

2014

## Proposal to Government

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# Assessment & Feedback Use Cases

## PROPOSAL TO GOVERNMENT

**Author:** Geraldine French

**Date:** 2014

This use case describes how one assessment method was designed and implemented by a lecturer or a group of lecturers in DIT. The use case was compiled from an interview conducted as part of **DIT's RAFT project (2013-14)**, the aim of which was to provide a database of assessment practices designed and implemented by academic staff across DIT.



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## Lecturer

Geraldine French

## Programme and year on which assessment was offered

BA Early Childhood Education, Year 3

## Description

It is a project to write an informed and authoritative 3000 word proposal to a government minister. The module is Perspectives on Early Childhood Education: Issues in policy, practice and research.

Because the field of early childhood education is evolving the course is flexible to respond to emerging issues. The students need to be informed on the bigger policy backdrop in Early Childhood Education.

The brief is responsive to whatever is currently happening regarding government policy in this area. At this point in time a National Early Years Strategy is being developed by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald. The students are required to write a proposal to the Minister

outlining: the history of the development of the early childhood sector outlining why such a Strategy is necessary, the potential benefits that high quality early childhood education and care, embodied in a National Early Years Strategy, could engender in Ireland and to focus on two themes arising from OECD reports (2006/2012) that should be key components of the Strategy.

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## Why did you use this Assessment?

As holders of a degree in this field the students will be the industry leaders and must develop high quality services. This is a developing area and requires an awareness of policy (in addition to professional practice). It prepares students to understand the sector and to be informed on current policy issues and practices. In addition they realise they have a voice and the power to bring change in an emerging sector through advocacy groups such as Start Strong.

## Why did you change to this form of assessment?

An essay was required previously. It was felt that writing such a proposal would be of more relevance enabling students to apply the skills of making an informed argument with a view to influencing change. It is hoped that they might continue the practice in their professional life.

## How do you give feedback to students?

There is a prewritten feedback form/marketing scheme capturing the four main criteria where comments are highlighted. Plus there is individual feedback on the four main areas that have further comments typed up. The tutor need to be succinct and disciplined otherwise it can be time consuming.

## What have you found are the advantages of using this form of assessment?

- Tutor feels confident that students have knowledge of important features of quality early childhood education and care provision.
- Students learn they have a voice and may inform policy and practice development.
- The module and assignment heightens awareness of the importance of Early Childhood Education and care. This is particularly important particularly in a recession where there are competing interests for funding and development.
- Students have already suggested to each other to use their assignment to write to papers in light of recent scandals in early childhood education and care.
- As part of the delivery of the module the students were exposed to public servants and leaders in the field and as a result were invited to submit their assignments directly to government.

## What have you found are the dis-advantages of using this form of assessment?

- Challenging for students.
- Feedback is time consuming.

## If another lecturer was using this assessment method would you have any tips for them?

In a broad area like this it is important to maintain focus for lecturer and students. Be very clear from the beginning what the marking criteria are. In a policy/professional practice arena it is particularly important to keep abreast of current issues and to present critique yet balance.

## Do you have any feedback from students about this assessment?

Yes, they find it challenging. Some say they understand it better when they have finished it. Others, really enjoy it and say they are better equipped and informed regarding the bigger issues in relation early childhood education and care and the effect policy has on their work.

## Additional Resources

# BA EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (Year 3) 2012 - 2013

## Perspectives in early childhood education: Issues in policy, practice and research

### Project

On the 25th January 2012, Minister Frances Fitzgerald at the Department of Children and Youth Affairs announced that she will develop Ireland's first National Early Years Strategy in consultation with key stakeholders. Identify and discuss two key issues of policy and/or practice that could inform the development of such a strategy, giving reasons for your choice. Headings could draw from Starting Strong III (OECD, 2012) among others. In doing so make the case for the development of high quality early childhood education and care. Your report includes the following steps:

1. Drawing from the history of the development of early childhood education and care in Ireland, introduce this topic by briefly and critically discussing why such a Strategy is necessary.
2. Discuss the potential benefits that high quality early childhood education and care, embodied in a National Early Years Strategy, could engender in Ireland.
3. Identify two key issues of quality policy and practice that could be contained within such a strategy, with critical reference to their development in Ireland.
4. Conclude with a synthesis of your findings and stipulate brief recommendations for your chosen two key issues of quality policy and practice within proposed the National Early Years Strategy.

### Guidelines for submission of assignment

- The final assignment will be submitted by to safe assign and hard copy submitted in class.
- Length of assignment: 3,000 words [12 pages of font 12 double spaced]. Word count must be specified on cover page. It may be accompanied by additional relevant material/documentation.
- Retain a complete copy of your assignment as work cannot be returned.
- Report must meet the criteria for all course assignments (see Dept. of Social Sciences website for guidelines).

## Notes

- The purpose of the assignment is to identify, analyse and discuss issues of particular significance in the Irish ECEC context and consider what might be learned about these issues from the countries being studied.
- The report should not **describe** policies and practices of Ireland or another country (appendices can be used sparingly for descriptive material).
- You must refer to relevant Irish law, policies and practices to support your choice of topics for discussion.
- It is important to adopt a critical approach in reviewing policies and practices in Ireland and from other countries.

*Dr Geraldine French, January 2014*

**Essay Title: Perspectives in Early Childhood Education Name of student: Mark:**

**PTO for further feedback**

Criterion  Grade	Knowledge of content, accuracy and evidence of reading  (30%)	Understanding of the topic, critical thinking and analysis/application  (30%)	Clarity, cohesiveness and synthesis (in general discussion and recommendations)  (30%)	General criteria: Presentation and structure,  Referencing  (10%)
<p><b>A</b></p> <p><b>1<sup>st</sup></b></p> <p><b>70% +</b></p>	<p>Breadth and depth of reading and understanding of relevant arguments and issues; Perhaps some areas covered in depth and awareness of provisional nature of knowledge. Uses appropriate terminology consistently.</p>	<p>Depth of insight into theoretical issues and/or application to practice; Where appropriate, demonstrates an ability to apply ideas to new material or in a new context. Critical thinking applied coherently.</p>	<p>Clarity of argument and expression; Has defined objectives/themes in detail and addressed them comprehensively; Shows an ability to synthesise a wide range of material and addresses all parts of the assignment topic; Perhaps shows unique or imaginative insights. Fluent writing style appropriate to type of assignment; Grammar and spelling accurate.</p>	<p>Structure of the assignment adhered to; Uses the standard referencing system correctly and consistently; Work has been submitted within time boundaries and within prescribed parameters (e.g. word length). Analytical and clear recommendations/conclusions well-grounded in text.</p>
<p><b>B</b></p> <p><b>2:1</b></p> <p><b>60-69%</b></p>	<p>Draws on a range of sources; Perhaps some areas covered in depth; Good knowledge of topic and use of appropriate terminology.</p>	<p>Demonstrates strong ability to work with theoretical material effectively and/or shows strong evidence of application. Critical thinking in evidence.</p>	<p>Has defined objectives/themes and addressed them through the work; Generally accurate and well-informed answer to the question that is reasonably comprehensive; Creates an argument that shows evidence of having reflected on the topic. Good summary of arguments based in theory/Literature. Language fluent. Grammar and spelling accurate.</p>	<p>Structure of the assignment mostly adhered to; Referencing is mainly accurate; Work has been submitted within time boundaries and within prescribed parameters (e.g. word length). Recommendations include but not specified.</p>
<p><b>C</b></p> <p><b>2:2</b></p> <p><b>50-59%</b></p>	<p>Uses a limited range of source material; Reasonable knowledge of topic and some use of appropriate terminology.</p>	<p>Demonstrates the ability to address theoretical material and/or shows evidence of application. Some critical thinking in evidence.</p>	<p>Has outlined objectives/themes and addressed them at the end of the work; Addresses main issues of assignment topic without necessarily covering all aspects. Develops + communicates a basic logical argument with some use of appropriate supporting examples and evidence. Some evidence of recommendations/conclusions grounded in theory/literature; Language mainly fluent; Grammar and spelling mainly accurate.</p>	<p>Structure of the assignment somewhat adhered to; Referencing is fairly accurate; Work has been submitted within time boundaries and within prescribed parameters (e.g. word length).</p>

<p>D</p> <p>Pass</p> <p>40-49%</p>	<p>Shows only sparse coverage of relevant material or contains some errors and omissions; Limited knowledge of topic but some use of appropriate terminology. Over-dependence on class slides.</p>	<p>Shows some sign of understanding of the question set, though not necessarily sustained; Demonstrates a basic ability to address theoretical material and/or shows limited evidence of application. Limited critical thinking in evidence.</p>	<p>Has provided generalised objectives/themes and focused the work on the topic area; Limited evidence of conclusions supported by theory/literature; Meaning apparent but language not always fluent; Grammar and/or spelling contain errors. Fails to support arguments with adequate evidence.</p>	<p>An attempt at following the structure of the assignment; Some attempt at referencing; Deviates slightly from the required parameters.</p>
<p>Fail</p> <p>39% -</p>	<p>Contains very little appropriate material or contains numerous errors and omissions; Lacks evidence of knowledge relevant to the topic and/or significantly misuses terminology; Is plagiarised.</p>	<p>Demonstrates a lack of understanding of theoretical material and/or lacks application. No critical thinking in evidence.</p>	<p>Only briefly acknowledges the question if at all; No information provided regarding objectives/themes of assignment; Lacks any real argument or argument is illogical and incoherent. Unsubstantiated/invalid conclusions based on anecdote and generalisation only, or no conclusions at all; Meaning unclear +/- grammar +/- spelling contain frequent errors.</p>	<p>No attempt to follow the structure of the assignment adhered to; Referencing is absent or unsystematic; Deviates significantly from the required parameters.</p>

# Perspectives in early childhood education: Issues in policy, practice and research

**Feedback Sheet - Code: DT572/3 Lecturer: Dr Geraldine French Mark:**

**Participant's name:**

**Knowledge of content (accuracy of content and evidence of reading - 30%):**

**Areas of strength**

**Areas for modification**

**2. Understanding of the topic (critical thinking and analysis- 30%):**

**Areas of strength**

**Areas for modification**

**3. Clarity, cohesiveness and synthesis (in general discussion and recommendations for policy and /or practice - 30%):**

**Areas of strength**

**Areas for modification**

**4. General Criteria (presentation, introduction/conclusion, referencing - 10%):**

**Areas of strength**

**Areas for modification**