



## University of Chester

Programme Specification  
Early Years Practice BA (Hons) (Level 6 only)  
2021 - 2022

### 1. Final Award

Bachelor of Arts (Level 6 only)

### 2. Programme Title

Early Years Practice

### 3. Internal Programme Title

Early Years Practice Top-Up (St Helens)

### 4. Intermediate / Exit Awards

4a. Award

4b. Title

### 5. Awarding Institution / Body

University of Chester

### 6. Programme Delivered By

St Helens College

### 7. Location of Delivery

St Helens College Town Centre Campus

### 8. Framework

Undergraduate Modular Programme

### 9. Mode of Study

Full-time

### 10. Forms of Study

Classroom / Laboratory,

**11. Normal length of study**

1 year

**12. Maximum length of study**

3 Years

**13. Frequency of intake / starting month**

Annual - September

**14. UCAS Code**

**15. JACS and/or HECoS Code**

X310

**16. Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Check Required?**

No

**17. Faculty & Department**

17a. Faculty

Education & Children's Services

17b. Department

Academic and Professional Programmes

**18. Subject Benchmarking Group**

Early Childhood Studies, November 2019.

**19. Professional Recognition By (if applicable)**

**20. Name of Module Assessment Board (MAB)**

Academic and Professional Programmes Undergraduate MAB.

**21. Date of Approval**

Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2018

**22. Educational Aims of the Programme**

The programme aims reflect the common core of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by those working with young children in early years settings, schools and other areas of children's services. In particular, the programme aims to equip learners with the subject knowledge, understanding, characteristics and skills described in the QAA Early Childhood Studies Benchmark Statements (2019) and also associated with the children's workforce. In particular, the aim is to:

- develop learners knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by those working with young children in early years settings, schools and other areas of children's services;
- provide learners with the skills to communicate and engage effectively with young children, their carers and other professionals which will enable learners to engage in a multi-agency / professional approach to children's services;
- promote understanding of the needs of the individual and the setting to support their development as well as promoting their welfare;
- develop knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to the preparation, planning, delivery and evaluation of provision that meets the needs of young children;
- provide opportunities to engage with and reflect upon their own personal and professional learning through further study and to enhance their professional practice;
- provide opportunities to explore theoretical concepts in a research context and to apply the principles of evidence informed and ethical practice;
- equip learners with transferable skills including ICT, teamwork; critical thinking and reflection, problem solving, communication and independence to enhance future practice in a diverse range of settings.

This will be achieved through a programme that is structured to encompass core areas of understanding such as perspectives on childhood and child development, the family and community, leadership and professional practice, developing research and pedagogy, as well as the personal attributes graduates need to be successful in the workplace.

## **23. Programme Outcomes**

### **Knowledge and Understanding**

An Early Years Practice graduate will be able to:

- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the key principles underpinning and factors that influence the early social, emotional, cognitive and physical development of young children;
- express their knowledge and understanding of multiprofessional, interprofessional, multi-agency and inter-agency working;
- express and understand the main provisions of the national and local statutory and non-statutory frameworks and policy contexts within which children's services work and their implications for early years settings;
- demonstrate a depth of knowledge and reflective understanding of the literature related to relevant field of study;
- demonstrate how the family, community, social, economic, environmental, global, ethical, political and cultural factors influence the construction of early childhood;
- understand the diversity of children's rights and needs and analyse responses to these;
- understand and critically analyse legislation relating to young children, families and their communities.

ED6702; ED6704; ED6705; ED6706; ED6708.

### **Cognitive Skills**

An Early Years Practice graduate will be able to:

- discuss critically a range of ideas and concepts relevant to how young children learn and develop;
- analyse and interpret the effects of society on young children, their families and communities;
- understand and critically evaluate different theories of child development and their influence on policy and practice;
- describe and critically analyse the nature and quality of a range of early years provision;
- review cultural and social diversity and inequality in society and evaluate how these are expressed and addressed;
- discuss critically a broad range of complex ideas and concepts relevant to the study of early childhood;
- analyse, interpret and evaluate a broad range of research;
- reflect upon different perspectives, and evaluate them in a critical manner to arrive at supported conclusions;
- access, retrieve, organise and use a range of sources of information, including primary sources and critically evaluate their relevance;
- make able to evaluate evidence, arguments and assumptions, reach sound judgements and communicate them effectively.

ED6702; ED6704; ED6705; ED6706; ED6708.

### **Practical and Professional Skills**

An Early Years Practice graduate will:

- develop and enhance transferrable skills;
- establish fair, respectful, trusting, supportive and constructive relationships with children;
- communicate sensitively and effectively with children from birth to the end of early years foundation stage;
- recognise and respect the influential and enduring contribution that families and parents/carers can make to children's development, well-being and learning;
- provide formal and informal opportunities through which information about children's well-being, development and learning can be shared between a setting and families and parents/carers
- contribute towards establishing a culture of collaborative and cooperative working between colleagues;
- have insight and confidence in leading and working collaboratively with others;

- be sensitive to contextual and interpersonal factors, taking into account of the complexity of factors that shape behaviour and social interaction and form the basis of problems and interpersonal conflict;
- be sensitive to the importance of enhancing cooperation to maximise the effectiveness of individual skills;
- have effective problem-solving skills and be able to devise and sustain arguments within their discipline;
- be able to use a range of multimedia skills to communicate;
- have effective professional and personal organisation skills including time management;
- be able to exercise personal responsibility and make decisions in complex situations.

ED6702; ED6704; ED6705; ED6706.

## Communication Skills

An Early Years Practice graduate will be able to:

- present information to others in appropriate forms, including having a sense of audience;
- write for different purposes;
- communicate ideas and research findings both effectively and fluently by written, oral and visual means to converse, debate, negotiate, persuade, and challenge the ideas of others;
- offer an informed point of view, drawing upon a range of theoretical and ideological positions;
- collate, interrogate and use data effectively;
- critically reflect upon their own and other's skills and views;
- make critical judgements and evaluations;
- use information and communication technology (ICT) appropriately in a range of contexts.

ED6702; ED6704; ED6705; ED6706; ED6708.

## 24. Programme Structure and Features; Levels, Modules, Credits and Awards

### 24a. Programme Structure and Features (levels, modules, credits, awards)

The programme is designed as a single honours level 6 only programme with a modular structure that will be offered full time. The programme will run over one academic year, commencing in September of each year. On successful completion of level six (120 credits), students will be awarded the BA (Honours) Degree.

In general terms, the curriculum is structured so that at level six, modules are designed to explore complex and challenging concepts as well as providing opportunities for consolidation and breadth. Students will be encouraged to develop more questioning and self-reliant attitudes towards:

- subject material;
- independent thought and judgement;
- skills in research, critical evaluation and analysis;
- leadership, team working and networking skills;
- critical investigations of the relationship between theory and practice.

Students will undertake five core modules at level six which will enable them to evaluate and develop appropriate pedagogical approaches to work with children and their families. The modules encompass theories of leadership and management, and will help students develop their understanding of professions and professionalism, and the importance of multi-professional and multi-agency working, alongside key pedagogical issues for early years practice. The modules are:

- ED6702 The Early Childhood Professional (20 credits)
- ED6704 Contemporary Issues in the Early Years (20 credits)
- ED6705 Dissertation (40 credits)
- ED6706 Principles and Pedagogy in Early Childhood (20 credits)
- ED6708 International Perspectives in Early Childhood (20 credits)

### 24b. Module Structure

Mod-Code	Level	Title	Credit	Single
ED6702	6	The Early Childhood Professional	20	Comp
ED6704	6	Contemporary Issues in the Early Years	20	Comp
ED6705	6	Dissertation	40	Comp
ED6706	6	Principles and Pedagogy in Early Childhood	20	Comp
ED6708	6	International Perspectives in Early Childhood	20	Comp

### 24c. Credit Accumulation

Level 6 120 Credits would entitle the student to an Honours Bachelor's Degree.

## 24d. Details of any derogation from University Regulations (if applicable)

## 25. Professional Body Requirements (if applicable)

## 26. Admission Requirements

The programme is intended to make a valuable contribution to lifelong learning by providing access to higher education for learners from different starting points and with different career aspirations. This is in accordance with the University policy on widening participation and equal opportunity.

Admission of students shall be based on the University of Chester's expectation that the student will be able to achieve the standard required for the academic award. Within the admissions process the University seeks to give advanced standing/credit for prior learning appropriate to specified learning outcomes. The level 6 Early Years Practice modules are available as a full-time option to students who have completed a Foundation Degree in Early Years, Early Years Practice, Early Childhood Studies or a similar qualification deemed equivalent by the programme team. Those students who do not hold this formal qualification, or who have only obtained vocational qualifications, will be directed towards an appropriate FdA award.

All students progressing from a FdA in Early Years Practice will hold a full and relevant Level 3 qualification as stated by the Department for Education. All qualification will be checked against this on Entry to the FdA. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-qualifications-finder>

Admission onto the course will be via application.

## 27. Subject Benchmark Statements

The programme takes account of the current QAA Benchmarking Statements (2019) for Early Childhood degrees. This set of Benchmarking Statements is divided into three categories:

- 'threshold standards' which are the minimal standards necessary for a student to graduate with a single honours degree in Early Childhood Studies;
- 'typical standards' which are those which a typical ECS student would be expected to attain;
- 'excellent standards' are those which the highest attaining Early Childhood Studies student would be expected to achieve.

The standards are designed to identify the knowledge or skills a graduate at that standard (threshold, typical or excellent) would be expected to be able to demonstrate. The areas of knowledge and skills are linked to the programme modules, but typical standards will be more securely demonstrated than threshold while excellent standards reflect a higher level of proficiency and understanding.

The programme aims to develop graduates who will demonstrate the characteristics described in the QAA Early Childhood Studies Benchmark Statements which cover Subject Knowledge, Subject-specific Skills and Generic Skills. These include aspects such as knowledge and understanding; awareness of key issues; reasoning, reflection and analysis; evaluation, observation, planning and implementation; critical thinking; application; communication and presentation; ICT; teamwork and problem solving; improving own learning; pose and operationalise research questions.

A distinguishing feature of the Early Years Practice degree is the emphasis placed on the application of theory to practical understanding of child development and early childhood multi-professional and inter- and intra-professional work. The Early Childhood Studies (2019) benchmarking standards offer a set of defining principles but state that the aim of the degree should be to produce 'an understanding of the ecology of early childhood from conception, and of children in ecological context. Ecological context should be understood as encompassing both time and geographical space and encompassing the contexts of family and community, and children's and family services'. It is the study of 'the development the child in context and the implications for practice'. This necessarily draws on many disciplines, including those of psychology, sociology, philosophy, social policy, education, health, history, cultural studies and the law along with economic and political perspectives; in doing so the degree has established a distinctive area of study and research. 'This enables students to understand and analyse the processes that shape childhood and children's lives in a way that fosters critical evaluation' and enables them to develop 'insights and understandings relating to how children and childhood are understood from a range of academic and professional perspectives and to understand the philosophies, beliefs and attitudes that inform them'.

## 28. Learning, Teaching and Assessment Methods

### Learning and Teaching

In accordance with sound educational research and current best practice, the programme will be delivered through a broad range of learning and teaching strategies which are underpinned by the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy. From this, the Faculty of Education and Children's Services have developed a local level response in the form of the Faculty Learning, Teaching, Assessment Improvement and Development Plan. This plan commits to pedagogical principles which include:

- Promoting professional engagement and reflective practice;

- Encouraging independent and autonomous learning;
- Supporting continuing professional development;
- Valuing students' professional experience and prior learning;
- Supporting diversity and personalised learning;
- Encouraging dynamic and participative learning;
- Promoting collaborative learning;
- Encouraging Internet and Web-based approaches;
- Supporting reflective and Practitioner enquiry.

For further details, please access:

[https://portal.chester.ac.uk/lti/Documents/190717-1623\\_Learning%20and%20Teaching%20Strategy%202017\\_2022\\_PRINT.pdf](https://portal.chester.ac.uk/lti/Documents/190717-1623_Learning%20and%20Teaching%20Strategy%202017_2022_PRINT.pdf)

From the beginning students will start to take responsibility for their own learning and will become actively engaged in a variety of learning and teaching processes. The programme includes a range of approaches to learning and teaching:

- **University-based Modules-** These modules are held at the University in technology rich environments. A range of methodologies are employed which take account of best practice and maximise active learning, sensitive to the learning styles and needs of students. These methodologies include lectures, seminars, group work, directed tasks, independent research and individual, group tutorials and blended learning.
- **Independent Learning** -Independent Learning is a philosophy of education which students are encouraged to adopt. It includes the opportunity to work with a supervising tutor who offers support as students work towards completing assessment tasks (such as ED6705 dissertation) but is fundamentally a more over-arching concept about an autonomous approach to work.
- **Electronic Support Materials** - The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is an essential feature of the Programme. Each module has a dedicated Moodle module space where key information about the module and a range of materials and interactive elements to support learning and assessment, is available.
- **Electronic Tutorial Support** – Students are able to contact their module tutor or module supervisor by email whenever they wish. Tutors will endeavour to respond to student queries within 3-5 days but often sooner. Tutorial support includes face-to-face tutorial support meetings and the opportunity for students to engage with online tutorial support. Individual tutorials can also be offered using a range of technologies such as Skype and Facetime. This is an important feature of the Programme as it enables students who may not live in close proximity to the University to access tutorial support remotely.

Students will benefit from a variety of learning and teaching strategies which will be chosen to best suit a range of learning needs and enhanced by the use of technology where and when appropriate to do so. Methods of delivery will be aimed at achieving the acquisition of relevant knowledge and understanding in order to develop an informed insight into current early years practice and issues. The programme will develop through a blend of lectures, group-work activities, case study, guided reflection and independent study. Theoretical perspectives explored in taught sessions will enable students to reflect upon and share their knowledge and experience and relate this to current thinking.

Students will investigate which factors are influential in the educational development of the young child and how these can impact on the learning process. The teaching approach will often be activity based and participatory with students expected to take a full and responsible part. Prior reading / preparation will be specified before hand through direct study tasks.

Throughout the programme, students will be encouraged to reflect critically; to listen carefully to the views of others; to question values and opinions; to investigate evidence and draw their own, informed conclusions. They will evaluate the ways in which knowledge and understanding, developed through the different modules, may be linked to theoretical concepts and practice in early years settings. They will be encouraged to progress as independent learners and to develop the skills of collaboration and negotiation. The learning and teaching experience, both theoretically and practically, will offer a range of opportunities to develop the skills of the reflective practitioner, a theme which is integral throughout all modules.

## Assessment

Assessment is more than simply a means by which tutors will arrive at a mark that expresses an evaluation of the students' learning. Assessment is a vital part of the teaching/learning process and the feedback that is provided is a key element of the teaching provided by tutors, this will include formative assessment opportunities utilising appropriate technology (e.g. Moodle).

The programme strives to maintain a diverse assessment palette and rigorous, consistent assessment practices which aims to enable students to demonstrate their skills, knowledge and understanding in a variety of ways. The diversity of assessments used encourages the development of a range of skills, whilst allowing all students to build on their strengths. Varying the assessment tasks and ensuring the assessment is integral to the learning process and supports the completion of tasks.

Assessments will include a variety of formal, informal, formative and summative techniques. The assessment of each element of study will be specified within individual module specifications.

## Handbooks

All modules have a college handbook that complies with University and Faculty Guidelines. All handbooks are available to students on the dedicated module space on Moodle (The University's VLE).

The module handbook includes:

- Module aims and learning outcomes;
- Outline content;
- Assessment method;

- Procedures for submission of work;
- Recommended reading;
- Appropriate grading criteria;
- Links to relevant documentation and University Policy eg. The Diversity and Equality Policy, The Disability, Gender and Race Equality Scheme, guidance on regulations governing the assessment of students.

## Marking

All assessed work is graded according to a percentage scale 0-100 using the University's grading criteria linked to the appropriate QAA requirements. All marking procedures comply with the central University Assessment Policies. Feedback to students is available electronically using the Turnitin and Grademark systems. Feedback on the work is intended to identify strengths and points of development. Assignments are not pre-marked.

Students may receive formative, verbal feedback on plans or on a specified amount of work identified by the tutor.

Assessment criteria are communicated to students through Programme and Module handbooks with specific assignment guidance explaining the important features of each assignment. Students will be informed of assessment criteria by individual module tutors when module assessment tasks are presented. These describe the characteristics of the performance necessary to achieve success in the module and at the appropriate level. Details of the assessment tasks and marking criteria will be placed on the VLE (Moodle) for reference. These have been carefully devised to meet the outcomes of individual modules to encourage analysis and reflection.

The Programme Leader, in consultation with programme staff, will ensure that the scheduling of assessments is evenly distributed, to the benefit of the students. With a modular framework 'hot-spots' can occur. Students will be provided with the assessment timeline at the beginning of the programme to assist in their time management.

## 29. Careers and Employability

The Government acknowledges the importance of a highly qualified early years workforce and to attracting graduates to work with young children. This is viewed as key to continuing to raise the quality of provision in settings across England and improving outcomes for many more children and young people (Nutbrown Review, 2012; 2017 Early Years Workforce Strategy). Students will have gained a full and relevant qualification at Level 3 as stated by the Department for Education, <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/early-years-qualifications-finder> allowing them to be included in the staff:child ratio.

Following successful completion of this programme, students may progress to a range of careers and/or further study and professional training. The skills and knowledge students gain through undertaking this programme will be applicable to future work opportunities. Embedding theory into practice, which supports the gaining of new knowledge and skills to underpin existing experience, is a key factor for learners and employers.

Some students will go on to work in areas which require non-specialist degree qualifications and may consider employment or further study aligned to health, social service or other children's services related disciplines. Others might seek postgraduate study which would enable them to teach, by undertaking a further programme of study/professional training leading to QTS, EYTS or to other professional work with children and young people. In order to do this students must have the appropriate grades at GCSE for Maths, English and Science (at the time of application) to progress.

Graduates in this discipline may be employed as learning mentors, specialist learning support in early years environments, Higher Level Teaching Assistants, trainers, teaching assistants, child minders, play workers or other roles working with children in this age range. Others go onto manage/own their own settings.

## 30. Equality

The University of Chester is committed to the active promotion of equality of opportunity both as an employer and an educational institution. For this purpose it has an equal opportunities policy and appropriate codes of practice. The objective of the policy is to be a University which is open to all sections of the community, where people from all groups in society are represented at all levels. Thus, the University is committed to the promotion of diversity, equality and inclusion in all its forms; through different ideas and perspectives, age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. In particular, we are committed to widening access to higher education. This is reflected in the admissions criteria which acknowledges the different pathways potential students take to reach higher education. Within an ethically aware and professional environment, we acknowledge our responsibilities to promote freedom of enquiry and scholarly expression.

The programme adheres to the University's policy on equality and diversity, namely:

- the university can only fulfil its responsibilities to students and staff and its broader responsibility to society if it builds on a foundation of respect for the dignity of each individual;
- discrimination is unacceptable within the University community in that it represents a waste of human resources and it unjustly denies individuals the opportunity to fulfil their potential. It can also be unlawful;
- the active support of the University community is sought through the commitment and involvement of all groups of staff and students in the implementation of this policy.

The University is committed to a programme of action to ensure that this equal opportunities policy is fully effective. Positive action may be needed where there are historical imbalances. To this end, the programme will ensure that:

- all students, staff (including those in partnership schools) are treated with respect;
- no student or professional colleague will be knowingly discriminated against.

All participants in and contributors to the programme will be encouraged to become involved in the development, management, delivery and evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme.

Opportunities for study to the highest level of award of which they are capable is offered without any form of discrimination on non-academic grounds. Students with disabilities will be advised on the facilities and capability of the University to respond to their needs.

### **31. Additional Information**

#### **Intentions for academic year 2021/22**

We concur with the principles laid out in the Assuring Quality and Securing Enhancement for 2020/21 document provided and are currently working on plans for the new academic year which follow these principles as well as OfS guidance.

#### **Delivery**

UCSH is currently developing a blended approach to course delivery. Programme leaders are identifying areas that can be delivered remotely that will not impact on quality. It is anticipated that students will engage with part of their courses remotely/online. The proportion of the course delivered by online methods will be tailored to the courses individually, to ensure that it is appropriate. Curriculum sequencing is also being used to provide stability and ensure that any plans are resilient and work in a number of different scenarios. There are no anticipated changes to delivery hours or course content. UoC and new /returning students will be informed as soon as this work is complete. Where individual students require additional support to engage with the delivery method, the college will endeavour to make provision to ensure continued accessibility and engagement.

#### **Assessment**

Any further changes to assessments or assessment methods will be carried out in preparation for the new academic year in consultation with the Faculty at Chester. Where possible assessments will be designed to ensure there will be no further adaptations or changes required if circumstances change. Where this is not possible 2 assessment strategies will be developed. Where this approach is required students will be informed at the start of the course that there is a contingency for assessment via alternate methods and which method we are currently intending to use.

#### **Practical Spaces**

UCSH is taking steps to prepare these spaces for the new academic year to ensure they comply with current guidance. The intention is that, where possible, students will be able to use these spaces in the new academic year as part of their courses. We are also exploring options to provide additional specialist equipment for use offsite.

#### **Online Access**

SK College Group has provided laptops and provision for internet access to students who have required them due to current circumstances, this has included HE students and we expect to be able to make similar provisions 21/22. This support will be based on individual need. There is also scope to use Hardship funds in accordance with the OfS approved access and participation plan.

#### **Student Communications**

Updates are being published on UCSH website, as well as direct contact at the course level. Module handbooks will be updated to reflect any changes made in consultation with UoC

#### **Delivery model evaluation**

UCSH will continue to facilitate student evaluative feedback of their on-programme experiences using the following mechanisms either through face to face or online media as is appropriate:

- Internal semester HE student online surveys