

SO, you want to be an EYP?

How do you go about studying to gain Early Years Professional Status, and how can it benefit your career and the children in your care? **Joanne Ryan, Liana Beattie and Jackie Basquill** offer their advice...



The quality of children's early years experiences have, without doubt, a huge impact on their future success in life. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that raising the quality of early years provision is a key elements in the quality improvement cycle as set out by the Government in the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2003), The Children's Plan: Building Brighter Futures (DCSF, 2007), the principles of the EYFS (DCSF, 2008) and Support for All: the Families



Practitioners with EYPS agreed that the programme had had a significant impact on their ability to initiate a positive change in their settings

and Relationships Green Paper (DCSF, 2010).

Central to the vision of the Government is Early Years Professional Status, an initiative that is aimed at upgrading the childcare workforce to professional graduate qualifications. Early Years Professionals are seen as agents of change (*see p61 for more on this role – Ed.*), whose professional expertise, leadership skills and exemplary practice can transform the early years services and ensure that all settings offer the highest quality experiences for all young children.

There are various routes to gaining EYPS depending upon a candidate's previous qualifications and experience. One of the main challenges potential candidates face is the requirement to hold mathematics and English at GCSE Grade C or above. Some candidates undertake EYPS, top up their Foundation Degree, undertake their maths/English and work full time all in the same period. (Many find meeting all of these requirements at the same time too much of a burden, so it's recommended that anybody considering EYPS gains their maths and English before they begin.)

Your options

There are five routes to EYPS, providing options for those with varying levels of experience and qualification:

1 Long Pathway (15 months). Candidates accessing the long pathway must have already achieved a Level 5 Foundation Degree and will top up their degree to an ordinary degree or a BA Hons Degree as part of this programme. Some candidates accessing long pathway may already hold a degree but need to develop their experience in leadership or with a particular age group of children.

2 Short Pathway (6 months). Candidates accessing the short pathway will usually be working towards most of the standards and must have a Level 6 Degree. They usually need to develop an aspect of knowledge and understanding or experience within one of the age ranges or standards.

3 Validation Pathway (4 months). Candidates accessing the validation pathway will need to have a Level 6 degree, mathematics and English GCSE Grade C or above, and must already have sufficient experience of working within the three age groups. The aim of this route is to validate the knowledge, skills and experience practitioners already hold against the 39 standards.

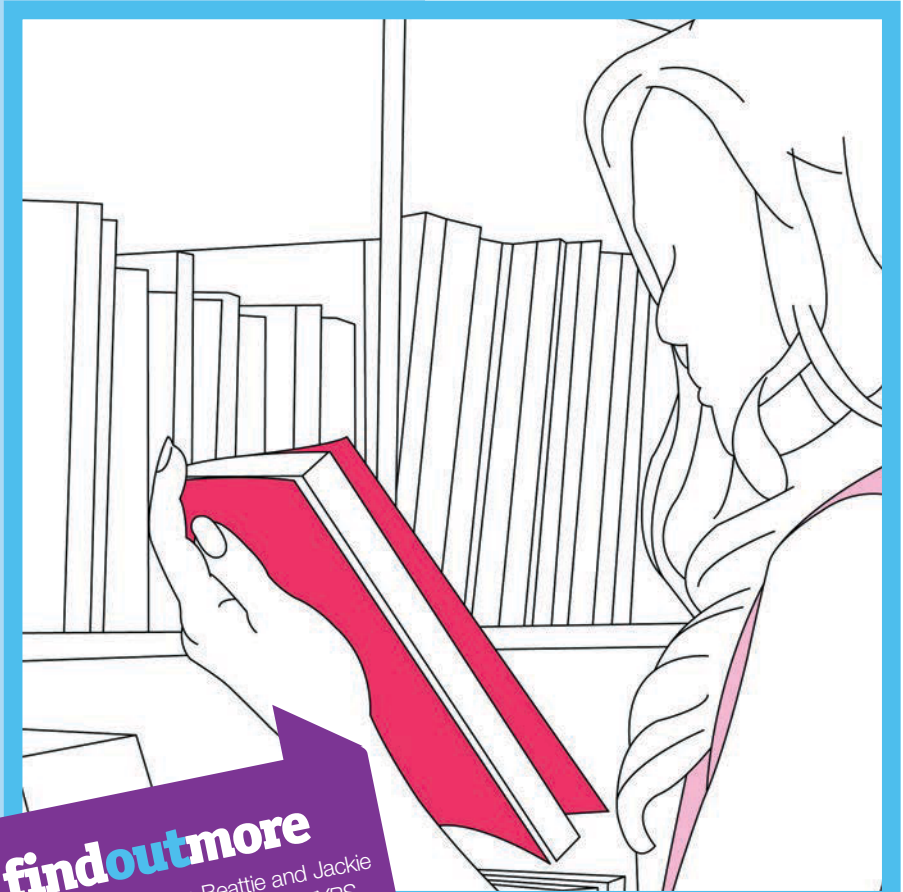
4 Full Training (12 months). Candidates accessing Full Training will already hold a degree, although it may be in an unrelated subject, and they will have little or no experience of working with children 0–5. Candidates develop their knowledge and understanding of child development and theory through underpinning knowledge sessions and then apply this knowledge in placements which they undertake in at least two settings and consisting of at least 18 weeks.

5 Early Childhood Studies with EYPS (24 months). Candidates who are accessing an Early Childhood Studies Degree can continue on to gain EYPS status. The route to gaining EYPS will consist of placement experiences with children aged 0–5 for at least 18 weeks.

Candidates gain Early Years Professional Status through an assessment process that requires them to demonstrate their personal practice and leadership of early years practitioners meeting no fewer than 39 EYP Standards. They are also required to demonstrate their experience of working with children from birth to five. To date there are approximately 6,000 candidates in the UK who have successfully met these requirements (CWDC, 2011).

Making a difference

Early years settings vary from large children's centres and nurseries to a wide range of private, voluntary and independent settings.



find out more

Joanne Ryan, Liana Beattie and Jackie Basquill are the authors of *The EYPS Handbook* (ISBN: 9781408241899), which will be published by Pearson in August. To get a 20% discount on its £19.99 retail price, visit www.pearson-books.com/voucher and use the voucher code KR007F.

This complexity reflects not only the preferences of providers and parents, but also creates a challenge for EYPS to ensure that children and parents with their diverse backgrounds and needs benefit from their improved leadership skills and practice.

These improvements are widely acknowledged. The First National Survey of Practitioners with Early Years Professional Status (CWDC, 2011) identified elements of positive impact that graduate leaders have had in the early years sector. Nearly a third of practitioners who had achieved the EYPS by 2010 took part in the survey conducted by Wolverhampton University for the Children's Workforce Development Council. Key findings from the survey demonstrated that over three-quarters (76%) of participants felt that attaining EYPS had improved their sense of professional status, and 80% felt it had increased their confidence as a practitioner. Practitioners with EYPS agreed that the programme had also had a significant impact on their ability to initiate a positive change in their settings as well as on their overall employment prospects in the early years sector.

Centre of excellence

Edge Hill University is one of the largest and most significant providers of education, training and research for the children's workforce in the country. It has a reputation for outstanding practice and works with a variety of partners and employers to develop and deliver programmes that meet the needs of the children's workforce both now and for the future.

One of the strongest aspects of its faculty of education's portfolio involves the Early Years Professional Status. For the candidates who decide to choose to study this programme it's not an easy journey. Some must initially get involved in rigorous academic study as they advance through a foundation degree and top-up year to achieve a BA Honours degree. Other candidates have to balance the requirements of gaining experience in working with particular age groups with the demands of their own workplace. Then, once candidates achieve EYPS, they face the opportunities and challenges of implementing their new skills, knowledge and understanding into practice in early years settings, where they become agents of positive change and leaders in raising the quality of provision. Becoming an EYP is a significant achievement – one that commits those who have succeeded to a demanding but rewarding role.