



Nursing associates

As the independent regulator for nursing associates in England, we're playing our part in making sure we have a skilled health and care workforce, able to meet increasingly complex clinical needs and to uphold our standards today and tomorrow. We became the regulator in law for the nursing associate profession in July 2018 and opened the nursing associate part of the NMC register in January 2019, cementing the profession in the English health and social care workforce. There are now over 1500 nursing associates on our register and by September 2020 we expect there to be well over 2000.

Why nursing associates?

Healthcare is becoming increasingly demanding and we know that registered nurses often need to focus today on more complex clinical cases. Nursing associates support registered nurses by allowing nurses to focus on such cases. At the same time, nursing associates have a standalone role in their own right which provides a progression route into graduate level nursing.

How is the role different to being a nurse?

The nursing associate role is a generic role, within the discipline of nursing, and not defined by a field of nursing. This means that nursing associates will have exposure to a breadth of practice learning experiences, providing care for people of all ages and from different backgrounds, cultures and beliefs. They must be able to care for people in their

own home, in the community or hospital or in any health care settings where their needs are supported and managed.

The standards help nursing associates by providing clarity about their role. Read alongside the nursing standards of proficiency, they demonstrate the synergies and differences between the two roles. Unlike nurses, they won't gain a specialism within a field of nursing. They also won't be able to go on to prescribe, but they will be able to administer a range of medicines. At the point of registration, nursing associates will demonstrate skills that contribute to assessment, but not at a level that would enable them to lead these activities as newly qualified professionals. Like nurses they are an accountable professional but unlike nurses they will not lead teams and co-ordinate care, but will work within teams.

Nursing associates qualify with a Foundation degree, which typically involves two years of higher education. In common with nurses, they learn through a combination of **academic education and placement-based practice**.

Standards of proficiency

We developed **standards of proficiency for nursing associates**, which set out what a nursing associate should know and be able to do when they join our register. These were designed to align with our standards of proficiency for nursing so that nursing associate programmes can be a stepping stone in to nursing programmes for those with the desire and the ability to progress.

The standards are set out in six sections:

- Being an accountable professional – providing safe and safe and compassionate person-centred care, acting professionally and taking responsibility
- Promoting health and preventing ill health – supporting people to manage their health, so they can have a good quality of life at every age
- Providing and monitoring care – monitoring a person’s health needs, and working with them and their family or carers to deliver care
- Working in teams – working well with a wide variety of colleagues in different roles, ensuring they communicate effectively
- Improving safety and quality of care – helping to monitor and improve the quality of care someone receives, identifying any risks to their safety and taking action to manage these
- Contributing to integrated care - playing a key role in helping individuals and providing their care.

The standards also have two annexes which nursing associates need to understand. One focuses on communication and relationship skills and the other focuses on procedures.

We expect nursing associates to have these skills and be able to carry out these procedures when they join the register.

After registration

In common with all our registrants, we expect nursing associates to revalidate every three years with us. This is really important as we regularly need to check that registered practitioners can deliver safe and effective care.

Once on our register, we also expect nursing associates to uphold our **Code**. This includes not working beyond the limits of one’s competence.

After registration, nursing associates can also develop and use more advanced skills, as nurses and midwives do.

Applicants from other areas of the UK and overseas

We can also accept applications for **registration** from people with equivalent qualifications from the rest of the UK, and from other countries. In September 2019 we registered our first overseas trained applicant to the nursing associate part of the register, following their successful completion of a test of competence based on our standards.

For more information, please see www.nmc.org.uk

