

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT Developing An Understanding Of Working With Children
(Higher)

CODE DM5L 12

COURSE

SUMMARY

This Unit is intended for candidates who will assist in work with children aged 0 to 12 years and families in an early education and childcare setting. It is designed to enable candidates to contribute effectively to the care, learning and development of children. It will provide candidates with an understanding of the values and principles that underpin work with children and an awareness of the knowledge, skills and qualities required to enable them to support child centred practice. Candidates will be encouraged to evaluate their own skills and qualities and to explore their role in contributing to the work of the team to ensure professionalism and best practice in all aspects of their work with children.

This Unit is a mandatory Unit in the *National Certificate Group Award: Early Education and Childcare* but is also suitable for candidates wishing to study the Unit on its own or as part of other awards. The Unit is suitable for candidates who wish to gain employment, or may already be employed, in the early education and childcare sector working under supervision. They may wish to progress onto higher early education and childcare qualifications.

OUTCOMES

1. Explain the principles and values that underpin working with children.
2. Explain child-centred practice.
3. Evaluate the skills and qualities necessary for working in an early education and childcare setting.
4. Evaluate the importance of 'reflective practice' in an early education and childcare setting.

Administrative Information

Superclass: GA

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

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RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, it is expected that candidates will have a clear understanding of the developmental need of children aged birth to twelve. In addition, candidates would normally be expected to have attained one of the following, or equivalent:

- Standard Grade at Credit level in any relevant subject
- A Course or Units in Care at Intermediate 2
- Courses or Units at Intermediate 2 in Communication or any relevant subject
- Scottish Group Award at Intermediate 2
- SVQ or SVQ Units at level 2 in a related subject.

It is acknowledged that there are a variety of prior learning experiences which are relevant to candidates wishing to undertake this Unit.

CREDIT VALUE

1 credit at Higher (6 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 6*)

**SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels, ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.*

CORE SKILLS

There is no automatic certification of Core skills or Core Skills components in this Unit.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards

UNIT Developing An Understanding Of Working With Children (Higher)

Acceptable performance in this Unit will be the satisfactory achievement of the standards set out in this part of the Unit Specification. All sections of the statement of standards are mandatory and cannot be altered without reference to the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

OUTCOME 1

Explain the principles and values that underpin working with children.

Performance Criteria

- a) Describe current and relevant legislation, charters and national policies and standards from which the principles and values are drawn.
- b) Explain the principles and values that underpin working with children.

OUTCOME 2

Explain child-centred practice.

Performance Criteria

- a) Describe the needs of children aged birth to twelve years.
- b) Explain the types of relationships formed with children which support child-centred practice.
- c) Explain the types of relationships formed with adults which support child-centred practice.
- d) Explain the role of the childcare professional in providing an enabling environment to support child-centred practice.

OUTCOME 3

Evaluate the skills and qualities necessary for working in an early education and childcare setting.

Performance Criteria

- a) Describe the skills and qualities that are needed to work with children.
- b) Describe the skills and qualities required to work effectively as part of a team in an early education and childcare setting.
- c) Evaluate the contribution personal skills and qualities make towards professional practice.

OUTCOME 4

Evaluate the importance of 'reflective practice' in an early education and childcare setting.

Performance Criteria

- a) Describe what is meant by 'reflective practice'.
- b) Explain how evaluating your own skills and qualities supports professional practice.
- c) Explain the benefits of reflective practice to an early education and childcare setting.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

UNIT Developing An Understanding Of Working With Children (Higher)

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

To achieve this Unit, each candidate will need evidence to demonstrate his/her knowledge for Outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4. Written and/or recorded oral evidence is required to demonstrate that the candidate has achieved all Outcomes and Performance Criteria.

The evidence for this part of the Unit should be obtained under controlled, supervised conditions and should last no more than one hour and 30 minutes.

A holistic assessment based on a case study/scenario with associated extended and restricted response questions; or a question paper with both extended and restricted response questions; such as illustrated in the National Assessment Bank item for this Unit, could be used. The case study should reflect the age range of the Unit and should offer opportunities for the candidate to demonstrate their knowledge of the principles and values, child-centred practice, qualities and skills, and reflective practice. The candidates should be assessed on completion of all four Outcomes. Achievement can be decided by the use of a cut off score.

Specific advice

Outcome 1 PC a) The assessment should cover **three** principles and values underpinning early education and childcare.

Outcome 1 PC b) **Two** pieces of current legislation, charters, national policies and/or standards from which these values are drawn should be described.

Outcome 2 The assessment should cover **three** examples of child-centred practice to be explained by the candidate.

Outcome 3 The assessment should cover **three** qualities and skills required for working with children, working in a team and for professional practice.

Outcome 4 The assessment should offer the candidate the opportunity to reflect on professional practice.

National Unit Specification: support notes

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This part of the Unit Specification is offered as guidance. The support notes are not mandatory.

While the exact time allocated to this Unit is at the discretion of the centre, the notional design length is 40 hours.

GUIDANCE ON THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THIS UNIT

Outcome 1

Candidates should have the opportunity to find out about and explore the values and principles that underpin work with children. They should be helped to identify that:

- The welfare of the child is paramount.
- All children have the right to play.
- The needs, rights and views of the child are at the centre of all practice and provision.
- Individuality, differences and diversity should be valued and celebrated.
- Care, learning, development and play are interwoven.
- Equality of opportunity and anti discriminatory practice must be promoted.
- Parents and families are partners in the care, learning and development of their child.
- Teamwork is essential in supporting children's care, learning and development.
- Confidentiality and agreements about confidential information are respected, unless a child's well-being is at stake.

Candidates will need to be aware of and show a basic understanding of:

- Current and relevant legislation, for example, Children (Scotland) Act (1995), Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, Protection of Children (Scotland) Act 2003.
- Current and relevant charters, national policies and quality standards, for example, UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the National Care Standards: early education and childcare, as well as the SSSC Code of Practice for Social Service Workers.
- Policies, standards and procedures that apply to individual settings.

Candidates should be introduced to legislation, policies and procedures in relation to workplace practice, and not in terms of the legislative process.

Candidates should be given opportunities to explore what these policies and procedures mean in practice. They should be encouraged to reflect on their own attitudes and values as they learn about the principles and values that underpin work with children. They should be helped to identify the similarities and differences between different parts of the early education and childcare sector and to consider the implications for practice.

Candidates need to be helped to understand that children, from an early age, absorb attitudes and values from the people, experiences and situations that they come into contact with. They need to consider that how they relate to and treat children will influence how children treat and relate to others.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Developing An Understanding Of Working With Children (Higher)

Outcome 2

Candidates should be given the opportunity to explore the term ‘child-centred practice’; that the child is at the centre of all professional practice in a early education and childcare setting, that the child’s wellbeing is paramount, and that this includes the child’s individual needs for play, care, learning and development.

The candidate must be aware of the care needs of children and explain their role in helping to meet these needs. They should be helped to realise that all children are individuals who have the right to be treated with respect and dignity at all times. The challenge facing them as early education and childcare workers is ensuring that their practice is appropriate and relevant to the needs of each child, that is, in terms of ability, aptitude, motivation, social and cultural background. Candidates should be helped to understand that their role has to change in response to children’s requirements and that they need to develop a flexible range of strategies to meet children’s play, care, learning and development needs. (This can be linked to theories relating to child development and behaviour such as Maslow, Kelmer Pringle, Vygotsky, Sturrock.)

Candidates should demonstrate an awareness of the policies and standards that relate to the care of children and an understanding of the importance of following agreed procedures, such as policies and procedures relating to protecting children from abuse, including: supporting children with additional needs; promoting equal opportunities; handling and reporting accidents and incidents, maintaining a safe and hygienic environment. They should explore the nature of their interactions with children, which would include discussion about modelling positive behaviours and language, interacting with children at their level, providing praise and encouragement, listening to children and responding appropriately, respecting children as individuals with rights of their own.

Candidates need to be helped to recognise the importance of getting to know the child so that their play, care, learning and development needs are met in ways which recognise the child’s individuality and enable them to make choices, to feel safe but not over protected, and to realise their potential.

Candidates should be helped to identify their role in contributing to child-centred practice. They should be given opportunities to discuss the importance of contributing to team working in terms of planning, observation and evaluation, in relation to supporting:

- the identification of individual and group needs
- the effective use of available resources
- the care, learning and development needs of children
- the identification of future needs
- improvements in practice
- objective assessment and feedback to parents/carers.

The need for flexibility in planning needs to be examined in the context of child-centred practice, for example acting on unexpected learning opportunities, picking up on children’s play cues or threads of thinking.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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Candidates should be helped to gain an understanding of the principles and processes of observing, talking to and listening to children in their every day work. They should discuss how to use the information and insight gained through observational processes to support child-centred practice, for example:

- to establish individual stages of development and monitor developmental progress
- to get to know the individual child – their likes and dislikes, their preferences, needs and interests
- to plan for individual and group play, learning and development opportunities
- to assess the use of resources
- to identify additional support needs
- the identification of play cues as a means of supporting child-centred play.

They should be helped to recognise the importance of giving feedback to parents/carers and colleagues on their findings so that the provision of learning and development opportunities ensures that the child's needs, interests and concerns are kept at the centre of practice. The importance of communicating and forming relationships with parents/carers should be emphasised, as the child's most enduring carer/educator. Candidates should recognise that parents know their child best.

The importance of monitoring and the evaluation of children's experience of the care, learning and development environment that has been provided and the nature of the interactions within it, should be explored by candidates in order for them to understand how monitoring and evaluation supports child-centred practice. They should be able to explain the processes of monitoring and evaluation and be able to identify ways in which they can contribute to the monitoring and evaluation process, for example, at team meetings, through record keeping, through keeping a daily diary, at planning meetings.

Outcome 3

Candidates should be able to describe some of the skills and qualities that they need to work in an early education and childcare setting. Candidates need to explore these skills and qualities in terms of those required to work with children, those required to work as part of a team, and those required for on-going professional practice.

In their work, candidates will need to build positive relationships with children; parents/carers and families, colleagues and other adults. They should be able to describe some of the skills and qualities required to do this, for example:

- expressing self clearly
- listening attentively
- offering support and encouragement
- asking questions and seeking clarification
- sharing information and receiving feedback
- co-operating and working with others.

As well as these, they should be able to describe some of the qualities required, such as openness and honesty, reliability and trustworthiness, interest and enthusiasm, patience and tolerance, sensitivity and empathy. The candidate should also understand the need to be respectful and welcoming to individuals, to value diversity and to be mindful of confidentiality of information, unless a child's well-being is at risk.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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Candidates should consider the value of team working. They should explore how teams work and to explore the skills of a team, for example those listed that are essential for good team working, and to understand the strength of teamwork in bringing together a variety of skills and qualities which can compliment and enhance the whole team. For example some team members may be more exuberant and outgoing, whilst others are more reflective – these qualities can compliment each other, if the team members value these qualities in each other. Candidates should also be given opportunities to discuss the importance of on-going communication within any team.

Candidates should explore how these qualities and skills may be brought into everyday professional practice, for example, greeting the children and parents/carers, contributing to team meetings, sharing information, acknowledging people's feelings, encouraging self esteem and positive behaviour, treating all people with respect, ensuring resources reflect all sections of society, adhering to setting policies and procedures, having a good attendance and time-keeping record. They should be given opportunities to discuss the skills and qualities in relation to supporting children, and in some instances, parents and families, step families, and in a variety of circumstances, such as poverty, abuse, illness, moving house, bereavement, etc.

Candidates should be helped to realise that fundamental to their professional practice is a recognition that all children and adults should be treated and respected as individuals irrespective of origin, race, status, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion or contribution to society. They should be made aware that personal prejudices and bias should not be allowed to colour or influence their relationships with children and adults. They should be given the opportunity to explore how these might affect their work with children, for example, stereotyping, gender, bias, unfair/unequal treatment. They must be helped to understand that they have an important role in promoting equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice in all aspects of their work with children, and they should be given the opportunities to discuss ways they can challenge bias and discrimination if they meet it in practice.

Candidates should be given opportunity to explore the wide range of skills and qualities that are observable within an early education and childcare setting. Some of these skills and qualities are innate, others must be learned and continually up-dated. The need for on-going awareness of new ideas and experiences and the need for continuous professional development can be emphasised.

Outcome 4

Candidates should be helped to explore and evaluate the importance of reflective practice and the value of becoming a 'reflective practitioner'.

They should have the opportunity to consider the learning and development cycle, that is, plan, do, review and evaluate. They should be helped to understand that the process of reflection is an integral part of their work with children and that taking stock, thinking about and modifying attitudes and behaviour are critical to becoming an effective practitioner.

Candidates should explore a variety of methods of reflective practice, both formal and informal, i.e. through observation, listening to children, feedback from children and adults, group discussion, team meetings, appraisal systems, etc. They should also have the opportunity to appreciate that reflective

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

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practice is based on individual's ability to be honest and reflective about their own skills and qualities, and practice.

Candidates should be helped to analyse their own attitudes, skills and qualities through a personal skills analysis. They should be encouraged to identify their strengths and developmental needs and to consider action areas for building on these through personal development planning. The importance of continuous professional development should be emphasised as a means of developing personal effectiveness, improving practice, offering career progression and maintaining credibility as a professional worker with children. Include discussion of the requirements of the Scottish Social Services Council for the registration of early education and childcare workers.

Candidates should consider that reflecting on practice can bring benefits to children, individuals, other team members and the overall practice in an early education and childcare setting. For example benefits might include:

- individual and group needs being identified more clearly
- children's play needs are met
- improvements to practice through the sharing of information and insights
- better planning for child-centred practice and evaluation of provision
- individuals and the team achieving their full potential by sharing, matching tasks and responsibilities among the team
- enhance knowledge and a deepening understanding of the work through shared learning.

Candidates should be encouraged to discuss the processes of communication, involvement and motivation, information sharing and developing the trust and support of colleagues.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

In delivering this Unit there should be a balance between teacher/lecturer presentation and candidate centred learning. This can be taught using a variety of methods:

- small group exercises
- group discussion
- case studies
- worksheets
- individual research
- videos
- lectures
- Use of ICT such as searching appropriate and relevant websites.

This Unit is included in the framework of the National Certificate in *Early Education and Childcare*. It is recommended that it should be delivered within the context of this qualification and be integrated with workplace practice Units and other Units in the NC Group Award, e.g. *Play in early Education and Childcare*, *Supporting Children's Rights and Entitlements*, *Supporting a Curriculum within An Early Education and Childcare Setting*.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Developing An Understanding Of Working With Children (Higher)

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

To achieve this Unit, each candidate will need evidence to demonstrate his/her knowledge for Outcomes 1, 2, 3 and 4. The Unit should be holistically assessed as short answer or extended response questions, or through case study. Candidates will be expected to provide answers to questions that elicit information and explanations about:

- ◆ values and principles that underpin work with children
- ◆ what is meant by child-centred practice
- ◆ how child-centred practice is supported by the values and principles that underpin work with children
- ◆ skills and qualities required to work with children
- ◆ ways in which reflective practice benefits children, teams and professional practice

The assessment time for this Unit should not exceed one hour 30 minutes.

CANDIDATES WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

This Unit Specification is intended to ensure that there are no artificial barriers to learning or assessment. The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering alternative Outcomes for Units. For information on these, please refer to the document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs* (SQA, 2004).