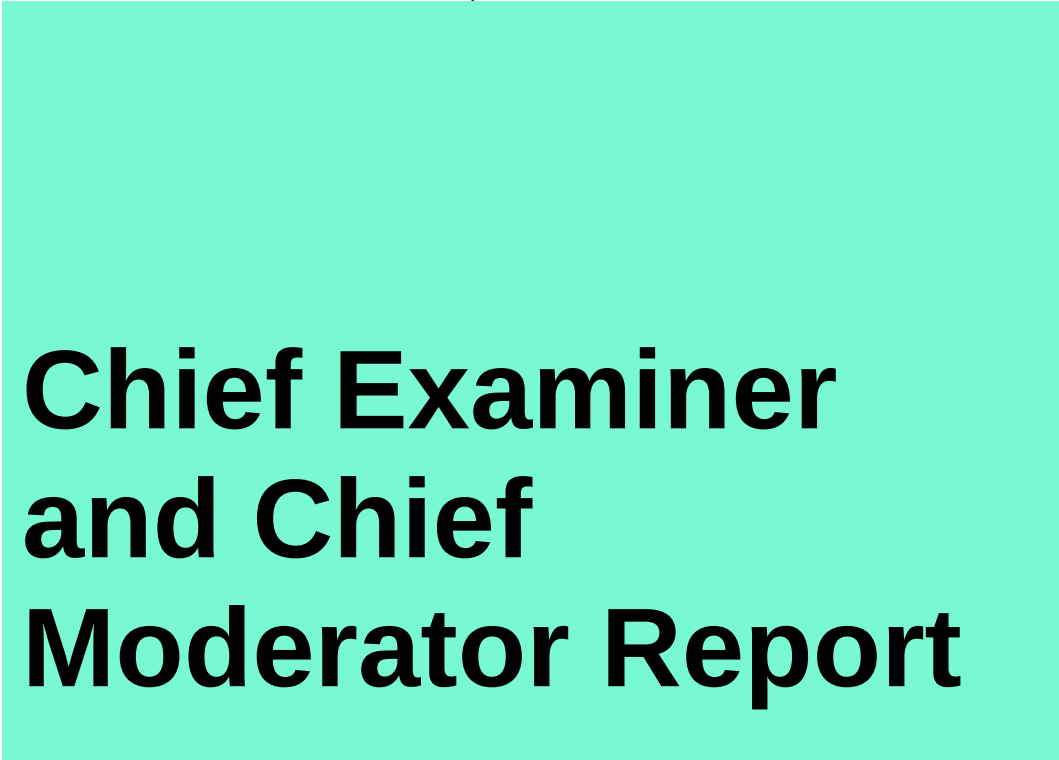




# **Chief Examiner and Chief Moderator Report**

**T Level Technical Qualification in  
Education and Early Years  
QN: 603/5829/4**

**Summer 2025 – occupational  
specialism (OS) Early Years Educator**

## Introduction

### Summer 2025 – occupational specialism (OS) Early Years Educator

Assessment dates: 03/02/2025 – 16/05/2025

Paper number: P002614, P002616, P002617 and P002618

This report contains information in relation to the externally assessed component provided by the chief examiner and chief moderator, with an emphasis on the standard of student work within this assessment.

The report is written for providers, with the aim of highlighting how students have performed generally, as well as any areas where further development or guidance may be required to support preparation for future opportunities.

Key points:

- grade boundaries
- standard of student work
- evidence creation
- responses to the external assessment tasks
- administering the external assessment

It is important to note that students should not sit this external assessment until they have received the relevant teaching of the qualification in relation to this component.

## Grade boundaries

Grade boundaries for the series are:

|             | Overall |
|-------------|---------|
| Max         | 640     |
| Distinction | 452     |
| Merit       | 350     |
| Pass        | 249     |

Grade boundaries are the lowest mark with which a grade is achieved.

For further detail on how raw marks are scaled and the aggregation of the OS element, please refer to the Qualification Specification.

## Administering the external assessment

The external assessment is invigilated and must be conducted in line with our [Regulations for the Conduct of External Assessment](#) document. Students may require additional pre-release material to complete the tasks. These must be provided to students in line with our regulations.

Students must be given the resources to carry out the tasks and these are highlighted within the [Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery](#) (QSID) document.

## Standard of student work

### External assessments

This was the fourth time the assessments have taken place for this qualification which has allowed for further development of approaches to the assignments by providers.

The purpose of the assessments is for students to demonstrate skills and knowledge of the relevant concepts and techniques reflected in this sector and to integrate and apply knowledge, understanding and skills with breadth and depth. It also requires them to demonstrate their capability to apply knowledge, understanding and skills across the chosen OS.

The external assessments consists of 2 assignments, Assignment 1 and Assignment 3.

Generally, across the external assignments, there was good engagement from students, with some detailed contributions submitted and an understanding of the assessments has developed. Providers have taken on board previous assessment guidance, including the use of sample papers to prepare the students for the three assessments.

A clear understanding of the task requirements could be seen across all three assignments and the tasks included within the brief had been mostly complied with.

This year, it was clear that all questions had been attempted, although at times students made limited reference to the brief requirements, which again limited the marks that could be awarded. This occurred specifically within Assignment 1 where some students did not focus the activity on the theme of 'people who help us'.

It is important to reiterate that students will benefit from an awareness of how the assessment objectives are embedded within the assignments and understand how marks will be awarded for these. This area could be further developed and will support their understanding of the level of performance that will achieve higher marks. For example, those students who achieved higher marks could apply their knowledge and understanding to the assessment criteria and write coherently, with both depth and detail in response to the brief. Where students developed analytical responses and remained focussed on the question, some excellent responses were seen, gaining higher marks. Examples of these could be seen where the theme, area of learning, and needs of all the children, with consideration for the specific children identified in the brief, were accounted for in Assignment 1, and for Assignment 3, the focus on specific observation methods, skills, and referencing to the curriculum.

Some students did not refer to the brief and guidance given for all assignments, and therefore responses were limited in depth and breadth, with content being irrelevant to the context. Additionally, at times, the command verbs featured within the criteria were not adhered to and descriptions were offered rather than analyses. Providers must guide students to read the brief and assessment requirements carefully. They should highlight the verb explanations for the assessments, ensuring students understand the expectations of the command verbs, this will encourage student's explanations for the assessment to ensure understanding of the expectations for the command verbs and encourage students to focus on the knowledge and practical skills required to be an effective early years practitioner.

### Moderated assessments

#### Assignment 2

Assignment 2 is internally assessed within the industry placement by provider-appointed assessors and externally moderated by NCFE moderators. It is a known assignment, in that assessment materials have been available for tutors from the beginning of delivery, therefore providing an opportunity to ensure that

students are well prepared for the assessment window. Students in the current cohort have performed well in Assignment 2. There has been improvement in students incorporating children's information into their planning. In many cases this has led to a more targeted and meaningful assessment that reflects children's interests and stages of development, marking positive progress towards meeting the expectations of higher marking bands. Best practice demonstrated this session is where students have completed and shared their planning with assessors early enough to give assessors time to check planning, ensuring an appropriate activity has been chosen and all criteria is covered. In addition, and if necessary, a conversation between student and assessor at the beginning of a structured observation, to discuss changes to the plan, would be beneficial. For example, where a specific child is no longer involved in the planned activity or when an outdoor activity has been planned but, due to adverse weather, must be carried out indoors.

There are many variables within Assignment 2 which continue to impact the outcome of moderation. Within each structured observation there are several options of activities or scenarios that allow for relevant criteria to be covered, either through direct observation or professional discussion, where permitted. Selecting the most appropriate activity for each assessment is imperative when aiming to achieve high marks.

Students have demonstrated improvement in the quality and clarity of their professional discussions, for instance, using bullet points for notes, preventing them reading verbatim from a hefty script. More students have been observed confidently linking knowledge to practice, showing a deeper understanding and subsequently gaining higher marks. Where these elements are lacking, lower marks are often awarded.

## Evidence creation

### External Assessments

All assignments were provided as written documents that are either digital or handwritten.

All evidence is submitted digitally, and some examiners had issues accessing written documents that, through scanning, were not clearly visible. Additionally, many documents were missing pages, or the wrong document was uploaded to the incorrect assignment.

It is crucial to the assessment process that providers ensure that they prepare for the assessments correctly and check that evidence is correctly uploaded, scanned and accessible.

Providers are reminded of the need for care when uploading documents. Specifically for this marking window it was found that some students scripts were not clearly labelled with names and no cover sheet was provided, making it difficult to authenticate the work.

### Moderated Assessments

#### Assignment 2

Assignment 2 relies on assessment records and justification of marks provided by assessors.

Improvements have been seen regarding assessors recording their justification of marks, however, this still varies across providers. Where justifications were accurate and detailed, with examples of practice from either the direct observation, professional discussion, or both, these have further supported remote moderation, allowing moderators to award appropriate marks for students. For example, regarding S1.29 and using terminology from the marking bands, this could be said: the student is highly effective when

implementing systematic synthetic phonics, they cater to each child's specific needs and are confident in all interactions across a range of pedagogical strategies. This is demonstrated in the direct observation where... and in the professional discussion where the student said... at 12 minutes 45 seconds.

The Observation of Skills Recording Form is used to record the direct observation. Assessors provide a detailed written narrative of the assessment and, in the best examples, the detail recreates the assessment. Ideally these are written in standard story form, recording everything that is seen and heard from the student and children. Also included should be the level of involvement of all children taking part in the activity. Lastly the level of the student's performance should be obvious throughout. For example, rather than saying 'the student has good communication skills', the assessor includes examples of the language used and the context in which it was used. These records should avoid any subjectivity and bias. This should all support the correlation with marks and justifications.

Professional discussions have been an area for development since the beginning of the qualification and remain a challenge. There has been an improvement this session, for example, assessors are introducing each discussion more effectively and structuring them well. Questions are prepared by the assessor ahead of the discussion using the marking criteria to support this. These are being used well as a guide for the discussion, however, assessors must be flexible with the use of these questions and ask further questions, where appropriate, to support students in accessing a greater depth of knowledge, which can potentially align with awarding higher marks.

It has been noted that assessors are missing opportunities to contextualise and reflect on the observations that have taken place, or utilise specific, relevant prior experiences. Assessors who carry out the discussions must have the relevant knowledge and understanding of the qualification, criteria and marking bands. Tutor Guidance must be read carefully regarding professional discussions. Some criteria, where discussion is allowed, have specific guidance about what can be discussed, for example, S4.24 where professional discussion can only be used for 'knowledge of common childhood illnesses and immunisation, isolation and exclusion periods', and S4.20 / S4.21, where, for example, the discussion can only cover 5.4 'Understand why health and wellbeing is important for babies and children and promote healthy lifestyles'. Care must be taken when marking and carrying out a professional discussion to reflect any adjustments stated. In these and other examples, all other skills should be assessed solely on direct observation.

The final challenge for professional discussions, and a common one, is distractions. Not having a room within the setting to carry out the discussion can also be an issue. All the above can contribute to the effectiveness of the professional discussion and, subsequently, the marks gained during the discussion. Most providers are now audio recording professional discussions, which is welcomed by the moderation team and supports accurate awarding of marks, particularly during remote moderation.

## Responses to the external assessment tasks

### Assignment 1: planning educational activities for individual needs

Students are required to plan educational activities for individual needs in response to the detailed scenario in the assignment brief. The focus for these planned activities for this assessment window is activity 1 personal, social and emotional development (PSED) and activity 2 'understanding of the world'.

Some students had included headings within the plan; whilst this is generally useful and consistent with practice, the use of templates must comply with assessment conditions. Most students had provided documents that resembled a planned format and only occasionally some students provided a written essay. It is important to remind students that activity plans should be written in the future tense to

prepare for implementation within the setting and be comprehensive for any Early Years Educator (EYE) to be able to follow the plan.

Students gained marks by providing activity plans that were, in the main, legible, coherent, creative and accurate. These plans contained concise information, using facts in relation to the current requirements of the early education curriculum, relevant theoretical and philosophical approaches, and making consistent links to the assignment brief, particularly the scenario given.

Most students created activity plans with a proficient level of detail and a reasoned selection and justification of resources to be used. In activity plan 1 students were able to link the area of learning, PSED, directly to the theme of 'people who help us', with a focus on promoting health and wellbeing. In this respect, students who accessed the higher marks gave excellent references to relevant educational theories, concepts and pedagogies underpinning the activity plans. In activity plan 2 students who maintained this level did so by applying references to relevant educational theories, concepts, and pedagogies framed around 'understanding of the world'. Some students planned activities around the theme of 'people who help us' for the second activity plan but missed the focus of the learning area, 'understanding of the world'.

In respect of safeguarding and promoting health and wellbeing, students who gained the higher marks considered all aspects of these concepts in relation to the specific activity planned, and included relevant reference to policy, risk assessment, risk and challenge considerations, modelling behaviour, and promoting healthy lifestyles. At times, some students copied and pasted the same content into both plans, which was not relevant to the activity being planned, and they missed opportunities to develop the response and achieve higher marks by considering the specific health and safety requirements of the activity and location.

Higher marks were gained where students focussed on all components of the assessment outcomes. For example, where the outcome required planning next steps, these were considered in respect of the expected developmental milestones and stretch and challenge opportunities provided. Reference to Development Matters in respect of the focussed developmental area was included, and other holistic areas were also featured. Methodologies in respect of observations to be used during the activity were clear and appropriate, with children's interests accounted for and opportunities for stretch and challenge considered. At times, students copied and pasted this information between the two activity plans, limiting marks as the needs of all children were not met within the context.

Where students considered the needs of all children, and provided appropriate strategies for the two specific children highlighted within the scenario, then higher marks were awarded. Providers should remind the students that each plan must encompass the requirements of the brief fully, and lower marks were given to the students who focussed each plan on one child from the scenario. Students should be referred to the scenario in respect of age, group size, location / timing and themes. Students have been awarded lower marks for isolated statements that are underdeveloped, and generic adaptations applied to both activity plans.

Students who referred to relevant professionals, key workers and parents / carers in partnership working, linking to children's development and focusing on the needs of all children, achieved the higher marks. Lower marks were awarded for students who made generic responses about partnership working, which did not contain relevance to the context of the plan.

Again, the second activity plan was less detailed than the first. Some reference to the theme was made but often not always expanded, and there was limited application to theory in respect of supporting the individual needs of specific children. Providers could remind students of the importance of allocating equal time to each activity plan to gain higher marks.

Providers should continue to support students with embedding issues, such as safeguarding, planning next steps, and partnership working throughout their activity plans. This will provide an opportunity for achieving higher marks.

### **Assignment 3: observation and assessment of children in settings**

**Part 1A:** students are required to carry out a range of observations in response to the assignment brief, evaluate their own practice and skills, and suggest ways to engage in opportunities for continuing professional development.

In general, the observations were presented in a reasonable manner, taking into account that these are live working documents, the content was mainly legible and followed a logical format. Occasionally, the observations were difficult to read and consisted of crossings out and diagrams, which made for content that is irrelevant. It would, therefore, be advisable to remind students that where work is crossed out, it may not be marked.

Students generally did well in this assignment. It was evident that some students demonstrated a good ability to carry out and record a range of observations in response to the assignment brief. However, some students included subjective statements throughout their observations and there were missed opportunities for capturing holistic learning and development. Some students missed specific detail such as date, time, and location, and provided limited focus on the area of learning given in the brief – physical development.

Providers should remind the students to consider the aim of the observation to ensure that the observation provides information and data to reflect this. Referring back to the task requirements will ensure appropriate methods are used and the learning area being featured.

Providers should remind students about confidentiality and safeguarding in relation to not including the names of settings and staff in observations. Children's names and colleagues should also be anonymised throughout.

**Part 1B, 2 (a):** students gained higher marks and showed effective evaluation skills when reflecting on their own strengths and weaknesses, particularly when they were identifying improvements to their own observation practice and skills. These students were able to identify and discuss in detail how knowledge of the child was an advantage when undertaking observations, but that difficulties with skills, such as active listening and multitasking, limited the effectiveness of the observation. As a result, the evaluation is balanced and the student's ability to carry out observations is clear.

However, some students submitted basic evaluations which consisted of a list of simple descriptive statements, and sometimes did not include any reference to their own skills, but would reflect on the skills the child in the observation was developing, limiting marks being awarded for this task. These submissions gave a basic evaluation, which was often unbalanced. The higher marks were achieved where the reflective cycle, specifically Kolb's, was applied and woven into the evaluation. Compliance with the command verb 'evaluate' should be encouraged by providers.

**Part 1B, 2 (b):** students gained higher marks and showed effective evaluation skills when reflecting on their own strengths and weaknesses evaluated in 2 (a) and applied a range of ways that would improve observation skills.

However, some students did not refer to the areas for improvement identified in 2 (a) which would provide a clear audit trail and consistency for development. Additionally, the ways were a little vague and did not refer to improvement of observation practice and skills, as required in the brief. In some cases, students referred to undertaking online training, but these suggestions were mostly unspecific and may not have related to observation practice. Additionally, those students that referred to shadowing and

mentoring, with detail of how this could be undertaken, achieved higher marks rather than a basic comment.

Overall, these suggestions were mostly relevant and likely to improve the student's own practice and skills, although lacking the depth of response to achieve the higher marks.

**Part 2:** students are provided with a series of observations on a young child. Students are required to identify each method used, analyse and draw conclusions from the observations, and discuss next steps in relation to the current requirements of the early education curriculum.

Generally, students performed well in this assignment. The use of facts, theory and approaches were embedded throughout. Some students made good use of relevant knowledge and demonstrated skills applicable to the sector. Many students established knowledge and understanding of the current requirements of the early years curriculum and demonstrated how this supports a young child's next steps. Clearly referenced scripts, with accurate substantiated judgements, achieved the higher marks.

**Part 2, 1 (a):** students generally performed well and demonstrated a good understanding of a range of observation methods. Only occasionally were the incorrect methods given, and some students did not add a description, which limited achievement of the full marks available. Some students suggested sociogram instead of time sample, or event sample in place of narrative, but would match the description to the correct method, therefore possibly achieving a mark.

**Part 2, 1 (b):** students who made accurate responses were able to develop the purpose of these specific observations well and the lower marks were only awarded when three clear explanations were missed. Students who focussed on the child here, rather than the purpose of the actual observation, failed to explain the purpose fully. Marks are awarded for the explanation of purpose.

**Part 2, 2:** students mainly performed well in this question. For higher marks, some students were able to clearly demonstrate the use of current early years curriculum to analyse, draw conclusions and make valid judgements regarding a young child's stage of learning and development. Clear referencing was in place and the command verb 'analyse' adhered to. Examples from the observation data to support judgements were substantiated and relevant to justify the point.

Some students listed key stages from the current requirements of the early years curriculum but often lacked development of the answer to access the higher marks. Many students repeated the findings from the observation, but failed to add credible judgements and conclusions which could be applied to atypical development.

Specifically, providers should draw attention to the application of the command verb 'analyse' for this section, which will allow for developed, investigative responses. Additionally, strong conclusions need to be given which are underpinned by the developmental stages relating to the early years foundation stage (EYFS).

**Part 2, 3:** in this final section, students were mostly able to suggest the next steps for Jessica, and higher-achieving students were rewarded for applying analytical conclusions from part 2, question 1, (a) and (b), with a developed discussion around a range of steps focussing on maths and other holistic development identified, such as poor turn-taking. The next steps discussed showed consideration for Jessica's interests, such as playing outside, and included ways to promote subsidised opportunities and develop resilience and perseverance.

Students awarded lower marks often offered isolated statements that were underdeveloped to represent how progress could be achieved, and lacked links back to the analysis in the previous section. In some cases, students made technical inaccuracies in the answer, showing a limited understanding of how the



early education curriculum is used to support children's development, and the range of next steps were limited.

Again, for this section, providers should remind the students to adhere to the command verb within the brief, which in this case was 'discuss', and avoid the use of description and explanation.

Overall, most students demonstrated an effective understanding of observation and assessment.

## Responses to the internal assessment tasks

### Assignment 2: competence observation criteria

#### Structured observation 1: supporting children's learning and development

There are three suggested activities for students to choose from. Typically, higher marks were awarded where students had selected 'plan a literacy session that requires the student to lead a story time session'. When selecting this activity, students were able to plan more effectively to ensure that all the relevant criteria were covered. In the best examples, assessment plans included details of child development and theory, philosophical approaches that were relevant to their chosen activity, and strategies to develop and extend children's learning and thinking. This was then supported, and often extended, during the professional discussion, with students clearly demonstrating how knowledge was informing practice and how it had informed the observed activity. Where some students scored lower marks, assessment records were not evidenced sufficiently.

#### **S1.30 – Demonstrate flexibility during planned activities to incorporate unplanned opportunities when supporting children's mathematical understanding**

Improvements to students incorporating unplanned maths into a literacy activity have been made, although naturally occurring opportunities are still being missed. There still appears to be confusion with this criteria where awarding marks is concerned. Students may have stated in their planning opportunities to support numeracy as part of their activity. To award marks for S1.30, unplanned maths must be observed.

This session has seen assessors marking leniently where maths was observed but was planned and / or was not at the appropriate age and stage to support children's mathematical development, and there was not a range of mathematical concepts demonstrated. There is no professional discussion allowed so careful consideration of this criteria is essential.

#### **S1.31 – Use observational assessments to identify children's mathematical skills and foster these skills through play and structured opportunities (5.9 - planning, observation, and assessment records)**

While the inclusion of child observations as evidence has improved, they are not consistently uploaded or linked to mathematical skills. Where observations are included, they often lack relevance to the demonstrated activity, with limited reference to next steps and minimal evidence of how the observations informed planning or the provision of meaningful mathematical opportunities and support for children. Professional discussion does not appear to complement the observation. To improve, students need to focus more closely on the assessment criteria, making sure their observations identify specific mathematical abilities and actively inform planning. Without this clear connection, students will fall short of expectations for the higher marking bands.

#### Structured observation 2: contributing to an enabling environment

Structured observation 2: contributing to an enabling environment is the smallest of the three, containing six criteria. There are two suggested activities for students to choose from. Most of the criteria must be assessed through direct observation so careful planning is essential, and this will also support marks awarded for S3.7 / 3.8. Generally, this observation is demonstrated well, and this session has seen an increase in the number of students using the whole environment, rather than focussing solely on their activity. However, S1.26 remains challenging and often marks awarded are low.

### **S1.26 – Promote equality of opportunity and anti-discriminatory practice**

Within this criteria there are three assessed skills and a focus on following the setting's equality policies and procedures. The latter is typically demonstrated well by students. However, the assessed skills need careful consideration for students to be awarded higher marks. The skills 'ensuring individual needs and interests are considered in planning and provision of resources', and 'celebrating diversity of culture and family backgrounds within the settings, must be considered by students and included in their planning. The final skill considers challenging discrimination. This element is often weak or not demonstrated at all. Professional discussion allows students to reflect on this through their own experiences or hypothetically. Opportunities to deepen discussions through examples of how equality, diversity and inclusion is promoted in settings and own practice, are often missed.

### **Structured observation 3: meeting the individual needs of children**

This is the largest of the structured observations with 11 criteria in total. Professional discussion can complement the direct observation for over half of these criteria. Generally, students who are placed in early years settings can meet the expectations of this structured observation more effectively. Planning effectively to include care routines and cover all criteria takes careful consideration.

The recommended time of one hour for each assessment, including this one, was frequently exceeded in this session. This was due to prolonged discussions paired with students' observed practical activity. To maintain fairness and operational efficiency, it is important for assessors to strike a balance between depth and time management. While rich professional dialogue is valuable, keeping assessments within the prescribed time ensures parity and prevents logistical challenges.

As mentioned above professional discussions for criteria S4.20 / S4.21 and S4.24 must be tailored to meet guidance. Aligning with this, it has been noted that assessors tend to mark leniently for these criteria, attributing marks to parts of the discussion that are not permitted. Students scored highly when their planning was robust and they had considered as many of the assessed skills as possible, often across a range of care routines, and differentiating the support given to the babies and children involved.

### **Criteria featured across multiple structured observations 1.1**

EYE 1.1 understand the expected patterns of children's development from birth to 5 years and have an understanding of further development from age 5 to 7, sits within Structured observations 1 and 3 and can be assessed through direct observation and professional discussion. Typically, low marks are awarded for this criteria. To achieve higher marks students must demonstrate a deeper understanding of the criteria. Alongside the coverage of the two-mark band, students should be encouraged to provide clearer, more detailed explanations and examples that link adaptations of the observed activity to relevant milestones for age ranges outside of the children they are working with. Where biological and environmental factors impact development, appropriate theories should back this up. Children in need of support and developing outside the range of typical development should be discussed and highlighted in planning, where appropriate, alongside the individual needs of the children involved in the direct observation. Improvement has been seen this session where during professional discussions, students have contextualised their learning to their activities, which has supported them in demonstrating a better understanding of the expected patterns of development.

EYE 1.4 is also demonstrated in Structured observation 1 and 3 and is another criteria where lower marks are frequently achieved. Crucially, the impact on learning and development must be clearly described, analysed or explained using examples. However, students often focus too heavily on the factors or circumstances themselves, rather than explaining how these impact learning and development. Links between EYE 1.1 and 1.4 could be made during professional discussions, particularly regarding biological and environmental impact to development.

Criteria S2.19 and S2.20 are in all three structured observations. S2.19 'model and encourage positive behaviours expected of children' is demonstrated well by most students. Whereas S2.20, 'support children to manage their own behaviour in relation to others' is generally performed poorly. Opportunities for higher marks are frequently missed for this criteria and it is often confused or overlapped with S2.19, where marks and justifications are given in alignment with the S2.19 marking band. Standardisation would be beneficial around S2.20, and assessor observation records should reflect the relevant skills observed in the direct observation. As professional discussion is not allowed for S2.20, student planning should consider the listed assessed skills to support full coverage.

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