

BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONS) IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

FACTFILE

Schedule

Start Date

Sept 2026

Duration

4 calendar years

Delivery

Blended - Livestream with some on campus classes

Indicative Timetable

Monday and Wednesday 18:00-21:30
livestream and some Saturdays 09.30
- 14.00 on campus.

In addition, students are required to be in supervised placement in Year 2 and Year 3. The schedule for supervised practice will depend on placement setting's schedules.

Fees

Year 1: €2,370

Year 2: €2,825

Year 3: €4,100

Year 4: €4,100

(Fees revised annually)



Spread the cost with
our direct debit plan

Application: Apply online at www.ncirl.ie

Course Description

The Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care is a four-year programme, designed for people who are interested in pursuing opportunities or upskilling, in the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) sector.

The aim of the BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Education and Care is to provide learners with a firm foundation in Early Childhood Education and Care so as to practice as Professional Early Childhood Educators in a range of ECEC environments. As such, the programme aims to present learners with a comprehensive foundation in the principles and pillars of professional practice of early childhood education and care in Ireland and internationally, underpinned by a solid theoretical framework.

The course incorporates core topics including holistic child learning and development, essential legislation and regulatory practices, early learning in a digital world, pedagogical practice in ECEC, working with parents and families, and in multi-professional contexts. It also includes aspects related to quality assurance. Students are encouraged to reflect, inquire and investigate a range of theoretical and practical pedagogical approaches to learning and development in ECEC. The final year Capstone Project enables students to develop skills in researching Early Childhood Practice. Students will be enabled as innovators and leaders in the ECEC sector.

Professional Recognition

This programme is approved by Qualifications Advisory Board (instituted to review Level 7 and Level 8 degree programmes for the Early Learning and Care sector) as meeting the requirements of the Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines standards.

The programme links in with the Nurturing Skills Workforce Plan 2022-28, which aims to professionalise Irish Early Childhood Education and Care, through a graduate led workforce. These changes are guided by 'First Five' - Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families (2019).

Supervised Professional Practice Placement

A strong emphasis on professional, value-based practice placement in diverse Early Childhood settings is included on the course from year one.

Year 1 students are required to go on organised field visits. Year 2 students' supervised placement will focus on observation and reflection in practice. In Year 3, students' supervised placement will focus on application of strategies in practice. In Year 4, students will have the opportunity to combine their knowledge, skills and practice in completing a capstone project.

Who is the course for?

This course is ideally suited to those currently working with babies, toddlers and young children from birth to six, who wish to upskill. You could be working in a pre-school, creche, Naionraí, or home-based setting as a child minder or home visitor.

The programme is also for those working in regulatory bodies such as TUSLA (the child and family support agency) and Better Start or other early childhood intervention programmes.

We encourage school leavers and mature learners returning to education to apply.

Career Prospects

Graduates will possess the skills and competencies to work as lead educators or supervisors, working directly with children, setting managers, advisory, mentorship, training and leadership roles. Further specialisation in play and digital competence can open up related careers in Play Therapy; and developing digital technology for ECEC (robotics, learning platforms, apps etc).





Award and Progression

The Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care (240 credits) is awarded by QQI at NFQ Level 8 on the National Framework of Qualifications.

Students who successfully complete this course may progress to the Postgraduate Diploma in Educational Practice in Teaching for Further Education featured on page 76, or the Master of Arts in Educational Practice detailed on page 74.

The programme includes three related exit awards:

- BA (Ordinary) in Early Childhood Education and Care (Level 7 on NFQ) (180 credits)
- Higher Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care (Level 6 on NFQ) (120 credits)
- Certificate in Early Childhood Education and Care (Level 6 on NFQ) (60 credits)

Students may exit after Year 3, Year 2 or Year 1 and receive the relevant awards.

Entry Requirements

The minimum entry requirements are a level 5 qualification in any discipline, ideally with professional involvement in the delivery of learning in Early Childhood Education and Care. Applicants may be interviewed by the Programme Director.

Applicants who do not meet the entry requirements outlined above may apply through Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL) which considers applicants based on relevant work experience.

Garda Vetting

Incoming students on the BA(Hons) in Early Childhood Education and Care programme must undergo Garda Vetting. Garda Vetting is part of the admissions process. Garda Vetting applications must be submitted to NCI prior to commencing the programme. Guidelines on this process are provided by the Admissions Office.

Note: Students will not be permitted to begin their placement until their vetting application is processed and approved in accordance with NCI's Student Vetting policy.

Funding

The BA (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care is a four-year Honours Degree programme, approved by QQI for full-time delivery with 60 ECTS credits per academic year. The course meets the requirements as an approved full-time course under the Student Grant Scheme (SUSI).

Laptop Requirement

All students applying to NCI must have access to a laptop that will allow them to attend classes online and, where relevant, to participate in on-campus learning. Some students may be able to avail of the Student Laptop Loan Scheme, subject to eligibility. See page 83 for more information.

COURSE CONTENT

Year 1

- Holistic Child Learning and Development*
- Foundations of Early Childhood Education and Care*
- Music, Movement, Art and Drama
- Academic Foundations and Scholarship
- Essential Legislation and Regulation in ECEC*
- Child Health Nutrition and Wellbeing*

*Field visits to diverse Early Childhood settings will be integrated within these theory modules

Year 2

- Core Pedagogies and Curriculum in ECEC
- Dispositions and Dynamics of Behaviour in Children
- Managing Your Learning and Academic Practice
- Diversity and Pluralism in Learning Language and Literacies
- Play and Creativity in ECEC
- Placement: Observation and Reflection in ECEC Practice

Year 3

- Quality Assurance in ECEC Environments
- Early Learning in a Digital World
- Inquiry Learning – Design and Evaluation of Curriculum in ECEC
- The Child Family and Society – Stakeholders in ECEC
- Leadership and Governance in ECEC Environments
- Placement: Application of Strategies in Learning Environments in ECEC Practice

Year 4

- Social Political and Cultural Contexts of ECEC
- Working in Multiprofessional Contexts
- Personal and Professional Identity
- ECEC Inquiry and Research Methods
- Capstone ECEC Practice Based Project