

HNC Early Years Professional Leadership for England

starting in Academic Year 2025/26

Course Leader:

Teaching Institution: Herefordshire, Ludlow and North Shropshire College
Campus: Hereford
Awarding Body: Pearson
Final Award: Pearson BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Early Years Professional Leadership for England
Intermediate Award(s): N/A
Mode of Study: Full-time
Qualification number: 610/2675/X
Date of programme specification preparation/revision: 30/06/25

Educational aims of the programme

The aim of the Pearson BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Early Years Professional Leadership for England is to develop students as professional, self-reflecting individuals able to meet the demands of employers in the early education and care sector and adapt to a constantly changing world. The qualifications aim is to widen access to higher education and enhance the career prospects of those who undertake it. It offers an in-depth introduction to the subject area via a mandatory core of learning, while allowing for the acquisition of specific knowledge, skills and experience thorough specialist pathways.

QAA and professional academic standards and quality

This qualification has been developed to also meet the occupational level 5 early years lead practitioner occupational standard (ST0551). The standard is held by the Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) and can provide professional or apprenticeship status and progression to direct employment. This qualification has been submitted to IfATE for consideration as a Higher Technical Qualification (HTQ)

Pearson BTEC Higher National qualifications are recognised higher education qualifications in the UK. They are in line with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Subject Benchmark Statements, where applicable. These qualifications are part of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF).

The following university and higher education tutors and employers supported development of this qualification Briteswell Centre, Busy Bees Leicester Bitteswell, Heart Pre-School, Little Elms Pre-School (Oxton) Limited, Nottingham Trent University, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Early Years Team, The Priory Learning Trust, West Nottinghamshire College, Wolds Childcare Ltd

National Occupational Standards

The content and level of the Pearson BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate and Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Early Years Professional Leadership for England are intended to support articulation to Level 6 in early education and care-related degree courses, excepting degrees to regulated professions such as primary school teaching.

To support progression to Level 5 or Level 6 in early education and care-related degree courses through accreditation of prior learning or articulation, units in the Pearson BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Early Years Professional Leadership for England are referenced against national early childhood education and care standards in the UK.

Higher-level Skills

The purpose of Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals in Early Years Professional Leadership for England is to develop students as professional, self-reflecting individuals able to meet the demands of employers in the early years education, leadership and care sector and adapt to a constantly changing world. The qualifications aim to widen access to higher education and enhance the career prospects of those who take them.

Objectives of the BTEC Higher Nationals in Early Years Professional Leadership for England The objectives of the Pearson BTEC Higher Nationals in Early Years Professional Leadership for England are:

- to equip students with the early years education, leadership and care practice skills, knowledge and understanding necessary to achieve high performance in the global early years education and care environment
- to provide education and training for entry to, or progression in, a range of careers in early years education, leadership and care, including: family, social and community care/work support roles in a range of community-based settings; senior early years practitioner, supervision and management roles in children's nursery and other childcare settings; teaching assistant roles in early education or pre-school settings; care and education support for children with special education and development needs; children's community-based health support roles
- to provide insight and understanding into the diversity of roles within the early years education and care sector, recognising the importance of collaboration at all levels
- to equip students with knowledge, understanding and behaviours that demonstrate the embedding of principles of equality and diversity in their practice in working with diverse organisations, communities, families, children and other individuals
- to provide opportunities for students to enter or progress in employment in early years education, leadership and care, or progress to higher education qualifications such as an honours degree in early childhood studies, psychology and child development, child and youth studies, or related areas
- to provide opportunities for students to develop the skills, techniques and personal attributes essential for successful working lives
- to support students to understand the local, regional and global context of early years education, leadership and care practice and, for those students with a global outlook, to aspire to international career pathways
- to provide students with opportunities to address contemporary early years education, leadership and care issues facing the sector and society at large, with particular emphasis on partnership working and values-based care and leadership, and child-centred approaches to providing early years education and care to babies and young children
- to provide opportunities for students to achieve a nationally-recognised professional qualification within their chosen area of specialisation
- to offer students the chance of career progression in their chosen field, with particular emphasis on achieving leadership or management-level positions, professional recognition and beyond
- to enable flexibility of study and to meet local or specialist needs
- to offer a balance between employability skills and the knowledge essential for students with entrepreneurial, employment or academic aspirations
- to provide students with the context in which to consider professional ethics and to personal, professional and statutory responsibilities within the sector.

We aim to meet these objectives by:

- providing a thorough grounding in early years education, leadership and care principles at Level 4 that lead the student to a range of progression opportunities at Level 5 and beyond to individual occupations in the early years education, leadership and care sector
- equipping individuals with the essential professional practice skills required to develop as early years lead practitioners and that can be applied a range of roles and responsibilities in the sector
- enabling progression to a university degree by supporting the development of appropriate academic study skills through the selection of appropriate units for study at Levels 4 and 5
- enabling progression to further professional qualifications in early years leadership, education and care disciplines by mapping the units studied to the requirements of professional bodies, regulators and occupational standards applicable to that discipline
- supporting a range of study modes and time frames for completion of the qualifications.

Course Structure

The Pearson BTEC Level 4 Higher National Certificate in Early Years Professional Leadership for England offers students a broad introduction to the subject area via a mandatory core of learning, while enabling the acquisition of skills, knowledge, behaviours and experience relevant to the workplace or placement. This effectively builds underpinning core skills while preparing the student for further subject specialisation at Level 5. Students will gain a wide range of sector knowledge tied to practical skills gained in evidence-based practice, personal research, self-study, directed study and workplace learning and experience.

At Level 4, students develop a broad knowledge and awareness of key aspects of the early years education, leadership and care sector through eight core units, which include one unit assessed by a Pearson-set assignment. The units are:

Unit Number		Unit Level	Unit Credit
Mandatory units			
1	Personal and Professional Development through Reflective Practice	4	15
2	Protecting Children in Early Education and Care Environments	4	15
3	Play and Learning in Early Childhood	4	15
4	Supporting and Promoting Children's Development (Babies and Toddlers)	4	15
5	Supporting and Promoting Children's Development (Young Children)	4	15
6	Promoting Healthy Living	4	15
7	Preparing for Research (Pearson-set)	4	15
8	Promoting Inclusive Early Education and Care Environments	4	15

Learning and Teaching Methods

Students will learn through a series of lectures, practical sessions, workshops, seminars and tutorials. They will also be required to undertake substantial independent study. Typically, this will involve completing online activities, reading journal articles and books, watching selected videos, working through example problems, working on individual and group projects, undertaking research in the library and online, preparing assignments and presentations.

Students will be taught by a teaching team whose expertise and knowledge are closely matched to the content of the modules on the course.

In a typical week, students will normally have 7 hours of face-to-face teaching. The course normally runs over 32 weeks.

Work experience/placement requirements - In addition to the teaching, 375 hours' work placement or experience in early education and/or care settings which is in line with the Nutbrown review 'Only settings that are rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted should be able to host students on placement". Students who are employed in a setting rated as Requiring Improvement or Inadequate by Ofsted will be required to complete 75 hours of the 375 hours in a Good or Outstanding setting.

Students who are full and relevant and employed in good or outstanding settings will be required to complete 25 hours of the 375 hour with an age range they are not responsible for and complete a reflective account of the experience.

All students will also need to complete a Practical Reflective Evidence Portfolio (PREP), including reflective accounts, over the duration of the programme.

A minimum of two different settings is required. Ideally, you will have a minimum of 75 practice hours with each of the following age ranges:

- From birth to one year, 11 months
- From two years to four years, 11 months
- Five years to seven years, 11 months.

Where a student undertakes work placement/experience in two settings only, at least one of these settings must enable the student to meet the practice hours requirements for at least two of the age ranges specified above.

Means of Assessment

Students working at higher levels should be capable of undertaking independent study and research, developing strategies to improve their own performance, supported by teaching staff.

Students will be required to complete coursework as they progress through the programme and undertake assessments at the end of each semester. The assessment of Pearson Higher National qualifications is criterion-referenced and we are required to assess learners' evidence against published learning outcomes and assessment criteria. All units will be individually graded as 'pass', 'merit' or 'distinction'. To achieve a pass grade for the unit learners must meet the assessment criteria set out in the specifications. Merit and distinction grades are awarded for higher-level achievement.

All grades awarded are provisional until they are confirmed at the assessment board. This usually takes place at the end of an academic year.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is 'a method of assessment that considers whether an individual can demonstrate that they can meet the assessment requirements for a unit through knowledge, understanding or skills that they already possess and do not need to develop through

a course of learning'. If individuals can produce relevant evidence that fully meets learning outcome requirements then RPL can be given for their existing knowledge, understanding or skills

External Examiner

The External Examiner (EE) is a subject assessment specialist appointed by Pearson to conduct external examination. They verify that the management of programmes and assessment decisions meet national standards. External examination is usually conducted by an annual visit, usually in the summer term.

Additional Support

Developing effective study skills is an essential element in achieving academic success. All module leaders provide individual academic support. This is in addition to Personal Academic Tutor support.

All students are provided with a Course Handbook that comprehensively outlines the programme and provides advice and guidance. Module outlines and assessment details are provided for all modules. During your studies you will have access to fully equipped classrooms, practical workshops, Library with text and electronic resources and Student Services.

The College is committed to ensuring that disabled people, including those with specific learning difficulties and/or mental health difficulties are treated fairly. Reasonable adjustments to provision will be made to ensure that disabled students are not disadvantaged. The Learning Support Service is your initial point of contact.

Entry Requirements

Entry criteria detail a typical offer but the College considers all applications on an individual basis which means that we could make offers based on qualifications, personal profile and experience. If you have any queries regarding your offer, please contact our Admissions Team.

Typical offer:

Four GCSEs at grade C or above including GCSE English Language at C or above (or recognised equivalency). Evidence of Level 2 Literacy is required, for example Key Skills Level 2 or GCSE English Language at C or above or equivalent. If you do not have evidence of Literacy at Level 2, it will be necessary to complete a non-standard entry essay to demonstrate competence in written English. Maths GCSE at grade C or above (or recognised equivalency) is desirable.

A minimum of one A Level or a Level 3 qualification equivalent to three or above A Levels, for example the CACHE Diploma or BTEC National Diploma in Children's Care, Learning and Development. The current UCAS tariff requirements for entry are 32 UCAS points.

In addition to this, practitioners who do not hold the qualifications outlined above will be considered on the basis of prior professional experience and related learning.

The following are required for both standard and non-standard entry:

- A statement of support from your current employer to provide the time, opportunity and support for work-based requirements and release to attend university-based study.
- A testimony from an appropriately qualified referee.
- Evidence of current police check (DBS) clearance to work with young children.

Course Exit Points

To achieve the qualification a student must complete 120 credits and pass 105 credits at or above the level of the qualification.

Progression Route

The Level 4 Higher National Certificate provides a solid grounding in early education and care practice, which students can build on should they decide to continue their studies beyond the Certificate stage. Successful completion of the HNC allows progression to Level 5. The Level 5 Higher National Diploma allows students to specialise by committing to specific career paths and progression routes to degree-level study.

On successful completion of the Level 5 Higher National Diploma, students can develop their careers in the early education and care sector through:

- Entering employment
- Continuing existing employment
- Completing a higher apprenticeship programme
- Linking with the appropriate Professional Body
- Committing to Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Progressing to university.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in associated course documentation e.g. course handbooks and module specifications.