

Course Description — Early Learning and Childcare: An Introduction

1 credit at SCQF level 5

Code: GMTY 45

Version: 01 (May 2026)

This document includes background information on the development of this award; its aims; course content; course delivery and assessment.

Development of the award

An Introduction to a Career in Early Learning and Childcare has been created to support Scotland's ambitious vision to make Scotland the best place to grow up, through developing an awareness of the essential skills, knowledge and values that are required for the future Early Learning and Childcare workforce.

The Scottish Government has made significant investment, including almost doubling funded entitlement to 1,140 hours per year for all eligible children, with nearly £1 billion allocated annually to sustain and expand services. This commitment reflects robust evidence that high-quality early learning experiences positively influence child development, laying the foundation for lifelong learning and improving health and economic outcomes. Research shows that 90% of brain development occurs before age five, making early interventions critical for narrowing attainment gaps and promoting equity.

To achieve these outcomes, Scotland needs a skilled and qualified workforce capable of delivering responsive, play-based pedagogy and meeting national standards for quality. Professional learning and registration with bodies such as the Scottish Social Services Council ensure practitioners uphold best practice and safeguard children's wellbeing, reinforcing the importance of attracting and preparing individuals for this vital career.

A team of writers, vetters and digital technologists from Scotland's College Development Network (CDN) consulted widely, designed and produced the course. Since then, Qualifications Scotland have further developed the material to enable this course to become an accredited assessment for use in centres, either as part of an induction programme, as part of the recruitment process, or to raise awareness of a career in Early Learning and Childcare for prospective employees.

For some learners a course completion certificate may be the end goal. However, there is the opportunity to achieve a fully accredited Qualifications Scotland Certificate after assessment.

Aims of the Award

1. Promote understanding of the professional standards, skills, and qualifications required for ELC practitioners, emphasising the need for a competent, qualified workforce to deliver safe, nurturing, and developmentally appropriate care and education.
2. Introduce learners to the national context and policy drivers shaping the ELC sector in Scotland.
3. Develop awareness of the importance of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in supporting children's development and lifelong learning.

Course content

Unit code	Unit title	SCQF level	SCQF credits
JOXB 45	Early Learning and Childcare: The Essentials	5	0.5
JQWC 45	Early Learning and Childcare: Best Practice	5	0.5

Early Learning and Childcare: The Essentials

This unit will provide learners with a comprehensive understanding of the concept of the Early Learning and Childcare industry as well as an introduction to the role of an Early Years Practitioner in Scotland.

It will also provide learners with the knowledge and skills necessary to begin to explore their own values and the values required to work within the Early Learning and Childcare industry in Scotland.

It is recommended that the learner then progresses to the Early Learning and Childcare: Best Practice unit.

Early Learning and Childcare: Best Practice

This unit is designed to introduce Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland. It focuses on key components that are essential to support children, including exploring various stages of child development, how these can be supported and nurtured, as well as promoting an understanding of Additional Support Needs. The learner will also explore the importance of promoting wellbeing and safeguarding in an Early Learning and Childcare setting, including the legal requirements and responsibilities of Early Years Practitioners. The unit will also introduce the concepts of play, pedagogy and the role of the environment in Early Learning and Childcare. In addition, it will examine the importance of transitions and reflective practice within the Early Learning and Childcare sector.

Overall, this unit aims to provide learners with a solid foundation in Early Learning and Childcare strategies, legislation, concepts and key components promoting understanding of the crucial role play has in our culture.

It is recommended that the learner achieves Unit 1, Early Learning and Childcare: The Essentials before attempting this unit.

Successful achievement of both units will result in the achievement of the **'Career in Early Learning and Childcare: An Introduction'** group award/College award.

Course delivery and assessment

Course delivery ideas:

1. Online Learning Platform:
 - Use interactive modules with embedded videos, animations, and case studies.
 - Include discussion forums for peer engagement and reflective tasks.
2. Blended Learning:
 - Combine online theory with short in-person workshops for practical insights.
 - Invite guest speakers from the ELC sector to share real-world experiences.
3. Self-paced Learning:
 - Learners progress through structured content at their own pace.
 - Incorporate checkpoints for reflection and application of knowledge.

Assessment suggestions

1. Online Delivery Tools:
 - Use platforms like **Moodle**, **Microsoft Teams**, or **Google Classroom** for hosting content and assessments.
 - Incorporate interactive tools such as **Kahoot** or **Quizizz** for engagement
2. Multiple-choice Questions (MCQs):
 - Test understanding of key concepts such as child development stages, policy drivers, and professional standards.
3. Use scenario-based MCQs to assess application of knowledge.
4. Restricted Response Questions:
 - Short written answers to explain why qualified practitioners are essential or describe the impact of ELC on lifelong learning.
 - Encourage critical thinking without requiring lengthy essays.

Assessment suggestions (continued)

5. Knowledge Check Quizzes:

- Frequent low-stakes quizzes after each module to reinforce learning.
- Include instant feedback to support learner progress.

Centres may use existing resources or develop new materials best suited to the target audience. Teaching must cover all topics within the units as a minimum.

A paper version of the instrument of assessment will be able to be accessed from Qualifications Scotland secure site. It is predominantly multiple-choice and should be quick and easy to mark. Centres have the option of uploading it to their virtual learning environments for completing it online, in which case the centre is responsible for ensuring that it remains secure. Additional support such as extra time and/or a reader and scribe may be required for learners who have support plans in place.

Internal verification is required if offered as an Accredited training programme and centres should refer to the Internal Verification Toolkit for guidance on best practice.

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 Qualifications Scotland's APS Navigator to confirm they are using the up-to-date qualification structure.

Version number	Description	Date

Acknowledgement

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