

Dear Student,

Congratulations on entering the first year of our new M.A. in Early Childhood Studies programme. To comply with NUI Galway academic standards, attendance at all scheduled full day workshops is a requirement for programme completion of the M.A. in Early Childhood Studies. Failure to attend either a full Workshop, or part thereof, will require the completion of a Compensatory Assignment. If you miss more than one Workshop, you will be deemed to have failed the attendance requirements of the course. Students are expected to attend workshops approximately once every 3 to 4 weeks. This averages out at 8 full day seminars (Year 1: 6 seminars held on Saturdays; 3 on Fridays).

University Student Registration

Please ensure you register as a student of the programme by following the instructions given in the email sent to you following your acceptance of a place on the programme i.e. email titled: Confirmation of your place & Registration information. This email details your student number which you will require to register. Registration is conducted online at <http://www.nuigalway.ie/registration/>; please find enclosed a Registration Flyer with instructions on this process. You must upload a picture during this process so as to generate your student ID card. For queries about the registration process only; contact the Registration Helpdesk at reghelp@nuigalway.ie.

Orientation Day

All students are required to attend a mandatory Orientation Day. Course content and course delivery will be discussed this day. Module workbooks for all subjects in the first year of the programme will be made available to you at this session and student ID cards will be sent to you by post in September.

The orientation day will take place this year as follows:-

Date: Saturday, 8th September 2018

Venue: To be confirmed

Time: 9.30 am to 4.30pm (**NOTE:** Registration takes place on a rolling basis between 9.30 – 10.00 a.m. Please ensure your arrive no later than 9.45 a.m.).

Fees

The full fee for this course is €4,200.00. This fee includes the cost of above mentioned course module handbooks. Following submission of a €500 deposit upon acceptance of offer, students must pay 50% of the remaining course fee (i.e. €2,850) by Wednesday 31st October 2018. The remaining €1,850 is due by 31th January 2019. Payment should be made out to NUI Galway and **must be by Bank Draft or Postal Order only**. Please send to MA in Early Childhood Studies, Programme Administrator, Adult Learning and



An tIonad Foghlama agus
Forbartha Gairmiúla
d'Aosaigh

Centre for Adult Learning
and Professional Development

Professional Development, NUI Galway, Nuns' Island, Galway. Receipts will be issued accordingly once payment is received.

Books

We will provide information on books to be obtained for the forthcoming year at Orientation.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any queries or wish to discuss any aspects of Year 1:
suzanne.golden@nuigalway.ie / sheila.garrity@nuigalway.ie / Valerie.kelly@nuigalway.ie

Yours sincerely,

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Programme Co-ordinator
BA in Early Childhood Studies
and Practice

Dr. Sheila Garrity
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BA in Early Childhood Studies
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NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

EARLY
CHILDHOOD
STUDIES



MASTER OF ARTS- EARLY CHILDHOOD STUDIES

2018-2019

Student Academic Guide

Table of Contents

1 Introduction	4
1.1 Contact Information.....	4
1.2 Distance and Blended Learning	4
1.3 Student ID Card.....	4
2 Course Description	5
2.1 Modules	6
2.2 Learning Activities.....	6
3 Workshops	7
3.1 Workshop Attendance Requirements	7
3.2 Workshop Activities	7
3.3 Workshop etiquette.....	7
3.4 Workload Requirements	8
4. Assessment Strategy	8
4.1 Assignments	8
5 Marks and Standards	9
5.1 Re-submits.....	9
5.2 Failure to reach a passing grade	9

6 Withdrawal, Deferral and Result Appeal.....	10
6.1 Withdrawal.....	10
6.2 Deferral to the next Academic Year.....	10
6.3 Results Appeal	10
7 Preparing your Assignments	10
7.1 Clarifying the Task.....	11
7.2 Structuring Your Assignments	11
7.3 Practical tips for completing your assignments:.....	15
7.4 Word Count and Submission dates.....	15
7.4.1. Word Count Recommendations	16
7.4.2 Submission Dates	16
7.4.3 Late Assignments	16
7.5 Deferral to the Autumn Board.....	17
7.6 Assessment of Assignments	18
8 Online Learning System	20
8.1 Blackboard Learning System	20
8.2 Resolving Technical Issues.....	21
9 Ethical Guidelines.....	21
9.1 Authenticity	21
9.2 Consent and Confidentiality.....	21
10 Plagiarism	22

11 Student Code of Practice	23
12 Academic Support System	23
12.1 How Others Can Help You	23
12.2 Managing Your Study Time	24
12.2.1 Planning Your Study Time.....	24
12.2.2 Planning Your Study Session.....	24
12.3 Student Services and Support	25
12.3.1 James Hardiman Library	25
12.3.2 Other Support Services.....	25
12.3.3 The Academic Skills Hub.....	25
13 Course Fees	26
14 Conferring	26
15 Conclusion	27
16 References and Recommended Reading	27

1 Introduction

This guide introduces you to the *MA in Early Childhood Studies*, a modular based course delivered, assessed and certified by the National University of Ireland, Galway. The course is delivered using a blended learning approach. This includes self-study, tutor led workshops and the use of the Blackboard Virtual Learning Management System.

This Student Academic Guide aims to inform you about the course structure and content and identifies what you are required to do to complete the course successfully. It informs you on the many aspects involved in your course of study and should be used by you as your primary resource to answer questions you may have about various aspects of your involvement in your course.

1.1 Contact Information

Name	Telephone/E-mail
Valerie Kelly Course Administrator	091 492080 Valerie.kelly@nuigalway.ie
Suzanne Golden Course Co-ordinator	091 492659 suzanne.golden@nuigalway.ie
Dr. Sheila Garrity Academic Director	091 492062 Sheila.garrity@nuigalway.ie
Mailing Address	Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development, National University of Ireland, Galway, Nun's Island, Galway

1.2 Distance and Blended Learning

The programme is delivered through the medium of *Distance and Blended Learning*. The course follows the general structure of the academic year (September – April) and is organised around specific workshop dates and assessment deadlines. Within this structural framework, the medium of *Distance and Blended Learning* offers a flexible model of learning. The learning materials contain learning features to guide you through the text and you may study course module materials at your own pace and at times of your choice.

1.3 Student ID Card

When you register as a student in NUI Galway, you will be issued with a student ID card. Please note a passport photograph must be supplied to enable the printing of your ID card. A delay in supplying a photograph will mean a delay in supplying your ID card. Your student ID card will be valid for the full duration of your course of study whatever that may be. You are advised to safeguard your card; there is a fee (€30) for a replacement card.

2 Course Description

The University's awards and degree courses are organised in accordance with the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS). **Courses** of study are organised into specific units of study called **Modules**. Each Module is a unit of teaching and learning formally offered within the University, and carries credit expressed as a number of credit points in accordance with the ECTS.

The MA in Early Childhood Studies comprises a number of modules and awards. Course modules are allocated either 5 or 10 ECTS credits (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). Awards are made at Level 9 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ).

Postgraduate Certificate in Arts (Early Childhood Studies):	Level 9 (Minor)
Postgraduate Diploma in Arts (Early Childhood Studies):	Level 9 (Major)
Master of Arts (Early Childhood Studies):	Level 9 (Major)

Table 1 provides an Overview of Course Modules, awards, NFQ Levels and ECTS.

Master of Arts (Early Childhood Studies)		
Module Code	Module Name	ECTS Credits
	Year One	
EYS1113	Historical Perspectives on childhood and family life	5
EYS 1115	Contemporary perspectives on play, learning and pedagogy	10
EYS1114	Integrated community-based work practices	5
EYS1112	Children's rights and wellbeing: current issues	10
EYS1116	Research in the social sciences	10
EYS1111	Engaging children as social researchers	5
	Year Two	
EYS1117	Supporting families through early years provision	5
EYS1118	Leadership, mentorship and emerging professions	10
EYS1119	Research Dissertation	30
	Master of Arts (Early Childhood Studies): Level 9	90
Note: Course Modules are subject to change		

Table 1

For further information on ECTS credits and award levels visit the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland at <http://www.nqai.ie>

2.1 Modules

The module is the basic unit of the course. Each module explores different aspects and theories of early childhood, childcare, early education and professional practice. The module has both print and on line resources to aid you in your learning. The learning material is organised into units and sections with associated summaries. For ease of reference, it is important to become familiar with this layout.

You are required to **read** the learning content **before** you attend the workshop. You may have learning activities to prepare and submit before you attend the workshop. Later, when you attend the workshop, you will take part in exercises that draw from the learning content. It is crucial that you have a good understanding of the material before you come to the workshop. Equally, you might have some questions about material or theories that are not clear to you which you can usefully discuss at the workshop.

Reading the material in advance of the workshop is the first step towards taking responsibility for your own learning

The module is an important source of information about context and theory.

2.2 Learning Activities

As you work through each section you are presented with learning activities which require you to reflect and form conclusions on the basis of the reading and study that you have completed. Some of these can be done independently. Others require you to work with other learners or to consult with colleagues. Sometimes it may not be practical for you to do an activity there and then. An obvious example would be if you were working at home and the activity required you to discuss something with your fellow learners. When this happens you may skip over the activity for the time being and read on. But you must make a commitment to carry out the activity at the earliest possible opportunity.

Activities give you the opportunity to test theory and apply your own experience

3 Workshops

Workshops are a central feature of course delivery and are organised throughout the academic cycle. Each module of the course has an associated workshop session. Workshops are facilitated by experienced tutors and focus on learning activities that help you explore knowledge and skills that you learned about in your module text.

This section outlines:

- Workshop attendance requirements
- Workshops activities
- Workshop etiquette

3.1 Workshop Attendance Requirements

Attendance at full day workshops is an NUI Galway requirement for course completion. There will be a total of nine workshops for you to attend during the first year of the course. There is a two-day workshop session for each of the 10 ECTS modules, occurring on both Friday and Saturdays, and a one-day workshop for each 5 ECTS modules, taking place on Saturdays, only. You are expected to attend the workshop sessions.

The workshops will give you an opportunity to meet with course teaching staff and with other course participants to exchange views and discuss problems. You can ask questions and share progress. The workshops will include practical exercises to relate the contents of the modules to your work context. You will also receive guidance on assignments and projects.

3.2 Workshop Activities

Workshops are designed to include learning activities that facilitate exploration and understanding of ideas and concepts that you learned about in the course modules. Experienced tutors facilitate lectures, discussions and group work designed to present new information in ways that assist your engagement with course material. You are encouraged to draw on practical experience and to apply new learning to work related situations and contexts. Participation in group learning activities enhances the learning process. In addition to the more formal aspects of workshops, course workshops provide opportunities to meet fellow students, to compare experiences and to develop study and professional networks.

3.3 Workshop etiquette

You are expected to arrive on time for workshops. Workshops start at 9:15 am and close at 5:15 pm. You are required to sign an attendance sheet for each day of workshop attended. If you are late for a workshop or if you leave a workshop early, you **will be required** to complete a Late Arrival /Early Departure Form.

During workshops, you are expected to:

- Treat tutors with dignity and respect
- Treat other students with dignity and respect
- Switch off/silence mobile phones
- Participate in group activities

- Participate in discussions
- Keep discussion to topic
- Complete the workshop

3.4 Workload Requirements

To comply with University academic standards, distance learning courses must adhere to student workload requirements. Workload includes self-study, workshop attendance, assignment completion, and in the case of part time students, experiential integration of learning. In the case of the MA in Early Childhood Studies, workshop requirements have been scheduled through workshop attendance requirements. To comply with requirements, students are **obliged** to attend **all** scheduled workshops.

4. Assessment Strategy

Each module delivered as part of the course will have a specified assessment strategy. The assessment strategy indicates what academic work needs to be completed successfully by the learner. Modules may be assessed in any combination of the following: formal written examinations, assignments, projects, essays, papers, reports, presentations & debates, locally-set exercises, laboratory or field-work, or other experiential learning.

Most modules on this course will have at least two separate pieces of academic work. These elements will be weighted in relation to the overall marks for the individual module. For example, 10% of the marks might be allocated to learning activities, 10% to Reflective learning exercises and 80% to an assignment. The module tutor will advise you of the assessment strategy associated with his/her module.

4.1 Assignments

After reading the module, completing the learning activities and attending a course workshop, students are required to undertake an assignment. The assignments, which will be outlined at the workshops, relate to material covered in that module. They emphasise the practical application of new knowledge and skills.

Each major assignment will be made available on Blackboard before the workshop to give you an opportunity to review it and to formulate questions you may have. However you should not complete the assignment until after the relevant workshop. Students will have an opportunity to discuss the assignment with the tutor at the workshop. You are usually given three weeks in which to complete and submit an assignment. The submission dates will be advised by your module tutor and will also be listed on Blackboard in the relevant module area. You should follow all assignment guidelines given to you by your tutor and by the Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development. **It is essential to include a title page with all assignments.**

Please note that all assignments, projects and other requirements must be submitted through Blackboard, unless otherwise directed, by the due date. The University will not be responsible for materials forwarded by email or fax. **Students should keep a hard copy of all work submitted to the University. The Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development will not accept responsibility for material lost in transit.**

5 Marks and Standards

The marking system for assignments, examinations and projects is as follows:

Percentage Grade

70+	A	Excellent
60 – 69	B	Very Good
50 – 59	C	Good
45 – 50	D+	Satisfactory
40 – 44	D	Acceptable
0 – 39	E	

Grade E is a fail grade.

NOTE: You must achieve a passing grade in all assessment components of each module in order to successfully complete the module.

5.1 Re-submits

If the minimum standard of 40% is not achieved, you will be given the opportunity to re-submit the assignment one more time. The assessor will recommend changes, additions and alterations to you. **The re-submit work will be capped at 40%** and a maximum of three weeks will be allowed to complete requirements. For each module, only one re-submit is permitted. If the re-submit fails to reach a passing grade, you will be required to attend the University for an Oral Examination.

Note: All assignments not achieving the minimum standard of 40% have been double marked.

5.2 Failure to reach a passing grade

If a student fails to reach a passing mark for a module, then the student will be required to repeat the module in the following academic year. A registration fee of 10% of the yearly tuition fee will apply. In addition, write-up fees may apply. The amount of the write-up fee will depend on the number and weighting of modules being retaken

Candidates must complete each academic year before entry to subsequent years. Candidates who do not complete all course requirements in one academic year (such as attending a workshop, completing each assignment and course project) may request, in writing, to defer completion and to carry forward marks following consultation and within a time frame agreed with the University. The University reserves the right to refuse deferral. Students who defer completion to the next academic year will encounter a re-registration fee of 10 % of the course fee.

6 Withdrawal, Deferral and Result Appeal

6.1 Withdrawal

It is important that if you are in circumstances that prevent you from completing your studies that you contact the Course Administrator to discuss your options. Don't just 'drop out' of your course. **If you are considering withdrawing from your course of study please contact the Course Administrator.**

6.2 Deferral to the next Academic Year

Candidates who do not complete all course requirements in one academic year (such as attending a workshop, completing each assignment and course project) may request, in writing, to defer completion and to carry forward marks following consultation and within a time frame agreed with the University. The University reserves the right to refuse a deferral.

Students who wish to apply for deferral to the next academic year must complete a course deferral form and return it to the course administrator. Students who defer completion to the next academic year will encounter a re-registration fee of 10% of the course fee. An additional 'writing up' fee may also be applied.

Please contact the Course Administrator if you are considering a deferral to the next academic year.

6.3 Results Appeal

There is a strict procedure regarding the appeal of results. If you wish to appeal your results after receipt of your final end-of-year results, you may do so in writing. You will need to set out the grounds on which you are appealing. Your appeal must be submitted to the Registrar within a specific date following the issue of results of the Summer Boards Examination or the Autumn Boards Examination. Information on appealing a result is available at: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/exams/appeals.html>

There will be a fee for a result appeal.

7 Preparing your Assignments

Note: Refer to the *Introduction to Learning* module workbook which outlines how to develop and structure academic assignments in greater detail.

Over the course of the year, you will be required to submit a significant amount of written work. Assignment guidelines will explain what you are expected to consider in your answer. We will also expect a formal style of writing and presentation.

7.1 Clarifying the Task

Before you start researching and planning your assignment, you need to ensure that you know exactly what is required of you. To do this, carefully read the Assignment Brief a few times, identify the *academic key words*, further instructions and the word count given for the assignment. The academic key words (for example, discuss, critically assess) indicate the approach expected in the assignment. Further instructions could indicate the context in which you need to apply the action indicated by the academic key words. For example, you might be asked to “*Assess the value of play in early years care and education*”. The word count will guide you as to the level of detail required in the assignment. (*The Study Skills Handbook* by Stella Cottrell includes a comprehensive list of Academic keywords).

7.2 Structuring Your Assignments

Your assignments should be structured along particular guidelines. While individual assignment guidelines may differ in some aspects, the general structure of assignments should adhere to the following guidelines:

- **Assignment Title Page:** – see Box 1 an Assignment Title Page template and Box 2 for an example of a completed Assignment Title Page. **All** assignments should have an assignment title page.
- **Table of contents** (essays generally do not have a table of contents, reports do)
- **Glossary** – if applicable, where you explain technical language or concepts that are specific to your topic.
- **Acronyms** – if applicable, where you explain acronyms used in your submission.
- **Introduction:** the introduction should explain what the report or essay is going to do:
 - Describe the topic or question that you are writing about. Give some relevant background and explain why the topic is worth writing about.
 - Explain the purpose of the report or essay. The purpose of the report or essay should reflect the assignment task. For example, if you are asked to ‘discuss’ elements or aspects of child protection training, the purpose of the report or essay should reflect this.
 - Explain the scope of the report or essay. This means explaining the issues about the topic that will be included in your report or essay.
 - Provide a plan of development. This means providing a brief overview of how you intend to set out your report or essay. The plan of development is like a prose version of the table of contents.
 - The introduction should have a word count of between 5% and 10% of the total word count requirements of the assignment.

- **Main Body:** the main body of the assignment is where you develop the elements or aspects of the topic that you mentioned in the introduction. It is the most important element of the assignment. Keep in mind the assignment requirements and guidelines. Ensure that you cover **all** required elements. The main body should:
 - Tackle the assignment topic in a logical and coherent way.
 - Use headings to set out the elements of the topic and to signpost what is to come.
 - Be structured into paragraphs that deal with one main point and that reflect headings.
- **Conclusion:** the conclusion draws together the main points that your assignment has developed. Link the conclusion to the purpose of the essay or report to develop one general conclusion, pointing out its significance. Never introduce new material into the conclusion.
- **Reference List:** list **all** the sources that you cited in your assignment. Entries should be listed in alphabetical order according to the author.
- **Appendix:** this is where you include any extra material that you have referred to in the report or essay. Do not include any material that you have not referred to in the report or essay. Please note not every assignment will have an appendix.

When completing your assignment, keep in mind that marks are awarded for content **and** presentation.

Box 1: Assignment Title Page Template

Name of Course of Study
Course Year (e.g. Year 1/2)

Academic Year (e.g. 2016/2017)

Module Code
Title of Module
Title of Assignment

Your Name
Your Student ID number

Date Assignment Completed

Word count allocated and word count used

I certify that this assignment is my original work and all research references have been acknowledged appropriately.

Box 2: Example of a completed Assignment Title Page

**MA in Early Childhood Studies and Practice
Year 1**

Academic year:2016/2017

EYS1113
Historical perspectives on childhood and family life
Written Essay

Mary Murphy
Student ID: 01234567

13th November 2018

Word count allocated (2000 words)
Word count used (2056 words)

*I certify that this assignment is my original work and all research references have been
acknowledged appropriately.*

7.3 Practical tips for completing your assignments:

- All reports/essays must be typed in a 12 point font and double-spaced.
- Use an easy to read font style such as Times New Roman or Arial.
- Use regular type (not bold or italics) except for circumstances as described below. In general bold type and italics should be used sparingly.
- Use bold type for headings.
- Use italics when naming the title of a publication or Latin abbreviations such as *et al.* Italics can also be used in a heading style.
[The Harvard referencing format has its own specific rules about using italics].
- All direct quotations must be clearly identified using quotation marks.
- Use single quotation marks for direct quotations that are included as part of a sentence [e.g. Denscombe (2007, p. 247) suggests that analysing research data involves 'the search for things that lie behind the surface content of the data.']. In general, you can include a direct quotation within a sentence like this when the quotation is less than 20 words.
- For a longer direct quotation, you need to set the text apart from your text. Use a smaller font and indent the quotation. E.g.

Cottrell gives a perceptive insight to the processes used by experienced writers:

'Most experienced writers rewrite their work over and over, refining their thoughts, finding a better way of saying something, making a long-winded section a bit briefer, or adding more details to develop an idea.'

(Cottrell, 2008, pg 170)

- Direct quotations from literature sources should be carefully selected and should be used **sparingly**. If essential, they must be integrated into your text to show linkage and relevance.
- Print only on one side of the page.
- Avoid starting a new section on the bottom one-third of a page.
- Include page numbers on the bottom centre of each page (except for the title page – no number). Use small Roman numerals for the preliminary pages. Restart numbering so that the first page of the Introduction is page number 1.
- Edit your work before submitting it on Blackboard. Leave yourself time to go back over it, correcting any mistakes and aiming to make it clear and well written. Check your spelling. Use the spell check in Word to review your writing before you finalise it.

7.4 Word Count and Submission dates

Practical issues to consider when completing and submitting your assignments include:

- Word count recommendations
- Assignment due dates

7.4.1. Word Count Recommendations

Ensure that your assignment is within the allotted word count. All assignments must comply with word count limits (+/- 20%). Note: The Dissertation is (+/- 10%). You are required to include the word count on the assignment title page. The word count includes all words from the beginning of the Introduction to the end of the Conclusion. The word count of preliminary pages, Reference List and Appendices should not be included in the word count.

Penalties for exceeding the word count may be imposed.

7.4.2 Submission Dates

Ensure that your assignment is submitted online through Blackboard on or before the due date. All components of module assessment must be submitted by the due date. Outstanding components will render the total assignment late. Ensure that your name, course, date and assignment title are included on all elements of your assignment including, reports, appendices, and attachments. You should include your Student ID number on all pages of your assignment.

7.4.3 Late Assignments

All assignments must be submitted by the due date attached to each module. If this is not adhered to, the assignment will be deemed late. Assignments that fail (without a formal deferral application) to meet the end-of-year submission deadline will not be presented at the Summer examination board. In such cases, late submissions will be presented to the Autumn examination boards. Students submitting to the Autumn Board will be deemed to be absent from the Summer board and to have failed the first sitting. In cases where students present to the Autumn Board (without an approved deferral) they will be considered repeat students and marks will be capped at 40%. Repeat Examination Fees will also apply.

7.5 Deferral to the Autumn Board

In exceptional circumstances, and at its discretion, the College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Celtic Studies considers applications for the deferral of examinations, where grounds of ill-health, bereavement or other extraordinary circumstances can be established to the satisfaction of the College. In cases where deferrals are granted, student work in the relevant modules will be submitted to the Autumn Board.

Deferrals may only be granted by the Dean of the College of Arts, Social Sciences, and Celtic Studies or his/her agents. An application is made by completing the appropriate form before the end of April in each academic year.

Students granted a deferral by the Dean of the College in a module will not be deemed to have failed the Summer sitting and will not be liable for the resubmit fee to the Autumn Board for that module. However where a student has a deferral in some but not all modules and is submitting work to the Autumn board in modules for which there is no deferral, the Autumn fee will apply.

NOTE: The examinations office at NUI Galway imposes a fee* for submissions that fail to meet the requirements for the summer examination board. Failing the requirements may be as a result of late submission, failure to submit or a requirement to resubmit. When submissions are not presented at the Summer examinations boards and therefore must be presented at the Autumn examination board, a late fee must be paid by the student. Non-payment of fee/non-return of form will result in Repeat Results being withheld.

* Late fees are subject to change.

NOTE: It is essential that you contact your course administrator promptly when circumstances prevent you from completing your assignments on time. Late requests for extensions or deferrals will not be accepted.

Late submission penalties

The university reserves the right to cap late assignments. Assignments that are submitted late may be subject to penalties according to the following scale:

Late by up to and including 7 calendar days	deduct 10% of marks awarded
Late by 8 to 14 calendar days	deduct 15% of marks awarded
Late by 15 to 21 calendar days	deduct 20% of marks awarded
Late by more than 21 calendar days	deduct 30% of marks awarded

7.6 Assessment of Assignments

Your assignments are assessed by University tutors who provide written feedback on submissions. Assessors aim to provide feedback within four to six weeks of submission. Broadly, assessment aims to measure the extent to which you have achieved defined learning outcomes.

Assignment assessors are looking for:

- Assignments that are well written, using a formal style of writing
- Assignments that are well presented
- Evidence of your familiarity with course material
- Evidence of your ability to meet assignment criteria as indicated in the assignment guidelines
- Demonstration of your grasp of topics and issues identified in assignment guidelines
- Evidence of your ability to relate theory to practical issues in training and/or education
- Demonstration of analytical skills in which you discuss relationships between different elements of an issue or problem
- Evidence of your ability to draw on relevant sources of information to support your points
- Presentation of your points in a well-organised and logical manner
- Assignments that stick to the assignment brief, that do not go off the point and that do not repeat the same ideas in different words
- Use of the Harvard referencing style to acknowledge material used in the completion of your assignment

Content marks are awarded for:

- Showing that you understand the issues raised in the assignment brief
- Demonstrating your ability to relate theory to practice
- Making good general topic related points, supported by evidence from your reading and from practical examples
- Providing a clear, coherent discussion: a well argued assignment
- Demonstrating analytical ability: ability to view things from different perspectives, ability to see relationships between different elements of the topic and ability to form sensible conclusions based on evidence

Presentation marks are awarded for:

- A neat, well organised assignment
- Appropriate use of language
- Correct grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, paragraph structure
- Logical arrangement of ideas, presented in sections
- A proper title page: the title of the assignment should be located about 1/3 of the way down the page, your name, year of the course you are completing and date of submission should be included on the title page (see Box 1, page **15**) for an example of title page content.
- A comprehensive Introduction, stating the topic of the assignment, the purpose of the assignment, the scope and limitations of your treatment of the topic and outline of how the assignment is organised
- A comprehensive Conclusion drawing together the main points from the assignment; no new material should be introduced in the conclusion

- Reference List and in-text citations, correctly formatted in the Harvard Referencing Style; the Reference List should document all material you have referenced while completing the assignment: material such as course modules, books, journal articles and websites

Assignments may receive a poor grade or may not achieve a passing grade if they are assessed as demonstrating inadequate knowledge or skills. Reasons for poor grading include:

- Not addressing some elements of the assignment brief (leaving out parts of the assignment)
- Making unsupported points: that is making bald statements with no evidence either from practical examples or from reading materials (properly referenced)
- Plagiarism (see section on Academic Honesty)
- Poorly referenced material: no references to support your points, or show where you got your information (see section on Referencing)
- Ranting and raving
- Vagueness
- Very long rambling paragraphs or sentences which make little or no sense
- Assignments presented like a set of notes, lists or bullet points without proper sentences
- Assignments composed mainly of sentences quoted from the course manual or some other sources, with insufficient original student thought in them
- Assignments that repeat the same ideas in different words

8 Online Learning System

This course of study makes use of the University's virtual learning environment- **Blackboard**.

8.1 Blackboard Learning System

All students who have registered with NUI Galway and who have settled their course fees will have automatic access to the Blackboard Learning System.

This includes:

- Access to course information, course announcements, course materials, course assignments, general notifications
- Access to assignment submission utility
- Access to learning tools such as blogs, discussion groups and wikis
- Access to NUI Galway's library catalogue and electronic resources
- Access to your unique NUI Galway email account

You need your Student ID number (username) and your unique PIN (password) to access Blackboard.

You can log into Blackboard by going to <http://blackboard.nuigalway.com> and using your student ID and PIN.

NUI Galway has prepared guides on accessing and using Blackboard. They are available at: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/information-solutions-services/services-for-students/blackboard/>

It is your responsibility as an NUI Galway student to regularly access Blackboard and your NUI Galway Student Email account in order to keep up to date with:

- Course and Module announcements
- Course materials
- Assignment requirements
- Assignment submission dates
- Assignment feedback
- Email communications
- Additional material added by the tutor

8.2 Resolving Technical Issues

Should you experience difficulties with your NUI Galway email account(e.g. password) or access to and use of Blackboard you need to contact the Information Solutions and Services (ISS) Service Desk. However first of all you should access the Blackboard login page and read any system announcements. If this does not address your issue you can click on the ISS service desk icon and make contact in the way that suits you best

You can contact the ISS Service Desk directly by telephone on 091- 495777 or by email on service@nuigalway.ie

Please have your student ID number to hand and remember to advise the support staff member that you are a distance learner.

9 Ethical Guidelines

The Distance and Blended Learning approach calls for a high level of motivation from the student. It also requires good ethical practice, something that is especially important where the student proceeds through course by means of essay type assignment. In turn, the University seeks to ensure confidentiality, especially of student records. In particular, final results are issued only to the candidate in question. The Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development will not divulge your results to your employer or others on your progress as a participant on the course without your permission. In instances where the assessor is familiar with the course participant for reasons unconnected with the course, a different assessor is invited to assess work submitted.

All students must pay careful attention to the following:

9.1 Authenticity

Students taking up University courses do so for their own personal and/or professional development as well as hoping to achieve recognition through the awarding of certification for their achievements. If you get someone else to do your work for you, then both of you are collaborating in an attempt to not only deceive the University, but also to inhibit your own educational development. It may get you through the course, but it does not get you an education. We maintain that all students have the right to develop their own educational skills and that all University students and staff, have the right to be protected from deceit. To this end, the University requires all students to submit their own work and to confirm a declaration that this is so.

9.2 Consent and Confidentiality

Finally, as you work your way through the course, you may be required to work with colleagues or trainees in order to complete an assignment or project work. At all times, it is important to have informed consent and to ensure confidentiality. Again, we will return to this important ethical issue as we proceed through the course.

10 Plagiarism

In a third level institution, **plagiarism** is a serious offence. It is important that you understand clearly what plagiarism is, and how to avoid it in your assignments.

The NUI Galway Code of Practice for Dealing with Plagiarism defines plagiarism as ‘act of copying, including or directly quoting from, the work of another, including your own previous work, without adequate acknowledgement’.

Plagiarism is claiming as your own work something developed or written by someone else.

The Code states: ‘**All work submitted by students for assessment purposes**, for publication or in public presentation, **is accepted on the understanding that it is their own work and written in their own words** except where explicitly referenced using the accepted norms and formats of the appropriate academic discipline’.

The act of submitting work that you did not create as your own, for the purpose of assessment, is fraudulent. It is taking credit for someone else’s words and ideas and falsely indicating that you created the content yourself. All suspected cases will be investigated and dealt with appropriately by the University, in accordance with its Code of Practice for Dealing with Plagiarism.

You can read the full details of the University Code of Practice for Dealing with Plagiarism on the University website, ‘Current Students’ page, under ‘Academic Information’ or type the web address below:

<http://www.nuigalway.ie/plagiarism/>

To see the full Code Of Conduct for students, visit the NUI Galway website, ‘Current Students’, under ‘Academic Information’ you will find ‘Code of Conduct’.

Remember, you cannot base your assignments on chunks of material ‘borrowed’ from your course manual or other reading materials. Instead, you must form your own opinions about the assignment topic, and use your reading materials fairly to support your own ideas, making sure to cite the sources of everything you use.

In Year One of the BA in Early Childhood Studies & Practice, the first module you encounter, Introduction to Learning, sets out clearly examples of plagiarism, how to avoid plagiarism by properly citing work you wish to include to enhance your arguments and demonstrate your broad use of written material. You are strongly encouraged to refer to this section of the module as you complete assignments throughout the four years of the B.A. course, to ensure you adhere to academic standards.

11 Student Code of Practice

NUI Galway expects that students who enrol in the University, whether based directly on the University campus, or across the country engaging in distance learning at various outreach centres, give a commitment to behave in an appropriate manner.

This includes a commitment to:

- Treat every staff member with dignity and respect
- Treat every student with dignity and respect
- Acknowledge the authority of the staff of the University, both academic and support staff, in the performance of their duties
- Approach your academic endeavours with honesty and integrity
- Comply with the academic course requirements such as workshop attendance and assessment requirements
- Comply with University requirements such as a payment of fees, use of Blackboard Learning System, examination regulations
- Avoid providing false or misleading information to or withholding relevant information from any party regarding academic achievements
- Behave in a manner that enables and encourages participation in educational activities of the University and does not disrupt the functioning of the University
- Maintain the good name of the University by representing it in a way that does not discredit it.

You can read more about the Student Code of Conduct at: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/codeofconduct/>

12 Academic Support System

You may require support for academic skills development as you go through the modules in year one of the *Early Childhood Studies & Practice* course. Academic support is available in a number of different forms, including at the workshops where you will meet your fellow learners and course staff, feedback on your assignments from NUI Galway, online through the Blackboard Learning System, as well as from your fellow students and your own personal support network.

12.1 How Others Can Help You

While studying can be an isolating activity, you are encouraged to seek the support of others as you pursue your course of study. You can for example:

- Form a study group with other participants. Share progress and experience with the other members of your group.
- Talk about the course; discuss the course with colleagues and friends. For example, make a point of discussing the course contents at coffee breaks.
- Get family support; involve your family. Remember, this course is a big time commitment. Help them to understand this part of your life.
- Make the best use of any available support; contact the Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development Course Administrator or Tutor Support to seek help on problems you may have.

- Get others to read your drafts; they may have helpful comments regarding your assignments or projects. Because you are so close to the work, you can miss problems that another person will easily spot.
- Work closely with those who help you most; avoid the pessimists!

12.2 Managing Your Study Time

Completing a course of study takes time, commitment and effort. Planning your studies helps to organise your time and moderate your commitment. The *Introduction to Learning* module provides helpful advice and suggestions on how to plan study time, and how to develop effective study skills that will allow you to become a more effective student. We encourage you to refer to this module frequently as you develop your study skills.

12.2.1 Planning Your Study Time

The first stage in managing your study is to determine how much time you can commit to your study. Keeping in mind all your activities, make realistic estimate of how much time you can dedicate to study. Some people like to, or are able to dedicate entire days to their studies, for others, spreading their studies across a number of days is more effective. Once you have made this estimation you will need to manage your study time efficiently. You can do this by:

- Allocating time to all the different aspects involved in one module: reading course material and additional suggested material, attending workshop day, follow up assignments, studying for exam, on line contributions.
- Committing specific periods of study; daily, weekly, and monthly periods
- Identifying your pace of work; identifying how much time it takes you to complete study tasks
- Planning the study session; daily, weekly, and monthly plans
- Setting priorities for your time; identify urgent, essential and non-essential activities in a priority-setting list of activities
- Working backwards from deadlines to set study schedules
- Preparing for unforeseen events that may disrupt your study schedule

12.2.2 Planning Your Study Session

Planning individual study sessions will help you get the most from the sessions. You can optimise your study session by:

- Setting realistic targets for your study session; what can you reasonably expect to achieve during the session?
- Setting mini-goals to break the study session into short manageable study periods
- Developing questions for the session; what questions do you hope to have an answer for on completion of the session?
- Surveying the reading material to get a sense of what you need to study. Scan the table of contents, the introduction and the learning outcomes for the module.
- Reading specific units and section of the course module, completing the activities and the progress checks
- Engaging in active learning through completion of module learning activities, reflecting on your learning and applying new learning to experiences. Don't rely solely on what you read to answer questions; draw on wealth of knowledge you have from your own life experiences

- Highlighting key points that seem especially noteworthy
- Drawing on your experiences to help you understand new ideas and concepts
- Engaging with the Reflective Practice Work project as you go through each module, applying learning through work based experiences.

Other suggestions that can help:

- Find a suitable place to study; a comfortable, well-ventilated room, warm and well-lit.
- Study when you are fresh; pick a time of day that suits you best.
- Take frequent breaks; have some refreshments or take a stretch at least every hour.

You may find the booklet on study skills useful. It is available at:

http://www.nuigalway.ie/student_services/documents/study_skills.pdf

12.3 Student Services and Support

12.3.1 James Hardiman Library

All students registered with NUI Galway have access to the James Hardiman Library. To access the library you will need to show your Student ID. To access the electronic resources at the library you will need your student ID and your PIN. The library provides a wide range of support services to help the student avail of the library catalogue and e-resources database. Full information on services available at the library at: <http://www.library.nuigalway.ie/>

12.3.2 Other Support Services

NUI Galway offers a range of services to registered students. These include:

- **Support for Students with Learning Difficulties:** learning difficulties included any of a diverse group of conditions that cause significant difficulties in perceiving, processing and/or producing auditory, visual and/or spatial information. It covers disorders that impair such functions as reading (dyslexia), writing (dysgraphia) and mathematical calculation (dyscalculia). Full information on support services is available at: <http://nuigalway.ie/disability/dyslexia.html>

- **Support for Students with Disabilities:** if you have a disability, a learning difficulty or a significant ongoing illness, you are welcome to study at NUI Galway. NUI Galway will try, wherever possible, to facilitate your access and participation. Full information on services can be accessed at: <http://nuigalway.ie/student-life/student-support/>

- **General Support for Students:** a range of support services including counselling services, career guidance, financial matters advice and disabilities services. Full information: <http://nuigalway.ie/student-life/student-support/>

12.3.3 The Academic Skills Hub

NUI Galway's online Academic Skills Hub aims to support all NUI Galway students to develop the key skills required for academic success. The Academic Skills Hub:

- Provides brief introductions to, and top tips on, **eight key academic skills**, as well as some information to help you get started.

- Links to a range of **additional sources of support** for students, including Library resources and academic skills workshops.

<http://www.nuigalway.ie/academic-skills/index.html>

13 Course Fees

The Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development manage all fees for the students enrolled in the BA in *Early Childhood Studies & Practice*. The following conditions apply:

- Students once registered are liable for the applicable full fee whether or not the student completes/attends the course.
- **Fee Refunds:** The Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development accept no obligation to refund any fee or part thereof.
- **Outstanding Fees:** Failure to pay fees may result in a curtailment of services such as access to tutor support service and receipt of feedback. Registration may also be cancelled.
 - In all cases where fees are outstanding at the end of the year, results and awards will be withheld pending full payment of fees. Outstanding fees may include course fees, library fees, and autumn examination fees.
 - Students must successfully complete all aspects of any year of the course in order to progress to the next year of the course. This includes payment of all tuition fees and library fines.
 - Students who have difficulties regarding the payment of fees should contact their course administrator as soon as possible. A more flexible payment schedule may be arranged in these cases, usually more frequent payments of smaller amounts.

NOTE: Fees should be paid by bank draft or postal order made payable to NUI Galway. All fees should be forwarded to the Course Administrator, Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development. Please ensure that all payments are clearly marked with your name and student ID number. The Centre for Adult Learning and Professional Development cannot be held responsible for fees that are not referenced thoroughly.

General information on fees policy in the University is available on www.nuigalway.ie/fees/

14 Conferring

The conferring ceremony will take place at the University, typically in October. Parchments will be awarded to each successful student. Parchments will not indicate grades or the overall result achieved. Examination transcripts will be issued by the Examinations Office to give detailed information regarding a student's performance.

Remember, to graduate from this course you must:

- Attend all workshops
- Submit assignments by the prescribed dates
- Submit your project by the prescribed date
- Complete required examinations
- Pass all prescribed course work

- Pay course fees
- Settle any outstanding library fees and or fines

You will be provided with information regarding collection of gowns, details on the conferring venue, parking, guest tickets (two guests allowed per graduand) and booking form in early September. You are required to return the booking form by the stated date, to indicate whether or not you wish to attend the conferring ceremony. For further queries please contact your individual course administrator.

Conferring information is available at: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/adulteducation/conferring.html>

15 Conclusion

We hope that this course guide has been helpful and answers any questions you have about the Masters in Early Childhood Studies. Remember – to graduate from this course you must:

- Attend all workshops
- Submit assignments by the prescribed dates
- Submit your project by the prescribed date
- Attend all exams
- Pass all prescribed course work

16 References and Recommended Reading

Cottrell, S. (2008) *The study skills handbook*. 3rd edn. Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Greetham, B. (2008) *How to write better essays*. 2nd edn. Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Macdonald, J. (2008) *Blended learning and online tutoring: planning learning support and activity design*. 2nd edn. Hampshire, UK: Gower.

Moon, J. (2006) *Learning Journals*. 2nd edn. London: Routledge.

NUI Galway (2014) *Code of Practice for Dealing with Plagiarism*. Available at: <http://www.nuigalway.ie/plagiarism/> (Accessed: August 5th, 2014).

Pear, R. and Shields, G. (2008) *Cite them right: the essential referencing guide*. Revised edn. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Pear Tree Books.

Talbot, C. (2007) *Studying at a distance: a guide for students*. 2nd edn. Berkshire, UK: Open University Press.