



**University of New England**

**School of Education**

**Teacher Education Student (TES) Professional  
Experience**

**General Handbook**

**Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Education and Care)**

**February 2026**

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## Welcome to the course

Welcome to the University of New England (UNE) Early Childhood (EC) Professional Experience. Placements of varying length in Early Childhood settings are integral to this course and are embedded in a number of units.

Professional Experience provides opportunities for Teacher Education Students (TES) to apply and reflect upon a diverse range of theoretical and professional understandings appropriate for teaching and learning with children aged from birth to five years. Participation in successive placements promotes an appreciation of the complexities and uniqueness of Early Childhood Education (ECE) field and fosters a commitment to professional and ethical approaches.

Please note that Teacher Education Student (TES) expectations for each Early Childhood unit differ and, naturally, expectations of students' progress towards leading a room increase as candidates gain confidence and experience. Many Teacher Education Students (TES/s) undertaking courses at UNE are upgrading their qualifications and bring a wealth of practical skills and understandings to their placements. The development of Early Childhood Professional Experience has been guided by key documents including the UNE Early Childhood team's philosophy of teaching and learning provided below and the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA, 2020) course accreditation criteria. This handbook is designed to support Teacher Education Students (TES/s) undertaking Early Childhood placements and Teacher Education Students (TES/s) are requested to ensure they are familiar with the handbook,

The UNE Early Childhood Team appreciates the support of all participants in Teacher Education Students (TES/s) Early Childhood Professional Experience and wishes Teacher Education Students (TES/s) every success in their placements. To ensure the ongoing quality of Early Childhood Professional Experience at UNE, we welcome constructive feedback at any time during or following placements.

## Office for Professional Learning

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Team Leader: Gina Mackenzie

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# The UNE Early Childhood team's philosophy of teaching and learning

1. We acknowledge and respect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we live, learn and work. We are committed to embedding Indigenous perspectives and knowledges in our teaching and research to foster cultural humility, cultural safety, respect, and reconciliation.
2. We acknowledge the diverse perspectives of all individuals and affirm the importance of personal and professional growth.
3. We advocate for education for sustainability and global citizenship, encouraging students to nurture children's awareness of their interconnectedness with people, place, and the natural environment.
4. We recognise you, our students, as integral members of broader learning communities that encompass UNE, Early Childhood Education contexts, families, local communities and beyond.
5. We believe in your ability to take an active, responsible approach to your learning and development, both personally and as a professional.
6. We value your commitment and positive orientation to your work with children, families and communities, and we share your commitment to new ideas, possibilities and professional growth.
7. We recognise the evolving role of digital technologies in early childhood education and encourage you to use them critically, creatively, and ethically to enhance both your own and children's learning and wellbeing.
8. We adhere to the Early Childhood Australia's (2016) Code of Ethics and the United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child.
9. We are committed to preparing you for diverse career pathways in early childhood education. We believe that contemporary knowledge, cultural responsiveness, and relational leadership are vital in supporting children's rights, wellbeing, and lifelong learning.
10. We value your commitment to create inclusive, play-rich environments that support exploration, inquiry, and holistic development.

## Expectations: Ours and yours

The Early Childhood units (6 Credit Points) will include:

- Ongoing assessment which builds toward deep understanding and representation of your knowledge, abilities and ideas.
- Learning experiences that draw on collaboration, requiring you to further your active participation in the online environment.
- Opportunities for multiple forms of expression of knowledge, abilities and ideas.

### **You will be responsible for your own learning. The Early Childhood academic team's role is to:**

- Scaffold your learning by building on what you already know.
- Develop and source multimedia materials to facilitate your learning.
- Provide opportunities for you to engage with your peers to consider relevant and important topics.
- Support the communication process.
- Guide you to be aware of your own learning through reflection.
- Provide feedback and facilitate peer feedback to improve your learning.
- Seek and apply Teacher Education Students (TES\`s) input to improve our modules and units.

### **The Early Childhood Academic team expects you to:**

- Read the required readings and engage with other resources.
- Contribute to, and participate in, the online learning environment.
- Be receptive to feedback from peers and from the Early Childhood team and use feedback to transform your learning.
- Source additional and appropriate resources when required, using the online resources available from the UNE library.
- Adhere to the Early Childhood Australia's (ECA, 2016) [Code of Ethics](#) and the United Nations (1989) [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) at all times.
- Engage respectfully with all peers, UNE staff, and other people with whom you interact while undertaking your studies.

The Early Childhood Australia's (2016) Code of Ethics can be found at:

<http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/eca-code-ethics/>

# Overview of the Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Education and Care)

Details of the courses and units relevant to this course can be found in the Course Handbook  
<https://www.une.edu.au/study/courses/bachelor-of-education-early-childhood-education-and-care>

# Your Professional Experience

As a professional in the field of Early Childhood Education there are a number of important tasks that require completion before, during and after any Professional Experience Placement.

The following is a summary of these expectations. These expectations apply to each and every Professional Experience Placement that you undertake throughout your study.

Please note that individual units of study will have *Specific Requirements*. Please refer to individual unit outlines for these *Specific Requirements, as guidelines of the expectations during your placement*.

## Placement Textbook:

The following textbook is prescribed for all placements in the course. It is a resource that you will use in all your placements and into your career.

MacNaughton, G., & Williams, G. (2008). *Techniques for Teaching Young Children. Choices for Theory and Practice* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education Australia.

## Before your Professional Experience begins:

Please ensure that you have copies of each of the following documents before you start your Professional Experience Placement.

Do not start a placement without confirmation documents from the Office of Professional Learning (OPL).

## Consent Forms:

Ensure you have consent forms ready for completion on the first day. They are provided in the *Early Childhood Community* site.

## Code of Ethics:

All Early Childhood professionals need to fully understand the professional standards that guide our practice. You are required to read the ECA (2016) *Code of Ethics* and ensure that your behaviour follows the required ethical standards as set out in this document. The *Code of Ethics* (ECA, 2016) can also be downloaded here: <http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/our-publications/eca-code-ethics/>

## The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC):

Teacher Education Students (TEs) are required to understand The United Nations (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child. Download the document from <https://www.unicef.org.au/Discover/What-we-do/Convention-on-the-Rights-of-the-Child/childfriendlycrc.aspx>. The Convention consists of 54 articles guided by four fundamental principles.

## **The Guide to the National Quality Framework:**

The Guide to the National Quality Framework (NQF) helps approved providers, educators, pre-service teachers and authorized officers understand and apply the requirements of the National Law and Regulations. The link to the Guide to the NQF is [https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-01/Guide-to-the-NQF\\_2.pdf](https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-01/Guide-to-the-NQF_2.pdf)

## **The National Quality Standard:**

The National Quality Standard (NQS) is a major component of the National Quality Framework, and the National Law makes the National Quality Standard a legal policy document. The NQS has seven quality areas that are imperative to outcomes for children. These are: educational program and practice, children's health and safety, physical environment, staffing arrangements, relationships with children, collaborative partnerships with families and communities, and governance and leadership. The link to the NQS is <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-07/RevisedNQSHandoutA4.pdf>

## **The Early Years Learning Framework:**

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) V2.0 is Australia's national curriculum framework to support early childhood educators in enhancing children's learning from birth to five years of age through guiding principles, practice and outcomes for children. The link to the EYLF is <https://www.acecqa.gov.au/sites/default/files/2023-01/EYLF-2022-V2.0.pdf>

## **Introductory Poster:**

Prepare an introductory, A4-sized poster of yourself that includes a recent photograph and explains that you are undertaking a Professional Experience Placement.

You could say:

My name is \_\_\_\_\_.

I am enrolled in the Bachelor of Education (Early Childhood Education and Care) at the University of New England. From (date) to (date), I will be undertaking a Professional Experience Placement with a focus on (name of the unit you are studying). My Supervising Teacher (ST)'s name is \_\_\_\_\_.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Use a photograph which portrays you as respectable and professional (it does not need to have been taken by a professional photographer.) Show it to your Supervising Teacher (ST) and ask where you may display it in the centre so that families and other educators know who you are.

### **Professional Experience folder:**

Prepare a personal professional experience folder clearly organised into relevant sections. This must be kept in a secure place. Do not have the name of the centre at which you are undertaking your placement or the names of any focus children in this folder. Use a pseudonym for focus children. At all times, protect the privacy and safety of children and Early Learning Centres. No photographs will be taken of children.

While there may be some variation across units, key folder sections may include professional goals (see below), a situational analysis (see below), observations, planning, resources, and a reflective learning journal.

This folder must be kept up to date and made available every day for the Supervising Teacher (ST) to view or presented to a UNE Professional Experience Liaison Officer (PELO) if requested. The personal folder should not be submitted to the OPL.

### **Professional goals:**

As an integral part of professional learning, it is important to continually consider goals for our professional development. You are required to write a statement of your personal and professional goals for each placement. These will relate to the unit you are studying. These goals may be areas you personally identify as a relevant focus or areas that have been identified for further work in particular units of study or the previous placements.

# During your Professional Experience Placement

## Hours of attendance:

You are expected to work the same hours as your Supervising Teacher (ST). This includes before and after preschool preparation, and meetings.

In a 9am-3pm preschool setting (the year before formal school), the minimum hours of attendance are 7 hours per day for five days each week of placement. In a Long Day Care (LDC) setting, the minimum hours of attendance are 8 hours per day for five days each week of placement, and again, you must undertake the same shift as your Supervising Teacher (ST). Completing some early and late shifts is highly recommended to ensure experience of the whole day's program.

Additional hours in preschool or childcare settings are optional and determined in collaboration with your Supervising Teacher (ST) e.g., staff meetings/service working-bees/professional development sessions. Students are not permitted to vary hours to undertake 10-hour days for four days each week or shorter 5-hour days over a longer period as this is unrealistic given the continuity of experience and written placement work required.

## Professional Experience Report:

During your Professional Experience your supervisor will complete the Professional Experience Report. The Professional Experience Report consists of three sections.

- An Interim Report, which must be completed at the midpoint of the placement and discussed for any placements that is longer than 5 days.
- A Final Report, which is to be completed on your last day of the placement and submitted within two weeks.
- The Teacher Education Student will gain access to the **Preservice Teacher Response to Professional Experience Report** via email, in which the Teacher Education Student can view the Interim and Final Report.

Teacher Education Students once the Final Report has been completed will need to acknowledge the completion of the Professional Experience Report.

This is an Online system and sent to the Supervising Teacher and Teacher Education Student via an additional email after the Confirmation email has been sent. If the Supervising Teacher or the Teacher Education Student has yet to receive an email containing the link with your Professional Experience Report please contact the OPL via [AskUNE](#) to have this resent.

Teacher Education Students should be proactive in ensuring the Professional Experience Report and Attendance Register has been finalised by the Supervisor Teacher. A Professional Experience Placement will not be recorded as Completed until Teacher Education Students have completed the **Preservice Teacher Response to Professional Experience Report, and Attendance Register is submitted (though**

**for an In-Service Placement, an Attendance Register is not required).**

## **Consent forms:**

Ensure consent forms are signed on the first day of your placement or as soon as possible thereafter. Remember to take copies to provide to parents to sign. They are provided in the [Early Childhood Community](#) site.

## **Situational Analysis:**

A situational analysis is integral to each placement and should include documents and notes regarding the following. Note that as you undertake many placements in the same centre, you will add to this information throughout your course. However, you should start collecting the information from your first placement.

### **1. Room program:**

- Set up of internal and external spaces – create diagrams/maps.
- Daily timetable.
- How individual children’s needs are catered for.
- Methods of planning/evaluation for individual and group experiences and example formats.
- How indoor and outdoor environments are used (consider transition times and routines; use of community environments if applicable).
- Room staffing and rosters.

### **2. Organisation and management of the centre:**

- Ways of grouping children (e.g., family grouping, aged-based grouping, etc).
- Storage spaces and how the resources are shared/managed.
- General description of the families using the centre and patterns of child attendance.
- The history of centre (when the centre began).
- Assessment and rating experiences, including focus areas in their Quality Improvement Plan (QIP; ACECQA, 2022).
- Funding (including relevant government bodies, fund raising, etc.).
- Organisational structure within the centre and leadership responsibilities (draw a diagram).
- Different levels of external administration e.g., ACECQA, NSW DET.
- With the advice of your Supervising Teacher (ST), collect any relevant forms e.g., enrolment, medication, accident/incident and/or newsletter.

- Centre philosophy statements (with time, you may also note unwritten philosophies of educators, including the director).
- Collect/note written policies e.g., inclusion, safety, health, nutrition.
- Record references for external philosophies and policies (e.g., Sun Smart).
- Find out how centre philosophy and policies have been developed/evolved (also ask for a copy of the centre philosophy and any relevant policies).

### **3. Staff-related information:**

- Number and qualifications of staff.
- Staff roles/position descriptions.
- Staff communication processes.
- Room rosters, programming time, administration time.

### **4. Family involvement:**

- How families are currently involved in the service.
- Communication processes between staff and families, families and staff and the purposes behind these.
- How families' needs are reflected in the program (in writing and in practice).
- How parents and carers find out about community services to support their child e.g., health services, early intervention.
- Whether the centre has resources available for families to borrow.
- The extent to which displays reflect the community e.g., if you are working in an agricultural community, is this evident in the displays?
- Whether displays reflect the diversity of society.
- Whether families' cultures and languages are visible and used in the service?

### **5. Local community:**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics and Local Council websites will have information about the local community. The Australian Early Development Census (AEDC) is a nationwide data collection of early childhood development which provides community profiles through the 'Community Data Explorer'. You may find it useful to look up this data before the beginning of your placement. Try to find out as much as you can about the service as a whole and take particular note of links between the early learning centre and other community groups. (You would prepare yourself in a similar way if were starting a new job in an early learning centre.)

- Make notes about the local community: is it rural, urban, suburban, regional, rural, remote? What landmarks surround the community e.g., major roads, parks, other landforms or features?
- Make notes about community demographics and the children's development from the AEDC community profile
- How family and child-friendly is the local community? What evidence supports this?
- Do all families live in the local area?

- What is the ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic make-up of the local community? Is this reflected in the service?
- How does the service philosophy cater for the diversity of children and families who attend the centre?
- How does the local community support the service?

## Enacting the Early Years Planning Cycle

During your Professional Experience Placement, you will be observing and planning for learning, guided by the specific requirements of different units. Observations of children help educators to assess and plan for continued learning. You are required to carry out a range of observations of your focus child or children and build summary profiles of children. Planning skills will be developed, practiced and critically reflected upon with each successive placement. You may be required to plan for individuals or small groups, a single experience, or a whole week with full responsibility. Planning considers transitions/routines as integral components of any Early Childhood program. Please refer to individual unit outlines for these.

As an early childhood professional, collate resources (and online sources) to inform your planning. You may already have a resource collection. The resource collection should be added to throughout your studies and will be added to throughout your career. Organising your resources systematically from the start is important. You could group resources like this:

- Programming and planning proformas.
- Observation templates and examples.
- Learning experience plans – templates and examples.
- Ideas for transitions.
- Reference books - author, title, publisher, source, price.
- Children’s books - author, title, publisher, source, price, suitability etc.
- Teaching resources - songs, music, drama, poems, dances, stories, craft, visual art, special occasions, STEM activities, communication activities etc.
- Cultural resources – artefacts, music, creative arts.

## Personal Professional Experience Folder

Evidence of your progress towards meeting the requirements set out in the *Professional Experience folders* must be kept up to date throughout each placement. You may record this as dot points. However, it is important to have this information on hand to inform discussions with your Supervising Teacher (ST/s) regarding the ways in which you are meeting Professional Experience criteria.

**It does not need to be submitted to the unit coordinator but may need to be provided to show evidence you are meeting the placement requirements.**

## Reflective Learning Journals

As an integral aspect of ongoing critically reflective practice you are required to add to your *Reflective Learning Journal* every day, during every placement. Some days you will have more to write than others. (The *Reflective Learning Journal* can be a section in your *Personal Professional Experience Folder* or a separate booklet).

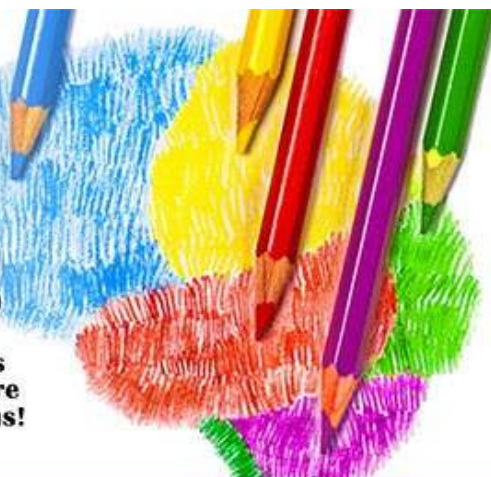
When writing, ask yourself (and write your reflection in the journal):

- What has gone well today?
- What have I achieved?
- What has not gone so well? Why?
- What does the literature tell me about this and how does it help me to understand what to do next? (Here, 'the literature' may be academic texts, tutorial content, multimedia resources from the relevant unit and/or previous units.)
- What are the next steps?
- Where can I get some help with this and when?

*Consider the reflective practice 'cheat sheet' on the next page.*

# The Ultimate Cheatsheet for Critical Thinking

Want to exercise critical thinking skills? Ask these questions whenever you discover or discuss new information. These are broad and versatile questions that have limitless applications!



<b>Who</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... benefits from this?</li> <li>... is this harmful to?</li> <li>... makes decisions about this?</li> <li>... is most directly affected?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... have you also heard discuss this?</li> <li>... would be the best person to consult?</li> <li>... will be the key people in this?</li> <li>... deserves recognition for this?</li> </ul>
<b>What</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... are the strengths/weaknesses?</li> <li>... is another perspective?</li> <li>... is another alternative?</li> <li>... would be a counter-argument?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... is the best/worst case scenario?</li> <li>... is most/least important?</li> <li>... can we do to make a positive change?</li> <li>... is getting in the way of our action?</li> </ul>
<b>Where</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... would we see this in the real world?</li> <li>... are there similar concepts/situations?</li> <li>... is there the most need for this?</li> <li>... in the world would this be a problem?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... can we get more information?</li> <li>... do we go for help with this?</li> <li>... will this idea take us?</li> <li>... are the areas for improvement?</li> </ul>
<b>When</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... is this acceptable/unacceptable?</li> <li>... would this benefit our society?</li> <li>... would this cause a problem?</li> <li>... is the best time to take action?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... will we know we've succeeded?</li> <li>... has this played a part in our history?</li> <li>... can we expect this to change?</li> <li>... should we ask for help with this?</li> </ul>
<b>Why</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... is this a problem/challenge?</li> <li>... is it relevant to me/others?</li> <li>... is this the best/worst scenario?</li> <li>... are people influenced by this?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... should people know about this?</li> <li>... has it been this way for so long?</li> <li>... have we allowed this to happen?</li> <li>... is there a need for this today?</li> </ul>
<b>How</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... is this similar to _____?</li> <li>... does this disrupt things?</li> <li>... do we know the truth about this?</li> <li>... will we approach this safely?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>... does this benefit us/others?</li> <li>... does this harm us/others?</li> <li>... do we see this in the future?</li> <li>... can we change this for our good?</li> </ul>

# Tracking Expectations for the Professional Experience (PrEx)

The following checklist may help you to track the expectations and ensure that all requirements have been completed for every placement:

## Before PrEx:

### Have I?

Prepared consent forms	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Read the ECA (2016) Code of Ethics	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Read the UN (1989) Convention on the Rights of the Child	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Read the NQF, NQS and EYLF	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developed an introductory poster	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Organised my PrEx folder	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Developed professional goals	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Downloaded a copy of the <i>Specific Requirements</i> for the specific unit	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Checked the Supervising Teacher (ST) has a copy of the <i>Specific Requirements</i> and the <i>Professional Experience Report</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

## During PrEx:

### Have I?

Ensured the Supervising Teacher (ST) has a copy of the <i>Specific Requirements</i> and the <i>Professional Experience Report</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Ensured consent forms are signed as required	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Gathered information for the situational analysis	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Completed observations as required	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Completed planning as required	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Gathered a range of resources for my own professional collection	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Gathered evidence to support the <i>Professional Experience Report</i> criteria	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Ensured your <i>Professional Folder</i> is up to date.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes

## After PrEx:

### Have I?

Ensured my Supervising Teacher (ST) has completed the <i>Professional Experience Report</i> and submitted it to the OPL via <a href="mailto:opl@une.edu.au">opl@une.edu.au</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Ensured my Supervising Teacher (ST) has submitted the <i>Professional Experience Report</i> to the OPL via <a href="mailto:opl@une.edu.au">opl@une.edu.au</a>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes
Made up any missed days and notified the OPL of these new dates, before the end of the Placement. As soon as possible after discussing date/s with your Supervisor.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> N/A