhood Studies degree course, let alone each module, to have to demonstrate how each skill is separately acquired.

Threshold Standard (3rd class degree)	Typical Standard (2nd class lower to 2nd class upper)	Excellent Standard (1st class)	Postgraduate level
Subject knowledge	**Subject knowledge**	**Subject knowledge**	**Subject knowledge**
understand the conceptual underpinnings of early childhood studies as a subject area	understand the conceptual underpinnings of early childhood studies as a subject area, its historical origins, development and limitations	understand critically the conceptual underpinnings of early childhood studies as a subject area, its historical origins, development and limitations	detailed and accurate knowledge and understanding, showing critical engagement with the conceptual underpinnings of early childhood studies as a subject area, its historical origins, development and limitations
have a basic understanding of babies, young children and multiple childhoods, nationally and globally, from psychological, sociological, health, welfare, educational, cultural, decolonising, sustainable, philosophical, legal, historical, political and economic perspectives	demonstrate systematic knowledge and critical understanding of babies, young children and multiple childhoods, nationally and globally, from psychological, sociological, health, welfare, educational, cultural, decolonising, sustainable, philosophical, legal, historical, political and economic perspectives	demonstrate in-depth, systematic knowledge and consistently critical understanding of babies, young children and multiple childhoods, nationally and globally, from psychological, sociological, health, welfare, educational, cultural, decolonising, sustainable, philosophical, legal, historical, political and economic perspectives	well-developed critical engagement with theoretical knowledge, and a consistently critical understanding of babies, young children and multiple childhoods, nationally and globally, from psychological, sociological, health, welfare, educational, cultural, decolonising, sustainable, philosophical, legal, historical, political and economic perspectives
demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the areas of interest contributing to early childhood studies across the core subject-specific skills areas, and how they interrelate.	demonstrate systematic knowledge and critical understanding of the areas of interest contributing to early childhood studies across the core subject-specific skills areas, and how they interrelate.	demonstrate in-depth, systematic knowledge and consistently critical understanding of the areas of interest contributing to early childhood studies across the core subject-specific skills areas, and how they interrelate.	detailed and accurate knowledge and consistently critical engagement with the areas of interest contributing to early childhood studies across the core subject-specific skills areas, and how they interrelate.
This includes:	**This includes:**	**This includes:**	**This includes:**
understanding of local, national and global policy, and provision for babies, young children, families and communities	a systematic knowledge and critical understanding of local, national and global policy, and provision for babies, young children, families and communities	in-depth, systematic knowledge and significant critical understanding of local, national and global policy, and provision	detailed and accurate systematic knowledge and consistently critical engagement with local, national and global policy, and provision for

Threshold Standard (3rd class degree)	Typical Standard (2nd class lower to 2nd class upper)	Excellent Standard (1st class)	Postgraduate level
		for babies, young children, families and communities	babies, young children, families and communities
understanding of multi-professional, inter-professional, multiagency, interagency and multicultural working as a means to enhance the lives of babies, young children, families and communities	a working knowledge of the importance of, but also the challenges and constraints of, multi-professional, inter-professional, multiagency, interagency and multicultural working as a means to enhance the lives of babies, young children, families and communities	a critical working knowledge of the importance of, but also the challenges and constraints of, multi-professional, inter-professional, multiagency, interagency and multicultural working as a means to enhance the lives of babies, young children, families and communities	a well-developed critical engagement with the importance of, but also the challenges and constraints of, multi-professional, inter-professional, multiagency, interagency and multicultural working as a means to enhance the lives of babies, young children, families and communities
awareness of issues in relation to human rights, diversity, equity, social justice, sustainability and inclusion in relation to working with babies, young children, families and communities	a good knowledge of issues in relation to human rights, diversity, equity, social justice, sustainability and inclusion in relation to working with babies, young children, families and communities	excellent knowledge of issues in relation to human rights, diversity, equity, social justice, sustainability and inclusion in relation to working with babies, young children, families and communities	Synthesizing of knowledge and understanding that leads to originality in relation to human rights, diversity, equity, social justice, sustainability and inclusion in relation to working with babies, young children, families and communities
knowledge and understanding of pedagogical approaches for working with babies, young children, families and communities.	a working knowledge and understanding of pedagogical approaches/values for working with babies and young children, families and communities.	a critical working knowledge and understanding of pedagogical approaches/values for working with babies and young children, families and communities.	detailed and accurate knowledge and understanding showing critical engagement with the pedagogical approaches/values for working with babies and young children, families and communities.
Subject knowledge	**Subject knowledge**	**Subject knowledge**	**Subject knowledge**
demonstrate a critical understanding of the links between ethics, economics, politics, culture and ideology in the lives of babies, young children, their families and their communities	demonstrate a well-developed critical understanding of the links between ethics, economics, politics, culture and ideology in the lives of babies, young children, their families and their communities	have a highly developed critical understanding of the links between ethics, economics, politics, culture and ideology in the lives of babies, young children, their families and their communities	have an excellent critical engagement with the links between ethics, economics, politics, culture and ideology in the lives of babies, young children, their families and their communities

Threshold Standard (3rd class degree)	Typical Standard (2nd class lower to 2nd class upper)	Excellent Standard (1st class)	Postgraduate level
knowledge of the methods required for systematic study and research relative to children and childhood.	a good working knowledge of the methods required for systematic study and research relative to children and childhood.	excellent and explicit working knowledge of the methods required for systematic study and research relative to children and childhood.	a critically reflexive evaluation of the methods required for systematic study and research relative to children and childhood.
Subject-specific skills	**Subject-specific skills**	**Subject-specific skills**	**Subject-specific skills**
reason clearly, and demonstrate the relationship between theory, policy, practice and evidence	reason clearly, understand the role of theory, policy, practice and evidence and make critical judgements about arguments relating to the subject area of early childhood studies	have a high-level ability to reason clearly, understand the role of theory, policy, practice and evidence and make critical judgements about arguments relating to the subject area of early childhood studies	have an excellent ability to reason clearly, critically engage with the role of theory, policy, practice and evidence and make critical judgements about arguments relating to the subject area of early childhood studies
be able to adopt a range of theoretical perspectives in relation to multiple childhoods	be able to adopt a range of theoretical perspectives in relation to multiple childhoods and systematically analyse the relationships between them	have a high-level ability to adopt multiple theoretical perspectives in relation to early childhood and systematically analyse the relationships between them	have an excellent ability to adopt multiple theoretical perspectives in relation to early childhood and critically analyse the relationships between them
constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of early childhood studies	analyse and constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of early childhood studies	have a high-level ability to analyse and constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of early childhood studies	have an excellent ability to critically analyse and constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of early childhood studies
reflect upon a range of psychological, sociological, health, welfare, educational, cultural, philosophical, legal, historical, political and economic perspectives, and consider how these underpin different understandings of babies, young children and childhood, at a local, national and global level	have a well-developed ability to reflect upon a range of psychological, sociological, health, welfare, educational, cultural, philosophical, legal, historical, political and economic perspectives, and consider how these underpin different understandings of babies, young children and childhood, at a local, national and global level	have a high-level ability to reflect upon a range of psychological, sociological, health, welfare, educational, cultural, philosophical, legal, historical, political and economic perspectives and consider how these underpin different understandings of babies, young children and childhood, at a local, national and global level	have an excellent ability to critically reflect upon a range of psychological, sociological, health, welfare, educational, cultural, philosophical, legal, historical, political and economic perspectives and consider how these underpin different understandings of babies, young children and childhood, at a local, national and global level

Threshold Standard (3rd class degree)	Typical Standard (2nd class lower to 2nd class upper)	Excellent Standard (1st class)	Postgraduate level
explore critically the interrelationship between political, economic, cultural and ideological contexts in the lives of babies and young children	have a well-developed ability to explore critically the interrelationships between political, economic, cultural and ideological contexts in the lives of babies and young children	have a highly developed ability to explore critically the interrelationships between political, economic, cultural and ideological contexts in the lives of babies and young children	have an excellent ability to explore critically the interrelationships between political, economic, cultural and ideological contexts in the lives of babies and young children
explore, examine and evaluate the significance of the cultural, historical and contemporary features of various policies, institutions and agencies in regard to babies, young children and childhood	critically explore, examine and evaluate the significance of the cultural, historical and contemporary features of various policies, institutions and agencies regarding babies, young children and childhood	have a high-level ability to explore, examine and evaluate the significance of the cultural, historical and contemporary features of various policies, institutions and agencies in regard to babies, young children and childhood	have an excellent ability to critically explore, examine and evaluate the significance of the cultural, historical and contemporary features of various policies, institutions and agencies in regard to babies, young children and childhood
evaluate competing positions in relation to the construction of babies, young children and childhood by different subjects, societal agents and time, place and culture	analyse and evaluate competing positions with regards to the social construction of babies, young children and childhood relative to time, place and culture	have a high-level ability to analyse and evaluate competing positions in relation to the construction of babies, young children and childhood by different subjects, societal agents and time, place and culture	have an excellent ability to critically analyse and evaluate competing positions in relation to the construction of babies, young children and childhood by different subjects, societal agents and time, place and culture
demonstrate knowledge and awareness of the skills needed for different relational pedagogical approaches	have a well-developed knowledge and awareness of the skills needed for different relational pedagogical approaches	have a high-level knowledge and awareness of the skills needed for different relational pedagogical approaches	have an excellent knowledge and awareness of the skills needed for different relational pedagogical approaches
use skills of observation and analysis in relation to aspects of the lives of babies and young children	use developed skills of observation and analysis in relation to aspects of the lives of babies and young children	have highly developed skills of observation and analysis in relation to aspects of the lives of babies and young children	have excellent skills of observation and analysis in relation to aspects of the lives of babies and young children
identify meaningful patterns in play, behaviour and experience	identify meaningful patterns in play, behaviour and experience, and evaluate their significance	have a high-level ability to identify meaningful patterns in play, behaviour and experience and evaluate their significance	have an excellent ability to identify meaningful patterns in play, behaviour and experience and critically evaluate their significance

Threshold Standard (3rd class degree)	Typical Standard (2nd class lower to 2nd class upper)	Excellent Standard (1st class)	Postgraduate level
demonstrate the ability to be attuned to the perspectives of and, where appropriate, act as an advocate for babies, young children, families and communities	have a well-developed ability to be attuned to the perspectives of and, where appropriate, act as an advocate for babies, young children, families and communities	have a highly developed ability to be attuned to the perspectives of and, where appropriate, act as an advocate for babies, young children, families and communities	have an excellent ability to be attuned to the perspectives of and, where appropriate, act as an advocate for babies, young children, families and communities
demonstrate the ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, meet and promote children's holistic development, health, well-being, protection and safety, and the conditions which enable them to flourish	have a well-developed ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, meet and promote children's holistic development, health, well-being, protection and safety, and the conditions which enable them to flourish	have a highly developed ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, meet and promote children's holistic development, health, well-being, protection and safety, and the conditions that enable them to flourish	have an excellent ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, meet and promote children's holistic development, health, well-being, protection and safety, and the conditions that enable them to flourish
demonstrate the ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, effective collaborations with parents, carers and other stakeholders	have a well-developed ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, effective collaborations with parents, carers and other stakeholders	have a highly developed ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, effective collaborations with parents, carers and other stakeholders	have an excellent ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, effective collaborations with parents, carers and other stakeholders
produce critical arguments for improvements to multiagency, multi-professional and inter-professional practices for babies and young children	have a well-developed ability to produce critical arguments for improvements to multiagency, multi-professional and inter-professional practices for babies and young children	have a highly developed ability to produce critical arguments for improvements to multiagency, multi-professional and inter-professional practices for babies and young children	have an excellent ability to produce critical arguments for improvements to multiagency, multi-professional and inter-professional practices for babies and young children
demonstrate the ability to recognise and challenge inequalities and social justice in society and to embrace anti-bias and anti-oppressive approaches.	have a well-developed ability to recognise and challenge inequalities and social justice in society and to embrace an anti-bias and anti-oppressive approaches	have a highly developed ability to recognise and challenge inequalities and social justice in society and to embrace an anti-bias and anti-oppressive approaches.	have an excellent ability to recognise and challenge inequalities and social justice in society and to embrace an anti-bias and anti-oppressive approaches.
demonstrate the ability to lead, mentor, facilitate and work collaboratively with others in order to support transformational change	have a well-developed ability to lead, mentor, facilitate and work collaboratively with others in order to support transformational change	have a highly developed ability to lead, mentor, facilitate and work collaboratively with others in order to support transformational change	have professional confidence and an excellent ability to lead, mentor, facilitate and work collaboratively with others in order to support transformational change

Threshold Standard (3rd class degree)	Typical Standard (2nd class lower to 2nd class upper)	Excellent Standard (1st class)	Postgraduate level
pose and operationalise research questions in relation to early childhood and demonstrate competence in research skills through practical and theoretical activities	pose, operationalise and critique research questions related to early childhood, and demonstrate competence in research skills through practical and theoretical activities	have a highly developed ability to pose, operationalise and critique research questions related to early childhood, and demonstrate a good level of competence in research skills through practical and theoretical activities	have an excellent ability to pose, operationalise and critique research questions related to early childhood, and demonstrate a highly developed level of competence in research skills through practical and theoretical activities
initiate, design, conduct and report an empirically based early childhood research project under appropriate supervision	competently initiate, design, conduct and report an early childhood research project under appropriate supervision, and recognise its theoretical, practical and methodological implications and limitations	initiate, design, conduct and report an early childhood research project under appropriate supervision with a high degree of competence, and demonstrate a highly developed ability to recognise its theoretical, practical and methodological implications and limitations	independently initiate, design, conduct and report an early childhood research project with appropriate supervision, evidencing a high degree of competence and reflexive engagement with its theoretical, practical and methodological implications and limitations
reflect upon the ethics of studying babies and young children, families and communities	have a well-developed ability to reflect upon the ethics of studying babies and young children, families and communities	have a high-level ability to reflect upon the ethics of studying babies and young children, families and communities	have an excellent ability to reflect upon the ethics of studying babies and young children, families and communities
be aware of ethical principles and demonstrate this in relation to personal study, particularly with regard to the research project.	be aware of the complexity of ethical principles and issues, and demonstrate this in relation to personal study, particularly with regard to the research project.	be aware of the complexity of ethical principles and issues, and apply this in relation to personal study, particularly with regard to the research project.	well-considered reflexive engagement with the complexity of ethical principles and issues, and synthesise this in relation to personal study, particularly with regard to the research project.
Generic skills	**Generic skills**	**Generic skills**	**Generic skills**
present a range of theoretical positions and offer and justify a point of view	present a wide range of theoretical positions and offer and justify a well-informed point of view	present a wide range of theoretical positions and offer and justify a well-informed and insightful point of view	detailed and accurate knowledge of a wide range of theoretical positions and be able to articulate and justify a well-informed and insightful point of view

Threshold Standard (3rd class degree)	Typical Standard (2nd class lower to 2nd class upper)	Excellent Standard (1st class)	Postgraduate level
use a range of sources of information	use a range of sources of information critically	use a wide range of sources of information critically and with insight	engage with a wide range of sources of information critically and with insight
listen carefully to others and reflect upon one's own and others' skills and views	listen carefully to others and critically reflect upon one's own and others' skills and views	listen carefully to others and reflect critically and insightfully upon one's own and others' skills and views	listen carefully to others and reflect critically and analytically upon one's own and others' skills and views
recognise the need to assess one's own skills and to reflect on them for future learning	be able to take charge of one's own learning and reflect and evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of future learning	show sophistication in taking charge of one's own learning, reflect and be reflexive of personal strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of future learning	evidence sophistication in leading one's own learning, evaluate and be reflexive of personal strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of future learning
have the ability to use digital technologies/literacies appropriately as part of the learning process in a range of contexts to enhance provision for children.	be confident in the use of digital technologies/literacies appropriately as part of the learning process in a range of contexts to enhance provision for children.	show sophistication in the use of digital technologies/literacies as part of the learning process in a range of contexts to enhance provision for children.	critically and professionally engage with digital technologies/literacies with sophistication as part of the learning process in a range of contexts to enhance provision for children.

5   List of references and further resources

Professional organisations

Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network (ECSDN)
www.ecsdn.org

Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degrees in Early Years Professional Association (SEFDEY)
www.sefdey.com

British Early Childhood Education Research Association (BECERA)
www.becera.org.uk

European Early Childhood Education Research Association (EECERA)
www.eecera.org

Early Childhood Forum (ECF)
http://earlychildhoodforum.org

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights

UK Child Health Research Collaboration (UKCHRC)
www.rcpch.ac.uk/resources/uk-child-health-research-collaboration

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Further resources

www.oecd.org/education/2030-project/teaching-and-learning/learning/skills/Skills_for_2030_concept_note.pdf

www.savethechildren.org.uk/what-we-do/childrens-rights/united-nations-convention-of-the-rights-of-the-child

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/315587/Equality_Act_Advice_Final.pdf

www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

www.foundationyears.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Believing_in_Children.pdf

www.naldic.org.uk/Resources/NALDIC/Teaching%20and%20Learning/ealeyfsguidance.pdf

www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment

www.educationdevelopmenttrust.com/EducationDevelopmentTrust/files/ee/ee5ee837-3914-4f9d-ba10-d59216255c28.pdf

www.birthto5matters.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Final-import-of-play-report-23.04.2012-2013_11_18-10_01_41-UTC-2014_04_14-09_41_00-UTC.pdf

www.galwaychildcare.com/uploadedfiles/Outdoor_Play_Matters.pdf

www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs128/resources/early-years-promoting-health-and-wellbeing-in-under-5s-pdf-75545365294789

https://lgbtqearlyyears.org/product/lgbtqia-early-years-magazine-downloadable-copy

6 Membership of the Advisory Groups for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Early Childhood Studies

Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Early Childhood Studies (2022)

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Dr Babs Anderson	Liverpool Hope University
Dr Victoria Bamsey	University of Plymouth
Jo Benford	Pen Green Research Base
Aaron Bradbury	Nottingham Trent University
Hattie Campbell	University of East London
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Dr Jackie Musgrave	The Open University
Dr Theodora Papatheodorou	Norland College Limited
Catriona Rogers	Stranmillis University College
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Katie Toft	Sheffield Hallam University
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Membership of the Reading Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Early Childhood Studies (2022)

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Dr Valerie Daniel	Washwood Heath Nursery School
Dr Ruth Hudson	Staffordshire University
Dawn Jones	University of Wolverhampton
Dr Eva Mikuska	University of Chichester
Deb Nye	Coventry University
Meredith Rose	Nottingham Trent University
Gemma Ryder	University of East London
Angela Scollan	Middlesex University
Nancy Small	University of Hertfordshire
Georgina Beatrice Smart	Roehampton University
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Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Early Childhood Studies (2019)

The third edition, published in 2019, was revised by QAA to align the content with the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education, published in 2018. Proposed revisions were checked and verified by the Chair of the advisory group of the Subject Benchmark Statement for Early Childhood Studies from 2014.

Dr Ian Barron (Chair)	Manchester Metropolitan University
Carolyn Silberfeld	Chair, Director, Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network
Simon Bullock	QAA

Membership of the Advisory Group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Early Childhood Studies (2014)

Details provided below are as published in the second edition of the Subject Benchmark Statement.

Dr Ian Barron (Chair)	Manchester Metropolitan University
Pamela Calder	London South Bank University
Ruth Davies	Glyndŵr University
Dr Julie Evans	University of St Mark and St John, Plymouth
Dorothy Johnson	University of the West of Scotland
Dr Dorothy J McMillan	Stranmillis University College, Belfast
Dr Bruce Marjoribanks	University of Sunderland
Beverley Nightingale	University Campus Suffolk
Pia Parry	University of Chichester
Faye Stanley	University of Wolverhampton
Harriet Barnes	QAA Officer
Fawziya H Al Zadjali (student reader)	Leeds Metropolitan University

The following employers were invited to provide feedback on the Subject Benchmark Statement:
Foundations for Learning
London Early Years Foundation
Peterborough City Council
Wrexham Early Years Centre

Membership of the Advisory Group for Early Childhood Studies (2007)

Details below appear as published in the original Subject Benchmark Statement.

Pamela Calder (Chair)	London South Bank University
Ian Barron	Manchester Metropolitan University
Dr Elizabeth Coates	University of Warwick
Joan Hendy	Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies
Caroline Leeson	University of Plymouth
Bruce Marjoribanks	University of Sunderland
Dr Helena Mitchell	Oxford Brookes University
Martin Needham	University of Wolverhampton

Angela Nurse	Canterbury Christ Church University
Kay Sargent	University of Bristol
Carolyn Silberfeld	University of East London

Other members of the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network also offered comments and suggestions at network meetings.

Early Childhood Studies Degree Network

Revised July 2020

Striving for Excellence
to ensure the skilful application of knowledge to practice and practice to knowledge

Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the Early Childhood Degrees Network Strategy Group, member organisations across the UK, ECS students and practitioners whose expertise and professional experience has enabled the development of Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies that embed the multiple lenses of the Early Childhood democratic community.

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Revisions October 2019

Following the QAA Benchmark consultation and the first year of the pilot presentation, this document has been updated to firmly locate the assessment process for practice at Level 6 to the QAA descriptors for a bachelor degree with honours in Early Childhood.

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Part One: Guidance

Part Two: Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies

Part One

Guidance

Only membership organisations of ECSDN can embed the competencies into degree programmes that are mapped on to the QAA Benchmark Statement for Early Childhood Studies. Their primary aim is to strengthen the Early Childhood degrees that embed practice.

1. Introduction

It is over twenty-five years since the first Early Childhood Studies degree students graduated and the [Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network (ECSDN)](#) was launched. The degree was aimed at providing higher level study opportunities for those working in the Early Childhood Education and Care sector. Since this time the number of degrees has grown enormously, and Early Childhood is now firmly established as an inter-disciplinary academic field in its own right with a [QAA Benchmark Statement.](#)

The need for highly qualified graduate Early Childhood practitioners is as relevant today as it was in the early 1990s. The introduction of the Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner competencies, as an optional route in degree programmes, is a timely and important development.

This document introduces the competencies and provides supporting information for Higher Education providers, programme teams and employers.

2. Early Childhood Studies Degrees

Early Childhood Studies degrees (ECS) afford students the opportunity to engage with the multiple perspectives on Early Childhood. They promote the critical application of theory to practice with infants, young children and families. Integral to the degrees is holistic knowledge and understanding of the ecology of child development in the context of the family, community and wider socio-political contexts. Anyone who has studied Early Childhood, or taught on Early Childhood Studies Degrees, appreciates how the knowledge, understanding and skills gained support future careers working with children and families.

ECS degrees can be studied in a variety of ways at a range of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and Further Education Colleges, with Higher Education provision, across the UK. Some programmes have an academic focus only, others offer placement opportunities or are employment based. Learners decide to study ECS at different ages, times in their life, with different entry qualifications and reasons. Some students have considerable experience in practice, others have minimal or no experience at all. However, they share an aspiration to work with children and families but are not always sure of the practice or professional direction they want to pursue.

There are currently five types of degrees mapped on to the Early Childhood Studies QAA Benchmark. Students can study a degree with:
- no placements
- formally assessed placements
- unassessed or sporadically assessed placements
- Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies embedded
- a combination of work and study for those in employment.
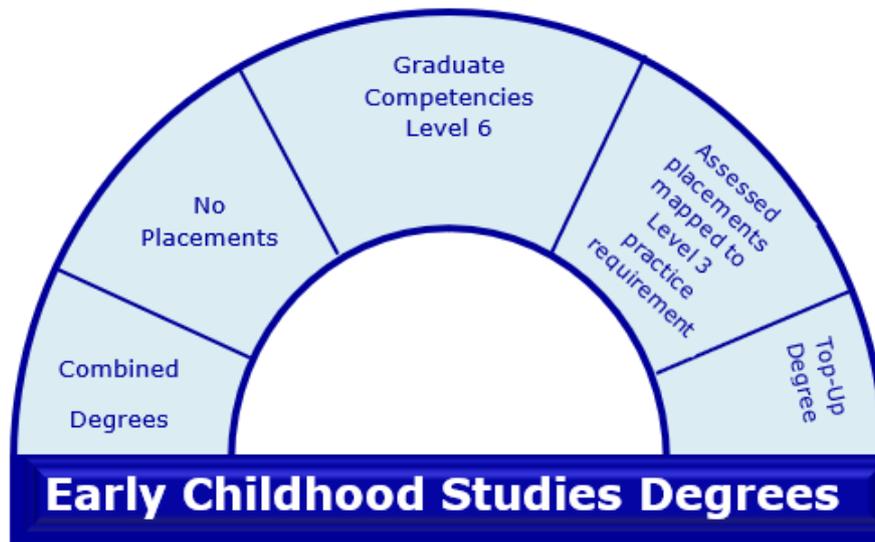
3. The Rationale for Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies

A real strength of ECS degrees is the variety of study and career pathways. However, this can present challenges for future employers. Different HEIs use different titles for degrees mapped on to the ECS QAA Benchmark Statement and it is not always clear how the degree maps against sector qualifications.

Full and Relevant Criteria in England

The Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network agree that a graduate can be counted as 'Full and Relevant' in Early Years settings in England if:

- They had an Early Years Educator, or equivalent Level 3 qualification before joining the degree.

Or their ECS degree is:

- mapped on to the ECS QAA benchmark statement
- Includes placements with:
  - o academic assessment
  - o practice which is observed, assessed and developed by setting mentors
  - o one visit per placement by HEI staff to observe, assess and develop practice.

It is the responsibility of the HEI to ensure that students have relevant assessed and observed practice that meets the Level 3 requirements.

They **cannot** be counted as 'Full and Relevant' if they do not meet the criteria above. **They need to undertake a relevant level 3 qualification.**

To proactively address these issues and strengthen degrees with placements, or that are work-based, the ECSDN has collectively developed assessed practice competencies awarded at Level 6, that evidence the students holistic understanding of Early Childhood development and their ability to apply, critically evaluate and communicate theoretical knowledge to practice. These can be embedded in a variety of ways, including:

- in a specifically designed degree
- as a pathway option

HEIs can award Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner to students who successfully meet all the competencies.

The Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies aim to:

1. Remove the confusion in the sector about how ECS Degrees are aligned to practice requirements in the four nations of the UK.

2. Address the inherent challenges of different types of Early Childhood degrees and study pathways, enabling the wider workforce to be clear about individual early career graduates' expected level of knowledge, skills and actual experience in practice.

3. Acknowledge the different pathways that lead learners to undertake the degrees, enhance their practice experience and enhance employability skills.

4. Ensure that Higher Education academic routes are responsive to the changing needs and training routes in early years practice, education and the wider Children's Services workforce.

5. Make a significant contribution to strengthening a graduate-led Early Childhood workforce that is responsive to workforce needs and improves outcomes for children.

6. Afford students with placement opportunities to critically apply theory to practice in a range of Early Childhood settings and/or schools, social care and health settings. This will enable students to develop graduate skills in the application of the inter-disciplinary Early Childhood knowledge base to reflective practice.

7. Provide new opportunities for graduates who want to strengthen their practice in Early Childhood and/or progress to post-graduate academic programmes or professional training, including Early Years Teacher (0-5), Teacher (3-11), Social Work and health professions.

4. The Role of the Early Childhood Studies Degree Network

- The ECSDN developed the competencies and will review, evaluate and monitor them to ensure they remain contemporary and relevant to the needs of the sector.

- The ECDN holds the copyright to the competencies so that only ECSDN member institutions can embed them in their ECS degree.

- ECSDN will provide guidance and support on how to embed and assess them to membership organisations.

- Undertake an External Moderating role.

5. Early Childhood Graduate Competencies Criteria

Each ECS degree is a bespoke programme and therefore, including Graduate Practitioners Competencies is the decision of HEI providers. They can only be embedded in degrees mapped on to ECS QAA Benchmark Statement.

Quality Processes

HEIs will embed, monitor and award Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies through their quality processes. These will include:

- Approval processes

- Annual review

- Subject review

- External examining

- A robust assessment process that is embedded through the degree

- Re-sit opportunities in-line with HEI requirements at Level 4 and 5

- One re-sit opportunity for the final assessment

Awarding Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies

The HEI is responsible for awarding the Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies. They must provide certification that the student has achieved the competencies, either integrated into the degree title or as a separate certificate.

For example:

- **Embedded in the title:** BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies (Graduate Practitioner)
- **Separate certificate:** Practitioner Competences has been awarded Early Childhood Graduate

6. Entry, Placement and Assessment Criteria

6.1 Entry Requirements

Students must:

- Be completing a full time (3 Year)
- Work-based undergraduate degree with honours (Level 4-6)
- Early Childhood post graduate qualifications that are mapped on to the ECS QAA Benchmark Statement.

On completion of the Early Childhood Graduate Competencies, have achieved Level 2 English and maths qualifications at grade 4 or above, or hold a formally recognised equivalent.

6.2 Placement Requirements

6.2.1 Full time Students

ECS full time degree programmes must ensure students have assessed placement experience which includes, mentoring and observations of practice by mentors and HEI staff, that evidences their development over time.

Students must:

- complete 80 days of work-based assessed placements in a range of Early Childhood settings and/or schools, health or social care settings, across the 0-8 age range
  - Level 4 - 25 days (Students with a full and relevant Level 3 qualification in the Early Years can map it to 5 days of placement at Level 4)
  - Level 5 - 30 days
  - Level 6 - 25 days
- receive mentoring support in the setting during the placement
- have their practice observed and assessed by the mentor and HEI staff.

If Higher Education providers decide to allow students to complete some of the placement requirements in paid employment, they must ensure that:

- the QAA guidelines in relation to what constitutes full time study are followed (https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/contact-hours-guidance.pdf)
- students are not exceeding the European Work Time Directive (https://www.gov.uk/maximum-weekly-working-hours)

They must also ensure that:

- the quality of the workplace has been rated at least 'good' by a statutory agency
- the setting is supportive of the student
- mentoring is provided that can observe and assess their workplace practice
- that specific placement days are identified.

6.2.2 Employment-based students

Students undertaking an employment-based programme can complete the Early Childhood Graduate Competencies, but programmes need to ensure:

- they have specific days allocated to placements
  - Level 4 - 25 days (Students with a full and relevant Level 3 qualification in the Early Years can APEL 5 days of placement at Level 4)
  - Level 5 - 30 days
  - Level 6 - 25 days
- receive mentoring support in the setting during placement
- have their practice observed
- have the placement periods assessed
- evidence practice across the 0-8 age range
- have placement experience in areas of their setting where they do not normally work
- have at least one placement outside their setting.

6.2.3 Post Graduate students

HEIs need to ensure that all students have:

- a degree
- achieved Level 2 English and maths qualifications at grade 4 or above, or hold a formally recognised equivalent on completion of the competencies
- DBS clearance, or equivalent for international students
- completed 80 days of placement over the 0-8 age range.

6.3 Assessment Requirements

The competencies will be met at different points across the degree with a final rigorous assessment at Level 6. The competencies can only be awarded to those who demonstrate their ability to apply the FHEQ descriptors for a bachelor degree with honours to their practice in Early Childhood. Please refer to:

QAA (2014). The Frameworks for HE Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies. Gloucester: QAA.
(https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf)

The final assessment will confirm the award (or not) of Early Childhood Graduate Competencies.
The assessment strategy will include:

- Assessed observations of practice throughout each level of the degree.
- Practice-based tasks and formalised academic assessment throughout the degree.
- Level 6 end of degree assessment point.
- Resit opportunities in-line with HEI requirements at Level 4 and 5
- One re-sit opportunity of the final assessment at Level 6.
- Robust assessment moderation processes that are monitored through university quality processes.

All students must demonstrate their ability to apply knowledge, methods and techniques, critically evaluate and communicate information in relation to Early childhood practice that evidences:

- a systematic understanding and coherent and detailed knowledge of Early Childhood
- the ability to analyse, develop and sustain arguments and problem solve
- apply current research to practice and evidence an appreciation of the limits of Early Childhood knowledge
- how to manage own learning, including evidencing how they have used scholarly material and reflection to develop their practice
- how their knowledge has developed over time
- how they have applied their knowledge to specific projects in practice, including their skills in critical evaluation
- how they have exercised initiative, personal responsibility, decision making in complex situations
- the ability to undertake further training or professional qualifications

Based on QAA (2014). The Frameworks for HE Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies. Gloucester: QAA.
(https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/qualifications-frameworks.pdf)

7. BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies (Top Up) (or equivalent) Entry, Placement and Assessment Criteria

7.1 Entry Requirements

Students must:

- hold a relevant Level 3 qualification and a work-based Foundation Degree (or equivalent) mapped to the ECS QAA Benchmark Statement
- be completing a Top Up degree that is mapped on to the ECS QAA Benchmark Statement
- be employment-based or have formal placements
- on completion of the Early Childhood Graduate Competencies, have achieved Level 2 English and maths qualifications at grade 4 or above, or hold a formally recognised equivalent.

7.2 Assessment Requirements

- 25 days of formally assessed and observed placement at Level 6
- Evidence knowledge and experience across the 0-8 age range
- Mentoring support in the setting during placement that observes and assesses their practice
- Employment-based or placement tasks
- A Level 6 end of degree assessment point
- One re-sit opportunity of the final assessment
- Robust assessment moderation processes, that are monitored through university quality processes.

8. *External Examiner Guidance*

8.1 Entry Requirements

All programmes as subject to their own institutional quality processes and this will be the main vehicle for ensuring that that programmes including the competencies are fit for purpose.

Institutions that are implementing practitioner competencies should seek to appoint or support the training of external examiners with knowledge of the graduate practitioner competencies.

8.2 External Examiner Role

The external examiner role already involves engaging with the quality of the programme, which includes curriculum development, assessment and moderation, and student experience. As the competencies are embedded into or certified alongside the programmes, they should be integral to the students learning experience.

External examiners should include review of the report on how the Graduate practitioner competencies are being included as part of the annual examination.

The following guidance should help when assessing the programme and assessment. Comprehensive comments can be added to show how the requirements are being met and any additional comments from the external examiner.

- The ways in which the competencies have been embedded within and/or interlinked with the curriculum and how these are mapped across the programmes (Full Time and Top Up).
- The documentation, expectation and guidance given to settings and how the placements are arranged, practice observed and assessed by workplace mentors as well as HEI staff.
- How evidence is recorded on-line on VLEs and how quality assurance data information, confidentiality issues are addressed.
- The patterns of visiting by the institutions and communication between them and the settings.
- The evidence for the practical competencies supplied by the student, rather than focusing on evidence in their written assignments. This is not about writing (eloquently) about meeting practice objectives but evidence from placement (this could take the form of mentor comments, observations, witness statements).
- The levelness of the way in which the students critically analyse their practice.
- Listening to the student voice (either directly where this is possible or via student portfolio documentation, evaluations, and similar evidence)
- Provision of feedback to the programme team.

Part Two

Early Childhood
Graduate Practitioner Competencies
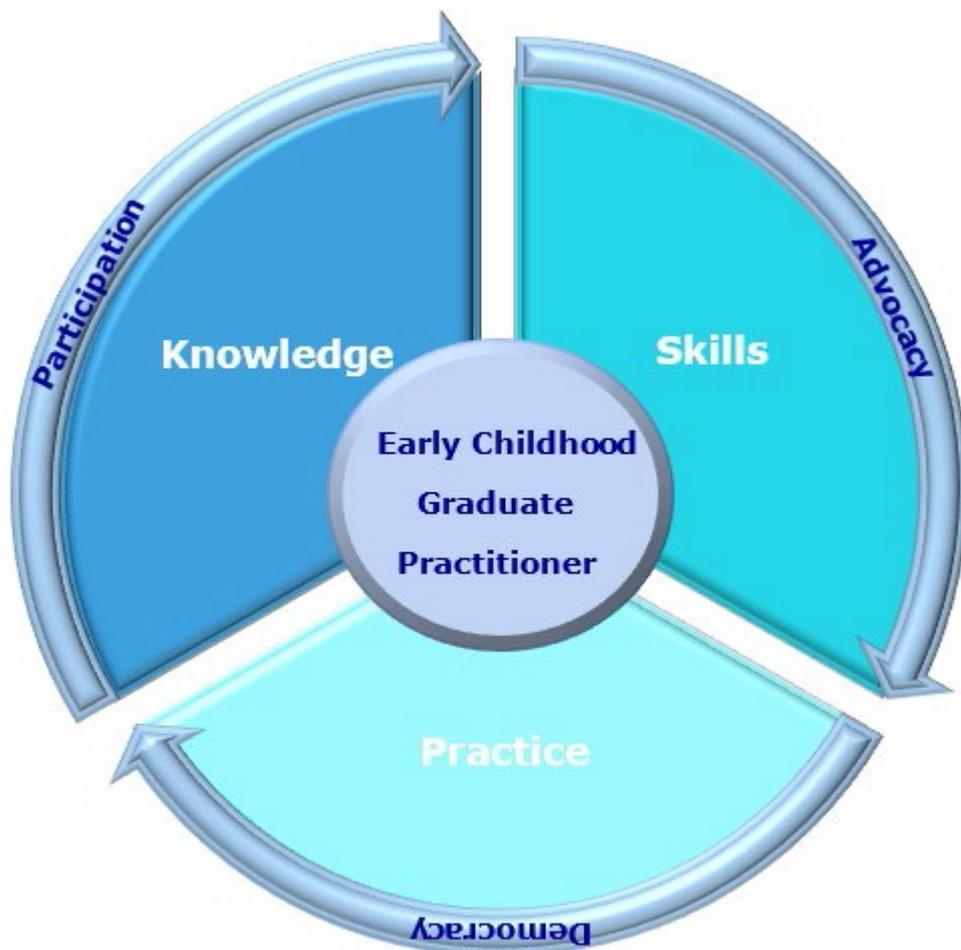
The skilful application of knowledge to practice and practice to knowledge.

The Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner is an advocate for young children's rights and participation and recognise that young children are active co-constructors of their own learning. They critically apply high-level academic knowledge of pedagogy and research evidence, to the holistic development of infants and young children (0-8), in a practice context that is respectful of the child, their family and community.

An Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner will have met nine competencies through assessed placement tasks, observations of practice and academic assignments. They will understand the importance of:

- Advocating for young children's rights and participation

- Promoting holistic child development

- Working directly with young children, families and colleagues to promote health, well-being, safety and nurturing care

- Observing, listening and planning for young children to support their well-being, early learning, progression and transitions

- Safeguarding and Child Protection

- Inclusive Practice

- Partnership with parents and caregivers

- Collaborating with others

- Ongoing professional development.

Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies

Competency 1 **Advocating for young children's rights and participation**	**1.1** Demonstrate how you listen to and work in collaboration with young children, individually and in groups. **1.2** Observe, support and extend young children's participation in their learning through following their needs and interests. **1.3** Support children to respect others by providing opportunities for their participation and decision making.

Competency 2 **Promote holistic child development**	**2.1** Explain, justify and apply in practice, knowledge of how infants and young children develop from conception to the age of 8 in terms of: • neurological and brain development • cognitive development • communication and language development • personal, emotional and social development • physical development **2.2** Demonstrate and apply knowledge to practice of the factors that promote and impede holistic development and long-term outcomes. These include: • individual circumstances • family circumstances • attachment • physical health • mental health • personal, social and emotional well-being • the impact of disadvantage and adverse childhood experiences • relationships with friends and adults • the importance of learning through play • the role of creativity • policy

Competency 3	3.1	Explain what factors influence health and wellbeing.

Competency 3

Work directly with young children, families and colleagues to promote health, well-being, safety and nurturing care.

3.1 Explain what factors influence health and wellbeing.

3.2 Demonstrate the application of knowledge about health, well-being and safety to practice, including:

- the importance of policies and legislation
- the identification of risks
- know how to identify and respond when a child is unwell or injured and may require urgent and non-urgent medical situations
- how to store and dispose of medicines
- practice good hygiene
- food preparation
- safe waste disposal
- how to use and maintain equipment and know how to access relevant training

3.3 Apply data protection legislation to practice.

3.4 Know and demonstrate how to complete a risk assessment and apply in practice.

3.5 Understand factors which influence nutritional health and integrate knowledge about current dietary guidance into practice, including early feeding and weaning.

3.6 Demonstrate the application of knowledge and understanding about the importance of respectful nurturing care routines including:

- Personal care
- Mealtime routines
- Rest, sleep and 'quiet' time
- Physical activity and mobility

3.7 Have relevant knowledge to support and manage children with on-going health conditions.

3.8 Demonstrate how to promote health and educate children and families about health-related matters.

Competency 4 **Observe, listen and plan for young children to support their well-being, early learning, progression and transitions**	**4.1** Know and understand the relevant Early Childhood curriculum frameworks and apply them in practice.
	4.2 Apply a range of observation and research skills to co-construct young children's development, play and learning, encouraging independence and next steps.
	4.3 Evidence the application of different theoretical perspectives when planning for young children's personal, social and emotional development.
	4.4 Apply theoretical understanding to the range of transitions young children experience and how these can be effectively supported in practice.
	4.5 Evidence knowledge of the importance of parents and/or caregivers and the home learning environment in infants and young children's development and learning.
	4.6 Demonstrate knowledge and skill in listening to and communicating verbally and non-verbally with children and how to encourage their communication skills, including situations where: • English is an additional language • A child has special educational needs and/or disabilities.
	4.7 Identify and apply pedagogical knowledge of how to develop enabling environments indoors and outdoors.
	4.8 Explain and demonstrate understanding of the balance between child-led and adult-led activities.
	4.9 Using real world contexts apply to practice theoretical understanding of: • Language development • Literacy development (including early reading and writing) • Mathematical concepts
	4.10 Evidence contemporary knowledge and skills in the use of technology and the role and appropriate use of digital literacies in young children's learning.
	4.11 Enable young children to understand the wider world.

Competency 5 Safeguarding and child protection	5.1	Know the wider legislative and statutory guidance for safeguarding including child protection, whistle blowing, digital safety and how these are articulated into setting policy.
	5.2	Recognise when a child may be in danger or at risk of serious harm and the procedures that must be followed.
	5.3	Appreciate the importance of working with others to safeguard and promote the well-being of infants and young children.
	5.4	Evidence advanced knowledge about child abuse, the wider theoretical perspectives about the causes of abuse and the potential implications for young children's outcomes.
	5.5	Apply knowledge of adverse childhood experience, including child abuse to individual planning to promote: • resilience (including, managing challenge, self-efficacy and self-regulation) • early learning • health and well-being • next steps
	5.6	Evidence and apply knowledge and understanding of how globalisation and technology may pose safeguarding risks for young children.
	5.7	Know when to signpost to other services or designated persons within the setting to secure young children's safeguarding and protection.

Competency 6 **Inclusive practice**	**6.1** Evidence knowledge, understanding and application in practice of pedagogy that supports inclusion. **6.2** Know how to identify infants and young children who may require additional support and how to refer to appropriate services. **6.3** Demonstrate an understanding of statutory guidance for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Protected Characteristics. **6.4** Evidence skills in appropriate planning to address the care and early learning needs of individual young children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and Protected Characteristics.

Competency 7 **Partnership with parents and caregivers**	**7.1** Evidence understanding of the importance of partnership with parents and/or caregivers in their role as infants and young children's first educators. **7.2.** Demonstrate in practice the co-construction of learning in respectful partnership with parents and/or caregivers. **7.3** Apply knowledge to practice, about the diversity of family life and society. **7.4** Demonstrate skills in communicating and working in partnership with families.

Competency 8 **Collaborating with others**	**8.1** Evidence knowledge about the importance of creating successful, respectful professional relationships with colleagues and other professionals in and outside the setting. **8.2** Apply collaborative skills in practice, including effective listening and working as a member of a team and in multi-professional contexts. **8.3** Demonstrate an understanding of the barriers to working with others and how to address these in practice.

Competency 9 **Professional development**	**9.1** Demonstrate self-awareness and knowledge of anti-discriminatory practice, promoting social justice and the importance of valuing difference, including gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation and sexual orientation.
	9.2 Evidence skills in enabling the voice of young children to be heard.
	9.3 Evidence advanced skills in utilising reflective practice alongside research, to enhance your continual professional development in Early Childhood.
	9.4 Draw on research to demonstrate knowledge of leadership and management and its importance and application in democratic and inclusive practice.
	9.5 Recognise and evidence the importance of communicating effectively orally and in writing to others

Fourth edition

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