



Skills for Work

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2022–23

Early Learning and Childcare

Verification group number: 416

Skills for Work Courses

The Skills for Work Course frameworks in Early Learning and Childcare consists of three mandatory units with one optional unit.

Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare National 4 (SCQF level 4)

Group award code: C782 74 (24 SCQF credit points)

Mandatory units

HX1R 74 Play in Early Learning and Childcare

HX1L 74 Child Development

HX1V 74 Working in Early Learning and Childcare

Optional units (one to be selected)

HX1K 74 Care of Children

HX1M 74 Contemporary Families

HX1T 74 Maintenance of a Safe Environment for Children

Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare National 5 (SCQF level 5)

Group award code: C783 75 (24 SCQF credit points)

Mandatory units

HX1R 75 Play in Early Learning and Childcare

HC3C 45 Development and Wellbeing of Children and Young People

HX1V 75 Working in Early Learning and Childcare

Optional units (one to be selected)

HX1J 75 Care and Feeding of Children and Young People

HX1M 75 Contemporary Families

J54S 75 Introduction to Basic First Aid

HC38 45 Children and Young People: Rights and Protection

General comments

This session, 2022–23, has seen many centres returning to delivery that is expansive and creative following the pandemic restrictions. This has meant that external verifiers have seen centres enthusiastically return to delivering qualifications underpinned by the 'Skills for Work ethos', developing skills and attitudes for employability, demonstrating positive attitudes to learning, and enhancing an understanding of the workplace skills and knowledge for working in early learning and childcare.

External verifiers have found centres are developing their focus on:

- play and fun
- experiences and experimenting
- creativity and imagination
- collaboration and co-operation
- developing employability skills

Overall, external verifiers found delivery of high-quality Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare courses offering effective learning and support for candidates, and robust quality assurance processes.

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

In session 2022–23, external verifiers found that assessors and internal verifiers within centres were confidently able to discuss course arrangements, unit specifications, and their use of instruments of assessment, demonstrating sound knowledge and understanding across the Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare courses and units being delivered.

Evidence requirements

The evidence requirements in the units being delivered as part of the Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare at National 4 and 5 courses were being adhered to by most centres in session 2022–23. Much of the evidence to be generated is process based, and external verifiers found evidence of observation, candidate practice, teamworking, peer evaluation, etc. These approaches to assessment are valid and the assessment judgements were reliable, consistent, and in line with the evidence requirements in the units. This demonstrated a sound understanding of the evidence requirements for the Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare courses and units, and the requirements of the different SCQF levels.

External verifiers identified that centres were implementing experiential and reflective approaches to assessment which are encouraged within the unit evidence requirements and are underpinned by the ‘Skills for Work ethos’. Evidence requirements allow for evidence to be generated in a range of ways to assess candidates’ knowledge, understanding and application across the learning outcomes and performance criteria. Candidates who met the evidence requirements demonstrated that they achieved all outcomes and performance criteria.

Administration of assessments

The majority of centres are using SQA assessment support packs (ASPs) for the assessment of units being delivered. The ASPs offer variety and choice of assessment format to candidates, while ensuring that assessment is accessible to all candidates who have the potential to be successful.

In most centres, marking schemes, checklists and assessment records were made available to external verifiers for the units being verified. These were valid and practicable.

Learning and teaching

External verifiers identified that centres have worked hard this session to provide a high standard of teaching and learning experience for their candidates. Most are providing a broad range of opportunities for their candidates and learning that is focused on unit requirements, but also providing expansive knowledge across the early learning and childcare sector.

In the majority of centres, there was a clear focus on experiential learning, learning through practical experience, and learning by reflecting on experience. External verifiers found good examples of learning in real or simulated early learning and childcare settings, learning through role-play activities, candidates carrying out case study and research work, planning and implementing practical tasks, and reflection on their own values, knowledge and skills.

Overall assessment

Over this session, external verifiers found that the majority of centres were adhering to the key principles of assessment within Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare. They found that approaches to assessment were:

- valid — assessments were appropriate, and allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills to meet the standards
- reliable — assessment results were consistent across candidates, assessors and centres
- equitable and fair — there were no unnecessary barriers to assessment
- practicable — the assessments were effectively and efficiently administered

Overall, external verifiers found a consistent approach across assessors and detailed records and checklists of assessment judgements were made available during verification. These assessment decisions, were in most cases, clearly provided to candidates in a written format. This feedback was constructive and highlighted areas of strength and indicated areas for development. There was evidence of remediation and opportunities for candidates to develop areas further. Regular feedback appears to be an integral part of the learning, teaching and

assessment process for the majority of centres delivering Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare units.

Verification

External verification in this session identified that the majority of centres were following SQA guidance for verification and undertaking a three-step approach, with prior, interim and post-verification, and evidence of standardisation meetings at each step. Centres provided their internal verification policy and completed verification documentation including sample plan, record of meetings and verification feedback. Most had 'pro forma' verification paperwork that was completed for the units sampled. For most centres there was evidence of the effectiveness of internal verification procedures, resulting in a sample for verification that had a high level of consistency. The internal verifiers provided focused and detailed comments. These clearly demonstrated how assessment judgements had been made and documented the professional dialogue between the assessors and internal.

In some centres, there was evidence of internal verification being carried out across centres delivering the course. This is a reciprocal agreement that supports and strengthens the standardisation process and is a model that is being used more regularly across the centres.

Overall, external verifiers found that approaches to verification demonstrated fairness to all candidates, quality assured delivery and assessment, maintained the integrity and credibility of the Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare courses, and ensured that standards were maintained consistently, in the interests of candidates.

Areas of good practice reported in 2022–23

External verifiers identified many aspects of good practice across centres delivering the Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare courses. Centres should be commended for the quality of learning, teaching, assessment and verification identified this session.

It was clear that candidates were particularly enjoying the course when in discussion with external verifiers. They enjoyed the practical activities and visiting nurseries and primary schools, and felt this enhanced their understanding of child development. They told external verifiers that they found learning and teaching resources were very informative and that, if having difficulty, their assessor would 'break it down' or provide a practical experience to provide context and ensure understanding. In one centre, which was echoed in others, candidates described the course as 'fun, interesting, engaging and entertaining', all said they would thoroughly recommend it to others.

Partnership

Many centres are working collaboratively with other centres delivering the Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare courses. They participate in regular standardisation activities, as well as cross-marking and sharing of resources and materials. Centres have found this very supportive, especially for those in their first year of delivery.

Many staff teams have established these partnerships with other local schools or centres delivering the Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare courses. This has resulted in the development of supportive networks and sharing of resources within the wider community. Teams also collaborate with other departments within their own centre, for example, the Home Economics and Physical Education departments and the library.

Experiential learning

The assessment approaches and the sample provided demonstrated that they are underpinned by a creative and dynamic learning and teaching strategy, for example:

- Candidates were supporting S1 pupils in cookery lessons as part of their course.
- Candidates were involved in a forest school experience which provided them with a real insight into how the creativity of outdoor experiences can promote development in children.
- Supporting candidates to attend a regular placement in nursery or primary school, which is further enabling them to apply their knowledge and understanding of development, play, etc. As well as enhancing their own skills.
- Multiple opportunities for candidates to engage with children and young people in a variety of contexts, including visits to a variety of early learning and childcare settings, hosting a Christmas party, and planning and implementing a play session for pupils from a local primary school.
- The children of staff members within the centre were invited in for a 'Day of Play', where the candidates planned and implemented their play experiences for the children and received feedback from the children participating, as well as the assessors.

Reflective learning

Many assessors are making good use of reflective practice on how the course has been delivered and identifying areas within the delivery of the course that could be developed, for example:

- The use of candidate feedback to explore learning opportunities to aid the candidates in areas where they have identified a skills weakness, for example asking the librarian to provide a session to the candidates on how to develop note-taking and referencing.

- Candidate activities encourage group working to build team working skills but equally provide opportunities for candidates to work on their own to build independence and responsibility for their learning, and to develop skills such as critical thinking.
- Candidates are encouraged to identify their own learning intentions — what they consider they will learn and measure this against what they actually learned. This includes self-reflection about their own development and wellbeing.
- At the end of the course the centre revisits the knowledge, skills and values, initially discussed and identified by the candidates, to reflect on their progress, instilling in them a sense of self-fulfilment and pride in their learning journey.

Integrated delivery

Many assessors make good use of integrating the Development and Wellbeing of Children and Young People unit with the Play in Early Learning and Childcare unit. The aspects of development have been embedded within the learning materials to reinforce prior learning, encourage consistent links between aspects of development and play, and to show how the aspects are inter-related.

Also, assessors utilise opportunities to further develop the candidates' understanding of the role of the early years practitioner by encouraging candidates to consider how to extend a child's interests. This allows the candidates to make the link between theory and practice. It also prepares the candidates for the Play in Early Learning and Childcare and Working in Early Learning and Childcare units.

Specific areas for improvement reported in 2022–23

Feedback to candidates

It is recommended that all feedback to candidates, including verbal feedback, should be recorded to capture the quality of guidance and support offered to candidates by all assessors. In a few cases, evidence of feedback was inconsistent or limited across the units verified and centres should consider a more formal recording of feedback. Centres are advised to develop a personalised style of feedback for each candidate, where their strengths in the assessment or task are highlighted along with possible next steps to support their development (feed-forward). For example, within the assessment support pack for the unit Play in Early Learning and Childcare (HX1R 75) there is a feedback/comments sheet which should be used by assessors. This will ensure that the candidate covers the evidence requirements.

The unit Play in Early Learning and Childcare, provides many opportunities to explore the seven types of play, including the scope for outdoor play and bringing the outdoor environment indoors. This provides candidates with a clear direction and allows them to focus on what is required, as well as acknowledging successes.

Internal verification

Refer to the Internal Verification Toolkit at www.sqa.org.uk/IVtoolkit for further guidance on the effectiveness of documenting standardisation discussions and meetings. This will also assist internal verifiers to understand their role in supporting the assessor to quality assure assessment practice and confirm the validity and reliability of assessment decisions, as well as sampling when delivering new units or monitoring new assessors.

Use of photographic evidence

Centres are advised to discourage the use of photographic evidence of children and young people. Photographic evidence can be used to support assessment practice but should focus on the actual activity undertaken and not on any children or young people involved.

Development and Wellbeing of Children and Young People (HC3C 45)

Candidates are required to undertake research to generate a folio with information presented in a variety of ways. This should be used as a formative assessment tool to ensure the candidate's understanding of the principles of development and wellbeing of children and young people. The assessor should complete the assessment checklist to confirm this folio has been completed.

The summative report for this unit should be discrete, a short-written report, verbal report, short presentation or group discussion, as outlined in the evidence requirements and ASP. The summative assessment will be a report which explains the candidate's understanding of the development and wellbeing of children and young people. If a group presentation is being used for summative assessment purposes, it is recommended that the candidates' individual notes are retained as evidence of their participation.

A list of sources of information should be presented with the candidate's portfolio and the summative report.

The assessor checklist and the summative report should be retained as evidence for external verification. The candidate's portfolio is not required as evidence for external verification.