

Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network

Striving for Excellence

EARLY CHILDHOOD GRADUATE PRACTITIONER Competencies

June 2018



Acknowledgements

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Only membership organisations of ECSDN can embed the competencies into their degree programmes that are mapped on to the QAA Benchmark Statement for Early Childhood Studies

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Part One

Guidance

1. Introduction

It is twenty-five years since the first Early Childhood Studies degree students graduated and the [Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network](#) (ECSDN) was launched. The degree was aimed at providing higher level study opportunities for those working in the Early Childhood Education and Care sector. Since this time the number of degrees has grown enormously and Early Childhood is now firmly established as an inter-disciplinary academic field in its own right with a [QAA Benchmark Statement](#).

The need for highly qualified graduate Early Childhood practitioners is as relevant today as it was in the early 1990s. The introduction of the Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner competencies, as an optional route in degree programmes, is a timely and important development.

This document introduces the competencies and provides supporting information for Higher Education providers, programme teams and employers.

2. Early Childhood Studies Degrees

Early Childhood Studies degrees (ECS) afford students the opportunity to engage with the multiple perspectives on Early Childhood. They promote the critical application of theory to practice with infants, young children and families. Integral to the degrees is holistic knowledge and understanding of the ecology of child development in the context of the family, community and wider socio-political contexts. Anyone who has studied Early Childhood, or taught on Early Childhood Studies Degrees, appreciates how the knowledge, understanding and skills gained support future careers working with children and families.

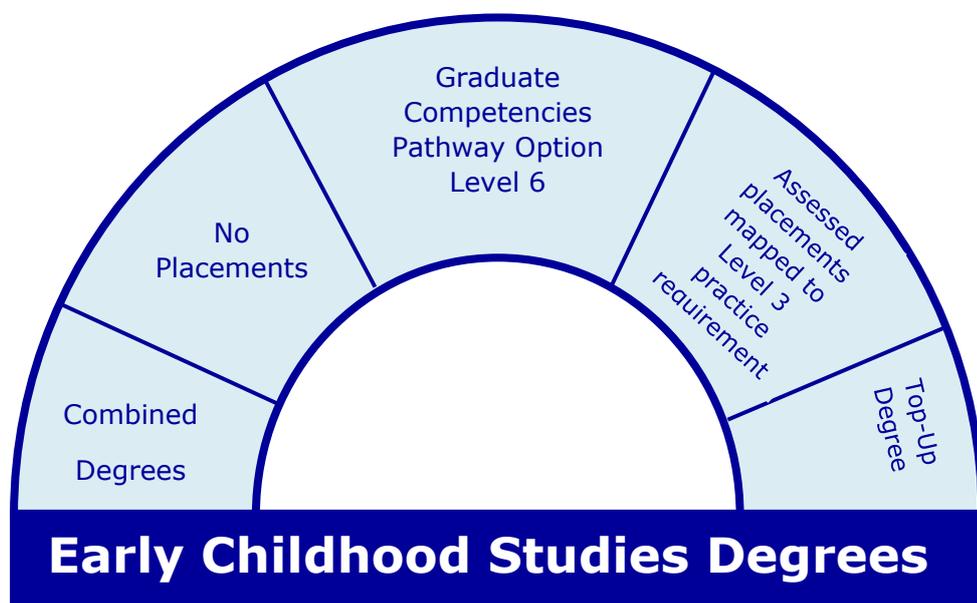
ECS degrees can be studied in a variety of ways at a range of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) and Further Education Colleges, with Higher Education provision, across the UK. Some programmes have an academic focus only, others offer placement opportunities or are employment based. Learners decide to study ECS at different ages, times in their life, with different entry qualifications and reasons. Some students have considerable experience in

practice, others have minimal or no experience at all. However, they share an aspiration to work with children and families but are not always sure of the practice or professional direction they want to pursue.

There are currently four types of degrees mapped on to the Early Childhood Studies QAA Benchmark. Students can study a degree with:

- no placements
- formally assessed placements
- unassessed or sporadically assessed placements
- a combination of work and study for those in employment.

Future Early Childhood Studies Degrees Study Pathways



3. The Rationale for Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies

A real strength of ECS degrees is the variety of study and career pathways. However, this can present challenges for future employers. Different HEIs use different titles for degrees mapped on to the ECS QAA Benchmark Statement and it is not always clear how the degree maps against sector qualifications.

Full and Relevant Criteria in England

The Early Childhood graduate can be counted as 'Full and Relevant' in England if:

- They had an Early Years Educator, or equivalent Level 3 qualification before joining the degree.
- Their degree is mapped on to the ECS QAA benchmark with assessed placements.
- It is the responsibility of the HEI to ensure that students have relevant assessed practice that meets the Level 3 requirements.

They **cannot** be counted as 'Full and Relevant' if they do not meet the criteria above. **They need to undertake a relevant level 3 qualification.**

To proactively address these issues and strengthen degrees with placements, or that are work-based, the ECSDN has collectively developed assessed practice competencies awarded at Level 6. These can be embedded as a pathway option into the ECS degree and HEIs can award Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner to students who successfully meet all the competencies.

The Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies will:

1. Remove the confusion in the sector about how ECS Degrees are aligned to practice requirements in the four nations of the UK.
2. Address the inherent challenges of different types of Early Childhood degrees and study pathways, enabling the wider workforce to be clear about individual early career graduates' expected level of knowledge, skills and actual experience in practice.
3. Acknowledge the different pathways that lead learners to undertake the degrees, enhance their practice experience and graduate employability.
4. Ensure that Higher Education academic routes are responsive to the changing needs and training routes in early years practice, education and the wider Children's Services workforce.
5. Make a significant contribution to strengthening a graduate-led Early Childhood workforce that is responsive to workforce needs and improves outcomes for children.
6. Afford students with placement opportunities to critically apply theory to practice in a range of Early Childhood settings and/or schools, social care and health settings. This will enable students to develop graduate skills in the application of the inter-disciplinary Early Childhood knowledge base to reflective practice.
7. Provide new opportunities for graduates who want to strengthen their practice in Early Childhood and/or progress to post-graduate academic programmes or professional training, including Early Years Teacher (0-5), Teacher (3-11), Social Work and health professions.

4. The Role of the Early Childhood Studies Degrees Network

- The ECSDN developed the competencies and will review, evaluate and monitor them to ensure they remain contemporary and relevant to the needs of the sector.
- The Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies can be embedded in programmes presented by member organisations.
- ECSDN will provide guidance and support to support how they are embedded and assessed to membership organisations.

5. Early Childhood Graduate Competencies Criteria

Each ECS degree is a bespoke programme and therefore, including Graduate Practitioners Competencies is the decision of HEI providers. They can only be embedded in degrees mapped on to ECS QAA Benchmark Statement.

The integration of the competencies is not prescribed; rather there are criteria which must be followed to ensure robust quality, admission and assessment procedures.

Quality Processes

HEIs will embed, monitor and award Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies through their quality processes. These will include:

- Approval processes
- Annual review
- Subject review
- External examining
- A robust assessment process that is embedded through the degree
- Resit opportunities in-line with HEI requirements at Level 4 and 5
- One re-sit opportunity for the final assessment

Awarding Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies

The HEI is responsible for awarding the Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies. They must provide certification that the student has achieved the competencies, either integrated into the degree title or as a separate certificate. For example:

- **Embedded in the title:** BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies (Graduate Practitioner)
- **Separate certificate:** _____ has been awarded Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competences

6. Entry, Placement and Assessment Criteria

6.1 Entry Requirements

Students must:

- Be completing a full time (3 Year) or work-based degree programme (Level 4-6) mapped on to the ECS QAA Benchmark Statement
- Have the relevant Level 2 English and maths qualifications.

6.2 Placement Requirements

ECS degree programmes must ensure students have assessed placement experience which includes observations of practice, that evidences their development over time.

- Students must complete 80 days of work-based placements:
 - Level 4 - 25 days
 - Level 5 - 30 days
 - Level 6 - 25 days
- Students with a full and relevant Level 3 qualification in the Early Years can APEL 5 days of placement at Level 4.

- Receive mentoring support in the setting during placement.
- Undertake a range of placements in Early Childhood settings and/or schools, health or social care settings, across the 0-8 age range with assessed evidence in the 0-2, 3-5 and 5-7 age ranges.

Many full-time students work in settings during term time and during vacations. Tasks could be set to allow students gather evidence towards the competencies that equate to:

- Level 4 - 5 days of placement
- Level 5 - 10 days of placement
- Level 6 - 5 days of placement

6.3 Assessment Requirements

The competencies will be met at different points across the degree with a final assessment at Level 6 that reflects HEI teaching and learning outcomes at this level. The final assessment will confirm the award (or not) of Early Childhood Graduate Competencies.

The assessment strategy will include:

- Assessed observations of practice throughout each level of the degree
- Practice-based tasks and formalised academic assessment throughout the degree
- Level 6 end of degree assessment point
- Resit opportunities in-line with HEI requirements at Level 4 and 5
- One re-sit opportunity of the final assessment
- Robust assessment moderation processes; that are monitored through university quality processes.

7. BA (Hons) Early Childhood Studies (Top Up) (or equivalent) Entry, Placement and Assessment Criteria

7.1 Entry Requirements

Students must:

- hold a relevant Level 3 qualification and a work-based Foundation Degree (or equivalent) mapped to the ECS QAA Benchmark Statement
- be completing a Top Up degree that is mapped on to the ECS QAA Benchmark Statement
- be employment-based or have 25 days placement opportunities
- have the relevant Level 2 English and maths qualifications.

7.2 Assessment Requirements

- Employment-based or placement tasks
- Level 6 end of degree assessment point
- One re-sit opportunity of the final assessment
- Robust assessment moderation processes, that are monitored through university quality processes.

Part Two

Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies



The Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner is an advocate for young children's rights and participation and recognise that young children are active co-constructors of their own learning. They critically apply high-level academic knowledge of pedagogy and research evidence, to the holistic development of infants and young children (0-8), in a practice context that is respectful of the child, their family and community.

An early career Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner will have met nine competencies through assessed placement tasks, observations of practice and academic assignments. They will understand the importance of:

- Advocating for young children's rights and participation
- Promoting holistic child development
- Working directly with young children, families and colleagues to promote health, well-being, safety and nurturing care
- Observing, listening and planning for young children to support their well-being, early learning, progression and transitions
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Inclusive Practice
- Partnership with parents and caregivers
- Collaborating with others
- Ongoing professional development.

Early Childhood Graduate Practitioner Competencies

<p>Competency 1</p> <p>Advocating for young children's rights and participation</p>	<p>1.1 Demonstrate how you listen to and work in collaboration with young children, individually and in groups.</p> <p>1.2 Observe, support and extend young children's participation in their learning through following their needs and interests.</p> <p>1.3 Support children to respect others by providing opportunities for their participation and decision making.</p>
<p>Competency 2</p> <p>Promote holistic child development</p>	<p>2.1 Explain, justify and apply in practice, knowledge of how infants and young children develop from conception to the age of 8 in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ neurological and brain development ▪ cognitive development ▪ communication and language development ▪ personal, emotional and social development ▪ physical development <p>2.2 Demonstrate and apply knowledge to practice of the factors that promote and impede holistic development and long-term outcomes. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ individual circumstances ▪ family circumstances ▪ attachment ▪ physical health ▪ mental health ▪ personal, social and emotional well-being ▪ the impact of disadvantage and adverse childhood experiences ▪ relationships with friends and adults ▪ the importance of learning through play ▪ the role of creativity ▪ policy

Competency 3

Work directly with young children, families and colleagues to promote health, well-being, safety and nurturing care.

- 3.1 Explain what factors influence health and wellbeing.
- 3.2 Demonstrate the application of knowledge about health, well-being and safety to practice, including:
 - the importance of policies and legislation
 - the identification of risks
 - know how to identify and respond when a child is unwell or injured and may require urgent and non-urgent medical situations
 - how to store and dispose of medicines
 - practice good hygiene
 - food preparation
 - safe waste disposal
 - how to use and maintain equipment and know how to access relevant training
- 3.3 Apply data protection legislation to practice.
- 3.4 Know and demonstrate how to complete a risk assessment and apply in practice.
- 3.5 Understand factors which influence nutritional health and integrate knowledge about current dietary guidance into practice, including early feeding and weaning.
- 3.6 Demonstrate the application of knowledge and understanding about the importance of respectful nurturing care routines including:
 - Personal care
 - Meal time routines
 - Rest, sleep and 'quiet' time
 - Physical activity and mobility
- 3.7 Have relevant knowledge to support and manage children with on-going health conditions.
- 3.8 Demonstrate how to promote health and educate children and families about health-related matters.

Competency 4

Observe, listen and plan for young children to support their well-being, early learning, progression and transitions

- 4.1 Know and understand the relevant Early Childhood curriculum frameworks and apply them in practice.
- 4.2 Apply a range of observation and research skills to co-construct young children's development, play and learning, encouraging independence and next steps.
- 4.3 Evidence the application of different theoretical perspectives when planning for young children's personal, social and emotional development.
- 4.4 Apply theoretical understanding to the range of transitions young children experience and how these can be effectively supported in practice.
- 4.5 Evidence knowledge of the importance of parents and/or caregivers and the home learning environment in infants and young children's development and learning.
- 4.6 Demonstrate knowledge and skill in listening to and communicating verbally and non-verbally with children and how to encourage their communication skills, including situations where:
 - English is an additional language
 - A child has special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- 4.7 Identify and apply pedagogical knowledge of how to develop enabling environments indoors and outdoors.
- 4.8 Explain and demonstrate understanding of the balance between child-led and adult-led activities.
- 4.9 Using real world contexts apply to practice theoretical understanding of:
 - Language development
 - Literacy development (including early reading and writing)
 - Mathematical concepts
- 4.10 Evidence contemporary knowledge and skills in the use of technology and the role and appropriate use of digital literacies in young children's learning.
- 4.11 Enable young children to understand the wider world.

Competency 5

Safeguarding and child protection

- 5.1 Know the wider legislative and statutory guidance for the safeguarding including child protection, whistle blowing, digital safety and how these are articulated into setting policy.
- 5.2 Recognise when a child may be in danger or at risk of serious harm and the procedures that must be followed.
- 5.3 Appreciate the importance of working with others to safeguard and promote the well-being of infants and young children.
- 5.4 Evidence advanced knowledge about child abuse, the wider theoretical perspectives about the causes of abuse and the potential implications for young children's outcomes.
- 5.5 Apply knowledge of adverse childhood experience, including child abuse to individual planning to promote:
 - resilience (including, managing challenge, self-efficacy and self-regulation)
 - early learning
 - health and well-being
 - next steps
- 5.6 Evidence and apply knowledge and understanding of how globalisation and technology may pose safeguarding risks for young children.
- 5.7 Know when to signpost to other services or designated persons within the setting to secure young children's safeguarding and protection.

Competency 6

Inclusive practice

- 6.1 Evidence knowledge, understanding and application in practice of pedagogy that supports inclusion.
- 6.2 Know how to identify infants and young children who may require additional support and how to refer to appropriate services.
- 6.3 Demonstrate an understanding of statutory guidance for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities and Protected Characteristics.
- 6.4 Evidence skills in appropriate planning to address the care and early learning needs of individual young children with special educational needs and/or disabilities and Protected Characteristics.

Competency 7

Partnership with parents and caregivers

- 7.1 Evidence understanding of the importance of partnership with parents and/or caregivers in their role as infants and young children's first educators.
- 7.2. Demonstrate in practice the co-construction of learning in respectful partnership with parents and/or caregivers.
- 7.3 Apply knowledge to practice, about the diversity of family life and society.
- 7.4 Demonstrate skills in communicating and working in partnership with families.

Competency 8

Collaborating with others

- 8.1 Evidence knowledge about the importance of creating successful, respectful professional relationships with colleagues and other professionals in and outside the setting.
- 8.2 Apply collaborative skills in practice, including effective listening and working as a member of a team and in multi-professional contexts.
- 8.3 Demonstrate an understanding of the barriers to working with others and how to address these in practice.

Competency 9

Professional development

- 9.1 Demonstrate self-awareness and knowledge of anti-discriminatory practice, promoting social justice and the importance of valuing difference, including gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation and sexual orientation.
- 9.2 Evidence skills in enabling the voice of young children to be heard.
- 9.3 Evidence advanced skills in utilising reflective practice alongside research, to enhance your continual professional development in Early Childhood.
- 9.4 Draw on research to demonstrate knowledge of leadership and management and its importance and application in democratic and inclusive practice.
- 9.5 Recognise and evidence the importance of communicating effectively orally and in writing to others.