

Part 1 Programme details

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| Existing title and code | BA in Early Childhood Education TU995 |
| Mode and duration of programme | Four years, full-time (programme currently three years in duration) |
| ECTS | 240 |
| TU Dublin award(s) sought | Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education (Level Eight) |
| Exit awards proposed | Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education (Level Seven) Higher Certificate in Early Childhood Education (Level Six) |
| Classifications of award(s) | First Class Honours; Second Class Honours First Division; Second Class Honours, Second Division; Pass (Level Eight award) Distinction; Merit Grade One; Merit Grade Two; Pass (Level Seven and Six awards) |
| School responsible | School of Languages, Law & Social Sciences |
| Professional body accreditation and relevant dates (where applicable) | Department of Education and Skill's Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education Degree Programmes for the Early Learning and Care Sector (2019) |
| External provider type (where applicable) | NA |
| Delivery location | TU Dublin, Grangegorman |

Part 2 Programme approval information

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| Date of review event | 20 January 2021 |
| Date of approval by Academic Council and Governing Body | |
| Proposed date of commencement | September 2022 |

Part 3 Programme background/structure

Background

The development of the Early Childhood Education sector in Ireland goes as far back as the 1940s, with statistics showing that about 48,000 children between 3-5 years old (Fallon, 2003) were in the educational system at that time. However, Early Childhood Education (ECE) in

Ireland entered a new phase with the publication of the White Paper *Ready to Learn* (DES, 1999). The paper identified quality provision as a key theme as well as the need to focus on the disadvantaged and children with special needs in the years to come.

Since then, the sector has undergone many significant developments and changes, such as the introduction of the national quality framework *Síolta* (CECDE) in 2006, *Childcare (Pre-School) Regulations* (2006) and (2016), the national curriculum framework *Aistear* (NCCA 2009), the first of the two Free Pre-School Years (2010), Inclusion coordinators (2016) and mandatory registration for ECE services, also in 2016. The many changes to policy and regulations have resulted in a need to up-skill educators, managers and leaders within ECE settings as well as persons working in the many other organisations who have support functions within the ECE sector.

TU Dublin (and formerly the Dublin Institute of Technology) is one of the longest established providers of Early Childhood Education programmes in Ireland. The first programme commenced in 1977, offering a one-year certificate to pre-school workers in the Eastern Health Board region. The certificate programme was extended to two years in 1985, followed by the introduction of a two-year part-time Diploma in 1993. This in turn evolved to the B.A. (Ord.) in ECCE in September 1999 and finally, in September 2005 a new 3-year BA (Hons.) in ECE. The programme is now under review to take on board the Department of Education and Skill's Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education Degree Programmes for the Early Learning and Care Sector.

Stated learning outcomes of the programme

Knowledge: Breadth

1. Demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of child development in the context of Early Years services;
2. Describe in detail the holistic development of children;
3. Communicate and demonstrate the links between theoretical knowledge and the practice of early childhood education;
4. Understand children in the context of family, community and society drawing on related disciplines such as sociology, law, and social policy;
5. Integrate concepts of developmentally appropriate practice, partnership and issues involved in working with families;
6. Manage overall operation and maintenance of an early years service.

Knowledge: Kind

1. Demonstrate specialised knowledge of early childhood education-related aspects of the following areas: Psychology, Pedagogy, Curriculum, Professional Practice, Creative Activity, Sociology, Social Policy, and Research;
2. Plan, organise and implement developmentally appropriate programmes that facilitate children's social, emotional, cognitive, physical and communicative development;
3. Demonstrate awareness of the ethical issues implicit in the professional role;
4. Demonstrate understanding of knowledge and skills required to support all children and their families during the early years;
5. Articulate the integrated nature of the nurturing and developmental aspects of early childhood care and education;

6. Be aware of the importance of equal opportunities for children and families based on rights, irrespective of ability, culture, class, ethnicity and socioeconomic status;
7. Apply knowledge of financial, administrative and human resources theory to the practice of the managing an early years service.

Know-how and Skill: Range

1. Use recorded observations and reflection on practice to develop short plans for the holistic development of individual children;
2. Implement policies and procedures within the service, and to ensure that the required information on policies and procedures is disseminated to staff, parents and students;
3. Demonstrate the ability to work with the whole child and the family in the context of community and society;
4. Apply principles of best practice in safeguarding and child protection;
5. Work as a member of a team and recognise the importance of teamwork and co-operative/ management skills;
6. Liaise with other professionals providing services to young children, such as speech and language therapists, social workers, psychologists and teachers;
7. Undertake many facets of the role of manager of an early years service, including administration, finance and human resources;
8. Ensure the welfare, and development of children and adults in the service, in cognisance of relevant policy, procedures and law

Know-how and Skill: Selectivity

1. Co-ordinate the development, implementation and evaluation of a developmentally appropriate curriculum for children from birth to eight years;
2. Develop high level appropriate strategies for facilitating and assisting children and families who are experiencing adverse social conditions or circumstances, based on knowledge of the public services available locally and nationally;
3. Use a range of strategies to ensure the best development and support of all children and families;
4. Evaluate policy and practice of the service.

Competence: Context

1. Observe and assess children's rights and provide for children's needs at a high level;
2. Maintain and develop effective working relationships with parents;
3. Take responsibility for the welfare and the well-being of all children and adults in the service;
4. Be able to fulfil the role of manager, taking responsibility for all aspects of the service, including administration, finance and human resources.

Competence: Role

1. Act as an autonomous professional, responsible for all aspects of the care and education of children;
2. Apply financial, administrative and human resources theory to the practice of the manager role;
3. Mentor, support and supervise staff and students;
4. Develop quality improvement strategies within their service to enhance the quality and experience of all staff and children;

5. Promote and support the professional development (including in-service and pre- service training and education) of all staff within the service;
6. Have current knowledge of local, national and international developments in the area of early education;
7. Liaise with outside agencies, such as city and county childcare committees, regulatory organisations and NGOs;
8. Plan for and resource flexible early education services for children;
9. Operationalise admission procedures and record-keeping systems relating to children, their families and staff;
10. Ensure best practice in child protection is promoted;
11. Identify and solve problems related to the effective operation of the service.

Competence: Learning to Learn

1. Be committed to the need for further professional development
2. Engage in learning opportunities to improve knowledge and skills both at a personal and a professional level
3. Promote innovation within the service
4. Be committed to research in the immediate working environment and in ongoing professional development.

Competence: Insight

1. Be confident in their professional role;
2. Reflect on their practice and critically evaluate self in relation to personal and professional development;
3. Demonstrate empathy and solidarity with children, families and community.

Programme structure

The BA Early Childhood Education is extended to become a full-time four-year honours degree programme, as it is currently delivered as a three-year honours degree. Each of the four years includes supervised practice placement and students complete a 15 ECTS dissertation.

Entry Requirements

For school leavers applying through the CAO, the minimum entry requirements are the Leaving certificate in six subjects at least two of which must be at grade H5 or higher on higher-level papers. Minimum results in Irish or English and Mathematics are O6/H7.

Applicants who have gained a QQI Level 5 award in Early Childhood Care and Education (or equivalent) with a minimum of 6 distinctions are eligible to apply for entry to Year 1.

A mature student who is 23 years of age on the 1st of January of the year of entry and who does not meet the normal admission requirements may be considered for admission to the programme. Mature applicants who have gained a QQI Level 5 award in Early Childhood Care and Education (or equivalent) with a minimum of 6 distinctions are eligible to apply for entry to Year 1.

Student assessment

In accordance with the General Assessment Regulations, apart from the derogations outlined below.

In some modules there is an attendance requirement and minimum thresholds of performance in module components.

Derogations from the General Assessment Regulations, including rationale for derogation and view of the Panel:

In the interests of protection of children and vulnerable service user groups, only one repeat Supervised Practice Placement will be facilitated across the entirety of the 4 year programme.

Placement modules are assessed on a pass/fail basis.

Part 4 Review Details and Membership of Panel

Date of Review: 20 January 2021

Schedule of meetings (conducted via Microsoft Teams)

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| 09.00 am | Introductory meeting between Panel and the Head of School of Languages, Law and Social Sciences, Assistant Head of School, Programme Chair and other members of staff from the School as appropriate. |
| 09.15 am | Private meeting of Panel to discuss agenda. |
| 10.15 am | Meeting of Panel with Head of School, Assistant Head of School, Chairperson and appropriate members of the Programme Committee to discuss specific issues raised by the Panel. |
| 11.15 am | Break. |
| 11.30 am | Meeting of Panel with staff teaching on the programme to discuss such matters as syllabi, teaching methods and assessment issues. |
| 12.30 pm | Panel meets with a group of current students and graduates. |
| 1.30 pm | Meeting with community stakeholders including placement supervisors. |
| 2.00 pm | Break. |
| 2.40 pm | Private meeting of Panel to consider draft report. |
| 4.15 pm | Final meeting of Panel with Head of School, Assistant Head of School, Programme Chair and other appropriate members of staff. |

Panel Membership

External Members

Dr Emad Al-Rozzi Assistant Professor, Department of Early Childhood Education, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway

Mark Shinnick Principal, Holy Child Pre-School (Rutland Street Project), Dublin 1

Internal Members

Dr Catherine Deegan (Chair) Assistant Head of School of Electrical & Electronic Engineering, TU Dublin, Kevin Street

Siobhan O'Regan School of Accounting & Finance, TU Dublin, Aungier Street

Con Kennedy TU Dublin School of Creative Arts, TU Dublin, Grangegorman

Quality Assurance Officer

Jan Cairns Quality Assurance Officer, TU Dublin, Grangegorman – Park House

Documentation submitted

The Panel received the programme self study, the Student Handbook, Placement Handbook, Dissertation Guidelines and Study Abroad Handbook. Following a request from the Panel the School forwarded additional information.

Part 5 Summary of Panel findings against key questions

| | Yes/No |
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| Is the market demand and need for the programme clear and articulated? | Yes |
| Are the aims, objectives and learning outcomes of the programme well-founded and clearly formulated? | Yes |
| Are the entry requirements clear and appropriate? | See condition regarding RPL |
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| Are the arrangements for access, transfer and progression in accordance with Institute policy and NFQ? | See conditions regarding RPL and module exemptions |
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| Are the programme learning outcomes at the appropriate level as set out by the NFQ requirements? | Yes |
| Do the individual modules 'add up' to a coherent programme? | Yes, however see recommendations on additional topics that might be included |
| Are Graduate Attributes embedded within the programme? | Yes, however see recommendation in this regard |
| Will the accumulation of the module learning outcomes result in the attainment of the programme learning outcomes? | See conditions in this regard |
| Is there appropriate use of student-centred learning, teaching and assessment strategies, including the First Year Framework for Success checklist, which recognise the needs of diverse student groups? | See conditions and recommendation in this regard |
| Do the curricula and teaching schemes in each module descriptor give realisable substance to the module's aims, objectives and learning outcomes? | Yes, however see recommendations in this regard |
| Are the assessment methods and criteria aligned to the learning outcomes in each module? | See condition in this regard |
| Are facilities and resources, including staff, in place to support the delivery of the programme at the standard proposed? | See Condition and Observations in this regard |

Part 6 Recommendations of the Panel

The Panel recommends continuing approval of the award of Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education at Level Eight on the National Framework of Qualifications and approval of the revised programme leading to this award, subject to conditions and with recommendations and observations. It also recommends approval of the exit awards of Bachelor of Arts in Early Childhood Education and Higher Certificate in Early Childhood Education, at Levels Seven and Six respectively on the National Framework of Qualifications.

The Panel recognises that this is a very successful and well regarded programme within the early years sector.

Conditions

1. It is not clear from the documentation provided how the module learning outcomes align to programme learning outcomes. In addition, the alignment of module learning outcomes to assessment methods is not clear, for example where all module learning outcomes are aligned to all assessment types. This mapping exercise should take

place, to ensure that this alignment is clear and that the assessment methodology is appropriate and learning outcomes are not being over-assessed.

2. Assessment methods need to be more clearly defined and detailed within the module descriptors, i.e. continuous assessment and portfolio, to facilitate their alignment to module learning outcomes.
3. It is not clear whether experiential learning through the RPL process will facilitate non-standard entry or advanced entry to the programme. The Advanced Entry process should be reviewed to ensure it is correct in relation to the four-year programme.
4. The documentation should be explicit in relation to how the module exemptions policy and process will operate within the revised four-year programme.
5. The Panel commends the Skills Development module in First Year; however, it would like to see more description within the programme documentation how the diverse student population is being supported throughout the programme. In addition:
 - Feedback to students on their performance should be formalised and provided on all pieces of work that students complete on the programme.
 - The schedule of assessment, provided should be enhanced to indicate all the various forms of assessment that students undertake, both formative and summative, to give an accurate indication of the student workload, as well as how and when they should expect to receive feedback on their performance.
6. A description of the new Early Years room in the new building should be provided to the Panel.
7. In relation to Practice Placements:
 - a) A tripartite contract should be in place for every student going on placement (template to be provided in placement handbook), between the student, host and TU Dublin. This should address learning outcomes, the requirements, obligations and expectations of all three parties to the contract. For example, where meetings are online, rather than face-to-face this should be specified. The contract should reference DES criteria. The contract should be individualised to the particular student's placement, e.g. state the number of visits and whether they are to be in person or remote meetings, any additional learning needs/supports the student may have, etc.
 - b) The reflective assessments that students complete while on placement should be more explicitly connected to the taught modules that students take and have feedback provided to them accordingly.
 - c) The pieces of work that students must complete as part of assessment of the placement should be more explicitly stated than currently within the Placement Handbook.

- d) The more practical aspects of placement could be covered within existing modules as appropriate (Intro to Business & Management), including paperwork (forms), office management etc.
- 8. The Team should consider not including the second year in the calculation of classification of award, taking into account the potential impact on classification for students who go on Erasmus study abroad in this year.

Recommendations

1. The inter-operability with similar programmes available in the Tallaght and Blanchardstown campuses and the possibility of transfer to and from these programmes should be considered.
2. The Programme Team could enhance the information provided on graduate opportunities (eg case studies on website and programme marketing).
3. How Graduate Attributes are expressed and assessed within the programme could be enhanced, to highlight the graduates' particular strengths and practical experience obtained.
4. The School / Team should explore further training for staff around formative and summative assessment and the difference between them.
5. There should be a review of the learning outcomes for the Research Methods modules to ensure that they align to and support the Dissertation module. The Team might also consider amalgamating the final year Research Methods and Dissertation modules.
6. The Team should consider again the name of the Creativity module, to ensure that it reflects more accurately the content and context of the module.
7. Formal group work should be introduced at an earlier stage in the programme than third year, and the documentation should be clear regarding where there is formal assessed group work.
8. The Panel would strongly support the provision of CPD/training for placement supervisors, to address such matters as evaluation of student progress and feedback to enhance progress.
9. There should be communication plan for the current 3 year cohort to explain the rationale for the new programme and the potential impact (or lack of) on the three-year graduates.

Observations of the Panel

1. The Panel notes that there is now a requirement of an additional year to the programme. It acknowledges that the additional ECTS are being covered by additional placement hours, extending the ECTS for the final dissertation and research methods, removing

optionality of certain modules, as well as the creation of new modules. It notes the commitment of the College Director to supporting any request from the School for additional staffing resources.

2. The Panel notes the support available for staff to undertake relevant development activities.
3. Panel notes the letter of comfort from the Department of Education and Skills regarding graduates of the current three-year Honours degree programme.