Subject Benchmark Statement

Early Childhood Studies

November 2019
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How can I use this document?

This is the Subject Benchmark Statement for early childhood studies. It defines the academic standards that can be expected of a graduate, in terms of what they might know, do and understand at the end of their studies, and describes the nature of the subject.

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) sets out the Expectations and Core practices that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet. Providers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland must also meet the Common practices in the Quality Code.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) has also published a set of Advice and Guidance, divided into 12 themes, and a number of other resources that support the mandatory part of the Quality Code. Subject Benchmark Statements sit alongside these resources to help providers develop courses and refine curricula but are not part of the regulated requirements for higher education providers in the UK.

This Statement is intended to support you if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of courses of study in early childhood studies or related subjects
- a prospective student thinking about studying this subject, or a current student of the subject, to find out what may be involved
- an employer, to find out about the knowledge and skills generally expected of a graduate in this subject.

Subject Benchmark Statements provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the 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.

It may be helpful to refer to relevant Advice and Guidance when using this Statement.

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this Subject Benchmark Statement can be found in QAA's Glossary.
About the Statement

This Subject Benchmark Statement refers to bachelor's degrees with honours and master's degrees in early childhood studies.\(^1\)

It has been produced by a group of subject specialists drawn from, and acting on behalf of, the subject community. The process is facilitated by QAA, as is the full consultation with the wider academic community and stakeholder groups each Statement goes through.

In order to ensure the continuing currency of Subject Benchmark Statements, QAA initiates regular reviews of their content, five years after first publication, and every seven years subsequently, or in response to significant changes in the discipline.

Relationship to legislation

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

Higher education providers may need to consider other reference points in addition to this Statement in designing, delivering and reviewing courses. These may include requirements set out by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), and industry or employer expectations.

Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Subject Benchmark Statement where appropriate. Individual higher education providers will decide how they use these resources.

Summary of changes from the previous Subject Benchmark Statement (2014)

This version of the Statement forms its third edition, following initial publication of the Subject Benchmark Statement in 2007 and review and revision in 2014.

This latest version of the Statement is the consequence of the revision to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education which was published in 2018. It has been revised to update references to the Quality Code and other minor changes within the sector. Changes have been made by QAA and confirmed by a member of the most recent review group.

Two minor additions have been proposed to the 2014 statement.

The first is an appendix outlining the Early Childhood Practitioner Competencies, published in June 2018. This is to take into account that where early childhood studies degrees meet the Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network’s Professional Practice Competencies at Level 6, in England the Department for Education is happy to recognise such degrees as conferring Graduate Practitioner Status and to include them in its Qualifications Framework.

\(^1\) Bachelor's degrees are at level 6 (Master's at level 7) in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and level 10 (Master's at level 11) in The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland, as published in The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies.
The second addition to the text is an update on professional practice on page 5 to take account of the proposed changes outlined above.
1 Introduction

1.1 The first early childhood studies bachelor's with honours degrees were created in 1992 with the aim of providing a research base in higher education for the study of early childhood and early childhood services. Before this, there had been no coherent way of understanding the development, care, education, health, well-being and upbringing of babies and young children in a social, pedagogical and policy context, as a subject area in higher education. Conceptual development and policy concerns were either split between the subject areas of, for example, sociology, psychology, social policy and health, or were seen as areas of practice outside higher education, and regarded as the province of technical training rather than being seen as an appropriate area for study, research and development.

1.2 The first degrees were set up with two purposes. The first was to provide such a research base for a new subject area in higher education. The second was to look to the future and to seek to develop an early childhood studies academic area, essentially interdisciplinary, which would provide the base for professional education and training for new professional roles, for an expanded provision of integrated care and education for children from birth. These purposes were in order to provide better lives for children, families and communities, and to challenge gender and other inequalities. Early childhood studies graduates are therefore effective advocates for babies and young children; in whatever capacity they work, they facilitate the recognition of the rights of children to actively participate in their world, recognising children's needs, developmental tasks, diversity and differences.

1.3 The development of degree courses has been rapid since the late 1990s, when provision of good-quality experiences for young children became a pressing government commitment. They have developed in all countries in the UK, but with necessary regional and national variations in the ways in which they have introduced, assessed and recognised practice since government regulations vary across different areas.

1.4 Among other aims, many courses seek to offer appropriate education and training to students who either already work in the early childhood studies field but lack a qualification at degree level, or to those who are interested in studying and working in the field.

1.5 Students of early childhood studies generally develop skills for a variety of purposes, including research, presentation, role-play, teamwork and problem-solving, and these attributes are valued highly by employers.

1.6 Graduates currently go on to a range of careers in the early childhood studies area, as well as completing postgraduate qualifications, in order to work in the health, legal, education and social work fields.
2 Defining principles

2.1 Courses in early childhood studies aim to give students an understanding of the ecology of early childhood from conception, and of children in an ecological context. Ecological 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 development of the child in context and the implications for practice. Studying children and early childhood ecologically means that it would be inappropriate to specify an age at which early childhood ends because this will differ according to societal and cultural contexts, practices and customs. The attention to child development in an ecological context also situates young children as active participants in the lives and practices of families, societies and cultures.

2.2 The courses aim to consider theory in relation to the implications for practice. They aim to enable students to evaluate and develop appropriate pedagogical approaches to work with babies, young children, families and communities.

2.3 The interdisciplinary nature of early childhood studies takes account of the ecology of children's lives, in studying the complexities of family life and of children's development from conception onwards. In this way the interdisciplinary nature demonstrates the importance of both the intricate 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 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.

2.4 The courses aim to present multiple perspectives and to draw on a range of subject areas, such as history, psychology, education, health, welfare, sociology and social policy, cultural studies, the law, and political and economic perspectives. 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.

Professional practice

2.5 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 particular statutory or regulatory bodies, through the structure and content of the course. There are likely to be regional and national variations in the nature of these requirements, and students may also have to meet other criteria in addition to the early childhood studies degree.

2.6 Currently, practitioners who have met the Level 3 Early Years Educator requirements have full and relevant eligibility to practice and will be included in the staff/child ratios in early years settings. Some will have achieved this before undertaking the early childhood studies degree. Some higher education institutions provide opportunities for early childhood studies students to undertake assessed practice equivalent to the Early Years Educator requirements as part of their degree studies.

2.7 Successful achievement of Level 6 Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies meets the Level 3 requirements above and, in addition, makes a significant contribution to strengthening a graduate-led early childhood workforce. Level 6 Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies provide 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.

Further information

**England**
Early years qualification finder
[www.gov.uk/early-years-qualifications-finder#overview](http://www.gov.uk/early-years-qualifications-finder#overview)

**Northern Ireland**
Qualifications for Early Years Specialists
[www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/qualifications-early-years-specialists](http://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/qualifications-early-years-specialists)

**Scotland**
2015 Standard for Childhood Practice

**Wales**
Qualifications for social care, early years and childcare in Wales
[https://socialcare.wales/qualification-framework](https://socialcare.wales/qualification-framework)
3 Nature and extent of early childhood studies

3.1 Early childhood studies is the study of early childhood, from conception onwards, in context. It is an established and distinctive area of study and research. The focus is on the development of the child in an ecological context and the implications for practice. This focus may be interpreted in different ways in different courses, but is likely to draw on, to a lesser or greater extent, subjects such as psychology, sociology, philosophy and social policy, and areas such as education, health, history and cultural studies.

3.2 The subject area enables students to develop insights and understandings relating to how babies, young children and childhood may be understood from a range of evolving academic and professional perspectives, and to understand the philosophies, beliefs and attitudes that inform them.

3.3 Academic subject knowledge encompasses both critical awareness and understanding of early childhood issues, theories and research. Students examine the various ways in which children and childhood may be understood and conceptualised. The subject explores the multidisciplinary interpretation of constructions of children and childhood and the principles, theoretical bases and implications for practice. This incorporates pedagogy and the wider aspects of putting pedagogy into practice.

3.4 A critical analysis of children as active participants, their rights and an antibias approach which considers early childhood as a site for democracy, sustainability and social justice underpins and permeates the subject.

3.5 Students are exposed to the challenges and intricacies of multiagency and multi-professional practices. Students are encouraged to gain insights into the complex interrelatedness of, and potential professional barriers to operating within, the provision of services for children and their families and communities, nationally and internationally.

3.6 Active engagement in research and enquiry are significant parts of the subject, and entail students developing 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, and are encouraged to develop the reflexivity necessary to explore the political, cultural and economic factors embedded in research and practice. This is a vital element of study for the future development of services, enabling professionals to initiate, evaluate and implement new research appropriate to different contexts.
4 Subject knowledge and understanding

4.1 It is not the intention of this Subject Benchmark Statement to set strict requirements in defining the subject knowledge acquired by students; nevertheless, there are certain core areas within the subject that receive significant coverage in all early childhood studies bachelor's with honours degrees. Students are also exposed to developments in the subject, including those that at present do not command consensus.

4.2 Early childhood studies is a subject with babies and young children at its centre, which has, and is developing, its own evidence and research base and is underpinned by several other subject areas. It is a multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and global area of study that draws on subjects such as education studies, health studies, social work and social policy, psychology, and sociology. The subject is dynamic and developing and so a key concern is to promote awareness of relevant academic and professional developments.

4.3 Given that the study of early childhood in context draws on areas of knowledge that may be interdisciplinary, the knowledge domains are frequently presented as integrated areas of cross-disciplinary study rather than as discrete subject areas. At the heart of the knowledge domains lies the study of child development, including social and developmental psychology, together with the philosophy, sociology and history of childhood. A range of pedagogical approaches are explored alongside policy and provision for children and families. Pedagogy is understood in this document as incorporating both upbringing and creative approaches to working with children; thus it will include debates around curricular development, play and learning.

4.4 The acquisition of knowledge of early childhood studies is progressive, and therefore study of the core areas continues and deepens throughout the honours degree. It is anticipated that there may be more variation in the subject areas covered at the more advanced point of the course, reflecting areas of expertise within departments of higher education providers. By the end of the course, students are required to demonstrate facility and familiarity with research in early childhood through their knowledge and understanding of different and ethical research methodologies, including, for example, research with children as active participants. Child development is studied progressively throughout the whole of the course.

4.5 Professional, reflective practice incorporates theoretical principles, working with babies, young children, families and communities, and knowledge of management, leadership and organisational structures, and of working with other professionals.

4.6 Theories, ideologies and constructions of professionalism underpin the examination of multi-professional leadership and management. Knowledge domains also encompass theoretical perspectives relating to the global status of children, including the role of children as active participants, their rights, their health and well-being, and perspectives on child protection, safeguarding, disability, diversity and inclusion.

4.7 Early childhood studies courses enable students to acquire knowledge of a range of research skills and how to integrate information from multiple sources. Students understand how to apply that learning to examine, identify and seek to respond to the complex experiences of babies, young children, children and families, by making and justifying judgements.
5 Skills

5.1 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.

5.2 However, it is important to bear in mind that this distinction is a fairly artificial one since the distinction between subject-specific and generic skills is not clear-cut. The multidisciplinary nature of the subject area means that it 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

5.3 Individual courses will have different emphases but in general, an early childhood studies graduate is expected to be able to:

- reflect upon a range of psychological, sociological, health, historical and philosophical perspectives and consider how these underpin different understandings of babies and 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
- integrate ideas and findings across the multiple perspectives in early childhood studies and recognise distinctive early childhood studies approaches to relevant issues
- evaluate competing positions in relation to the construction of babies and young children and childhood by different subjects, societal agents and time, place and culture
- constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of child development
- demonstrate knowledge and awareness of the skills needed for different pedagogical approaches, including:
  - the necessary depth and strength of relationships with individual children and children in groups, and the facilitation of the building of relationships with and between children
  - the formation and promotion of mutually respectful relationships with families, colleagues, other professionals and communities
- 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
- plan for, and where appropriate implement, play and the 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 observation 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 in the lives of children and their families and communities
• recognise and challenge inequalities in society, and embrace an antibias approach
• give voice to and, where appropriate, act as an advocate for babies, young children, families and communities.

Generic skills

5.4 An early childhood studies graduate is expected to be able to:

• present information to others in appropriate forms, including having a sense of audience
• offer and justify an informed point of view, drawing upon a range of theoretical positions
• comprehend and use data effectively
• listen carefully to others and reflect upon one's own and others' skills and views
• generate, define and refine questions and make critical judgements and evaluations
• reflect on different perspectives, and evaluate them in a critical manner 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
• 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, which include persuasion, explanation, description, evaluation and judgement, recount, recap, hypothesis and summary
• use information and communications technology (ICT) appropriately in a range of contexts
• become more independent, resilient, responsible and pragmatic and develop as an autonomous learner.
6  Teaching, learning and assessment

6.1 The teaching and learning strategies used in early childhood studies 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 technological) learning resources, 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 self-assess their own learning progress, development and achievement
- encourage the student to define learning in terms of questions to be answered and problems to be solved.

6.2 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.

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

Teaching and learning

6.4 Approaches to teaching and learning value personal, theoretical and practice-based experiences and explore the ways in which they complement and enrich each other. There is a concern to support students in reflecting on their own childhoods, on experience in early childhood settings and in exploring the relationship between these experiences and the theoretical perspectives that enable students to make sense of them. 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.

6.5 Engagement with practice is a key feature of approaches to teaching and learning in early childhood studies. Opportunities are provided for students to plan for the curriculum, assessment, evaluation and improvement of creative learning opportunities, 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. They also provide opportunities for students to lead, support and work collaboratively with others and an understanding of working effectively in teams with parents, carers and other professionals.

6.6 Where early childhood studies degree courses offer the opportunity for students to develop and extend their professional practice and/or qualifications through meeting the requirements of particular statutory or regulatory bodies, the planning described in paragraph 6.5 is implemented in practice. In these cases, where such practice is assessed in the early childhood setting, students are provided with appropriate mentor support by the
higher education provider and the early childhood setting in order to support them in the development of the professional skills needed for such work.

6.7 Teaching and learning approaches in early childhood studies 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, due emphasis is given to active learning and the acquisition of subject knowledge and both generic and subject-specific skills and abilities, through a variety of learning and teaching strategies.

Assessment

6.8 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. Assessment methods in early childhood studies may include formal examinations (which can be seen, unseen or open-book); multiple-choice tests; assessed essays; practical reports; other reports; use of information technology; case studies; portfolios; dissertations; and formal assessment of performance in oral presentations and debates, including seminar and individual presentation. Students may also be assessed in practice in early childhood settings. To ensure that the full range of skills being developed by a course can be demonstrated, a diversity of assessment methods is encouraged. Assessment criteria are explicit and anticipate that critical thinking skills will develop progressively.

6.9 Where early childhood studies degree courses offer the opportunity for students to meet the requirements of particular 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, including reflection on practice, portfolios of evidence and/or direct observation of practice. Such assessment may be undertaken in the higher education provider or in early childhood settings.

6.10 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 also an increasing degree of independence and autonomy in their studies.
7 Benchmark standards

7.1 The following benchmark standards are divided into three 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.

7.2 The standards are phrased in terms of what knowledge or skills a graduate at that standard (threshold, typical and excellent) is expected to be able to demonstrate. The areas of knowledge and skills are the same at each level, but typical standards are more securely demonstrated than threshold, and excellent standards reflect a high level of proficiency and understanding.

7.3 All early childhood studies graduates should acquire a measure of the skills required by the discipline, 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.

7.4 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Threshold standard</strong></th>
<th><strong>Typical standard</strong></th>
<th><strong>Excellent standard</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject knowledge</strong></td>
<td>On graduating with a bachelor’s degree with honours in early childhood studies, students are expected to:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>understand the conceptual underpinnings of early childhood studies as a subject area</td>
<td>understand the conceptual underpinnings of early childhood studies as a subject area, its historical origins, development and limitations</td>
<td>understand critically the conceptual underpinnings of early childhood studies as a subject area, its historical origins, development and limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have a basic understanding of babies and young children and childhood, nationally and globally, from psychological, sociological, health, welfare, educational, cultural, philosophical, legal, historical, political and economic perspectives</td>
<td>demonstrate systematic knowledge and critical understanding of babies and young children and childhood nationally and globally from psychological, sociological, health, welfare, educational, cultural, philosophical, legal, historical, political and economic perspectives</td>
<td>demonstrate in-depth, systematic knowledge and consistently critical understanding of babies and young children and childhood nationally and globally, from psychological, sociological, health, welfare, educational, cultural, philosophical, legal, historical, political and economic perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This includes:

- understanding of all aspects of significant policy and provision for babies and young children, families and communities
  - a systematic knowledge and critical understanding of all aspects of significant policy and provision for babies and young children, families and communities
  - in-depth, systematic knowledge and consistently critical understanding of all aspects of significant policy and provision for babies and young children, families and communities
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threshold standard</th>
<th>Typical standard</th>
<th>Excellent standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>understanding of multi-professional, interprofessional, multiagency and interagency working as a means of meeting the needs of babies and young children, families and communities</td>
<td>a working knowledge of the importance of, but also the challenges and constraints of, multi-professional, interprofessional, multiagency and interagency working in order to meet the needs of babies and young children, families and communities</td>
<td>a critical working knowledge of the importance of, but also the challenges and constraints of, multi-professional, interprofessional, multiagency and interagency working, in order to meet the needs of babies and young children, families and communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge and understanding of pedagogical approaches for working with babies and young children, families and communities</td>
<td>a working knowledge and understanding of pedagogical approaches for working with babies and young children, families and communities</td>
<td>a critical working knowledge and understanding of pedagogical approaches for working with babies and young children, families and communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>awareness of issues in relation to rights, diversity, equity and inclusion in relation to working with babies and young children, families and communities</td>
<td>a good knowledge of issues in relation to rights, diversity, equity and inclusion in relation to working with babies and young children, families and communities</td>
<td>excellent knowledge of issues in relation to rights, diversity, equity and inclusion in relation to working with babies and young children, families and communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of the methods required for systematic study and research relative to children and childhood</td>
<td>a good working knowledge of the methods required for systematic study and research relative to children and childhood</td>
<td>excellent and explicit working knowledge of the methods required for systematic study and research relative to children and childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of a range of research paradigms, research methods and measurement techniques, and some awareness of their limitations</td>
<td>a systematic knowledge of a range of research paradigms, research methods and measurement techniques, and awareness of their limitations</td>
<td>in-depth and systematic knowledge of a range of research paradigms, research methods and measurement techniques, and awareness of their limitations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge of some specialised areas and/or applications</td>
<td>detailed knowledge of several specialised areas and/or applications, some of which are at the cutting edge of research in the subject area</td>
<td>detailed and explicit knowledge of several specialised areas and/or applications, many of which are at the cutting edge of research in the subject area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold standard</td>
<td>Typical standard</td>
<td>Excellent standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate a critical understanding of the links between ethics, economics, politics, culture and ideology in the lives of babies and young children and their families and their communities.</td>
<td>demonstrate a well-developed critical understanding of the links between ethics, economics, politics, culture and ideology in the lives of babies and young children and their families and communities.</td>
<td>have a highly developed critical understanding of the links between ethics, economics, politics, culture and ideology in the lives of babies and young children and their families and communities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Subject-specific skills**

On graduating with a bachelor's degree with honours in early childhood studies, students are expected to:

- reason clearly, and demonstrate the relationship between theory and evidence
- be able to adopt multiple perspectives in relation to early childhood
- 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, nationally and globally
- evaluate competing positions in relation to the construction of babies and young children and childhood by different subjects, societal agents and time, place and culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason clearly, and demonstrate the relationship between theory and evidence</th>
<th>Reason clearly, understand the role of evidence and make critical judgements about arguments relating to the subject area of early childhood studies</th>
<th>Have a high-level ability to reason clearly, understand the role of evidence and make critical judgements about arguments relating to the subject area of early childhood studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be able to adopt multiple perspectives in relation to early childhood</td>
<td>Be able to adopt multiple perspectives in relation to early childhood and systematically analyse the relationships between them</td>
<td>Have a high-level ability to adopt multiple perspectives in relation to early childhood and systematically analyse the relationships between them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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, nationally and globally</td>
<td>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, nationally and globally</td>
<td>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, nationally and globally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate competing positions in relation to the construction of babies and young children and childhood by different subjects, societal agents and time, place and culture</td>
<td>Analyse and evaluate competing positions in relation to the construction of babies and young children and childhood by different subjects, societal agents and time, place and culture</td>
<td>Have a high-level ability to analyse and evaluate competing positions in relation to the construction of babies and young children and childhood by different subjects, societal agents and time, place and culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold standard</td>
<td>Typical standard</td>
<td>Excellent standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of child development</td>
<td>analyse and constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of child development</td>
<td>have a high-level ability to analyse and constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of child development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>detect meaningful patterns in play, behaviour and experience</td>
<td>detect meaningful patterns in play, behaviour and experience, and evaluate their significance</td>
<td>have a high-level ability to detect meaningful patterns in play, behaviour and experience and evaluate their significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explore, examine and evaluate the significance of the cultural, historical and contemporary features of various policies, institutions and agencies in regard to babies and young children and childhood</td>
<td>critically explore, examine and evaluate the significance of the cultural, historical and contemporary features of various policies, institutions and agencies in regard to babies and young children and childhood</td>
<td>have a high-level 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 and young children and childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate knowledge and awareness of the skills needed for different relational pedagogical approaches</td>
<td>have a well-developed knowledge and awareness of the skills needed for different relational pedagogical approaches</td>
<td>have a high-level knowledge and awareness of the skills needed for different relational pedagogical approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate the ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, play and the curriculum, assessment, evaluation and improvement of creative learning opportunities, taking account of babies' and young children's health and emotional well-being</td>
<td>have a well-developed ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, play and the curriculum, assessment, evaluation and improvement of creative learning opportunities, taking account of babies' and young children's health and emotional well-being</td>
<td>have a highly developed ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, play and the curriculum, assessment, evaluation and improvement of creative learning opportunities, taking account of babies' and young children's health and emotional well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate the ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, meeting and working effectively, and in collaboration with parents, carers and other agencies</td>
<td>have a well-developed ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, working effectively and in collaboration with parents, carers and other agencies</td>
<td>have a highly developed ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, working effectively and in collaboration with parents, carers and other agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold standard</td>
<td>Typical standard</td>
<td>Excellent standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate the ability 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</td>
<td>have a well-developed ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, meeting and promoting children's health, well-being, protection and safety, and the conditions which enable them to flourish</td>
<td>have a highly developed ability 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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate the ability to lead, support and work collaboratively with others in the early childhood context</td>
<td>have a well-developed ability to lead, support and work collaboratively with others in the early childhood context</td>
<td>have a highly developed ability to lead, support and work collaboratively with others in the early childhood context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>produce critical arguments for improvements to multiagency, multi-professional and interprofessional practices for babies and young children</td>
<td>have a well-developed ability to produce critical arguments for improvements to multiagency, multi-professional and interprofessional practices for babies and young children</td>
<td>have a highly developed ability to produce critical arguments for improvements to multiagency, multi-professional and interprofessional practices for babies and young children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explore critically the interrelationship between political, economic, cultural and ideological contexts in the lives of babies and young children</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pose and operationalise research questions in relation to early childhood and demonstrate competence in research skills through practical and theoretical activities</td>
<td>pose, operationalise and critique research questions related to early childhood, and demonstrate competence in research skills through practical and theoretical activities</td>
<td>have a highly developed ability to pose, operationalise and critique research questions related to early childhood, and demonstrate competence in research skills through practical and theoretical activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use skills of observation and analysis in relation to aspects of the lives of babies and young children</td>
<td>use developed skills of observation and analysis in relation to aspects of the lives of babies and young children</td>
<td>have highly developed skills of observation and analysis in relation to aspects of the lives of babies and young children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reflect upon the ethics of studying babies and young children, families and communities</td>
<td>have a well-developed ability to reflect upon the ethics of studying babies and young children, families and communities</td>
<td>have a high-level ability to reflect upon the ethics of studying babies and young children, families and communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threshold standard</td>
<td>Typical standard</td>
<td>Excellent standard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>initiate, design, conduct and report an empirically based early childhood research project under appropriate supervision</td>
<td>competently initiate, design, conduct and report an early childhood research project under appropriate supervision, and recognise its theoretical, practical and methodological implications and limitations</td>
<td>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</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be aware of ethical principles and demonstrate this in relation to personal study, particularly with regard to the research project</td>
<td>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</td>
<td>be aware of the complexity of ethical principles and issues, and demonstrate and apply this in relation to personal study, particularly with regard to the research project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate the ability to give voice to and, where appropriate, act as an advocate for babies and young children, families and communities</td>
<td>have a well-developed ability to give voice to and, where appropriate, act as an advocate for babies and young children, families and communities</td>
<td>have a highly developed ability to give voice to and, where appropriate, act as an advocate for babies and young children, families and communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>demonstrate the ability to recognise and challenge inequalities in society and to embrace an antibias approach.</td>
<td>have a well-developed ability to recognise and challenge inequalities in society and to embrace an antibias approach.</td>
<td>have a highly developed ability to recognise and challenge inequalities in society and to embrace an antibias approach.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Generic skills**
On graduating with a bachelor’s degree with honours in early childhood studies, students are expected to:

<p>| communicate ideas and research findings by written, oral and visual means | communicate ideas and research findings both effectively and fluently by written, oral and visual means | communicate ideas and research findings effectively, clearly and fluently by written, oral and visual means |
| 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 |
| interpret and use numerical and other forms of data | interpret and use numerical and other forms of data, critically and securely | interpret and use numerical and other forms of data, clearly, critically and securely |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Threshold standard</th>
<th>Typical standard</th>
<th>Excellent standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>present information to others in appropriate forms</td>
<td>present information to others in a variety of appropriate forms</td>
<td>present information to others in a variety of appropriate and innovative forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>approach problem-solving in a systematic way</td>
<td>solve problems by clarifying questions, considering alternative solutions and evaluating outcomes</td>
<td>solve problems by clarifying and probing questions, considering alternative and innovative solutions and evaluating outcomes critically</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>listen carefully to others and reflect upon one’s own and others’ skills and views</td>
<td>listen carefully to others and reflect critically upon one’s own and others’ skills and views</td>
<td>listen carefully to others and reflect critically and insightfully upon one’s own and others’ skills and views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use a range of sources of information</td>
<td>use a range of sources of information critically</td>
<td>use a wide range of sources of information critically and with insight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use the communication skills necessary to converse, debate, negotiate, persuade and challenge the ideas of others</td>
<td>use the communication skills necessary to effectively converse, debate, negotiate, persuade and challenge the ideas of others</td>
<td>use sophisticated communication skills necessary to effectively converse, debate, negotiate, persuade and challenge the ideas of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>be aware of contextual and interpersonal factors in groups and teams</td>
<td>be sensitive to, and react appropriately to, contextual and interpersonal factors in groups and teams</td>
<td>be highly sensitive to, and react appropriately and thoughtfully to, contextual and interpersonal factors in groups and teams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>have insight and confidence in leading and working collaboratively with others</td>
<td>have critical insight and confidence in leading and working collaboratively with others</td>
<td>have considerable critical insight and confidence in leading and working collaboratively with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>write for different purposes</td>
<td>have the ability to write for different purposes, which include persuasion, explanation, description, evaluation and judgement, recount, recap, hypothesis and summary</td>
<td>have sophisticated skills in writing for different purposes, which include persuasion explanation, description, evaluation and judgement, recount, recap, hypothesis and summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Threshold standard</strong></td>
<td><strong>Typical standard</strong></td>
<td><strong>Excellent standard</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
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<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use ICT appropriately as part of the learning process in a range of contexts, both at one's own level and to enhance provision for children</td>
<td>have the ability to use ICT critically and appropriately as part of the learning process in a range of contexts, both at one's own level and to enhance provision for children</td>
<td>have the ability to use ICT critically and with sophistication as part of the learning process in a range of contexts, both at one's own level, and to enhance provision for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>undertake self-directed study and project management in a supportive environment</td>
<td>undertake self-directed study and project management in order to meet desired objectives</td>
<td>undertake self-directed study and project management with a high degree of critical awareness in order to meet desired objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>recognise the need to assess one's own skills and to reflect on them for future learning.</td>
<td>be able to take charge of one's own learning, and reflect and evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of future learning.</td>
<td>show sophistication in taking charge of one's own learning, and reflect and evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of future learning.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1: Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies, October 2019
Early Childhood Studies Degree Network

EARLY CHILDHOOD GRADUATE PRACTITIONER COMPETENCIES

Revised October 2019

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

Main Author: Dr Eunice Lumsden on behalf on the ECSDN

Contributors and Peer Review: Aaron Bradbury, Babs Anderson, Carol Fenton, Carolyn Silberfeld, Damien Fitzgerald, Gill Goodliff, Helen Perkins, Helena Mitchell, Jackie Musgrave, Jane Murray, Jemima Murray, Nikki Fairchild, Pamela Calder, Peter Goy, Philippa Thompson, Mary Wild, Michelle Bugby, Sigrid Brogaard-Clausen, Sharon Smith, Tanya Richardson and students at the University of Northampton

Consultation Feedback: Edge Hill University, Liverpool Hope University, Open University, Plymouth University, Staffordshire University, Sheffield Hallam University, Warwick University, University College Birmingham, University of Brighton, University of Derby, University of Greenwich, University of Northampton, University of Portsmouth, University of Roehampton, University of Sunderland, University of Wolverhampton, University of Worcester, Stranmillis College University.

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 Two: Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies

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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:
  - academic assessment
  - practice which is observed, assessed and developed by setting mentors
  - 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:** ___ has been awarded Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competences
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?sfvrsn=cc45f981_8)
- 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:

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


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.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency 1</th>
<th>1.1 Demonstrate how you listen to and work in collaboration with young children, individually and in groups.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advocating for young children’s rights and participation</td>
<td>1.2 Observe, support and extend young children’s participation in their learning through following their needs and interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3 Support children to respect others by providing opportunities for their participation and decision making.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency 2</th>
<th>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:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Promote holistic child development | • 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

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 | 4.1 Know and understand the relevant Early Childhood curriculum frameworks and apply them in practice. |
| Competency 4 | 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. |
| Competency 4 | 4.3 Evidence the application of different theoretical perspectives when planning for young children's personal, social and emotional development. |
| Competency 4 | 4.4 Apply theoretical understanding to the range of transitions young children experience and how these can be effectively supported in practice. |
| Competency 4 | 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. |
| Competency 4 | 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: |
| Competency 4 | • English is an additional language |
| Competency 4 | • A child has special educational needs and/or disabilities. |
| Competency 4 | 4.7 Identify and apply pedagogical knowledge of how to develop enabling environments indoors and outdoors. |
| Competency 4 | 4.8 Explain and demonstrate understanding of the balance between child-led and adult-led activities. |
| Competency 4 | 4.9 Using real world contexts apply to practice theoretical understanding of: |
| Competency 4 | • Language development |
| Competency 4 | • Literacy development (including early reading and writing) |
| Competency 4 | • Mathematical concepts |
| Competency 4 | 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. |
| Competency 4 | 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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency 6</th>
<th>Inclusive practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Evidence knowledge, understanding and application in practice of pedagogy that supports inclusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Know how to identify infants and young children who may require additional support and how to refer to appropriate services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Demonstrate an understanding of statutory guidance for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Protected Characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency 7</th>
<th>Partnership with parents and caregivers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Evidence understanding of the importance of partnership with parents and/or caregivers in their role as infants and young children’s first educators.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Demonstrate in practice the co-construction of learning in respectful partnership with parents and/or caregivers.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>Apply knowledge to practice, about the diversity of family life and society.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>Demonstrate skills in communicating and working in partnership with families.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Competency 8</th>
<th>Collaborating with others</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Evidence knowledge about the importance of creating successful, respectful professional relationships with colleagues and other professionals in and outside the setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Apply collaborative skills in practice, including effective listening and working as a member of a team and in multi-professional contexts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>Demonstrate an understanding of the barriers to working with others and how to address these in practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competency 9</td>
<td>Professional development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>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.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>Evidence skills in enabling the voice of young children to be heard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>Evidence advanced skills in utilising reflective practice alongside research, to enhance your continual professional development in Early Childhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>Draw on research to demonstrate knowledge of leadership and management and its importance and application in democratic and inclusive practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>Recognise and evidence the importance of communicating effectively orally and in writing to others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Membership of the benchmarking and review groups for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Early Childhood Studies

Membership of the review group for the Subject Benchmark Statement for Early Childhood Studies (2019)

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

Membership of the review 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  
**QAA officer**  Harriet Barnes  QAA  
**Student reader**  Fawziya H Al Zadjali  Leeds Metropolitan University

**Employer representatives**

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 original benchmarking 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.