Programme Specification for the FdA Birth and Beyond with the National Childbirth Trust

This document applies to Academic Year 2021/22 onwards.

Table 1 programme specification for Foundation Degree Birth and Beyond

1.	Awarding institution/body	University of Worcester
2.	Teaching institution	National Childbirth Trust (NCT)
3.	Programme accredited by	N/A
4.	Final award	FdA
5.	Programme title	Foundation Degree Birth and Beyond
6.	Linked Honours Degree progression route	Relevant BA (Hons) Top Up degrees
7.	Mode and/or site of delivery	Teaching is via blended learning through online study and block teaching at NCT regional locations around the UK
8.	Mode of attendance	Full-time and part-time for progressing students
9.	UCAS Code	L521
10.	Subject Benchmark statement and/or professional body statement	QAA Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement
11.	Date of Programme Specification preparation/ revision	March 2016 August 2017 AQU amendments and updates August 2018 AQU amendments and updates February 2019 AQU amendments to template (sections 19 and 21 removed, renumbering) for 2019/20 August 2019 AQU amendments to Section 19, minor updates. September 2019 Removal of two optional modules (NCTC2015 and NCT2016) January 2020 - Update of mode of attendance to full-time only with effect from September 2020 August 2020 QAA benchmark links updated August 2020 - AQU amendments to section 19. August 2021 – AQU and NCT amendments.

12. Educational aims of the programme

This programme is for those wishing to work with and support parents as they prepare for the transition to parenthood, providing the qualification required to become an NCT Practitioner.

Level 4 modules provide core skills and knowledge, then at Level 5 students can choose modules leading to qualifications as NCT Antenatal Teachers, Breastfeeding Counsellors, Postnatal Practitioners, NCT Yoga for Pregnancy or Mother and Baby Yoga Teachers, NCT Birth Doulas, or NCT Baby Massage Teachers. The modules at Level 5 also allow NCT practitioners to develop further discrete skill sets, or to study a particular topic in more depth.

The blended learning nature of the programme enables students to develop transferable skills in the use of online technology.

The programme also provides a pathway for those wishing to progress to relevant study at Level 6.

The aims of the programme are to:

1. Develop NCT Practitioners who are fit for practice, who are innovative, proactive and adaptable, and who accept responsibility for continuing professional development.

2. Develop the knowledge base, skills and self-awareness of students through reflective practice, analysis of issues and the use of research-based evidence.

3. Develop critically reflective practitioners who have the ability to utilise contemporary knowledge, research and evidence on which to base their practice.

4. Develop intellectual competence, ability and interpersonal skills to the appropriate level.

5. Empower students to work in a person-centred manner that respects individual's beliefs and needs, values experience and fulfills NCT's vision and purpose.

6. Encourage students to broaden their perspective in order to enable a sensitive and holistic approach to the varying and changing psychological and physical needs of those they work with.

7. Ensure that students develop the knowledge and skills required to meet the essential educational needs of all parent groups, working effectively in diverse communities.

8. Provide a rewarding and transformational learning experience which ensures the development of a range of transferable academic and practical skills which meet the needs of students, parents, NCT and the wider community.

9. Promote an ethos of partnership with other NCT practitioners and health and social care professionals, enabling parents to benefit from a holistic approach.

13.   Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods

Table 2 knowledge and understanding outcomes for modules/codes

Knowledge and Understanding		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	**Module Code/s**
1.	Demonstrate a critical understanding and knowledge of the issues affecting the health and wellbeing of both parents and baby across the transition to parenthood.	All
2.	Identify a range of ways in which to effectively apply the concepts and principles of adult learning, self-realisation and support to promote the preparation and support of all parents across the transition to parenthood.	All

Table 3 cognitive and intellectual skills outcomes for module code/s

Cognitive and Intellectual skills		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	**Module Code/s**
3.	Learn independently using reflection, evaluation, feedback, self-directed study and time management skills to meet set objectives, whilst understanding the limits of their knowledge and how this may influence their interpretation and analysis of issues.	All
4.	Demonstrate ability to access up-to-date knowledge, research and evidence, and to critically analyse and evaluate it before use in practice.	All

Table 4 skills and capabilities related to employability outcomes for module code/s

Skills and capabilities related to employability		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	**Module Code/s**
5.	Demonstrate a range of effective group and one-to-one facilitation and listening skills that clearly meet the practical, emotional and relationship needs of parents across the transition to parenthood.	All
6.	Demonstrate a range of effective person-centred skills when working with parents and professionals, showing respect for an individual's beliefs and needs and valuing their experience.	All
7.	Critically evaluate the effectiveness of both the courses and one-to-one interactions that they facilitate, and the support they provide, identifying strategies for improving their practice.	All level 5 modules

Table 5 transferable/key skills outcomes for module code/s

Transferable/key skills		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	**Module Code/s**
8.	Consistently use a range of strategies for working effectively with groups or one-to-one and for promoting adult learning in a holistic and experiential manner.	All
9.	Employ appropriate and effective communication and interpersonal skills that can be used in a range of circumstances.	All
10.	Assume personal responsibility for practice, learning and continuing development, undertaking further training where necessary to develop existing skills and demonstrate new competencies.	All
11.	Consistently demonstrate a non-judgmental attitude that values individuals, their needs and their experiences.	All

Learning, teaching and assessment
The programme is delivered using a blended learning approach. Contact teaching hours include both onsite teaching at approved venues as well as online synchronous teaching. The exact percentage of onsite and online teaching hours varies between modules with onsite teaching hours ranging from 90% to 37%. However, specific information is provided in module outlines.

In addition, the programme includes an element of work-based learning, allowing theory and practice to be integrated. NCT tutors model the approach taken by NCT Practitioners when working with students.

Teaching
Students are taught through a combination of experiential and interactive face-to-face (both in-person and virtual) contact days and tutorials, asynchronous online learning and guided independent study. Interactive and experiential tutorials and contact days are intended to develop knowledge and understanding and the application of learning through small group activities, practice facilitation, discussion, listening skills and debate, alongside modelling the approach used by qualified NCT practitioners. Practice scenarios, case studies and inquiry-based learning will also be used to develop skills and knowledge.

In addition, meetings with Personal Academic Tutors are scheduled on at least four occasions in the first year and three occasions in each of the other years of a course.

The University places emphasis on enabling students to develop the independent learning capabilities that will equip them for lifelong learning and future employment, as well as academic achievement. A mixture of independent study, teaching and academic support from Student Services and Library Services, and also the Personal Academic Tutoring system enables students to reflect on progress and build up a profile of skills, achievements and experiences that will help them to flourish and be successful.

Contact time
This course will be delivered across two semesters with 20 weeks of teaching per semester. The exact percentage of onsite and online teaching hours varies between modules with onsite teaching hours ranging from 90% to 37%. However, specific information is provided in module outlines.

Typically, contact time will be structured around:
- Interactive and experiential activities
- Inquiry based learning
- Practice facilitation, discussion and listening skills
- Small group work
- Practice scenarios and case studies

Independent self-study
In addition to the contact time, students are expected to undertake guided independent personal self-study per week. Typically, this will involve completing asynchronous directed online activities, reading journal articles and books, undertaking research in the library and online, preparing coursework assignments and interactive sessions, and preparing for quizzes and examinations.

Independent learning is supported by a range of excellent learning facilities, including the Hive and library resources, the virtual learning environment, and extensive electronic learning resources. NCT also provide excellent resources, up to date research and information for all students and practitioners via their intranet babble and the main website.

Learning in the workplace

During the course, students will take part in learning that takes place whilst practising as an NCT student practitioner. The role that students play will vary depending on the pathway chosen, but will involve observation of practice: observation of NCT practitioners working with and supporting parents; observation of parents and their babies and/or children; observation of midwives. Depending on the specialist practitioner pathway chosen, students will prepare for the facilitation of courses, or one-to-one support of parents.

Further information on work based issues can be found in the Practice Guidelines which are set to maintain standards of conduct and practice for all NCT practitioners and to protect practitioners and clients using their services and support.

Teaching staff

You will be taught by a teaching team whose expertise and knowledge are closely matched to the content of the modules on the course. The team includes senior tutors, academics and professional practitioners with on the ground experience. All tutors have registered lecturer status at the University of Worcester.

Experienced, qualified practitioners may also contribute to the overall learning by providing mentoring for observations during the course.

Teaching is informed by research and consultancy. All NCT tutors hold a degree and have also gained the skills and experience needed through the NCT in-house tutor training system which includes a specific focus on Adult Learning. In addition, around 50% have a PGCert in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and are Fellows of the Higher Education Academy.

Assessment

The course provides opportunities to test understanding and learning informally through the completion of practice or 'formative' assignments. Each module has one or more formal or 'summative' assessment which is graded and counts towards the overall module grade.

The precise assessment requirements for an individual student in an academic year will vary according to the mandatory and optional modules taken. Assessment methods include -

Skills based:
- Assessment of Course Facilitation (work-based assessment)
- Evaluation of Course Facilitation
- Assessment Days to assess ability to lead facilitated discussions and Interactive sessions, role play scenarios

Content based:
- Evaluation of Case Study
- Essay
- Report
- Reflective Commentary
- Resource File
- Knowledge based exam
- Videos

14.   Assessment Strategy

Assessment is aligned with the University's Assessment Policy and is seen as a means to:

- Assess whether students have met the specified learning outcomes to the required level
- Allow students to demonstrate practical and academic progress and achievement
- Provide a supportive structure to allow students to learn from feedback
- Increase and motivate learning towards learning outcomes

Both summative and formative assessments are used. Formative assessment is seen as playing an important role in student learning and development, providing students with regular feedback on their progress. It is aligned to summative assessment and can increase student confidence in achieving the modular learning outcomes.

A broad range of assessment strategies are used which are student-centred and help develop the skills needed for both Higher Education and future employment.

Assessments combine both traditional and innovative assignments and include those focussed on 'content' (essays, resource files, evaluations, reflective commentaries, exams) and those focussed on 'practical skills' (facilitated discussions, interactive sessions and facilitation of a whole course, role-play).

Assessment had been considered across all modules to ensure a positive learning experience for students which allows for:

- A range (and in places a choice) of assessment strategies to suit different students' learning needs
- An ability to build on skills learnt from previous assessments

Each assessment, along with comprehensive guidelines, is outlined in the Course Handbook, module specifications and module guides. The guidelines contain explicit assessment criteria, aligned to module learning outcomes, and indicate what students need to do to complete the assessment successfully.

The assessments are marked using criteria based on UW grade descriptors. Assessment criteria and grade descriptors are provided for each type/item of assessment in the form of a grid.

15.   Programme structures and requirements

Award Map for the Foundation Degree Birth and Beyond
To be awarded the Foundation Degree Birth and Beyond students must successfully complete 120 credits at Level 4 and 120 credits at Level 5.

Course Title: Foundation Degree Birth and Beyond				
LEVEL 4				
Module Code	**Module Title**	**Credits** (Number)	**Status** Mandatory (M) or Optional (O)	**Prerequisites** (Code of Module required)
NCTC1001	Facilitating learning in groups	30	M	None
NCTC1002	Introduction to reflective practice and listening skills	30	bvfd	None
NCTC1003	New baby – new family: part 1	30	M	None
NCTC1004	Breastfeeding knowledge for NCT practitioners	15	M	None

NCTC1005	Giving birth	15	M	None

LEVEL 5				
Module Code	**Module Title**	**Credits** (Number)	**Status** Mandatory (M) or Optional (O)	**Prerequisites** (Code of Module required)
NCTC2001	Antenatal skills	30	O	None
NCTC2002	Antenatal knowledge	30	O	None
NCTC2003	Developing skills as a breastfeeding counsellor	30	O	None
NCTC2005	Developing knowledge as a breastfeeding counsellor	30	O	None
NCTC2007	New baby – new family: part 2	30	O	None
NCTC2008	Facilitating postnatal groups	30	O	None
NCTC2011	NCT Yoga foundations	15	O	None
NCTC2009	NCT Yoga for pregnancy	15	O	None
NCTC2010	NCT Mother and baby yoga	15	O	None
NCTC2014	NCT Baby massage	15	O	None
NCTC2012	Dimensions of the role of the birth doula	15	O	None
NCTC2013	Realising the role of the birth doula	15	O	None
NCTC2018	NCT Professional attributes	0	M for FD award	None

Level 4 students starting the programme from September 2020 can only take the course full-time. The delivery patterns are laid out in the course handbook.

Level 5 students progressing in September 2020 can either take the course full or part-time. The delivery patterns are laid out in the course handbook.

Selection of modules for practitioner pathways at level 5 - Pathway Options

NCT Antenatal Teacher
You will need to take two 30-credit modules over one year
- Antenatal skills (30 credits)
- Antenatal knowledge (30 credits)

NCT Breastfeeding Counsellor
You will need to take two 30-credit modules over one year.
- Developing skills as a breastfeeding counsellor (30 credits)
- Developing knowledge as a breastfeeding counsellor (30 credits)

NCT Postnatal Practitioner
You will need to take two 30-credit modules over one year
- New baby - new family: part 2 (30 credits)
- Facilitating postnatal groups (30 credits)

(It is also possible to take New baby – new family: part 2 as a standalone module in order to gain 30 credits as well as build knowledge and skills to support the main specialism chosen)

NCT Yoga for Pregnancy Teacher / Mother and Baby Yoga Teacher
You will need two 15-credit modules
- NCT Yoga foundations (15 credits)

And one of:
- NCT Yoga for pregnancy (15 credits)
- NCT Mother and baby yoga (15 credits)

(It is also possible to do all three modules and qualify in both specialisms)

NCT Baby Massage Teacher
You will need one 15-credit module
- NCT Baby massage NCTC2 (15 credits)

NCT Birth Doula
You will need two 15-credit modules
- Dimensions of the role of the birth doula NCTC2110 (15 credits)
- Realising the role of the birth doula NCTC2111 (15 credits)

16.   QAA and Professional Academic Standards and Quality

The intended Learning Outcomes of this programme are commensurate with a higher education qualification at Level 4 and Level 5 as specified in the Framework for HE Qualifications, and also with the requirements for a Foundation Degree as laid out in the QAA Foundation Degree Characteristics Statement (2020)

This award is located at Level 5 of the FHEQ.

17.   Support for students

Student support is a key element of the programme and is provided through a range of sources at both NCT and the University of Worcester.

Personal Academic Tutor
All students will be allocated a named Personal Academic Tutor for the duration of their study. The Personal Academic Tutor will support students at key transition points, enabling them to reflect on progress and set future goals for achievement academically and for employability, and to become autonomous learners. The Personal Academic Tutor system is intended to provide a stable, holistic, and developmental form of support for individual students that is course related. There will be a minimum of four meetings during the academic year with an initial meeting within the first 3 weeks.

Academic support
Students can access the University's learning support through the Study Skills portal. The NCT also has an Academic Support Tutor who is available to provide students with information and support from specific learning needs to referencing.

Induction event

There is an Induction event at the start of the course providing students with an introduction to both the course and the NCT practitioner role. This event provides students with the opportunity to be introduced to:

- The principles of learning and teaching in higher education
- Study skills
- Information and Learning Systems at the University of Worcester and at NCT (including library services, Blackboard and SOLE)
- Student support services at the University of Worcester
- Information & Communication Technology
- Evidence-based practice
- Safe practice (health and safety, lone working, risk assessment for practitioners, boundaries, safeguarding)
- NCT Ethos, history of birth, feeding and parenting

https://www2.worc.ac.uk/firstpoint/
https://www.worcester.ac.uk/life/help-and-support/services-for-students/home.aspx
https://www2.worc.ac.uk/disabilityanddyslexia/

Student Representation

Worcester students' union, the University of Worcester and NCT are committed to ensuring that all students can influence and shape the course they study and enhance the learning experience for current and future students. All students are represented at Student Staff Liaison Committees by at least one elected Course Representative. The role of a Course Representative is to represent the views and concerns of the cohort and to make suggestions about how their course might be improved.

Course reps attend Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC), in person or by virtual conference, as well as taking part in working groups on issues affecting students. NCT student course representatives are supported by a tutor team lead, and they regularly communicate amongst themselves via email, virtual environments, and phone. Course representatives are encouraged and supported to communicate with the student body in person, via student e-groups and a dedicated NCT email address.

The Disability and Dyslexia Service within the university provides specialist academic support, making recommendations for reasonable adjustments to teaching and assessment based on individual need. As above, the NCT academic support tutor also provides support for specific learning needs.

18.   Admissions

The admissions policy for the programme is designed to encourage access to higher education through a policy of equal opportunity. NCT is committed to widening participation in line with its strategy, and to recruiting a diverse student cohort that is representative of the areas and groups in which they will subsequently work.

NCT seeks to recruit students who:

- Wish to work with parents in the transition to parenthood
- Are committed to the values and ethos of NCT

Admissions tutors work to identify applicants who can demonstrate their potential to succeed at this level, and who will be able to practise and contribute as NCT Practitioners, or in other ways, to support parents in the transition to parenthood.

Entry requirements
The current UCAS Tariff requirements for entry to this course are published on the University website: https://www.worcester.ac.uk/courses/birth-beyond-fda.html

We welcome applicants who may not meet our standard entry requirements but can demonstrate the ability to study this subject at university level and have relevant life and/or work experience related to birth, babies and parenting, adult education or women's issues. Details of acceptable level 3 qualifications, policy in relation to mature students or applicants with few or no formal qualifications can be found in the prospectus or on the University webpages.

Recognition of Prior Learning
Information on eligibility for Recognition of prior learning for the purposes of entry or advanced standing is also available from the University webpages or from the Registry Admissions Office (01905 855111). Further information on Recognition of Prior Learning can be found under Registry Services.

Admissions procedures
Full-time applicants apply through UCAS (L521)

All applicants will attend an applicant day, which involves sharing of information, group work and one to one.

Information on assistance with fees can be found at http://www.nct.org.uk/train-nct/fees-funding/help-fees

See Section 20 of the Programme Specification for information regarding the admissions arrangements for progression to the linked Honours Degree(s)/Top-Up Degree(s).

19.   Regulation of assessment

The course operates under the University's Taught Courses Regulatory Framework

Requirements to pass modules
- Modules are assessed using a variety of assessment activities that are detailed in module specifications.
- The minimum pass mark is D- for each module, except the 0 credit module NCTC2018.
- NCTC2018 Professional attributes is assessed as pass or fail.
- A student is required to submit all items of assessment in order to pass a module, and a pass mark in each item of assessment will be required.
- Full details of the assessment requirements for a module, including the assessment criteria, are published in the module outline.

Submission of assessment items
- A student who submits course work late but within 7 days (one week) of the due date will have work marked, but the grade will be capped at D- unless an application for mitigating circumstances is accepted
- A student who submits work later than 7 days (one week) will not have work marked unless they have submitted a valid claim of mitigating circumstances
- For full details of submission regulations see the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework

Retrieval of failure
- A student is entitled to re-sit failed assessment items for any module that is awarded a fail grade
- Reassessment items that are passed are capped at D-
- If a student is unsuccessful in the reassessment, they have the right to retake the module (or, in some circumstances, take an alternative module); the module grade for a re-taken module is capped at D-.
- A student will be notified of the reassessment opportunities in the results notification issued via the secure student portal (SOLE). It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and comply with any reassessments.

Requirements for Progression
- A student will be permitted to progress from Level 4 to Level 5 if, by the time of the reassessment Board of Examiners, they have passed at least 90 credits at Level 4. Outstanding Level 4 credits must normally be studied in the following academic year.
- A student who, by the time of the reassessment Board of Examiners, has failed 90 credits or more (after exhausting all reassessment opportunities) during the academic year, will have their registration with the University terminated.
- If a student has not passed at least 90 credits by the reassessment Board of Examiners, the student is not permitted to progress to the next level and will be required to either complete outstanding reassessment or retake the failed modules the following academic year. Students will be able to carry forward any passed modules.

Requirements for Awards

Table 6 requirements for cert HE and FdA awards

Award	Requirement
Cert HE	In order to be eligible for the exit award of Certificate in Higher Education in the named subject/area of study, a student must have passed at least 120 credits in total including the mandatory modules for level 4 of the award as specified on the award map.
Foundation Degree FdA	120 credits at Level 4 and 120 credits at Level 5 as specified on the award map and a pass in NCTC2018 NCT Professional attributes

This award is not classified.

20.   Graduate destinations, employability and links with employers

Graduate destinations
Specific modules of this programme qualify students as NCT Specialist Practitioners and enable them to apply for an NCT Specialist Licence-to-Practise.

NCT Postnatal Practitioners can facilitate NCT Postnatal courses through the NCT or through NHS Trusts and/or Children's Centres

NCT Antenatal Teachers can facilitate NCT Antenatal courses through the NCT or through NHS Trusts and/or Children's Centres

NCT Breastfeeding Counsellors can support mothers on a one-to-one basis and to facilitate the breastfeeding element of an NCT antenatal course

NCT Yoga for Pregnancy Teachers can teach NCT Yoga for Pregnancy classes through the NCT or through NHS Trusts and/or Children's Centres

NCT Mother and Baby Yoga Teachers can teach NCT Mother and Baby Yoga classes through the NCT or through NHS Trusts and/or Children's Centres

NCT Birth Doulas can support women and couples through the experience of pregnancy, labour and birth

NCT Baby Massage Teachers can teach NCT Baby Massage classes through the NCT or through NHS Trusts and/or Children's Centres.

Progression to Linked Honours Degree(s)/Top-Up Degree(s)
On completion of the Foundation Degree, students are eligible to continue to relevant study at Level 6.

Student employability
The course is designed to qualify NCT practitioners, so most students go on to work within NCT as a self-employed practitioner. The course enables graduates to apply for an NCT Licence-to-Practise.

In the field of 'supporting parents in the transition to parenthood', the skills demonstrated by NCT practitioners are widely acknowledged and laid out in the NCT Competency Standards Framework.

Therefore, graduates will have developed skills transferable to a range of careers in the early years and childcare sector, as well as being transferable to any working environment.

The programme also opens up work and training opportunities within the health and social care sector. Past students have found that completion of an NCT FdA has provided a successful transition to Midwifery programmes.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the module outlines and the course handbook provided to all students at the start of the course.