ELC awards to be deactivated and implications for validation

What will change for providers of programmes leading to QQI ECCE (and the future ELC) awards?
New awards standards for *Early Learning and Care (ELC)* have been developed to replace the current ECCE standards at Levels 5 and 6.

The major ECCE awards at NFQ Levels 5 and 6 will be **deactivated** and replaced with new professional awards. The Level 4 major award in ECCE will be deactivated by QQI and will not be replaced. Child Development and Play (4N1111) and Child Care and safety (4N1905) will continue to be available until reviewed in a broader context.

All ELC training providers of programme leading to QQI awards based on the new standards will need to have their programmes validated by QQI before they can be offered to learners.

When will the current awards be deactivated?
The major awards and the following minor awards will be deactivated in mid-2021. The last course/programme intake should be at the start of the 20/21 academic year. The first intake under the new standard should be no later than the start of the 21/22 academic year.

Which minor awards will be deactivated?
The following minor awards will all be deactivated.

Code	Title	Credit Value	Associated to Other Awards (Elective)	Deactivate
5N1770	Early Care and Education Practice (16276)	15		Yes
5N1763	Approaches to Early Childhood Education (1,372)	15	1	Yes
5N1769	Creative Arts for Early Childhood (7328)	15		Yes
5N1775	Equality and Diversity in Childcare (1094)	15		Yes
5N1779	Infant and Toddler Years (908)	15	1	Yes
5N2005	Irish for Preschool Services (366)	15		Yes

Code	Title	Credit Value	Associated to other award (Elective)	Deactivate
6N1942	Child Development (11868)	15		**Yes**
6N1944	Early Childhood Curriculum (11654)	15		**Yes**
6N1945	Childhood Social Legal and Health Studies (11473)	15		**Yes**
6N1932	Early Learning Philosophy (903)	15		**Yes**
6N1933	Early Learning Environment (3965)	15		**Yes**
6N1935	Early Childhood Literacy and Numeracy (4954)	15		**Yes**
6N1936	Early Childhood Arts and Culture (2845)	15		**Yes**
6N1972	Creative Studies for Special Needs (593)	15		**Yes**
6N1973	Supervision in Early Childhood Care (6976)	15		**Yes**
6N1974	Equality and Diversity in Childcare (103)	15		**Yes**
6N2023	Child Psychology (3339)	15		**Yes**

The NFQ 4M2014 Early Childhood Education and Care Support will be deactivated, but all associated components will still be available for certification**.**

Where can I see the new standards? Are they set out as CAS award specifications to replace 5M2009 and 6M2009?
No 5M2009 and 6M2009 will be retired and will not be replaced by CAS award specifications. The new awards standards take the form of *annotated professional award-type descriptors* (see the next question). Therefore, the way the new standards will be published is different.

There are special validation conditions attached to the new standards.

What is a standard expressed as annotated professional award-type descriptor?
The new ELC awards will be professional class major awards. A professional class award is typically required to meet two descriptors. The expected learning outcomes (ELOs) come from the professional award-type descriptor and, for example, if the award is also major class the major award-specific parameters such as the award stem (e.g. Advanced Certificate) and volume come from the relevant major award-type descriptor.

Formally the ELOs for the new ELC major awards are the eleven generic elements of the PATD. The annotation indicates how these statements should be interpreted in the ELC context and sets out special validation conditions. The details in the ELC annotations must be addressed by any programme leading to a QQI ELC award but this may involve being in programme or module content, MIMLOs (minimum intended module learning outcomes), placements and so on. They do not all need to be explicit in the MIPLOs (minimum intended programme learning outcomes) which are synoptic in nature and must always be interpreted considering their programme. The set of MIPLOs should be compact and outline the intended learning outcomes without distracting detail that would

be described in the programme (course) content and the MIMLOs (which are synoptic module learning outcomes).

Who will develop the programmes?

Providers are responsible for developing programmes. We envisage that all programmes would be based on a single *shareable curriculum*. This should help promote consistency; help ensure a smooth transition between FET and HET; make efficient use of resources; help maximise the possibilities for sharing effective practice; and help create conditions for the development of communities of practice in the ELC profession.

The sharable curriculum would be developed and maintained on an on-going basis by a single lead provider or a group of providers acting as a coordinating consortium.

So how exactly will this work?
We envisage all providers involved in ELC programmes leading to QQI awards being involved in a single collaborative network.

We envisage that a lead provider (or consortium of providers) will develop a programme to include a proposed sharable curriculum. If validated, the *shareable curriculum* will be available to other providers in the network. The lead provider will need to make suitable practical arrangements for sharing (including the specification of conditions that must be met) and collaborative maintenance of the curriculum. The Quality Assurance aspects of these arrangements will be approved at validation.

The sharable curriculum will set out core parts of a programme that all training providers will have to commit to on an ongoing basis, updating their programmes following any updates to that curriculum. It will include minimum intended programme and module learning outcomes, entry criteria, duration, modules, assessment strategies, resourcing, staffing and approach to practice placement learning and assessment.

The regulatory body may also have its own criteria that any prospective training provider must meet before it can submit a programme for validation.

If I want to get a programme validated, what do I need to do?
When the lead provider's programme is validated, and the shareable curriculum published, another training provider which has been endorsed by the regulator can ask the lead provider for *permission to use the curriculum*.

If permission is given, the provider should then develop and document the *provider-specific parts of the programme* i.e. name, contact details, resources, budgeting, staffing, quality assurance, etc. This provider can then apply to QQI for *differential validation* i.e. the evaluation panel will focus on the provider-specific parts of the programme together with any additional elective programme modules specific to that programme.

Will I be able to use parts of programmes I already have validated which currently lead to CAS components?
It's probable that a provider's programme will include some modules leading to CAS components (that are not being deactivated following this review), e.g. Social Studies, that are also part of other

programmes. These modules can be included in the new programme without any change provided the programme as a whole is consistent with the relevant new ECL award standard.

What awards will my learners achieve?
The new standards will create two new major awards: a Level 5 Certificate in Early Learning and Care and an Advanced Certificate in Early Learning and Care.

Providers may propose *new minor and / or special purpose awards* to be created as part of the validation process for the lead provider's programme. Programmes leading to these smaller awards could also be put forward for validation, either embedded in a major award programme or independently.

So in this way, learners could be enabled to achieve certification for each of the programme's constituent parts as well as for completion of the whole programme.

These new minor awards will be included in the new *Irish Register of Qualifications* including (in due course) details on FET credit, NFQ level, and module learning outcomes. This will facilitate their use for progression to higher education.

What else will be different?
Grading and Certification of these new minor, special purpose and major awards will be different from the practice with CAS awards. In CAS, achievement of a major or special purpose award is determined by QQI, through comparing a learner's accumulated components against the certificate requirements i.e. credit, mandatory components, electives etc. Grading of a *component* is calculated based on the sum of marks gained in the various assessment techniques for that component. Grading of the *major* is calculated based on the combination of grades achieved on contributing components. None of these conventions will apply for the new awards. The grades for new minor and major awards will be *determined by the provider* using the *assessment strategy* set out in the approved curriculum.

Another change will be that a provider will be able to enter a learner for multiple certificates in the same certification period, something which is not currently possible.

What arrangements will there be for learners who have achieved only some but not all of the requirements for 5M2009 and 6M2009 by the time that they are deactivated?
These learners will have to meet the new standard before they can receive an QQI award in ELC. They can expect to be able to have their prior learning recognised through a suitable RPL process. It would be expected that curriculum developers would take this into account when designing access requirements for programmes leading to QQI awards in ELC. Providers should discuss the implications with learners who may be affected and consider whether it is preferable for the learners to accelerate progress and complete their studies before deactivation.