



**National Qualifications 2016  
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

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

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

## General comments

The Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare courses at National 4 and National 5 offer opportunities for learners to acquire generic employability skills through a variety of practical experiences that are linked to this particular vocational area. These Skills for Work courses provide an experiential route to candidates who wish to progress to further study in Early Education and Childcare. The learners are also introduced to key knowledge, skills and values, whilst developing positive attitudes that will allow them to progress on to related courses, eg early learning, childcare and playwork, or into employment within the early learning and childcare sector.

Over this academic session, it is evident that these courses have been central in developing these employability skills in early education and childcare across schools, training providers and colleges, with external verifiers finding very positive outcomes from their visits. Centres are delivering Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare at National 4 and 5 to senior phase pupils within schools or in colleges, and to full-time and part-time learners in colleges or training providers on SCQF level 4 and 5 courses.

It is also clear that this area continues to grow with a number of additional centres adding Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare to their SQA portfolio.

External verifiers have identified that centres are presenting assessment evidence which is based on the requirements and assessment guidance within the units. This was at the appropriate Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 and 5. External verifiers also identified internal verification activities which ensured the robustness of assessment practice and which were in line with SQA guidance.

## Course and unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

Over this academic session, external verifiers confirmed that centres were very competently working with unit specifications and instruments of assessment. They were delighted to find a high level of commitment to the principles of employability which underpin the Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare courses.

External verifiers continued to find that centre staff, assessors and internal verifiers, understood the process and practice required to deliver these courses well, whilst complying with course and unit specifications.

The majority of centres were using National Assessment Bank materials, which incorporate a number of assessment methods and cover all evidence requirements in the unit specifications. External verifiers found that these are being downloaded from SQA's secure site as required and are therefore current instruments of assessment. Many centres have adapted the format of the NABs, (font or style), but are maintaining the rigour of the assessment instrument.

### **Course specifications**

External verifiers identified a number of delivery methods across the centres. Most centres have partnership approaches in place to either share the teaching and learning or to provide practical experiences for the learners. These have been between schools, colleges, other training providers, local authorities and employers. These partnerships have supported the delivery and enhanced the learning experience for those involved.

These partnerships extend to local organisations, such as local nurseries, childminders, primary schools and out-of-school care providers which allowed learners the opportunity for practical experience.

There are partnerships with professionals and organisations in play, childcare, education and health which provide learners with information, practical experiences and develop knowledge and employability skills.

This session has seen a shift in delivery patterns with many schools (with their delivery partners) now delivering to senior phase pupils (S4–S6), therefore the courses are being delivered within one year. Previously it may have been delivered over two years to S3 and S4 learners. This has meant that National 4 is delivered to S4 pupils, National 5 to S5, with S6 pupils picking up the course as a vocational qualification to support their application for further study or as a route into employment. Some schools are delivering across all years and offering bi-level classes.

Generally, colleges and training providers are continuing to deliver to full-time and part-time learners as part of childcare courses at SCQF 4 and 5, or to support the knowledge base for apprenticeships or SVQ delivery.

### **Unit specifications**

Over this academic session, centres have been delivering across all units within the Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare frameworks. Evidence was presented and externally verified for the following units.

#### **Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare National 5 framework:**

- ◆ Child Development and Health (F19L 11)

- ◆ Play in Early Education and Childcare (DM41 11)
- ◆ Working in Early Education and Childcare (DM84 11)
- ◆ Care and Feeding of Children (DM60 11)
- ◆ Parenting (DM86 11) and
- ◆ First Aid (F19M 11)

**Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare National 4 framework:**

- ◆ Child Development (DM83 10)
- ◆ Play in Early Education and Childcare (DM41 10)
- ◆ Working in Early Education and Childcare (DM84 10)
- ◆ Care of Children (DM85 10)
- ◆ Parenting (DM86 10)
- ◆ Maintenance of a Safe Environment for Children (DM5V 10)

External verifiers found centres were using the current unit specifications and were using these as the basis for comprehensive, and in some cases innovative, approaches to learning and teaching. Centres were providing excellent materials, resources and experiences to support learners. Most had dedicated teaching rooms which were well resourced and allowed for practical activities and experiences. Most learners had the opportunity to work with children, either as part of a placement experience or when children attended the centre. These opportunities extended and expanded the learning experience and provided coverage of all the requirements within the unit specifications. These approaches are supporting a key feature of these courses which is the emphasis on experiential learning. Centres are focused on learning through practical experience and learning by reflecting on experience.

**Instruments of assessment**

The assessment strategies used in the Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare National 4 and National 5 courses are to allow the learner 'to demonstrate a competence in key knowledge, skills and attitudes required to be employed in the early education and childcare sector' and it has been clear that this academic session, centres are focused on fulfilling this strategy in relation to assessment practice.

External verification has found that the vast majority of centres are using National Assessment Bank materials and these are being administered according to the assessment conditions, timing and duration of the assessment instrument. From the assessment evidence sampled by external verifiers, assessment judgements were valid and fair, with evidence of internal verification to ensure consistency of practice.

Assessors were making accurate and robust assessment decisions based on the evidence presented by the learners. These decisions were in line with the requirements in the units, marking guidance in the NAB and the SCQF level of the unit being delivered.

Assessors were providing focused and supportive feedback to the learners which has ensured continued improvements across unit delivery. Feedback was constructive from assessors showing progression to learners, identifying development points and areas of success. This feedback supported learners to be reflective of their own progress and take responsibility for their own learning.

Centres were following SQA guidelines for re-assessment, and where required, remediation was undertaken appropriately.

This academic session, external verifiers found evidence of robust and effective internal verification systems in most centres, with internal verification policy, process and paperwork in place. Internal verification records were clear and accurate with constructive feedback provided to assessors. Internal verification policies and systems are in place and are robust and compliant with SQA guidance.

## **Areas of good practice**

### **Partnerships**

There continues to be evidence of strong partnership approaches across delivery of Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare. These partnerships enhance course delivery and extend the experience of learners by assisting them to develop: skills and knowledge of Early Education and Childcare, Core Skills, an understanding of the workplace, a positive attitude to learning, and the skills and attitudes for employability.

External verification this session also identified that centres are working together to improve quality assurance of unit delivery and verification practice.

### **Learning experience and employability**

Centres have demonstrated that they have a clear understanding of, and commitment to, the development of employability skills in their learners. External verifiers highlighted many excellent examples of experiential or enhanced learning opportunities which have supported employability attitudes and skills.

Centres identified learning experiences, practical activities and placement opportunities which have developed the skills and attitudes of learners for employment. Consideration has been given to developing learners' understanding of the workplace and their responsibilities, and to developing self-evaluation skills, teamwork and a positive attitude to learning. There has been a commitment to enhancing and developing learners' confidence to set goals, to reflect and to learn from their experiences.

### **Development of individuals**

External verifiers also found that many centres were committed to the development and aspirations of individual learners. They found that centres provided positive feedback to learners which allowed them to evaluate and

comment on their own progress and development. They found that learners undertaking the courses identified progress in their learning, were able to link theory to practice, and (as a direct result) gained further college or training places. External verifiers commented on the commitment of assessors and internal verifiers to their learners and the impact on developing knowledge and skills and growth in self-confidence in learners.

## **Specific areas for improvement**

### **Assessment practice**

External verification highlighted that some centres need to ensure consistency of approach to assessment practice. All assessors should ensure a consistent approach to giving feedback on assessments to show achievement and identify areas for improvement. Assessors should have an opportunity to engage with quality assurance prior to completing unit assessments to ensure valid, reliable and fair assessment decisions are taken.

### **Internal verification**

External verifiers continue to see improvement in internal verification practice over the academic session, however there are still some areas where further improvements can be made.

Centres must ensure that formal verification paperwork is used to record verification feedback and standardisation practice. This will ensure that the quality of assessment and verification practice is confirmed and that any changes in delivery or personnel can be accounted for. Centres should ensure that standardisation decisions are recorded in minutes of meetings or on decisions logs, and that internal verification is noted on the work verified and a verification record kept with feedback on assessment practice and any action identified.