



Programme Specification Definitive Document

1. Basic Information

1.1 Awarding Institution:	Plymouth Marjon University
1.2 Teaching Institution:	Plymouth Marjon University
1.3 Locus of Delivery:	Plymouth Marjon University
1.4 Final Award Title:	FdA
1.5 FHEQ Level:	5
1.6 Programme Title:	Early Years
1.7 Mode and Duration of Study:	Full Time – 2 Years Part Time – 4 Years
1.8 School:	Education
1.9 HECoS Code:	100463
1.10 Collaborative Provision Arrangement:	N/A
1.11 UCAS Code(s):	X900
1.12 Admission Criteria:	<p>Normal University entrance criteria apply (please refer to the website for further details).</p> <p>International students will be expected to meet the English language requirements of IELTS 6.0 or equivalent.</p> <p>The programme is designed for practitioners working with young children in Early Years settings; students will be working a minimum of 10 hours per week on a paid or voluntary basis. Three of the twelve modules focus on work-based learning.</p> <p>The programme lead will normally have an informal discussion with applicants prior to their acceptance of a place, to ensure the course is appropriate for their circumstances.</p>
1.13 Accrediting Professional Body/PSRB:	N/A
1.14 QAA Subject Benchmarking Group(s):	Early Childhood Studies (2019)
1.15 Other External Points of Reference:	N/A
1.16 Language of Study (for learning, teaching and assessment):	English

1.17 Work-Based Learning Arrangements:	The programme is designed for practitioners working with young children and families in early years settings; students will be working a minimum of 10 hours per week on a paid or voluntary basis. Three of the twelve modules focus on work-based learning. An identified mentor will support students' work-based learning.
1.18 Foundation Degree Progression Routes:	BA Early Childhood, BA Primary Education and BA Special Educational Needs and Disability Studies.
1.19 Arrangements for Distance Learning:	N/A
1.20 Original Date of Production:	November 2021
1.21 Date of Commencement:	September 2022
1.22 Review Date:	August 2028

2. Programme Outline

The programme offers a route for Early Years practitioners to progress their career aims and to further their understanding of the research, concepts and theories that underpin their work in practice, whilst continuing to work in Early Years settings. Some will wish to take on greater responsibilities and may aspire to leadership and management roles within Early Years; many discover an aptitude for academic study, and progress to study at Honours and postgraduate levels. Students are introduced to Futures (our in-house career advisory service) in their first year and have access to their resources for three years after graduating, sometimes progressing on to careers that they may have been unaware of when they first joined university.

Students have a mentor with whom they engage in regular reflective discussion about practice, particularly in the light of their engagement with new ideas at university. If none can be identified in the workplace, the university will provide a suitably qualified and experienced mentor free of charge. Students are encouraged to seek academic advice from module staff and are all assigned a Personal Development Tutor who will provide pastoral care. If it is thought that a student may have a specific learning difficulty such as dyslexia, they will be referred to our Disability team for assessment, and where appropriate, ongoing support.

The involvement of student-practitioners with a wide range of practice experience in diverse settings, together with the discursive nature of formal learning and teaching on the programme, provides rich opportunities for students to converse, reflect, debate, negotiate, persuade and challenge the ideas of others whilst identifying best practice. Throughout, students are required to make links between the taught and work-based components of the course, linking theory with practice. Many work settings make positive changes as a result of having an employee engaged in the foundation degree, as evidenced at three-way meetings involving the student, their workplace supervisor, and a member of academic

staff. A generic learning outcome across modules requires students to reflect upon practice and suggest how practice might be improved.

A value base of social justice and inclusion threads throughout the programme and develops students' aspirations of 'making a difference' for children and their families. This inclusive culture is supported by programme staff who share similar motivation. In this revalidated programme we have also introduced a first-year module to specifically focus on social justice, as a response to increasing poverty and the consequent adaptations made by workplace settings to support families who may lack essentials such as food and clothing.

2.1 Integrating Sustainability into the Curriculum

This document is informed by Education for sustainable development (QAA & Advance HE, 2021) particularly with reference to embedding competencies in critical thinking, futures thinking, self-awareness and normative competency. The programme aims to enable learners to make informed decisions and evaluate the consequences of their actions for current and future stakeholders, within the context of the Early Years environment and more widely in their life trajectory. Students will be encouraged to develop solutions to problems, embrace a 'growth mindset' (Dweck), and to adapt to changing and sometimes unpredictable circumstances. Values, ethics and principles are cross-cutting themes within the programme.

3. Distinctive Features

This work-based learning foundation degree is designed for people in relevant employment in the Early Years sector, which may include working with families as well as babies and young children. Students are expected to attend approximately 20 campus-based days of learning each academic year, and to spend a minimum of 10 hours per week during term-time in their Early Years work setting. Learning in the workplace is supported by regular meetings with an identified mentor, provided by the workplace or if needed, by the University. Contact time on the university campus builds connection and resilience; the programme is designed for blended, rather than distance learning delivery. A wide range of on-line resources is made available to support independent study, and students are expected to make full use of these at their convenience. Programme staff have extensive experience of practice, assessment and leadership in Early Years settings, and have published work on Early Years policy and practice. Students are encouraged to seek academic or pastoral support whenever needed, using the wide range of communication interfaces at their disposal: email, phone, Teams, etc as preferred.

4. Programme Aims

1. Enable employers, students and the University to work collaboratively in order to enhance the quality of Early Years practice.
2. Develop students as critically reflective Early Years practitioners who are committed to continuous professional development.
3. Enable students to understand and appreciate diversity when working with young children and families, and to challenge inequalities and discrimination.
4. Develop student competence in independent learning to a level commensurate with a Foundation Degree level award.

5. Provide a learning experience relevant to those working with babies, toddlers and young children and their families.
6. Promote knowledge and understanding of learning and development within a bio-psycho-social and ecological framework, for children from conception.
7. Promote knowledge and understanding of the wider social context in which young children develop, including the development of policy and multi-agency services, and influences of globalisation.

5. Programme Learning Outcomes

Knowledge & understanding:

By the end of this programme students should be able to demonstrate:

1. An understanding of the importance of critical reflective practice in the Early Years workplace and its application to practice.
2. A critical awareness of issues of social justice, inclusion and diversity and their application to practice together with an appreciation of babies and young children as active participants in their worlds.
3. A critical understanding of the nature and use of research including its application in practice, and its ethical dimensions.
4. Knowledge and understanding of child development from conception, within a bio-psycho-social and ecological framework, and the ability to apply this knowledge in a range of situations.
5. Knowledge and understanding of the interrelationships between political, economic, cultural and ideological contexts in the lives of babies, young children and their families and communities.
6. Knowledge and understanding of key concepts, policy, guidance and theoretical approaches relevant to practice in Early Years settings, including some international practices.

Intellectual skills:

By the end of this programme students should be able to demonstrate:

7. The ability to make links between their learning experiences across modules and with their practice.
8. Their ability to access, retrieve, organise and utilise a range of sources of information, evaluate their relevance and apply this knowledge to practice.
9. Listen to others and articulate and justify an informed point of view.
10. Analyse policies and practices using a range of theoretical perspectives and articulate intellectual, professional and value-based judgements.
11. Review and critically evaluate relevant theory and research from a range of sources and apply these to practice.

Practical skills:

By the end of this programme students should be able to demonstrate:

12. Ability to link theoretical concepts to practice in Early Years settings.
13. Ability to make informed judgements on ethical, relational and professional issues.

14. Flexibility, resourcefulness and ability to adapt a problem-solving mindset to fit changing or unforeseen circumstances.
15. Ability to competently engage in a range of relationships with families, colleagues, other professionals and communities within an anti-oppressive and anti-discriminatory framework.

Transferable / key skills:

By the end of this programme students should be able to demonstrate:

16. Communication and collaboration skills in a variety of contexts.
17. Learning, study and research skills including the ability to critically assess the authenticity of sources.
18. Digital skills in a range of contexts, including their own and children's learning.
19. Effective planning, organisation and time management skills
20. The ability to select appropriate quantitative and qualitative techniques for data collection, presentation, analysis and problem-solving.
21. Professional attitudes and behaviours in a range of situations.
22. The ability to organise and communicate information, using a range of relevant criteria evidencing appropriate proficiency in English language, to a variety of audiences in unfamiliar contexts of increasing complexity (level 5).

6. Learning and Teaching Methods

The programme aims to build academic skills and confidence from the outset. The first modules build on concepts that students will have some familiarity with, and all modules require students to explore links to practice. Emphasis is placed on enabling tacit knowledge to become more explicit, and on making use of a range of perspectives. A discursive style of teaching is adopted, enabling co-construction of learning. Throughout the course, students are asked to engage in reflective practice; this is supported in the workplace through mentoring sessions, and discussed in academic tasks as well as face to face teaching sessions. Blended learning (a research focus within the teaching team) and independent study are facilitated via a range of digital platforms and this makes teaching and learning adaptable in the face of changing circumstances. Programme staff bring experience of Early Years practice, management and assessment.

Method	Description
Case study	Detailed examination of a real-world situation, with analysis
Debate	Students prepare and present differing perspectives on an issue which may then be discussed and critiqued
Digital technologies	A range of technologies including online tools enabling interactive learning
Flipped classroom	Students undertake pre-session learning and then make use of time together to engage in collaborative exploration of themes
Lecture	A presentation or talk on a particular topic; may be discursive in style
Reflection on practice	Student engagement with mentor or other, in order to discuss practice experience from a range of perspectives
Seminar	A discussion or classroom session on a particular topic
Small-group work	Small groups are formed for discussion or to complete a set task (eg respond to scenario) in order to embed and extend learning during a taught session
Supported independent study	Preparation for scheduled sessions, follow-up work, wider reading and research, completion of assessment tasks, with some guidance
Tutorial	A meeting with a course tutor, one-to-one or small group, for feedback or discussion on a particular topic
Work-based learning	Practising skills and using understanding in the workplace; reflective discussions with mentor and other work colleagues; planning to implement theoretical learning in practice; writing up practice experience

6.1 Learning Enhancement

Guest lecturers and speakers; links to on-line talks and conferences are integrated into modules. Staff have published in specialist subject areas such as safeguarding and children's literature and bring this expertise to their teaching. Work-based learning modules are supported by an identified mentor, who will be a suitably qualified and experienced practitioner. Mentors will help to facilitate reflection and learning in the workplace.

6.2 e-Learning

Students will be supported to engage with a range of technologies and platforms as an integral part of their learning. Teaching will be delivered both synchronously and asynchronously, and appropriate software and guidance on its use will be provided for students. Free training for Microsoft Office applications are offered by our Digital Innovation Team and sessions are regularly advertised to students. These sessions can lead to an Internationally recognised qualification (ECDL) if students choose to take an exam at the end of each module (exam fees apply). The Digital Innovation team also offer bespoke ICT training, tailored to student assignments via AIM sessions. A member of the teaching team is engaged in research into blended learning.

7. Modes of Assessment

The assessment scheme embodies the principles of assessment of and for learning.

Assessment

has a role in providing an indication to students and staff of the level of attainment, in relation to established criteria. However, assessment is also designed for learning because it is a means of

self-directed learning in action. Thus, students become producers of meaning and learning which in some cases will be designed to be disseminated to others. The variety of assessment tasks is intended to enable all students to have the opportunity to demonstrate a range of strengths. A generic learning outcome across modules invites students to tailor learning to their working context, and to reflect upon and bring about improvements to practice. This allows each student to shape their research and learning activity to fit their own areas of interest.

Method	Description
Audio recording	Time-limited audio file presenting content in a concise and dynamic format accompanied by a supporting document giving academic references
Case study	Detailed examination of a real-world situation, with analysis
Curriculum Vitae	A formal document designed to showcase a summary of qualifications, skills and experience to prospective employers
Essay	Structured piece of academic writing in response to a given title or task. May involve discussion, analysis and data presentation.
Leaflet	Information and advice for a specific audience, presented in a particular format. May involve informal explication (presentation)
Learning agreement	Student identifies own learning aims, in consultation with others, often using a given format
Portfolio	A number of pieces of work, usually connected by a topic or theme, eg observation notes, reflective writing, response to reading
Poster	Presentation of information and opinion, with academic references, in a particular format. May involve informal explication (presentation)
Presentation	Verbal and visual presentation and discussion of information, data etc, by student or group of students
Proposal	Structured plan for a future action or project
Reflective journal	A subjective, meaning-making account of events relating to professional experience; often incorporating links to theoretical concepts. May make use of identified models of reflection
Report	Structured investigation of a given topic
Resource	Artefact, plan of action, etc which has a practical application
Review	Analysis and discussion, usually of published writing
Timed group exercise	Students work collaboratively in small groups to provide a written response to a given scenario or problem, for a group mark

8. Exemptions to University Regulations

N/A

9. Work-Based Learning/Placement Learning

It is a pre-requisite for entry to the course, that students are working in a relevant Early Years setting for a minimum of 10 hours per week during term time. This may be on a paid or voluntary basis. Each student has an identified mentor with whom they engage in regular sessions of reflective discussion relating to their work-based learning. Three work-based learning modules are incorporated in the programme, one at level 4 and two at level 5. Programme staff have extensive practice experience, including managing nurseries, Early Years and Sure Start Centres, and multi-agency work in health and social care, in addition to training, assessing and mentoring Early Years Professionals.

10. Programme Structure

Full Time

Level 4

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Assessment	Semester/ Term	Compulsory/ Optional	Condonable/ Non- Condonable
LETC51	Communication in Context	20	Coursework 100%	A	Compulsory	Condonable
LETC52	Child Development	20	Coursework 100%	A	Compulsory	Condonable
LETC53	Safeguarding Children and Young People	20	Practical 15% Coursework 85%	A	Compulsory	Condonable
LETC54	Children, Families and Social Justice	20	Coursework 100%	B	Compulsory	Condonable
LETC55	Learning and Teaching	20	Coursework 100%	B	Compulsory	Condonable
LETC56	Reflection in Practice	20	Coursework 100%	B	Compulsory	Condonable

Level 5

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Assessment	Semester/ Term	Compulsory/ Optional	Condonable/ Non- Condonable
LETD51	Growing up Global	20	Coursework 70% Practical 30%	A	Compulsory	Condonable
LETD52	Unlocking Creativity	20	Coursework 100%	B	Compulsory	Condonable
LETD53	Values in Practice	20	Coursework 100%	A	Compulsory	Condonable

LETD54	Diversity in Learning	20	Practical 50% Coursework 50%	A	Compulsory	Condonable
LETD55	Research in Practice	20	Coursework 100%	B	Compulsory	Condonable
LETD56	Developing Practice	20	Coursework 100%	B	Compulsory	Condonable

Key: Semester X = A & B

Part Time

Level 4 – Year 1

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Assessment	Semester/ Term	Compulsory/ Optional	Condonable/ Non-Condonable
LETC51	Communication in Context	20	Coursework 100%	A	Compulsory	Condonable
LETC52	Child Development	20	Coursework 100%	A	Compulsory	Condonable
LETC55	Learning and Teaching	20	Coursework 100%	B	Compulsory	Condonable

Level 4 – Year 2

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Assessment	Semester/ Term	Compulsory/ Optional	Condonable/ Non-Condonable
LETC53	Safeguarding Children and Young People	20	Practical 15% Coursework 85%	A	Compulsory	Condonable
LETC54	Children, Families and Social Justice	20	Coursework 100%	B	Compulsory	Condonable
LETC56	Reflection in Practice	20	Coursework 100%	B	Compulsory	Condonable

Level 5 – Year 3

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Assessment	Semester/ Term	Compulsory/ Optional	Condonable/ Non-Condonable
LETD52	Unlocking Creativity	20	Coursework 100%	B	Compulsory	Condonable
LETD53	Values in Practice	20	Coursework 100%	A	Compulsory	Condonable
LETD54	Diversity in Learning	20	Practical 50% Coursework 50%	A	Compulsory	Condonable

Level 5 – Year 4

Module Code	Module Title	Credits	Assessment	Semester/ Term	Compulsory/ Optional	Condonable/ Non- Condonable
LETD51	Growing Up Global	20	Coursework 70% Practical 30%	A	Compulsory	Condonable
LETD55	Research in Practice	20	Coursework 100%	B	Compulsory	Condonable
LETD56	Developing Practice	20	Coursework 100%	B	Compulsory	Condonable

Key: Semester X = A & B

The table below shows the various ‘threads’ through the programme. These ‘threads’ provide cohesion and coherence to the programme, so that learning can be developed and built upon in a robust way that makes sense to the students. Links will be forged during learning sessions with content from previous modules, as well as indication of learning on up-coming modules. The ‘threads’ act as a mechanism for students to see how the learning links together in meaningful way and will be made explicit to students throughout the programme.

Threads Level 4

Module Code	Module Title	Thread
LETC51	Communication in Context	7
LETC52	Child Development	1,7
LETC53	Safeguarding Children and Young People	1, 2, 3, 4
LETC55	Learning and Teaching	3, 5
LETC54	Children, Families and Social Justice	1, 2, 3, 4, 7
LETC56	Reflection in Practice	6

Threads Level 5

Module Code	Module Title	Thread
LETD51	Growing up Global	1, 3, 4
LETD52	Unlocking Creativity	2, 5
LETD53	Values in Practice	6, 8
LETD54	Diversity in Learning	2, 3, 4, 5
ERYD55	Research in Practice	7
LETD56	Developing Practice`	6, 8

Key:

1: Ecological model of child development (Bronfenbrenner)

- 2: Child-centred approach
- 3: Inclusive practice
- 4: Rights-based approach
- 5: Educational theory
- 6. Employability
- 7. Research
- 8. Leadership

11. Accrediting Professional Body /Professional Regulatory and Statutory Body (PSRB)

N/A

12. Professional Advisory Group

N/A

13. Academic Progression Opportunities

BA (Hons) Level 6: a range of progression routes at Plymouth Marjon University and other Higher Education institutions.

14. Employability and Career Progression Opportunities

Students are required to relate each module in the programme to their practice in Early Years, via both taught sessions and their assignment tasks. They are expected to meet with their mentor and to discuss with them how their academic learning can be applied in the workplace. In addition, they will be developing soft skills such as communication (particularly in the Communication in Context module), problem-solving, creative thinking, networking, time management and organizational skills. Students will develop an understanding of the significance of critical reflection (through all modules) and a range of methods for engaging in this practice (particularly through the Reflection in Practice module). Assessment tasks throughout the programme provide a framework for students to develop expertise related to their job role and interests, allowing them to make links across modules and to build a body of expertise over the programme.

Students will be prepared to join an Honours year that would allow them to progress into training for positions of responsibility in the Early Years sector or a range of careers involving work with children and families. These could include Early Years or Reception teacher, Nursery Manager, Special Educational Needs Coordinator, or Family Support Worker. The employability theme is consolidated in the final work-based learning module, Developing Practice.

Skills include:

- **Analytical thinking and innovation** – students are able to identify and define problems, extract key information from data and develop workable solutions for the problems identified to test and verify the cause of the problem and develop solutions to resolve the problems identified; these skills have a particular focus in the three work-based learning modules LETC56, LETD53 and LETD56.

- **Active learning and reflective practice** – students are in charge of their own learning through meaningful activities. They think about and apply what they are learning and are able to reflect in order to improve future performance; these skills have a particular focus in the three work-based learning modules LETC56, LETD53 and LETD56.
- **Creativity, originality and initiative** – students are able to perceive the world in new ways, to find hidden patterns and to generate new solutions. Students develop the ability to assess situations and initiate solutions independently: this has a particular emphasis in the Global and Diversity modules LETD51 and LETD54.
- **Critical thinking and analysis** - students have the ability to actively conceptualise, analyse and synthesise information objectively and make a reasoned judgment to reach an answer or conclusion; this skill progresses through the levels and is evidenced in the Learning Outcomes.
- **Complex problem-solving** – students are able to identify complex problems and review related information in order to develop and evaluate options and implement solutions in real-world settings. These skills are primarily developed in Level 5 modules.
- **Leadership and social influence** - students are able to motivate others to act towards achieving a common goal especially in Values and Developing Practice modules LETD53 and LETD56.
- **Emotional intelligence** – students are able to recognise and manage their emotions, and the emotions of others, both individually and in groups.
- **Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation** – students are able to consider issues and situations in a sensible way using logic and imagination and have the capacity to form intelligent solutions. These skills are particularly evident in module LETD55.
- **Systems analysis and evaluation** – students are able to study a process or situation in order to identify its goals and purposes and create systems and procedures that will achieve them in an efficient way.

Digital Skills:

- **ICT Proficiency and Productivity** – students will be able to use devices (such as laptops, smartphones and touch screens), and identify and use applications, software and systems that are relevant and most suited to different tasks (e.g. text editing, presentations, and basic screen recording software).
- **Digital Collaboration, Participation, Communication** – students will be able to communicate effectively and appropriately using a variety of digital media such as text-based forums, online video and audio, email, blog posts and social media. They can also participate in digital teams and collaborate with others in digital spaces (e.g. using Google docs, group forums, social media, file sharing applications and Hub).
- **Finding Digital Information and Data Management** – students will develop their understanding of different data storage systems and file types (e.g. using network drives, cloud storage and external storage devices). They will be able to identify and use appropriate digital productivity tools to find information (e.g. using Marjon Mobile app, advanced online searches, Mendeley, Discovery). They are also able to manage, organise and analyse data or information (e.g. folder and file organisation, use of analytical tools within Spreadsheets and Databases).

- **Digital Learning and Teaching** – students are able to identify and use digital learning resources, apps and services (e.g. Canvas, Panopto, Studio, podcasts, and Teams). They are also able to participate in digital assessment such as online quizzes and exams and receive and reflect on digital feedback (e.g. Turnitin).
- **Digital Problem Solving, Creation & Development** – students are able to identify and use digital tools to solve problems and answer questions (e.g. Microsoft Office help, Digital Skills Help, TelKit, online surveys). They are also able to create new digital artefacts and materials such as digital writing, digital imaging, audio and video and creating and modifying webpages (e.g., poster creation, use of digital cameras and scanners, creating recorded presentations, creating a blog).
- **Digital Security, Well-being and Identity** – students understand how to act safely and responsibly in digital environments and can identify potential risks and consequences (e.g. security settings on social media, netiquette, keeping personal data secure). They are able to look after their personal health, safety, relationships and work-life balance in digital settings and are able to develop and project a positive digital identity across a range of platforms (e.g. LinkedIn, Twitter).

15. Support for Students and for Student Learning

The University recognises the value of the whole student experience within Higher Education and students have full access to the University's facilities for academic and pastoral support and guidance. The Student Support team offers a confidential and comprehensive service to guide and support students through their studies in the following areas:

- Academic Advice
- Academic Skills
- Accommodation
- Disability and Inclusion Advice Service
- Employability and Careers Development
- Finance and Welfare
- Health
- Student Counselling and Well-being
- Student Volunteering

Student support and guidance is further promoted by the following:

- Personal Development Tutor for every student in the University
- Academic tutorial staff, including programme leaders, module leaders and tutors
- Extensive library, and other learning resources, and facilities
- Library and study skills guidance material
- Programme handbooks, and module guides
- The Chaplaincy Centre which is at the heart of the University and is used for social gathering, quiet reflection and prayer
- On-campus Nursery provision

16. Student Feedback Mechanisms

The programme team seek to develop positive relationships with students through on going and continuous dialogue and regular communication.

Feedback at programme level will be achieved through mid-module evaluations, end of semester evaluations and the staff student liaison committee. In addition, all non-final year students will be invited to participate in the UK Engagement Survey (UKES) and final year students will be invited to participate in the National Student Survey (NSS).

17. Other Stakeholder Feedback

This has been gained from student workplace mentors and employers (for example in the 3-way discussions which are held in the workplace of each student), as well as Futures staff who engage with students studying on all programmes across the university. This has informed our development of the new Children, Families and Social Justice module and the progression of our work-based learning modules from a focus on reflective practice, to an awareness of professional and personal values, and thence to considering the students' potential career trajectory

Feedback has been requested from students to inform revalidation of the programme, via Staff/Student Liaison Committee meetings for current students and by email to all students who are currently taking a progression route at level 6. We have for example asked students to identify modules which are particularly liked, or which may be deemed irrelevant to their interests or practice. The feedback received has been overwhelmingly positive in support of the existing programme. No themes emerged around, for example, least favourite module or the development of new modules.

18. Quality and Enhancement Mechanisms

The quality of the student experience and the standards of the awards are managed and quality assured through the University's regulations policies and procedures. Student achievement and progression is managed through the Module Assessment Boards (MABs) and the Progression and Award Boards (PABs). Programmes are reviewed annually through University annual monitoring processes, including external examiner contributions, and incorporate student feedback mechanisms at both modular and the programme level reported formally through the University's annual monitoring and reporting cycle.