

The Nursing and Midwifery Council's response to the [consultation](#) on the Office for Students' strategy for 2022-25

Proposal 1: Do you have any comments to make on the OfS's proposed strategy for 2022 to 2025 or the priorities set out within it?

Nursing and Midwifery Council

About us

Our vision is safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery that improves everyone's health and wellbeing. As the professional regulator of almost 745,000 nursing and midwifery professionals, we have an important role to play in making this a reality.

Our core role is to **regulate**. First, we promote high education and professional standards for nurses and midwives across the UK, and nursing associates in England. Second, we maintain the register of professionals eligible to practise. Third, we investigate concerns about nurses, midwives and nursing associates – something that affects less than one percent of professionals each year. We believe in giving professionals the chance to address concerns, but we'll always take action when needed.

To regulate well, we **support** our professions and the public. We create resources and guidance that are useful throughout people's careers, helping them to deliver our standards in practice and address new challenges. We also support people involved in our investigations, and we're increasing our visibility so people feel engaged and empowered to shape our work.

Regulating and supporting our professions allows us to **influence** health and social care. We share intelligence from our regulatory activities and work with our partners to support workforce planning and sector-wide decision making. We use our voice to speak up for a healthy and inclusive working environment for our professions.

Our role in education

We promote and uphold the highest professional standards in nursing and midwifery to protect the public and inspire confidence in the professions. We set and monitor standards for the education of nursing and midwifery professionals in higher education institutions and healthcare settings across the UK.

Our approach to education ensures that nurses, midwives and nursing associates are equipped with the skills and knowledge to practise, at the point they join our register and throughout their careers:

- We set the education standards to shape the content and design of programmes. These ensure the professional competences of nurses, midwives and nursing associates.
- We approve education institutions and programmes and maintain a database of approved programmes (courses).
- We deliver quality assurance of our approved programmes, including practice placements for students.
- We register nurses, midwives and nursing associates when they have successfully completed their courses.

The Office for Students strategy for 2022 to 2025

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Office for Students' (OfS) proposed strategy for 2022 to 2025. In particular, we would like to respond to the proposals related to two central priorities for your work: quality and standards, and equality of opportunity. We will focus on the three goals of the strategy that the OfS seek to achieve during this timescale of quality and standards, equality of opportunity and enabling regulation.

While we agree with the principles of quality and standards, and equality of opportunity, it is difficult to assess the potential for duplication, until we are more aware of what your actual standards will be, and how you will enforce them.

Quality and Standards

Our education standards apply to every education programme we approve, including degree apprenticeships, and students must achieve these to practise as a nursing or midwifery professional in the UK. These standards outline what we expect from education institutions as part of their nursing and midwifery programmes. As the statutory regulator for these professions including our quality assurance activity, we would therefore welcome early engagement with the OfS on plans to ensure alignment of the sector on decisions around quality. It is important that we are working together as a sector to ensure quality, whilst also reducing duplication and regulatory burden on education institutions.

Although the NMC does not have a specific remit for workforce, we recognise the important contribution that people on our register make every day, and it is vital that the flow of students from programmes to practice is maintained. We are pleased that the OfS is seeking to support the development of programmes to address current and anticipated skills shortages for business and public services locally and nationally.

It is important for us to be aware of and involved in plans for the health and social care sector at an early stage to ensure clarity for education institutions and students of what is feasible and beneficial. Our standards ensure people are fit for professional practice in addition to an academic award, and as a result there may necessarily be examples of our standards exceeding the OfS' benchmark for standards.

Equality of Opportunity

We welcome the commitment to equality of opportunity and mechanisms to develop this. It is vital that all nursing and midwifery students receive the support they need to succeed and progress in higher education. We are keen to support routes that will widen access to registration for nurses, midwives and nursing associates, while meeting the same high-quality standards and outcomes that we regulate.

We are pleased to see the emphasis on considering the needs of all people, as we are committed to advancing equality, diversity and inclusion. We seek to strengthen our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, by working collaboratively to drive improvements. We believe that it would be helpful for the sector to work more closely together, to enable the higher education sector to do all it can to promote equality and advance opportunity.

Enabling Regulation

We are pleased that the OfS is seeking to minimise its regulatory burden on higher education providers. We see this as a positive step of taking a proportionate, targeted, risk-based approach to regulation. We would be pleased to collaborate with the OfS to avoid duplicating regulatory processes. Our strategy is to implement a data driven and risk-based approach to quality assurance of nursing and midwifery education.

We ensure that the regulatory interventions we take are robust, targeted and proportionate and working together will help to drive efficiencies and boost our shared commitment to high quality standards.

We work closely with other organisations and regulators to promote best practice and share insights and intelligence. We share intelligence with other professional regulators and system regulators on education quality assurance, to enable safe learning and practice. Working together with the OfS to strengthen intelligence-sharing and communication channels will support a proportionate approach to regulation. It will also help to promote alignment of quality and standards within our regulatory remits.

Proposal 1: Do you have any comments about any unintended consequences of the proposed strategy or the priorities set out within it, for example for particular types of provider, particular types of student, or for individuals on the basis of their protected characteristics?

We agree with the priorities of quality and standards, and equality of opportunity that you are consulting on, although we would need more insight into your precise regulatory standards to be able to consider this. In particular, whether this presents opportunities to reduce duplication and regulatory burden.

Also, our standards are designed to ensure that people are ready for professional practice on completing their degree and this is an important aspect to consider, and we look forward to further engagement with the OfS.

Proposal 2: Do you have any comments to make on the proposed addition to the regulatory framework? No.

Are there aspects of proposals 1 and/or 2 you found unclear? If so, please specify which, and tell us why. No comment.

Do you have any other comments? No.