



T Level Technical Qualification in Education and Early Years (Level 3) QN: 610/5748/4

Occupational specialism assessment (OSA)

Early Years Educator

Assignment 3 Part 1 (a), Part 1 (b) and Part 2 – Mark Scheme

Marking guidelines

General guidelines

You must apply the following marking guidelines to all marking undertaken throughout the marking period. This is to ensure fairness to all students, who must receive the same treatment. You must mark the first student in exactly the same way as you mark the last.

- The Mark Scheme must be referred to throughout the marking period and applied consistently. Do not change your approach to marking once you have been standardised.
- Reward students positively, giving credit for what they have shown, rather than what they might have omitted.
- Utilise the whole mark range and always award full marks when the response merits them.
- Be prepared to award zero marks if the student's response has no creditworthy material.
- Do not credit irrelevant material that does not answer the question, no matter how impressive the response might be.
- If you are in any doubt about the application of the Mark Scheme, you must consult with your team leader or the chief examiner.

Guidelines for using extended-response marking grids

Extended-response marking grids have been designed to award a student's response holistically for the relevant observations, reflections and scenario-based questions and should follow a best-fit approach. The grids are broken down into bands, with each band having an associated descriptor indicating the performance at that band. You should determine the band before determining the mark.

When determining a band, you should look at the overall quality of the response and reward students positively, rather than focusing on small omissions. If the response covers aspects at different bands, you should use a best-fit approach at this stage and use the available marks within the band to credit the response appropriately.

When determining a mark, your decision should be based on the quality of the response in relation to the descriptors. Standardisation materials, marked by the chief examiner, will help you with determining a mark. You will be able to use exemplar student responses to compare to live responses, to decide if it is the same, better or worse.

You are reminded that the indicative content provided under the marking grid is there as a guide, and therefore you must credit any other suitable responses a student may produce. It is not a requirement that students must cover all of the indicative content to be awarded full marks.

Performance outcomes (POs)

This assessment requires students to be able to:

PO1: Support and promote children's play, development and early education

PO2: Develop relationships with children to facilitate their development

PO3: Plan, provide and review care, play and educational opportunities to enable children to progress

PO4: Safeguard and promote the health, safety and wellbeing of children

PO5: Work in partnership with colleagues, parents, carers and other professionals to support children's development

PO grid

Part	Performance outcomes (POs)					Total
	PO1	PO2	PO3	PO4	PO5	
1 (a)	2	1	5	1		9
1 (b)	1		8			9
1 (b)			5		1	6
2			4			4
2			6			6
2	5	1	5	1		12
2	6	2	4			12
Total marks	14	4	37	2	1	58
% weighting	24%	7%	64%	3.5 %	1.5%	100%

Part 1 (a)

Total for this part: 9 marks

1	You must carry out two observations on a child in your industry placement. You must observe the child in activities that support the prime area of development in the early years foundation stage (EYFS) – personal, social and emotional development (PSED). You must carry out two separate observations: • Observation 1 requires the use of a jottings / sticky notes observation method. • Observation 2 requires the use of the time sample observation method. [9 marks]
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Band	Mark	Descriptor
3	7 to 9	The student demonstrates an excellent ability to carry out and record the range of observations within PSED, which are highly sophisticated and the focus is clear and sustained. The observations show a highly sophisticated level of detail, and the approach is highly appropriate around the individual needs and stages of development related to expected and atypical patterns within PSED. The observations show an excellent understanding of the early years education curriculum and are objective rather than subjective, maximising the effectiveness in being able to draw conclusions from them.
2	4 to 6	The student demonstrates a good ability to carry out and record the range of observations within PSED, which are sufficiently detailed and the focus is largely sustained. The observations show a sufficient level of detail, and the approach is generally appropriate around the individual needs and stages of development related to expected and atypical patterns within PSED. The observations show a good understanding of the early years education curriculum and are most likely to be objective rather than subjective, maximising the effectiveness in being able to draw conclusions from them.
1	1 to 3	The student demonstrates a limited ability to carry out and record the range of observations within PSED, which are basic and likely to be lacking in focus. The observations show a minimal level of detail, and the approach is likely to be inappropriate around the individual needs and stages of development related to expected and atypical patterns within PSED. The observations show a limited understanding of the early years education curriculum and are likely to be subjective rather than objective, reducing the effectiveness in being able to draw conclusions from them.
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

Observation 1: jottings / sticky notes method

- captured as jottings or on sticky notes, which can be used to check development, for example, using the sticky notes to put into a learning journal or a child's developmental folder
- records a snapshot of something significant that a child has done or said, for example, has the child done or said something for the first time?
- notes anything that is a 'first', for example, the first time a child holds their pencil in a tripod grip or holds a book correctly, turning pages left to right
- notes anything particular to that child, for example, that she enjoys colouring in or has an interest in fairies
- notes anything unusual or exceptional about the child's play at that moment, if the child is well known, for example, is the child acting differently or displaying behaviour that is unusual for that child?
- should build a picture about children's interests and development from many pieces of information
- observations recorded in an objective manner: no opinions or feelings – unbiased
- recording of observations in early years areas of learning against the child's age bracket
- can be used in all environments, not constrained to one learning environment and can be used anywhere in the early years setting, for example, outdoor and indoor play, trips or forest school.

Observation 2: time sample method

- three methods of time sampling that students can choose from – whole interval recording, partial interval recording, and momentary time sampling:
 - whole interval recording means that the observer is interested in behaviour that occurs during the entire interval
 - partial interval recording involves observing whether a behaviour occurs or does not occur during specified time periods, partial interval recording means that the observer is interested in behaviour that does or does not occur in any part of the interval and that the behaviour usually does not consume the entire interval
 - momentary time sampling is where the observer records whether a behaviour occurs or does not occur at the very end of the interval, when the behaviour looked at is not easily counted, you can measure the behaviour by counting the number of time intervals in which the behaviour occurred
- time sampling observations on PSED will be brief but will include the activity the child is engaged in, which area of the nursery they are in and the level of involvement at that particular time
- repeated short-focused snapshots of the child's development used to collect precise data over a period of time
- identifies the behaviour of a child and determines what the child typically does during the day
- focuses on selected aspects and frequency of the child's behaviour
- time sample observations on PSED need to have clear aims to focus
- useful for recording the child's level of interest in types of activities and their disposition
- monitoring a child's interactions, particularly if the child is quiet and overlooked or always shows a preference for only a few particular activities
- used to observe a child's behaviour to identify possible concerns, for example, a shy child who does not relate to other children
- no attempt to influence behaviour during the observation, for example, practitioners cannot influence the type of play, skills or behaviour of the child within PSED
- observations recorded in an objective manner: no opinions or feelings – unbiased
- the observer needs to be aware of not making it obvious to the child that they are being observed.

Accept any other suitable response.

Part 1 (b)**Total for this part: 15 marks**

1 Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of **your own** practice and skills in carrying out **each** of the different observation methods in Assignment 3 Part 1 (a).

[9 marks]

Band	Mark	Descriptor
3	7 to 9	Exceptional evaluation of student's own strengths and weaknesses in carrying out the observations, which is balanced . The relationship to the student's ability to carry out the observations in Part 1 (a) is clear and sustained . There is a highly sophisticated level of detail in relation to own skills required when carrying out observations, with excellent application of reflective practice.
2	4 to 6	Effective evaluation of student's own strengths and weaknesses in carrying out the observations, which is generally balanced . The relationship to the student's ability to carry out the observations in Part 1 (a) is generally clear . There is a sufficient level of detail in relation to own skills required when carrying out observations, with good application of reflective practice.
1	1 to 3	Basic evaluation of student's own strengths and weaknesses in carrying out the observations, which is unbalanced . The relationship to the student's ability to carry out the observations in Part 1 (a) is likely to be unclear . There is a minimal level of detail in relation to own skills required when carrying out observations, with limited application of reflective practice.
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

Strengths

Students may make reference to:

- having a good relationship with the child, for example, knowing a child well and knowing their stage of development can support the observational process and make it easier to identify any behavioural or additional needs
- using effective reflection on the observation to check that the child is in line with the expected pattern of development in the early years curriculum and that any activities are age and stage appropriate; if there are any issues, strategies can be put in place to support the child
- understanding and using the reflective cycle, for example, using the reflective cycle can ensure that the practitioner reflects in detail on their own practice and develops their observation skills
- experience of already doing an observation, for example, experience of observations will strengthen practitioner observation skills, ensuring they are accurate, coherent and show no bias
- prior knowledge of types of observations, for example, the practitioner should know all of the types of observation that they have been taught and the importance of each type
- observing a practitioner in practice carrying out observations, for example, practitioners may have already shadowed other practitioners in the observation process; this will have shown them the process and how to reflect on the observation for the child's future planning
- practitioner's confidence in their own ability, for example, if a practitioner has confidence in their own ability, then they will be able to carry out detailed observations that are linked to the early years curriculum and can determine the patterns of development and any concerns
- observations informing future planning, for example, the observational data from the PSED observation can be reflected on and then used to plan next steps for the child or support any additional or behavioural needs.

Weaknesses

Students may make reference to:

- observations are filtered through the interpretive lens of the observer and susceptible to observer bias, for example, although practitioners understand that they should remain unbiased, observations can often be interpreted incorrectly
- observations do not increase the understanding of why children behave the way they do, for example, observations can determine the stage of the child's development and behaviour of the child, but they do not explain why a child behaves a certain way or give solutions for further planning
- children realise they are being observed, for example, if children realise that they are being observed, they consciously or unconsciously change the way they behave
- observation techniques, for example, the observation types in this assignment are often not used anymore in settings, due to using electronic tablets with development apps
- time consuming, for example, in a busy early years setting, it may be time consuming to attempt two different methods of observation
- lack of confidence, for example, a practitioner's lack of confidence can affect their ability to understand children's development, which could affect future planning and next steps
- lack of in-depth knowledge of the current early years education curriculum, for example, if a practitioner does not fully understand the curriculum, they will not be able to determine if the child is reaching their milestones or needs additional support.

Reference to professional skills used in observations, such as:

- active listening – students may reflect on how well they were able to listen to the children whilst completing their observations, if they found it difficult to hear and record what was being said and done and the impact this had on the quality of their observations
- time management and working in partnership with others in the setting to plan observations – students may reflect on how well they managed their time, for example, did they give enough time to effectively plan and share their observations with their mentor or did they leave everything to the last minute and then felt rushed?
- observations require the ability to multi-task – observers need to be able to notice what is going on whilst listening and writing and, at the same time, trying not to miss anything. In addition, the observer needs to be aware of what else is happening around them; students may reflect on how well they did this when carrying out their observations, which skills they found easy to manage and those they found difficult and the impact on the quality of their observations
- handwriting and writing skills (legibility and spelling, punctuation and grammar) – it can be difficult to record observations neatly as the observer is watching and writing at the same time; students might reflect on the legibility of their observations, how well they were written and if this would affect the accuracy of their observations
- being objective – students might reflect on how objective their observations were and how this helped or hindered the assessment (analysis) process
- may apply a reflective cycle:
 - Gibbs
 - Kolb
 - Boud, Keogh and Walker.

Accept any other suitable response.

2	Suggest ways that you could engage with continuing professional development (CPD) to improve your own observational practice and skills.	[6 marks]
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Band	Mark	Descriptor
3	5 to 6	Comprehensive response, which suggests an extensive range of ways to engage in CPD. The suggestions are likely to improve the quality of the student's observation skills significantly. Relevance to the strengths and weaknesses of the student's own practice is clear and sustained, with a highly sophisticated response. Clear and varied opportunities to work in partnership with others are considered. These are relevant and highly effective.
2	3 to 4	Sound response, which suggests a good range of ways to engage in CPD. The suggestions are likely to improve the quality of the student's observation skills. Relevance to the strengths and weaknesses of the student's own practice is largely clear, with a well-developed response. Clear opportunities to work in partnership with others are considered. These are mostly relevant and effective.
1	1 to 2	Fragmented points, which suggest a limited range of ways to engage in CPD. The suggestions are very unlikely to improve the quality of the student's observation skills. Relevance to the strengths and weaknesses of the student's own practice is somewhat unclear and likely to consist of basic statements. Limited opportunities to work in partnership with others are considered. These are likely to be minimal and ineffective.
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

Ways to engage in CPD, including working in partnership, related to strengths and weaknesses of own practice may include:

- having a mentor, for example, having a mentor in the setting will ensure that the practitioner is supported whilst carrying out observations and next step planning
- setting targets related to identified weaknesses of practice and skills when observing children
- using a range of resources to improve practice and skills when observing children
- implementing strategies to improve own confidence to observe children
- training days, for example, attending training courses on observations can ensure that observation practices are up to date and valid
- peer observation, for example, by observing a peer, a practitioner can observe good practice and develop their own practice, in own or other early years settings
- research on the different observation methods, for example, practitioners can research new innovative methods of observation and share their knowledge with peers to keep practice current
- training on new technologies such as electronic tablets and new observation apps, for example, practitioners need to be aware of how to use technology and the new apps that are involved in observing
- further training on the observation, assessment and planning cycle will develop a better understanding of the need for objectivity in recording observations in order to provide a valid and reliable base for assessment and planning of next steps, consequently enabling progression of the children's development
- CPD in relation to identified areas for development is directly related to the specific observation methods carried out
- training and development on reflective cycles to ensure the practitioner is reflecting on practice and becoming reflective to improve outcomes for children
- shadowing key person / workers and supporting the completion of children's learning journeys to gain hands-on experience
- working collaboratively with colleagues such as the class teacher or teaching assistants
- working collaboratively with children's health and care services
- supporting key person / workers with parent consultations to learn how observations from parents and carers inform the observation, assessment and planning cycle.

Accept any other suitable response.

Part 2

Total for this part: 34 marks

1	Identify and describe the two different methods of observation (provided in the insert) that were used to assess Louis' development in personal, social and emotional development (PSED) . [4 marks]
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Award **one** mark for identification and **one** mark for a description (up to a maximum of four marks):

- **child tracker (1):**
a child tracker observation follows the child's movements around the setting and records where they go, what they choose to do, and how long they spend in each area (1).
- **checklist (1):**
a checklist observation uses a predetermined list of specific skills, behaviours or milestones that the observer checks off as they occur during the activity / over time (as appropriate) (1).

Accept any other suitable response.

2	Using an example, evaluate the purpose of each of the two methods of observation identified in question 1 in the assessment of children. [6 marks]
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Award up to **three** marks for an explanation of the purpose of each method of observation in the assessment of children (up to a maximum of six marks):

- **child tracker** – the purpose of a child tracker observation is to follow a child's movements throughout the setting to identify where they choose to play, how long they stay in each area, and the types of activities they are naturally drawn to (1); this helps the practitioner assess levels of engagement, independence, confidence, and social interaction in different environments, supporting an accurate understanding of the child's interests and developmental needs (1); child tracker observations may be limited by the practitioner's ability to record every movement in real time, and significant learning moments may be missed when the child moves quickly between activities(1).
- **checklist** – the purpose of a checklist observation is to assess whether a child demonstrates specific skills, behaviours or developmental milestones by using a predetermined list to record the presence or absence of each item (1); this enables the practitioner to make quick, objective judgements about a child's progress in relation to expected developmental norms, helping to identify strengths, gaps or areas requiring further support (1); however, checklist observations may be limited as they offer only a snapshot of behaviour and do not provide contextual detail, meaning that important nuances or 'in-the-moment' learning may be overlooked (1).

Accept any other suitable response.

3	With reference to the insert, analyse each of the two observations to draw conclusions about Louis' holistic developmental needs, as identified through PSED. In your answer, you must relate to the current requirements of the early years education curriculum.
[12 marks]	

Band	Mark	Descriptor
3	9 to 12	There is an exceptional analysis of Louis' interests, individual needs and stages of development related to expected and atypical patterns as identified within PSED. Substantiated conclusions from the observations have been drawn and are fully supported by judgements, showing an excellent understanding of how the early years education curriculum is used to assess children's development holistically.
2	5 to 8	There is an effective analysis of Louis' interests, individual needs and stages of development related to expected and atypical patterns as identified within PSED. Conclusions from the observations have been drawn but are lacking substantiation and are generally supported by relevant judgements, showing a good understanding of how the early years education curriculum is used to assess children's development holistically.
1	1 to 4	There is a basic analysis of Louis' interests, individual needs and stages of development related to expected and atypical patterns as identified within PSED. Simplistic conclusions from the observations have been drawn and are not supported by any judgements, showing a limited understanding of how the early years education curriculum is used to assess children's development holistically.
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

Conclusions from the observations may include:

- Louis is broadly working within expected PSED patterns for 3- and 4-year-olds
- Louis can join shared play and stay involved when the activity has a clear purpose
- Louis responds well to active, outdoor and goal-focused experiences
- Louis needs support to build confidence with a wider range of peers, especially girls
- Louis' PSED links closely to his physical confidence, communication and access to other areas of learning.

Analytical points may include:

Child tracker:

- Louis stayed engaged in the obstacle-course activity for the full observation period
- Louis was motivated by building, organising and completing the course
- Louis showed growing confidence in joining a shared task
- Louis benefited from the familiar outdoor environment
- Louis appeared more socially comfortable when the play had a clear shared aim
- Louis showed resilience and concentration during practical play
- Louis could work alongside other children during a physical challenge
- Louis' strongest engagement was seen in active and purposeful play.

Checklist:

- Louis joined in with group play
- Louis showed interest in a shared activity
- Louis interacted with other children
- Louis co-operated with peers during the task
- Louis sustained involvement for the full session
- Louis managed the group activity appropriately in a familiar space
- Louis showed positive signs of developing social confidence
- mixed-gender interaction remained an area for development.

Milestones met related to the EYFS based on Development Matters 2023 may include:

Communication and language 3 to 4 years

- use talk to organise themselves and their play
- use longer sentences in familiar play situations
- start to continue conversations with adults and peers during shared activity.

Personal, social and emotional development 3 to 4 years

- play with one or more other children
- select and use activities and resources with help when needed
- increasingly follow rules and expectations in group play
- show resilience and perseverance in the face of challenge.

Physical development 3 to 4 years

- choose the right resources to carry out their plan
- use large-muscle movements with increasing control and coordination.

Accept any other suitable response.

SAMPLE

4	Use your analysis of the two observations to discuss the next steps for Louis' holistic developmental needs, through PSED. Give examples of suitable educational activities or opportunities to support your answer. [12 marks]
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Band	Mark	Descriptor
3	9 to 12	Exceptional application of the analysis of the observations to inform Louis' next steps through PSED. Next steps discussed, with a highly sophisticated level of detail. Relevance to Louis is clear and sustained. Planning for next steps is exceptional in enabling Louis to progress and has highly sophisticated consideration for Louis' individual needs and interests.
2	5 to 8	Effective application of the analysis of the observations to inform Louis' next steps through PSED. Next steps are discussed, with a sufficient level of detail. Relevance to Louis is generally clear. Planning for next steps is effective in enabling Louis to progress and has sufficient consideration for Louis' individual needs and interests.
1	1 to 4	Basic application of the analysis of the observations to inform Louis' next steps through PSED. There are few next steps discussed, most of which are likely to be merely stated and have little relevance to Louis. Planning for next steps is most likely to be ineffective in enabling Louis to progress and has minimal consideration for Louis' individual needs and interests.
0	0	No creditworthy material.

Indicative content

Discussion regarding next steps in relation to the EYFS may include:

Personal, social and emotional development

- play with one or more other children, extending and elaborating play ideas
- build constructive and respectful relationships with a wider range of peers
- find solutions to small conflicts and negotiate roles in play
- identify and express feelings in social situations.

Communication and language

- use talk to organise shared play and explain ideas
- start and continue conversations with peers for several turns
- develop social phrases for joining in, turn-taking and problem solving.

Physical development

- continue to use large-muscle movements confidently in outdoor play
- choose and move equipment safely when working with others
- co-ordinate body movements during co-operative physical challenges.

Discussion regarding individual needs, interests and progress may include:

- use obstacle-course play as a starting point because it is motivating for Louis
- plan small-group outdoor tasks with a clear shared goal
- pair Louis with calm, familiar peers and gradually widen the group
- include girls in supported partner and trio activities
- model inclusive language such as sharing ideas and choosing turns fairly
- use treasure hunts, den building or team challenges to encourage cooperation
- provide adult support for turn-taking, waiting and listening to others
- teach simple language for negotiating roles and solving problems
- use circle time or story prompts to help Louis name feelings
- talk after activities about how Louis felt, what helped and what was difficult
- repeat successful mixed-group experiences so confidence can build over time
- keep activities active and practical rather than relying only on discussion
- link PSED targets with communication and physical development opportunities
- review whether Louis begins to interact more confidently with a wider range of children.

Accept any other suitable response.

Change history record (CHR)

Version	Description of change	Approval	Date of issue
v1.0	First published version	30 June 2026	31 July 2026

SAMPLE

Document information

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