

Next Generation Higher National Unit Specification

Playwork in Practice (SCQF level 7)

Unit code: J7DE 47
SCQF level: 7 (16 SCQF credit points)
Valid from: session 2023–24

Prototype unit specification for use in pilot delivery only (version 1.0) June 2023

This unit specification provides detailed information about the unit to ensure consistent and transparent assessment year on year.

This unit specification is for teachers and lecturers and contains all the mandatory information required to deliver and assess the unit.

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Unit purpose

This unit helps learners to develop their understanding of playwork approaches to support children and young people's play.

The unit is suitable for learners studying for the Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Childhood Practice. They explore contemporary playwork theories and evaluate their use in supporting play. You should make links between practice and theory throughout the unit, so that learners can select and implement appropriate strategies in practice. Learners analyse the Playwork Principles and ensure that they underpin their playwork practice.

Learners examine strategies to create and adapt play spaces and environments to support play. They explore a range of play types, to gain the knowledge and skills they need to meet children's play needs. Learners consider techniques for intervention, and you should encourage them to develop a range of responses appropriate to the children and young people they are supporting. Risk and challenge forms a key part of this, as learners understand the importance of children experiencing elements of risk and challenge, and support children to assess and manage risk appropriately.

Learners identify strategies for ensuring the meaningful participation of children and young people in decision making. They reflect on and evaluate their own practice, identifying and acknowledging good practice and areas to develop.

Entry to the unit is at your centre's discretion; however, we recommend that learners have relevant qualifications at SCQF level 6 and/or experience of working in the childhood practice sector.

Learners who complete the unit as part of the HNC in Childhood Practice may have the opportunity to progress to further learning, including Higher National Diploma (HND) or degree-level courses.

Unit outcomes

Learners who complete this unit can:

- 1 examine a range of playwork theories
- 2 investigate the Playwork Principles and how they work in practice to support children and young people's play
- 3 examine the role of the practitioner in supporting play in a range of play spaces
- 4 create, or adapt, play environments to support a range of play opportunities for children and young people
- 5 investigate the benefits of play opportunities that offer an element of risk and/or challenge
- 6 evaluate their reflective playwork practice

Evidence requirements

Learners must provide knowledge evidence and product evidence for the unit.

Knowledge evidence

All outcomes

Learners must provide knowledge evidence with reference to practice experiences for all outcomes. This could be oral or written, or a combination of both, and captured in a range of media.

To successfully achieve the outcomes, learners must:

- ◆ research current and emerging playwork theories
- ◆ explain the purpose of the Playwork Principles and analyse how they work in practice, including how they can be used to advocate for children's right to play
- ◆ explore the benefits of freely chosen, self-directed play for children and young people, and how this contributes to children and young people's development
- ◆ explore the play cycle and how knowledge of this can enable practitioners to select appropriate intervention styles to support children's play

Product evidence

Outcomes 4 and 6

Learners must provide product evidence for outcomes 4 and 6.

For outcome 4, this relates to practical activities. Learners create, or adapt, a play environment on at least two occasions, one indoors and one outdoors. The play spaces created or adapted by learners must provide a range of play opportunities for the children and young people they are working with.

Learners must demonstrate that they can:

- ◆ plan and support children's play
- ◆ explain how to create and adapt indoor and outdoor play spaces to offer a range of flexible play opportunities and nurturing environments for children and young people
- ◆ discuss the importance of ensuring a range of play types are available for children and young people
- ◆ explain the importance of inclusive playwork practice to support children with additional support needs and behavioural support needs

For outcome 6, the product evidence is the learner's evaluation of their playwork practice. In their evaluation, they must reflect on their own playwork practice.

Learners must demonstrate that they can:

- ◆ reflect on the importance of play opportunities that offer elements of challenge and risk in supporting children and young people to develop skills, confidence, and resilience
- ◆ explain strategies that can be used to reflect on and evaluate playwork practice, including methods to ensure children's participation in decision making
- ◆ identify good practice and areas for improvement

The evidence for all outcomes can be produced over the course of the unit in lightly-controlled conditions and requires authentication.

Knowledge and skills

The following table shows the knowledge and skills covered by the unit outcomes:

Knowledge	Skills
<p>Outcome 1 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ definitions of play ◆ the value of play ◆ the benefits of freely chosen play ◆ the therapeutic playwork approach ◆ the short-term and long-term benefits of play 	<p>Outcome 1 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ discuss current playwork theories ◆ identify how playwork theories can be used in practice to support children and young people ◆ take an enabling and inclusive approach to supporting play
<p>Outcome 2 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the Playwork Principles ◆ a child's right to play 	<p>Outcome 2 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ identify the value of play ◆ analyse and implement the Playwork Principles
<p>Outcome 3 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ the play cycle ◆ a range of appropriate intervention styles ◆ a non-interventionist approach 	<p>Outcome 3 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ explain the role of the practitioner in supporting play ◆ recognise and respond appropriately to play cues ◆ identify when children are experiencing uncertainty and respond accordingly
<p>Outcome 4 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ inclusive playwork practice ◆ play types ◆ loose parts ◆ opportunities to support indoor and outdoor play 	<p>Outcome 4 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ create play spaces that support freely chosen, self-directed play ◆ adapt play spaces to the play needs and preferences of children and young people

Knowledge	Skills
<p>Outcome 5 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ risk and benefit analysis ◆ deep play ◆ the importance of acceptable risk-taking being supported in play ◆ how to work in collaboration with families and communities (or carers) to gain feedback and address concerns 	<p>Outcome 5 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ support children and young people to develop confidence and build resilience ◆ assess risks in the context of supporting children and young people’s development ◆ support children and young people to manage risk and challenge in play appropriately
<p>Outcome 6 Learners should understand:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ how to have meaningful consultation with children and young people ◆ strategies to ensure participation ◆ effective techniques for reflection and evaluation 	<p>Outcome 6 Learners can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ create innovative opportunities to gather feedback and ideas from children and young people ◆ reflect on practice and identify areas to develop

Meta-skills

Throughout the unit, learners develop meta-skills to enhance their employability in the early learning and childcare.

Self-management

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ focusing: researching topics; identifying useful sources; self-study
- ◆ integrity: reflecting on placement experience; developing an awareness of inclusive practice; becoming aware of the values and principles of practice
- ◆ adapting: analysing own practice; being open to discussions; working with other professionals and families
- ◆ initiative: taking responsibility for own learning; working with others; evaluating own contributions in placement and group work

Social intelligence

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ communicating: collaborative working; sharing ideas and information; following instructions and research; reading into topics
- ◆ feeling: self-awareness in class and during group work; working with others; awareness of social conscience, developed through knowledge of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) capacities
- ◆ collaborating: working with other practitioners and families in a childhood practice setting and in group work
- ◆ leading: through own learning and children's learning

Innovation

This meta-skill includes:

- ◆ curiosity: observing a childhood practice setting and meeting individual children's needs, questions, and discussions in class and through own research
- ◆ creativity: developing an imaginative response to planning; facilitating play and creating ideas for resources to support play
- ◆ sense-making: research and analysis into topics; class and group discussions to examine understanding of topics
- ◆ critical thinking: analysis of information; evaluation of practice; identifying best practice and most effective methods of support

Literacies

Learners develop core skills in the following literacies:

Numeracy

Learners develop numeracy skills by:

- ◆ using relevant data and statistics in research and assessments
- ◆ managing time-sensitive tasks

Communication

Learners develop communication skills by:

- ◆ participating in group work in class
- ◆ completing written assignments, including the use of relevant sources of information
- ◆ working collaboratively with colleagues when on placement
- ◆ receiving and responding to feedback both in class and in a childhood practice setting

Digital

Learners develop digital skills and computer literacy by:

- ◆ using digital platforms to access information to support learning
- ◆ using electronic methods of accessing learning materials, and producing and submitting assessments
- ◆ using digital platforms to communicate with colleagues in a childhood practice setting, and to collaborate with other learners

Delivery of unit

Learners need workplace practice during the unit to enable them to link theory to practice. This can be through a placement or in the learner's place of employment.

You should identify common themes across other units in the group award and deliver them holistically.

You should deliver the unit alongside the relevant Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) playwork unit: Analyse and Support Self-Directed Play in Line with Current Playwork Theories at SCQF level 8 in the HNC in Childhood Practice framework, if being used as part of the group award. You can also deliver the unit as a stand-alone unit.

The notional design length for the unit is 80 hours, however the amount of time you allocate to each outcome is at your discretion. We suggest the following distribution of time, including assessment:

Outcome 1 — Examine a range of playwork theories
(20 hours)

Outcome 2 — Investigate the Playwork Principles and how they work in practice to support children and young people's play
(10 hours)

Outcome 3 — Examine the role of the practitioner in supporting play in a range of play spaces
(10 hours)

Outcome 4 — Create, or adapt, play environments to support a range of play opportunities for children and young people
(15 hours)

Outcome 5 — Investigate the benefits of play opportunities that offer an element of risk and/or challenge
(10 hours)

Outcome 6 — Evaluate reflective playwork practice
(15 hours)

Professional recognition

This is an optional unit for the HNC in Childhood Practice, which is a registrable qualification with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC).

Additional guidance

The guidance in this section is not mandatory.

This unit helps learners to gain a broad knowledge and understanding of play pedagogy and playwork approaches to supporting children and young people's play opportunities. Learners need workplace practice during delivery of this practice-based unit, to help them to link theory to their work practice. This can be through a placement or in their place of employment.

You should ask learners to use academic writing to demonstrate their understanding of contemporary playwork theories, alongside reflective writing that demonstrates that they are evaluating their practice and identifying links to relevant theoretical sources.

Learners' evidence can take the form of:

- ◆ theory reports, academic posters, recorded video clips or presentations to demonstrate knowledge
- ◆ reflective journals linked to work or placement practice
- ◆ analysis of relevant policy and legislation

Learners conclude the unit with an evaluative report that discusses playwork approaches to planning, supporting, and evaluating children's play, including effective methods to ensure children's participation. For learners who are studying the unit as part of the HNC in Childhood Practice, you should use an integrated approach, particularly around the reflective journals, which should be mapped to the relevant SVQ Playwork unit standards.

You should encourage learners to discuss and evaluate their understanding of the term 'play' and to identify the value of providing freely chosen, self-directed play opportunities for children and young people. This should be considered across a range of age groups and childhood practice settings, including nurseries, playgroups, schools, holiday clubs and after-school clubs.

The Playwork Principles are central to the unit, and you should encourage learners to develop a deep understanding of these and how they support playwork practice. Key theoretical areas to examine include:

- ◆ the play cycle
- ◆ intervention styles
- ◆ play types
- ◆ play spaces
- ◆ play deprivation
- ◆ the role of the practitioner in supporting play
- ◆ therapeutic playwork approaches
- ◆ reflective playwork practice
- ◆ current thinking around the benefits of outdoor play and opportunities for risk and challenge

Play spaces include:

- ◆ physical
- ◆ affective
- ◆ transient
- ◆ permanent
- ◆ cyber

Play types include:

- ◆ communicative
- ◆ creative
- ◆ deep
- ◆ dramatic
- ◆ exploratory
- ◆ fantasy
- ◆ imaginative
- ◆ locomotor
- ◆ mastery
- ◆ object
- ◆ role
- ◆ rough and tumble
- ◆ social
- ◆ socio-dramatic
- ◆ symbolic
- ◆ recapitulative

Useful sources at the time of writing include:

- ◆ Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group (2005), Playwork Principles
- ◆ Care Inspectorate (2015), My world outdoors
- ◆ Education Scotland (2020), Realising the ambition
- ◆ Scottish Government (2013), Play Strategy for Scotland
- ◆ Else, P. (2009), The Value of Play
- ◆ Play Wales (2002), The First Claim
- ◆ Hughes, B. (2012), Evolutionary Playwork
- ◆ Casey, T. (2005), Inclusive play — practical strategies for working with children aged 3–8
- ◆ Gill, T. (2007), No Fear — growing up in a risk averse society
- ◆ Kilvington, J. and Wood, A. (2010), Reflective Playwork — for all who work with children
- ◆ Tovey, H. (2007), Playing Outdoors: Spaces and Places, Risk and Challenge

Equality and inclusion

This unit is designed to be as fair and as accessible as possible with no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment.

You should take into account the needs of individual learners when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment methods or considering alternative evidence.

Guidance on assessment arrangements for disabled learners and/or those with additional support needs is available on the assessment arrangements web page:

www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements.

Information for learners

Playwork in Practice (SCQF level 7)

This information explains:

- ◆ what the unit is about
- ◆ what you should know or be able to do before you start
- ◆ what you need to do during the unit
- ◆ opportunities for further learning and employment

Unit information

This unit develops your knowledge and understanding of playwork practice to support children and young people. You explore a range of contemporary playwork theories and identify how these can be used in practice to support children and young people. You explore and analyse the Playwork Principles, and consider how these are used in practice to support children and young people's play.

You examine strategies to create and adapt play spaces to support children's play, ensuring that these offer a range of play types and opportunities. You consider how play spaces can be adapted to meet children's play needs. You explore intervention styles to identify a range of responses you can use in practice. Risk and challenge form a key part of this, as you develop your understanding of the importance of children experiencing elements of risk and challenge, and you can assess and manage risk appropriately.

You identify strategies for ensuring the meaningful participation of children and young people in decision making. You develop strategies for reflecting on and evaluating your own practice, identifying and acknowledging good practice and areas to develop.

Before starting the unit, you should have good communication skills, both written and oral. You can evidence these by achieving nationally recognised qualifications, for example Higher English or a qualification equivalent to SCQF level 6.

You can demonstrate the skills you need to carry out the unit through an employer's reference or the process of application and interview. In addition to this, you should have carried out some work experience, paid or voluntary, in a childhood practice setting.

You develop meta-skills, such as self-management, social intelligence and innovation, during your placement or in your work setting, and you reflect on your role as a practitioner.

The unit is an optional unit in the Higher National Certificate (HNC) in Childhood Practice. The HNC in Childhood Practice is a recognised qualification for registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) and employment in early years sectors.

On completion of the unit, you may have the opportunity to progress to further learning, including Higher National Diploma (HND) or degree-level courses.

Administrative information

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Superclass: GA

History of changes

Version	Description of change	Date

Note: please check [SQA's website](#) to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of this document.