



Qualification Specification



Qualification summary

Qualification title	NCFE CACHE Level 2 Technical Specialist in Neuroscience in Early Years (Award)
Ofqual qualification number (QN)	610/4570/6
Guided learning hours (GLH)	105
Total qualification time (TQT)	120
Minimum age	16
Qualification purpose	This technical specialist qualification is designed for learners to develop an increased understanding of neuroscience in early years. It covers exploration of brain development in relation to holistic growth with a particular focus on self-regulation and how to nurture this in children from birth to 7 years. It also provides an opportunity for learners to acquire a number of practical and technical skills. Learners are required to demonstrate the full application of knowledge and understanding over a period of time in the workplace. This qualification will support learners who are seeking a career within the early years sector and who may also want to progress to further or higher education. This qualification builds on the outcomes within the Early Years Practitioner occupational standard (ST0888).
Grading	Achieved/not yet achieved
Assessment method	Internally assessed and externally quality assured portfolio of evidence.
Work placement experience	Learners will need to be working or on a practical placement to be able to show competence in both knowledge and skills. It is recommended that learners complete 30 placement hours while undertaking this qualification.
Occupational standards	This qualification builds on the outcomes within the Early Years Practitioner Occupational Standard (ST0888) V1.0. The specialist duties have been written to build upon the knowledge, skills and behaviours in the Early Years Practitioner occupational standard. 1. Share knowledge of the impact of neuroscience on child development with staff and parents



	2. Evaluate pedagogical practice ensuring learning from neuroscience is embedded in daily practice 3. Recognise trauma in children and work in partnership to best support them 4. Model co-regulation for self-regulation in children
Regulation information	This is a regulated qualification. The regulated number for this qualification is 610/4570/6.
Funding	This qualification may be eligible for funding. For further guidance on funding, please contact your local funding provider.



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Section 1: introduction

Centres must ensure they are using the most recent version of the Qualification Specification on the NCFE website.

Aims and objectives

This qualification aims to:

- Increase learners' awareness of neuroscience in the early years
- offer breadth and depth of study, incorporating a key core of knowledge
- provide opportunities to acquire a number of practical and technical skills

The objectives of this qualification are to:

- support learners to gain an understanding of neuroscience in early years
- support learners to progress to further and higher education
- extend the knowledge of the early years practitioner for improved practice

Support Handbook

This Qualification Specification must be used alongside the mandatory Support Handbook, which can be found on the NCFE website. This contains additional supporting information to help with planning, delivery and assessment.

This Qualification Specification contains all the qualification-specific information you will need that is not covered in the Support Handbook.

Guidance for entry and registration

This qualification is designed for learners who wish to gain knowledge in order to improve their practice when working with babies and young children, learning from an evidence-informed understanding of early brain development.

It may also be useful to learners studying qualifications in early years education.

Registration is at the discretion of the centre in accordance with equality legislation and should be made on the NCFE Portal.

Industry experience is required, and learners must already have prior core knowledge and skills within the early years sector to study this qualification. It would also be advantageous for learners to hold a relevant qualification at level 2 or level 3.

Centres are responsible for ensuring that all learners are capable of achieving the learning outcomes (LOs) and complying with the relevant literacy, numeracy and health and safety requirements.

Learners registered on this qualification should not undertake another qualification at the same level, or with the same/a similar title, as duplication of learning may affect funding eligibility.



Achieving this qualification

To be awarded this qualification, learners are required to successfully achieve **two mandatory units**.

Please refer to the list of units in appendix A or the unit summaries in section 2 for further information.

To achieve this qualification, learners must successfully demonstrate their achievement of all LOs of the units as detailed in this Qualification Specification. A partial certificate may be requested for learners who do not achieve the full qualification but have achieved at least one whole unit; partial achievement certificate fees can be found in the Fees and Pricing document on the NCFE website.

Age range covered by the qualification

This qualification prepares learners to work with children from birth to 7 years.

Progression including job roles

Learners who achieve this qualification could progress to the following:

- employment:
 - learners could go on to champion neuroscience in an early years setting from an informed position
- further education:
 - early years education
- higher education:
 - early years education

Resource requirements

There are no mandatory resource requirements for this qualification, but centres must ensure learners have access to suitable resources to enable them to cover all the appropriate LOs.

Work placement experience

Learners will need to be working or on a practical placement to be able to show competence in both knowledge and skills.

It is recommended that learners complete 30 placement hours while undertaking this qualification.

How the qualification is assessed

Assessment is the process of measuring a learner's skill, knowledge and understanding against the standards set in a qualification.

This qualification is internally assessed and externally quality assured.

The assessment consists of one component:



- an internally assessed portfolio of evidence, which is assessed by centre staff and externally quality assured by NCFE (internal quality assurance must still be completed by the centre as usual)

Simulation is not permitted for this qualification, however, as the skills-based outcomes do not require direct observation, learners are able to reflect on their experiences within their settings in order to meet these outcomes.

Unless otherwise stated in this specification, all learners taking this qualification must be assessed in English and all assessment evidence presented for external quality assurance must be in English.

Internal assessment

We have created some sample tasks for both the internally assessed units, which can be found within a separate document in the member's area of the NCFE website. These tasks are not mandatory. You can contextualise these tasks to suit the needs of your learners to help them build up their portfolio of evidence. The tasks have been designed to cover all knowledge- and skill-based LOs for NEY 1 and unit NEY 2 and provide opportunities for stretch and challenge. Learners should always be encouraged through opportunities to allow for learning to be extended, for example, tutors can ask learners to delve deeper into their responses, encourage learners to explore different perspectives, propose solutions, or justify their reasoning which can all add layers of challenge and a higher level of achievement. Additionally, including open ended questions can stimulate higher order thinking skills and encourage learners to go beyond the minimum requirements for achieving this qualification. Tutor feedback will also support intrinsic reward and motivation.

For further information about contextualising the tasks, please contact the Provider Development team.

Each learner must create a portfolio of evidence generated from appropriate assessment tasks to demonstrate achievement of all the LOs associated with each unit. The assessment tasks should allow the learner to respond to a real-life situation that they may face when in employment. On completion of each unit, learners must declare that the work produced is their own and the assessor must countersign this. Examples of suitable evidence for the portfolio for each unit are provided in section 2.

If a centre needs to create their own internal assessment tasks, there are four essential elements in the production of successful centre-based assessment tasks; these are:

- ensuring the assessment tasks are meaningful with clear, assessable outcomes
- appropriate coverage of the content, LOs or assessment criteria (AC)
- having a valid and engaging context or scenario
- including sufficient opportunities for stretch and challenge for higher attainers



Section 2: unit content and assessment guidance

This section provides details of the structure and content of this qualification.

The types of evidence listed are for guidance purposes only. Within learners' portfolios, other types of evidence are acceptable if all learning outcomes (LOs) are covered, and if the evidence generated can be internally and externally quality assured. For approval of methods of internal assessment other than portfolio building, please contact your external quality assurer (EQA).

The explanation of terms explains how the terms used in the unit content are applied to this qualification. This can be found in section 3.



NEY 1 Applying knowledge of neuroscience in early years (T/651/2641)

Unit summary			
In this unit, learners will understand neuroscience and the early development of the brain. They will understand neurons, synaptogenesis and how the social brain develops.			
Assessment			
This unit is internally assessed via a portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	Achieved/not yet achieved	Level 2	45 GLH

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
1. Understand the neuroscience of early brain development	1.1 Define neuroscience 1.2 Explain how the baby's brain develops and grows during pregnancy 1.3 Explain the process of early brain development from birth to 7 years
2. Understand neurons and their main functions	2.1 Identify the three main parts of a neuron 2.2 Describe the functions of a neuron
3. Understand synaptogenesis	3.1 Define synaptogenesis 3.2 Explain the process of synaptogenesis and the factors that influence this 3.3 Describe pruning within sensitive periods of brain development
4. Understand how the social brain develops	4.1 Explain the impact of relationships on developing the social brain
5. Be able to improve practice by sharing knowledge of early neuroscience and its impact on child development with colleagues and parents	5.1 Recognise trauma in children and explain ways practice can be improved by sharing the knowledge of early neuroscience with colleagues and parents and the importance of working in partnership 5.2 Plan enabling environments with reference to evidence-informed research 5.3 Evaluate own pedagogical practice ensuring learning from neuroscience is embedded into daily practice

Range
5. Be able to improve practice by sharing knowledge of early neuroscience and its impact on child development with colleagues and parents
5.1 Sharing must include: • communication: ○ written ○ verbal • using digital tools for example: ○ email ○ social media ○ newsletters • informing colleagues and parents



Delivery and assessment guidance

LO4, AC4.1 Learners must explain the impact of mirror neurons on the development of the social brain

LO5, AC5.1, 5.2, 5.3 Learners may wish to refer to the sustainability resource An Early Childhood Education for Sustainability resource that embeds the Sustainable Development Goals and STEM into pedagogical practice (available on the NCFE website).

Evidence could include:

- written and pictorial information
- professional discussion
- learner's own work products such as leaflets and guides for practitioners and parents/carers

Relationship to National Occupational Standards (NOS):

- SCDHSC0047 Support parents and carers to acquire skills to care for and protect babies, children and young people
- SCDCCLD0314 Promote the care of babies and children
- SCDCCLD0303 Promote the development of children and young people
- SCDCCLD0312 Implement positive environments for babies and children

Simulation is not permitted for this qualification, however, as the skills-based outcomes do not require direct observation, learners are able to reflect on their experiences within their settings in order to meet these outcomes.



NEY 2 Self-regulation and how to nurture this in children from birth to 7 years in settings (Y/651/2642)

Unit summary			
In this unit, learners will understand the limbic system and how it is involved in self-regulation. They will understand self-regulation and the factors that can affect its development. They will also learn about the three types of stress and about adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). The learner will also learn to distinguish between behaviourist and relational approaches to behaviour management.			
Assessment			
This unit is internally assessed via a portfolio of evidence.			
Mandatory	Achieved/not yet achieved	Level 2	60 GLH

Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
1. Understand the limbic system	1.1 Explain what the limbic system is
2. Understand self-regulation	2.1 Describe self-regulation
	2.2 Define the five domains of self-regulation
	2.3 Define the five domains of stressors relating to self-regulation
3. Understand special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and the influences that can affect the child's ability to self-regulate	3.1 Explain to colleagues and parents the significance of SEND and the influence of the five stressors on children's ability to self-regulate
4. Understand about co-regulation and its role	4.1 Define co-regulation
	4.2 Explain the role of co-regulation in nurturing children to achieve self-regulation
5. Understand the types of stresses which impact on children from birth to 7 years	5.1 Define the stress response system
	5.2 Identify the three types of stress and the impact on the child from birth to 7 years
6. Understand ACEs and how they influence long-term wellbeing and development	6.1 Describe the 10 ACEs that a child from birth to 7 years may be subjected to
	6.2 Explain how these ACEs influence long-term wellbeing and development
7. Understand the difference between the predominant behaviourist and alternative relational approaches and policies in behaviour management	7.1 Compare behaviourist behaviour management approaches to more relational approaches in understanding behaviour and nurturing positive behaviour
	7.2 Describe what emotion coaching is
	7.3 Explain how emotion coaching can support practice in an early years setting



Learning outcomes (LOs) The learner will:	Assessment criteria (AC) The learner can:
8. Be able to outline indicators of trauma in individual children and strategies to support them	8.1 Outline indicators of experienced trauma in children
	8.2 Outline strategies to support individual children who have experienced trauma
	8.3 Model co-regulation for all children
	8.4 Use an example to explain self-regulation for an individual child

Delivery and assessment guidance

LO8, AC8.2 Learners may wish to refer to the sustainability resource An Early Childhood Education for Sustainability resource that embeds the Sustainable Development Goals and STEM into pedagogical practice (available on the NCFE website).

Evidence could include:

- written and pictorial information
- professional discussion
- learner's own work products such as leaflets and guides for practitioners and parents/carers

Relationship to National Occupational Standards (NOS):

- SCDHSC0047 Support parents and carers to acquire skills to care for and protect babies, children and young people
- SCDCCLD0314 Promote the care of babies and children
- SCDCCLD0303 Promote the development of children and young people
- SCDCCLD0312 Implement positive environments for babies and children

Simulation is not permitted for this qualification, however, as the skills-based outcomes do not require direct observation, learners are able to reflect on their experiences within their settings in order to meet these outcomes.



NCFE assessment strategy

The key requirements of the assessment strategies or principles that relate to units in this qualification are summarised below.

The centre must ensure that individuals undertaking assessor or quality assurer roles within the centre conform to the assessment requirements for the unit they are assessing or quality assuring.

Knowledge LOs

- assessors will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make assessment decisions
- internal quality assurers (IQAs) will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make quality assurance decisions

Competence/skills LOs

- assessors will need to be both occupationally competent and qualified to make assessment decisions
- IQAs will need to be both occupationally knowledgeable and qualified to make quality assurance decisions

The centre with whom the learners are registered will be responsible for making all assessment decisions. Assessors must be **contracted** to work directly with the centre, contributing to all aspects of standardisation. The centre must ensure a process of training is followed, including during induction and quality assurance activities. Occupationally competent and qualified assessors from the centre must use direct observation to assess practical skills-based outcomes.

For adult care, early years, childcare and health qualifications, the centre must use the further information relating to assessment principles, which can be found within the mandatory Support Handbook.



Section 3: explanation of terms

This table explains how the terms used at **level 2** in the unit content are applied to this qualification (not all verbs are used in this qualification).

Apply	Link existing knowledge to new or different situations.
Assess	Consider information in order to make decisions.
Classify	Organise according to specific criteria.
Compare	Examine the subjects in detail looking at similarities and differences.
Define	State the meaning of a word or phrase.
Demonstrate	Show an understanding of the subject or how to apply skills in a practical situation.
Describe	Write about the subject giving detailed information.
Differentiate	Give the differences between two or more things.
Discuss	Write an account giving more than one view or opinion.
Distinguish	Show or recognise the difference between items/ideas/information.
Estimate	Give an approximate decision or opinion using previous knowledge.
Explain	Provide details about the subject with reasons showing how or why. Some responses could include examples.
Give (positive and negative points)	Provide information showing the advantages and disadvantages of the subject.
Identify	List or name the main points. (Some description may also be necessary to gain higher marks when using compensatory marking).
Illustrate	Give clear information using written examples, pictures or diagrams.
List	Make a list of key words, sentences or comments that focus on the subject.
Perform	Do something (take an action/follow an instruction) that the question or task asks or requires.
Plan	Think about and organise information in a logical way. This could be presented as written information, a diagram, an illustration or other suitable format.
Provide	Give relevant information about a subject.



Reflect	Learners should look back on their actions, experiences or learning and think about how this could inform their future practice.
Select	Choose for a specific purpose.
Show	Supply sufficient evidence to demonstrate knowledge and understanding.
State	Give the main points clearly in sentences.
Use	Take or apply an item, resource or piece of information as asked in the question or task.



Section 4: support

Support materials

The following support materials are available to assist with the delivery of this qualification and are available on the NCFE website:

- Qualification Factsheet
- Internal Assessment Sample Tasks
- An Early Childhood Education for Sustainability resource that embeds the Sustainable Development Goals and STEM into pedagogical practice

Other support materials

The resources and materials used in the delivery of this qualification must be age-appropriate and due consideration should be given to the wellbeing and safeguarding of learners in line with your institute's safeguarding policy when developing or selecting delivery materials.

Products to support the delivery of this qualification may be available. For more information about these resources and how to access them, please visit the NCFE website.

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Appendix A: units

To simplify cross-referencing assessments and quality assurance, we have used a sequential numbering system in this document for each unit.



Knowledge-only units are indicated by a star. If a unit is not marked with a star, it is a skills unit or contains a mix of knowledge and skills.

Mandatory units

Unit number	Regulated unit number	Unit title	Level	GLH
NEY 1	T/651/2641	Applying knowledge of neuroscience in early years	2	45
NEY 2	Y/651/2642	Self-regulation and how to nurture this in children from birth to 7 years in settings	2	60

The units above may be available as stand-alone unit programmes. Please visit the NCFE website for further information.



Change history record

Version	Publication date	Description of change
1.0	August 2025	First publication