



Department
for Education

Early Years Practitioner

Level 2 Occupational Certificate

DRAFT FOR CONSULTATION

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1. Introduction

Occupational Certificates are technical qualifications that will be taken as part of the 2-year Occupational pathway. They are designed for students who want to prepare for a particular occupation in a school or college-based setting, before progressing into employment in a relevant Level 2 role.

Occupational Certificate content sets out the knowledge, skills and supporting behaviours common to all Occupational Certificate specifications in a given subject area.

We are proposing that Occupational Certificates should normally comprise two components:

1. broad introductory core content that is set centrally. This will include the knowledge and skills that are applicable across a range of occupations in the same, or similar, sectors, including key transferable skills¹ that are needed to succeed, and
2. occupation-specific content that is developed by awarding organisations. This will be aligned to an occupational standard and deliver the knowledge, skills and behaviours to enable the student to enter relevant level 2 employment and work towards full competence in their given occupation.

The content for this Occupational Certificate reflects the specific nature of the Early Years Practitioner qualification and its reliance upon the existing DfE-published criteria for “full and relevant” qualifications.

All Occupational Certificates for Early Years Practitioners must align to the DfE’s full and relevant criteria for level 2 qualifications: [Early years qualification requirements and standards](#).

In respect of their current Level 2 Early Years Practitioner qualifications, most awarding organisations require students to be working, or on a practical placement of around 250-280GLH, which is important so that knowledge and skills can be assessed in the workplace.

The requirement for “shared” introductory core content will not be applied for this qualification, as Early Years Practitioner is the only standard in this occupational route at level 2 and has specific licence to practice requirements. Core content will therefore focus on themes that are complementary to the content that is mandated by DfE for all full and relevant qualifications.

¹ Please refer to the Framework for Transferable Skills and Work-related Behaviours document, published alongside the subject content as part of the consultation.

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This document sets out the introductory core content for Occupational Certificates for Early Years Practitioners. Awarding organisations should use the Occupational Standard published by Skills England to develop additional occupation-specific content for inclusion in the final qualification specification, ensuring that all full and relevant criteria are met.

We recommend that awarding organisations should include clear signposting in their qualification specifications to direct providers to the following resources (not embedded in the qualification and not formally assessed):

- Early Years Child Development Training Programme (EYCDT) modules [Early years child development training : Home page](#). A self-guided online training programme which offers a foundational base of child development knowledge suitable for a Level 2/16-18 year old student and is pitched at those who are new to the sector. This could be taken alongside the main qualification, as part of the wider study programme, and is maintained by DfE.
- Coverage of the Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition guidance ([Early Years Foundation Stage nutrition - GOV.UK](#)) linked to statement K14 in the occupational standard.
- Coverage of food safety guidance Help for early years providers : Food safety ([Help for early years providers : Get help for your setting](#))
- Coverage of safe sleeping guidance: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/baby/caring-for-a-newborn/reduce-the-risk-of-sudden-infant-death-syndrome/> signposted in the EYFS para 3.84.

1.1 Qualifications

There will be one qualification in this occupational route:

- **Level 2 Occupational Certificate for Early Years Practitioners: 600GLH**

Introductory core content guided learning hours (GLH) should be less than 50% of the total GLH for the qualification.

1.2 Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The Department does not set mandatory prior learning requirements for Occupational Certificates. They are intended for students who wish to develop introductory knowledge and skills in their chosen occupation. RPL may be applied, where appropriate, in line with awarding organisations' RPL policies.

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2. Aims

Occupational Certificates prepare students for employment in a given occupational area. The Occupational Certificate for Early Years Practitioners is based on the following occupational standards:

- **OCC0888 Early Years Practitioner**

The purpose of this qualification is to enable students to develop their technical knowledge and skills in relation to early years, over a two-year period, with the aim of progressing into skilled employment in a relevant level 2 role. Through the core content of the qualification, students will apply their knowledge, skills and understanding to achieve learning outcomes. These learning outcomes focus on themes that are complementary to the content that is mandated by DfE for all full and relevant qualifications as follows:

- **Learning Outcome 1:** Conveying information to an audience to outline the role of an Early Years Practitioner and the knowledge, skills and qualities needed to work successfully in the early years sector
- **Learning Outcome 2:** Collaborating as a team member to promote the importance of partnership working in the early years sector
- **Learning Outcome 3:** Applying research skills to identify and propose ways to improve sustainability in early years settings
- **Learning Outcome 4:** Assessing first aid emergency situations in early years settings to propose appropriate responses

Through these learning outcomes students will develop transferable skills including:

- planning how to convey information in relation to early years to an audience to ensure communication is effective
- communicating information to an audience in relation to early years and communicating effectively as a team member
- investigating through research, to source information needed in relation to sustainability in early years
- team working to collaboratively achieve an objective
- decision making skills to propose appropriate first aid responses to emergency situations based on knowledge and understanding.

3. Subject Content

3.1 Guidance for Awarding Organisations on inclusion of content in qualification specifications

All content, unless specified otherwise, must be included in qualification specifications.

Lists of content which start with a colon ‘:’

This denotes that all the content in the list is compulsory and is expected to be included in Awarding Organisations’ qualification specifications.

Lists of content which start with ‘Including’

This denotes that all the content in the list is compulsory and is expected to be included in Awarding Organisations’ qualification specifications. However, the list is a minimum; AOs may choose to add to the list or not.

Use of ‘e.g.’

This is used to exemplify what is meant by the content statement. AOs can specify the example cited or other examples in their specifications as appropriate.

3.2 Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes describe what a student will be able to do after a period of learning.

We have set out below each learning outcome and the knowledge, skills and behaviours, where appropriate, that a student will need to know and apply to achieve that outcome:

- knowledge refers to both knowledge and understanding. It relates to the theoretical facts, principles, concepts, procedures and techniques that students should acquire
- skills refer to subject-specific and transferable skills needed to achieve a learning outcome

Students are expected to apply the full range of their knowledge, understanding and skills in order to demonstrate achievement of the learning outcome.

For each learning outcome, a rationale is provided for contextual explanation only. It is not part of the subject content that awarding organisations are required to include in their specifications

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Learning Outcome 1: Convey information to an audience to outline the role of an Early Years Practitioner and the knowledge, skills and qualities needed to work successfully in the early years sector

Rationale:

This Learning Outcome provides an opportunity for students to develop fundamental knowledge and understanding in relation to the requirements for successful working in the early years sector. This understanding will prepare students for employment in an early years setting and underpins further study at Level 3.

The learning outcome will also develop students' skills in communicating as they convey information in a way which is relevant and engaging for a specific audience. Effective communication skills are fundamental to early years practice; developing these skills in a simulated situation will provide the opportunity to hone the skill and develop student confidence to use the skill within a workplace setting and to develop the skill further through relevant employment in the early years sector and level 3 study.

The learning outcome also strengthens the key transferable skills of planning, identifying relevant information, creativity and using digital technologies. Students will need to plan how to communicate information to an audience, identify information to use and relevant information to convey using digital technologies to do this.

This learning outcome provides a coherent stepping stone for students progressing into skilled employment in a relevant level 2 role in the early years sector.

To enable students to achieve the learning outcome, students must know and understand:

- the different settings in the early years sector: private and public settings, full day care, children's centres, pre-schools, reception classes, playgroups, nursery schools, home-based provision, hospitals, social care settings, family hubs, and local authority provision.
- the role of an Early Years Practitioner:
 - to work as part of a professional team to ensure the welfare and care of children
 - to work as part of a team to support the learning and development of children
 - to work directly with children on a day-to-day basis supporting the planning of and delivery of activities
- the main responsibilities of an Early Years Practitioner: supporting child-initiated and adult-led activities, supporting children's learning through planned and purposeful play, creating and maintaining an enabling environment, ensuring the safety and security of children, assisting with children's care needs and ensuring

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the safety and welfare of children by recognising when a child is in danger, or at risk of harm or abuse

- the importance of safeguarding and child protection when working as an Early Years Practitioner including the legal requirements and guidance on safeguarding, Prevent, security and confidentiality
- the need for safeguarding policies and procedures including child protection and online safety
- the importance of health and safety and food hygiene in early years settings: legal requirements, risks and hazards, infection control techniques, food preparation and use of personal protective equipment
- the importance of setting specific learning goals for learning and development in the early years sector
- the existence of expected early learning goals within the statutory framework and the stages of learning and development requirements from birth to five years
- the skills required by employers in the early years sector: planning, communicating, teamworking and self-managing
- the personal qualities required by employers in the early years sector: punctual, inclusive, reliable, positive, enthusiastic and professional
- communication techniques used to convey information to an audience: oral, visual, and written methods, and using technology to support conveying information.

To enable students to achieve the Learning Outcome, students must be able to

- plan how to convey information to an audience: estimating time and resources required, prioritising and sequencing activities to produce the required information that is to be conveyed
- identify information sources to be used and select relevant information to be conveyed to the audience
- apply creativity skills to consider different ways to convey information to an audience
- apply communication skills to convey the information to an audience
- apply digital skills by producing, organising, storing and retrieving created digital content to convey information to an audience.

Supporting behaviours that are integral to the learning outcome but not expected to be assessed explicitly

- self-confident
- self-aware
- attention to detail

Learning Outcome 2: Collaborate as a team member to promote the importance of partnership working in the early years sector

Rationale:

This learning outcome provides an opportunity for students to develop fundamental knowledge and understanding in relation to the requirements for partnership working in the early years sector. This understanding will prepare students for employment in an early years setting and underpins further study at Level 3.

This learning outcome will also develop students' skills in team working to prepare them to work as part of a professional team in the early years sector. Effective team working skills are fundamental to early years practice; developing these skills in a simulated situation will provide the opportunity to hone the skill and develop student confidence to use the skill within a workplace setting and to develop the skill further through relevant employment in the early years sector and level 3 study.

The learning outcome also strengthens the key transferable skills of communication, inclusivity and using digital technologies. Students will need to use effective communication skills to work as part of a team; they will need to demonstrate inclusivity to encourage active participation of all team members and use digital technologies to support team working.

This learning outcome provides a coherent stepping stone for students progressing into skilled employment in a relevant level 2 role in the early years sector.

To enable students to achieve the learning outcome, students must know and understand:

- the range of different individuals and professionals that Early Years Practitioners and educators work with: parents, carers, wider family, agencies and services that support parents and carers, colleagues within the same setting and other professionals outside of the education setting
- the role of different agencies and childcare professionals: area SENCOs, Local authority advisors, health visitors, social workers, speech and language therapists and children's centre workers
- the core principle in the early years sector of working as part of a professional team to provide high quality care and to ensure the best outcomes for children
- the benefits of professional teamwork in early intervention including to collaborate, plan and provide appropriate and comprehensive support for individual children
- the relationship between safeguarding and confidentiality of information, including exceptions to confidentiality
- the important considerations when working with others to accomplish a task: using active listening techniques, being aware of needs of others, being aware of the

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effect of non-verbal communication, being courteous and inclusive when engaging with others.

To enable students to achieve the learning outcome, students must be able to:

- work with others to achieve the objective of promoting the importance of partnership working
- apply active listening skills to support team working activities
- apply effective communication techniques to support team working activities
- apply non-verbal communication techniques to support team working activities
- apply an inclusive approach to team working by showing respect for others' views and opinions
- apply digital skills to support team working with others by organising, storing, retrieving and sharing any created digital content.

Supporting behaviours that are integral to the learning outcome but not expected to be assessed explicitly:

- perceptive
- professional
- assertive

Learning Outcome 3: Apply research skills to identify and propose ways to improve sustainability in early years settings

Rationale:

This learning outcome provides an opportunity for students to develop understanding of the requirements for sustainable working in the early years sector. This understanding will prepare students for employment in an early years setting and underpins further study at Level 3. Through this learning outcome students will consider the importance of sustainability and what determines sustainability in early years settings.

This learning outcome will also develop students' research skills through the investigation of the concept of sustainability and how this relates to early years settings. From their research investigations, students will be able to consider possible changes to learning activities, possible changes to learning environments and how the involvement of children can contribute to improving sustainability. This will allow students to propose ways that sustainability could be improved within early years settings.

Effective research skills are fundamental to early years practice; developing these skills in a simulated situation will provide the opportunity to hone the skill and develop student confidence to use the skill within a workplace setting and to develop the skill further through relevant employment in the early years sector and level 3 study.

The learning outcome also strengthens the key transferable skills of communication, investigation and using digital technologies. Students will need to use effective investigation skills as part of their research; they will need to demonstrate communication skills to communicate their findings and use digital technologies to support their research.

This learning outcome provides a coherent stepping stone for students progressing into skilled employment in a relevant level 2 role in the early years sector.

To enable students to achieve the learning outcome, students must know and understand:

- the importance of improving sustainability in early years settings to ensure the long-term future of the environment
- the importance of modelling good practice for children to foster responsibility for sustainability
- how resources used in early years settings may impact on sustainability including the use of equipment, materials, products and consumables
- the different environments in which learning activities are delivered in early years settings: indoor and outdoor
- different approaches to improving sustainability: reducing energy consumption, reducing water consumption, reducing packaging used by the setting, reducing waste produced by the setting

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- how the use of sustainable materials and products can support sustainability including changing to biodegradable products or greener products and reducing single item use
- ways to minimise waste in the early years sector: reduce, reuse, repurpose and recycle
- how to dispose of waste sustainably including composting and waste sorting
- ways to increase children's awareness of sustainability: focused learning activities, involvement in reducing waste and recycling, involvement in sustainability projects and challenges, links to Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework and 'understanding the world'
- how to identify search requirements and create appropriate search criteria and queries to support research
- how to assess reliability of search results: currency, relevance, source and purpose.

To enable students to achieve the learning outcome, students must be able to:

- investigate information related to sustainability in early years settings using appropriate search criteria
- assess reliability of search results
- interpret information obtained in relation to sustainability in early years settings
- apply communication skills to propose ways to improve sustainability in early years settings
- apply digital skills to support making recommendations on improving sustainability by producing, organising, storing and retrieving any created digital content.

Supporting behaviours that are integral to the learning outcome but not expected to be assessed explicitly:

- focused
- perceptive
- reflective

Learning Outcome 4: Interpret information on first aid emergency situations in early years settings to propose appropriate responses

Rationale:

This learning outcome provides an opportunity for students to develop fundamental knowledge in relation to the requirement to hold a Paediatric First Aid qualification and the roles and responsibilities of a first aider. Students will also develop an understanding of the different emergency situations that first aiders may have to respond to within an early years setting and the appropriate responses to those situations. This understanding will prepare students for employment in an early years setting and underpins further study at Level 3.

The learning outcome also develops students' decision-making skills, so they can interpret information regarding different emergency situations and use their knowledge and understanding to propose the appropriate first aid response for different emergency situations. Effective decision-making skills are fundamental to early years practice; developing these skills in a simulated situation will provide the opportunity to hone the skill and develop student confidence to use the skill within a workplace setting and to develop the skill further through relevant employment in the early years sector and level 3 study.

The expectation for this outcome is not for students to provide any actual first aid, but to identify the correct response to given first aid situations, in scenario type situations. This learning outcome supports students intending to undertake a Paediatric First Aid qualification in the future but is not intended as a replacement for such qualifications.

The learning outcome also strengthens the key transferable skills of communication, interpretation and using digital technologies. Students will need to use effective interpretation skills to inform the decisions they make; they will need to demonstrate communication skills to communicate their proposals and use digital technologies to support this.

This learning outcome provides a coherent stepping stone for students progressing into skilled employment in a relevant level 2 role in the early years sector.

To enable students to achieve the learning outcome, students must know and understand:

- roles and responsibilities of first aiders in early years settings: safeguarding of children, ensuring child safety and well-being, responding to health emergencies, responding to accidents and emergencies and providing immediate care to infants and children before professional medical help can be given
- the overall aim of any first aid response is to preserve life, prevent any condition worsening and promote recovery

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- the legal requirements for first aid training and qualifications in early years settings including requirements set by DfE Statutory Framework for Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and the new requirements from September 2025 in relation to who must hold a full Paediatric first aid certificate.
- how to assess emergency situations by considering: type of casualty, injury or concern, age of casualty (difference in first aid procedures for babies versus children), use of primary survey: Danger, Response, Airway, Breathing and Circulation (DR ABC) and the secondary survey
- types of casualties that first aiders deal with: responsive, non-responsive and breathing, non-responsive and not breathing
- situations in early years settings requiring a first aid response:
 - accidents: cuts, grazes, bruises, sprains, fractures and head injuries from falls, slips and trips
 - choking; caused by ingesting small toys or food
 - allergic reactions: reactions to foods, stings, substances and medicines, possible anaphylaxis
 - burns and scalds: caused by accidents with hot drinks, food or surfaces
 - electric shocks: caused by faulty equipment, biting cords or poking items into outlets
 - environmental incidents: bites, stings and sunburn/heat exhaustion
 - illnesses: asthma, diabetes, croup, epilepsy and meningitis
- first aid responses to injuries, accidents and illnesses.
 - Basic Life Support (BLS) for babies and children; Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) for babies and children
 - choking: encourage coughing, back blows and abdominal thrust (children not babies)
 - correct positioning of casualties depending on situation: lying down and raising legs, sitting up and standing up
 - using treatments: adrenaline auto-injector for allergic reactions, inhalers for asthma, glucose or sugary drinks for diabetic hypoglycaemia
 - noting signs and symptoms: rash, high temperature, vomiting and diarrhoea
 - stopping bleeding: applying pressure, cleaning wounds and using sterile dressings for wounds, treating nosebleeds
 - treating suspected fractures and sprains: keeping injured limb still, supporting the limb, resting an injury, applying ice pack (wrapped in a towel), applying a bandage, elevating the injury
 - treating minor injuries such as grazes: washing, always wiping from centre, applying a sterile dressing

To enable students to achieve the learning outcome, students must be able to:

- interpret information on first aid emergency situations

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- use decision making skills to propose appropriate first aid responses to emergency situations
- apply written communication skills to propose appropriate first aid responses
- apply digital skills to support the proposing of appropriate first aid responses by organising, storing and retrieving digital information

Supporting behaviours that are integral to the learning outcome but not expected to be assessed explicitly:

- perceptive
- focused
- attention to detail

3.3 Links to Occupational Standards

The mapping below sets out which knowledge and skills statements from the occupational standards have been addressed in the introductory core content, and which need to be developed further by awarding organisations for inclusion in the occupation-specific component of the qualification. We would not expect the same knowledge and skills to appear in both the introductory core and the occupation-specific components of the qualification, unless there is a genuine need for greater contextualisation.

This table lists all the learning outcomes for the introductory core content and the knowledge and skills statements from each occupational standard that each learning outcome will address.

Learning Outcome 1: Convey information to an audience to outline the role of an Early Years Practitioner and the knowledge, skills and qualities needed to work successfully in the early years sector.

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Occupational standard	Reference	Knowledge	Skills	Behaviours
Early Years Practitioner	ST0888	K5: The legal requirements and guidance on safeguarding, including Prevent, security, confidentiality of information and promoting the welfare of children.	S12: Use a range of appropriate communication methods to share information with children, parents or carers and other professionals	

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Learning Outcome 2: Collaborate as a team member to promote the importance of partnership working in the early years sector

Occupational standard	Reference	Knowledge	Skills	Behaviours
Early Years Practitioner	ST0888	<p>K21: Partnership working, including parents or carers, in relation to working effectively with children with special educational needs and disabilities</p>		
Early Years Practitioner	ST0888	<p>K28: The roles and responsibilities of other agencies and professionals that work with and support the provision, both statutory and non-statutory</p>		

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Learning Outcome 3: Apply research skills to identify and propose ways to improve sustainability in early years settings

Occupational standard	Reference	Knowledge	Skills	Behaviours
Early Years Practitioner	ST0888	K31: Ways to increase children's awareness of environmental sustainability		

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Learning Outcome 4: Assess first aid emergency situations in early years settings to propose appropriate responses

Occupational standard	Reference	Knowledge	Skills	Behaviours
Early Years Practitioner	ST0888	<p>K12: The signs and symptoms which may indicate that a child is injured, unwell (including common childhood illnesses and allergies) or in need of urgent medical/dental attention</p>		
Early Years Practitioner	ST0888	<p>K10: Own role and responsibilities, including identifying risks and hazards and the recording and reporting in the event of a baby or young child requiring medical/dental attention, a non-medical incident or emergency</p>		

3.4 Links to Foundation Certificates

The policy aims for Occupational Certificates state that, where appropriate, the specification should provide opportunities for co-teaching with Foundation Certificate students. Introductory core content should therefore share learning outcomes and outline content with Foundation Certificates in similar sectors, wherever it is appropriate to do so.

The following content is also covered in the Foundation Certificate in Education and Early Years Occupational Certificate	Foundation Certificate	Coverage (Full/Partial)
<p>LO2 Knowledge/understanding</p> <p>The range of different individuals and professionals that Early Years Practitioners and educators work with: parents, carers, wider family, agencies and services that support parents and carers, colleagues within the same setting and other professionals outside of the education setting</p>	<p>LO2 Knowledge/understanding</p> <p>The different individuals that educators interact with: parents, carers, wider family, agencies and services that support parents and carers, colleagues within the same education setting and industry professionals outside of the education setting</p>	<p>Partial</p> <p>Occupational Certificate focuses on early years, Foundation Cert is broader and covers industry professionals</p>

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<p>The following content is also covered in the Foundation Certificate in Education and Early Years Occupational Certificate</p>	<p>Foundation Certificate</p>	<p>Coverage (Full/Partial)</p>
<p>LO2 Knowledge/understanding The important considerations when working with others to accomplish a task: using active listening techniques, being aware of needs of others, being aware of the effect of non-verbal communication, being courteous and inclusive when engaging with others</p>	<p>LO2 Knowledge/understanding Communication techniques used to communicate purposefully: verbal, visual, written methods, and use of technology. The ways to ensure communication is purposeful: being clear, being concise, being courteous, using active listening techniques, being aware of audience, being aware of the effect of non-verbal communication The ways to demonstrate active listening to communicate purposefully: paying attention, allowing others to speak, responding rather than just delivering information The different non-verbal communication techniques: body language, facial gestures, eye contact, space and physical appearance</p>	<p>Partial Foundation Certificate requires more depth</p>
<p>LO1 Skill Apply communication skills to convey the information to an audience LO2 Skill Apply oral communication techniques to support team working activities Apply non-verbal communication techniques to support team working activities</p>	<p>LO2 Skill Communicate purposefully with different individuals through the use of visual, oral and written communication methods to share required information</p>	<p>Full</p>

Annex A: Glossary

Term	Definition
Early years sector	This is the sector that supports the period from birth to 5 years old. This stage is officially governed by the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS). The sector provides high-quality education and care to ensure children are prepared for school, focusing on cognitive, physical, and social development
Early years setting	Any private or public setting including full day care, children’s centres, pre-schools, reception classes, playgroups, nursery schools, home based provision, hospitals, social care settings, out of school environments and local authority provision which is responsible for delivering the Early Years Foundation Stage
Early years practitioner	An occupation whose broad purpose is to work and interact directly with children on a day to day basis supporting the planning of and delivery of activities, purposeful play opportunities and educational programmes within the ethos of the setting
Safeguarding	This is the proactive process of protecting babies and children from harm, promoting their welfare and ensuring that all care is provided in a safe environment
Sustainability	The ability to meet the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.



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