



Subject benchmark statement

Early childhood studies

Draft for consultation June 2007

Contents

Preface	ii
Introduction	x
Defining principles	x
Nature and extent of early childhood studies	x
Subject knowledge and understanding	x
Skills	x
Teaching, learning and assessment	x
Benchmark standards	x
Appendix A: Membership of the benchmarking group for the subject benchmark statement for early childhood studies	x

Preface

Subject benchmark statements provide a means for the academic community to describe the nature and characteristics of programmes in a specific subject or subject area. They also represent general expectations about standards for the award of qualifications at a given level in terms of the attributes and capabilities that those possessing qualifications should have demonstrated.

This subject benchmark statement, together with others published concurrently, refers to the **bachelor's degree with honours**¹. In addition, some subject benchmark statements provide guidance on integrated master's awards.

Subject benchmark statements are used for a variety of purposes. Primarily, they are an important external source of reference for higher education institutions (HEIs) when new programmes are being designed and developed in a subject area. They provide general guidance for articulating the learning outcomes associated with the programme but are not a specification of a detailed curriculum in the subject.

Subject benchmark statements also provide support to HEIs in pursuit of internal quality assurance. They enable the learning outcomes specified for a particular programme to be reviewed and evaluated against agreed general expectations about standards. Subject benchmark statements allow for flexibility and innovation in programme design and can stimulate academic discussion and debate upon the content of new and existing programmes within an agreed overall framework. Their use in supporting programme design, delivery and review within HEIs is supportive of moves towards an emphasis on institutional responsibility for standards and quality.

Subject benchmark statements may also be of interest to prospective students and employers, seeking information about the nature and standards of awards in a given subject or subject area.

The relationship between the standards set out in this document and those produced by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies for individual disciplines will be a matter for individual HEIs to consider in detail.

This subject benchmark statement was produced by a group of subject specialists drawn from, and acting on behalf of, the subject community. The final draft subject benchmark statement went through a full consultation with the wider academic community and stakeholder groups. The process was overseen by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). This subject benchmark statement will be revised no later than five years from its publication date, to reflect developments in the subject area and the experiences of HEIs and others who have been working with it. The review process will be overseen by QAA in collaboration with the subject community.

QAA publishes and distributes this subject benchmark statement and other subject benchmark statements developed by similar subject-specific groups.

¹ This is equivalent to the honours degree in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (level 10) and in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (level 6).

The Disability Equality Duty (DED) came into force on 4 December 2006². The DED requires public authorities, including HEIs, to act proactively on disability equality issues. The Duty complements the individual rights focus of the *Disability Discrimination Act* (DDA) and is aimed at improving public services and outcomes for disabled people as a whole. Responsibility for making sure that such duty is met lies with HEIs.

The Disability Rights Commission (DRC) has published guidance³ to help HEIs prepare for the implementation of the Duty and provided illustrative examples on how to take the duty forward. HEIs are encouraged to read this guidance when considering their approach to engaging with components of the Academic Infrastructure⁴, of which subject benchmark statements are a part.

Additional information that may assist HEIs when engaging with subject benchmark statements can be found in the DRC revised *Code of Practice: Post-16 Education*⁵, and also through the Equality Challenge Unit⁶ which is established to promote equality and diversity in higher education.

² In England, Scotland and Wales

³ Copies of the guidance *Further and higher education institutions and the Disability Equality Duty*, guidance for principals, vice-chancellors, governing boards and senior managers working in further education colleges and HEIs in England, Scotland and Wales, may be obtained from the DRC at www.drc-gb.org/library/publications/disability_equality_duty/further_and_higher_education.aspx

⁴ An explanation of the Academic Infrastructure, and the roles of subject benchmark statements within it, is available at www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure

⁵ Copies of the DRC revised *Code of Practice: Post-16 Education* may be obtained from the DRC at www.drc-gb.org/employers_and_service_provider/education/higher_education.aspx

⁶ Equality Challenge Unit, www.ecu.ac.uk

1 Introduction

1.1 Early childhood studies (ECS) is a developing academic area. The first degrees were created in 1992 with the aim of providing a research base in universities 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 young children in a social pedagogical and policy context, as a subject area in universities. Conceptual development and policy concerns were either split between the subject areas and disciplines of, for example, sociology, psychology, social policy and health, or were seen as areas of practice, outside the universities 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 universities. The second was to look to the future and to seek to develop an ECS 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.

1.3 These purposes were in order to provide better lives for children and families and to challenge gender inequalities. ECS graduates should therefore be effective advocates for the rights of young children; in whatever capacity they work, facilitating the recognition of the rights of children to actively participate in their world, recognising children's needs, developmental tasks, diversity and differences.

1.4 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.

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

1.6 Students typically develop skills for a variety of purposes, research, presentation, role play, teamwork and problem solving, and these attributes are valued highly by employers.

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

The history of professional development and practice

1.8 Practitioner options were developed in 2004 so students could show that their assessed practice matches current occupational standards. (Meeting occupational standards at level 3 National Qualifications Framework currently qualifies a person to work with children directly and in a supervisory capacity.) In recent years, professional standards have been developed and this is continuing, for work with children in early years. Degrees may wish to offer practice elements and modules that allow their students to match practice against these.

2 Defining principles

2.1 Programmes of study in ECS aim to produce an understanding of the ecology of early childhood, and children in ecological context. Ecological context should be understood as encompassing both time and geographical space and encompassing the contexts of family, and children's and family services (ie early childhood services). The focus is on the development of the child in context and the implications for practice.

2.2 The degrees 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 children and families.

2.3 The interdisciplinary nature of the area of ECS takes account of the ecology of children's lives, in studying the complexities of family life and of children's development from conception onwards, thus signifying 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 protecting and caring for children.

2.4 The programmes aim to present multiple perspectives and to draw on a range of significant disciplines, 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 which 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. Practitioner options additionally offer the opportunity to link theory and practice to competency and the relevant and appropriate professional standards.

Practitioner options

2.6 Practitioner options may be offered as part of an ECS degree where institutions wish to provide opportunities for assessed practice. Degrees with practitioner options are mainly intended for those students who do not already have recognised practice qualifications at level 3 on the National Qualifications Framework, yet who may want to work directly with children on completion of their degree.

2.7 For those practitioner options devised to match occupational standards at level 3, the following requirements usually apply.

- In addition to core ECS, modules there are practice elements and modules, through which the students undertake assessed practice in an Ofsted-recognised early years setting. This will usually be a minimum of 100 hours. These assessed elements can usually only be undertaken if the students have already completed 100 hours of sustained practice in an Ofsted-recognised early years setting.
- In addition, or alternatively, some degrees may offer the opportunity for students to develop and extend their professional competence.

2.8 This subject benchmark statement recognises that ECS programmes are designed with ethical discourses in mind and operate with a consideration of ethical frameworks and values.

3 Nature and extent of early childhood studies

3.1 ECS is the study of early childhood in context. It is an established and distinctive area of study and research. The focus is on the development of the child in context and the implications for practice. This focus may be interpreted in different ways in different degrees, but is likely to draw on, to a lesser or greater extent, disciplines such as psychology, sociology, philosophy and social policy, and areas such as education, health, history and cultural studies. However, all of these will focus on the development of the child in context.

3.2 The area of study should enable students to develop insights and understandings relating to how children and childhood are understood from a range of academic and professional perspectives and to understand the philosophies, beliefs and attitudes that inform them.

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

3.4 A critical consideration of children's rights and anti-discriminatory practice underpins and permeates the subject.

3.5 Students will be exposed to the challenges and intricacies within multiprofessional practices and within constructions of childhood. Students will be encouraged to gain insights into the complex inter-relatedness of, and potential professional barriers operating within, the provision of services for children and their families.

3.6 Research and inquiry are significant parts of the subject and students will be encouraged to develop awareness and reflection upon self and others, and to develop appropriate communication, reading and writing skills. Students will gain an understanding of the processes, methodological and ethical debates required to conduct and complete a piece of research and will be 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 ECS is a discipline which has, and is developing, its own evidence and research base and is underpinned by several existing disciplines. It covers a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary area of study which draws on disciplines and areas such as education studies, health studies, social work and social policy, psychology, and sociology. The discipline is dynamic and developing and so a key concern is to promote awareness of relevant academic and professional developments.

4.2 ECS graduates should be able to make and justify judgements related to the providing for children's and families' needs based on integrating a range of information from different sources.

4.3 It is not the intention of this statement to be overly prescriptive in defining the subject knowledge acquired by students; nevertheless, there are certain core areas within the discipline which should each receive significant coverage. Students should also be exposed to developments in the discipline, including those that at present do not command consensus.

4.4 The acquisition of knowledge of ECS is progressive and therefore study of the main areas will continue across undergraduate degree levels with opportunities for more specialised, in-depth study at honours level. It is expected that child development will be studied progressively throughout the whole of the degree programme. It is anticipated that there may be more variation in the subject areas covered at the more advanced level reflecting areas of expertise within departments. By honours level, students will be expected to demonstrate facility and familiarity with research in early childhood through their knowledge and understanding of research methodology.

4.5 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. However, knowledge domains typically include the study of child development, including social and developmental psychology and the philosophy, sociology and history of childhood. Various pedagogical approaches will be explored as will policy and provision for children and families. Pedagogy is understood as incorporating both upbringing and pedagogy (where pedagogy is also understood as incorporating the principles and practice of education). Thus it will include curriculum and curriculum development.

4.6 Professional practice incorporates theoretical principles and knowledge of management, leadership, knowledge of organisational structures, including 'schooling' and 'care' institutions, working with other professionals, and working with families.

4.7 Theories, ideologies and constructions of professionalism will underpin the examination of multiprofessional leadership and management. Knowledge domains will also encompass theoretical perspectives relating to the global status of children. These perspectives will include children's rights, children's health and well-being, including child protection and disability, diversity and inclusion.

4.8 The degree programme will enable students to acquire the knowledge of a range of research skills. This will in turn develop knowledge and understanding about a range of specific issues relating to early childhood such as multi-agency working in order to meet the needs of children and families

5 Skills

5.1 Studying for a single bachelor's degree with honours in ECS 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 the subject knowledge and/or are an integral part of any ECS degree. Generic skills are transferable skills which are not so closely tied to the subject matter of ECS.

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 ECS graduate will be expected to:

- reflect upon a range of philosophical, historical, psychological, sociological and health perspectives and consideration of how these underpin different understandings of children and childhood
- apply multiple perspectives to early childhood issues, recognising that ECS involves a range of research methods, theories, evidence and applications
- integrate ideas and findings across the multiple perspectives in ECS and recognise distinctive ECS approaches to relevant issues
- demonstrate the ability to evaluate competing positions in relation to the construction of children and childhood by different subject disciplines, societal agents and time, place and culture
- demonstrate the knowledge and awareness of the skills needed for different pedagogical approaches, including:
 - the formation and promotion of mutually respectful relationships with families, colleagues and other professionals
 - and for the necessary depth and strength of relationships with individual children, and to facilitate the building of relationships with and between children in groups
- demonstrate the ability to critically explore, examine and evaluate the significance of the cultural and historical features of various agencies and institutions in regard to children and childhood

- demonstrate the ability to plan for, the curriculum, assessment, evaluation and improvement of creative learning opportunities taking account of young children's health and emotional well-being
- demonstrate the ability to lead, support and work collaboratively with others and an understanding of working effectively in teams with parents, carers and other professionals
- demonstrate an understanding of how to plan for meeting and promoting children's health, welfare and safety needs and the conditions which enable them to flourish
- demonstrate the ability to produce critical arguments for improvements to multiprofessional practices for children
- use skills of observation and analysis in relation to aspects of children's lives
- reflect upon the ethics of studying children and their families
- 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 the ability to act as an advocate for children and families
- demonstrate the ability to recognise and challenge inequalities in society and to embrace an anti-bias curriculum
- demonstrate a critical understanding of the links between ethics, politics, culture and ideology in the lives of children and their families.

5.4 For practitioner options an ECS graduate would also be expected to demonstrate the ability to:

- plan for and implement 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 an understanding of working effectively in teams with parents, carers and other professionals
- meet and promote children's health, welfare and safety needs and the conditions which enable them to flourish.

Generic skills

5.5 An ECS graduate should be able to:

- present information to others in appropriate forms
- offer an informed point of view, drawing upon a range of theoretical positions
- handle primary source material critically
- comprehend and use data effectively
- listen carefully to others and to reflect upon own and others' skills and views
- make critical judgements and evaluations
- take different perspectives on issues and problems and evaluate them in a critical, sceptical manner to arrive at supported conclusions
- access, retrieve, organise and use a range of sources of information, and critically evaluate their relevance
- 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. The complexity of the factors that shape behaviour and social interaction will be familiar to ECS graduates and will make them more aware of the basis of problems and interpersonal conflict. They should also be sensitive to the importance of enhancing cooperation to maximise the effectiveness of individual skills as shown in group work and team building
- write for different purposes, which include persuasion explanation, description, evaluation and judgment, recount, recap, hypothesis and summary
- use information and communications technology (ICT) appropriately in a range of contexts
- become more independent and pragmatic as learners (taking responsibility for their own learning is increasingly expected in an ECS degree).

6 Teaching, learning and assessment

6.1 The teaching and learning strategies used should help the students achieve an awareness of the ethical concerns within the discipline, especially in the conduct of empirical studies and practice. Individual programme specifications will show the specific focus of a programme. However, as the subject is based on the principle of developing independent, critical students who will be insightful advocates of children, programmes will usually be designed to:

- help the student understand how to use learning resources – human and material (including technological) - 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 will reflect an increasing proportion of individualised and self-directed learning approaches. Students will be encouraged to take personal responsibility for achieving the learning outcomes through their own efforts. They will be expected to supplement the knowledge presented through additional enquiry and discussions.

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

Teaching and learning

6.4 Graduates will be able to take a more critical stance to the theories, findings and approaches of the discipline. In terms of teaching and learning, this will typically involve a change from initially supported and guided study to more independent and self-directed study. Throughout, there should be due emphasis given to active learning and the acquisition of both generic and subject-specific skills and abilities, through a variety of learning and teaching strategies.

6.5 There are many different forms of teaching and learning, including workshops, lectures, seminars, individual tutorials, guided reading, independent study, email discussion groups, student groups, distance learning, individual project supervision, dissertation, opportunities to reflect on practice etc.

6.6 It is recognised that these categories are not mutually exclusive; lectures may, for instance, involve student activities and opportunities for dialogue. As well as developing familiarity with literature and published research, the use of other media should be encouraged.

Assessment

6.7 The choice of assessment methods will be clearly related to the learning objectives. Assessment methods may include formal examinations (which can be seen, unseen, open-book), multiple-choice tests, assessed essays, practical reports, other reports, information technology use, case studies, portfolios, dissertations, and formal assessment of performance in oral presentations and debates, including seminar and individual presentation. 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 should be explicit and should contain the expectation that critical thinking skills will develop progressively.

6.8 The assessment schedule must be clearly specified and linked to objectives, with suitable safeguards to ensure the authenticity of learning and to define clearly the limits of cooperative learning. Students should be given the opportunity to demonstrate that they are conversant with the core aspects of the discipline, which should normally be covered in the assessment schedule.

6.9 The purpose of assessment is to enable students to demonstrate that they have fulfilled the objectives of the programme and achieved the standard required for the award. Assessment must be carried out by examiners who are impartial and who are competent to make judgements about the performance of individual students in relation both to the cohort and to peers on other comparable programmes.

6.10 Programmes should use a variety of assessment methods and strategies that reflect the stated aims and overall learning outcomes for the programme as a whole as well as those specifically written for any particular unit/module.

6.11 Programmes should have an explicit assessment strategy to ensure cumulatively a varied, imaginative and cohesive overall pattern of assessment for the programme.

6.12 The range and breadth of assessment is designed to enable students to demonstrate possession of a variety of 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 minimal standards necessary for a student to graduate with a single bachelor's degree with honours in ECS
- **typical standards** are those which a typical ECS student would be expected to attain
- **excellent standards** are those which the highest attaining ECS student would be expected to achieve.

7.2 The standards are phrased in terms of what knowledge or skills a graduate at that level (threshold, typical and excellent) would be 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 ECS graduates should acquire a measure of the skills required by the discipline, though the range of skills demonstrated and the degree of competence exhibited will vary depending on whether students take single honours, joint honours or ECS modules within a modular degree.

7.4 Although some skills are specific to particular modules, others are pervasive through the discipline. It would, therefore, be inappropriate for each ECS degree programme, let alone each module, to have to demonstrate how each skill is separately acquired.

7.5 Graduates will be expected to have acquired the intellectual abilities and attributes listed below, most of which are readily transferable to other contexts.

Threshold standard

Subject knowledge

7.6 On graduating with a bachelor's degree with honours in ECS students would be expected to:

- understand the conceptual underpinnings of ECS
- have a basic understanding of children and childhood, nationally and globally, from philosophical, historical, psychological, sociological, cultural, educational, health, welfare, legal, political and economic perspectives
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the areas of interest contributing to ECS across the core subject-specific skills areas, and how they interrelate.

7.7 This includes:

- understanding of all aspects of significant policy and provision for children and families
- understanding of multi-professional, inter-professional, multi-agency and interagency working as a means of meeting the needs of children and families

- knowledge and understanding of pedagogical approaches for working with young children and families
- awareness of issues in relation to rights, diversity, equity and inclusion in relation to working with children and families
- knowledge of the methods required for systematic study and research relative to children and childhood.

Subject skills

7.8 On graduating with a bachelor's degree with honours in ECS students would be expected to:

- reason clearly and demonstrate the relationship between theory and evidence, and be able to adopt multiple perspectives in relation to early childhood
- reflect upon a range of philosophical, historical, psychological, sociological, cultural, health, welfare, legal, political and economic, perspectives and consider how these underpin different understandings of children and childhood, nationally and globally
- evaluate competing positions in relation to the construction of children and childhood by different subject disciplines, societal agents and time, place and culture
- detect meaningful patterns in behaviour and experience
- explore, examine and evaluate the significance of the cultural and historical features of various agencies and institutions in regard to children and childhood
- demonstrate the knowledge and awareness of the skills needed for different relational pedagogical approaches
- demonstrate the ability to plan for the curriculum, assessment, evaluation and improvement of creative learning opportunities taking account of young children's health and emotional well-being
- demonstrate the ability to plan for meeting and working effectively and in collaboration with parents, carers and other agencies
- demonstrate the ability to plan for meeting and promoting children's health, welfare and safety needs and the conditions that enable them to flourish
- demonstrate the ability to lead, support and work collaboratively with others in the early childhood context
- produce critical arguments for improvements to multi-professional and interprofessional practices for children
- explore critically the links between ethics, politics, culture and ideology in children's lives
- pose and operationalise research questions in relation to early childhood
- demonstrate competence in research skills related to early childhood through practical and theoretical activities
- use skills of observation and analysis in relation to aspects of children's lives
- reflect upon the ethics of studying children and their families
- initiate, design, conduct and report an empirically-based early childhood research project under appropriate supervision
- be aware of ethical principles and demonstrate this in relation to personal study, particularly with regard to the research project

- demonstrate the ability to act as an advocate for children and families
- demonstrate the ability to recognise and challenge inequalities in society and to embrace an anti-bias curriculum
- demonstrate a critical understanding of the links between ethics, politics, culture and ideology in the lives of children and their families.

7.9 For practitioner options an ECS graduate would also be expected to demonstrate the ability to:

- demonstrate the ability to plan for, assess, evaluate and improve creative learning opportunities taking account of young children's health and emotional well-being
- demonstrate the ability to work effectively and in collaboration with parents, carers and other agencies
- demonstrate the ability to meet and promote children's health, welfare and safety needs and the conditions which enable them to flourish.

Generic skills

7.10 On graduating with a bachelor's degree with honours in ECS students would be expected to:

- communicate ideas and research findings by written, oral and visual means
- present a range of theoretical positions and offer a point of view
- interpret and use numerical, and other forms of data
- present information to others in appropriate forms
- approach problem solving in a systematic way
- listen carefully to others and to reflect upon own and on others' skills and views
- use a range of sources of information
- use the communication skills necessary to converse, debate, negotiate, persuade and challenge the ideas of others
- be aware of contextual and interpersonal factors in groups and teams
- have insight and confidence in leading and working collaboratively with others
- write for different purposes
- use ICT appropriately as part of the learning process in a range of contexts
- undertake self-directed study and project management in a supportive environment
- recognise the need to assess their own skills and to harness them for future learning.

Typical standard

Subject knowledge

7.11 On graduating with a bachelor's degree with honours in ECS students would be expected to:

- understand the conceptual underpinnings of ECS as a subject area, its historical origins, development and limitations
- demonstrate systematic knowledge and critical understanding of children and childhood nationally and globally from philosophical, historical, psychological, sociological, cultural, educational, health, welfare, legal, political and economic perspectives
- demonstrate systematic knowledge and critical understanding of the areas of interest contributing to ECS across the core subject-specific skills areas, and how they interrelate.

7.12 This includes:

- a systematic knowledge and critical understanding of all aspects of significant policy and provision for children and families
- a working knowledge of the importance of, but also the challenges and constraints of, multiprofessional, interprofessional, multi-agency and interagency working in order to meet the needs of children and families
- a working knowledge and understanding of pedagogical approaches for working with young children and families
- a good knowledge of issues in relation to rights, diversity, equity and inclusion in relation to working with children and families
- a good working knowledge of the methods required for systematic study and research relative to children and childhood
- a systematic knowledge of a range of research paradigms, research methods and measurement techniques, and awareness of their limitations
- detailed knowledge of several specialised areas and/or applications, some of which are at the cutting edge of research in the subject area.

Subject skills

7.13 On graduating with a bachelor's degree with honours in ECS students would be expected to:

- reason clearly, understand the role of evidence and make critical judgements about arguments relating to the subject area of ECS
- adopt multiple perspectives in relation to early childhood and systematically analyse the relationships between them
- have a well developed ability to reflect upon a range of philosophical, historical, psychological, sociological, cultural and health, welfare, legal, political and economic perspectives and consider how these underpin different understandings of children and childhood nationally and globally
- analyse and evaluate competing positions in relation to the construction of children and childhood by different subject disciplines, societal agents and time, place and culture
- detect meaningful patterns in behaviour and experience and evaluate their significance

- critically explore, examine and evaluate the significance of the cultural and historical features of various agencies and institutions in regard to children and childhood
- have a well developed knowledge and awareness of the skills needed for different relational pedagogical approaches
- have a well developed ability to plan for the curriculum, assessment, evaluation and improvement of creative learning opportunities taking account of young children's health and emotional well-being
- have a well developed ability to plan for working effectively and in collaboration with parents, carers and other agencies
- have a well developed ability to lead, support and work collaboratively with others
- have a well developed ability to meet and promote children's health, welfare and safety needs, and the conditions which enable them to flourish
- have a well developed ability to produce critical arguments for improvements to multiprofessional and interprofessional practices for children
- have a well developed ability to explore critically the links between ethics, politics, culture and ideology in children's lives
- pose, operationalise and critique research questions related to early childhood, and can demonstrate competence in research skills through practical and theoretical activities
- use developed skills of observation and analysis in relation to aspects of children's lives
- have a well developed ability to reflect upon the ethics of studying children
- competently initiate, design, conduct and report an early childhood research project under appropriate supervision, and recognise its theoretical, practical and methodological implications and limitations
- 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
- have a well developed ability to act as an advocate for children and families
- have a well developed ability to recognise and challenge inequalities in society and to embrace an anti-bias curriculum
- demonstrate a well developed critical understanding of the links between ethics, politics, culture and ideology in the lives of children and their families.

7.14 For practitioner options an ECS graduate would also be expected to demonstrate a well developed ability to:

- plan for, assess, evaluate and consider how to improve creative learning opportunities taking account of young children's health and emotional well-being
- work effectively and in collaboration with parents, carers and other agencies
- meet and promote children's health, welfare and safety needs, and the conditions which enable them to flourish.

Generic skills

7.15 On graduating with a bachelor's degree with honours in ECS students would be expected to:

- communicate ideas and research findings both effectively and fluently by written, oral and visual means
- present a wide range of theoretical positions and offer a well informed point of view

- interpret and use numerical, and other forms of data, critically and securely
- present information to others in a variety of appropriate forms
- solve problems by clarifying questions, considering alternative solutions and evaluating outcomes
- listen carefully to others and reflect critically upon own and on others' skills and views
- use a range of sources of information critically
- use the communication skills necessary to effectively converse, debate, negotiate, persuade and challenge the ideas of others
- be sensitive to, and react appropriately to, contextual and interpersonal factors in groups and teams
- have critical insight and confidence in leading and working collaboratively with others
- have the ability to write for different purposes, which include persuasion explanation, description, evaluation and judgment, recount, recap, hypothesis and summary
- have the ability to use ICT critically and appropriately as part of the learning process in a range of contexts, both at own level and to enhance provision for children
- undertake self-directed study and project management in order to meet desired objectives
- be able to take charge of their own learning, and reflect and evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of future learning.

Excellent standard

Subject knowledge

7.16 On graduating with a bachelor's degree with honours in ECS students would be expected to:

- understand critically the conceptual underpinnings of ECS as a subject area, its historical origins, development and limitations
- demonstrate in depth, systematic knowledge and consistently critical understanding of children and childhood nationally and globally from philosophical, historical, psychological, sociological, cultural, educational, global, health, welfare, legal, political and economic perspectives
- demonstrate in depth, systematic knowledge and consistently critical understanding of the areas of interest contributing to ECS across the core subject-specific skills areas, and how they interrelate.

7.17 This includes:

- in depth, systematic knowledge and consistently critical understanding of all aspects of significant policy and provision for children and families
- a critical working knowledge of the importance but also the challenges and constraints of multiprofessional, interprofessional, multi-agency and interagency working in order to meet the needs of children and families
- a critical working knowledge and understanding of pedagogical approaches for working with young children and families
- excellent knowledge of issues in relation to rights, diversity, equity and inclusion in relation to working with children and families

- excellent and explicit working knowledge of the methods required for systematic study and research relative to children and childhood
- in depth and systematic knowledge of a range of research paradigms, research methods and measurement techniques, and awareness of their limitations
- 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.

Subject skills

7.18 On graduating with a bachelor's degree with honours in ECS students would be expected to:

- 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 ECS
- have a high level ability to adopt multiple perspectives in relation to early childhood and systematically analyse the relationships between them
- have a high level ability to reflect upon a range of philosophical, historical, psychological, sociological, cultural, health, welfare, legal, political and economic perspectives and consider how these underpin different understandings of children and childhood
- have a high level ability to analyse and evaluate competing positions in relation to the construction of children and childhood by different subject disciplines, societal agents and time, place and culture
- have a high level ability to detect meaningful patterns in behaviour and experience and evaluate their significance
- have a high level ability to critically explore, examine and evaluate the significance of the cultural and historical features of various agencies and institutions in regard to children and childhood
- have a high level knowledge and awareness of the skills needed for different relational pedagogical approaches
- have a highly developed ability to plan for the curriculum, assessment, evaluation and improvement of creative learning opportunities taking account of young children's health and emotional well-being
- have a highly developed ability to plan for working effectively and in collaboration with parents, carers and other agencies
- have a highly developed ability to plan for meeting and promoting children's health, welfare and safety needs, and the conditions which enable them to flourish
- have a highly developed ability to produce critical arguments for improvements to multiprofessional and interprofessional practices for children
- have a highly developed ability to explore critically the links between ethics, politics, culture and ideology in children's lives
- have a highly developed ability to pose, operationalise and critique research questions and demonstrate competence in research skills related to early childhood through practical and theoretical activities
- have a highly developed skills of observation and analysis in relation to aspects of children's lives
- have a high level ability to reflect upon the ethics of studying children and their families
- 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

- have a highly developed ability to act as an advocate for children and families
- have a highly developed ability to recognise and challenge inequalities in society and to embrace an anti-bias curriculum
- a highly developed critical understanding of the links between ethics, politics, culture and ideology in the lives of children and their families.

7.19 For practitioner options an ECS graduate would also be expected to demonstrate a highly developed ability to:

- plan for, assess, evaluate and consider how to improve creative learning opportunities taking account of young children's health and emotional well-being
- work effectively and in collaboration with parents, carers and other agencies
- meet and promote children's health, welfare and safety needs, and the conditions which enable them to flourish.

Generic skills

7.20 On graduating with a bachelor's degree with honours in ECS students would be expected to:

- communicate ideas and research findings effectively, clearly and fluently by written, oral and visual means
- present a wide range of theoretical positions and offer a well informed and insightful point of view
- interpret and use numerical, and other forms of data, clearly, critically and securely
- present information to others in a variety of appropriate and innovative forms
- solve problems by clarifying and probing questions, considering alternative and innovative solutions and evaluating outcomes critically
- listen carefully to others and reflect critically and insightfully upon own and on others' skills and views
- use a wide range of sources of information critically and with insight
- use sophisticatedly the communication skills necessary to effectively converse, debate, negotiate, persuade and challenge the ideas of others
- be highly sensitive to, and react appropriately and thoughtfully to, contextual and interpersonal factors in groups and teams
- have considerable critical insight and confidence in leading and working collaboratively with others
- have sophisticated skills in writing for different purposes, which include persuasion explanation, description, evaluation and judgment, recount, recap, hypothesis and summary
- have the ability to use ICT critically and with sophistication as part of the learning process in a range of contexts, both at own level and to enhance provision for children
- undertake self-directed study and project management with a high degree of critical awareness in order to meet desired objectives
- show sophistication in taking charge of own learning, and reflect and evaluate personal strengths and weaknesses for the purposes of future learning.

Appendix A: Membership of the benchmarking group for the subject benchmark statement for early childhood studies

Pamela Calder (Chair)	London South Bank University
Ian Barron	The 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 ECS Degree Network also offered comments and suggestions at network meetings.