



**National Qualifications 2014
Internal Assessment Report
Skills for Work: Early Education
and Childcare**

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

National Courses

Titles/levels of National Courses verified:

C221 74: Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare (National 4)

C246 75: Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare (National 5)

General comments

The National 4 and 5 Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare Courses are designed to improve learners' understanding of the workplace and enhance skills and attitudes for employability within the childcare sector. The Courses should also help learners develop skills and knowledge in this vocational area, to develop Core Skills, and to develop a positive attitude to learning.

Throughout this session, it is clear that most centres presented evidence for external verification that was based on the Evidence Requirements and assessment guidance within the Units, embedded employability skills, and the vocational area of early education and childcare.

Course Arrangements, Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

It has been clear from the outcomes of external verification and through discussion with assessors, internal verifiers and learners that the aims of these Courses as described in the Course Arrangements and Unit Specifications are being met, with many learners progressing to further study or into employment.

Evidence Requirements

The outcomes from external verification show that the majority of centres have a clear understanding of the Evidence Requirements for all the Units delivered.

Administration of assessments

In most cases, evidence was available to External Verifiers at the appropriate level — National 4 or 5. There were many good examples of learners applying research skills, problem solving and of working with others. There was evidence of class and group discussion related to employability and personal development of skills, qualities and attitudes for working in early education and childcare.

Almost all the centres that were verified used National Assessment Bank materials (NABs) to undertake Unit assessment. External Verifiers sampled complete and incomplete examples of work and in most cases commented positively on the clarity of tracking of assessment evidence, which indicated clearly what was still outstanding. External verifiers found that they agreed with the allocation of marks for assessment evidence and found clear feedback to learners whether they had achieved a pass/fail or remediation. They found good

examples of discussion between the learner and assessor. In most cases, learners were encouraged to reflect upon their own knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for working effectively in the sector.

External Verifiers confirmed that the majority of centres were presenting excellent examples of assessment practice, however some were struggling with the volume of paperwork associated with the NABs for the Units, and this was detracting from the quality of assessment practice.

Areas of good practice

Learning through practical experience

A key feature of these Courses in Early Education and Childcare is the emphasis on experiential learning. This means learning through practical experience and learning by reflecting on experience. In the majority of centres, External Verifiers found a very positive focus on experiential learning.

Most centres are providing learners with practical learning experiences with specific rooms set aside for the delivery of Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare. The rooms are well resourced and allow for practical sessions with the learners. Most have access to computer suites and appropriate resources such as art and craft materials, play equipment and books.

The majority of centres are providing learners with very supportive and informative Courses. Most learners have had the opportunity to visit local childcare settings; to work across departments within the school, college or training provider covering areas such as healthy eating, weaning, etc; and to take home virtual babies to support the parenting Unit. Most have developed a network of visiting speakers such as early education specialists, psychology services, health services, visual impairment specialists, Active Schools co-ordinators, etc.

Employability

Centres are providing opportunities for learners to meet with visiting speakers, childcare and healthcare professionals, parents and carers to encourage the link between theory and practice. This has enhanced the learning experience and added value to the delivery of the Courses.

Many centres are providing enriched opportunities to learners to enhance employability, such as first aid training, food hygiene certificates, etc.

The practical bases and embedded employability have allowed learners the opportunity to develop and enhance the skills required for possible employment in the early education and childcare sector, particularly their personal and interpersonal skills, communication and practical caring skills.

Learning through reflecting at all stages of the experience

Many centres provided opportunities for learners to access childcare settings, such as nurseries, primary schools, out of school care, etc. This approach has underpinned much of the learning and has clearly enhanced the personal development of the learners and allowed for positive self-reflection. The access to childcare settings has enriched the learners' knowledge and allowed them to make focused connections between theory and practice, and to develop their employability skills.

This reflective practice is clearly seen in their written work, although this has been identified by many as one of the most challenging aspects of the Courses.

Partnerships

Many quality partnerships have been established with the local nurseries, primary schools, and childcare organisations, which are all part of the wider community arrangements for the delivery of Skills for Work Courses.

These partnerships provide learners with direct access to workplace experiences and to different learning environments, which simulate aspects of the workplace. For example, good connections with local Community Learning and Development officers in relation to Care and Feeding of Children; links with a local community centre allow learners to carry out play activities in an after-school group; sports co-ordinators assist with vigorous play activities; careers advisors (World of Work) are used effectively to discuss career progression in the early education and childcare sector.

Quality of assessment evidence

External Verifiers found that most learners' work sampled was to a very good standard and very well organised. Through discussion with the learners it was evident that they had had a very positive learning experience.

Good use was made of photographic evidence to support practical activities within the learners' portfolios of evidence.

There was good evidence of cross-marking, which ensured consistency and reliability of assessment practice within centres.

Quality of staff delivering the Courses

External Verifiers found that staff within centres were undertaking on-going professional development to ensure they had sufficient and current knowledge and skills for the sector to deliver the Early Education and Childcare qualifications.

Many assessors and internal verifiers were maintaining high standards of quality assurance practice and procedures, and making good use of the skills and knowledge of other professionals. Furthermore, many were developing links with

other colleagues across the local area who were also completing or had delivered National 4 and 5 Early Education Child Care: Skills for Work Courses. This supports the continuation of excellent delivery of these Courses.

Specific areas for improvement

Internal verification

External Verifiers agreed that some centres were finding internal verification procedures unfamiliar and complex and that, in the last session, they had provided a great deal of advice and support to develop robust and practicable internal verification policies and processes.

In these centres, there is a need for a centre-wide approach to internal verification and quality assurance. Since these Courses are internally assessed by centres, this means that the centre's own assessors are responsible for deciding how learners have performed in relation to the national standards for the qualification. The internal verification system must, therefore, ensure that assessment practice is valid, reliable, practicable, equitable and fair — and assessors must apply the standards of assessment uniformly and consistently.

External Verifiers found that in some centres there wasn't a consistent approach to internal verification, with some departments arranging their own approach to verification. There was also evidence of a lack of clarity regarding the roles of assessors and internal verifiers; and of a lack of recording of assessment or verification decisions.

A clear, focused and robust policy for quality assurance will help internal verifiers to:

- ◆ provide support for assessors
- ◆ check assessment instruments to ensure validity
- ◆ arrange standardisation exercises and meetings
- ◆ sample assessment decisions, and
- ◆ maintain assessment and verification records

Recording and tracking

Over this session, External Verifiers found that a few centres require to improve the recording and management of learners' assessment evidence. Assessors need to ensure that they are providing supportive feedback to learners and are completing on-going checklists as means to keep track of work, particularly when delivering the course holistically. Formal record keeping is vital to ensuring that nothing is missed. Within the assessments it is also important to ensure that where planning is a success criterion, learners are encouraged to record this on their paperwork prior to the implementation and evaluation.

Some centres have designed holistic assessment booklets, but assessors and internal verifiers need to ensure that they are including all key aspects and success criteria from the Evidence Requirements in the Units. Also, where the Outcomes require learners to have a group and individual plan as part of their evidence, there should be evidence that both were completed.