Syllabus

Cambridge International Certificate
Early Years Good Practice 5889

For examination in 2025 to 2030

Cambridge Pathway

Why choose Cambridge?

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications (PDQs) provide a strong framework to support the effective continuing professional development of candidates.

They help candidates to:

- engage critically with relevant concepts, principles, theories and best practices from around the world
- apply new ideas and approaches in reflective practice in their own teaching and learning context
- formatively evaluate experiences to plan further development
- transform the quality of teaching and school leadership to improve the outcomes of learners.

Cambridge PDQs are designed to be integrated into schools' professional development planning, activities and culture. They help schools to improve through cost-effective, sustainable programmes that benefit teachers and their learners. They demonstrate to parents, the school community and stakeholders that the school values and nurtures staff development.

The Cambridge International Certificate in Early Years Good Practice is for candidates who want to:

- engage with the principles and concepts of teaching and learning in early years to improve their effectiveness as practitioners
- gain the knowledge, skills and understanding to support an inclusive approach to teaching and learning in early years
- use opportunities to try something new in their setting
- engage with colleagues to improve professional knowledge and practice
- develop a reflective approach to the development of their professional practice
- progress their teaching career.

Research indicates that effective teacher professional development:

- is integrated into the everyday life of the setting and the practitioner
- considers practitioners' prior knowledge and experience
- offers opportunities for reflection and learning from experience
- encourages and supports innovation and collaboration
- helps practitioners to develop their existing knowledge, skills and understanding of teaching and learning
- enriches practitioners' learning through critical engagement with the theories of others
- is sustained over time and supported by people with expertise.

The Certificate is designed to provide for such professional development.

School feedback: 'Over the three years we have run the PDQ, we have seen how the programme has been a catalyst for exciting conversations about Teaching and Learning across the school. The PDQ candidates are envoys in their departments for the reflective and rigorous approach that we want to see in all staff, and that collaboration at department level has allowed the benefits of the PDQ to blossom beyond those who have participated in the course. By engaging with educational research and theories, and embedding these in their practice, the PDQ candidates have been role models to their departmental colleagues. In particular, the high-quality evidence-based research in the diploma programme has challenged teachers across the school to be bold and ambitious as they reflect on their own practice, striving for excellence.'

Feedback from: Bianca Wright, PDQ Programme Leader, Head of Teaching and Learning, Hebron School, Tamil Nadu, South India

Contents

1 Introduction

Purpose of this document

This syllabus sets out the details of the Certificate in Early Years Good Practice. This is a Cambridge Professional Development Qualification (PDQ) offered by Cambridge International Education.

The syllabus will help Programme Leaders in Cambridge Professional Development Centres understand the design, structure and requirements of this qualification. It will also help them to guide their candidates accordingly.

The syllabus focuses on the learning outcomes and related scheme of assessment. For further guidance on the design principles and features of programmes leading to these qualifications please see the resources for Cambridge Professional Development Centres.

These are available at **www.cambridgeinternational.org/pdq**

Cambridge International retains the copyright on all its publications. Registered centres are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use. However, we cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party, even for internal use within a centre.

Quality

Cambridge PDQs are benchmarked to the Framework for Higher Educational Qualifications (FHEQ) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Cambridge PDQ Certificates are benchmarked to FHEQ Level 4 and Diplomas to FHEQ Level 5.

This means that teachers and leaders achieving a Cambridge PDQ are well prepared for their next step in the professional development pathway and their Cambridge PDQ has value as they progress to relevant Level 6 and 7 programmes.

School feedback: 'The PDQ is an excellent way to encourage collaboration among teachers. From the sharing of experiences in the weekly sessions, to peer observations with colleagues and mentors, teachers talk to and support each other much more often. The natural outcome of this is a significant increase in personal reflection of day-to-day teaching practice.'

Feedback from: Erica Davis, Deputy Principal & Programme Leader for the Certificate in Teaching and Learning Wuhan ULink College of China Optics Valley

2 The Cambridge teacher

Cambridge International programmes and qualifications develop not only subject knowledge and skills but also attitudes, ways of thinking and behaviours.

There are five Cambridge teacher attributes. Cambridge teachers are:

- **confident** in teaching their subject and engaging each learner in learning
- **responsible** for themselves, responsive to and respectful of others
- **reflective** as learners themselves, developing their practice
- **innovative** and equipped for new and future challenges
- **engaged** intellectually, professionally and socially, ready to make a difference.

More information about teaching Cambridge at your school can be found at:
www.cambridgeinternational.org/support-and-training-for-schools/leading-learning-and-teaching-with-cambridge

Cambridge Standards for Teachers, School Leaders and Early Years Practitioners

Our Cambridge Standards for Teachers, School Leaders and Early Years Practitioners define what we believe to be key characteristics of effective teaching and leadership. They focus on supporting practitioners, and leaders, and they offer an opportunity for self evaluation which helps them to understand their professional learning and development needs.

The Standards are based on the latest international research into effective teaching and school leadership, taking into account a wide range of international practices and advice from education experts around the world.

Cambridge Standards for Early Years Practitioners

The Cambridge Standards for Early Years Practitioners can be used to:

- evaluate current practice
- help identify, prioritise and plan areas for professional development
- understand the teaching requirements for Cambridge Early Years programme in order to achieve the desired outcomes for young children.

How to use the Standards

The Standards can be used to evaluate your practice, your teaching or your school leadership by asking key questions and looking for examples from practice. By using our self-reflection surveys you can identify where you are now and which areas you need to improve. This would be a really useful exercise to undertake while planning a PDQ programme. It could also be used again to evaluate the programme's impact.

You can download the Standards, self-reflection surveys and online guide from:

www.cambridgeinternational.org/support-and-training-for-schools/professional-development/professional-development-qualifications/school-leader-teacher-standards

3 Syllabus Overview

The PDQ Programme Leader

Every Cambridge PDQ Centre appoints a Programme Leader who is responsible for designing and managing the programme. The Programme Leader is pivotal to the quality and success of the Cambridge PDQ programme.

The role is wide-ranging, from designing and developing the programme to liaising with mentors, school leadership and Cambridge International. Being an effective Programme Leader is about shaping and supporting professional learning to have an impact on the quality of practice in schools and early years settings. Programme Leaders evaluate their professional development learning programme as part of their commitment to professional development.

We provide a wide range of practical resources, detailed guidance and innovative support so that Programme Leaders can give their candidates the best possible preparation for Cambridge PDQs.

The Certificate Syllabus

This Certificate is designed to help candidates develop their professional thinking and practice, and enhance the quality of teaching and learning. It is for practising teachers and practitioners, focusing on the development of knowledge, skills and understanding in the key aspects of teaching and learning in early years settings. It helps candidates to explore and apply new ideas in their own context, integrate new approaches in their own practice, and demonstrate their professional development as reflective practitioners.

Two essential principles underpin the design of the qualification: effective practice and effective professional development. The programme involves a spiral of professional learning, each stage being a cycle of experiential learning and reflective practice following on from the previous cycle and leading on to the next. Areas of learning are revisited systematically within the programme so that the candidate can engage with these in more depth and detail, and acquire related knowledge and skills.

The spiral of professional learning in a Cambridge PDQ programme depends particularly on three processes:

- observation
- reflection
- learning with and from mentors.

These processes work together. It is crucial that candidates receive feedback to inform their continuous reflection on their learning experiences. Observation and reflection are much more effective with the support of a mentor.

The mentor develops a learning relationship with the candidate, supporting them during their work-based learning to make the most of the learning experience and to achieve the Cambridge qualification. The mentor understands the essential principles of the Cambridge PDQ, and provides helpful advice to their candidate, sharing their own experiences and knowledge.

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications – Early Years Good Practice 5889 syllabus for 2025–2030.

Syllabus Overview

Eligibility

Candidates **must**:

- be a full or part-time practitioner employed in an early years setting. For the purpose of this syllabus, Cambridge understands the Early Years setting to be those children up to and including the age of 6 years old.
- teach in their current institution over a full academic year, for a minimum of 24 weeks and a minimum of six hours per week
- have the regular support of a mentor who understands the essential principles that underpin this qualification, and can provide helpful advice and observations
- teach a group with a minimum of six young children
- be responsible for planning, teaching and formatively assessing groups of young children.

Candidates who do not meet the above criteria cannot make an entry for this syllabus. Those candidates may meet the criteria for syllabus 5880.

School feedback: 'Having the continued support and guidance of mentors throughout the PDQ course have been invaluable for both our candidates and the mentors themselves. We have seen an improvement in reflective practice and an increase in willingness to experiment with best practices. The candidates find they have a safe space to collaborate, share their experiences and ask for advice. This has empowered and made them more open to developing their practice.'

Feedback from: Melissa Alberts, Professional Development Officer, GenEx Institute, Cape Town, South Africa

Language requirements

To take part in the Certificate programme candidates are required to have sufficient competence in English. All candidates should have English language competence comparable to **Level B2** in the **Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)**. This framework is provided by the Council for Europe. Further details can be found on the Council's website at **http://coe.int/t/dg4/education/elp-reg/cefr grids EN.asp**

We recommend a minimum requirement of 5.5 on the International English Language Testing System. See **www.ielts.org/** for more details.

What is the qualification structure?

Module 1 can be taken on its own as the Certificate. Candidates can then progress to Modules 2 and 3 to complete the Diploma.

The Diploma can also be taken as a standalone qualification.

Module 1 → Module 2 → Module 3

Certificate | Diploma
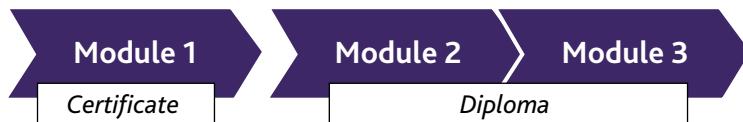
The table below shows what is involved in each module.

Learning hours in preparation	150
Recommended programme duration	4 months per module
Assessment	Portfolio of evidence of practice, learning and reflection
Evidence length	3600 words with work-based records

What does the Certificate involve?

A typical Certificate programme run by a Cambridge Professional Development Centre consists of a broad balance of activities, appropriate to the needs and circumstances of teachers and their schools. The materials for the guided learning element of this syllabus are provided by Cambridge and the programme is delivered by the centre's programme leader and team as a coherent sequence of learning over time, with a variety of elements.

150 hours

Guided learning 50 hours

Individual & collaborative learning 50 hours

Work-based learning 50 hours
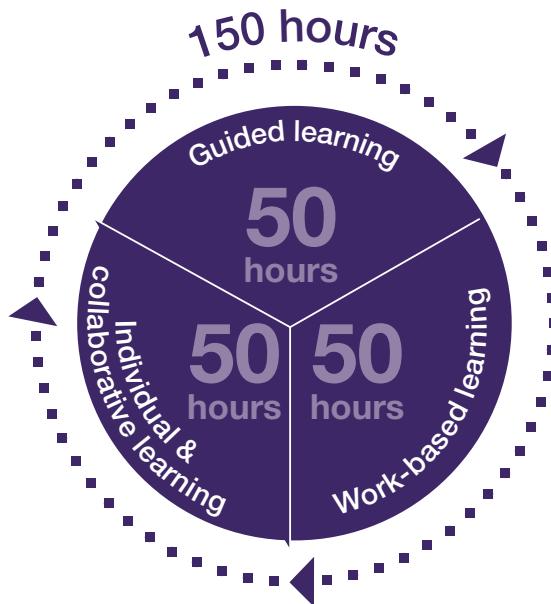
Centres must provide at least 50 hours of guided learning for each module. Candidates should integrate as much preparation time as possible into their day-to-day practice. They should allow time for background reading and discussion with their colleagues, to enrich their reflective practice.

In each unit, candidates engage with the required learning outcomes through a series of activities closely related to their everyday professional work. The activities and related reflections produce evidence for assessment.

The mentor plays a vital role in supporting a candidate. Through discussion and questioning, mentors encourage candidates to reflect on their learning and on what it means for their approaches to teaching. They also help candidates to demonstrate through examples and accounts of practice that they are:

• acquiring new skills

• learning how to use their new skills and knowledge

• linking changes in classroom practice to improvements in outcomes for young children.

How is the Certificate assessed?

Candidates are assessed through a portfolio of evidence, submitted to a team of Cambridge International examiners. In their portfolio, candidates demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding in the context of their own work. Portfolio evidence includes:

- observing a colleague's practice
- planning, teaching, learning and assessment materials that arise naturally out of the teaching process
- feedback from mentor, colleagues, learners and others
- the candidate's own reflections on their learning and practice.

In their evidence of learning and reflection, a candidate's views, ideas or opinions must be supported with relevant references to established concepts and theories of learning and teaching, whether these are in the form of academic publications or posts to online discussion forums or blogs. All sources must be referenced.

School feedback: 'We have utilized the Cambridge PDQ program to foster a rich, collaborative, Community of Practice that has helped to knit our school together with students, teachers, and administrators identifying as being part of a supportive Learning Organization in which everyone models a love of learning and support for others.'

Feedback from: Dr. Russell Hazard, Director of Teaching, Learning, and innovation – NIT Education Group

Evidence requirements

In their portfolio, candidates will use the relevant Cambridge International templates (*Forms*) to gather, organise and present their evidence to satisfy the assessment criteria.

In the introduction to the portfolio, candidates provide background information about their professional experience and role, and the context in which they teach. This is their opportunity to indicate significant influences on their work and professional development. Although the introduction is not formally assessed or judged, it does help the examiner to understand the teaching context and interpret the subsequent assessment evidence. Please note, however, that a curriculum vitae is not required.

With written evidence, candidates should keep to the word limits and respond to the prompts in templates succinctly. The prompts indicate how to focus and shape explanations, reflections and other evidence. Candidates must also follow Cambridge International's rules for the format and size of digital evidence, such as images and video.

Candidates' reflections should provide references for other people's ideas and experiences, whether these are in the form of academic publications, or posts to online discussion forums or blogs. All sources must be clearly referenced.

The Programme Leader can provide further guidance on academic honesty.

Reflective journal

Candidates will maintain a reflective journal throughout their programme of learning. By keeping a journal, candidates will more effectively evaluate their practice and develop reflective skills which will underpin their professional development.

For further support on reflective practice see:
www.cambridgeinternational.org/teaching-and-learning/getting-started-with/

School feedback: 'PDQ has provided the framework to articulate, formalise and enhance the things I was doing naturally as a teacher, it has encouraged me to be a reflective practitioner and to back my intuition. '

Feedback from: Mrs Wendy H McCabe, Head of Art and Design, Head of Drama, Hebron School, Tamil Nadu, South India

School feedback: 'Reflection has become my second nature as a teacher. I am able to design this year's lessons with more insight and foresight and what I am witnessing is happy and more confident students. Thanks to PDQ! '

Feedback from: Jyothsna D'Silva, Geography teacher, Hebron School, Tamil Nadu, South India

4 Certificate in Early Years Good Practice

Introduction to the Certificate

Aims

In the Certificate, candidates will have the opportunity to:

- understand principles of learning and teaching and apply these principles to their own practice
- articulate the theories that underpin their understanding of how young children learn
- design coherent learning activities that focus on active learning and teaching
- use approaches to teaching and learning appropriately to help young children to learn more effectively
- develop their reflective practice skills to help them evaluate and improve their own practice
- learn collaboratively, supported by their colleagues.

Candidates can work towards the Certificate at their own pace, depending on their priorities and circumstances. Certification provides an international quality mark, enhancing their professional profile, and opening pathways for their further professional and career development.

Structure

The Certificate comprises three units related to practice which together form Module 1: Exploring child development, learning and teaching in the Early Years:

Unit 1	Understanding child development
Unit 2	Teaching in an effective early years learning environment
Unit 3	Facilitating active learning in the early years

Each unit is set out in terms of its learning outcomes, key questions, assessment approach and evidence requirements. Assessment criteria appear at the end of this section.

- Each **learning outcome** specifies what a candidate must know, understand and be able to demonstrate after completing the associated professional learning.
- The **key questions** indicate the professional learning related to each learning outcome. These questions will support the candidate as they explore the knowledge, skills and understanding required to achieve the learning outcome.
- The **assessment approach and evidence requirements** explain what candidates must do to demonstrate how they have achieved the learning outcomes.
- The **assessment criteria** specify the standard required to achieve the learning outcomes and are used by examiners to judge the quality of the evidence presented.

Module 1 Exploring child development, learning and teaching in the Early Years

Unit 1 Understanding child development

In this unit candidates will explore the basic principles that underpin the concepts of child development, learning and teaching in the early years to achieve the following learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes

A: Explain your understanding of early childhood development and how young children learn and grow.

B: Explain your understanding of play-based learning and what makes a learning environment safe and effective for young children.

C: Explain the role of assessment in the early years context.

D: Analyse the key features of an effective early years learning activity.

Learning outcomes and key questions

Learning outcome A: Explain your understanding of early childhood development and how young children learn and grow.

- What is your understanding of early childhood development and learning?
- What does the term 'holistic learning' mean to you?
- Why is metacognition important to learning?
- How do practitioners develop children's self-regulation?

Learning outcome B: Explain your understanding of play-based learning and what makes a learning environment safe and effective for young children.

- What do you think are the key characteristics of a safe and effective learning environment?
- What is the difference between continuous and enhanced provision?
- Why is play important to early development and learning?
- How do practitioners motivate young children?

Learning outcome C: Explain the role of assessment in the early years context.

- What is your understanding of the role of assessment in the early years context?
- What assessment methods do practitioners use in the early years context?
- What is your understanding of the role of adult interaction with young children in relation to assessment?
- How might a practitioner model effective communication and feedback around assessment to all stakeholders?

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications – Early Years Good Practice 5889 syllabus for 2025–2030.

Certificate in Early Years Good Practice

Learning outcome D: Analyse the key features of an effective early years learning activity.

- What are the features of an effective early years learning activity?
- Why should practitioners continually reflect on their own and other's practice?
- Why does a practitioner need the support of a mentor to reflect and learn from experiences?
- What impact do you think your new learning from Unit 1 will have on your future practice?

The role of the mentor in Unit 1

The candidate will observe an experienced practitioner's learning activity with their mentor. In a post-observation discussion the mentor will provide advice and guidance to support the candidate in identifying the key features of effective practice. The discussion will form the basis of the candidate's evidence of reflection.

Assessment

A candidate must:

- observe, with their mentor, an experienced practitioner as they interact with and monitor young children.
- discuss with their mentor the key features of effective early years learning activities.

In the portfolio a candidate must submit the following evidence.

Evidence of practice – This includes:

- *Module 1: Unit 1 Observation Visit Form*
- A copy of the observed practitioner's activity plan (the plan will not be assessed).

Evidence of learning (800 words)

1 Explain your understanding of how young children grow and learn.
2 Describe what you think are the key characteristics of effective teaching and learning in an early years context.
3 Explain your understanding of the role of assessment in the early years.

Evidence of reflection (400 words)

1 Analyse the key features of an effective learning environment for young children and identify implications for your future practice.

Unit 2 Teaching in an effective early years learning environment

In this unit candidates will plan, teach and evaluate a learning activity to achieve the following learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes

E: Select open-ended resources that promote curiosity, exploration and communication.

F: Provide an appropriate balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities that promote high levels of engagement.

G: Use observation strategies, that enable formative assessment, to monitor and respond to children's learning.

H: Evaluate a learning activity using feedback and reflective practice.

Learning outcomes and key questions

Learning outcome E: Select open-ended resources that promote curiosity, exploration and communication.

- What is your understanding of the characteristics and benefits of 'open-ended' resources?
- What might influence a practitioner's selection of resources for learning?
- What are examples of resources that might promote curiosity, exploration and communication?
- How does the selection, design and use of resources impact children's learning?

Learning outcome F: Provide an appropriate balance of child-initiated and adult-led activities that promote high levels of engagement.

- How do child-initiated activities engage learning?
- How do adult-led activities engage learning?
- Why is it effective to balance child-initiated and adult-led activities to engage young learners?
- What are useful indicators of high levels of engagement in learning?

Learning outcome G: Use observation strategies, that enable formative assessment, to monitor and respond to children's learning.

- Why is it important to observe children making sense of the world around them?
- Which strategies might a practitioner use to support their observations?
- How might a practitioner balance observation and interaction?
- How might a practitioner effectively use observations to plan further learning opportunities?

Learning outcome H: Evaluate a learning activity using feedback and reflective practice.

- Why is it important to reflect on the successes and challenges in each learning activity?
- What were the highlights in your taught learning activity?
- How might feedback from a mentor be used when evaluating practice?
- What would you change if you taught this learning activity again?
- What impact will your new learning from Unit 2 have on your future practice?

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications – Early Years Good Practice 5889 syllabus for 2025–2030.

Certificate in Early Years Good Practice

The role of the mentor in Unit 2

In a pre-observation meeting, the mentor will discuss the aspects of practice that the candidate wants to develop. The mentor will then observe the candidate's practice. In a post-observation meeting, the mentor and candidate will discuss what went well and what aspects of practice might be further developed. The focus of the post-observation discussion will be on the candidate's personal learning outcomes, which are based on syllabus Learning Outcomes E, F and G.

Assessment

A candidate must:

- plan, teach and evaluate a learning activity for young children.
- have their practice observed by their mentor, who will provide formative feedback for reflective practice.

In the portfolio a candidate must submit the following evidence.

Evidence of practice – This includes:

- Module 1: *Unit 2 Learning Activity Plan Form*.
- Module 1: *Unit 2 Observer Feedback Form*.

Evidence of learning (600 words)

1   Explain why a learning activity should have a coherent structure, with a balance of child-initiated and adult-led components with clearly identified roles and learning opportunities.
2   Explain why choosing open-ended resources promotes curiosity and exploration in children.
3   Identify the observation methods used during the learning activity and explain why they were used.

Evidence of reflection (600 words)

1   Evaluate the learning activity using feedback and reflection to identify what went well and what requires further improvement.
2   Evaluate the impact your new learning and experiences from Unit 2 have had on your professional practice and how this will help you prepare for Unit 3.

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications – Early Years Good Practice 5889 syllabus for 2025–2030.

Certificate in Early Years Good Practice

Unit 3 Facilitating active learning in the early years

In this unit candidates will plan, teach and evaluate **one** learning activity that is part of a sequence of learning activities to achieve the following learning outcomes.

Learning outcomes

I: Develop a sequence of learning activities that shows holistic and progressive learning.

J: Teach active, play-based learning activities to challenge and extend learning, with differentiation as appropriate.

K: Make use of systematic observation strategies to assess learning and development.

L: Evaluate a sequence of activities to identify strengths and areas for further development.

Learning outcomes and key questions

Learning outcome I: Develop a sequence of learning activities that shows holistic and progressive learning.

- What are the key features of an effective sequence of learning activities?
- Why do practitioners plan sequences of learning activities?
- Why should practitioners plan learning activities that have clear links to previous learning?
- What influences the choice of teaching, learning and assessment methods practitioners select to include in learning activity plans?

Learning outcome J: Teach active, play-based learning activities to challenge and extend learning, with differentiation as appropriate.

- What strategies do practitioners use to manage learning activities effectively?
- What does an active learning activity with young children look like?
- Why and how might planning be differentiated to nurture each child's full potential?
- Why and how do practitioners develop young children's metacognitive skills?

Learning outcome K: Make use of systematic observation strategies to assess learning and development.

- How do practitioners use continuous observation as formative assessment?
- Why do practitioners use a variety of communication methods to monitor children's progress?
- Why is Assessment for Learning (AfL) an integral part of practice?
- How might practitioners provide effective formative feedback to enhance learning?

Learning outcome L: Evaluate a sequence of activities to identify strengths and areas for further development.

- Why is it important to evaluate the effectiveness of practice?
- How can the impact of changes to your teaching practice on children's learning be evaluated?
- What impact has the learning from Module 1 had on your professional practice?

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications – Early Years Good Practice 5889 syllabus for 2025–2030.

Certificate in Early Years Good Practice

The role of the mentor in Unit 3

The mentor will support the candidate in reviewing the sequence of activities planned and then observe the delivery of one of those activities. In the pre-observation meeting, the mentor will discuss the aspects of practice that the candidate wants to develop as a result of teaching a learning activity. The mentor will then observe the learning activity. In a post-observation meeting, the mentor and candidate will discuss what went well and what aspects of practice might be further developed. The focus of the post-observation discussion must be on the candidate's personal outcomes, which are based on syllabus Learning Outcomes I, J and K.

Assessment

A candidate must:

- plan, teach and evaluate a learning activity that is part of a holistic sequence.
- have their practice observed by their mentor, who will provide formative feedback for reflective practice.
- evaluate assessment evidence to inform next steps in the sequence.

In the portfolio a candidate must submit the following evidence.

Evidence of practice – This includes:
- Module 1: *Unit 3 Learning Activity Plan Form*
- Module 1: *Unit 3 Observer Feedback Form*
- Module 1: *Unit 3 Teaching Log Form*.

Evidence of learning (400 words)
1 Explain why it is important to see each learning activity as part of a sequence in the broader provision.
2 Explain the teaching and learning approaches you use in your practice to challenge and extend learning.
3 Explain how you use continuous observation and feedback to monitor and support children's learning.

Evidence of reflection (800 words)
1 Evaluate the activity using feedback and reflective practice to identify what went well and what requires further improvement.
2 Evaluate the impact of your learning in Module 1 on the children's learning and your professional practice.

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications – Early Years Good Practice 5889 syllabus for 2025–2030.

Certificate in Early Years Good Practice

Assessment criteria

Candidates will be assessed for the Certificate according to the following criteria, applied to the portfolio of evidence as a whole:

1   Understanding teaching and learning in early years.
2   Developing thinking and practice in early years contexts.
3   Analysis and discussion.
4   Communication and presentation.

DISTINCTION	
Understanding teaching and learning in early years	Demonstrates a well-focused understanding of relevant concepts and principles, with evidence of analysis of strengths and weaknesses. Applies relevant concepts and principles to own practice, with evidence of critical evaluation and limitations.
Developing thinking and practice in early years contexts	Evidences effective practice, with a well-focused understanding of relevant theories and principles underlying practice in early years, and applied to own practice. Evidence of reflective evaluation of own practice contexts, and identification of learning from experience.
Analysis and discussion	Analyses questions and issues arising from study, enquiry, discussion and experience, in a well-focused manner, supported by relevant and useful examples drawn from valid and reliable evidence. Evidence of a range of information sources to inform the analysis and discussion. Well-structured work.
Communication and presentation	Presents ideas, arguments and information in a well-structured and consistent manner. Professional approach to presentation of work, with opinions only given when justified and/or backed up by evidence. Academic conventions followed, with appropriate referencing to published work or other accepted sources of evidence.

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications – Early Years Good Practice 5889 syllabus for 2025–2030.

Certificate in Early Years Good Practice

PASS	
Understanding teaching and learning in early years	Demonstrates a broad understanding of relevant concepts and principles, and is able to apply these in a meaningful way to own practice.
Developing thinking and practice in early years contexts	Evidences effective practice, with a sound and largely accurate understanding of relevant theories and principles underlying practice in early years. Some evidence of application of theories and principles to own practice contexts. Some evidence of reflective evaluation.
Analysis and discussion	Analyses questions and issues arising from study, enquiry and experience in a sound and largely appropriate manner. Some use of relevant examples drawn from sound evidence. Use of some different information sources to inform discussion and analysis. Structured approach to analysis and discussion.
Communication and presentation	Presents ideas, arguments and discussions in an orderly and generally consistent manner. Professional approach to presentation of work. Opinions may be expressed at times without evidential or other accepted support. Academic conventions mostly followed, with attempt to reference appropriately.

FAIL	
Understanding teaching and learning in early years	Demonstrates inadequate or poor understanding of relevant concepts and principles. Application to own practice may be very limited, inadequate or inappropriately applied.
Developing thinking and practice in early years contexts	Little or poor evidence of linking effective practice with theories and principles. Limited or inaccurate understanding of relevant theories and practice. Little evidence of application of theories and principles to own practice.
Analysis and discussion	Descriptive accounts, with inaccuracies and misunderstandings in places. Opinions and views expressed, but without links to evidence and/or relevant examples. Work likely to be poorly organised and structured.
Communication and presentation	Work demonstrates significant weaknesses in presentation and may be poorly structured, not well organised and not presented in a professional manner. Opinions may be given at length without any attempt to provide support from other sources.

5 Support and resources for PDQ programmes

We provide a wide range of practical resources, detailed guidance and innovative support so that Programme Leaders can give their candidates the best possible preparation for Cambridge PDQs.

Support and resources
Programme planning and delivery
Syllabus
The Cambridge International Professional Development Qualification (PDQ) syllabus
Syllabus Support Guides
Exemplify the Learning Outcome and Assessment Criteria requirements for each PDQ syllabus
PDQ Programme Leader Community
An online community for Programme Leaders to share and collaborate

Portfolio creation and development
Sample Evidence
Examples of completed evidence with a commentary from the Principal Examiner
Getting started with...
Interactive resources which introduce and develop key areas of teaching and learning practice
Principal Examiner Reports
Annual reports completed by the Principal Examiner for each syllabus
Webinars
Recorded sessions looking at different aspects of the PDQ Assessment requirements

Training
PDQ Programme Leader Course
Training provided by Cambridge for aspiring PDQ Programme Leaders
Online Training
Introductory, Extension, Enrichment and Assessment courses, available online here: **www.cambridgeinternational.org/support-and-training-for-schools/professional-development**
Support for Mentors
www.cambridgeinternational.org/Images/304230-a-guide-for-mentors.pdf
'Getting started with mentoring' is also available as an online enrichment course: **www.cambridgeinternational.org/support-and-training-for-schools/professional-development/enrichment-courses/online-enrichment**

Continuing professional development

Education briefs

www.cambridgeinternational.org/support-and-training-for-schools/teaching-cambridge-at-your-school/education-briefs

Further study towards PGCE, MA or MBA

www.cambridgeinternational.org/support-and-training-for-schools/professional-development/professional-development-qualifications/teacher-development-journey

Note: Cambridge has secured this route into Higher Education study for all those that hold a PDQ Diploma. Cambridge Programme Leaders cannot claim credits towards this themselves, unless they also hold a PDQ Diploma, but the journey may still be of interest to them.

What is PDQ Connect?

PDQ Connect is the platform used by Cambridge International to support the delivery of PDQ Programmes, and where Programme Leaders can find resources, templates and forms. Use of the platform allows Programme Leaders to support candidates to collate, develop and enhance their portfolio evidence prior to final submission.

Final submission of the completed PDQ portfolio of evidence to Cambridge International must be made using the correct PDQ templates (*Forms*) as specified in each syllabus, and in accordance with the current submission guidance and series deadlines as laid out in the *Administrative Guide*. The *Administrative Guide* is for exams officers who are making the final submission of the portfolio to Cambridge for grading.

Cambridge International is committed to ensuring that all assessments are 'fair, have sound ethical underpinning, and operate according to the highest technical standards' (The Cambridge Approach 2009). Cambridge International expects technology to be used to enhance the assessment process in terms of reliability, validity, accessibility as well as efficiency, and not to dilute its quality (Craven 2009).

- Validity: Assessment should measure what it claims to measure and what it is important to measure; there must be a close fit between the assessment methods and the learning outcomes.
- Authenticity: All assessment practices must have processes in place to ensure that the evidence for assessment is the learner's work.
- Reliability and consistency: Assessment should be capable of generating sufficient evidence for the target level.

6 Glossary

The following definitions apply throughout this syllabus.

Word or phrase	What it means
Achievement	measures the improvement in a learner's performance over a period of time as the result of a process of learning
Active learning	based on the theory of constructivism where learners participate in a variety of activities that promote engagement with learning resources, ideas and other people; it then requires them to think hard in order to make sense of their new learning by linking it to their existing learning
Activity Plan	a plan, devised by a practitioner, to guide the learning trajectory and approaches for an individual activity, as part of wider provision
Adult-led activities	where an adult plans and provides opportunities for children to develop skills and knowledge
Advance organisers	strategies that connect new learning to existing learning
Agency	a child's ability to make decisions that influence events and learning
Analysis	process of studying or examining something carefully and in detail to learn more about it
Assessment	any activity in which evidence of learning is collected in a planned and systematic way and then used to make a judgement about what learners know, understand and are able to do
Assessment criteria	freestanding statements that specify the standard required to achieve a learning outcome or objective.
Assessment for learning	based on the concept of teachers embedding the strategies of questioning, formative feedback, peer and self-assessment, and the formative use of summative assessments in their classroom practice; assessment information is then used by teachers to adjust their teaching strategies and by learners to adjust their learning strategies
Assessment of learning	an alternative term for summative assessment
Attainment	the level or standard reached by a learner, considered by the practitioner throughout the learning and teaching cycle. Attainment may also be evidenced at the end of a learning sequence or learning programme.
Autonomy	where a child is in control of, or an active agent in, their learning
Behaviourism	theory of learning based on the concept that all behaviours are learned through interaction with the environment to the near exclusion of innate or inherited factors

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications – Early Years Good Practice 5889 syllabus for 2025–2030.

Glossary

Word or phrase	What it means
Candidate	the person following a Cambridge Professional Development syllabus
Child development	the processes by which a child changes over time, including physical growth as well as intellectual, language, emotional and social development
Child initiated activity	where a child determines the activity – what they will use, what they will do, and who is involved
Cognition	process of acquiring knowledge and understanding through thought, experience, and the senses
Cognitive Development	relating to the ability to think, gain and use knowledge through memory and reasoning
Cognitivism	theory of learning based on the concept of how learners acquire new learning through perception, thinking, remembering, reasoning and judging
Collaboration	working with one or more colleagues for a particular purpose or to achieve a common goal
Communication	the sending and receiving of information, either one-on-one or between groups
Competence	ability to repeatedly do something well
Constructivism	theory of learning based on the concept that all learners 'construct' their own unique meanings or understanding of experiences by reflecting or thinking about them
Continuous provision	the environment and resources provided for children to explore freely, which support learning with or without an adult and enable children to revisit and build on their learning
Cooperation	working together to accomplish shared goals
Critique	a detailed analysis and judgement, both positive and negative, of a person's work or ideas
Criterion-referencing	describe the qualities of what a learner knows, understands and is able to do without reference to the performance of others
Critical evaluation	making judgements through a process of critical thinking and analysis
Critical thinking	careful goal-directed thinking; it is a way of thinking about any subject, content or problem by analysing the facts to form a judgement
Curriculum	academic content taught in a school or in a specific course or learning programme; it is usually presented as syllabuses for sequential stages of the learners' learning
Dialogic teaching	involves on-going talk between the teacher and learners; it provides learners with opportunities to contribute to classroom dialogue in extended and varied ways so they can explore the limits of their own understanding through the use of language

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications – Early Years Good Practice 5889 syllabus for 2025–2030.

Glossary

Word or phrase	What it means
Didactic teaching	learning is seen as mainly acquiring knowledge and skills as the direct result of teaching
Differentiated learning	strategies used to accommodate the differences between learners so they all have the best possible chance of progressing their learning
Early years setting	an organisation delivering early childhood care and education
Engagement in learning	the attention, curiosity, interest, energy, and motivation that children show when they are learning or being taught
Enhanced provision	the extra material and resources practitioners provide to meet the children's needs
Evaluate	to judge or determine the quality, importance or value of something
Experiential learning	process that involves learners engaging with a variety of experiences and then through reflection, creating links with existing learning to form new learning
Explore	think about an idea or topic in order to assess it carefully
Fine motor skills	relating to muscle movement working with the brain and nervous system to control movements in areas such as the hands, fingers, lips, tongue and eyes: developing fine motor skills helps children do things such as eating, writing, manipulating objects and getting dressed
Formative assessment	assessment methods used by teachers to check the learners' understanding of the topic being taught at different stages of a lesson
Goals	the object of a child's effort, a desired result
Gross motor skills	relating to muscle movement working with the brain and nervous system to control movements in the large muscles in the arms, legs and torso. Gross motor activities are important to everyday physical activities such as walking, running, climbing, throwing and lifting.
Higher-order thinking skills	requires learners to use their analytical, evaluative and creative thinking skills in a range of activities to progress their learning
Holistic planning, teaching and learning	recognises all aspects of children's development and learning as inter-related, including physical, personal, social, emotional, spiritual and cognitive learning
Humanism	theory of learning based on the concept that the development of the whole person is considered more important than the development of specific subject matter
Inclusive learning	the learners' entitlement to a learning experience that respects diversity, enables participation, removes barriers and anticipates and considers a variety of learning needs and preferences
Independence	a range of children's self-reliance skills, such as developing skills in washing and dressing and encouraging them to think for themselves

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications – Early Years Good Practice 5889 syllabus for 2025–2030.

Glossary

Word or phrase	What it means
Interdisciplinary	the combination of more than one academic discipline to think across boundaries and draw on knowledge from other fields, for example, sociology, psychology, anthropology
'In-the-moment'	when practitioners observe the interest of a child in the present moment, and plan spontaneously to develop the learning opportunity; often called 'teachable moments'
Involvement in learning	the extent to which a child is operating to their full capacities; focused, engaged and interested in an activity
Key questions	indicate the professional learning related to a learning outcome
Language and communication development	all the different ways a child understands and communicates, only part of which involves spoken words
Learning Activity	a single learning opportunity, often part of a sequence
Learner	we use 'learner' in a general, aspirational sense
Learning objective	brief description of what the learners must know or be able to do as a result of their learning experiences
Learning outcome	brief description of what the learners must know or be able to do as a result of their learning experiences at the end of a course, learning programme, module or unit; it specifically relates to the learning that will be assessed
Learning record	information and evidence of a child's achievement, collated by a practitioner, as a celebration and point of reference about learning and development
Lower-order thinking skills	requires learners to use their skills of remembering, understanding and applying their learning in a range of activities
Mentor	an experienced colleague who provides support, advice and guidance to help develop the personal and professional growth of a less experienced colleague
Metacognition	concept that requires learners to reflect or think about how they learn and then intentionally apply the outcomes of their reflective thinking to improve future learning
Modelling	when a practitioner shows a child by example how to use a skill, behaviour, or complete a task
Motivation	a learner's willingness to participate in the learning process
Multi-modal	communication can be written, oral, visual, digital and non-verbal, all of which contribute to making meaning
Norm-referencing	comparing one learner's performance with that of everyone else being assessed
Observation	the practice of watching and listening to a child as they engage in an activity and demonstrate specific knowledge, skills and understanding

Word or phrase	What it means
Open-ended	having no specific direction or purpose, and no pre-determined use, process or outcome, to be interpreted and directed by the children
Participation model of learning	creating personal meaning by reflecting on shared experiences and then applying it in different situations
Pedagogy	the study and theory of the methods and principles of teaching
Play-based learning (or learning through play)	a type of early childhood education based on child-led and open-ended play; experiences typically based on children's own unique interests, as they make sense of the world around them
Practitioner	an adult who works with children in a pre-school setting
Progression	learning and developing towards the next stages in skills, knowledge and understanding
Provision	the overall elements of pre-school setting - including environment, resources, planning and delivery of sequences of learning
Reflection in action	reflecting during an experience, it can also be thought of as 'thinking on our feet' and involves making decisions or changes to practice during the experience as the situation demands
Reflection on action	reflecting after the experience, can also be thought of as making decisions or changes to practice as a result of retrospective thinking
Reflective account	an account of an event or a process that is not simply descriptive; it addresses evaluative questions as well as how and why questions
Reflective journal	a document in digital or traditional book format can be used to record experiences; it is subsequently used to critically reflect on learning or practice in order to improve future learning or teaching practice
Reflective practice	learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights into self and practice
Reflective thinking	consciously thinking about analysing what you are doing, what you have previously done, what you have experienced, what and how you have learned
Relational learning	where relationships are at the heart of learning and teaching
Reliability	how well a test consistently measures what it is supposed to measure; reliability exists if repeat marking of a single assessment by a second or third examiner produces the same outcome, or if the learner achieves the same outcome when taking a second version of the same test.
Responsive teaching	a flexible approach that ensures learning is always child, context, content, and curriculum appropriate, shown through a balance of opportunities for structure and spontaneity, open-ended and specific tasks, and child-led and adult-led learning

Cambridge Professional Development Qualifications – Early Years Good Practice 5889 syllabus for 2025–2030.

Glossary

Word or phrase	What it means
Scaffolding of learning	providing one or more students with support from the teacher and/or peers when learning new concepts; the support is reduced as the students become more independent in their thinking and ability to acquire new knowledge and skills
Sequence of learning	Medium term plan of sequential learning activities
Self regulation	describes how students monitor and control their cognitive processes
Schema	patterns of repeated play and behaviours that help children organise information
Sequence	the order in which related learning experiences follow each other
Social and emotional development	a child's ability to regulate their behaviour towards other children and adults
Social constructivism	theory of learning that stresses the fundamental role of social interaction in the development of cognition
Special education needs	refers to learners who experience learning difficulties that make it harder for them to learn than most children and young people of the same age
Spiral of learning	learning is structured so that concepts and ideas are initially taught at a simplified level and then re-visited at more complex levels later on
Success criteria	summarise the key steps needed for learners to successfully meet a learning intention by specifying the main things to do, include or focus on
Summative assessment	assessment methods used to evidence what the learners have learned at a given point in time, usually at the end of a course, module, unit, theme or topic
Sustained Shared Thinking	when two or more learners work together to solve a problem, clarify a concept, or evaluate an activity, where both contribute to the thinking and develop and extend understanding
Teaching	the process of attending to children's needs, experiences, interests and feelings, in making specific interventions to help them learn
Well-being	feeling at ease, being free of emotional tensions, thriving, blossoming and flourishing
Zone of Proximal Development	a learner's ability to perform learning tasks just beyond their current abilities with guidance and support from the teacher and/or peers

We are committed to making our documents accessible in accordance with the WCAG 2.1 Standard. We're always looking to improve the accessibility of our documents. If you find any problems or you think we're not meeting accessibility requirements, contact us at **info@cambridgeinternational.org** with the subject heading: Digital accessibility. If you need this document in a different format, contact us and supply your name, email address and requirements and we will respond within 15 working days.