



# Subject benchmark statement

## Early childhood studies

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## Contents

How can I use this document? .....	1
About subject benchmark statements .....	2
About this subject benchmark statement.....	4
1 Introduction.....	5
2 Defining principles.....	6
3 Nature and extent of early childhood studies.....	8
4 Subject knowledge and understanding.....	9
5 Skills .....	10
6 Teaching, learning and assessment.....	12
7 Benchmark standards .....	14
Appendix: Membership of the benchmarking and review groups for the subject benchmark statement for early childhood studies .....	22

## How can I use this document?

This document is a subject benchmark statement for early childhood studies 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.

You may want to read this document if you are:

- involved in the design, delivery and review of programmes of study in early childhood studies or related subjects
- a prospective student thinking about studying early childhood studies, 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 early childhood studies.

Explanations of unfamiliar terms used in this subject benchmark statement can be found in the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA's) glossary.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The QAA glossary is available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary).

## About subject benchmark statements

Subject benchmark statements form part of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) which sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education reviewed by QAA are required to meet.<sup>2</sup> They are a component of *Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards*, which includes the Expectation that higher education providers 'consider and take account of relevant subject benchmark statements' in order to secure threshold academic standards.<sup>3</sup>

Subject benchmark statements describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas and in respect of particular qualifications. They provide a picture of what graduates in a particular subject might reasonably be expected to know, do and understand at the end of their programme of study.

Subject benchmark statements are used as reference points in the design, delivery and review of academic programmes. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme 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 programme design within a framework agreed by the subject community. Further guidance about programme design, development and approval, learning and teaching, assessment of students, and programme monitoring and review is available in *Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality* of the Quality Code in the following Chapters:<sup>4</sup>

- *Chapter B1: Programme design, development and approval*
- *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching*
- *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning*
- *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review.*

For some subject areas, higher education providers may need to consider other reference points in addition to the subject benchmark statement in designing, delivering and reviewing programmes. These may include requirements set out by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, national occupational standards and industry or employer expectations. In such cases, the subject benchmark statement may provide additional guidance around academic standards not covered by these requirements.<sup>5</sup> The relationship between academic and professional or regulatory requirements is made clear within individual statements, but it is the responsibility of individual higher education providers to decide how they use this information. The responsibility for academic standards remains with the higher education provider who awards the degree.

Subject benchmark statements are written and maintained by subject specialists drawn from and acting on behalf of the subject community. The process is facilitated by QAA. 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.

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<sup>2</sup> The Quality Code, available at [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code), aligns with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, available at: [www.engq.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/ESG\\_3edition-2.pdf](http://www.engq.eu/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/ESG_3edition-2.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> *Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards*, available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-a](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-a).

<sup>4</sup> Individual Chapters are available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b).

<sup>5</sup> See further *Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards*, available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-a](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-a).

## 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. The Quality Code does not interpret legislation nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements. Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the subject benchmark statement where appropriate. Higher education providers are responsible for how they use these resources.<sup>6</sup>

## Equality and diversity

The Quality Code embeds consideration of equality and diversity matters throughout. Promoting equality involves treating everyone with equal dignity and worth, while also raising aspirations and supporting achievement for people with diverse requirements, entitlements and backgrounds. An inclusive environment for learning anticipates the varied requirements of learners, and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities. Higher education providers, staff and students all have a role in, and responsibility for, promoting equality.

Equality of opportunity involves enabling access for people who have differing individual requirements as well as eliminating arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to learning. In addition, disabled students and non-disabled students are offered learning opportunities that are equally accessible to them, by means of inclusive design wherever possible and by means of reasonable individual adjustments wherever necessary.

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<sup>6</sup> See further the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education: General Introduction*, available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=181](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=181).

## About this subject benchmark statement

This subject benchmark statement refers to bachelor's degrees with honours in early childhood studies.<sup>7</sup>

This version of the statement forms its second edition, following initial publication in 2007.<sup>8</sup>

### Note on alignment with higher education sector coding systems

Programmes of study which use this subject benchmark statement as a reference point are most frequently classified under the following code in the Joint Academic Coding System (JACS):<sup>9</sup>

X310 (Academic studies in nursery).

Also in general use is:

X370 (Academic studies in education).

More broadly, the following codes may be appropriate:

C820 (Developmental psychology); C821 (Child psychology); L510 (Health & welfare); L520 (Child care).

### Summary of changes from the original benchmark statement (2007)

The changes made to the original benchmark statement to produce this revised version have been relatively minor, reflecting the strength of the original statement. Small changes have been made to the descriptions of subject knowledge and skills and the section on teaching, learning and assessment has been refocused on the distinctive aspects of provision in early childhood studies. The presentation of the benchmark standards has been made more accessible. References to 'practitioner options' have been removed, to reflect the changed regulatory context.

The consultation on the draft revised statement attracted around 30 responses, with a very strong trend of support for the statement. However, the responses also made a number of suggestions for further changes, particularly in relation to practice requirements, critical engagement with research, children as active participants, and the international context. These comments have been taken into account by the review group in finalising the statement.

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<sup>7</sup> Bachelor's degrees are at level 6 in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (2008) and level 10 in the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (2001).

<sup>8</sup> Further information is available in the *Recognition scheme for subject benchmark statements*, available at: [www.gaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=190#.VCvYkXhwaic](http://www.gaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=190#.VCvYkXhwaic).

<sup>9</sup> Further information about JACS is available at [www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1776/649/](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/1776/649/).

# 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 programmes 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 programmes 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 Programmes 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 programmes 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, programme 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 programmes 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 programme. 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.



## **Further information**

### **England**

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

### **Northern Ireland**

Qualifications for Early Years Specialists, available at:  
[www.deni.gov.uk/index/support-and-development-2/early-years-education/qualifications-for-early-years-specialists.htm](http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/support-and-development-2/early-years-education/qualifications-for-early-years-specialists.htm).

### **Scotland**

*Scottish subject benchmark statement: The Standard for Childhood Practice*, available at:  
[www.gaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Scottish-Subject-Benchmark-Statements-Standard-of-Childhood-Practice.pdf](http://www.gaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Scottish-Subject-Benchmark-Statements-Standard-of-Childhood-Practice.pdf)

### **Wales**

Qualifications for social care, early years and childcare in Wales, available at:  
[www.ccwales.org.uk/qualifications/](http://www.ccwales.org.uk/qualifications/)

### 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 programmes, 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 anti-bias 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 multi-agency and multiprofessional 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 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 programme, reflecting areas of expertise within departments of higher education providers. By the end of the programme, 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 programme.

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 multiprofessional 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 programmes 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 programmes 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 multi-agency and multiprofessional 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 anti-bias 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 programmes varies, but as the subject is based on the principle of developing independent, critical students who are insightful advocates of children, programmes 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 programme 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 programmes 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 programme 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 programmes 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 programme.

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 programme, let alone each module, to have to demonstrate how each skill is separately acquired.



Threshold standard	Typical standard	Excellent standard
<b>Subject knowledge</b> On graduating with a bachelor's degree with honours in early childhood studies, students are expected to:		
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
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	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	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
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.
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
understanding of multiprofessional, interprofessional, multi-agency and inter-agency working as a means of meeting the needs of babies and young children, families and communities	a working knowledge of the importance of, but also the challenges and constraints of, multiprofessional, interprofessional, multi-agency and inter-agency working in order to meet the needs of babies and young children, families and communities	a critical working knowledge of the importance of, but also the challenges and constraints of, multiprofessional, interprofessional, multi-agency and inter-agency working, in order to meet the needs of babies and young children, families and communities

knowledge and understanding of pedagogical approaches for working with babies and young children, families and communities	a working knowledge and understanding of pedagogical approaches for working with babies and young children, families and communities	a critical working knowledge and understanding of pedagogical approaches for working with babies and young children, families and communities
awareness of issues in relation to rights, diversity, equity and inclusion in relation to working with babies and young children, families and communities	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	excellent knowledge of issues in relation to rights, diversity, equity and inclusion in relation to working with babies and young children, families and communities
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
knowledge of a range of research paradigms, research methods and measurement techniques, and some awareness of their limitations	a systematic knowledge of a range of research paradigms, research methods and measurement techniques, and awareness of their limitations	in-depth and systematic knowledge of a range of research paradigms, research methods and measurement techniques, and awareness of their limitations
knowledge of some specialised areas and/or applications	detailed knowledge of several specialised areas and/or applications, some of which are at the cutting edge of research in the subject area	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
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.	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.	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.

<b>Subject-specific skills</b>		
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	reason clearly, understand the role of 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 evidence and make critical judgements about arguments relating to the subject area of early childhood studies
be able to adopt multiple perspectives in relation to early childhood	be able to adopt multiple perspectives in relation to early childhood and systematically analyse the relationships between them	have a high-level ability to adopt multiple perspectives in relation to early childhood and systematically analyse the relationships between them
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' and young children and childhood, nationally and globally	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' and young children and childhood, nationally and globally	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' and 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	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	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
constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of child development	analyse and constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of child development	have a high-level ability to analyse and constructively critique theories, practice and research in the area of child development
detect meaningful patterns in play, behaviour and experience	detect meaningful patterns in play, behaviour and experience, and evaluate their significance	have a high-level ability to detect meaningful patterns in play, behaviour and experience and evaluate their significance
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	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	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

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
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	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	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
demonstrate the ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, meeting and working effectively, and in collaboration with parents, carers and other agencies	have a well developed ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, working effectively and in collaboration with parents, carers and other agencies	have a highly developed ability to plan for, and where appropriate implement, working effectively and in collaboration with parents, carers and other agencies
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	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	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
demonstrate the ability to lead, support and work collaboratively with others in the early childhood context	have a well developed ability to lead, support and work collaboratively with others in the early childhood context	have a highly developed ability to lead, support and work collaboratively with others in the early childhood context
produce critical arguments for improvements to multi-agency, multiprofessional and interprofessional practices for babies and young children	have a well developed ability to produce critical arguments for improvements to multi-agency, multiprofessional and interprofessional practices for babies and young children	have a highly developed ability to produce critical arguments for improvements to multi-agency, multiprofessional and interprofessional practices for babies and young children
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

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 competence in research skills through practical and theoretical activities
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
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
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
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 demonstrate and apply this in relation to personal study, particularly with regard to the research project
demonstrate the ability to give voice to and where appropriate act as an advocate for babies and young children, families and communities	have a well developed ability to give voice to and where appropriate act as an advocate for babies and young children, families and communities	have a highly developed ability to give voice to and where appropriate act as an advocate for babies and young children, families and communities
demonstrate the ability to recognise and challenge inequalities in society and to embrace an anti-bias approach.	have a well developed ability to recognise and challenge inequalities in society and to embrace an anti-bias approach.	have a highly developed ability to recognise and challenge inequalities in society and to embrace an anti-bias approach.

<b>Generic skills</b>		
On graduating with a bachelor's degree with honours in early childhood studies, students are expected to:		
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
present information to others in appropriate forms	present information to others in a variety of appropriate forms	present information to others in a variety of appropriate and innovative forms
approach problem solving in a systematic way	solve problems by clarifying questions, considering alternative solutions and evaluating outcomes	solve problems by clarifying and probing questions, considering alternative and innovative solutions and evaluating outcomes critically
listen carefully to others and reflect upon one's own and others' skills and views	listen carefully to others and reflect critically 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
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
use the communication skills necessary to converse, debate, negotiate, persuade and challenge the ideas of others	use the communication skills necessary to effectively converse, debate, negotiate, persuade and challenge the ideas of others	use sophisticated communication skills necessary to effectively converse, debate, negotiate, persuade and challenge the ideas of others
be aware of contextual and interpersonal factors in groups and teams	be sensitive to, and react appropriately to, contextual and interpersonal factors in groups and teams	be highly sensitive to, and react appropriately and thoughtfully to, contextual and interpersonal factors in groups and teams
have insight and confidence in leading and working collaboratively with others	have critical insight and confidence in leading and working collaboratively with others	have considerable critical insight and confidence in leading and working collaboratively with others

write for different purposes	have the ability to write for different purposes, which include persuasion, explanation, description, evaluation and judgement, recount, recap, hypothesis and summary	have sophisticated skills in writing for different purposes, which include persuasion explanation, description, evaluation and judgement, recount, recap, hypothesis and summary
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	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	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
undertake self-directed study and project management in a supportive environment	undertake self-directed study and project management in order to meet desired objectives	undertake self-directed study and project management with a high degree of critical awareness in order to meet desired objectives
recognise the need to assess one's own skills and to reflect on them for future learning.	be able to take charge of their 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, and reflect and evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of future learning.

## Appendix: 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 (2014)

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

### Employer representatives

The following employers were invited to provide feedback on the benchmark statement:

Foundations for Learning  
London Early Years Foundation  
Peterborough City Council  
Wrexham Early Years Centre

### Student reader

Fawziya H Al Zadjali                      Leeds Metropolitan University

### 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 Majoribanks	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.



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