The Pearson Level 3 Alternative Academic Qualification (AAQ) BTEC National in Early Childhood Development (Extended Certificate) consists of **four mandatory units** total. Its assessment structure combines external examinations and internal coursework.

Assessment Structure

Unit	Title	Assessment Type	Format
Unit 1	Children's Development	**External Assessment**	Written examination set and marked by Pearson.
Unit 2	Keeping Children Safe	**External Assessment**	Written examination / set task marked by Pearson.
Unit 3	Play and Learning	**Internal Assessment**	Pearson Set Assignment (coursework marked by teachers, verified by Pearson).
Unit 4	Research and Reflective Practice	**Internal Assessment**	Pearson Set Assignment (coursework marked by teachers, verified by Pearson).

Key Assessment Features

- **Balanced Weighting:** The qualification splits assessment across 50% external exams and 50% internal assignments.
- **Pearson Set Assignments (PSAs):** For the internally assessed units (Units 3 and 4), Pearson provides brief scenarios and tasks. Teachers mark the work against standard criteria (Pass, Merit, Distinction), which is then externally moderated by Pearson.
- **Grading System:** Individual units are graded Pass (P), Merit (M), or Distinction (D). These convert to an overall qualification grade ranging from **P** to **D*** (equivalent to A-level grades for UCAS points).
- **Work Placement Support:** While practical work placement hours enhance course content and reflective skills for Unit 4, the primary assessment evaluates academic understanding, research, and application rather than direct workplace competency.

Break

Year 12 (Year 1)

Year 12 focuses on fundamental child development concepts and practical play principles.

- **Unit 1: Children's Development** *(External Exam — 90 GLH)*
  - **Focus:** Theoretical foundations, developmental milestones (ages 0–8), and factors influencing child progress.
  - **Assessment:** Written examination (1 hour 45 minutes) sat in the summer term of Year 12.
- **Unit 3: Play and Learning** *(Internal Coursework — 90 GLH)*
  - **Focus:** How play supports holistic development, play theories, and planning learning activities.
  - **Assessment:** Teacher-marked Pearson Set Assignment (PSA) submitted during Year 12.

Year 13 (Year 2)

Year 13 builds on advanced safety regulations, research, and reflective professional practice.

- **Unit 2: Keeping Children Safe** *(External Exam — 90 GLH)*
  - **Focus:** Safeguarding requirements, health and safety policies, risk management, and responding to welfare concerns.
  - **Assessment:** Written examination / set task (1 hour 45 minutes) sat during Year 13.
- **Unit 4: Research and Reflective Practice** *(Internal Coursework — 90 GLH)*
  - **Focus:** Evaluating early years research, current policy impacts, and self-reflection on practice.
  - **Assessment:** Teacher-marked Pearson Set Assignment (PSA) submitted in Year 13, supported by practical work placement hours.

Assessment Timeline Summary

Year	Term	Primary Focus / Milestone
Year 12	Autumn / Spring	Study Unit 1 theory & complete Unit 3 coursework tasks.
Year 12	Summer	Sit **Unit 1 External Exam**; finalize & submit **Unit 3 PSA**.
Year 13	Autumn / Spring	Study Unit 2 topics & complete Unit 4 research/placement work.

Year 13	Summer	Sit **Unit 2 External Exam**; finalize & submit **Unit 4 PSA** (and any exam resits).

Break

Unit 1 Content Coverage

Unit 1: Children's Development provides the foundational theoretical knowledge for the entire qualification. The exam assesses children's developmental progress from **birth up to eight years** across four main areas:

- **Areas of Development:**
  - **Physical:** Gross and fine motor skill acquisition, cephalocaudal (head to toe) and proximodistal (center outward) patterns of growth.
  - **Cognitive & Language:** Information processing, memory, problem-solving, speech development, and communication stages.
  - **Social & Emotional:** Attachment theories, self-regulation, emotional literacy, and peer relationships.
- **Theories & Frameworks:** Key child development theories (e.g., Piaget, Vygotsky, Bowlby, Bandura) and how their concepts apply to practical early years settings.
- **Factors Affecting Development:** Biological factors, health conditions, environmental influences, socio-economic factors, transitions, and individual rates of development.

Exam Format

- **Duration:** 1 hour and 45 minutes.
- **Marks & Structure:** Includes a mix of short-answer conceptual questions, scenario-based application questions, and extended-response analytical essays evaluated by Pearson examiners.