



NUI Galway
OÉ Gaillimh

NEVER STOP
LEARNING

FAMILY CHILD
EARLY
YEARS
PRACTICE
CHILDCARE
STUDIES

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 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.

The course will be particularly suitable for:

- 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 new Child & Family Support Agency

COURSE FACTS

ECTS: 90

Level: 9

Duration: 2 years, part-time

Mode of study: Blended Learning

Fees:

EU: Year 1 – €4,200

Year 2 – €3,700

Non-EU: Year 1 – €4,700

Year 2 – €4,200

Start date: September



- Staff of City/County Childcare Committees and National Voluntary Childcare Organisations
- Practitioners in the child and family support sector
- Early years specialists working in advisory or mentoring roles, or those aspiring to such positions

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

1. **Academic:** Students are normally required to have a minimum of a 2.2, NFQ 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.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Applicants who do not meet the normal entry criteria may be eligible to apply through the University's Recognition of Prior Learning Pathway.

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.

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).

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 of 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 in the research process (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.





**‘THE PART-TIME DISTANCE
LEARNING COURSE
WHICH USES A BLENDED
LEARNING APPROACH
ENABLED ME TO CONTINUE
WORKING FULL-TIME.’**

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.

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.



HOW CAN I APPLY?

Apply online at: www.nuigalway.ie/apply

WEBSITE

www.nuigalway.ie/adultlearning

WHO CAN I CONTACT?

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