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Department
for Education

Guidance

Early years qualifications and ratios

Updated 30 March 2023

Applies to England

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Qualifications and ratios

All early years providers working with children from birth to 5 years old must follow the regulations on early years foundation stage (EYFS) staff:child ratios. This is the number of qualified staff, at different qualification levels, an early years setting needs to have in order to meet the needs of all children at different stages of development and ensure their safety. These regulations are set out in the [early years foundation stage \(EYFS\) statutory framework](#).

Providers must make sure staff have the appropriate qualifications to count in the ratios, including the need to have at least one staff member trained in [paediatric first aid](#).

The Department for Education (DfE) defines the qualifications that staff must hold to count in EYFS staff:child ratios. Providers can use our [early years qualifications lists](#) to:

- check if a person's qualification meets the approved 'full and relevant' criteria for

early years qualifications

- confirm if a person counts in the EYFS staff:child ratios

If a person holds a level 2 qualification achieved from 1 September 2019 that meets the level 2 full and relevant criteria, you can count them towards the EYFS staff:child ratios at level 2.

If a person holds a level 3 qualification from September 2014 that meets the level 3 full and relevant criteria, you can count them towards the EYFS staff:child ratios at level 3.

If a person holds a qualification at level 4 or 5 (completed as part of a level 6 course), unless the level 4 or level 5 qualification is listed as meeting the full and relevant criteria, they cannot be counted in the EYFS staff:child ratios at level 3.

Lists of qualifications which meet DfE's criteria can be counted as full and relevant, and enable the holder to count within the staff:child ratios according to the EYFS. Please use the [early years qualifications list](#) to check if your qualification is suitable to work in an early years setting.

Paediatric first aid (PFA)

Newly qualified staff with a level 2 or level 3 early years qualification, awarded after 30 June 2016, must also have either a full paediatric first aid (PFA) or an emergency PFA certificate within 3 months of starting work. If they do not have this you cannot count them in the EYFS staff:child ratios at level 2 or level 3.

Recognition of early years qualifications

If your qualification is shown on the [early years qualifications list](#) then it is considered full and relevant. If it is not shown on this list, then the qualification is not considered full and relevant. In both cases there is no need to contact the department to check.

If the answer to your question or query cannot be found above, or your qualification was awarded by an overseas institution, please contact Ecctis. For further information on the services Ecctis provide, please see the [Ecctis website](#).

Please note that if you have contacted the early years workforce team at the DfE prior to 5 September 2022, you only need to contact Ecctis if you are starting a new query.

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