Placement Booklet for Supervised Placement

2026-2027

BA (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care
School of Business and Social Sciences
National College of Ireland

Contents

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Section 1: General Overview of Placement

The BA (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care (BAHECEC) is a taught programme that leads to both an academic and professional qualification in the field of early childhood education and care. Early childhood is recognised as a critical period in children's development, and responding to the needs and rights of young children and their families requires highly qualified professionals. At the National College of Ireland (NCI), the preparation of such professionals takes place through a taught programme grounded in contemporary theory, research, policy, and practice. Education and training needs are reviewed regularly and aligned with both sectoral and national priorities.

Supervised professional practice placement is a core component of the BAHECEC programme, accounting for at least 35% of the overall degree. Placement allows Student Early Childhood Educators to link classroom learning with real-world practice while progressively developing the professional knowledge, skills, values and dispositions required of competent Early Childhood Educators.

There is an essential requirement for direct and practical engagement with children, focusing on their education and care across different age groups.

Table 1: Minimum contact hours

Category	Age Range	Minimum Hours
Babies	Birth to 18 months	50 hours
Toddlers	12 to 36 months	50 hours
Young Children	2½ to 6 years	50 hours
Overall Placement	**All age groups combined**	**800 hours**

This handbook provides an overview of placement across the programme. It sets out the roles and responsibilities of Student Early Childhood Educators, Mentors, and the programme team, and outlines the expectations and learning outcomes associated with supervised professional practice.

Benefits of Placement

Placement provides Student Early Childhood Educators with progressive opportunities for professional growth and the development of their professional identity. Through supervised practice, Student Early Childhood Educators learn to:

- Adopt a reflective practice approach, critically analysing and learning from their experiences.
- Apply theories, concepts, and pedagogical strategies from the taught programme in authentic early years settings.
- Engage in meaningful relationships with children, families, mentors, and professional colleagues.
- Develop ethical and professional practices grounded in child protection, inclusion, and respect for diversity.
- Build confidence in integrating theory with practice while contributing positively to Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings.

Rationale for Placement

The importance of supervised practice is emphasised in *First 5: A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families* (Government of Ireland, 2018), which identifies the need for well-prepared and qualified professionals in the early years sector. Professional practice placement is central to initial professional development, offering structured opportunities to work directly with children from birth to six years, in collaboration with experienced Early Childhood Educators, parents, families, communities, and external partners.

The BAHECEC programme is approved by the *Qualifications Advisory Board* (QAB) and delivered in accordance with the *Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines* (2019) for Early Learning and Care degree programmes in Ireland. NCI's placement structure ensures that Student Early Childhood Educators undertake progressive, developmental practice placements consistent with sectoral and professional standards.

Placement Preparation

All placements must be approved by the Academic Placement Lead. Suitable settings include crèches, pre-schools, Montessori schools, Naíonraí, Early Start pre-schools in primary schools,

registered childminders, or other environments deemed appropriate by the Academic Placement Lead.

The setting must be TUSLA (the Child and Family Agency) registered and inspected as per the Register of Early Years Services. Placement settings must allow the Student Early Childhood Educator to meet placement requirements regarding days, hours, and direct contact with children from birth to six years of age (see Table 1 and 2).

Each Student Early Childhood Educator must be assigned a mentor in the setting for the duration of the placement. Further information about the mentor's role is available on page 21-22.
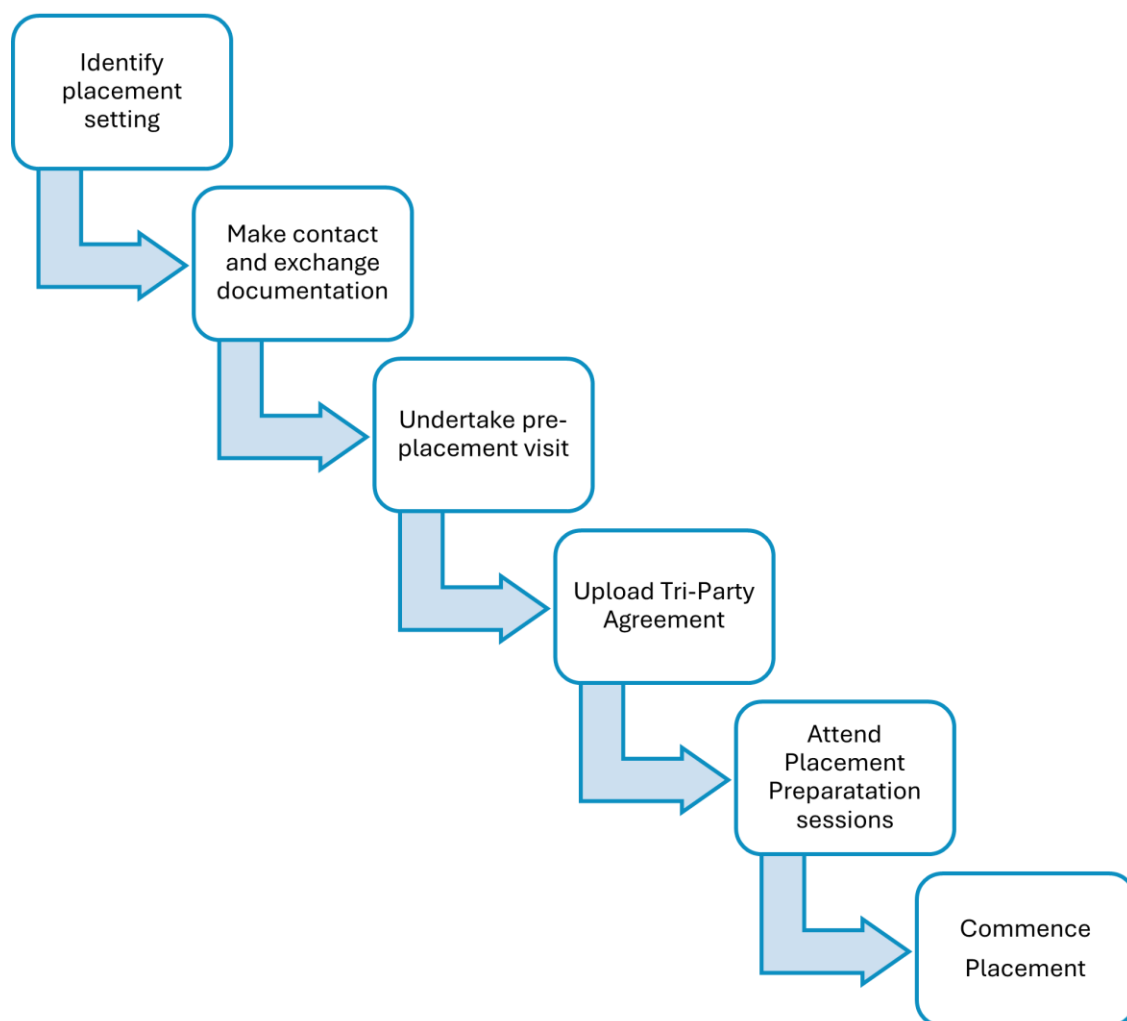

Figure 1: Arranging an Appropriate Setting to complete the placement

Student Early Childhood Educators are encouraged to review [Tusla Early Years Inspection Reports](#) to become familiar with a setting and to consider whether it is suitable for their placement needs. It is also recommended that Student Early Childhood Educators contact the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) setting directly and ask to speak with the person responsible for placements, often the Setting Manager.

Before commencing placement, Student Early Childhood Educators must undertake a pre-placement visit to:

- introduce themselves,
- exchange and review paperwork,
- familiarise themselves with the setting, and
- clarify any expectations the setting may have during the placement.

Placement Documentation

Student Early Childhood Educator Early Childhood Educators are required to complete specific documents within the first week of placement. These documents will be provided at the start of the semester.

- **Tri-Party Agreement** – This agreement must be completed with the placement mentor/setting manager and signed by the Student Early Childhood Educator, Placement Tutor, and Placement Mentor/Setting Manager. Once signed, it must be uploaded to Moodle Appendix 2: NCI Early Childhood Placement Triparty Agreement

Placement Practice Structure

Placement at NCI is embedded in each year of the programme. Student Early Childhood Educators are to meet a total of 800 hours of placement in an ECEC setting directly engaged with babies, toddlers and young children (See Table 1). The placement programme structure is outlined below.

Table 2: Placement practice Structure Years 1-4

Year	Total Hours	Structure
BAHECEC 1	40	- Field visits (Two in semester 1 and 2 in semester 2) - Block Placement *Foundations in Early Childhood Education and Care (10 credits)* *Essential Legislation and Regulation in Early Childhood Care and Education (10 credits)*
BAHECEC 2	220	- Supervised placement across semesters 1 and 2 - Minimum 2 days, 12 hours per week *Placement Practice Observation and Reflection in ECEC Practice* module (10 credits)
BAHECEC 3	300	- Supervised practice across semesters 1 and 2 - Minimum 2 days, 14 hours per week *Placement Practice Application of Strategies in Learning Environments in ECEC Practice* Module (10 credits) *Inquiry Learning – Design and Evaluation of Curriculum in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) (15 credits)*
BAHECEC 4	240	- In practice semesters 1 and 2 - Minimum 2 days, 12 hours per week *Working in Multi Professional Contexts (10 credits)* *Capstone Early Childhood Education and Care Practice based Project (20 credits)*

* Student Early Childhood Educators are responsible for ensuring they complete the required hours for Placement. Appendix 3: Student Monthly Placement Log

Placement Practice Requirements

During each year of placement, Student Early Childhood Educators are required to engage in structured practice experiences appropriate to their stage of study. These experiences are designed to align with professional role expectations and support the progressive development of competence. In addition to practical engagement, students must complete assessments across various modules that complement and reinforce their placement learning. While these experiences are facilitated by the placement mentor, the initiation and active participation in both practice and academic components remain the responsibility of the Student Early Childhood Educator.

Year 1:

Student Early Childhood Educators are required to participate in both field visits and block placements within early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings. These experiential learning opportunities allow Student Early Childhood Educators to observe, shadow, and actively engage with experienced educators, gaining valuable insights into the daily lives and developmental needs of babies, toddlers, and young children.

Through field visits, Student Early Childhood Educators are introduced to a variety of early childhood environments, where they begin to identify and reflect on professional practices, routines, and interactions. These shorter, structured visits help them make initial connections between classroom learning and real-world application, particularly drawing on foundational concepts explored in the module **Foundations of Early Childhood Education and Care**, which introduces key principles, values, and historical perspectives that shape early childhood education.

During block placement, Student Early Childhood Educators spend extended periods embedded in ECEC settings, enabling deeper engagement with curriculum, pedagogy, and care practices. This immersive experience supports the integration of theoretical knowledge, legislative frameworks, and professional standards into everyday practice. Placement is closely aligned with the module **Essential Legislation and Regulation in ECEC**, which equips Student Early Childhood Educators with a working knowledge of the legal and regulatory landscape governing early years provision in Ireland.

Throughout the block placement, Student Early Childhood Educators will critically engage with the Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework (QRF), observing how compliance with Early Years Regulations is enacted in practice. Particular focus will be placed on:

- Regulation 16 – Record Keeping
- Regulation 19 – Health, Welfare and Development of the Child
- Regulation 20 – Staffing
- Regulation 22 – Premises

By observing how these regulations are upheld, Student Early Childhood Educators will enhance their understanding of quality practice, regulatory compliance, and the creation of safe, inclusive, and developmentally appropriate environments for young children. These experiences lay the groundwork for developing a strong professional identity and a commitment to high-quality, inclusive ECEC provision.

Placement Practice Tasks	- Observe, record and reflect on types of ECEC service and its overall environment. - Gain an introductory understanding of the curriculum and pedagogical approaches in practice. - Note the care and education routines and daily experiences of children within the setting. - Shadow and assist educators with the care and education routines. - Observe how compliance with Early Years Regulations is enacted in practice. - Identify examples of essential legislation, policy, and regulatory frameworks in operation. - Begin to reflect on the role of the Early Childhood Educator and the link between theory and practice.

Year 2

In Year 2, Student Early Childhood Educators undertake an extended practice placement that spans both semesters, supported by the module *Placement Practice: Observation and Reflection in ECEC Practice*. This placement offers a rich opportunity for Student Early Childhood Educators to become deeply embedded in the life of the early years setting, where they begin to build trusting relationships with children, families, and colleagues, and take on more active roles in care routines and learning experiences.

Throughout the placement, Student Early Childhood Educators will develop and refine key professional skills in observation, reflection, and collaboration, gradually progressing toward co-leading aspects of practice under the guidance of a mentor. This progression is supported by critical engagement with complementary modules that inform and enrich their placement experience:

- **Core Pedagogies and Curriculum in Early Childhood Education and Care**: Student Early Childhood Educators will apply their understanding of curriculum planning, documentation, and assessment to create learning experiences that reflect children's interests, rights, and holistic development. Placement provides a context for exploring the educator's role in designing inclusive and responsive environments that promote children's agency, emotional wellbeing, and smooth transitions.

- **Play and Creativity for Learning in Early Childhood Education and Care**: Placement offers Student Early Childhood Educators the opportunity to observe, build skills and implement child-led inquiry and adult-guided, purposeful play. They will explore how to design play experiences that support emergent literacy, numeracy, and critical thinking, using open-ended materials, creative provocations, and inclusive practices to respond to children's interests and foster rich invitations to learning.

- **Language, Literacy and the Plurilingual Child:** Student Early Childhood Educators will practice strategies to support early language and literacy development, including the use of language-rich environments, storytelling, and collaboration with families. In this module, particular attention will be given to supporting multilingual learners, recognising and valuing children's home languages as part of an inclusive and culturally responsive approach. Placement becomes a space to enact developmentally appropriate practices that nurture every child's voice, language, and capacity to communicate.

By the end of Year 2 placement, Student Early Childhood Educators will have developed a growing awareness of the important role they play in early childhood education and will begin to build the confidence needed to contribute meaningfully to quality, equitable ECEC provision.

Practice Placement Tasks	- Familiarise themselves with the setting's routines, policies, and daily timetables. - Participate in daily care routines (e.g., handwashing, feeding, dressing) under guidance. - Build positive relationships with children, mentors, and practitioners. - Support children's transitions within the daily routine (e.g., arrivals, mealtimes, rest, departures). - Support children's holistic development by recognising and responding to diverse strengths, needs, and backgrounds. - Complete child observations - Assist and shadow educators in delivering care routines and learning experiences. - Engage with playful and creative activities, supporting children's holistic development. - Begin to collaborate and co-lead selected care routines and learning experiences with mentor support. - Plan and lead a play invitations - Nurture children's language and numeracy in areas such as STEM - Critically and continuously reflect on their time in placement - Utilise a variety of pedagogical strategies

Year 3

In Year 3, Student Early Childhood Educators assume a more active and responsible role within their professional practice settings. They are expected to plan, lead, and adapt learning experiences with increasing independence, demonstrating a deeper understanding of pedagogy, curriculum design, high-quality practice, theory, and policy. This stage of professional development emphasises critical engagement with practice, as students begin to consolidate their professional identity, articulate their values and ethics, and develop a personal philosophy of early childhood education and care (ECEC).

Module: Inquiry Learning; Design and Evaluation of Curriculum

This module underpins the placement experience by deepening students' understanding of inquiry-based learning and enhancing their ability to foster curiosity, document, and evaluate curricula for babies, toddlers, and young children. Students will:

- Engage in practical curriculum design and evaluation within an inquiry learning cycle.
- Apply theoretical and conceptual tools to select and assess pedagogical and assessment strategies.
- Collaborate with colleagues, families, and other professionals to ensure alignment with national curriculum frameworks and quality standards.

The module fosters a reflective, inquiry-based approach to curriculum development, supporting professional growth and critical thinking.

Module: Quality Assurance in ECEC Environments

This module equips students with the knowledge and skills to recognise, evaluate, and implement quality standards in ECEC settings. Students will critically analyse formal structures and systems of quality assurance, exploring the role of the environment in supporting children's learning and development. Through placement, students will identify quality indicators in practice and understand the educator's responsibility in sustaining high-quality environments.

Module: Early Learning in a Digital World

This module introduces students to the role of digital technologies in ECEC, exploring both opportunities and challenges. Students will critically evaluate how digital tools can support learning and development, while considering ethical, developmental, and safety implications. Reflecting on

their own attitudes toward technology, students will develop strategies for integrating digital tools thoughtfully and responsibly into practice.

This integrated approach ensures that Year 3 placement is not only a practical experience but also a critical learning opportunity, where theory and practice intersect to strengthen professional competence, reflective capacity, and leadership potential.

Module: The Child, Family and Society

Students will deepen their understanding of the interconnectedness of children, families, and societal structures, critically examining policies and practices that support family well-being. This module emphasises the influence of social, cultural, and economic factors on child development and encourages students to develop inclusive, responsive strategies for engaging with families and communities.

Placement Practice Tasks	- Take an active role in planning and leading learning experiences, with mentor guidance. - Curate and adapt learning environments to promote children's interests, curiosity, and participation. - Apply a range of pedagogical strategies (e.g.co-constructing, scaffolding, modelling, sustained shared thinking). - Complete observations - Collaborate with the lead educator to design and implement a small change in curriculum - Demonstrate skills in collaborating with colleagues, parents, families and the wider learning community. - Support children's holistic development by recognising and responding to diverse strengths, needs, and backgrounds. - Creating opportunities for children to share their views and ensuring those views are genuinely heard and considered. (Lundy Model) - Contribute to documentation of learning (e.g. artefact stories, incident insight analysis, reflective records). - Explore the use of digital technology to support learning - Apply quality frameworks to enhance practice - Contribute to policy review and development informed by legislation and best practice.

Year 4

In Year 4, Student Early Childhood Educators undertake their final professional placement, which emphasises professional autonomy, leadership, and inclusive practice. During this placement, students are expected to:

- Model high-quality pedagogical practice in line with current Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) standards.
- Demonstrate leadership skills by contributing to team development, supporting colleagues, and fostering a collaborative learning environment.
- Communicate effectively with children, families, and multi-professional teams to ensure inclusive and responsive practice.

Module: Capstone Practice-Based Research Project

This placement also provides a critical link to the Capstone Research Project, enabling students to design and implement an action research or participatory initiative within their setting. This experience supports evidence-informed practice and encourages reflective inquiry.

Module: Working in Multi-Professional Contexts

The final placement offers valuable insight into leadership and policy in practice, while providing opportunities to collaborate with a range of professionals, such as inclusion officers, health practitioners, and educational leaders. Students will:

- Shadow managers and inclusion officers to understand strategic decision-making and inclusive policy implementation.
- Plan and evaluate policy implementation, considering its impact on practice and outcomes for children and families.
- Develop coaching and mentoring strategies to support colleagues and promote continuous professional development within the team.

Learning from this module will directly inform the Critical Reflection on Practices and Policies in an ECEC Setting assessment, enabling students to critically analyse how leadership, policy, and multi-professional collaboration shape practice.

Practice Placement Tasks	- Independently plan, implement, and evaluate learning experiences that respond to children's strengths, needs, and rights. - Apply theory, policy, and research to inform high-quality, inclusive practice. - Contribute to policy development and implementation informed by legislation and best practice. - Demonstrate agency and leadership, contributing to team practice and supporting colleagues. - Implement coaching and mentoring initiatives to support educators' professional development. - Communicate effectively with children, families, and professionals, including through advocacy for children's learning and wellbeing. - Advocate ethical, regulatory, and professional standards, modelling best practice. - Promote a range of pedagogical strategies (e.g. scaffolding, modelling, sustained shared thinking, co-constructing). - Collaborate with mentor to identify an area of focus for ECEC Capstone research project - Implement action research in setting

Placement Visits

Year 1

During year one, semester 2, Student Early Childhood Educators are required to dedicate 30 hours towards work-based learning and link their learning from Essential Legislation and Regulation in ECEC module. During this block placement students shadow early childhood educators and observe children and educators in practice and be encouraged to make meaningful connections between their observations and the learning from the module.

During this block placement, Student Early Childhood Educator will have an observation visit. Dates and times for observation visits will be planned in advance in agreement with a Placement Tutor, Placement Mentor and Student Early Childhood Educator Early Childhood Educator. Placement Tutors are required to contact the setting before their visit to ensure they can accommodate the visit and arrange to discuss feedback on the Student Early Childhood Educators' engagement during placement.

The observation visit will:

- Take place onsite in the placement setting
- Last up to 1 hour
- Be entirely formative

*The Placement Tutor may arrange further observation visits if they deem it necessary.

Year 2 & 3

During year two and three placement, Student Early Childhood Educator Early Childhood Educators will have a minimum of two observation visits (one in semester 1 and one in semester 2) (See Figure 3). Dates and times for observation visits will be planned in advance in agreement with a Placement Tutor, Placement Mentor and Student Early Childhood Educator Early Childhood Educator. Placement Tutors are required to contact the setting before each of their visits to ensure they can accommodate the visits and arrange to discuss feedback on the Student Early Childhood Educators' engagement.

The observation visits will:

- Take place onsite in the placement setting
- Last up to 1 hour
- Be entirely formative

Formative observation visit 1	• The first observation visit and triparty meeting will take place in the placement setting in semester 1.
Formative observation visit 2	• The second observation and triparty meeting will take place in the placement setting in semester 2
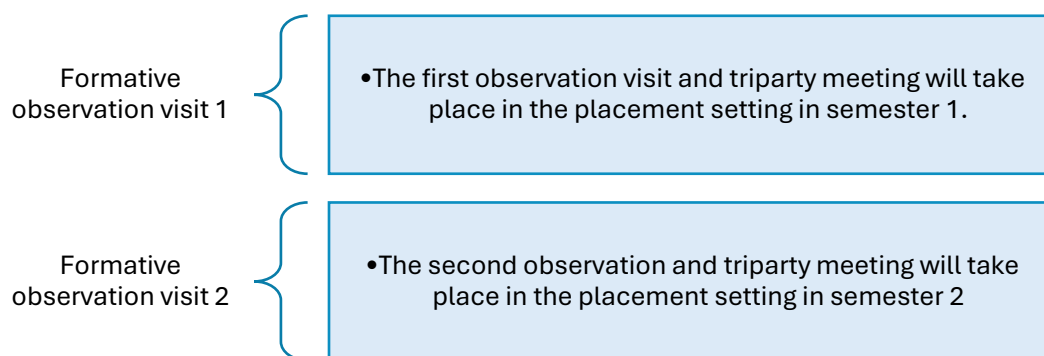
Figure 2: Placement Visits

*The Placement Tutor may arrange further observation visits if they deem it necessary.

Table 3: Placement Visit Structure

Visit Structure
1. Student Early Childhood Educator Observed in Practice
2. Triparty Meeting (Student/Mentor/Placement Tutor)
3. Discuss formative feedback and agree on action plan with student
4. Signed Triparty Placement Visit Form (see appendix)
5. Written Triparty Placement Visit Form uploaded to Moodle

Year 4

During Year 4, Student Early Childhood Educators undertake their final placement, which emphasises professional autonomy, leadership, and inclusive practice. This placement is closely linked to modules such as Working in Multi-Professional Contexts and the Capstone Research Project, enabling students to integrate theory, policy, and research into practice.

Student Early Childhood Educators are required to demonstrate leadership in policy review and implementation, while also engaging in multi-professional collaboration. They will where possible shadow managers and inclusion officers, contribute to coaching and mentoring plans, and critically reflect on quality assurance processes within their setting.

As part of this placement, students will also implement an action research or participatory initiative, applying inquiry-based methods to address a practice-based question aligned with their Capstone Research Project.

During this placement, Student Early Childhood Educators will have a formative observation visit to support their professional growth.

The observation visit will:

- Take place onsite in the placement setting
- Last up to 1 hour
- Focus on leadership, collaboration, and reflective practice
- Be entirely formative, providing feedback to guide professional development

Dates and times for observation visits will be agreed in advance between the Placement Tutor, Placement Mentor, and Student Early Childhood Educator. Placement Tutors will contact the setting prior to the visit to confirm arrangements and ensure feedback can be shared effectively.

*The Placement Tutor may arrange further observation visits if they deem it necessary.

Placement Assessment Breakdown

Placement Year 1: Building Blocks of Professional Practice in ECEC	
Foundations in ECEC (Semester 1) Reflective Report	50%
Essential Legislation and Regulation in ECEC (Sem 2) Reflective Portfolio	50%

Placement Year 2: Observation and Reflection in ECEC Practice	
Reflective Journals	30%
Observations	30%
Emerging Practice Plan	20%
Professional Learning Conversation and reflective report	20%
Placement Visits	Formative

Placement Year 2: Work-based learning assessments	
Core Pedagogies and Curriculum in ECEC (Semester 1) Project: Implement a cycle of documentation, assessment, and planning in early childhood education practice.	60%
Assignment: supporting children through transitions	40%
Play and Creativity for Learning in ECEC (Semester 2) Project: Designing and implementing a purposeful play experience to support early literacy and numeracy	60%
Assignment: Reflective Case Study Analysis	40%
Language, Literacy and the Plurilingual Child (Semester 2) Project: Language-Rich Environment Audit	70%

Placement Year 3: Application of Strategies in Learning Environments in ECEC	
Reflective placement journal	30%
Documentation Portfolio	25%
Case Studies analysis	25%
Professional Learning Conversation and Reflective Report	20%
Placement Visits	Formative

Placement Year 3: Inquiry Learning: Design and Evaluation of Curriculum	
Curriculum Design and Evaluation Plan (Semester 1)	40%
Curriculum Design Implementation (Semester 2)	30%
Evaluation of Curriculum Design and Plan (Semester 2)	30%

Placement Year 3: Work-based learning assessments	
Quality Assurance in ECEC Environments (Semester 1) Project: Quality Audit and Policy Development	100%

Early Learning in a Digital World (Semester 1) Project: Digital audit	50%
The Child, Family and Society (Semester 2) Project: document work with families and communities while on placement/in workplace.	40%

Placement Year 4: Research, Leadership, and Reflective Practice	
Working in a Multi-Professional Contexts (Semester 1 and 2) Project: Analysis, Policy development, Coaching and mentoring implementation.	100%
Capstone Practice-Based Research Project (Semester 1 and 2) presentations and poster	100%

Section 2: The Role of the Student Early Childhood Educator on Placement

Student Vetting and Code of Conduct

Garda Vetting is required as part of the admissions process to the BA(Hons) in Early Childhood Education and Care programme. Student Early Childhood Educators may not commence their placement until this process has been completed. Student Early Childhood Educators are expected to adhere to the stated Appendix 1: Code of Conduct for Student Early Childhood Educators and NCI's disciplinary codes of behaviours and policies.

Student Code of Conduct

As a Student Early Childhood Educator on placement, you represent both yourself and NCI. You are expected to uphold the highest professional and ethical standards, act with respect and integrity, and approach all learning opportunities with commitment.

Placement Attendance Policy

The National College of Ireland recognises the key role of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) settings in supporting Student Early Childhood Educators by providing placement opportunities. When a Student Early Childhood Educator commits to attending a setting for placement, their absence can cause significant disruption to the children, families, and staff in that setting. For this reason, **full and complete attendance is required for the duration of placement**.

As placement is a formal component of the BA (Honours) in Early Childhood Education and Care programme, **no absences are permitted without prior approval of the** Placement Tutor and Placement Coordinator. In the case of illness, Student Early Childhood Educators must notify the placement setting, the Placement Tutor, and the Placement Coordinator **as early as possible — ideally the evening before, or in exceptional circumstances, no later than 8.00 a.m. on the morning of the absence**.

Absence due to illness must be supported by a **medical certificate**, which should be submitted to the Placement Coordinator within one week of the absence. Medically certified absences will be required to be made up at a later date as arranged with the Placement Coordinator and Placement

Tutor. Failure to follow these procedures, or absences without valid certification, will be recorded as **non-attendance** and may result in failure of the placement module.

Attendance and Placement Eligibility – Programme Policy

Why Attendance Matters

Professional practice placements are a core component of the BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Education and Care programme. To work effectively in early childhood settings, Student Early Childhood Educators must have a strong academic foundation. Attendance at lectures, seminars, and workshops ensures Student Early Childhood Educators engage with the theoretical knowledge, ethical principles, and professional standards necessary to apply learning in practice. (See Attendance and Engagement FAQ – National College of Ireland)

College Attendance Requirement

The following requirement applies:

Requirement	Minimum Standard	Impact on Placement
Attendance to all timetabled lectures	80% of the semester	Required for placement eligibility

Key Points

- Attendance is recorded and monitored throughout the programme.

- Student Early Childhood Educators who do not meet the 80% attendance requirement will not be permitted to attend placement unless there are approved extenuating circumstances.

- This requirement is in addition to existing placement protocols and professional conduct expectations.

- If Student Early Childhood Educators are struggling to meet attendance requirements, they should contact the Programme Team.

Child Protection Guidelines

As per section 3.3 of [NCI's Child Protection Guidelines](#) (as outlined below), Student Early Childhood Educators must comply with the Child Protection Guidelines/Policies within the placement setting.

3.3 Students on placement or volunteering in schools, colleges or with any other bodies providing services to children must comply with the Child Protection Guidelines/Policies of those bodies.

Professional Practice Requirements

Student Early Childhood Educators are required to abide by the guidelines outlined in this handbook and by the policies and procedures of their placement setting. **Punctuality and reliability are essential professional requirements.** Student Early Childhood Educators should arrive at least **15 minutes before the start of the day** and remain in the setting for the full duration of their agreed placement hours. If a Student Early Childhood Educator is late, they must report directly to the setting manager upon arrival.

Student Early Childhood Educators are encouraged to assist with the preparation of activities, display areas, and resources, and to contribute to the daily routines of the setting.

Student Early Childhood Educators should also be mindful of staff-room routines, health and safety requirements, and all regulations of the placement setting. **Mobile phones must remain switched off** and kept with personal belongings throughout the placement day. Devices should not be used to complete college work within the placement setting.

Continuing, repeating and deferring Placement

Continuing placement during semester 3

Student Early Childhood Educators who are unable to complete the Semester 1 placement requirements may apply to delay the start of placement until Semester 2 and then continue placement during Semesters 2 and 3 (see Figure 2). Extenuating circumstances must apply, such as illness, bereavement, or the placement setting being unable to accommodate the placement. To request a deferral to Semester 2 (with continuation into Semester 3), Student Early Childhood Educators must email the Placement Coordinator and Placement Tutor for details.

Repeating or Deferring Placement

Student Early Childhood Educators who are unable to complete the Semester 1 placement requirements by the end of Semester 2 will be required to repeat the placement module in the next academic year. In this case, the placement will be paused until the following academic year, and progression into the next year of the BAHECEC Programme will not be permitted (see Figure 2).

Where a Student Early Childhood Educator is unable to complete placement due to extenuating circumstances (e.g., illness, bereavement), they may apply for a module deferral. Applications for a placement module deferral must be submitted through NCI360.

Not-Progressing

In certain circumstances, Student Early Childhood Educators may be deemed 'not progressing' during placement due to deficits in *fitness to learn* or *fitness to practice*. In such cases, the placement will be paused.

This may occur for reasons including, but not limited to:

- Being unable or unwilling to follow guidance from the Placement Mentor, Manager, Placement Tutor or Placement Coordinator.
- Failure to make satisfactory progress with placement practice requirements.
- Failure to act and communicate professionally, and in accordance with the standards of the placement setting.
- Inadequate preparation to carry out placement practice tasks.
- Failure to adhere to the Code of Conduct for Student Early Childhood Educators.
- Failure to make satisfactory progress with placement portfolio requirements.
- Lack of communication with the Placement Mentor, Manager, Placement Tutor or Placement Coordinator.

Where a Student Early Childhood Educator is deemed 'not progressing' due to fitness to learn and/or practice concerns, they will receive formal communication outlining the issues identified. The Student Early Childhood Educator will be required to demonstrate that these issues have been rectified before placement can resume. Failure to rectify the issues within a reasonable timeframe will result in withdrawal from placement and forfeiture of their place on the BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Education and Care programme.

Withdrawal

On the advice of the Manager of the placement setting and the Placement Tutor, The Academic Placement Lead may withdraw a Student Early Childhood Educator from placement. This may occur in cases of serious infringement of the setting's policies, breaches of the code of practice for Student Early Childhood Educators on placement, or failure to follow required procedures.

A Student Early Childhood Educator may appeal this decision in accordance with the National College of Ireland's Appeals Process.

Where a Student Early Childhood Educator fails to maintain a placement, they will forfeit their place on the BA (Hons) in Early Childhood Education and Care programme.

Placement	
Semester 1	Semester 2
Complete Placement Requirements	Complete Placement Requirements

Student unable to complete Sem 1 requirements may be offered Sem 3 opprtunity	
Semester 2	Semester 3
Complete Sem 1 Placement Requirements	Complete Sem 3 Placement Requirements

Student unable to complete Semester 1 requirements during Semester 2

Option to repeat the placement module during the next academic year
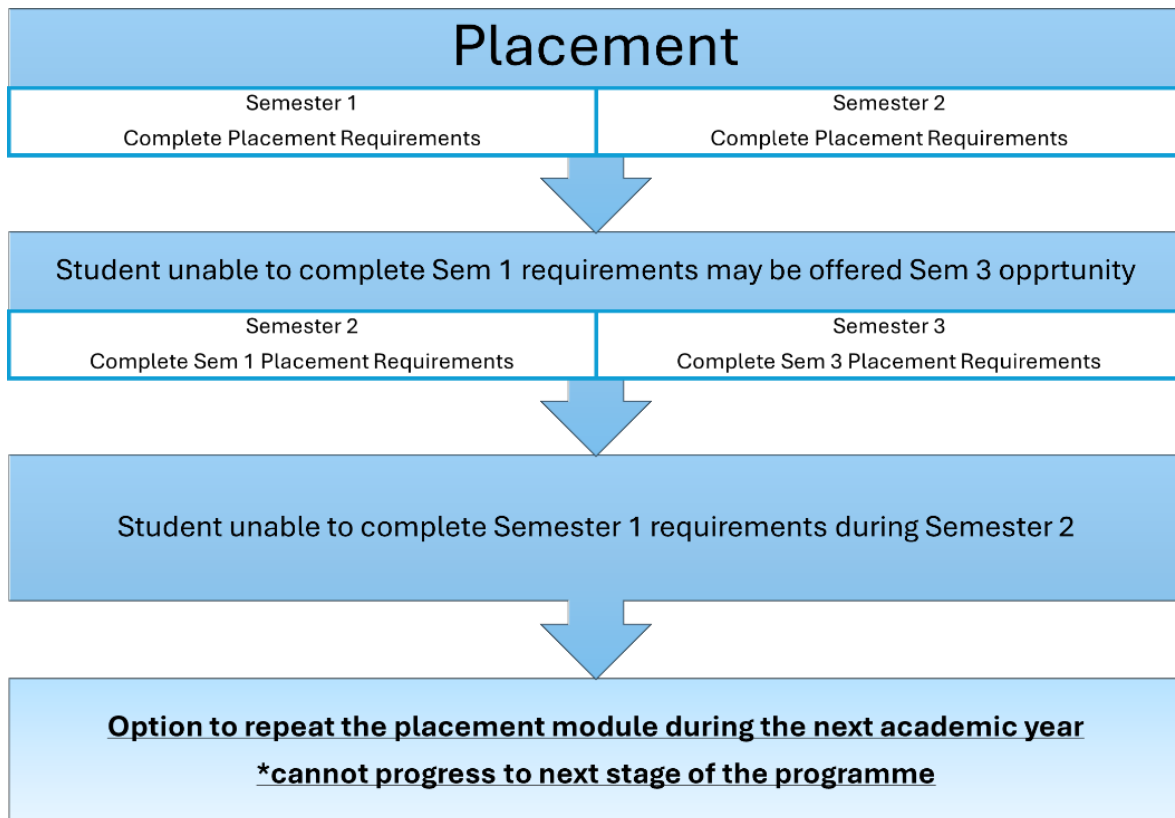***cannot progress to next stage of the programme**

Figure 3: Decision process for continuing, repeating or deferring placement

Section 3: The Role of the Placement Provider

The placement setting plays a vital role in supporting the placement mentor and placement student relationship along with communicating with the placement supervisor. Settings are expected to:

- **Provide induction**: Offer a clear introduction to the organisation, including policies, health and safety, fire procedures, emergency arrangements, and accident/incident reporting.
- **Nominate a mentor**: Assign a designated staff member to oversee the 'Student Early Childhood Educator's day-to-day practice and development.
- **Facilitate visits**: Allow access for NCI Placement Tutor to visit Student Early Childhood Educators on placement
- **Provide feedback**: Share feedback with the college on placement delivery and promptly report any serious incidents or breaches of discipline.
- **Enable learning**: Guarantee sufficient placement hours and varied experiences with children from birth to age six to allow Student Early Childhood Educators to meet programme learning outcomes.

Guidance for Placement Provider

Contact the **Placement Tutor/Placement Coordinator at NCI** if:

- Concerns arise regarding the Student Early Childhood Educator's conduct, attendance, or wellbeing.
- There are incidents, accidents, or breaches of policy involving the Student Early Childhood Educator.
- The placement is no longer viable or requires adjustment.

Section 4: The Role of the Placement Mentor

A Mentor is an experienced Educator in the placement setting who supports and guides the student Early Childhood Educator and serves as the main contact with NCI. As outlined in the Best Practice Guidelines (PLÉ, 2019), the Mentor's role includes coaching, advising, modelling best practice, engaging in reflection, and encouraging professional commitment.

The Mentor introduces the Student Early Childhood Educator to professional practices, facilitates reflective dialogue, and helps link theory with practice through tasks such as planning and continuous improvement. The Student Early Childhood Educator remains under the Mentor's guidance throughout the placement.

If the Mentor has concerns about the Student Early Childhood Educator's practice, behaviour or well-being, they must notify the ECEC Academic Lead.

A Placement Mentor needs to satisfy the following requirements:

- ☐ Be an experienced Early Childhood Educator in the placement setting
- ☐ Commitment to supporting the Student Early Childhood Educators' professional development
- ☐ Meet with the Student Early Childhood Educator and Placement Tutor as required
- ☐ Facilitate observation visits by the NCI programme team
- ☐ Provide constructive feedback on the Student Early Childhood Educator's progress

Guidance for Placement Mentors

The mentor is the designated educator in the ECEC setting who supports, supervises, and guides the Student Early Childhood Educators throughout their placement experience. Mentors play a crucial role in bridging theory and practice, helping Student Early Childhood Educators to develop confidence, competence, and professional identity.

Mentors can support the Student Early Childhood Educators in these areas by:

At the Start

- Agree a placement plan with the Student Early Childhood Educator
- Provide an orientation to the setting (routines, staff, structure, policies).
- Introduce key workplace procedures (health & safety, child protection, dress code, confidentiality).

During Placement

- Allow shadowing of staff members to observe practice.
- Gradually involve the Student Early Childhood Educator in daily routines and learning experiences.
- Encourage reflective discussions on how college learning connects to practice.
- Provide opportunities for participation, co-leading, and eventually leading activities.
- Model professional practice in communication, teamwork, and advocacy.

Ongoing Support

- Sign Student Early Childhood Educator attendance log
- Give constructive feedback, highlighting strengths and areas for growth.
- Prompt critical reflection by asking questions about theory, policy, and practice.
- Support Student Early Childhood Educator independence in line with their year of study.
- For Year 4 Student Early Childhood Educators, provide space for action research related to their Capstone project.

Section 5: Placement Tutor

Role of the Placement Tutor

The Placement Tutors are representatives of the NCI programme team and are expected to uphold the highest standards of professionalism, fairness, and care while supporting Student Early Childhood Educators, mentors, and ECEC settings.

Placement Tutor responsibilities include:

- Liaising with placement setting Mentor and Student Early Childhood Educator
- Observing Student Early Childhood Educators in their setting
- Leading Triparty placement meeting
- Completing Triparty Placement Visit Form
- Checking Student Early Childhood Educators' attendance log
- Marking Student Early Childhood Educator placement portfolio
- Arranging Professional Learning Conversation with Student Early Childhood Educator

Section 6: Role of the Placement Coordinator & Academic Lead for Placement

Placement Coordinator

The Placement Coordinator is responsible for managing the practical and organisational aspects of your placement journey. This includes processing Garda Vetting for all Student Early Childhood Educators, collecting and securely storing the documentation required by TUSLA, and allocating Student Early Childhood Educators to approved placement settings across all years of the programme. The team also tracks your progress throughout your placements and coordinates lecturer visits to ensure you receive the necessary support. Their work ensures that all placements run smoothly and meet the required legal and professional standards.

Academic Lead Role

The Academic Lead oversees the academic and professional quality of your placement experience. With expertise in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), they approve and monitor placement settings, liaise with mentors, and ensure that your placement arrangements meet programme requirements. They also make key decisions on issues such as extensions, deferrals, and fitness to practice. In addition, the Academic Lead is responsible for maintaining the Placement Handbook, managing placement-related Moodle pages, and leading placement preparation sessions, supervision, and assessment. Their role is to guide and support you in developing the skills and knowledge needed for professional practice.

Appendix 1: Code of Conduct for Student Early Childhood Educators

The purpose of this Code of Conduct is to inform student Early Childhood Educators of the professional behaviour expected from them while undertaking the Placement element of the BAHECE Programme. Student Early Childhood Educators must abide by the terms, conditions and policies of their ECEC setting as well as NCI's policies and procedures.

The responsibility of the student Early Childhood Educator

Student Early Childhood Educators engage in a learning process where they will be guided and supported by their Placement Supervisor and Placement Mentor. They will come into contact with a range of stakeholders including children and their parents. Student Early Childhood Educators are expected to actively participate in activities appropriate to their level of knowledge and practical experience, under the supervision and guidance of their Placement Mentor. As their knowledge, skills and competences develop, it is expected that they will increasingly accept more responsibility. It is not expected that they will undertake unsupervised activities for which they are not prepared for.

Professional code for student Early Childhood Educators

- Approach your work diligently, take responsibility and show a willingness to use your initiative.
- Always act in a professional, respectful manner with the placement setting supervisors, staff team and all stakeholders.
- Fully adhere to the working practices and terms and conditions of the placement organisation – working conditions, health and safety, GDPR, confidentiality and child protection.
- Ensure that your health and safety needs are met.
- Be sensitive and responsive to the needs of the ECEC setting and stakeholders.
- Be aware of your limitations and seek help when necessary.
- The use of drugs or alcohol by a student Early Childhood Educator is a serious breach of conduct and will not be condoned. The use of drugs or alcohol by any student Early Childhood Educator during their placement period will necessitate a disciplinary action.
- Remember the principles of equal opportunities and implement them with respect to everyone you work with.
- Be willing to learn from all the professionals you work with in the ECEC setting.
- Organise thoroughly for all your activities by ensuring resources and activity plans are prepared in advance and in consultation with your Placement Supervisor/Placement Mentor as appropriate.
- Always notify the ECEC setting as early as possible on the day if you are unable to come in during school placement, for example, due to illness.
- Be punctual; you should be in the environment approximately 15 minutes before you are due to start work and remain long enough to clear up, review the activity with the Placement Mentor/room leader if they are available, and make provisional plans for your next session.

- Involve yourself in the wider life of the ECEC setting.
- Dress appropriately in accordance with the dress codes operating in the ECEC setting.
- Do not leave the premises during the duration of the placement, unless it is essential, in which case seek permission and let a senior member of staff know.
- Offer, and be available to attend, informal and formal meetings, which may be outside working hours.
- Attend the ECEC setting on the agreed days. Any changes to the agreed Planning for Placement should be notified to both the Placement Supervisor and the ECEC setting.

Appendix 2: NCI Early Childhood Placement Triparty Agreement

National College of Ireland

Early Childhood Placement Programme

EARLY CHILDHOOD PLACEMENT AGREEMENT
– TRI PARTY NATIONAL COLLEGE OF IRELAND
Contract for Placement

1 General

This document captures key information required for student placement opportunities. Its primary purpose is to ensure the safe delivery of a meaningful and high- quality learning experience – the outcomes of which should be beneficial to both the student and the placement provider.

Student Name:

Programme:

Setting Name:

The placement will be: Onsite   Remote

2 Responsibilities of the contracting parties

1) The Setting commits itself to:

a)   Host _____ (Student Name)
     from specify start date *DD/MM/YEAR*   to specify end date *DD/MM/YEAR*

b)   Provide the student with induction training of the setting including an outline of Health and Safety and emergency arrangements.

c)   Adhere to the roles and responsibilites of the setting and mentor as outlined in the placement booklet.

d)   Support the students to undertake the activities linked to the placement module.

e)   Provide adequate supervision and feedback for the Student during the placement.

f)   Accommodate a supervisor from NCI to attend onsite visits and discuss student progress throughout their placement.

2) NCI commits itself to:

a)   Provide the student with the necessary information on the placement.

b)   Provide adequate support for the student during the placement.

c)   Make the student aware of the placement code of practice and their rights, roles and responsibilities during the placement.

3) The Student commits herself/himself

a)   To make the most of the learning opportunities which the placement offers.

b)   To carry out carefully the tasks which he/she is assigned according to the roles and responsibilities outlined in the placement booklet.

c)   To follow the instructions of his/her Mentor in the setting.

d)   To follow the official rules and regulations of the setting and inform the setting immediately in case of absence (such as the case of sickness).

e)   To adhere to NCI and the settings code of conduct to the same extent as any employee of the setting

f

4. Mentor

The setting will assign

(Setting mentor Name) _____ (Job Title) _____

Telephone _____

email _____ as the placement mentor.

5. Remuneration (if applicable)

The Student will receive € _____ per hour.

6. Placement hours

The Student will be required to be onsite from _____ (am) to _____

on _____ *(Specify days between Monday-Friday)*

7. Termination of the Contract

The contract can be terminated for reasons including: fitness to learn/practice, breach of discipline, unsatisfactory placement or placement conditions, inability to carry out the placement without prior notice by both the Setting and the Student after consultation with the National College of Ireland.

8. Contract Copy

The agreement must be signed by all 3 parties.

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Signature on behalf of Setting   Printed name (Capitals) & Title

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Signature on behalf of NCI   Printed name (Capitals) & Title

--------------------------------   --------------------------------
Signature of Student   Printed name (Capitals)

Appendix 3: Student Monthly Placement Log

Student Name: _____

Year: (1/2/3/4)_____   Placement Provider: _____

Date	Arrival Time	Departure Time	Activities (Participated in or Observed)	Signed (Mentor)

Placement Provider: _____ Mentor: _____

Signed (Student): _____ Date: _____

Placement Visit Feedback
BA ECEC Year 2

Student Name:	Date: Time:
Setting Name:	Visit Number 1 / 2
Mentor Name:	Tutor Name:

Placement Task	Not Observed	Novice/ needs support	Developing	Proficient	Accomplishing
Learn routines, policies, and timetables.					
Join daily care tasks (e.g., handwashing, feeding).					
Build relationships with children and staff.					
Support transitions (e.g., arrivals, meals, rest).					
Respond to children's diverse needs and backgrounds.					
Conduct child observations.					
Assist and shadow educators.					
Engage in creative, developmental play.					
Co-lead routines and learning with mentor support.					
Plan and lead a play invitation.					
Support language and numeracy, including STEM.					
Reflect critically on placement experiences.					
Use varied pedagogical strategies.					

Tutor Observations:

Manager/Mentor Comments:

What Next? Formative Feedback and Action Plan

Student Signature
Tutor Signature

Visit Structure

1. Observe Student in Practice
2. Visiting Tutor meets with Manager/Mentor
3. Visiting Tutor meets with Student (Triparty where possible)
4. Agree formative feedback and action plan
5. Complete Visit Sheet together and sign

Placement Visit Feedback
BA ECEC Year 3

Student Name:	Date:	Time:
Setting Name:	Visit Number 1 / 2	
Mentor Name:	Tutor Name:	

Placement Task	Not Observed	Novice/ needs support	Developing	Proficient	Accomplishing
Lead learning experiences with mentor support					
Adapt environments to spark children's curiosity and engagement					
Use varied teaching strategies (e.g. scaffolding, modelling, shared thinking)					
Conduct and document observations					
Co-design and implement small curriculum changes					
Collaborate with colleagues, families, and the wider community					
Support holistic development, respecting diverse needs and backgrounds					
Ensure children's voices are heard and considered (Lundy Model)					
Contribute to learning documentation (e.g. stories, reflections, analyses)					
Explore digital tools to enhance learning					
Apply quality frameworks to improve practice					
Participate in policy review and development using legislation and best practice					

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Tutor Observations:

Manager/Mentor Comments:

What Next? Formative Feedback and Action Plan

Student Signature
Tutor Signature