



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

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- + Career
- + Opportunity

EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES

Masters, Degree and CPD courses



EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES

The Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development, in conjunction with the UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre, offers a range of part-time blended and distance learning courses focused on expanding your intellectual and professional competence in the area of early years care and education. Our courses are focused on offering a high quality learning experience with integrated and progressive learning content. Courses have been designed for Irish practitioners and are up to date with Irish and International developments. NUI Galway is committed to providing comprehensive learning support to all its adult learners and offers a vast range of interventions designed to guide and assist students throughout their learning journey.

Our Early Childhood Studies courses have been developed to meet the needs of individuals such as:

- Early year practitioners in crèches, pre-schools, school age childcare services, special education services and childminding settings
- Managers of crèches, pre-schools, school age services, special education services
- Early childhood practitioners in the Health Services Executive and Tusla: the Child & Family Support Agency
- City/County Childcare Committee members and staff of National Voluntary Childcare Organisations
- Practitioners in the child and family support sector
- Special Needs Assistants with infant classes
- Early years specialists working in advisory or mentoring roles, or those aspiring to such positions

The flexibility of our delivery approach keeps you, the learner, in mind. Part-time study allows you to combine personal and professional responsibilities while undertaking recognised university courses. Blended learning methods such as self-study, face-to-face workshops and online learning encourage the development of self-directed and independent learning skills. Distance learning allows you to access the courses regardless of geographical location. Exit options within the courses allow you to plan your educational progression in a way that suits your schedule.



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



UNESCO Chair in
Children, Youth and Civic Engagement
Ireland
• CHILD AND FAMILY RESEARCH CENTRE

Bachelor of Arts in EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES AND PRACTICE

Course Overview

The Diploma/Bachelor of Arts (Early Childhood Studies and Practice) has been developed to meet the identified needs of practitioners in the early years sector who wish to pursue further education and training in a flexible manner, complimenting and supporting continued employment. This 4 year part time distance learning course of study, with options for interim exit awards, builds on practical experience, enhancing the learner's skills through exposure to theory, social policy, research practice and workbased experiential learning opportunities.

The course aims to provide practitioners currently working in the field of early childhood care and education an opportunity to upgrade their qualifications and further develop their skills and enhance their existing knowledge in a flexible and accessible format. This course was developed in response to substantial evidence of the needs of childcare practitioners who may already possess a recognised qualification at NFQ levels 5 or 6 and who wish to upgrade their qualification to a University award in a manner

that will support their continued employment and their workplace. Alternatively, potential students without a recognised qualification, but with extensive experience in the childcare care and education sector are also encouraged to apply.

The BA in Early Childhood Studies and Practice is approved by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs for higher capitation funding and is internationally recognised.



The knowledge, skills and learning I gained over the four years on this course of study has enhanced my confidence as manager of a busy and challenging early years setting.



Special Entry Requirements

- 1. Academic**
While formal academic qualifications are not necessary, those possessing a NFQ Level 5 or 6 qualification in the childcare or related disciplines will be encouraged to apply.
- 2. Experiential**
Applicants should be employed in an early years setting with a minimum of 2 years experience working in the sector or other relevant experience.
- 3. Technological**
Candidates must have computer proficiency and access to the internet.
- 4. Age Requirement**
Applicants who have reached the age of 21 on the year of application will be admitted to the course on the grounds of mature years.

Places may be limited and applicants may be required to attend for interview prior to being offered a place on the course.

Delivery

This course is a blended learning course with materials and tutorials delivered through face-to-face workshops and NUI Galway's online learning system - Blackboard. Attendance at workshops and tutorials forms an integral part of the course.

Assessment

Assessment techniques may include a range of the following: written assignments, reflective learning journals, portfolios, group projects and written examinations (which take place in NUI Galway).

Student Support

NUI Galway recognises that the decision to return to learning, especially as an adult, may be daunting. Students often feel anxious and doubt their ability to succeed in a University level





course. In response the University provides a range of progressive learning supports which cater to the varying requirements and prior learning experiences of our students. These supports address the development of:

- Study Skills
- Academic Writing skills
- Referencing Skills
- Online Learning Skills

All learners are respected regardless of their prior learning achievements.

Accreditation

Participants will have opportunities to achieve accreditation throughout the cycle of the course, recognising their efforts and achievements at different stages:

Certificate in Arts - Early Childhood Studies and Practice (NFQ Level 7 Certificate) will be awarded on the successful completion of Year 1. Minor Award (45 ECTS)

Diploma in Arts - Early Childhood Studies and Practice (NFQ Level 7 Diploma) will be awarded at the end of Year 2. Minor Award (90 ECTS)

Bachelor of Arts - Early Childhood Studies and Practice (NFQ Level 8 Degree) will be awarded on the successful completion of full course at the end of year 4. Major Award (180 ECTS)

Course Modules

Year One: Certificate Cycle

	ECTS
Introduction to Learning	5
Psychology: The Developing Child 1	10
Safeguarding Young Children in Early Years Settings	10
Creative Development in Early Years	5
Health, Hygiene and Nutrition in Early Childhood	5
Work-based Project – Year 1	10

Year Two: Diploma Cycle

	ECTS
Psychology: The Developing Child 2	10
Implementing the Early Years Curriculum	10
The Child and Family in Irish Law	5
Quality Awareness in Early Learning	10
Work-based Project – Year 2	10

Year Three: Degree Cycle

	ECTS
Children and Families in Society	10
Management Skills for Early Years Environments	10
Understanding Children's Early Learning	5
Effective Leadership and Professionalism for the Early Years Sector	5
Social Research Methodologies	5
Work-based Project – Year 3	10

Year Four: Degree Cycle

	ECTS
Promoting Inclusion in Early Years Care and Education	10
Irish Social, Family and Childcare Policies: Critical Analysis	10
Critical Reflection on Learning and Practice	5
Research Dissertation	20

10 ECTS modules will require attendance at a two day workshop and 5 ECTS modules will require attendance at a one day workshop.

Workshops

Students will be expected to attend a number of full day workshops throughout each academic year (September to May). In the main, these workshops will be held on Saturdays, with higher weighted modules requiring an additional two or three Friday workshops each year. Dates for all workshops will be provided to students at the commencement of each academic year. Workshops will be organised to be geographically accessible to the majority of learners. To date, a number of outreach centres have been established throughout the country. Previous venues have included Galway, Limerick, Cork, Donegal, Dundalk, Maynooth and Cavan. The number and location of venues held each year of the course is contingent on student uptake, the geographical spread of applicants and the availability of resources to support the course.



Achieving the degree has also opened many doors and provided a range of professional opportunities for me.



Professional Competence and Career Relevance

The Early Years sector in Ireland has become the constant focus of State attention, impacting on funding, on regulatory and inspection processes, with increasing expectations for practitioners to offer pedagogical leadership within services of high quality. Evidence points to the increasing need for practitioners to hold a degree level qualification in order to raise the quality of provision and to enhance the experiences of the children attending their settings. Practitioners must be able to respond to these

needs and will require an expert knowledge and skills base to be able to do so effectively. The BA in Early Childhood Studies and Practice will provide you with the opportunity to gain an in depth understanding of the core early years knowledge areas and the confidence to apply this knowledge in support of young children's needs.

You will learn about:

- Child development including key theorists and the influence of environmental, biological, social and cultural factors on growth and development.
- Approaches to curriculum for early childhood and processes involved in curriculum development.
- The role and importance of play.
- Socialisation and the significance it has for the development of social competencies in children.
- The importance of parental involvement in early years care and education.
- Leadership and management skills and their significance for quality provision in the early years sector.

Using experiential learning to underpin and reinforce understanding is a key component of this course. You will learn the skills of reflective practice and how to use them in your daily work practices so that you can apply the core knowledge and skills acquired throughout this course. You will see your competencies expand and grow improving your ability as a professional practitioner with an in-depth understanding of the holistic needs of children and families, the importance of evidenced-informed practice and the role of early years services in the broader community and policy context.

In addition to course specific knowledge and expertise graduates of the BA can also expect to achieve the following **Graduate Attributes:**

- Ability to solve new challenges and problems

- Ability to make sense of complex information from a variety of sources
- Communication skills in a variety of contexts, styles and media
- Teamwork, collaboration and effective leadership skills
- Ability to be creative, enterprising and resourceful
- Personal responsibility and a commitment to lifelong learning
- Valuing of ethical and professional standards, integrity, responsibility and good citizenship
- Appreciation of the importance of place, identity and culture in a global context

Career Opportunities

A Level 8 honours degree will open many doors for exciting career opportunities within the Irish sector. Your career opportunities will grow as you will be able to hold a wider variety of occupational roles. Upon completion of this degree course students will be qualified to be employed in a variety of early years settings, including preschool settings, full daycares/crèches, playgroups, after school settings, drop in centres as well as a range of specialised locations such as family intervention settings. Due to the extensive range of course topics covered, the graduate will be skilled in a wide range of issues and areas that might also see them employed in early years support organisations, such as county/city childcare committees, in community outreach and development settings, family and community resource centres, or at a national level contributing to policy or course development arena.

Since completing the degree-level of the BA, graduates of NUI Galway have become employed in County Childcare Committees, as Better Start and Aim Mentors, with POBAL, as LINC tutors, as lecturers at Institutes of Technology and at the University level. Other graduates are now working abroad in the ECEC sector in New Zealand, Australia and the UK.



Progression Opportunities

The Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development at NUI Galway offers a part-time Level 9 Masters in Early Childhood Studies which was designed specifically as a progression opportunity for graduates of the BA in Early Childhood Studies and Practice. Full details listed further on in this brochure.

Other progression opportunities are also available at higher diploma or master degree level in community development, education and training, family studies and family support, to name a few.

The University also offers a range of Continuous Professional Development opportunities.



The blended learning on this course ideally suited my circumstances; I was able to continue to work, attend workshops and complete my studies in conjunction with my family life.



www.nuigalway.ie/adultlearning/courses/early-childhood-studies

COURSE FACTS

ECTS: 180

NFQ Level: 8

Duration: 4 years, part-time

Mode of study: Blended Learning /Distance Learning

Fees: (per annum)

EU: €2,900 **Non-EU:** €3,400

(Fees may be paid by instalment)

Start date: Late August

APPLY ONLINE

www.nuigalway.ie/adultlearning/apply

CONTACT

 Valerie Kelly

 +353 (0)91 492080

 valerie.kelly@nuigalway.ie

Master of Arts (EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES)

Course Overview

The Masters of Arts (Early Childhood Studies) has been developed to meet the needs of professionals working in or supporting the early years care and education sector, and may also be attractive to individuals with a particular interest in the area. The course is designed to complement and support continued employment, however, it is not restricted to those employed in early years practice settings. This part-time blended distance learning course was designed to interact with the developing policy, practice and research environment in early years care and education. It is inspired by the continued evolution of the early years sector in Ireland, with contextual influence from Europe and from International trends.

The course content has been developed to reflect contemporary approaches and understandings of family life, childhood, play and pedagogical philosophies as they inform the early years sector. Students will engage with advanced and critical theories, exploring evolving policy, social research, child protection, integrated working as well as professional leadership and practice. Cutting across all modules and underpinning the ethos of the course will be a children's rights perspective, facilitated through a strong reflective element, supporting students to analyse, critique and challenge dominant discourses, perceived values as well as the on-going developments within the practice and policy environment.

The course places a strong emphasis on experiential knowledge and skills, along with a capacity to study independently, and as such places significant weighting on reflective engagement with assigned content, readings and self-directed participation in learning activities.

This course aims to provide an opportunity for professionals working in the early years sector, in complimentary professions or those with an interest in early childhood education and care, to extend their knowledge, skills and abilities through post graduate study at an established University, delivered in a flexible and accessible manner.

Who should apply?

This course is aimed at people who may already possess a recognised early years third level qualification and who wish to upgrade their qualification in a part-time, flexible manner. This will increase their opportunities to progress into broader professional roles (e.g. management, training, policy development, advocacy or research) and new emerging roles (e.g. mentoring and leadership) within the early years sector. Potential students with an undergraduate qualification in an area not related to early years, but who are currently working in, and have extensive experience of the sector or are in professional roles which complement and interact with the early years sector, are also encouraged to apply.



This course has changed my practice as an early years professional in a positive way.



Entry Requirements

1. **Academic** Students are normally required to have a minimum of a 2.2, NFO Level 8, primary degree award in Early Childhood Studies and Practice, in Early Years Education and Care, in Social Care, or in a related discipline.
2. **Experiential** Applicants should have minimum of 3 years of relevant working experience, or equivalent.
3. **Technological** Applicants must have good digital literacy skills and have access to the internet.

Numbers are limited and students may be required to attend for interview prior to being offered a place on the course.

English language requirement

Applicants may be required to provide evidence of proficiency in English, at the higher level required by the Course.

Delivery

The course will be delivered on a part-time modular basis over two years using a blended learning approach. Blended learning combines traditional learning approaches with distance learning and utilises a variety of teaching methods and assessment techniques. Attendance at workshops and tutorials forms an integral part of the overall learning experience.

Assessment

Innovative and authentic assessments methods are used throughout the course which will enable learners to demonstrate capabilities and competencies as well as academic knowledge. Methods may include written assignments, reflective journals, e-learning and multi-media exercises, group projects, practical assignments, presentations and reports, though this list is not exhaustive.

Course Modules

Historical perspectives of childhood and family life (5 ECTS)

Ireland has experienced significant change in family structure, family formation, and family-related attitudes and practices over the past 40 years. In addition, our understanding of childhood has changed to a contemporary, rights based perspective, reflected in the recent amendments to the Irish Constitution. This module will explore trends in family life and parenting, focusing on challenges and transitions faced by families from a range theoretical perspectives.

Contemporary perspectives on play, learning and pedagogy (10 ECTS)

This module will explore contemporary issues and perspectives on play, learning and pedagogy concerning ECEC. Drawing from a range of theoretical perspectives, learners will explore and analyse existing debates, emerging issues and current approaches, with an aim of developing critical and reflective thinking skills, enabling transformative practice within the early years sector.

Integrated community-based work practice (5 ECTS)

Recent changes in the policy arena and the reform of services in Ireland designed to support children and families have created renewed attention to interagency and collaborative practice. This module will explore the theoretical underpinning to integrated community based work, examine past approaches and critically examine the 'new' direction in service provision. A children's rights lens will be applied to the examination of interventions designed to improve early childhood experiences.

Children's rights and well-being: current issues (10 ECTS)

The starting point of this module is the recognition that human rights are the entitlement of all people and acknowledging children as individual rights holders. From this perspective, the module explores current policy and practice issues, critiquing their impact on rights and wellbeing in early childhood. Key areas of analysis include the issues of risk and vulnerability, safeguarding and child protection, exploring conceptual understandings and the relation of these to quality of practice.

Research in the social sciences (10 ECTS)

This module explores principles, skills and knowledge relating to planning and designing research in the social sciences. It examines qualitative and quantitative methods as well as underpinning theoretical assumptions. The use of secondary data in social research will be examined as both an alternative and as a supplement to data collection methods and research design. The growing emphasis on 'research informed' practice, supporting the development of 'research literacy' will also be a focus.

Engaging children as social researchers (5 ECTS)

Reflecting Irish policy, involving children in the research process enables comprehensive insights into the lives of children, their views and voice. Building on the module Research in the Social Sciences, this module extends the discussion to consider engaging children as active research participants. The module explores specific principles, theories and skills relating to research strategies involving children, including theoretical assumptions, research design, and research ethics.

Supporting families through early years provision (5 ECTS)

Changing Irish social behaviours have seen an increase in familial use of early years settings to meet care obligations. The presence of ECEC in families' lives suggests services are well placed to support families facing daily challenges, as well as those families experiencing increasing difficulties, who may be deemed vulnerable or at risk. This module examines the potential of Family Support within ECEC settings as both an informal method of working, and as a formal, deliberate, development.

Leadership, mentorship and emerging professions (10 ECTS)

The Irish ECEC sector has undergone rapid development and ongoing change in the past two decades. This evolution created space for emerging professional roles, situated under the broad umbrella of early years practice, including, mentoring, leadership, management, parent support, research, advocacy and policy development work, inspection and oversight positions, amongst others. This module will focus on the skills, abilities, responsibilities and theoretical approaches to these new varied roles.

Dissertation (30 ECTS)

The Dissertation Module will support students to plan, manage and develop the research necessary to produce a dissertation of sectoral relevance and having appropriate academic rigour. In developing a practical understanding of the research process students will be supported in project management, the analysis of data, the use of statistics, referencing and citing.

*NOTE: Modules are subject to change. Modules of equivalent status will be offered when changes are made.

Awards

A Master of Arts (Early Childhood Studies) at Level 9 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) will be awarded on the successful attainment of 90 ECTS.

Students who exit the course having accumulated 60 ECTS may be awarded an NFQ Level 9 Postgraduate Diploma in Arts (Early Childhood Studies).

Students who exit the course having accumulated 30 ECTS may be awarded an NFQ Level 9 Postgraduate Certificate in Arts (Early Childhood Studies).

Professional Competence and Career Opportunities

Graduates of this course will be well-placed to take on leadership and development roles, impacting progressively on the ever-evolving Irish ECEC sector. Potential roles include teaching and research, policy development, mentoring or inspecting, advocacy and support as well as management of ECEC settings.

You will learn how to effectively engage with other professionals and increase your awareness of the value of integrated working across a variety of services and agencies. This will make you well placed to contribute to the development of strengths-based approaches to working with families and children.

The MA in Early Childhood Studies will provide you with the ability to take a children's rights perspective across all content, in particular, on the issues of child protection, risk and vulnerability, safeguarding children and promoting wellbeing through early years practice, policy and research. This will also expand your ability to work in broader professional roles.

Upon successful completion of this course you can expect to have developed a range of personal and professional skills and abilities, including specialist knowledge developed through research, reflecting each student's own particular interest area. In addition, your enhanced knowledge in regards to the contemporary

developments in the early childhood education and care arena will ensure that you are well placed to participate in the on-going and progressive expansion of the early years sector in Ireland.

Upon completing this MA, students with a 2.1 or higher grade average may be interested in pursuing further education through doctoral studies at NUI Galway or another suitable institution.



This course has helped to build my confidence and has also given me the opportunity to broaden my career prospects.



www.nuigalway.ie/adultlearning/courses/early-childhood-studies

COURSE FACTS

ECTS: 90

NFQ Level: 9

Duration: 2 years, part-time

Mode of study: Blended Learning

Fees EU: Year 1: €4,200

(Fees may be paid by instalment)

Year 2: €3,700

Fees Non-EU: Year 1: €4,700 **Year 2:** €4,200

Start date: September

APPLY ONLINE

www.nuigalway.ie/adultlearning/apply

CONTACT

Valerie Kelly

+353 (0)91 492080

valerie.kelly@nuigalway.ie

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

For Advanced Entry to the BA course

Advanced Entry to Year 3

Applicants with a Level 7 degree in Early Childhood Studies/Early Years Education who wish to apply for advanced entry may be considered for direct entry into Year 3 of the part-time Level 8 BA course. Upon the successful completion of year 3 and year 4 they will be awarded the Level 8 BA degree in Early Childhood Studies and Practice. Students must also meet the other standard BA entry criteria regarding prior work experience.

Advanced Entry to Year 2 (New)

Applicants with a Level 6 Major Award in Early Childhood Care and Education (6M2007) with Distinction who wish to apply for advanced entry may be considered for direct entry into Year 2 of the part-time Level 8 BA course. Upon the successful completion of year 2, year 3 and year 4 they will be awarded the Level 8 BA degree in Early Childhood Studies and Practice. Students must also meet the other standard BA entry criteria regarding prior work experience.

Students approved for Advanced entry to Year 2 or Year 3 will be required to attend a one day Bridging Course in late August.

For Entry to the MA course

Applicants who do not meet the standard entry criteria for the Masters in Early Childhood Studies may be eligible to apply through the University's Recognition of Prior Learning Pathway (RPL).

For Module Exemption

Students with previous relevant qualifications at NFQ Level 7 or 8 may be eligible to apply for exemption from modules on the BA course of study. Students with previous relevant qualifications at NFQ Level 9 may be eligible to apply for exemption from modules on the MA course of study.

Applicants applying for advanced entry or module exemption will be required to submit full copies of their previous awards and transcripts when making their application.

Further information on the RPL process may be obtained from the course RPL co-ordinator.

 Suzanne Golden

 091 492659

 suzanne.golden@nuigalway.ie

CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development has made it even easier to experience our unique learning approach. Through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) you can manage your own professional knowledge and skills on an ongoing basis. The CPD approach means that modules from the BA in Early Childhood Studies and Practice or the MA in Early Childhood Studies can be taken on a stand alone basis. Any stand alone modules successfully completed can be presented for Recognition of Prior Learning should you decide to join the full award course at a later stage. Applicants will be expected to meet the standard entry criteria of the parent award. Sample modules offered include:

Level 8

Psychology: The Developing Child, Safeguarding Young Children in Early Years Settings, Implementing the Early Years Curriculum, Quality Awareness in Early Learning, Management Skills for Early Years Environments, Understanding Children's Early Learning, Effective Leadership and Professionalism for the Early Years Sector.

Level 9

Contemporary perspectives on play, learning and pedagogy; Integrated community-based work practice; Children's rights and well-being: current issues.

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