



Group Award Specification for:

**Professional Development Award: Early Learning
and Childcare: Policy and Provision in Scotland**

Group Award Code: GT0L 47

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1 Introduction

The purpose of this document is to:

- ◆ assist centres to implement, deliver and manage the qualification
- ◆ provide a guide for new staff involved in offering the qualification
- ◆ inform course managers teaching staff, assessors, learners, employers and higher education institutes (HEIs) of the aims and purpose of the qualification
- ◆ provide details of the range of learners the qualification is suitable for and progression opportunities

The Professional Development Award (PDA) Group Award: Early Learning and Childcare: Policy and Provision in Scotland is a new award.

There is recognition of an SCQF credit 'gap' for individuals in the early years' sector who wish to progress to a level 8/9/10 of a Childhood Practice qualification. This credit gap can arise for individuals who hold, for example, an SCQF level 7 SVQ Social Services (Children and Young People) award, which carries a maximum of 93 SCQF credits. This situation also arises for individuals who hold an HNC Childhood Practice with 96 credits.

The rationale for the development of this group award is to bridge the SCQF credit gap and support progression within the workforce. This group award is made up of two level 7 units, each with a value of 16 SCQF credits, comprising a 32 credit award. The structure of the award is two mandatory units; unit content would support delivery of high quality early learning and childcare provision for all children before school age, with an explicit focus on babies, children under three and eligible two year olds. Historically the sector has been reporting that there is often a lack of opportunity for workers to experience meaningful practice, and to engage in learning opportunities with regard to babies and very young children.

This 'gap' has represented a long-term barrier to progression for learners in the sector and it will be welcomed by many. Returning to study after any length of time can be a daunting prospect and this PDA would offer reassurance and an opportunity to undertake a smaller, yet meaningful, fully recognised award, which would provide a natural pathway to, for example, the HND, PDA level 8, PDA level 9, or BA Childhood Practice.

SQA contacted centres to establish demand for the proposed PDA.

The Quality Design Team (QDT) was mindful to make the best use of relevant data that was gathered from centres delivering the award, for example the following quote was captured:

'The HNC is 12 credits, most colleges are delivering 15 so would welcome an additional qualification to bolt on to the HNC. This would provide recognition for the additional credits and would be another use for this PDA other than only being a bridge to the level 8 for SVQ qualified staff. It could also possibly form a milestone for the Modern Apprenticeship but even if it didn't, it could open up a whole new stream of work for colleges by creating a pathway to the PDA 8 and 9 for the existing workforce. This would certainly be useful, particularly for SVQ holders who have not taken on much academic learning'.

Learners can progress to the HND Childhood Practice or use the credits towards entry to the BA Childhood Practice or PDA Childhood Practice at SCQF level 9. Both of these qualifications are the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) registration requirements for manager/lead practitioner. Centres are advised to consult SSSC for their current requirements in relation to Childhood Practice awards.

2 Qualification structure

This group award is made up of 2 SQA double unit credits. It comprises 32 SCQF credit points at SCQF level 7. A mapping of Core Skills is available in section 5.4.

2.1 Structure

This group award is achieved on the successful attainment of the two following mandatory units.

4 code	2 code	Unit title	SQA credit	SCQF credit points	SCQF level
J584	34	Provision, Regulation and Professional Learning in Early Learning and Childcare	2	16	7
J585	34	Transitions: Babies and Young Children	2	16	7

- ◆ The qualification is at SCQF level 7 and reflects this competency level.
- ◆ It comprises 32 credits at SCQF level 7.
- ◆ The award is matched to the revised Childhood Practice Standards and the National Occupational Standards (NOS)

3 Aims of the qualification

3.1 General aims of the qualification

The principal aim of the PDA is to allow learners to advance their knowledge and understanding of regulation, professional learning and transitions in early learning and childcare.

- 1 Develop transferable skills including Core Skills.
- 2 Develop personal effectiveness.
- 3 Develop critical, evaluative and analytical skills and an ability to synthesise concepts and ideas.
- 4 Develop problem solving skills.
- 5 Enable progression within the SCQF framework including progression to higher education.
- 6 Provide opportunities for career planning and enhance learners' career prospects.

3.2 Specific aims of the qualification

- 7 Develop an understanding of Regulation and Professional Learning in early learning and childcare.
- 8 Develop professional practice.
- 9 Develop an understanding of theoretical concepts and pedagogy in early learning and childcare with a specific focus on babies and children under three.
- 10 Develop an understanding of transitions in early years
- 11 Develop an understanding of approaches to transitions for babies and young children, including eligible two year olds.
- 12 Develop an understanding of the effect transitions can have for children and families and on the attainment gap.

4 Recommended entry to the qualification

Entry to this qualification is at the discretion of the centre. The following information on prior knowledge, skills, experience or qualifications that provide suitable preparation for this qualification has been provided by the Qualification Design Team (QDT) as guidance only.

Learners should have good communication skills at SCQF level 6. It would be beneficial if learners have work experience with children, especially with babies and children under three years of age, although this is not essential.

Learners who have already qualified at practitioner level, or those looking to expand their knowledge, or increase their SCQF level 7 credits, will find this award invaluable. Learning will be enhanced if learners can arrange to undertake work experience in a setting with babies and children under three years of age.

4.1 Core Skills entry profile

The Core Skill entry profile provides a summary of the associated assessment activities that exemplify why a particular level has been recommended for this qualification. The information should be used to identify if additional learning support needs to be put in place for learners whose Core Skills profile is below the recommended entry level, or whether learners should be encouraged to do an alternative level or learning programme.

Core Skill	Recommended SCQF entry profile	Associated assessment activities
Communication	6	Case studies, academic essay, reflective account, investigation, report.
Numeracy	6	Investigation, report.
Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	6	Case studies, academic essay, reflective account investigation, report.
Problem Solving	6	Case studies, academic essay, reflective account, investigation, report.
Working with Others	6	Case studies, academic essay, reflective account, investigation, report.

5 Additional benefits of the qualification in meeting employer needs

This qualification was designed to meet a specific purpose and what follows are details on how that purpose has been met through mapping of the units to the aims of the qualification. Through meeting the aims, additional value has been achieved by linking the unit standards with those defined in National Occupational Standards and/or trade/professional body requirements. In addition, significant opportunities exist for learners to develop the more generic skill, known as Core Skills through doing this qualification.

5.1 Mapping of qualification aims to units

Code	Unit title	Aims											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
J584 34	Provision, Regulation and Professional Learning in Early Learning and Childcare	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
J585 34	Transitions: Babies and Young Children	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X

5.2 SIGNPOSTING of Childhood Practice Standards.

There are 25 Childhood Practice Standards. Link to the standards www.sssc.uk.com

Code	Unit title	Childhood Practice Standards																									
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
J584 34	Provision, Regulation and Professional Learning in Early Learning and Childcare	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X					X		X	
J585 34	Transitions: Babies and Young Children	X	X	X	X			X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X			X	

5.3 Signposting of National Occupational Standards (NOS) Social Services (Children and Young People) SCQF level 7

Code	Unit title							
J584 34	Provision, Regulation and Professional Learning in Early Learning and Childcare	SSC0033 Underpinning knowledge and practice	SCCLD0306 Underpinning knowledge and practice	SCDCCLD0317 Underpinning knowledge and practice	SCDCCLD0329 Underpinning knowledge and practice	SCDCCLD0340 Underpinning knowledge and practice	SCDHSC0037 Underpinning knowledge and practice	SCDCPC309 Underpinning knowledge and practice
J585 34	Transitions: Babies and Young Children	SCDCCLD0301 Underpinning knowledge and practice	SCDHSC0034 Underpinning knowledge and practice	SCDCCLD0306 Underpinning knowledge and practice	SCDCCLD0308 Underpinning knowledge and practice	SCDCCLD0312 Underpinning knowledge and practice	SCDCCLD0317 Underpinning knowledge and practice	SCDCCLD0325 Underpinning knowledge and practice

5.4 Mapping of Core Skills development opportunities across the qualification

Unit code	Unit title	Communication			Numeracy		ICT		Problem Solving			Working with Others	
		W (R)	W (W)	O	UN	UGI	AI	PCI	CT	PO	RE	WCO	RCC
J584 34	Provision, Regulation and Professional Learning in Early Learning and Childcare	X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X
J585 34	Transitions: Babies and Young Children	X	X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X

Key:

Communication:	W (R) = Written (Reading)	W (W) = Written (Writing)	O = Oral
Numeracy:	UN = Using Number	UGI = Using Graphical Information	
ICT:	AI = Accessing Information	PCI: Providing/Creating Information	
Problem Solving:	CT = Critical Thinking	PO = Planning and Organising	RE = Reviewing and Evaluating
Working with Others	WCO = Working Co-operatively with Others	RCC = Reviewing Co-operative Contribution	

5.5 Assessment strategy for the qualification

One suggested approach for the unit regulation and professional Learning in Early Education and Childcare is a portfolio in four sections to cover the evidence requirements for all four outcomes.

Unit	Assessment			
	Outcome 1 section 1	Outcome 2 section 2	Outcome 3 section 3	Outcome 4 section 4
Provision, Regulation and Professional Learning in Early Learning and Childcare	Case studies with different family structures and socio-economic backgrounds with supporting questions to cover the Early Learning and Childcare Landscape in Scotland with regard to entitlement and the different types of provision.	A report (part 1) to provide comprehensive evidence of knowledge and understanding of regulatory bodies' functions and requirements as well as accountability to wider stakeholders. The scrutiny bodies remit and functions should be explained and evaluated	A report (part 2) to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how the implementation of the regulatory requirements policies and wider accountabilities in part 1 of the report impact on children, families and providers across different types of provision. Challenges and proposed solution should be included.	Flow chart — to show qualification pathways supported with a 1,500 word essay to demonstrate knowledge of registration systems and processes highlighting what learners have to do to achieve registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

Unit	Assessment (continued)			
Transitions: Babies and Young Children	Outcomes 1, 2, 4	Outcome 3	Outcome 5	
	Academic essay to include explanations and analysis of the key concepts, highlighting challenges and solutions where required. It is recommended that this assignment is 2,500 words.	Report: The report should include a minimum of three evaluation mechanisms to measure the quality of transitions in early learning and childcare settings and explain how evidence from the evaluation mechanisms can support and ensure continuous improvement.	Investigation: The investigation should demonstrate a clear understanding of the poverty related attainment gap. An analysis of the possible effects that poor quality and high quality transitions can have on the attainment gap, especially for eligible two year olds. The roles of home learning and parents should form part of this.	

6 Guidance on approaches to delivery and assessment

The PDA consists of two mandatory double credit HN Units at SCQF level 7 allowing learners to achieve 32 SCQF credit points.

The award will enable learners to develop a critical understanding of the different types of early learning and childcare provision and the key regulations relating to the early learning and childcare sector in Scotland.

Learners will gain a deeper understanding of the impact that sector regulations, qualification requirements and professional learning expectations have on children accessing early learning and childcare provision.

The learner will develop an understanding of the multiple transitions experienced by children in the earliest years of their lives, the key role of managing the evaluation of transitions and the impact of transitions on children in their earliest years, including babies, and eligible two year olds. This will include the role of transitions in closing the attainment gap.

Learners will engage in personal reflection for continuous professional development.

The award may be delivered in a variety of different ways which will reflect the learning, employment and development needs of individual learners and employing organisations.

The most common method of delivery will be to learners who are currently in full or part time employment and will be studying on a part-time basis.

Modes of delivery could include classroom learning, online, distance learning or a combination of these.

It is recommended that assessments are integrated where the opportunity arises. While each HN Unit has very specific evidence requirements and assessment guidance, it is strongly recommended that where overlaps between units occur an assessment from one unit should be considered to meet some or all of the evidence requirements from other units to avoid the possibility of over assessment.

6.1 Sequencing/integration of units

The PDA consists of two mandatory units. It is suggested that centres consider beginning with the unit Provision, Regulation and Professional Learning in Early Learning and Childcare. This will set the context and help frame learning for the unit Transitions: Babies and Young Children.

Both units are stand alone and the learner may wish to improve their knowledge and understanding in either of the topics covered in each unit to enhance their continuous professional development.

6.2 Recognition of prior learning

SQA recognises that learners gain knowledge and skills acquired through formal, non-formal and informal learning contexts.

In some instances, a full group award may be achieved through the recognition of prior learning. However, it is unlikely that a learner would have the appropriate prior learning and experience to meet all the requirements of a full group award.

The recognition of prior learning may **not** be used as a method of assessing in the following types of units and assessments:

- ◆ HN Graded Units
- ◆ Course and/or external assessments
- ◆ Other integrative assessment units (which may or not be graded)
- ◆ Certain types of assessment instruments where the standard may be compromised by not using the same assessment method outlined in the unit
- ◆ Where there is an existing requirement for a licence to practice
- ◆ Where there are specific health and safety requirements
- ◆ Where there are regulatory, professional or other statutory requirements
- ◆ Where otherwise specified in an Assessment Strategy

More information and guidance on the *Recognition of Prior Learning* (RPL) may be found on our website www.sqa.org.uk.

The following sub-sections outline how existing SQA units may contribute to this group award. Additionally, they also outline how this group award may be recognised for professional and articulation purposes.

6.2.1 Articulation and/or progression

The PDA is designed to provide additional credits to allow learners to progress, for example, to the HND Childhood Practice or use the credits towards entry to the BA Childhood Practice or PDA Childhood Practice at SCQF level 9. These qualifications are the SSSC registration requirements for manager/lead practitioner.

6.3 Opportunities for e-assessment

All units in this award would lend themselves to e-learning and e-assessment.

Centres who offer this type of delivery are responsible for ensuring that their systems meet the necessary SQA guidance.

However, it is recommended that centres create the opportunity for learners to be involved with other learners in order to facilitate a sharing of professional practice.

6.4 Resource requirements

It is recommended that staff in centres delivering this award have appropriate current knowledge and understanding of legislation, policy, guidance and frameworks in relation to childhood practice.

7 General information for centres

Equality and inclusion

The unit specifications making up this group award have been designed to ensure that there are no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment. The individual needs of learners will 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.

Internal and external verification

All instruments of assessment used within this/these qualification(s) should be internally verified, using the appropriate policy within the centre and the guidelines set by SQA.

External verification will be carried out by SQA to ensure that internal assessment is within the national guidelines for these qualifications.

Further information on internal and external verification can be found in *SQA's Guide to Assessment* (www.sqa.org.uk/GuideToAssessment).

8 Glossary of terms

Embedded Core Skills: is where the assessment evidence for the unit also includes full evidence for complete Core Skill or Core Skill components. A learner successfully completing the unit will be automatically certificated for the Core Skill. (This depends on the unit having been successfully audited and validated for Core Skills certification.)

Finish date: The end of a group award's lapsing period is known as the finish date. After the finish date, the group award will no longer be live and the following applies:

- ◆ learners may not be entered for the group award
- ◆ the group award will continue to exist only as an archive record on the Awards Processing System (APS)

Lapsing date: When a group award is entered into its lapsing period, the following will apply:

- ◆ the group award will be deleted from the relevant catalogue
- ◆ the group award specification will remain until the qualification reaches its finish date at which point it will be removed from SQA's website and archived
- ◆ no new centres may be approved to offer the group award
- ◆ centres should only enter learners whom they expect to complete the group award during the defined lapsing period

SQA credit value: The credit value allocated to a unit gives an indication of the contribution the unit makes to an SQA group award. An SQA credit value of 1 given to an SQA unit represents approximately 40 hours of programmed learning, teaching and assessment.

SCQF: The Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) provides the national common framework for describing all relevant programmes of learning and qualifications in Scotland. SCQF terminology is used throughout this guide to refer to credits and levels. For further information on the SCQF visit the SCQF website at www.scqf.org.uk.

SCQF credit points: SCQF credit points provide a means of describing and comparing the amount of learning that is required to complete a qualification at a given level of the Framework. One National Unit credit is equivalent to 6 SCQF credit points. One National Unit credit at Advanced Higher and one Higher National Unit credit (irrespective of level) is equivalent to 8 SCQF credit points.

SCQF levels: The level a qualification is assigned within the framework is an indication of how hard it is to achieve. The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. HNCs and HNDs are available at SCQF levels 7 and 8 respectively. Higher National Units will normally be at levels 6–9 and graded units will be at level 7 and 8. National Qualification group awards are available at SCQF levels 2–6 and will normally be made up of National Units which are available from SCQF levels 2–7.

Subject unit: Subject units contain vocational/subject content and are designed to test a specific set of knowledge and skills.

Signposted Core Skills: refers to opportunities to develop Core Skills arise in learning and teaching but are not automatically certificated.

History of changes

It is anticipated that changes will take place during the life of the qualification and this section will record these changes. This document is the latest version and incorporates the changes summarised below. Centres are advised to check SQA's APS Navigator to confirm they are using the up to date qualification structure.

NOTE: Where a unit is revised by another unit:

- ◆ No new centres may be approved to offer the unit which has been revised.
- ◆ Centres should only enter learners for the unit which has been revised where they are expected to complete the unit before its finish date.

Version Number	Description	Date

Acknowledgement

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's colleges have made to the development of this qualification.

9 General information for learners

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

Unit title: Regulation and Professional Learning in Early Learning and Childcare

This unit is designed to enable you to gain an awareness of the areas highlighted below. On successful completion of the unit outcomes you will be able to explain the various types of early learning and childcare provision that exist in Scotland, including local authority, private and voluntary provision.

You will also be able to identify the various regulatory and scrutiny bodies that have a responsibility for early learning and childcare in Scotland. You will learn about and be able to explain their respective functions, including their role with regard to babies and children under three. These bodies include the Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

You will have the opportunity to find out about the various conditions and standards required by the different bodies for all types of early learning and childcare provision in Scotland. This will include the specific requirements that apply to settings and staff working with children under three. This will be an excellent opportunity to understand what happens at inspections and what is required to achieve positive evaluations.

You will be able to apply the different rules and regulations that apply to the various early learning and childcare settings and weigh up how the different requirements affect children and families, local authorities and early learning and childcare providers.

You will have a sound understanding of the current national guidance and policies that relate to early learning and childcare provision, and you will also understand how this affects children under three. Once you have a firm grasp of the different types of provision and the different requirements that they have to meet, you will be able to suggest some improvements or changes that could be made to address some of the key challenges with regard to babies and children under three.

As well as being accountable to the regulatory bodies, you will also learn about how important it is that early learning and childcare providers understand in which important ways they are also accountable to local authorities and to their other stakeholders including the children themselves, parents and professionals.

You will become familiar with the range of early learning and childcare qualifications that are available in Scotland and you will be supported to explore the differences and similarities between the qualifications.

You will be able to consider the current workforce qualifications requirements required by SSSC (or other regulatory body) and assess how effectively these qualifications prepare staff to undertake the actual role of working with children.

Once qualified and registered, there is an ongoing requirement to keep up to date with continuous professional learning. You will be asked to explore how this works and to comment on whether or not you think this is important and effective.

As part of your research you will explore and select challenges that relate to qualifications and professional learning for the sector. You will also have the opportunity to propose suggested changes and solutions for improvements, including contexts relating to babies and children under three.

The possible approaches to assessment may include the compilation of a portfolio that enables you to consider the outcomes in a comprehensive way bringing together your research, as well as your experience and knowledge about early learning and childcare provision, regulatory bodies, policies and professional learning. It is likely that assessment will be open-book format. It is also likely that where the assessment is a portfolio, this would be compiled incrementally and be fully referenced using a recognised and agreed referencing system.

Unit title: Transitions: Babies and Young Children

This unit is designed to enable you to gain an awareness of the areas highlighted below.

On successful completion of the unit outcomes you will be able to:

Explain and evaluate approaches to supporting multiple and diverse high quality transitions for babies and young children. This will include considering the role of transitions in relation to closing the attainment gap.

You will define transitions in its broadest context and also in relation to the range of transitions babies and young children can experience whilst explaining how and why transitions are so significant for babies and young children and must be of high quality.

You will be able to explain the eligibility criteria for eligible two year olds in Scotland and the significance of transitions in this context.

You will be able to explain the range of strategies that can be developed and implemented within transitions practice when working with babies and young children.

You will be able to explain why parental engagement is critical when developing and implementing effective approaches to high quality transitions, including an explanation of the ways in which technology can be used as a 'tool' to support transitions.

You will explain ways in which diversity, equality and inclusion must be supported within transitions and identify and explain potential challenges, potential barriers and possible solutions when implementing approaches to effective transitions.

There are many professional partnerships that that can be part of the baby or child's transition experience which you will be able to explain the diversity of these.

You will be able to explain ways in which relationships within a setting can influence transitions and the ways in which the setting ethos can influence transitions for both babies, children and families.

Transitions for eligible two year olds therefore you will be able to explain the factors that should be taken into account when planning and implementing approaches,

You will be able to explain the range of quality measures that are applied to early learning and childcare settings when evaluating transitions and the range of approaches that may be used when evaluating the effectiveness of transitions.

Evidencing the involvement of children, parents and staff you will be able to explain ways in which a setting's self-evaluation of transitions can be evidenced. This should include the involvement of children, parents and staff and also explain approaches that support continuous improvement in relation to evaluating transitions.

You will analyse the impact of transitions on the social and emotional development of babies and children and explain how early brain development is relevant and important when managing and analysing the impact transitions can have for babies, children and families.

Progression of learning can be impacted by experience of transitions therefore you will be able to analyse this impact whilst explaining the impact transitions can have on parents of babies and young children.

You will be able to explain the poverty related attainment gap and how it relates to babies and young children and the possible effects that high-quality transitions can have on the attainment gap.

You will analyse the importance of transitions for eligible two year-olds in considering the poverty related attainment gap.

You will analyse the importance of the home learning environment in managing transitions that seek to address the poverty related attainment gap.

One suggested approach to assessment may be the completion of three separate assessments to cover the evidence requirements for all 5 outcomes. You will have the opportunity to explore the broad area of transitions by completing the following:

- ◆ an essay
- ◆ a report
- ◆ an investigation

Your assessments will enable you to bring together your reading, research, learning, discussions and experience so that you learn about the importance of transitions for babies and young children in a comprehensive way. It is likely that all of your assessments will be based on an 'open-book' format and that you will have opportunities to discuss and debate the many issues and challenges inherent in the:

- ◆ study of transitions
- ◆ attainment gap and
- ◆ funded Early Learning and Childcare provision for eligible two year-olds

It is hoped that you will find many ways of using the learning from this unit to inform and improve your understanding of transitions in your everyday practice with young children.