

National Unit Specification: general information

UNIT	Play in Practice (Higher)
CODE	DM42 12
COURSE	Play in Early Education and Childcare (Higher)

SUMMARY

This Unit requires the candidate to demonstrate the skills required to support children's play within an early education and childcare setting. Whilst working under supervision with children within the age range 0-12 years, the candidate should demonstrate the ability to support and maintain a play environment and support a variety of different types of play. They should be able to explain what benefits the child derives from play and demonstrate an understanding of the role of the adult in supporting children's play.

This Unit is a mandatory Unit in the National Certificate Group Award: Early Education and Childcare and also a mandatory Unit in the Course: Play in Early Education and Childcare. It is also suitable for candidates wishing to study the Unit on its own. 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 on to higher early education and childcare qualifications. To complete this Unit, candidates are required to have a work placement or be employed in an early education and child care setting

OUTCOMES

1. Support a play environment within an early education and childcare setting.
2. Support different types of play within an early education and childcare setting.
3. Evaluate how play supports the care, learning and development of the child.
4. Explain the role of the adult in supporting play within an early education and childcare setting.

Administrative Information

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National Unit Specification: general information (cont)

UNIT Play in Practice (Higher)

RECOMMENDED ENTRY

While entry is at the discretion of the centre, it is expected that candidates will have a clear understanding of the basic concepts of play. This may be evidenced by candidates undertaking or having completed the Unit *Play in Early Education and Childcare (Higher)*, and have some knowledge and understanding of child development. 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. Candidates may have completed or are working towards completion of Units within the *National Certificate Group Award: Early Education and Childcare (Higher)*.

CREDIT VALUE

2 credits at Higher (12 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 Play in Practice (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

Support a play environment within an early education and childcare setting.

Performance Criteria

- a) Identify factors within an early education and childcare setting which are important in creating a play environment.
- b) Working under supervision, support the creation of a play environment.
- c) Working under supervision, support the maintenance of a play environment.

OUTCOME 2

Support different types of play within an early education and childcare setting.

Performance Criteria

- a) Explain a range of different types of play observed within an early education and childcare setting.
- b) Working under supervision, support a variety of planned play experiences.
- c) Working under supervision, support a variety of spontaneous play experiences.

OUTCOME 3

Evaluate how play supports the care, learning and development of the child.

Performance Criteria

- a) Describe a variety of play experiences that have supported the care, learning and development of the child.
- b) Explain how a variety of play experiences can support the care, learning and development of the child.
- c) In consultation with others, assess how a variety of play experiences could be extended to support the care, learning and development of the child.

Outcome 4

Explain the role of the adult in supporting play within an early education and childcare setting

Performance Criteria

- a) Explain the role of the adult in supporting the play environment.
- b) Explain the role of the adult in supporting a variety of play experiences.
- c) Explain the role of the adult in extending children's play experiences.

National Unit Specification: statement of standards (cont)

UNIT Play in Practice (Higher)

EVIDENCE REQUIREMENTS FOR THIS UNIT

There should be a single assessment folio for this Unit which the candidate builds during practical placement in an early education and childcare setting. Where applicable the assessment for this Unit should be integrated with other workplace based Units within the *National Certificate Group Award: Early Education and Childcare*. This folio should be gathered from one or two work placements within the age range of 0-12 years. This folio should be evidenced by the candidate's workplace supervisor. The supervisor must be eligible for registration at practitioner level with the SSSC.

Folio to include (as per PCs):

- ◆ Description of setting and play experiences on offer
- ◆ Record of candidate's involvement in 6 play experiences (both planned and unplanned experiences)
- ◆ An evaluation of how the play needs of the child were supported
- ◆ Explanation of how the candidate supported the child's play experience
- ◆ Checklist for placement supervisor
- ◆ Checklist for assessor.

National Unit Specification: support notes

UNIT Play in Practice (Higher)

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 80 hours.

GUIDANCE ON THE CONTENT AND CONTEXT FOR THIS UNIT

Outcome 1

In identifying factors which are important in helping to create a suitable play environment, candidates should be aware of the role they play in ensuring the areas are accessible for children and that children's play can flow easily from one play experience to the next. They must show awareness of any sensitivities that might occur in the type of play offered and ensure it is not disrespectful to any religious group and that it is appropriate and accessible for all children. This might include examples like making sure aids, such as scissors can potentially be used by all children, including children who have a preference to use their left hand or who have additional support needs.

Candidates need to be aware of the impact of the play as it is presented to the children. The play environment should have a strong sensory impact and candidates should be made aware of how this is best achieved in the particular setting, bearing in mind they may be working in an environment which has to be set up and taken down daily. Candidates should be aware of their role in that process and of the importance of creating an environment that fits the age and developmental requirements of the group with whom they are working.

In relation to demonstrating how adults can support the creation of a play environment, candidates need to be aware of the importance of planning, observation and communication in the team as a whole and what their role would be as support workers, including how they communicate with others. Candidates need to have opportunities to determine how play materials are best stored in relation to the need of the particular setting. In the case of a play facility which sets up and takes down daily, they should know how to store equipment appropriately and safely in storage boxes and how these can be labelled and stored safely.

Candidates also need to be clear that play equipment has to be maintained to an appropriate standard to make it safe and attractive to children. This may involve cleaning equipment and checking for breakages and missing pieces. This is also particularly important in areas such as sand, water and dough where there is a risk of spreading germs. The candidate has to be aware of his/her role in the process, how children can be involved and why it is happening.

Outcome 2

In demonstrating a range of different types of play, the candidates should be aware of the following types of play. These may include:

- ◆ Symbolic Play
- ◆ Creative Play
- ◆ Discovery Play
- ◆ Vigorous Play
- ◆ Play with Technology
- ◆ Books and play which supports language enrichment
- ◆ Games.

Other types of play such as heuristic play may also be included as appropriate.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Play in Practice (Higher)

Candidates would be expected to have undertaken basic observations of children engaged in different types of play. These observations should be seen as supporting the candidate's understanding of the ways in which children play. Candidates are also expected to have seen different examples of the types of play, indicated above and to understand what is meant by these types of play. They are also expected to have had sufficient opportunities to explore the potential of materials which might be used to provide the specific type of play.

Candidates should also have the opportunity to see how adding to or altering the play which is offered might extend the learning experience for the child.

Examples of this are:

- ◆ The candidates might want to add equipment to sand that shows how sand flows.
- ◆ They might change the appearance of imaginative play areas by providing new props such as mirrors.
- ◆ They might add some pebbles to the water.
- ◆ They might add large paint rollers and buckets of water to the outside play areas on a warm summer's day.
- ◆ They might make up treasure baskets for babies.
- ◆ Exploring with older children the potential of adding obstacles to a bike track.
- ◆ Adding art/craft resources to a mask making activity.
- ◆ Providing ICT resources for children making posters.

It is important in this outcome that candidates are given the opportunity to see how play can be extended to facilitate different learning experiences for children.

In describing how adults can offer a range of opportunities in different types of play it is essential that candidates understand the role all adults take in observing children's play and in providing additional resources according to the children's needs. They should have opportunities to see how all adults contribute to this directly or indirectly according to their job roles and understand the importance of team working and of good communication.

Outcome 3 and 4

In demonstrating how play can support aspects of the child's overall care, learning and development, candidates are asked to describe types of play which might best support the child's cognitive development, physical development and social and emotional development and they may use a curriculum framework to support their understanding if this is appropriate to the play context.

Candidates are expected to have opportunities to contribute under supervision to providing types of play to support the child's overall development and are expected to have opportunities to evaluate how this happened and how it supported the child's informal learning. Candidates are expected to show which aspects of development they had in mind when planning the experience.

Candidates are expected to show how the play they have offered extends children's learning. They might show this, for example, by providing materials which allow children to develop additional skills and confidence, for example, a problem solving experience. By participating in a play experience with children e.g. by telling a story or making music with children, or by showing that they took time to help the child develop a particular skill such as doing up buttons on a coat or being sensitive to their needs at the sewing table.

In supporting aspects of children's overall development candidates are expected to show an awareness of how the child's preferred mode of play was identified and extended, e.g. where a child prefers to play alone but engages in repetitive play, how they sensitively intervene by providing extra resources.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Play in Practice (Higher)

It is important to provide candidates with practical opportunities to see how the cycle of plan, observe, report and record are used by other adults to identify children's play needs. It is important that candidates are given some opportunities to observe other adults using these strategies and to start developing these skills by having limited opportunities to contribute to observation and planning for children's play needs. This would be done under close supervision and candidates at this level would not be expected to take a lead role in this process.

Candidates should however be able to identify the role the adult takes in identifying and meeting the child's developmental needs through play and this will include developing an understanding of what is meant by planning, observing, reporting and recording and how and why it is essential to do this effectively in an early education and childcare setting.

Candidates are expected to have opportunities to see appropriate adult intervention in play in a practical context. They should be able to identify why adults intervene to extend children's play and under what circumstances adult intervention can have positive effects on the quality of play or to enable children to maximise play opportunities. Examples of this might be when an adult brings in additional resources to take the child's interest forward or plans for a forthcoming event like a festival. This might also be done to support a particular and immediate need in the child such as a forthcoming visit to hospital or the arrival of a sibling.

Candidates should also be given the opportunity to see effective team working in action and to understand the role of all the adults in the team, how these adults use and are reliant on parents and other professionals to extend their knowledge of the children and the extent to which they involve the child in the process of their own learning.

GUIDANCE ON LEARNING AND TEACHING APPROACHES FOR THIS UNIT

It is important to emphasise that this Unit involves the demonstration of practical competences and the application of knowledge and understanding in the work setting. For this, regular tutorial meetings with candidates which explore aspects of workplace practice and which support candidates in the process of self evaluation and recording of evidence (such as log reporting) will be essential. A combination of tutorial support and placement supervision would facilitate candidates' progress through the Unit. A named workplace supervisor should monitor candidate progress in partnership with tutor(s). It is also essential that delivering centres continuously meet with supervisors to aid understanding and establish candidate progress.

Written materials in the form of structured log books, task/project sheets and evaluation records and questions, or reports on progress, could also be used to ensure effective progress throughout the Unit. Centres should continue to offer placement experiences to candidates according to principles of best practice, or in an appropriate setting. It is suggested that candidates would benefit from experiencing working with children from two of the following age ranges: 0-3; 3-5; 5-8; 8-12. Placements could be offered to candidates across the early education and childcare sector, including the local authority, private and voluntary sectors. Candidates should have enough time in placement to ensure that all learning outcomes and performance criteria are met. Candidates should be able to complete the Unit in a placement that only provides part day provision, e.g. playgroup, after school club.

This Unit can be delivered in a flexible manner, i.e as distance learning although measures should be taken by the Centre to ensure the validity of the candidate's practice.

National Unit Specification: support notes (cont)

UNIT Play in Practice (Higher)

GUIDANCE ON APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT FOR THIS UNIT

It is suggested there should be a single assessment folio for this Unit which the candidate builds during practical placement in an early education and childcare setting. Where applicable the assessment for this Unit should be integrated with other workplace based Units within the National Certificate Group Award: Early Education and Childcare. This will allow candidates to see the holistic nature of early education and childcare play provision. The assessment of this Unit should be on-going and should allow the candidate the opportunity to develop, as well as demonstrate, the skills required to meet the Outcomes and performance criteria of the Unit.

The standard to be applied is exemplified in the National Assessment Bank item for this Unit. If a centre wishes to design its own assessments for this Unit, they should be of a comparable standard.

CANDIDATES WITH ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

This Course 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 SQA document *Guidance on assessment for Candidates with Disabilities and/or Additional Support Need* (SQA, 2004).