

# Early Years Qualification Guide



The Open  
University

Foundation Degree in Early Years  
Diploma of Higher Education in Childhood Practice (Scotland)  
Certificate in Early Years Practice

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# 1 Introduction

This section provides information on:

- the content of this guide
- the vocational focus and professional relevance of the Early Years (EY) qualifications
- distance learning and its appropriateness for the EY qualifications
- the requirements of the EY qualifications
- what we mean by an EY setting
- the recommended route through the Foundation Degree.

Welcome to The Open University's Early Years Qualifications Guide. We hope that you find your study enjoyable and rewarding. This guide provides an introduction to the content and structure of the Foundation Degree in Early Years (FDEY) (G01) – known in Scotland as the Diploma of Higher Education in Childhood Practice\* (DipHE CP) (E37). It also includes information on the Certificate in Early Years Practice (C37), which is an initial qualification that sits within the Foundation Degree and entails 60 credits of study.

This guide provides a range of information relating to the FDEY.

**Section 1** discusses some general matters relating to the FDEY programme, including its vocational relevance, the requisites of the programme, what an early years setting is, and the structure and nature of the degree.

**Section 2** offers some general advice on how to study for the FDEY – for example, how you might organise your work – and outlines the support available.

**Section 3** outlines the structure and purpose of the FDEY, including stipulations regarding progression through the qualification and requirements for gaining credit for experiential learning or learning undertaken elsewhere.

As the Foundation Degree requires you to draw and critically reflect on your work with young children and their families, **Section 4** provides some practical advice and guidance on the context of and requirements for work-based learning.

**Section 5** gives information on linking the degree to professional development and the Careers Advisory Service.

**Section 6** provides brief descriptions of each FDEY module.

**Section 7** contains information on the study materials and online resources available to you as a student.

**Section 8** discusses the tuition which will be provided by your AL and the form assessment will take.

**Section 9** provides some suggestions for additional reading and resources which may help you in your studies.

The guide should be read in conjunction with other information available to you, either in your mailing or through The Open University (OU) website. For example, you should also read the regulations governing the FDEY or

the Certificate (whichever you are studying). Go to the prospectus section of the website [www3.open.ac.uk/study](http://www3.open.ac.uk/study); select 'Childhood and Youth', and then either the Foundation Degree in 'Early Years' or the Certificate in 'Early Years Practice'. The regulations for both qualifications can be found here.

\*Note that the FDEY and DipHE CP are, in essence, the same qualification: the FDEY is the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) Sector-Endorsed Early Years Foundation Degree for students in England, Wales and Northern Ireland; and the DipHE CP is the equivalent study programme for students in Scotland. From this point forward, we therefore generally refer to FDEY and DipHE CP as just 'FDEY', 'the Foundation Degree', or 'the degree', for simplicity's sake. There are a few small matters to note regarding the FDEY and DipHE CP; these are outlined in subsection 1.1.

## 1.1 Vocational focus

The FDEY is a vocationally focused higher education (HE) qualification. It is recognised by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) as a Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degree, which means that it meets all of the Qualifications Assurance Agency for Higher Education benchmarking statements for Foundation Degrees (QAA, 2004, 2010). It is also tailored to the specific needs of the early years sector and is aligned to *The Common Core of Skills and Knowledge* (CWDC, 2010) for practitioners working across the children's workforce. The OU's FDEY encompasses the Certificate in Early Years Practice, which is included in the CWDC's Qualifications list of those qualifications delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage as an acceptable course at Level 4 (CWDC, 2011a). The list provides information on qualifications that OFSTED accept for regulatory purposes and guidance on suitable job roles for those who have achieved different qualifications. The Certificate in Early Years Practice has qualified status for classroom assistants in Northern Ireland. In Scotland, the Certificate is recognised for registration at Support Worker Level for staff in day care of children services settings. In Wales, the Certificate is recognised as a positive asset for those working in early years and childcare settings.

As previously stated, the FDEY is Sector-Endorsed and recognised by the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC). Foundation degrees are Level 5 qualifications. The CWDC website states:

A foundation degree at Level 5 in early years or playwork will be considered full and relevant for the purposes of registration and regulation. This means that anyone holding this qualification can count in the qualified ratio of staff at Level 3.

(CWDC, 2011b)

In Scotland, the FDEY is offered as the Diploma of Higher Education in Childhood Practice (DipHE CP). The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) recognises the OU FDEY /DipHE CP as an appropriate qualification for registration for support workers and practitioners in day care of children

services settings (for further information go to the SSSC website; then select ‘All about Registration’).

Holders of the FDEY are permitted to use the letters ‘FD (Open)’ after their name. Holders of the DipHE CP are permitted to use the letters ‘DipHE (Open)’ after their name.

As mentioned above, there are a few small matters to note regarding the FDEY and DipHE CP.

Both the FDEY and DipHE CP provide a basis for further academic study at a higher level. Students can progress either to the BA Early Years (300 credits) or the BA (Hons) Early Years (360 credits). See the ‘Study at the OU’ web pages for more details (follow the link from StudentHome).

In England, the FDEY offers direct progression to the ‘Undergraduate Practitioner Pathway’ to Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) (see [www.open.ac.uk/cys/p3\\_4.shtml](http://www.open.ac.uk/cys/p3_4.shtml)). EYPS is a professionally-recognised status awarded to those who can demonstrate that they meet a set of national, graduate-level EYP Standards. Students intending to progress to EYPS will need to have GCSE passes in English and Mathematics on entry to the pathway. Further information can be found on the FDEY website.

For those studying the **DipHE in CP in Scotland** and planning to work towards the BA (Hons) Early Years, or transferring to the BA Childhood Practice, the recommended SCQF Level 8/9 (OU Level 2) option module is K218 *Working with children, young people and families* as this matches most closely the Standard for Childhood Practice.

Further details of the degree structure, module levels, the credit point system and progression opportunities can be found in the ‘Study at the OU’ web pages (via StudentHome).

## 1.2 The distance learning route

The FDEY is a foundation degree delivered by distance learning. It provides a Supported Open Learning (SOL) route to this qualification in order to meet the needs of a wide variety of experienced practitioners working directly with young children in a range of early years settings. The degree is designed to fit in with your work commitments, whether you are working with young children on a full- or part-time basis, in a paid or unpaid capacity.

The FDEY includes a specialist vocational component which is underpinned by broad-based academic learning. It is suitable for practitioners working directly with children in a range of early years settings and for teaching assistants specialising in early years. It will provide the knowledge and skills needed for working with young children (birth to seven years) in these settings, and will prepare students to engage in further study, enquiry and practice in which a knowledge of early years is required. We anticipate that our students will come from a variety of early years backgrounds. For example, they might work in a home-based setting as a childminder or nanny, or in a group setting such as a playgroup, day nursery, nursery school or children’s centre, or in a school-based or extended school setting.

## 1.3 Requirements of the FDEY

The FDEY aims to be inclusive to a wide audience of practitioners working with young children. The qualification has three specific requirements:

Before registering for the OU Level 1 module E100 *The early years: developing practice* you must have at least six month's full-time or one year's part-time experience of working directly with young children in an appropriate setting (in an employed or voluntary capacity).

Before registering for the OU Level 1 work-based learning module E105 *Professional practice in the early years* you must have gained at least two years' experience of working directly with young children in an appropriate setting (in an employed or voluntary capacity).

Your current employer will have confirmed this experience via the appropriate agreement form submitted at registration for each module. If you think you may have difficulties meeting this requirement, you should contact a regional adviser as soon as possible.

### Other pre-requisites

You will need to provide proof that you are working directly with groups of young children aged from birth to seven years in an early years setting for at least one day a week (minimum five hours) **throughout** the FDEY programme.

Note: If you are not working in the United Kingdom you must be following an English early years curriculum which is delivered in English. Your employer is asked to verify this information.

There is no academic entry requirement for the programme. However, most students undertaking Early Years Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degrees are qualified on entry to NQF Level 3 or equivalent.

## 1.4 The early years setting

What do we mean by an 'early years setting'? Examples include:

- home-based
- playgroups
- children's centres
- after-school clubs
- early years units in schools
- nursery classes/schools
- day nurseries.

Whichever setting you work in, be it paid or unpaid work with young children, your own thinking and practical experience are what matters. Both are invaluable to the learning process. Further information on the role that the workplace plays in your studies can be found in Section 4.

In studying the FDEY, you will develop your knowledge and understanding of the various issues and concepts in the field of work with young children.

You will also have the opportunity to develop key workplace skills, such as information and communication technology (ICT), literacy and problem-solving. Throughout the FDEY emphasis is also placed on your development as a reflective practitioner.

## 1.5 Composition of the FDEY

The FDEY is made up of individual modules, each of which draws on different core topic areas relating to professional practice with young children. In studying the modules, you will have the opportunity to show that you meet a number of core occupational and professional standards which are highly relevant to your professional development.

You must follow a prescribed route through the FDEY, beginning with the OU Level 1 (SCQF Level 7) E100 *The early years: developing practice*. E210 *Extending professional practice in the early years* should be the last module that you study. Further information about progression through the degree can be found in subsection 3.3.

Note that credit can be given for relevant prior learning or experience; it is therefore possible for some students to join the Foundation Degree at a different entry point. Further information on accrediting prior learning and experience can be found in subsection 3.4.

## 2 Studying with The Open University

This section provides information on:

- the range of study support available to you
- Supported Open Learning (SOL)
- the time required to study the modules
- where to begin your studies
- where and how to record your learning.

### 2.1 Study support

Studying the FDEY may present you with fresh challenges. Generally, most people preparing to study the degree are new to academic study at a higher level or have been away from study for some time. Whether you have had recent experience of academic study or not, you may be unfamiliar with the distinctive methods used by the OU. If your only previous experience of academic study was at school and perhaps college, it is likely that you will need to take a little time to learn what studying at this level involves and adjust your everyday routine to fit study in.

You can be assured that the OU is the leading provider of distance learning. Our materials have been adapted and refined over forty years to meet the specific needs of distance learning students. In addition to traditional approaches to learning, we provide support through the latest online methods including through a personalised ‘virtual learning environment’ (VLE) provided via the OU ‘StudentHome’ web page. You will also, of course, learn from your ALs, colleagues, your student peers and yourself.

When you register for a module, a range of useful guidance on how to approach your studies becomes available to you through the StudentHome web page. The links within the ‘Study support’ section of the website provide access to help of various kinds, such as strategies to assist you in planning your studies and developing your study skills, and the *OU Computing Guide* which introduces the OU’s online systems. These resources are intended to support your learning so that you grow both in confidence and in your personal and career development as you progress through the Foundation Degree.

Don’t forget that your AL (often referred to as your ‘tutor’) and staff at your local regional centre are on hand to help you get started; contact them for advice on anything which is worrying you about your studies. They may suggest undertaking some preparatory work before starting your studies or offer additional study support.

### 2.2 Supported Open Learning

Even if you have recently been involved in aspects of professional development, the demands of the FDEY will require that you engage with several practical activities and reflect on your practice. If you have any doubts about your ability to carry out these practical activities – for example,

if you have concerns about the suitability of your workplace – please contact staff at your local regional centre in the first instance.

The overall learning strategy of the OU is to provide individualised support to students through a system by which 200,000 students are taught each year. Throughout your studies, support will never be far away. The OU's SOL approach is designed to support all levels of students, from those returning to study after a substantial break, to those more familiar with continuing professional development. Support is provided through a blend of methods including: structured learning texts; up-to-date online resources; audio and video; face-to-face, online and telephone tutoring; a dedicated VLE including online discussion forums; and work-based learning. SOL is a methodology based on a sophisticated and highly-successful infrastructure that has been developed and improved continuously over forty years.

## 2.3 Organising your time

As a distance learner, it is vital to carefully manage the time that you have available to study. You will need to form the habit of regular study, so start thinking now about how best to create both the time and the appropriate conditions to enable you to study on a regular basis. You will also need to consider where you will study: for example, do you have a suitable place at home and/or at work where you can study uninterrupted and where there is access to a computer? This may require some careful thought, planning and discussion.

The amount of study time required by a module depends on the number of credits the module is worth. All modules within the FDEY are worth 60 credits. This represents 600 study hours over a nine-month period and would mean that you should aim to study for around 14–18 hours per week. Do bear in mind that for the work-based learning modules, this includes activities you undertake in your workplace (such as face-to-face contact with groups of young children and your preparations).

## 2.4 Where to start your studies

An integral feature of the FDEY is putting theory into practice in your workplace and critically reflecting on your work and interactions with young children. It is crucial that you organise yourself from the start and develop realistic strategies for balancing your priorities so that time pressures can be managed.

During your first two weeks of study, you should follow the guidance given in the module Chair letter or the Study Guide provided in your materials.

Your initial study tasks will vary according to the module you are studying but will include the following:

Familiarise yourself with the module content, structure and schedule.

Gain access to the VLE via the StudentHome. Explore the module website – this will be central to your learning as it hosts a variety of study resources and the online discussion forums. **Note that you are required to use the module websites to access study resources and facilities for all modules of the FDEY.**

### **Online discussion forums**

For E100, accessing and participating in the online discussion forums is optional. You are, however, strongly encouraged to take part in these as they will support and extend your learning experience and enhance your ICT skills.

For E105 and E210, participation in your online tutor group discussion forum is compulsory.

Find your online study planner, Study Guide and Assessment Guide (available through the module website). Look at the planner and note the deadlines for assignments and the examinable component. Download the Study Guide and Assessment Guide and familiarise yourself with the content.

## **2.5 Organising/recording your learning**

During the two work-based learning modules (E105 and E210), you will develop an ePortfolio, a reflective learning journal and a Practice Evidence File (PEF). Each of these has a different role in your studies; together they provide a central repository of the materials that you will produce as you progress through the modules and complete the qualification. You will find them particularly useful when you come to write your assignments and need to refer back to the materials or your earlier work.

The role of:

your **learning journal** is to be a record of your reflections and notes from both your module activities and day-to-day practice.

your **ePortfolio** is to help you to store and organise material relating to your learning and practice.

your **PEF** is to be a place to keep your anonymised evidence relating to the Professional Practice (PP) learning outcomes, together with the Recording Forms (required for the work-based learning modules).

Evidence might include materials that you produce as part of your work, such as plans for sessions with young children or resources you use with them, or feedback or input from participants and colleagues.

Guidance on setting up and keeping a PEF is provided in each work-based learning module.

## 3 Structure and purpose of the FDEY

This section provides information on:

- the form and aims of the FDEY
- the modular structure of the FDEY
- stipulations regarding progression through the FDEY
- how it may be possible to gain credit for previous learning and experience.

### 3.1 Structure

The FDEY has a modular structure and sits within a hierarchy of qualifications. Students who successfully complete E100 *The early years: developing practice* (60 credits) will be eligible for the Certificate in Early Years Practice, providing an externally-recognised HE qualification in the UK at Level 4 (see subsection 1.1). The FDEY entails 240 credits of study and provides a recognised Sector-Endorsed HE qualification at Level 5. The FDEY structure is discussed further below (subsection 3.3).

We hope that you will continue your studies by completing further modules which lead to the attainment of either:

- the OU Bachelor of Arts Early Years unclassified degree (BA Early Years) which provides the graduate level requirement for entry to the EYPS pathway (Note: entrants to EYPS are also required to have GCSE passes in English and Mathematics)
- the OU Bachelor of Arts Early Years with Honours (BA (Hons) Early Years).

A diagram showing the structure of the Early Years Qualifications is provided as an appendix.

### 3.2 Purpose

The FDEY has been developed in the context of the National Childcare Strategy and the Children's Workforce Strategy. Both strategies identified concerns regarding the recruitment, training and retention of early years workers and the need to strengthen multi-agency and interdisciplinary working. The purpose of the overall qualification is to, through a series of carefully structured learning opportunities, enable you to:

- become a senior practitioner and gain a Level 5 qualification
- become qualified in the sector
- achieve an academic qualification at certificate, foundation or honours degree level by progressing through a range of accredited modules.

The degree will develop your professional understanding so that you can meet the learning outcomes for the Sector-Endorsed FDEY. As indicated in the introduction to this guide (Section 1), the degree will help you to develop a combination of knowledge-based, work-specific and key skills. Learning outcomes for each module in the degree have been mapped against

the areas of *The Common Core of Knowledge and Skills* (CWDC, 2010) and meet the specified criteria for the CWDC Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degree in Early Years.

### 3.3 FDEY modules

The OU FDEY combines knowledge-based and work-based learning.

- Level 1 comprises one core vocationally-related module (E100) and one work-based learning module (E105).
- Level 2 comprises one option module and one work-based learning module (E210).

The option modules available at Level 2 provide additional underpinning knowledge for workplace activity. Some options – U212, ED209, K218, E214 – do not require students to be employed in or have access to an early years setting. However, work-based learning modules (including the optional module E207) **do** require students to be employed in an early years setting (in a paid or unpaid capacity) so they can carry out activities in the workplace. New knowledge is introduced in these modules which draws on previous study and your practice with young children.

Table 1 is a suggested order of progression through the FDEY for those starting in 2011. Progression is linked to provide a ladder of learning and development.

Table 1 Recommended study route through the FDEY for 2011

Order of study	Module code and title	Start date (annually)	Type of module
1	E100 <i>The early years: developing practice</i>	October	Vocationally-related
2	E105 <i>Professional practice in the early years</i>	October	Work-based learning
3	Choose one from the following:		
	ED209 <i>Child development</i>	February	Option module
	U212 <i>Childhood</i>	January	
	E214 <i>Equality, participation and inclusion: learning from each other</i>	February	
	K218 <i>Working with children, young people and families</i>	February	
	E207 <i>Subject knowledge and professional practice in primary schools</i>	February and October	
4	E210 <i>Extending professional practice in the early years</i>	October	Work-based learning

Particular points to note are that:

- all modules are worth 60 credits and require 600 hours of study time.
- you are required to successfully complete E100 before studying the first work-based learning module (E105)
- the OU Level 2 option module may be taken at the same time as completing E105 or studying E210, but it is not recommended.

U212 *Childhood* is compulsory if you wish to progress to the BA (Hons) Degree in Childhood and Youth Studies. It is **not** compulsory if you wish to progress to the BA Early Years.

For those studying the DipHE in CP in Scotland and planning to work towards the OU BA (Hons) Early Years, or transferring to a BA Childhood Practice, K218 is the recommended option module as this matches most closely the Standard for Childhood Practice.

Students selecting the optional module E207 *Subject knowledge and professional practice in primary schools* must be working with groups of children aged 3–7 years

E210 *Extending personal professional development* is designed to be the final module you study as part of the FDEY.

Details of the content and learning outcomes of individual modules are provided in Section 6.

### 3.4 Credit for prior qualifications and experience (APCL/APEL)

The University will award the FDEY (or the equivalent study programme in Scotland – the DipHE CP), if you have attained 240 credits from studying the modules listed in Table 1 (above). You may also qualify for the qualification of Foundation Degree or the Diploma if, within the 240 credits, you have had credit awarded for your prior qualifications and experience. You can gain this either through:

*Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL).* The APCL route entails your credit being transferred from another learning provider. You will be obliged to submit a claim (including tangible evidence – for example, copies of certificates or transcripts) of a similar level of attainment in a comparable programme of study in an equivalent institutional setting. You will need to ensure that the learning outcomes from your previous study match the outcomes of the relevant modules in the FDEY.

*Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).* The APEL route is for those who have significant experience in their career to date. You will be asked to demonstrate that your experiential learning is equivalent to learning that would normally be included in a module by providing evidence through assessments that you can meet the module learning outcomes. The APEL route is offered as the module E2L100 *The early years: developing practice*.

## 4 Work-based learning: E105 and E210

This section provides information on:

- the purpose of work-based learning
- what the reflective practitioner approach entails
- your role and the work context
- the requirements of the work-based learning modules.

### 4.1 Integrating theory and practice

The particular role of the two work-based learning modules (E105 and E210) in the FDEY is to focus on the integration of theory and practice. The weighting given to setting-based learning in the degree (50 per cent) reflects the importance placed on achieving such integration. In these modules you will be building on the knowledge and understanding that you have gained from earlier study and extending it.

This will be done in several ways. You will be introduced to new materials, such as extended case studies and extracts from practice documents, and consider your practice in the light of your own practice-based investigations and research. Discussion with colleagues and other professional practitioners (in your setting or through the online discussion forums) is required for both work-based learning modules. You will also keep a reflective journal that records the analysis of your professional practice and provides confirmed evidence of the development of your knowledge and expertise in working effectively with young children, parents, colleagues and other professionals.

### 4.2 Developing a 'reflective practitioner' approach

We use the term 'work with' to describe the process of relating your knowledge and understanding to everyday practice with children and adults. This signals an active approach that recognises that such knowledge can rarely be applied to real situations of work with young children in an easy and straightforward way. The learning process is therefore one that seeks to develop you as a 'reflective practitioner'. Here practitioners attend to the unique factors of the situation they are working with, and draw creatively on a repertoire of responses. The work-based learning modules will help you to develop a questioning approach to practice which will enable you to continue to improve the quality of your work with young children. You will also be using several frameworks introduced by the module to examine your practice, with particular emphasis placed on ethical issues and examining your own values.

The module materials will take you through a series of learning activities to help you to examine your own practice. You will link theory with practice in three broad stages: (1) planning and implementing work with young children, (2) reflecting on the outcomes, and (3) considering the implications for future practice. As you progress through the modules you will develop a deeper approach to reflecting on and investigating your practice.

## 4.3 Your role and the work context

### 4.3.1 Your role with young children

When you register for E105 you should already be an experienced practitioner with at least two years' experience. You should also be working directly with young children aged from birth to seven years (see subsection 1.3; also subsection 1.4 for examples).

### 4.3.2 The work context and your study

Throughout the FDEY, you will need to be working in an early years setting, in either a paid or unpaid role. Your work must include a minimum of five hours direct face-to-face work with groups of young children in the setting per week. A 60-credit module will require 600 hours of study over a nine-month period (e.g. October to June), of which 450 hours will be 'directed study'. Directed study includes all the time in which you are engaged in the learning activities that you have been asked to do – for example, in the module materials, in tutorials and for assessment. There will be reading and activities to do at home and other activities to plan and carry out in the workplace.

## 4.4 Specific requirements of work-based learning

Before registering for E105 and E210 (and the initial vocationally-related module E100) you must have prior experience of working directly with children in an appropriate early years setting (see Section 1.3 and subsection 4.3.1). You will also need the agreement of your employer to undertake learning activities in your setting, such as scrutinising policy and curriculum documents, writing assignments that draw on your practice and gathering evidence in your setting. The pre-registration documents for these modules include a Permission Agreement Form, which must be signed by your employer to confirm your prior work experience and their agreement for you to carry out work-based activities in the setting during the module. If you work as a self-employed practitioner (which you may do, for example, if you own and run your own childcare business or if you are a childminder), you should complete this form yourself. Permission Agreement Forms can be downloaded from the 'Childhood and Youth at the OU' web pages ([www.open.ac.uk/cys/p3\\_4.shtml](http://www.open.ac.uk/cys/p3_4.shtml)).

In undertaking the FDEY, you will need criminal records clearance for the setting (or the equivalent for country you work in) which is appropriate and current (usually an enhanced certificate). Confirmation of this clearance is requested through the Permission Agreement Form. It is the responsibility of your setting (i.e. your employer) to have criminal records clearance in place and public liability insurance that covers your role, as well as policies on equal opportunities, inclusion, child protection and health and safety which comply with relevant legislation. It is also the responsibility of your setting to meet relevant employment and equality legislation, including the Disability Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Amendment Act. If you are self-employed practitioner, as an 'employer' yourself you must comply with the same conditions.

Note: If you change employer at any time during study of the work-based learning modules you must notify the University by following the instructions on the module website under the heading Quality Assurance

E105 and E210 require you to identify a 'confirmer' in your workplace from each setting for which you are submitting evidence. The confirmer will confirm that evidence discussed in your assignments exists and derives from your own practice, and will sign the Agreement with Confirmer Form. The pre-registration packs for E105 and E210 contain more information about the forms which will need to be completed, along with guidance on who may sign them for you. Forms and guidance are also available under the 'Childhood and Youth at the OU' web pages ([www.open.ac.uk/cys/p3\\_4.shtml](http://www.open.ac.uk/cys/p3_4.shtml)).

A comprehensive handbook which provides more information on work-based learning is available when you begin E105. The Work-based Learning Handbook has been written as a briefing document specifically for employers or organisations that are supporting students on these modules. As a student, you should share and discuss the document with your employer. It is important to do this so that employers or organisations are aware of and can agree to provide the support you will need throughout your studies. A printed copy of the handbook will be sent to you as part of the mailing for E105; it is also hosted on the E105 and E210 websites (follow the links to 'Module resources' from your StudentHome web page).

### **Safeguarding**

Safeguarding and child protection is the responsibility of everybody. All students on the FD/DipHE are working directly with children. Therefore, if a concern is raised, either in discussion or within an assignment, which suggests a concern about a student failing to promote safe working practice, or a concern relating to practice within a student's setting, the Open University has a responsibility to address such concerns. Specific guidance, policy and procedures have been put in place to deal with such issues and can be found on the OU's 'Safeguarding' web pages (<http://www.open.ac.uk/studentsservices/safeguarding>).

## 5 Professional and career development

This section provides information on:

- the role of the FDEY in providing professional development
- your professional development needs
- the OU Careers Advisory Service.

### 5.1 The professional development approach

The FDEY has been designed to take you through a process of initial professional development which will ultimately lead to the status of senior practitioner and the qualification of the Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degree in Early Years. This qualification offers direct entry to the Undergraduate Practitioner Pathway (UPP) to Early Years Professional Status (EYPS), through which you will be able to develop your qualification further to bachelors degree level (see subsection 3.1).

The process of initial professional development involves gaining the knowledge and understanding to be able to reflect on and review your practice. This is achieved through the different learning opportunities offered throughout the degree, which will holistically support your professional development.

As you progress through the modules, you will develop knowledge and skills related to working with young children and the wider children's workforce. You will also develop your key skills – particularly those related to study and ICT.

### 5.2 Professional development needs

You will be asked to identify your professional development needs at different points in the programme. The requirement to meet the learning outcomes will inform this self-development analysis. In key assignments for each professional module (E100, E105 and E210), you will be required to demonstrate how these needs might be met. This may be through trying out new work with young children, or through the formal and informal development opportunities offered by your setting and in the children's workforce more generally. In each work-based module this will take the form of a Professional Development Plan (PDP).

By progressing through the modules, you will increasingly be networking with fellow professionals and developing your awareness of the key debates and changes in the sector. As you engage in each module, you will be working with a group of fellow students who will bring their own examples and perspectives to discussions in your tutorial groups, whether they are face-to-face or online. Your AL will also provide a wealth of experience from the field through case studies and additional materials or exercises used in tutorials. You will be encouraged to access and use a range of professional resources, such as journals and websites, to extend your understanding beyond each module. Your awareness of the early years

sector, and your sense of belonging to it, will expand as you engage in the informed discussions that support the degree.

## 5.3 The OU Careers Advisory Service

The OU Careers Advisory Service can help you to:

- plan, develop or change your career
- choose a module to match your career plans
- complete application forms or CVs
- prepare for interviews
- look for employment, nationally or locally
- consider further study or professional training.

Take a look at the OU's Careers Advisory Service website ([www.open.ac.uk/careers](http://www.open.ac.uk/careers)) or contact your regional centre for more information. You may find the 'OU study and your career' section of the Careers Advisory Service website a useful resource. This web area provides information on selecting an appropriate subject to study, popular careers areas and choosing a qualification to complement your career.

## 6 Module descriptions

Full and regularly updated descriptions of all the modules outlined in this section can be found in the 'Study at the OU' web pages (via StudentHome).

## 7 Study materials and online resources

This section provides information on:

- the printed study materials you will be sent in your mailing
- the online resources which you will need to access for your studies.

Each FDEY module is supported by printed materials sent to you in your mailing and the resources provided through the module website. You will also have access to the FDEY website, a programme-wide resource which hosts FDEY news and an online discussion forum.

### 7.1 Materials you will receive in your mailing

You will be supplied with printed module materials to help you study each module in the programme. Further to this, video, audio, CD-ROM, DVD and co-published readers are provided in your module pack which also support your learning.

#### 7.1.1 Module Guide

All modules have a separate Guide which provides an overview of the programme of study, information relating to the teaching and assessment strategy, and general information on student support. The Module Guide will also be available through the module website.

#### 7.1.2 Study Guide

Each module has a Study Guide (presented as books) which will be central to your study for the module. The Study Guide contains the ‘study topics’ or ‘blocks’ which develop your knowledge and understanding of a topic, introduce a number of new themes and ideas, and contain activities which encourage you to think through and apply your learning. For work-based learning modules, the activities provide an additional ‘scaffold’ to help you to engage in practice. The activities will help you to undertake the assignments directly related to a particular aspect of your work.

#### 7.1.3 Assessment Guide

The Assessment Guide explains the types of assessment that you will be required to undertake for the module – for example, the tutor-marked assignments (TMAs) and the end-of-module assessment (EMA). For E105 and E210, the Assessment Guide includes an explanation of the role of the Agreement Forms and the evidence Recording Forms. The Assessment Guide will also be available through the module website.

### 7.2 Online resources

You will also learn from resources available through your own personalised ‘virtual learning environment’ (VLE) provided via the OU ‘StudentHome’ web page. To access the StudentHome web page, you will need to log in to

www.open.ac.uk using your OU computer username (OUCU) and password which is sent to you at the start of each module. Your VLE is a gateway providing links to policy and guidance documents, a range of facilities such as the OU Library and the Careers Advisory Service, as well as the module website(s) applicable to your study.

### 7.2.1 Information and communications technology

As you work through the FDEY, you will develop information and communication technology (ICT) skills which will support your learning and enhance children's development and learning. The VLE is a core resource through which you will learn. The printed materials for each module provide guidance on how to begin working with and accessing material available through the StudentHome.

### 7.2.2 Module websites

Each module in the FDEY has its own website. The website for the module you are studying at a particular time can be accessed via the StudentHome web page. Module websites host a set of resources which are specific to the module, including:

- your study planner, which shows you week-by-week how the module is structured and when your TMAs/EMA are due, and hosts resources and links needed for each study week
- online discussion forums where you can 'meet' your fellow students and your tutor
- a range of information and guidance, such as your module and assessment guides
- news items relating to your module
- a link to the online TMA/EMA service through which you will need to submit your assignments
- links to various other facilities available to you, such as the OU Library website and the *OU Computing Guide*.

The online discussion forums provide students with an opportunity to share their perspectives on practice and learning. Given that you are studying via distance learning and therefore have limited opportunities to meet ALs and fellow students face-to-face, the discussion forums constitute an important part of learning. The forums allow you to 'chat' and learn with other students on the same module as well as your AL on a one-to-one basis. Note that some modules **require** students to contribute to the tutor group forums and other online discussion forums for assessment purposes.

### 7.2.3 FDEY website

The FDEY website (linked from StudentHome) is a resource available to those who are currently studying on the FDEY and those who have recently completed the degree, and therefore provides access to a wider early years learning community. The site hosts an online discussion forum where you can 'meet' and discuss issues with professionals, and also news items

relevant to the whole early years programme. A link to the FDEY website is provided in each of the FDEY module websites.

## 8 Tuition and assessment

This section provides information on:

- your AL and the support they provide
- the form that assessment will take.

### 8.1 Tuition

While studying on the FDEY you are provided with personal learning support from your AL who is linked to your local regional centre. Your AL may change for each module you study, but you can rest assured that all OU ALs are committed to supporting you in your studies and making your learning experience enriching and enjoyable.

ALs are recruited for their academic specialism, professional experience and personal commitment to adult learners and will understand and accept the diversity of OU students and their learning needs. They are supported by experienced staff at regional centres. So, if your AL is unable to help you then additional help is at hand via Student Services at your regional centre and at the main campus in Milton Keynes.

You will be sent your AL's contact details shortly before you begin your studies. You will also receive an introductory letter from them at about the same time, explaining the best times to contact him/her by email, telephone or online discussion forum. It is essential that you and your AL quickly establish the most effective and efficient mode of communicating. As long as you comply with the ground rules regarding contact set by your AL, you should feel free to get in touch with them to discuss your progress on the module and any concerns/issues you have. Indeed, tutorial support by telephone, email and online discussion forum is central to the OU approach, so make use of it.

Your AL will provide you with advice and guidance on writing TMAs and on the work-based learning elements of modules (if applicable), should any problems arise. (Further information on work-based learning is provided in Section 4). Your AL will also mark and provide feedback on your TMAs. Further to this, they will provide teaching through face-to-face and online tutorials. You will therefore have the opportunity to meet your AL in person.

### 8.2 Assessment

The assessment for the professional modules in FDEY – E100, (E123, E124), E105, E210 and the optional modules E230, E214 and E207 – takes the form of continuous assessment (TMAs, i.e. assignments) and an end-of-module assessment (EMA). Your TMA and EMA grades determine whether you have passed the module (note that you need to pass both the TMAs and the EMA to pass a module). If you are unsuccessful in the EMA, you are usually allowed to resubmit on one occasion, as long as you have met minimum threshold marks set for the particular module. You must refer to the module Assessment Guides and the current Assessment Handbook for undergraduate-level modules (follow the links from your StudentHome web

page). If you fail to reach the minimum pass grade for the continuous assessment overall, then you will be obliged to retake the whole module. Individual TMA scores are weighted and contribute different percentages to your overall continuous assessment score. Again, you must refer to each module Assessment Guide to find out the specific assessment details of each module. Note that assignments have specified word lengths and it is important to stick these. If you exceed them your grade may be affected as you may not have fully met the marking criteria. This is explained further in each Assessment Guide.

You will normally submit your completed TMAs to your AL for marking via the eTMA/EMA service. After assessing them, your AL will provide individual feedback. Further details can be found in the Assessment Guide for each module.

## 9 Wider reading

This section provides suggested some preparatory reading and online resources which may aid your studies.

You should be able to successfully complete all the modules in the FDEY, including the TMAs and EMA, using just the module materials provided in your mailing and through the OU website. You may, however, find other sources of material helpful during your studies – for example, specific online resources, books or journals available through the OU Library website or your local library.

If you are new to OU study, you may also find it useful to undertake some preparatory reading and/or study before starting your first module of the FDEY programme. Take a look at some of the resources below as a starting point.

You will find the following books helpful in preparing to study.

*The Good Study Guide* (Northedge, 2005) (for details see the associated website, [www.open.ac.uk/goodstudyguide/index.php](http://www.open.ac.uk/goodstudyguide/index.php)).

*The Good Writing Guide for Education Students* (Wyse, 2007).

*Early Childhood Education and Care Policy and Practice* (Clark and Waller, 2007).

You may also want to access the following resources available through the OU website.

*New to OU Study*: an introduction to the OU and its study methods, plus resources to help students begin their studies ([www.open.ac.uk/learning/new](http://www.open.ac.uk/learning/new)).

*Skills for OU Study*: activities and resources to develop effective study techniques ([www.open.ac.uk/skillsforstudy](http://www.open.ac.uk/skillsforstudy)).

*Planning Studies*: points to consider when planning a programme of study, including the need to make changes ([www.open.ac.uk/learning/planning-studies/index.htm](http://www.open.ac.uk/learning/planning-studies/index.htm)).

'*Assignments*' section in Skills for OU Study: tips on how to get an assignment underway ([www.open.ac.uk/skillsforstudy/assignments-and-exams.php](http://www.open.ac.uk/skillsforstudy/assignments-and-exams.php)).

*Assessment*: all about assessment matters. Explains substitution rules and lets you work out whether you are likely to pass the module using your preliminary overall continuous assessment score (pOCAS) ([www.open.ac.uk/assessment/index.php](http://www.open.ac.uk/assessment/index.php)).

The following two resources will also be useful.

*The Common Core of Skills and Knowledge* (CWDC, 2010)

'*Defining characteristics of Foundation Degrees*' in Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark (QAA, 2004, 2010).

### Structure of the Early Years qualifications

To complete the degree, students need to attain 240 credits. Progression through the qualification is linked to provide a ladder of learning and

development. For instance, students beginning their studies should study E100. The diagram provided in the appendix gives information on the modules which constitute the degree.

Students who complete E100 will be eligible for the Certificate in Early Years Practice.

The Foundation Degree in Early Years (FDEY) provides students with a Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degree and a recognised professional qualification as an early years practitioner working at a senior level. The Diploma of Higher Education in Childhood Practice (DipHE CP) is the equivalent qualification in Scotland. There will be an opportunity for students on both the FDEY and DipHE CP to top up their degree with further study to an Open University BA Early Years degree and BA (Honours) Early Years degree.

The Certificate in Early Years Practice will take a minimum of nine months to complete. The Foundation Degree can take a minimum of two years and eight months to complete, which would be the equivalent to full-time study and would require exceptional commitment to studying. **From 1 January 2011** students wishing to achieve the FDEY/DipHE CP will be required to pass all modules within seven years of starting the first module. For students who have approved credit transfer from previous study into the FDEY/DipHE CP, the seven year time limit will start from the completion date of the previous study for which credit has been awarded.

The Bachelor of Arts Early Years (BAEY) degree consists of 300 credits for an unclassified degree or 360 credits for an honours degree. Both degrees require 120 credits at OU Level 1 and 120 credits at undergraduate OU Level 2 (I level on the FHEQ (Framework for Higher Education Qualification) framework). The unclassified degree requires a further 60 credits at OU Level 3, and the honours degree requires a total of 120 credits at OU Level 3. The modules at OU Levels 1 and 2 are the same as for the FDEY and, as such, most of the content of this guide applies to the BAEY too. The OU Level 3 module which ‘tops up’ the FDEY to the 300-credit BA Early Years is KE312. The BA Early Years can then be ‘topped up’ to the 360-credit BA (Honours) Early Years by studying the final OU Level 3 module EK311.

The BAEY may be a useful qualification for those wanting to continue to study and train as an Early Years Teacher via the Registered Teacher Programme (RTP), the Graduate Teacher Programme (GTP) or the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). This degree will also help you prepare for the new EYPS which can be achieved through four training and assessment pathways. To find out more about this degree, visit the ‘Study at the OU’ web pages (via StudentHome).

**Key to module titles** (each module is worth 60 credit points)

**Level 1 (SCQF Level 7) – compulsory modules**

E100 *The early years: developing practice*

E105 *Professional practice in the early years*

**Level 2 (SCQF Level 8 and 9) – compulsory module**

E210 *Extending professional practice in the early years* (from October 2011; previously E215)

**Level 2 (SCQF Level 8 and 9) – option modules (60 points required)**

E214 *Equality, participation and inclusion: learning from each other*

ED209 *Child development*

K218 *Working with children, young people and families*

U212 *Childhood*

**Level 3 (SCQF Level 10) – compulsory modules**

KE312 *Working together for children*

EK311 *Early years focus on research with children and young people*

## References

Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) (2010) *The Common Core of Skills and Knowledge*, Leeds, CWDC Publications. Also available online at <http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/common-core#content> (accessed 4 May 2011).

Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) (2011a) Qualifications Finder pages of the CWDC website [online], <https://secure.cwdcouncil.org.uk/eypqd/level-5> (accessed 4 May 2011).

Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) (2011b) 'Level 5 Qualifications – Foundation Degrees', Qualifications Finder pages of the CWDC website [online], <https://secure.cwdcouncil.org.uk/eypqd/level-5> (accessed 4 May 2011).

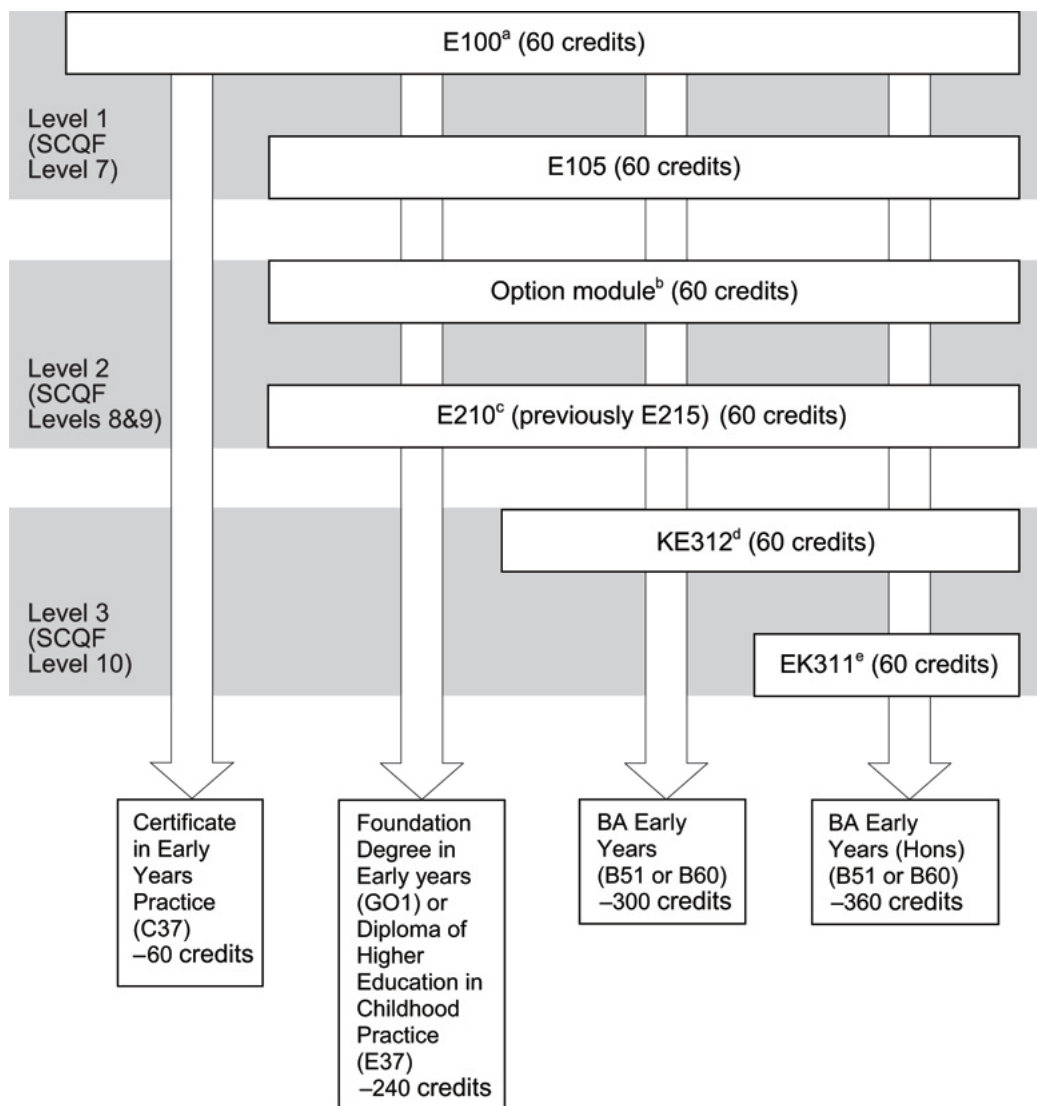
Clark, M.M. and Waller, T. (2007) *Early Childhood Education and Care Policy and Practice*, London, Sage.

Northedge, A. (2005) *The Good Study Guide*, Milton Keynes, The Open University. See also <http://www.open.ac.uk/goodstudyguide/index.php> (accessed 4 May 2011).

Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (2004, 2010) 'Defining characteristics of foundation degrees' in *Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark* [online], [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationdegree/benchmark/fdqb.asp#define](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationdegree/benchmark/fdqb.asp#define) (accessed 4 May 2011).

Wyse, D. (2007) *The Good Writing Guide for Education Students*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn, London, Sage Publications).

## Appendix



### Notes

<sup>a</sup> E100 or the previous modules E123 and E124 (or their APEL routes EZL100 or EZL123 and EZL124) must be completed before undertaking E105. E100 is the 60-credit module which replaced the 30-credit modules E123 and E124 from October 2009. E123 and E124 will only be available for study (last presentation from October 2011) to students who have successfully completed one of the modules to enable them to complete the other 30 credits towards the Certificate or the Foundation Degree.

<sup>b</sup> U212 is a compulsory module for those wishing to use this Foundation Degree to progress to the BA (Hons) Childhood and Youth Studies (B23). It is not a compulsory module for those studying towards the BA and BA (Hons) Early Years where free choice of the option modules is permitted. For those studying the DipHE in CP in Scotland and planning to work towards the OU BA (Hons) Early Years, or transferring to a BA Childhood Practice, K218 is the recommended option module as this matches most closely the Standard for Childhood Practice.

<sup>c</sup> You can study the OU Level 2 option module at the same time as E210, but you are strongly advised not to. You cannot study E210 before the OU Level 2 option module.

<sup>d</sup> Students who have completed a Sector-Endorsed Foundation Degree in Early Years (FDEY) can ‘top up’ to a 300-credit unclassified BA Early Years degree on completion of KE312 – the degree level entry criteria for Early Years Professional Status (EYPS).

<sup>e</sup> Students can continue by studying EK311 and also achieve the BA (Hons) Early Years.