



Skills for Work

Qualification Verification Summary Report 2023–24

Early Learning and Childcare

Verification group number: 416

Skills for Work Courses

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

C782 74 Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare National 4 (SCQF level 4) (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

C783 75 Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare National 5 (SCQF level 5) (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

In session 2023–24, external verifiers were pleased to find high-quality delivery of Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare courses. They identified that centres were offering effective learning experiences, continued support for learners, and robust quality assurance processes. External verification showed centres demonstrating innovation and creativity in learning and teaching, and flexibility and adaptability in course delivery while maintaining the Skills for Work ethos, with an emphasis on experiential learning.

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

External verifiers identified that the SQA centres' course arrangements, unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials were aligned with national standards. They were also reliable and accepted, and demonstrated a range of abilities within SCQF levels 4 and 5. Centres were using current SQA Assessment Support Pack (ASP) materials for units they delivered. These were administered reliably, and ensured a consistent approach to assessment, while ensuring robust coverage of evidence requirements in the unit specifications.

Evidence requirements

SQA external verifiers found that centre personnel, including assessors and internal verifiers, clearly comprehend the evidence criteria for the Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare courses and units. They also understand the requirements for different SCQF levels. External verifiers noted that centres were employing adaptable and learner-focused assessment methods, as encouraged by the unit evidence requirements. Evidence was collected through various means to evaluate learners' knowledge, understanding, and practical application across learning outcomes and performance criteria. This approach ensured that learners met the evidence requirements and showed achievement in all outcomes and performance criteria.

In the Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare units, assessment is largely process-oriented. External verifiers found evidence of various assessment methods, including observation, hands-on practice, collaborative work, peer review and personal reflection. The assessment approaches were deemed valid, and the assessment decisions were found to be reliable, consistent, and aligned with the unit evidence requirements.

Administration of assessments

In 2023–24, centres were conducting assessments for Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare National 4 and 5 appropriately. These assessments were at the correct SCQF level and adhered to the assessment principles of validity, reliability, equitability, fairness, and practicability. External verifiers found that most assessment decisions were valid, reliable, equitable, and fair. Assessors based their judgements on evidence presented by learners, unit requirements, and marking guidance from ASPs. They noted a consistent approach among assessors, with most maintaining detailed records and checklists of their assessment decisions.

Learning and teaching

A key feature of these Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare courses is the emphasis on experiential learning, which involves learning through practical

experience and reflecting on that experience. External verifiers identified that teaching and learning programmes incorporated various methods to achieve this. External verifiers were pleased to find that many centres have implemented various innovative approaches to enhance the learning experience, such as visits to local nurseries and primary schools, enabling learners to have hands-on interactions with children; inviting guest speakers to discuss their roles and responsibilities, such as midwives, playworkers, and active schools coordinators, which provides insights into vital roles in childcare and related fields; interviews with teachers and parents about childcare choices and family support, offering balanced views on different childcare provisions. They were also pleased to see the integration of outdoor learning through play sessions, encouraging creativity and imagination (for example, nature item storytelling activities); introduction of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its application to Play in Early Learning and Childcare, and in some cases the implementation of forest kindergarten sessions to engage learners with diverse play and learning opportunities.

Overall assessment

Most assessors provided assessment feedback to learners that was supportive and aligned with the learners' development while remaining focused on the assessment content. This feedback was generally clear, accurate, and systematically administered. It was positive, supportive, and constructive, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement. Many used this feedback to provide advice and opportunities for learners to identify their next learning steps.

External verifiers found that the approaches to assessment are valid, and the assessment judgements are reliable, consistent, and in line with the evidence requirements in the units. The overall implementation of the Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare courses demonstrates a commitment to quality education and fair assessment practices.

Verification

All centres had an internal verification policy, which most assessors and internal verifiers implemented effectively. They maintained quality assurance documentation for Skills for Work, including guidance on internal verification processes and practices. Most centres used standardised documentation based on the SQA Internal Verification Toolkit.

External verifiers found documented evidence of prior, interim, and post verification, ensuring a robust approach to quality assurance. There was also evidence of standardisation meetings and action logs recording discussions between assessors and internal verifiers. These provided clear insight into ongoing decisions and rationales for unit delivery, learning and teaching approaches, and assessment administration.

Areas of good practice reported in 2023–24

In session 2023–24, external verifiers identified many areas of good practice across centres delivering Skills for Work: Early Learning and Childcare at SCQF levels 4 and 5. Some centres were large colleges, delivering across a variety of courses, and others were small rural high schools with only a small number of learners undertaking the course. However, the quality of learning and teaching, the robustness of assessment and verification, and the commitment of staff teams can only be commended. Here is a summary of the areas of good practice identified.

- **Skills for Work ethos:** The courses were well-planned and creatively delivered, with units showing a depth of knowledge across all outcomes, strong emphasis on experiential learning with learners enthusiastic about their learning, especially placement opportunities. It was clear that assessors were creating interesting, fun, and engaging learning experiences, and using varied practical activities to keep learners motivated and interested.
- **Industry links:** Professionals from play, education and health spoke to learners, and there were partnerships with local primary schools and nurseries for placements, as well as connections with local organisations, such as The Prince's Trust and local colleges. Learners gained practical experience, and understanding of workplace environments.
- **Learning environments:** Many had dedicated classroom spaces, some had the creche set up as a 'mock nursery', displays of learners' work, opportunities for personalisation and choice in assessments, and mix of group and individual activities to develop various skills.
- **Curriculum integration:** Many units are delivered across the academic year, not as a discrete unit. This enables learners to build on knowledge and skills from other units and offers a genuine embedding of Skills for Work through a creative portfolio approach.
- **Personalisation and choice:** Assessors offered opportunities for personalised learning, where learners could choose assessment methods and play experiences. This flexibility catered to different learning styles and interests.
- **Facilitating peer interaction:** Many assessors encouraged and supported peer discussions and peer evaluations. This approach enhanced collaborative learning and communication skills.
- **Staff and teaching approach:** External verification showed motivated and enthusiastic teams, supportive and encouraging learning environments, and emphasis on critical thinking, independence, and responsibility. Centres also invited external speakers (such as Scottish Social Services Council, early years practitioners, playworkers, healthcare professionals).

External verifiers found that outcomes for learners included a strong knowledge acquisition, and learning was evident. Learners appreciated the non-traditional

learning environment, experiential learning, and identified the positive impact on their own learning engagement, and the development of self-confidence. Staff focus on developing knowledge, skills, confidence, and self-assurance provides a comprehensive approach which prepares learners well for future careers in early learning and childcare.

Specific areas for improvement reported in 2023–24

Internal verification

In some centres, external verifiers encourage the staff to follow all stages of their internal verification policy, either internally or with other centres delivering the course. Staff with identifiable roles in the centre's Internal Verification Policy must ensure that internal verification is carried out across the whole verification cycle, according to the policy, to ensure the best outcomes.

Centres are advised to ensure all required internal verification documentation is completed and available for future verification events.

It is recommended that centres send any centre-devised assessments to SQA for prior verification. A centre guide and the form are available on [SQA's website](#).

Play in Early Learning and Childcare

External verifiers encourage centres to provide learners with opportunities to experience play with natural material and if possible, let them experience outdoor play in the natural world in line with current early learning pedagogy. It would be beneficial to allow time for learners to explore and develop these practical play skills, and contextualise knowledge and understanding gained.

To extend good play practice in a more holistic manner, centres should keep the additional themes as a formative piece to strengthen learning. Examples of additional themes include wellbeing indicators linked to the play experiences, employability skills used in the play experiences, and so on. These are best suited to run alongside the play plans. It is suggested that centres use SQA documentation in summative assessments, rather than creating a centre version; this helps with standardisation.

Centres should also make sure to use the correct terminology for the Play in Early Learning and Childcare units with regards to the seven types of play and the age ranges for the National 4 and 5 units, as specified in the unit specification, ASP and the teaching and learning resource.

Development and Wellbeing of Children and Young People

Learners 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 learner'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 assessment is a report which explains the learner's understanding of the development and wellbeing of children and young people. Centres are advised that the summative report should take the form of a short-written report, verbal report, short presentation or group discussion, as outlined in the evidence requirements and ASP.

A list of sources of information should be presented with the summative report.

Evidence to be retained for external verification is the assessor checklist and the summative report. The folio is not required as evidence for external verification; rather, it is used as a resource for the learner.

Working in Early Learning and Childcare

External verifiers advise centres to ensure that sources of information used relate to Scotland, including job titles, qualification requirements, and so on. Centres should also suggest relevant sources for professional roles, such as the Scottish Social Services Council, and Skills Development Scotland: My World of Work.