

Chapter 2: Classification Policies

Section: 2.1 Classification Levels and Competency Requirements	Issue Date: <i>August 1, 2024</i>
Page # of #	Revised Date:

2.1.0 Policy Statement

This policy outlines the different types of early childhood education (ECE) classifications that may be issued under the *Regulations* and provides guidance on the learning outcomes that must be demonstrated through an applicant's **credentials** to be considered for each early learning classification level in Nova Scotia.

2.1.1 Policy Objective

This policy aims to provide clarity for potential applicants seeking ECE classification by outlining additional information on the requirements for each classification level. This will allow all individuals with education and/or training in early childhood education an opportunity to demonstrate that they have the knowledge and skills required to provide developmentally appropriate early learning and child care programs in Nova Scotia.

Policy Directives

2.1.2 Scope of Practice

1. Requirements for ECE classification are aligned with the established scope of practice for ECE, as outlined in the [Standards for Early Childhood Education Post-Secondary Programs](#) (“the Standards”).
2. Credentials/qualifications provided to support the assessment of education and training for ECE classification must provide sufficient evidence of the applicant's competencies in early learning and child care.

2.1.3 Classification Levels

1. Entry-Level
 - a) Entry-Level Classification may be granted to applicants who can demonstrate **one** of the following:
 - i. Completion of the [Orientation for Staff Working in Licensed Child Care Facilities](#).
 - ii. Completion of **post-secondary** courses in early childhood education that are comparable to the orientation training, as assessed by Classification Services' Assessment Officers.
 - b) Individuals with entry-level classification are not eligible to contribute to the facility staffing requirement ratios for trained staff, as outlined in *Regulation 36*.

- c) In accordance with *Regulation 37(6)*, staff working directly with children who do not meet the regulated training requirements must complete the orientation within six months of their date of employment.
2. Level 1
- a) Level 1 Classification may be granted to applicants who can demonstrate **one** of the following:
 - i. Completion of the [Orientation for Staff Working in Licensed Child Care Facilities](#) and completion of coursework and workplace training as specified in standards set by the Minister;
 - ii. A post-secondary **certificate** in early childhood education approved by the Director; or a vocational training certificate relevant to early childhood education.
3. Level 2
- a) Level 2 Classification may be granted to applicants who can demonstrate **one** of the following:
 - i. A **diploma** from a post-secondary early childhood education program approved by the Director.
 - ii. Successful completion of the **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program**.
4. Level 3
- a) Level 3 Classification may be granted to applicants who can demonstrate **one** of the following:
 - i. A bachelor's degree in early childhood education or an area of study that qualifies a person to plan and deliver early childhood programming for children birth to 12 years of age.
 - ii. A diploma from a post-secondary early childhood education program approved by the Director for a Level 2 Classification and completion of a bachelor's degree program.
 - b) RPL cannot be used toward achievement of a level 3 classification.
5. School-Age Training Approval
- a) School-age approval may be granted to applicants who can demonstrate **both** of the following:
 - i. Completion of the [Orientation for Staff Working in Licensed Child Care Facilities](#);
 - ii. A bachelor's degree in early education or **elementary education** (pre-primary to grade 5/6) or a post-secondary credential that qualifies a person to plan and deliver developmentally appropriate programming for school-age children, with courses including Human Growth and Development, Behaviour Guidance, Programming, Child in Society, as well as a teaching practicum.
 - b) A six-month conditional approval of school-age training may be granted to a person

who meets the requirements for a school-age approval on the condition that they complete the orientation training no later than six (6) months after the conditional approval is granted.

2.1.4 Overview of Education Requirements

1. The following table provides a summary of requirements for a Level 1, 2, 3, and school-age classification:

Education Requirements				
	Credential	Coursework/ Learning Outcomes	Course Hours	Practicum Hours
Level 1	Certificate <i>(Generally, applies to certifications under 18 months in duration.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Development • Behaviour Guidance • Curriculum Planning for Young Children 	Not specified	250
Level 2	Diploma in early childhood education from a post-secondary program <i>(Generally, applies to programs between 18 months and three years.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diversity and Inclusion • Pedagogy • Health and Safety • Observation and documentation • Program Evaluation • Professionalism • Child Development • Relationships 	900	520
Level 3	Bachelor's degree from a post-secondary program in early childhood education or area of study related to planning and delivering early childhood education programming. <i>(Generally, a bachelor's degree of at least three years, or combination of level two classification and a degree.)</i>			
School-Age Approval	Bachelor's degree from a post-secondary program in early [childhood] elementary education or a program from a post-secondary institution that qualifies a person to plan and deliver developmentally appropriate programming for school-age children. <i>(Generally, a bachelor's degree of at least three years, in early or elementary education.)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Growth & Development • Behaviour Guidance • Programming • Child in society 		Practicum in an educational or recreational setting with groups of children.

2.1.5 Assessing Educational Equivalency & Learning Outcomes

1. Level 1

- a) Applicants for Level 1 Classification must provide proof of completion of course work inclusive of three courses in the following subject areas:
 - i. Child Development
 - ii. Behavior Guidance
 - iii. Curriculum Planning for Young Children
- b) Applicants are required to have 250 hours of either practicum, workplace, or fieldwork experience in an early learning and child care environment.

2. Level 2

- a) As per the *Regulations*, a Level 2 Classification may be granted to those who:
 - i. hold a diploma in early childhood education, or
 - ii. have completed the Recognition of Prior Learning program.
- b) Applicants are required to have 520 hours of either practicum, workplace, or fieldwork experience in an early learning and child care environment.
- c) An applicant must demonstrate their credential meets eight (8) core learning outcomes expected for early childhood educators, and general competency in early learning. These are defined as learning outcomes.

3. Level 3

- a) Level 3 applicants must have completed:
 - i. a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, or
 - ii. a diploma that meets the Standards for Level 2 classification **and** a bachelor's degree in any discipline.
- b) For applicants with multiple degrees, or a combination of degree(s) and diploma(s), a combination of instructional and practicum hours may be accepted, so long as all learning outcomes are met, and the course work completed provides a comprehensive understanding of early childhood education as determined by an assessment officer.

4. Learning Outcomes

- a) Learning outcome expectations for Level 2 and 3 classifications include:

Specific Learning Outcomes	General Learning Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diversity and Inclusion• Pedagogy• Health and Safety• Observation and documentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Importance of play in child development• Positive behavior guidance strategies

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program Evaluation • Professionalism • Child Development • Relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantial instruction for ages 0-5 for those looking for level 2 or 3 (not school-age approval).
<p><i>*See General Requirements [Clause 2.1.7 (4)] and Appendix A for additional details on coursework learning outcomes</i></p>	

5. General Requirements for a Level 2 or 3 Classification

- a) Graduates are expected to have completed a total of 900 credit hours in early childhood education, and 520 practicum hours in an early learning and child care environment, that cover a range of age groups.
 - i. The requirement for 900-credit hours may be achieved through multiple awarded post-secondary credentials.
 - ii. All coursework related to early childhood education will be considered, e.g., Child Psychology
 - iii. A combination of practicum and work experience will be considered, e.g., Field work, internships, and co-op placements.
 - iv. Practicum and work experience should provide experience with children of all ages (e.g., infants, toddlers, preschool and school-age) as well as experience with children who have additional support needs.

- b) As per the *Regulations*, academic credentials must focus on early learning and child care which covers birth to the age of 12.
 - i. Kindergarten or Primary Education may be accepted so long as the required learning outcomes clearly cover the ages of 0-12.

- c) Applicants for Level 2 and 3 classifications must show completion of learning outcomes, as per the *Standards*, through course work in the areas outlined in Appendix A.
 - i. Applicants with credentials that concentrate on early childhood education may be approved below the 900-credit hour threshold so long as all learning outcomes are met, and the course work completed provides a comprehensive understanding of early childhood education as determined by an assessment officer.

For example, a diploma with 850 hours that exclusively focuses on early childhood education may be approved.
 - ii. Applicants with credentials that concentrate on early childhood education may be approved below the 520-practicum hour threshold so long as they have exceeded the required instructional hours and have met all learning outcomes. In these circumstances, applicants must provide:
 - (i) proof of practicum hours just under the 520-hour threshold (e.g., 495 hours), or
 - (ii) proof of equivalent work experience in early learning and child care.

- iii. For proof of work experience to be considered equivalent, the applicant must provide a letter from their current or previous employer, stating:
 - (i) that the applicant completed a period of supervised work within a regulated child care setting, and
 - (ii) the number of hours they were employed in a supervised ECE position.

6. School-age training approval

- a) An applicant for school-age training approval must demonstrate that their credential meets four (4) core learning outcomes expected for early [childhood] elementary education.

Learning outcome expectations for school-age approval classifications include:

Specific Learning Outcomes	General Learning Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human Growth & Development • Behaviour Guidance • Programming • Child in society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child Development • Positive behavior guidance strategies • Classroom Management • Elementary curriculum and instruction • Play-based learning and physical literacy

- b) Graduates are expected to have completed a practicum in an educational or recreational setting with groups of children.
- c) School-age approvals are granted to eligible applicants under the condition that they primarily work in a school-age program with children aged 4-12.
 - i. Only facilities that offer a school-age program should extend offers of employment to those with school-age approvals.
 - ii. As per *Regulation 36(4) and (5)*, facility staff with school-age approvals will only contribute to the 2/3 staffing complement when working with children in a school-age program, or when the facility has only 2 staff working directly with children.

7. Francophone Applicants

- a) Applicants for ECE classification interested in delivering French-language ELCC programming must meet the core learning outcome requirements for a Level 1, 2, or 3 classification, as stated above.
- b) The majority of coursework (approximately 850 hours) demonstrated in a Francophone applicant’s credentials must be in early childhood education.
 - i. For applicants working in French first-language programs, EECD may consider coursework (up to approximately 50 credit hours) that contribute to understanding and supporting French as a first language, e.g. French Literature, as part of the 900 course hour requirements.

2.1.6 References

- *Orientation for Staff Working in Licensed Child Care Facilities* modules and activities:
<https://nsorientation.skillbuilder.co/>
- Recognized Prior Learning Program
<https://aecens.ca/RPL>
- *Standards for Early Childhood Education Post-Secondary Programs*
 - https://www.ednet.ns.ca/earlyyears/documents/pd/early_childhood_education_posts_econdary_program_standards_en.pdf - English
 - https://www.ednet.ns.ca/earlyyears/documents/pd/early_childhood_education_posts_econdary_program_standards_fr.pdf - French
- *Standards for Level 1 Classification*
 - https://www.ednet.ns.ca/earlyyears/documents/pd/Standards_Trng_Level_1.pdf - English
 - https://www.ednet.ns.ca/earlyyears/documents/pd/Standards-TRNG-Level_1-March-2011-approved-FRENCH.pdf - French

2.1.7 Appendices

- A. Foundational learning outcomes by course
- B. Additional learning outcomes by course

Appendix A: Foundational learning outcomes

Subject Area	Description of Learning Outcomes	Relevant Coursework
Child development	ECEs use their in-depth knowledge of child development and learning theories and are influenced by their values and cultures to form an Image of the Child. Skilled in observational techniques, ECEs use their insights to reflect on their practice both on their own and with colleagues. They continually refine their Image of the Child, and draw on it to design learning environments, assess their practice, and engage with children and families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • historical and social foundations of early childhood education • stages of emotional, social, physical, and cognitive development in typically developing children from birth to age 12 • characteristics of, and developing appropriate learning strategies for, children with developmental delays, giftedness, and learning disabilities • different learning styles, and how to develop appropriate learning experiences • strategies for guiding children’s behavior • comparative studies of child development theories, and learning theories and approaches • concept of the Image of the Child
Relationships	ECEs understand that maintaining strong, positive relationships contribute to healthy child development. They appreciate that their relationships with children, families, colleagues, and the community are necessary for children’s well-being and learning. These relationships must be developed based on mutual respect for cultural, linguistic, and social differences. ECEs implement positive and supportive strategies for guiding children’s behaviour and understand and apply principles and strategies for conflict resolution and negotiation with both children and adults. They seek support in maintaining relationships, and support others, when needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • principles of developing and maintaining mutually respectful and supportive relationships, both personal and professional • support children in forming positive relationships with other children • value and form relationships with children of different ages and abilities, parents, and families of children • encourage parental engagement • professional boundaries with children and families • differences between conflict resolution and conflict management, and demonstrating strategies and techniques for each • professional relationships with boards of directors, management, colleagues, community members and organizations, and other professionals such as child specialists and teachers • active participation through provincial or regional professional organizations, including understanding their purpose and policies, and following their research and initiatives to stay current with emerging trends and knowledge • role of advocacy in the early childhood education profession
Diversity and Inclusion	ECEs appreciate diversity in culture, language, gender, and developmental abilities. They understand principles of inclusion, and demonstrate this in their relationships, pedagogical practices, in planning children’s activities, and in designing and maintaining indoor and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • theories and principles of inclusion in an early learning environment. • socio-cultural theories and influences on children and families. • linguistic abilities, social and cultural influences, familial and societal issues, and their impact on learning and development. • explain the impacts of on children’s learning and development, such as

	<p>outdoor learning environments. They articulate their respect for diversity to others and incorporate these values into procedural statements and observable practices for their early childhood education programs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • inclusive learning environments for children • Nova Scotia’s and Canada’s cultural diversity, including the diverse linguistic, cultural, and economic realities of newcomers • strategies to support children living with the effects of trauma
Pedagogy	<p>ECEs work collaboratively with children, families, and colleagues. They draw from their professional knowledge of child development, daily observation and reflection, learning theories, and the pedagogical principles, practices, and learning goals of early learning frameworks to co-construct, implement, document, and assess child-centered, inquiry- and play-based learning experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capable, Confident, and Curious: Nova Scotia’s Early Learning Curriculum Framework, applying the framework’s learning goals and objectives to program planning and designing learning environments • pedagogical principles described in Nova Scotia’s early learning framework and applying those principles to different age groups of children • early learning curriculum frameworks from other jurisdictions nationally and internationally • compare specialized curriculum approaches, such as Montessori, Reggio, Steiner, High Scope • use observation skills to inform pedagogical practices • different types of reflective practice • inquiry and its implications for early childhood education pedagogical practices • different types of play and the characteristics of each • inquiry, play-based learning, and environment practices for indoor and outdoor learning environments • scaffolding techniques • self-regulation - why it is important, and how early learning experiences support its development • communicating the curriculum framework’s purpose and learning goals and how children learn through play to parents
Health and Safety	<p>ECEs demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between human development and principles of health and safety, universal precautions, and the concept of reasonable risk-taking in children’s play. They incorporate their knowledge into planning for nutrition, implementing food safety protocols, hygiene, designing indoor and outdoor learning environments, and developing daily learning activities for children.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • requirements set out in Nova Scotia’s Manual for Food and Nutrition in Regulated Child Care Settings and related legislation on food safety, including menu planning with provisions for allergies, cultural or religious differences, and other food restrictions such as intolerances and sensitivities • safe and sanitary personal hygiene practices with children such as hand washing, sanitizing, diapering, and safe lifting • fire hazards and fire prevention strategies for indoor and outdoor learning environments • potential risks and hazards in indoor and outdoor learning environments, such as hazards on excursions, and the strategies used to address them

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • different forms of child abuse and neglect, and the ECE’s responsibility for reporting and the processes required when reporting abuse and neglect • explain the benefits of reasonable risk-taking for children • reasonable risk-taking for children when designing indoor and outdoor learning environments
<p>Observation and Documentation</p>	<p>ECEs use their professional observations and findings to make necessary referrals to child specialists and alert families to learning challenges. They confer with families to design and implement learning and behaviour strategies for children. They consult with supervisory staff on matters related to pedagogical practices, relationships, and program management. They also identify and declare their own conflicts of interest as required and are aware of and maintain professional boundaries with children and families.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • variety of observation techniques, including structured, controlled, and natural • authentic assessment and the evidence to support the approach • objective recording and the documentation process • documenting a child’s learning using a variety of methods, such as learning stories, portfolios, check lists, and pictures • sharing observations with others, including colleagues, parents, supervisors, boards of directors, and children’s specialists, and know how to make referrals, when appropriate • initiating or responding to written and spoken communication with colleagues, parents, supervisors, boards of directors, and children’s specialists, clearly and concisely • appropriate grammar and vocabulary when initiating or responding to written and/or spoken communication • appropriate technologies to facilitate documentation and administrative record-keeping • protecting sensitive information and the privacy and confidentiality of children and their families

Appendix B: Additional learning outcomes by course

Subject Area	Description of Learning Outcomes	Relevant Coursework
Program Evaluation	ECEs are knowledgeable about quality in their practice, programs, leadership, and management of their work environments. They are familiar with a variety of approaches to be able to conduct program assessment. They collaborate with their colleagues to plan for continuous quality improvement, reach consensus on goals, indicators, and timelines, and carry out agreed-upon actions for quality improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • basic research skills to interpret research studies and professional reports and incorporate this knowledge into their professional practices • conducting literature reviews of quality in early childhood education settings • team development of assessment strategies to evaluate programs within the context of Quality Matters • developing program goals that are specific, measurable, actionable, realistic, and time-bound • process of continuous quality improvement • systematic approaches to problem-solving in an early childhood education setting • mathematical and reasoning concepts and skills required to manage budgets and forecasts, monitor expenditures, and analyze the impacts of funding opportunities • remaining current in research on early childhood education
Professionalism	ECEs are familiar with provincial acts, regulations, and policies and understand the implications of them, such as mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect, on their practice. They can explain the processes for such reporting and pay attention to potential or future changes to legislation and policies that may impact their practice. ECEs act on their professional responsibility to advocate for meaningful change.	<p>Professional behavior</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • code of ethics and ethical decision-making • importance of confidentiality, its limits, and the consequences of breaching it • conflicts of interest, and why it is necessary to identify and declare them • importance of and model non-judgmental attitudes • time and resource management for meeting deadlines for projects and tasks • taking responsibility for one's own actions and decisions, as well as the resulting consequences • productively responding to change • open-mindedness and acceptance of constructive feedback • workplace professionalism, including awareness of tone of voice, respecting privacy, adhering to work hours, attendance policies, dress code, and other workplace expectations <p>Professional development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • personal learning goals • professional development plans

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• importance of ongoing professional development• accessing professional development opportunities and resources• professional literature, information, legislation, and policies• information technologies and systems• provincial requirements for obtaining “classification” under the Early Learning and Child Care Regulations• applicable provincial legislation and standards• United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child and its relevance to early childhood education practice
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