



Higher National Unit specification

General information

Unit title: Play (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: H993 34

Superclass: PQ

Publication date: June 2015

Source: Scottish Qualifications Authority

Version: 01

Unit purpose:

The Unit is designed to enable learners to understand why play is crucial in the development and wellbeing of children and young people. The learner will explore the importance of environment in supporting play.

They will demonstrate the knowledge and skills required to support, foster and promote the development of a play culture within their workplace and the skills required of practitioners to support effective high quality play. They will identify theories of play and make the link with good practice. Learners will identify their own role in promoting quality play experiences. They will identify and explore the place of play within the government's vision and within the current legislative and policy frameworks and guidance.

Outcomes

On successful completion of the Unit the learner will be able to:

- 1 Identify the intrinsic value of play in the development and wellbeing of children and young people.
- 2 Demonstrate knowledge of the role of the practitioner in supporting play.
- 3 Demonstrate knowledge of an effective play environment.

Credit points and level

1 Higher National Unit credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7)

Higher National Unit specification: General information (cont)

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Recommended entry to the Unit

Core Skills

Opportunities to develop aspects of Core Skills are highlighted in the Support Notes for this Unit specification.

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

Context for delivery

If this Unit is delivered as part of a Group Award, it is recommended that it should be taught and assessed within the subject area of the Group Award to which it contributes.

Equality and inclusion

This Unit specification has been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Further advice can be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards

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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 SQA.

Where evidence for Outcomes is assessed on a sample basis, the whole of the content listed in the Knowledge and/or Skills section must be taught and available for assessment. Learners should not know in advance the items on which they will be assessed and different items should be sampled on each assessment occasion.

Outcome 1

Identify the intrinsic value of play in the development and wellbeing of children and young people.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Definitions of play
- ◆ Play theory and theorists
- ◆ Benefits of play
- ◆ Features, types and categories of play
- ◆ The play process

Outcome 2

Demonstrate knowledge of the role of the practitioner in supporting play.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ Observing play and recording the play process
- ◆ Consulting with children and young people on planning and facilitating play
- ◆ Appropriate adult interventions
- ◆ Play and curricular frameworks and guidance

Outcome 3

Demonstrate knowledge of an effective play environment.

Knowledge and/or Skills

- ◆ The enabling environment across the age ranges
- ◆ The culture of play
- ◆ Play resources
- ◆ Play and technology
- ◆ Play and risk

Higher National Unit specification: Statement of standards (cont)

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Evidence Requirements for this Unit

Learners will need to provide evidence to demonstrate their Knowledge and/or Skills by showing that they are able to:

- ◆ Evaluate the relevance of frameworks and guidance for play.
- ◆ Identify definitions of play.
- ◆ Identify analyse and evaluate a variety of play theories relevant to working with children and young people.
- ◆ Recognise the benefits and importance of play as the key feature in the environment that supports development and wellbeing.
- ◆ Consider the features, types and categories of play and the need to respond to children's developmental stage, ability, play needs and interests.
- ◆ Understand the importance of observing and recording the play process.
- ◆ Reflect on appropriate adult interventions in play.
- ◆ Recognise and demonstrate an awareness of the place of environment in fostering play.
- ◆ Analyse and evaluate equal opportunities in access to space, resources and interaction.
- ◆ Evaluate the support of the culture of play through appropriate resources, spaces, adult interaction and play activities.
- ◆ Identify the curricular frameworks and guidance relating to play.

This unit may be delivered in conjunction with the unit Support for Play Learning and Development

Assessment may be carried out, through the production of a portfolio of evidence or a blog which identifies the holistic nature of the play in the setting, the effective use of the play spaces and the resources, observations and documented evidence of children and young people's play, the adult role in fostering, facilitating and developing play and the links between current theory of play and the observed practice.

This evidence from a range of observations and planned experiences may be cross referenced to the mandatory SVQ units.



Higher National Unit Support Notes

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Unit Support Notes are offered as guidance and 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

On successful completion of the Unit the learner will be able to:

- ◆ Identify the intrinsic value of play in the development and wellbeing of children and young people.
- ◆ Demonstrate knowledge of the role of the practitioner in supporting play.
- ◆ Demonstrate knowledge of an effective play environment.

Guidance on approaches to delivery of this Unit

Outcome 1

Play, Development and Wellbeing

There has been an abundance of research around play and its positive effects on early childhood learning and development. In general, research shows strong links between creative play and language, physical, cognitive, and social development. Play is a healthy, essential part of childhood and learners should explore their views on play and how those views relate to the current thinking on play.

We know from all kinds of research that childhood and play should go hand in hand and as a result of this it is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and in much of Scottish legislation, policy and guidance, eg

- ◆ Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014
- ◆ Early Years Framework, etc

<http://academic.research.microsoft.com/Paper/5054704.aspx>

The recent publication of the 'Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision' confirms the government's commitment to play as an important part of their vision for Scotland's children. It defines play as follows *'play encompasses children's behaviour which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. It is performed for no external goal or reward and is fundamental and integral part of healthy development.'*

'Play comes in many forms. It can be active, passive, solitary, independent, assisted, social, exploratory, educational or just for fun. Moreover, it can happen indoors or outdoors, it can be structured, creative, messy, entirely facilitated by the imagination or can involve using the latest gadget.'

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Learners should be encouraged to identify all of the Scottish legislation, policy and guidance that relates to children and young people's play.

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/5675>

In '*Building the Ambition*' *National Practice guidance on Early Learning and Childcare Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014* highlights the difficulties in defining play and the misinterpretation of the intrinsic value of play to children and young people. Learners should be familiar with this crucial document and the case studies should be used to deepen understanding of the challenges that practitioners face in planning activities with children and young people.

Play is an elusive concept but most of the current literature suggests that play can be described as an activity which:

- ◆ Is freely chosen and under the control of the player.
- ◆ Intrinsically motivated — done for its own sake and not for external reward.
- ◆ Is open ended and spontaneous.
- ◆ Often involves exploration and imagination.
- ◆ Actively engages the player.

Learners should be encouraged to research the many different definitions of play and come up with their own definition.

Some of the current theory to explore can be found in the work of:

- ◆ Tina Bruce,
- ◆ Kathy Sylva
- ◆ Pamela May
- ◆ Linda Pound
- ◆ Bob Hughes
- ◆ Gordon Sturrock
- ◆ Perry Else

(Please note this list is not definitive)

Tina Bruce (2004) describes 12 features of free-flow play to help staff understand the level of deep engagement in learning which children show while they play. For example, in their play children use the first hand experiences they have had in life. Children rehearse their future in their play.

These features should be explored and can help to deepen learners understanding of supporting play experiences.

Benefits of play

It is accepted that play has many benefits for both children and young people and learners could explore the benefits under the following headings.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Benefits of play

It is accepted that play has many benefits for both children and young people and learners could explore the benefits under the following headings:

- ◆ Emotional development
- ◆ Cognitive development
- ◆ Affective development
- ◆ Social development
- ◆ Physical development
- ◆ Language development

Developmental benefits may include:

- ◆ Providing a meaningful context for children and young people to learn concepts and skills.
- ◆ Making learning fun and enjoyable.
- ◆ Encouraging children and young people to explore and discover together and on their own.
- ◆ Allowing children and young people to extend what they are learning.
- ◆ Encouraging children and young people to experiment and take risks.
- ◆ Providing opportunities for collaborative learning with adults and peers.
- ◆ Allowing for the practice of skills.
- ◆ Allow children and young people to explore their environment, culture and values.
- ◆ Encourage children and young people to experience challenge and risk.
- ◆ Allow children and young people to develop social and emotional resilience.

The recent publication of the 'Play Strategy for Scotland: Our Vision' states that '*Play is vital from the early stages of brain development and bonding with parents and carers, and promotes independence and autonomy for the teenage years.*'

'The research suggests that, from the first stages of growth through to adulthood, play has a central role in developing strong attachments. Play between caregiver and infant helps establish the neural pathways for developing wider attachments with other children and adults' (Lester and Russell, 2007).

Stages of play

Learners should research the stages of play which children move through:

- ◆ Solitary play
- ◆ Parallel
- ◆ On-looking
- ◆ Complex
- ◆ Co-operative

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Process of Play

Learners should be encouraged to explore how children and young people 'initiate, plan, lead and conclude their own play through aspects of the play cycle to allow them to understand how play works for children and young people:

- ◆ Metalude
- ◆ Play Cue
- ◆ Play return
- ◆ Play Frame
- ◆ Play flow
- ◆ Annihilation

Types of play

Learners could be asked to name all of the types of play which they know including discovery, creative, imaginative, exploratory and experiential. It is possible to have many more descriptions of play types and learners could discuss the most common of the types to explore.

Categories of Play

Many categories of play are promoted in the literature and learners should be encouraged to explore the options. The following is a suggestion of the categories most used.

- ◆ Social
- ◆ Physical
- ◆ Intellectual (Cognitive)
- ◆ Creative
- ◆ Linguistic play

Learners working with older children may explore the play types suggested by Hughes.

Learners could explore the opportunities provided in their setting for these categories of play, the barriers/challenges faced in the setting to free play and the possible solutions to these barriers/challenges.

Outcome 2

Observing Play and recording the play process

Jenny Linden (2006) states that 'If young children are to learn from play, helpful adults need to reflect on how they get involved and how to avoid over involvement that becomes interference'.

In order to plan effectively, practitioners need to have a sound understanding of development and knowledge of how children and young people learn and develop through play.

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The starting point is always observation of children's play experience coupled with consultation with children and the practitioners' knowledge and understanding of the child or young person. Learners should be asked to discuss why it is crucial to observe children or young people in a setting.

Some of the many points they could cover are:

- ◆ To become aware of individual's interests and learn about the types of play they prefer (play preferences).
- ◆ To record and support children's learning experiences.
- ◆ To ensure that children are central to their own learning or the play process.
- ◆ To enable adults to evaluate the play environment and how children are young people are interacting with their peers.
- ◆ To observe the quality of the play experience and identify aspects of the play cycle or play process that could be facilitating further.

Further discussion could take place around the observation cycle and how it can be used to plan experiences and share play and learning with children, young people and adults.

If we need to summarise a child's learning and development to share their learning with families and visiting professionals we can do so far more effectively if we have good quality on-going formative records to fall back on. Learners should discuss the many ways that children's learning is recorded in settings.

Children and young people may need adults to support and facilitate their play, but as adults we have a responsibility to ensure that we are aware of their play needs, developmental requirements, take account of their ideas and interests and ensure that we are providing quality play resources, spaces and environments. Observing play allows adults to reflect on and evaluate play.

Consulting with children and young people

It is the view of the Government expressed through the 'The National Care Standards: early education and care up to the age of 16' that *'Children and young people will have opportunities to express their views, exercise choice, and where possible influence the programme'*.
(Standard 5,6)

Class discussion could focus on how different age ranges of children and young people can be consulted and their views taken into account as children and young people know what is important to them and have a right to be listened to. Starting with simple choices all children and young people will learn to participate.

Linda Kinney (2001) believes 'Once we have learned to listen to children, we must be prepared to change our own thinking as a result of what they have told us. We need to ask ourselves how this information will affect our decisions and actions'.

Learners could discuss an occasion when they, or someone they have worked with, has changed practice or planning in response to something a child has told them.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Further discussion around the benefits of consulting with children and young people could be useful and could include some of the following points.

- ◆ Insight gained help adults plan experiences more effectively.
- ◆ Children and young people are likely to become 'effective contributors' (CfE).
- ◆ Children and young people learn to express their own needs, consider those of others and develop the skills of co-operation, negotiation and problem-solving.

Appropriate Interventions

Although It has long been believed that play is the main vehicle for learning researchers have found that educators are often uncertain of exactly how children learn through play and their role in relation to play.

The Tickle Review (2010) stated 'there is widespread confusion about what learning through play actually means... what then are the implications of this for the role of the adult'

The adult role is to observe, support children and young people's 'purposes' in play and respond to their ideas and interests. Educators should learn when to 'step in' to the play and when to 'step out'.

Sturrock and Else suggest the adult role is vital in supporting play, and carefully judged interventions are the key to working with children and young people. *'Adults can enhance play opportunities by sensitively interacting with children and by establishing stimulating play environments, so deepening their capacity to offer insight and meaningful responses.'*

Learners should have the opportunity to explore their own views of intervention.

Play and Curricular Frameworks and guidance

Learners should by this point be familiar with all the relevant Curricular Frameworks and Guidance and could research, in groups, what these frameworks and guidance documents have to say about the role of play.

Pre-Birth to Three: Positive Outcomes for Scotland's Children and Families, (2010) states that:

'One of the most important aspects of supporting play is ensuring that children have the time, space and freedom to initiate, plan, lead and conclude their own play. Children tend to be most relaxed when they can play in the knowledge that members of staff are available and interested, as this enable children to invite staff involvement, or feel free to instigate interactions with staff'.

It may be useful to use case studies of children and young people playing to discuss appropriate interventions with learners.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Curriculum for Excellence supports children and young people to have opportunities to take part in play to 'develop my self-awareness, self-worth and respect for others; meet challenges, manage change and build relationships; experience personal achievement and build my resilience and confidence; understand and develop my physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing and social skills'.

Outcome 3

The enabling environment across the age ranges

In their book 'Designs for Living and Learning: Transforming Early Childhood Environments'. Curtis and Carter (2003) Suggest that we consider our own environment created for children and young people's play to start with an evaluation of the way the space is designed.

- ◆ Does it promote inclusion or create barriers?
- ◆ Can all children and young people participate?
- ◆ Is there evidence that all children and young people feel as if they 'belong'?

There are many organisations which support and encourage children and young people to create their own play environment — Grounds for Learning, Scotland; Learning through Landscapes, Forest Schools, etc. Learners should be encouraged to investigate the use of outdoor and indoor play spaces created by children and young people.

Play and Curricular Frameworks and guidance

Learners should by this point be familiar with all the relevant Curricular Frameworks and Guidance and could research, in groups, what these frameworks and guidance documents have to say about the role of play.

The culture of play

'In creating the space and time for play, adults affirm the intrinsic value of play, and by implication cultural engagement generally and create the context for initiating children and young people into key societal values.

Good play provision offers a welcoming space where children can meet on a more equal basis. For this reason play provision can be the starting point for tackling social exclusion, engaging with marginalised families and communities and working to build their capacity to improve their social, environmental and economic circumstances. (Hill-Tout and others 1995)'

Some sociologists have gone so far as to equate play with the culture of childhood – that is, the arena in which children as social actors are most likely to express their values, their art, their music, their physical culture, and their language and humour (Prout and James 1997).

Learners could discuss whether the play they are familiar with has the effect of limiting the scope of children and young people's play and restricting the development of their cultural expression or enhances their opportunities for cultural engagement.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Play Resources

When they play with materials, children are building a foundation for understanding concepts and skills that form the basis for later academic learning. It's not only concepts that children are learning as they play, they are learning how to learn: to take initiative, to ask questions, to create and solve their own problems. Open-ended materials (loose parts) such as blocks, play dough, art and building materials, sand and water encourage children to play creatively and in depth. Neuroscience tells us that as children play this way, connections and pathways in the brain become activated and then solidify.

Learners should consider the resources available in their settings. Do the resources promote equality and fairness? Are they age appropriate? Do they encourage children and young people to take risks in a secure and safe environment? Are they open ended? Do they encourage creativity and imagination? Do they provide a link to the natural world and natural elements?

Play and Technology

Critiques of technology play

Some educators believe that children and young people playing computer games gain no benefit from the activity itself as how to do it is already prescribed by a programmer. What the child does is play according to someone else's rules and design. This is profoundly different from a child having an original idea to make or do something.

However others believe that as well as being fun to play, many games are educational in nature and many others develop eye-hand coordination and strategy skills. Played alone, with a friend or parent, these games can also help to bring people closer together, even if it is in the spirit of computer competition.

Many practitioners have doubts about the use of technology within settings. Objections to using electronic games and smart toys in the nursery are that they limit the child's imagination, and may lead to addiction, social isolation, and aggressive behaviour. The evidence to support these positions is equivocal.

Learners could explore the differing beliefs of Sue Palmer in 'Toxic Childhood: How The Modern World Is Damaging Our Children And What We Can Do About It' (2007) and Hugh Cunningham in 'The Invention of Childhood' (2006)

Differing positions on addiction to videogames and the Internet can be found in Gentile (2009) and Kutner and Olson (2008).

Play and Risk

'To place oneself at risk does not only mean that one places oneself in jeopardy, but also that one is situated in a zone of potential and development' (Lindqvist and Nordanger, 2007)
Adults who work with children and young people need to balance risk with developmental benefit their wellbeing. Challenge and risk are fundamental aspects of play, children test their skills at every stage and develop further with every new experiment and encounter. Challenge and risk help build resilience and confidence, creativity and character.

Learners should be encouraged to study the benefits of outdoor play to support development, wellbeing and learning.

Higher National Unit Support Notes (cont)

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Guidance on approaches to assessment of this Unit

Evidence can be generated using different types of assessment. The following are suggestions only. There may be other methods that would be more suitable to learners.

Centres are reminded that prior verification of centre-devised assessments would help to ensure that the national standard is being met. Where learners experience a range of assessment methods, this helps them to develop different skills that should be transferable to work or further and higher education.

Learners could give a presentation to identify the place of play in their own practice and to demonstrate that they understand the importance of play and their own role in promoting play to support children and young people's learning. The presentation could be supported by a report or a reflective professional log or it is suggested a holistic case study, developed to reflect the place of play in good practice in their work with children and young people, supported by a professional journal could be used to assess this unit.

Opportunities for e-assessment

E-assessment may be appropriate for some assessments in this Unit. By e-assessment we mean assessment which is supported by Information and Communication Technology (ICT), such as e-testing or the use of e-portfolios or social software. Centres which wish to use e-assessment must ensure that the national standard is applied to all learner evidence and that conditions of assessment as specified in the Evidence Requirements are met, regardless of the mode of gathering evidence. The most up-to-date guidance on the use of e-assessment to support SQA's qualifications is available at www.sqa.org.uk/e-assessment.

Opportunities for developing Core and other essential skills

Learners will have the opportunity to develop the following Core Skills:

Communication: Written communications will be developed through learners producing written work in a variety of formats; oral communication will be developed through discussion, debate and evidence of engagement with other learners, professionals and key people.

Working with Others: Will be developed as learners will be required to work collaboratively with colleagues from their own and other service areas in the preparation and research for their assignments.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT): Learners will develop their ICT skills through research and the presentation of written assignments.

History of changes to Unit

Version	Description of change	Date

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General information for learners

Unit title: Play (SCQF level 7)

This section will help you decide whether this is the Unit for you by explaining what the Unit is about, what you should know or be able to do before you start, what you will need to do during the Unit and opportunities for further learning and employment.

This unit is designed to enable you to understand why play is crucial in the development and wellbeing of children and young people and how the play environment and appropriate adult interventions, in the play process, can support their development and wellbeing.

On completion of the unit you will be able to:

- 1 Identify the intrinsic value of play in the development and wellbeing of children and young people.
- 2 Demonstrate knowledge of the role of the practitioner in supporting play.
- 3 Demonstrate knowledge of an effective play environment.

You will have the opportunity to become familiar with play and the play process and the positive effects on children and young people's development and wellbeing. You will have the chance to explore current theories on play and how they relate to both your own views and experiences and the government's aspirations for Scotland's children.

You will research the features, types and categories of play and explore how children and young people initiate, plan, lead and conclude their play within the play process.

You will reflect on your own role in supporting good practice, in the play process, through the effective use of the observation and planning cycle to plan appropriate play experiences for all stages of children's development.

You will become familiar with the benefits of consulting and cooperating with children and young people and facilitating opportunities for them to express views which influence the planning of quality play experiences.

You will analyse appropriate adult interventions, in the play process, and relate this analysis to the national policy and guidance which promotes the role of play in the development of children and young people.

You will consider the environment, you create, for children and young people and evaluate how the space is designed to encourage and support development through play.

You will also evaluate how children and young people can be supported to design their own play environments, express their views and enhance opportunities for social and cultural development.

You will analyse the role that open ended, creative and technological resources play in children and young people's development and wellbeing. You will also explore your views on and attitude to challenge and risk in the play process.