



**National Qualifications 2018**  
**Qualification Verification Summary Report**  
**Skills for Work: Early Education**  
**and Childcare**

# Introduction

The following National Courses were verified:

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

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

## General comments

The Skills for Work: National 4 and National 5 Early Education and Childcare courses focus on developing employability skills in learners. The emphasis is on the practical skills and knowledge required to work with children and young people across the childcare and playwork sector.

During the session 2017–18, the Skills for Work: National 4 and National 5 Early Education and Childcare courses were revised. Consequently, the new Skills for Work: National 4 and National 5 Early Learning and Childcare are now ready for delivery in the next academic session. These new courses continue to focus on employability skills, and provide an experiential route for learners who wish to progress to further study or into employment.

Overall, external verifiers found that learners were happy to discuss their thoughts about the Skills for Work courses. They found learners to be very positive about their learning during the course delivery, and most expressed their enjoyment of the practical aspects of the course, especially the Play and Care of Children units. Learners identified their developing knowledge about working with children as being crucial to their 'next step' decisions in a wide variety of careers, such as early learning and childcare, teaching, nursing, and sports coaching.

The number of centres coming forward for approval to offer these courses has continued to grow throughout academic session 2016–17.

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

### **Course arrangements:**

Skills for Work: National 4 and National 5 Early Education and Childcare courses are based on the delivery of four units. There are three mandatory units with one optional unit. Each of the units is also suitable for learners wishing to study on a standalone basis.

For each of the units, evidence is required to demonstrate that learners have achieved all outcomes and performance criteria. Evidence can be gathered in a range of ways to assess learners' knowledge, understanding, and application across the learning outcomes and performance criteria. There is no external assessment for any of these units.

These courses are being delivered across schools, training providers and colleges; to senior phase pupils within schools or in colleges, and to full and part-time learners in colleges or training providers on SCQF level 4 and 5 courses.

### **Unit specifications**

External verifiers confirmed that centres were working competently with current unit specifications. External verifiers saw evidence that staff within centres have an accurate understanding of the requirements of the national unit specifications and the appropriate SCQF level. Moreover, they found that centre staff, assessors and internal verifiers understood the process and practice required to deliver these units, whilst complying with unit outcomes, criteria, and evidence requirements.

### **Instruments of assessment**

All centres that were externally verified were using National Assessment Bank (NAB) 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 the SQA Secure website as required, ensuring use of up-to-date instruments.

Many centres have adapted the format of the NABs (font or style), to make assessment more accessible to learners undertaking the unit assessment, whilst maintaining the rigour of the assessment instrument.

## **Evidence requirements**

In the academic session 2017–18, centres have been delivering across all units within the Skills for Work: National 4 and National 5 Early Education and Childcare frameworks.

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

#### **Mandatory units:**

Child Development and Health (F19L 11)  
Play in Early Education and Childcare (DM41 11)  
Working in Early Education and Childcare (DM84 11)

#### **Optional units:**

Care and Feeding of Children (DM60 11)  
Parenting (DM86 11)  
First Aid (F19M 11)

External verifiers found that the evidence sampled was consistent with SCQF level 5, with learners demonstrating knowledge, facts, ideas and theories about early education and childcare. Moreover, they demonstrated an ability to work alone or with others on tasks, agree goals, and take responsibilities, and to contribute to the evaluation of their own work and that of others.

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

#### **Mandatory units:**

Child Development (DM83 10)  
Play in Early Education and Childcare (DM41 10)  
Working in Early Education and Childcare (DM84 10)

#### **Optional units:**

Care of Children (DM85 10)  
Parenting (DM86 10)  
Maintenance of a Safe Environment for Children (DM5V 10)

The evidence sampled during external verification is consistent with SCQF level 4. Verifiers observed learners demonstrating basic knowledge and some simple facts and ideas about early education and childcare, and relating this knowledge to practical contexts. It was clear that learners have been taught how to work alone or with others on tasks, set goals and timelines, review their work, and identify their own strengths and areas for improvement.

## **Administration of assessments**

The assessment strategies used in the Skills for Work: National 4 and National 5 Early Education and Childcare courses are designed 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’*. It is clear that centres were focused on fulfilling this strategy in relation to assessment practice.

External verifiers found that centres were using NAB materials and that these were being administered based on assessment conditions, timing and duration, and assessment instrument. In the majority of centres, external verifiers found that assessment judgements met the requirements of the relevant unit specifications across units sampled. These assessment decisions were valid and fair, with evidence of internal verification to ensure consistency of practice. These decisions were in line with the requirements in the units, marking guidance in the NAB, and the SCQF level.

External verifiers observed that assessment feedback to learners was mostly focused and supportive, based on the evidence presented, and is understanding of their learning. Most feedback provided a clear rationale for assessment decisions taken.

External verifiers found that most centres had quality assurance documentation for Skills for Work covering guidance on internal verification. This included the key functions, sampling strategy, feedback and record of sampling forms. Internal verification ensured that the administration of assessments was valid and reliable, with internal verifiers providing clear and focused feedback on assessment decisions. Internal verification also identified any concerns over assessment practice or decisions and established action as required. It was evident, usually within Minutes of standardisation meetings, that assessors and internal verifiers met across the course delivery to discuss the administration of assessments, instruments of assessments, assessment judgements and learner feedback.

## **Areas of good practice**

Many centres have been delivering the Skills for Work: Early Education and Childcare courses for a number of years and have developed very good quality assurance systems, and learning and teaching approaches. We would highlight the value of the ongoing partnerships between schools, training providers and colleges in which these courses are delivered.

There are opportunities for many learners to undertake a placement experience within a nursery, primary school or out-of-school care service. Learners also visit play spaces, forest schools, exhibitions, libraries, museums and local parks to develop their own play experience and to develop their knowledge and practical skills.

This ongoing commitment to quality delivery and added value for learners should be commended in all centres.

### **Internal verification**

There are many instances of staff from different centres collaborating to support assessment and internal verification practice, and this has significantly contributed to the standardisation of assessment practice, particularly in those centres with fewer assessors/verifiers.

### **Professional partnerships**

Many centres have developed strong links with local professionals — including teachers, nursery staff, playworkers, health visitors, and midwives, and various community groups, like Child Smile, sports groups, forest schools, play organisations and Book Bug — who come to speak to the learners. This has had a positive impact on learning, as it encourages learners to consider the link between theory and practice.

### **Practical learning environments**

External verifiers highlighted the quality and variety of learning environments; including various well-resourced practical and teaching rooms, and spaces for practical sessions such as kitchens, ICT suites, gym halls, and art areas.

Work-placement opportunities helped learners undertake assessment tasks for Play in Early Education and Childcare, and enhanced their understanding of working in the early education and childcare sector.

### **Professional development**

Many centres support their assessors and internal verifiers in engaging in professional development opportunities within local nurseries and primary schools, to ensure that they have current knowledge and understanding of early education and childcare practice.

## **Innovation**

External verification in 2017–18 identified some innovative practice. One primary school gave digital/video feedback from their pupils to learners, following participation in play experiences. This helped learners to plan, implement, and evaluate play experiences in a real context.

In another centre, the young people hosted a crèche for school parents' evenings, where they offered play activities and experiences to children whose parents were meeting with teachers. The young people planned the play experiences within the delivery of the Play in Early Education and Childcare unit. This was then used as part of the assessment process.

## **Enhanced learning**

A high level of constructive and positive feedback given to learners has led to a high standard of work produced. This was clear from the work sampled, particularly the group presentations that learners were encouraged to work on as part of a team, and to develop the necessary knowledge and skills required to work in early education and childcare.

The integration of practical activities to complement and enhance learning fostered positivity and commitment in the learners, even for those who, in some cases, had been non-attenders in other aspects of their educational life.

## **Specific areas for improvement**

As in previous years, external verifiers identified some specific areas for improvement in a small number of centres, specifically: assessment practice, feedback given to learners, and internal verification process.

### **Assessment practice**

External verification highlighted that some centres need to ensure consistency of approach to assessment practice across assessors and across unit delivery. In one or two cases, limited information was provided for assessment answers which were accepted, or uncompleted assessment was deemed to be sufficient.

Assessors should have an opportunity to engage with quality assurance processes, including standardisation, cross marking and internal verification to ensure valid, reliable and fair assessment decisions are taken, and compliance with the SCQF level of the units.

### **Learner feedback**

While evidence showed that good assessor–learner relationships were resulting in frequent verbal feedback, a few centres have not been providing or recording written learner feedback.

**Internal verification**

A few centres were not ensuring that internal verification procedures provided formal evidence of support for assessors, recording of internal verification decisions, or standardisation of assessment practice and meetings. These centres should develop clear and accurate records of internal verification activity, and formalise reports of meetings and standardisation exercises to ensure support for assessors and reliability of assessment decisions.

You can find out more about this in the [SQA National Qualifications Internal Verification Toolkit](#).