

Chief Examiner Report

**T Level Technical Qualification in
Education and Early Years
(603/5829/4)**

**Summer 2025 – Core Paper A and Core
Paper B**

Introduction

Summer 2025 – Core Paper A and Core Paper B

Assessment dates: Core Paper A 06 June 2025
Core Paper B 12 June 2025

Paper numbers: Core Paper A P002607 (paper-based) and P002610 (onscreen)
Core Paper B P002609 (paper-based) and P002611 (onscreen)

This report contains information in relation to the externally assessed component provided by the chief examiner, 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
- responses to the external assessment questions
- administering the external assessment

It is important to note that students should not sit the core exams until they have received the relevant teaching of the qualification in relation to this component, and that both papers must be taken in any given series that a student sits the core exams.

Grade boundaries

Raw mark grade boundaries for the series are:

	Overall	Notional boundaries	
		Paper A	Paper B
Max	204	102	102
A*	181	90	90
A	161	81	80
B	141	71	70
C	122	61	60
D	103	51	51
E	84	42	42

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

Students receive a grade for the core exam component as a whole, and although there are no official grades for the individual assessments in the core exam, it can be useful for students and teachers to see how the core exam grade was achieved. The grade boundaries given for each assessment are known as 'notional grade boundaries', as they are for illustrative purposes only. For further information on

notional grade boundaries, please see our guide T Levels: Notional boundaries for the core exam assessments (Paper 1 and Paper 2) available on the qualification page on the NCFE website.

For further detail on how raw marks are converted to uniform mark scale (UMS), and the aggregation of the core component, 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 must be given the resources to complete the assessment, and these are highlighted within the [Qualification Specific Instructions for Delivery](#) (QSID) document.

Standard of student work

Overall, student performance in this assessment series showed noticeable improvement compared to previous exam series. A clear shift was observed in the quality and depth of responses, with the majority of students demonstrating strong subject knowledge and understanding throughout their answers. It was particularly encouraging to see that nearly all students attempted every question, with a significant reduction in instances of unanswered or partially attempted questions.

One of the most positive developments this series was the evident improvement in how students approached higher-banded questions. Responses in this area were generally more structured, focused, and aligned with the assessment criteria (AC). This suggests that providers have been actively supporting students in understanding how to construct clear, well-communicated responses. There was greater attention to the layout and clarity of extended answers, reflecting both improved exam technique and better preparation.

However, one continuing challenge noted by examiners relates to the legibility of handwriting. In some cases, handwriting was extremely difficult or even impossible to read, which may have limited the marks that could be awarded. It is recommended that providers encourage students to complete practice assessments under timed conditions to improve both the pace and legibility of their written responses. Supporting students in managing exam time effectively will help ensure their knowledge is fully accessible to examiners.

There has been a clear and positive trend in student performance this series, with stronger engagement across all questions and improved responses to the higher-mark questions. Continued focus on written communication and legibility will help maintain and build on this progress in future assessments.

Responses to the external assessment questions

Core Paper A

Students approached Core Paper A with increased confidence, demonstrating a solid understanding of subject content throughout their responses. Compared with previous assessment series, there was a clear improvement in completion rates, with most students attempting all questions. The number of non-responses was noticeably lower, highlighting better preparation and more consistent engagement with the full paper.

There is continued evidence that exam technique is improving. Many students are now more capable of organising their responses effectively and managing their time to ensure coverage across all questions. This improvement has contributed to an overall uplift in student performance.

That said, in some of the extended-response questions, a small number of students drifted from the core focus. For example, where questions required discussion of practitioner-led strategies, some responses leaned heavily on unrelated concepts, such as counselling methods, which limited the marks that could be awarded.

To maintain and build on this progress, it would be beneficial for providers to revisit and reinforce key vocabulary that frequently appears in exam questions – terms such as impact, barriers, strategy, purpose, participation, empower, breach, and key concepts. Stronger familiarity with these terms will help students better interpret and respond to questions.

It is also important to remind students to avoid rewriting the question and instead focus on directly addressing its key components. Emphasising the importance of command words (such as give, identify, and explain) and aligning responses to the allocated marks will support clearer, more concise answers.

For extended responses, students are encouraged to maintain a broad perspective, using a variety of relevant examples to evidence understanding. Responses should be clearly structured, avoiding repetition of the scenario, and instead showing purposeful application of knowledge to the context provided.

Section A: Element 1: wider context, and Element 2: supporting education

Question 5: students found it challenging to understand the concept of a "guiding principle" in relation to the early years foundation stage (EYFS) framework. Many responses incorrectly focused on safeguarding or health and safety, indicating a misunderstanding of the terminology. There is a need for providers to reinforce the specific language used in the framework and ensure students can accurately identify and explain the guiding principles of the EYFS.

Question 7: a number of students struggled with both the understanding and application of social constructivism theory, particularly in relation to the proforma provided. In some cases, students misidentified the theorist and instead described unrelated theories. It is recommended that students focus on developing well-structured, higher-band responses that include reasoned judgments and clear conclusions specifically related to the pedagogical application of social constructivism. Students who had a strong grasp of the theory performed very well, demonstrating detailed knowledge and understanding. These responses were well-structured and met the criteria for higher marks.

Section B: Element 3: Safeguarding, health and safety and wellbeing

Question 8: in this multiple-choice question, which asked students to identify "Part One: Safeguarding information for all staff", it was observed that some students appeared to rely on a process of elimination rather than showing a confident understanding of safeguarding content. This highlights the importance of strengthening core safeguarding knowledge, especially when interpreting assessment items.

Question 9: while many students correctly identified aspects of the question, some showed a limited understanding of how a teaching assistant might abuse their position of trust. Responses often focused on general poor practice rather than specific breaches of professional trust. Providers may wish to clarify this distinction in future teaching.

Question 13: students performed well on this question, showing solid knowledge and understanding. Many drew on personal insight and experience, particularly in relation to bullying and feeling unsupported by the designated safeguarding lead. Responses were confident and well-articulated, with many students achieving high marks.

Section C: Element 4: behaviour

Question 16: providers should ensure students are confident in answering multi-part questions (for example, 16 (a), 16 (b), 16 (c)) and encourage students to regularly refer back to the proforma to stay focused. In some responses, students veered off-topic, which may have affected the marks awarded.

Question 16 (a): this question asked students to explain why stages of social development should be considered when supporting children's communication and teamwork skills. However, many students confused this with other developmental areas, shifting the focus away from social development. Clearer distinction between developmental areas to be supported during exam preparation.

Section D: Element 5: parents, families and carers, and Element 6: working with others

Question 21: performance on this maths-based question showed a significant improvement compared to previous series. Most students attempted the question, and the majority provided correct answers. However, in some cases, working out was disorganised and the final answer was difficult to locate within the calculation. While examiners gave the benefit of the doubt when possible, providers are advised to remind students to present their calculations clearly and ensure final answers are clearly identified.

Question 24: students demonstrated good understanding of the role of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Coordinator (SEND CO), particularly regarding collaboration and the importance of maintaining professional boundaries. Responses were generally well-informed and confident.

Core Paper B

Students demonstrated a confident approach to Core Paper B, with strong evidence of subject knowledge and understanding reflected across their responses. Compared to previous assessment series, there was a noticeable improvement in completion rates, with the majority of students attempting all questions. The number of unanswered questions was significantly reduced, indicating improved preparation and greater engagement with the full paper.

Exam technique continues to show improvement, which is reflected in an uplift in overall grades. Students appear to be more familiar with structuring their responses effectively and managing time across the paper.

However, in some extended-response questions, focus was occasionally lost. For instance, when asked to explore tutor strategies, many students concentrated instead on counselling approaches, missing the core intent of the question.

To support continued progress, it is recommended that providers revisit key glossary terms such as impact, barriers, strategy, key concepts, purpose, breach, align, participation, and empower. A clearer understanding of these terms would enable students to respond more precisely to questions.

Students should also be reminded to avoid rewriting the question and instead focus directly on its key points. Attention to command words (for example, give, identify, explain) and mark allocation can help students structure their answers appropriately and manage their time effectively.

In extended responses, students are encouraged to take a broader view, incorporating a wide range of relevant points rather than focusing too narrowly. Where possible, using examples to support their understanding will strengthen responses. Additionally, students should avoid simply repeating the scenario and instead apply their knowledge clearly and purposefully.

Section A: Element 7: child development

Question 1: responses were inconsistent, with many students appearing to use a process of elimination rather than demonstrating true understanding of the question. There was a noticeable gap in knowledge regarding Piaget's theoretical approach, particularly identifying the first stage of logical thinking and language development. It is recommended that revision sessions focus on reinforcing key stages of cognitive development theories.

Question 2: students generally performed well on this question, offering a variety of appropriate and relevant strategies a practitioner could use to promote language development. Responses were detailed and demonstrated clear understanding.

Question 3: students showed good awareness of age-appropriate activities to support fine motor skill development in a 3-year-old. Responses included a wide range of relevant examples that were well-explained.

Question 5: some students showed limited understanding of Ainsworth's key concepts, which affected their ability to apply the theory effectively. This led to underdeveloped responses when explaining how a key person could support attachment development in practice. Stronger focus is needed on both the theoretical content and how it translates into real-world settings.

Question 6: while students showed general understanding of how to support children through unexpected transitions, some lost focus on what the question was asking. Rather than discussing tutor-led strategies, several responses concentrated on counselling approaches, which, although related, diverted from the question's intent and limited the marks that could be awarded.

Section B: Element 8: observation and assessment and element 9: reflective practice

Question 8: a number of students struggled to distinguish clearly between formative and summative assessment. Definitions were often vague or interchangeable, with some responses failing to show understanding of formative assessment as ongoing and summative as final or end-point evaluation. Additional clarification and practice are recommended in this area.

Question 9: students demonstrated strong understanding of why observing children is important, particularly in relation to planning next steps. Responses were generally well-structured and a diverse range of responses were given

Question 11: this was a weaker area, many students appeared unfamiliar with the concept of flipped learning and instead focused on blended learning, which did not fully address the question and resulted in lost marks.

Question 12: while many responses were detailed, some students misinterpreted the focus of the question, confusing developmental feedback intended for practitioners with feedback aimed at supporting children. As a result, students often discussed the importance of feedback in helping a child develop, rather than recognising how developmental feedback supports practitioners in improving their own practice. This led to repetition and a lack of focus in some answers.

Section C: Element 10: equality and diversity

Question 14: some confusion was noted regarding the purpose of a school's safeguarding policy. While many students linked the policy to keeping children safe, others incorrectly focused on data protection (GDPR) or the safety of information. Clarifying the distinct purposes of safeguarding and data protection policies could support stronger responses in future series.

Question 16: there was a marked improvement from previous series, with most students attempting and correctly answering the question. However, disorganised working out occasionally made it difficult to identify the final answer. Students should be encouraged to clearly separate their calculations and final responses.

Question 19 (a): several students lost marks by repeating barriers already mentioned in the scenario (for example, mental health). The question required identification of additional barriers, and responses repeating information from the proforma could not be credited. Emphasis on fully reading and interpreting the question and scenario is recommended.

Section D: Element 11: special educational needs and disability, and element 12: english as an additional language (20 – 26)

Question 21: many students incorrectly identified a piece of legislation rather than naming a specific policy that an early years setting must have to support children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). This suggests a need to develop better understanding of the difference between legislation and setting-level policies. Providers should guide students to read questions carefully and match responses accordingly.

Question 26: students responded well to this question, showing a sound understanding of SEND terminology and the impact on children's health and wellbeing. Responses were generally thoughtful and demonstrated confident application of knowledge.

Document information

Copyright in this document belongs to, and is used under licence from, the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education, © 2025.

'T-LEVELS' is a registered trade mark of the Department for Education.

'T-Level' is a registered trade mark of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

'Institute for Apprenticeships & Technical Education' and logo are registered trade marks of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

The T-Level Technical Qualification is a qualification approved and managed by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education.

NCFE is authorised by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education to develop and deliver this Technical Qualification.

'T-Level' is a registered trade mark of NCFE.