



## Higher National Graded Unit specification

### General information for centres

This Graded Unit has been validated as part of the HNC Early Education and Childcare. Centres are required to develop the assessment instrument in accordance with this validated specification. Centres wishing to use another type of Graded Unit or assessment instrument are required to submit proposals detailing the justification for change for validation.

**Graded Unit title:** Early Education and Childcare: Graded Unit 1

**Graded Unit code:** F290 34

**Type of Graded Unit:** Project

**Assessment Instrument:** Investigation

**Credit points and level:** 1 HN credit at SCQF level 7: (8 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7\*)

*\*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.*

**Purpose:** This Graded Unit is designed to provide evidence that the candidate has achieved the following principal aims of the Higher National Certificate in Early Education and Childcare:

- ◆ to enable candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the values and principles which underpin work in early education and childcare settings
- ◆ to enable candidates to integrate knowledge, theory and practice effectively in a variety of early education and childcare settings
- ◆ to enable candidates to have a service user and childcare worker focus in their practice
- ◆ to assist candidates to practice in an anti-discriminatory way
- ◆ to enable candidates to critically evaluate their practice and to be reflective practitioners
- ◆ to enable candidates to develop a working knowledge of current legislation, policy and practice methods
- ◆ to facilitate progression to higher education

**Recommended prior knowledge and skills:** It is recommended that the candidate should have completed or be in the process of completing the following Units relating to the above specific aims prior to undertaking this Graded Unit:

DF4Y 34 *Working in an Early Education and Childcare Setting*  
DF50 34 *Children and Young People's Rights: Provision, Protection and Participation*  
DF52 34 *Theoretical Approaches to Development and Learning*  
DF51 34 *Curriculum and Assessment in an Early Education and Childcare Setting* **OR**  
DF53 34 *Facilitating Playwork Opportunities*

## General information for centres (cont)

**Core Skills:** There may be opportunities to develop the Core Skills of Problem Solving and Communication in this Unit, although there is no automatic certification of Core Skills or Core Skills components. *If candidates choose to word process their work, there may be opportunities to develop the Core Skill of Information Technology.*

**Assessment:** This Graded Unit will be assessed by the use of an investigation which will include:

- ◆ a plan of action
- ◆ an investigation report with conclusions and recommendations
- ◆ evidence showing evaluation and or a review of the investigation

The investigation should provide the candidate with the opportunity to produce evidence that demonstrates she/he has met the aims of the Group Award that this Graded Unit covers.

## Administrative Information

**Graded Unit code:** F290 34

**Graded Unit title:** Early Education and Childcare: Graded Unit 1

**Original date of publication:** August 2007

**Version:** 01

**History of changes:**

Version	Description of change	Date

**Source:** SQA

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## **Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates**

**Graded Unit title:** Early Education and Childcare: Graded Unit 1

### **Conditions of assessment**

The candidate should be given a date for completion of the investigation. However, the instructions for the assessment task should be distributed to allow the candidate sufficient time to assimilate the details and carry out the assessment task. During the time between the distribution of the assessment task instructions and the completion date, assessors may, answer questions, provide clarification, guidance and reasonable assistance, however, this is an independent piece of work. The assessment task should be marked as soon as possible after the completion date. The final grading given should reflect the quality of the candidate's evidence at the time of the completion date and the level of support required to complete this.

The evidence for the project is generated over a specified period of time and involves three distinct stages, where each stage has to be achieved before the next is undertaken. Thus any re-assessment of stages must be undertaken before proceeding to the next stage.

If a candidate fails the project overall or wishes to upgrade, then this must be done using a *substantially different* project, ie all stages are undertaken using a new project, assignment, case study, etc. In this case, a candidate's grade will be based on the achievement in the re-assessment, if this results in a higher grade.

The tutor's role is as a facilitator and so to achieve high marks candidates will need to demonstrate a high degree of autonomy throughout the project.

At this level, candidates should work independently. It is up to centres to take reasonable steps to ensure that the project is the work of the candidate. For example, centres may wish to informally question candidates at various stages on their knowledge and understanding of the project on which they have embarked. Centres should ensure that where research etc, is carried out in other establishments or under the supervision of others that the candidate does not receive undue assistance.

### **Instructions for designing the assessment task**

The assessment task is a project. The project undertaken by the candidate must be a complex task which involves:

- ◆ variables which are complex or unfamiliar
- ◆ relationships which need to be clarified
- ◆ a context which may be familiar or unfamiliar to the candidate

The assessment task must require the candidate to:

- ◆ analyse the task and decide on a course of action for undertaking the project
- ◆ plan and organise work and carry it through to completion
- ◆ reflect on what has been done and draw conclusions for the future
- ◆ produce evidence of meeting the aims which this Graded Unit has been designed to cover
- ◆ produce this work independently with appropriate tutor support

There is an example of a mapping exercise relating to a topic within the Support Notes for guidance.

## **Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)**

The project based assessment consists of three stages: planning; developing; and evaluating and candidates will produce an action plan, an investigative report and an evaluation respectively.

The investigation will examine an aspect of early education and childcare chosen by the candidate, which is relevant to their area of practice

The candidate should be asked to select either a topic which can be implemented in practice or one which will have practice implications. This topic will be investigated by means of secondary and if appropriate, primary research, using a variety of research methods and sources.

Candidates may be interested in basing projects on a particular aspect from the broad headings suggested below, although a topic agreed with their tutor would be equally acceptable. It is recognised that students will be working or on placement in, a variety of contexts and that their experiences will be related to differing age groups of children between birth to 12 years. Therefore some of these topics will be more appropriate than others. The topic titles are here as suggestions and they have been grouped relevant to particular settings.

When candidates make their choice tutors should guide them in making their investigation manageable with a realistic aim which is relevant to the topic title.

### **Playwork Topics**

- ◆ The role of play in the development of social relationships
- ◆ Introducing risk in children's play
- ◆ Barriers to play
- ◆ Places to play
- ◆ Play Cycle

### **Primary School Topics**

- ◆ Children's participation
- ◆ The curriculum and learning styles
- ◆ Enhancing personal and social development
- ◆ Approaches to literacy acquisition
- ◆ Importance of play in early primary
- ◆ Piaget and numeracy
- ◆ Citizenship
- ◆ ICT
- ◆ Brain gym
- ◆ Circle time
- ◆ Gender debate
- ◆ Inclusiveness

## Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

### Nursery topics

- ◆ Routine and structure
- ◆ Explorative/heuristic play and treasure basket
- ◆ Supporting children’s schemata
- ◆ Partnerships
- ◆ Sacks as aid to learning (story, poetry, numeracy, movement)
- ◆ Road safety awareness
- ◆ Self care
- ◆ Outdoor play and exercise
- ◆ Settling in
- ◆ Sensory play
- ◆ Respect, relationships and responsive care
- ◆ Supporting children’s emergent literacy or numeracy

### Guidance on grading candidates

Candidates who meet the minimum Evidence Requirements will have their achievement graded as C — competent, or A — highly competent or B somewhere between A and C. The grade related criteria to be used to judge candidate performance for this Graded Unit is specified in the following table.

Grade A	Grade C
<p>Is a seamless, coherent piece of work which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ is clear, accurate and well structured throughout and uses language of a professional standard, recognised as appropriate within the childcare sector</li> <li>◆ demonstrates an accurate, insightful interpretation of the project brief</li> <li>◆ is highly focused and relevant to the tasks associated with the project brief and does not deviate from the aim without appropriate justification</li> <li>◆ has sufficient evidence for the three essential phases of the project, is produced to a high standard and is obviously and explicitly inter-related to relevant HNC Units</li> <li>◆ effectively consolidates and integrates knowledge and skills showing a high level of continuity and consistency</li> <li>◆ is submitted within agreed timescales</li> <li>◆ is produced independently with reasonable tutor support</li> </ul>	<p>Is a co-ordinated piece of work which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ is clear, accurate and satisfactorily structured throughout and contains language of a professional standard, recognised as appropriate within the childcare sector</li> <li>◆ demonstrates an acceptable interpretation of the project brief</li> <li>◆ is mainly focused and relevant to the task associated with the project brief</li> <li>◆ has sufficient evidence for the three essential phases of the project, produced to a satisfactory standard and demonstrates some interrelationship with other HNC Units</li> <li>◆ consolidates and integrates knowledge and skills but this may lack continuity and consistency</li> </ul>

## Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

The project will be marked out of 100. Assessors will mark each stage of the project, taking into account the criteria outlined. The marks will then be aggregated to arrive at an overall mark for the project. Assessors will then assign an overall grade to the candidate for this Graded Unit based on the following grade boundaries.

A	=	70%	—	100%
B	=	60%	—	69%
C	=	50%	—	59%

### Evidence Requirements

The following table specifies the minimum evidence required to pass each stage.

The project consists of: an action plan, an investigative report and an evaluation. Each task has a marking allocation. This is **30/40/30**. Marks cannot be redistributed between stages. There is a suggested distribution of marks in the Support Notes for each of the three stages.

**Note:** The candidate must achieve **all of the minimum evidence** specified below for each stage of the project in order to pass the Graded Unit.

Project stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
Stage 1 — Planning  30% of marks	<p><i>An Action Plan</i> which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ the identification of a Topic and the development of a rationale which is relevant to Early Education/Playwork settings</li> <li>◆ the aim and objectives, including proposed methods of research and sources to be used. The topic of the investigation should be recorded and agreed with the tutor.</li> <li>◆ identification of relevant theories/approaches to childrens’ learning and development and links with knowledge acquired through the HNC</li> <li>◆ an outline of ways in which the topic links to children’s needs, rights and interests</li> <li>◆ identification of topic related local/national initiatives and/or guidelines</li> <li>◆ a timescale for each stage of the project with a target completion date</li> </ul> <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Planning stage.</i></p>

## Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

Project stage	Minimum Evidence Requirements
Stage 2 — Developing  40% of marks	<p><b>An Investigative Report</b> including evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ development and/or justified adjustment of aim and objectives as detailed at the planning stage of the topic</li> <li>◆ implementation of the research methods identified to develop the Aim and its Objectives in the project as detailed in the planning stage</li> <li>◆ critical analysis of the results of the research findings</li> <li>◆ recommendations for a suggested strategy to further develop the project in relation to the chosen setting within the sector</li> <li>◆ a summary and conclusion of the project findings including links to HNC Units and how they relate to the project</li> <li>◆ acknowledgement of sources</li> </ul> <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Developing stage.</i></p>
Stage 3 — Evaluating  30% of marks	<p><b>An Evaluative Report</b> including evidence of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ an abstract</li> <li>◆ a summary of both the challenges involved and the aspects which were particularly successful</li> <li>◆ the knowledge and skills which have been gained and/or developed whilst carrying out the research and investigation of the topic, linking these clearly to the relevant HNC Units content</li> <li>◆ an evaluation of the effectiveness of the research methods used</li> <li>◆ an evaluation of the candidate's adherence to the plan and subsequent changes</li> <li>◆ an assessment of the effectiveness of the candidate's communication and interpersonal skills throughout the project</li> </ul> <p><i>The candidate must achieve all of the minimum evidence specified above in order to pass the Evaluating stage.</i></p>



## Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

### Support notes

Below is a **suggested** marking scheme for each stage of this project which has been provided for guidance only and is not mandatory. Centres may prefer to devise their own scheme.

Please also consult Guidance on Grading Table when deciding on overall grade for the candidate.

### Suggested Allocation of Marks:

#### Planning

This stage is worth **30** marks. As part of the planning process the candidate should produce a report of 750–1,000 words. To confirm the planning stage an individual tutorial could take place after which the candidate should record the discussion.

#### The Action Plan should include:

- ◆ A clear and well developed rationale behind selecting the topic.
- ◆ A clear unambiguous aim.
- ◆ Clearly defined objectives which detail the steps which will be taken to achieve the aim.
- ◆ Evidence of agreement with tutor.
- ◆ A detailed timescale for the planning, development and evaluation which could be presented in the form of a chart.

**Up to 10 marks**

- ◆ Identification of the methods of research which will be used to investigate the project.
- ◆ A clear outline and definition of the sources behind this research — secondary and primary if appropriate.
- ◆ The topic's relation to local/national initiatives and/or guidelines.

**Up to 11 marks**

- ◆ Evidence of how theories of children's development and learning have been used in determining the topic for the project and the linking to the HNC Units they are studying.
- ◆ Evidence of how the topic is related to a child or group of children's identified needs or interests together with children's rights and entitlements.

**Up to 9 marks**

## Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

### Developing

This stage is worth **40** marks. Assessment is based on a report on the process of undertaking the project. The report should be between 1,500–2,000 words.

#### *Aim and Objectives:*

Candidates should take each of their objectives and outline the research, present the findings and critically analyse/evaluate the findings. They should then explain how they developed their aim and objectives. They should highlight any adjustments made as a result of their research findings in the planning stage. Candidates should include a discussion of current pieces of reading which influenced their chosen aim and objectives, showing how this reading had a direct bearing on their chosen topic. Readings should include relevant theories, legislation, current initiatives, strategies, policies, practice guidelines and underlying principles and values.

**Up to 12 marks**

#### *Presentation of findings*

- ◆ A description showing how the chosen topic has been followed through according to the plan and an explanation of how the topic was or could have been implemented in a workplace setting.

**Up to 5 marks**

- ◆ An explanation of the candidate's choice of resources and materials describing how these were managed. Research methods should be identified and used appropriately to develop the aim and objectives of the project.

**Up to 5 marks**

- ◆ Recommendations for a suggested strategy to further develop the project in relation to the chosen topic/setting within the sector.

**Up to 3 marks**

- ◆ Acknowledgement of sources.

**Up to 2 marks**

#### *Summary and Conclusions*

- ◆ Identification of the ways in which other Units are interconnected/relevant within the project.

**Up to 5 marks**

- ◆ Provide an account of the topic showing its relationship to the plan.

**Up to 3 marks**

- ◆ Coherence and organisational skills shown in developing the investigation.

**Up to 3 marks**

- ◆ Candidate should show how they have taken account of children's rights, needs and entitlements during the investigation.

**Up to 2 marks**

## Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)

### Evaluating:

This stage is worth **30** marks and should be between 1,000 and 1,500 words.

### The Evaluative Report should include:

- ◆ A short abstract of no more than 200 words summarising the whole project. It should contain an outline of the investigation, together with information on context, findings and any recommendations.

**Up to 5 marks**

**NB: An abstract should be devised at the beginning of the project, before the Action Plan.**

- ◆ A summary identifying the way in which challenges were met (eg meeting time scales, being able to carry out planned tasks/activities/research, teamworking skills, personal difficulties etc); together with a discussion highlighting aspects which were particularly successful.

**Up to 6 marks**

- ◆ An evaluation of how the learning undertaken in the HNC was used in a holistic way to carry out the project. As part of this, candidates should identify newly acquired and/or improved knowledge and skills which have been gained over the course of the project. (This could include research skills, IT skills, time management skills, reading for information skills, general personal organisation etc).

**Up to 8 marks**

- ◆ The candidate's reflection upon the effectiveness of research methods used in their investigation. This may include both primary and secondary research.

**Up to 3 marks**

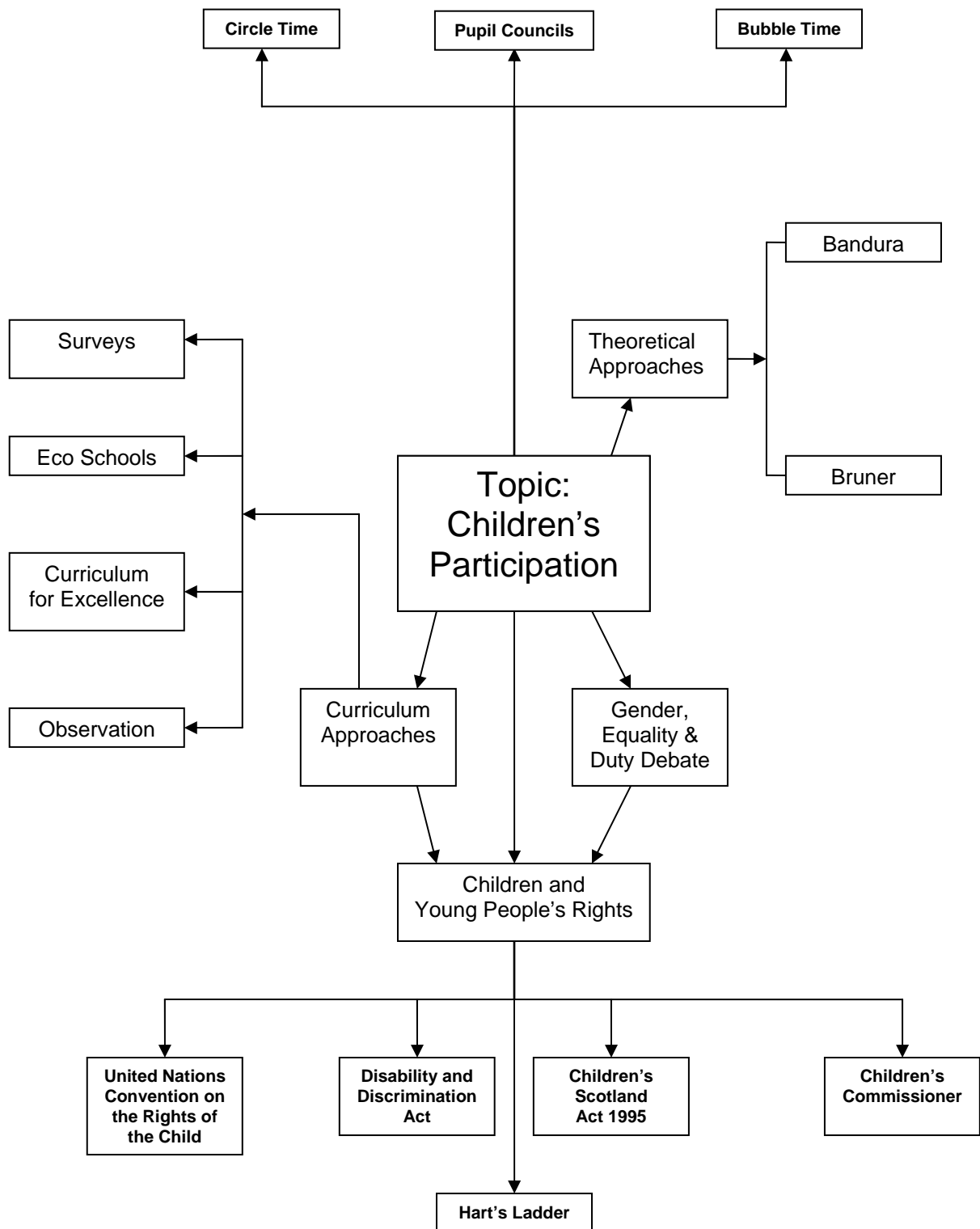
- ◆ A discussion of how closely the candidate has followed the original plan together with a clear explanation of reasons for any change made.

**Up to 5 marks**

- ◆ An assessment of the effectiveness of communication/interpersonal skills throughout the course of the project. (This may involve both verbal and written communication and could include negotiations with supervisor/placement staff, interviewees, children and college staff. In addition written communication in the form of letters, e-mails etc. could be used as appropriate.)

**Up to 3 marks**

Below is an example of how candidates might complete a mapping exercise at the start of their project to help them plan their investigation.



## **Higher National Graded Unit specification: instructions for designing the assessment task and assessing candidates (cont)**

### **Candidates with disabilities and/or additional support needs**

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments or considering alternative assessment arrangements. For information on these, please refer to the SQA document *Guidance on Assessment Arrangements for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Needs*, which is available on SQA's website: [www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk).

## General information for candidates

This Unit has been designed to allow you integrate your learning across a range of Units in the HNC Early Education and Childcare. You should be able to draw upon your learning and assignments for the mandatory Units and your placement or workplace experience. You should be aware that any references to the individual(s) must be anonymised and the permission of that individual(s) obtained. You will have the opportunity to discuss and agree on the topic of the investigation to be undertaken with your placement supervisor/teacher/line manager prior to carrying out the investigation.

You will explore theories and perspectives relating to early education and childcare and draw on your experiences in practice/placement.

On completion of this Unit, you will be able to demonstrate that you have achieved the following principal aims of the HNC Early Education and Childcare:

- ◆ to enable candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the values and principles which underpin work in early education and childcare settings
- ◆ to enable candidates to integrate knowledge, theory and practice effectively in a variety of early education and childcare settings
- ◆ to enable candidates to have a service user and childcare worker focus in their practice
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- ◆ to enable candidates to develop a working knowledge of current legislation, policy and practice methods
- ◆ to facilitate progression to higher education