

Standards for pre-registration nursing associate programmes

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About these standards

Realising professionalism: Standards for education and training includes the Standards framework for nursing¹ and midwifery education, Standards for student supervision and assessment, and programme standards specific to each approved programme.

Our Standards for education and training are set out in three parts:

Part 1: Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education

Part 2: Standards for student supervision and assessment

Part 3: Programme standards

- Standards for pre-registration nursing education
- Standards for pre-registration nursing associate education
- Standards for prescribing programmes

These standards help nursing and midwifery **students** achieve proficiencies and programme outcomes. All nursing and midwifery professionals must practise in line with the requirements of the Code, the professional standards of practice and behaviour that nurses, midwives and nursing associates are expected to uphold.

¹We have used the phrase 'nursing' in this document to apply to the work of nurses and nursing associates. Nursing associates are a distinct profession with their own part of our register, but they are part of the nursing team.

Introduction

Our Standards for pre-registration nursing associate programmes set out the legal requirements, entry requirements, availability of **recognition of prior learning**, length of programme, methods of assessment and information on the award for all pre-registration nursing associate education programmes.

Student nursing associates must successfully complete an NMC approved pre-registration programme in order to meet the Standards of proficiency for nursing associates and to be eligible to apply, and be entered onto, the NMC register.

Public safety is central to our standards. Students will be in contact with people throughout their education and it's important that they learn in a safe and effective way.

These programme standards should be read with the NMC Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education and Standards for student supervision and assessment which apply to all NMC approved programmes. There must be compliance with all these standards for an education institution to be approved and to run any NMC approved programme.

Education providers structure their educational programmes to comply with our programme standards. They also design their curricula around the published proficiencies for a particular programme and students are assessed against these proficiencies to make sure they are capable of providing safe and effective care. Proficiencies are the knowledge, skills and behaviours that nurses, midwives and nursing associates need in order to practise. We publish standards of proficiency for the nursing and midwifery professions as well as proficiencies for NMC approved post-registration programmes.

Through our **quality assurance** (QA) processes we check that education programmes meet all of our standards regarding the structure and delivery of educational programmes, that the programme outcomes relate to the expected proficiencies for particular qualifications and that the **approved education institutions** (AEIs) and **practice learning partners** are managing risks effectively. Using internal and external intelligence we monitor risks to quality in education and training; this intelligence gathering includes analysis of system regulator reports.

Before any programme can be run, we make sure it meets our standards. We do this through an approvals process, in accordance with our Quality assurance framework.

Legislative framework

Article 15(1) of the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001 ('the Order')² requires the Council to establish standards for education and training which are necessary to achieve the standards of proficiency for admission to the register, as required by Article 5(2) of the Order. The standards for pre-registration nursing associate programmes are established under the provision of Article 15(1) of the Order.

Overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the quality of any educational programme lies with an AEI in partnership with practice learning partners.

² SI 2002/253

The student journey

Standards for pre-registration nursing associate programmes follow the student journey and are grouped under the following five headings:

1. Selection, admission and progression

standards about an applicant's suitability for, and continued participation in, a pre-registration nursing associate programme

2. Curriculum

standards for the content, delivery and evaluation of the pre-registration nursing associate education programme

3. Practice learning

standards specific to pre-registration learning for nursing associates that takes place in practice settings

4. Supervision and assessment

standards for safe and effective supervision and assessment for pre-registration nursing associate education programmes

5. Qualification to be awarded

standards which state the award and information for the NMC register.

1 Selection, admission and progression

Approved education institutions together with practice learning partners must:

- 1.1 confirm on entry to the programme that students:
 - 1.1.1 demonstrate values in accordance with *the Code*
 - 1.1.2 have capability to learn behaviours in accordance with *the Code*
 - 1.1.3 have capability to develop numeracy skills required to meet programme outcomes
 - 1.1.4 can demonstrate proficiency in English language³
 - 1.1.5 have capability in literacy to meet programme outcomes
 - 1.1.6 have capability for digital and technological literacy to meet programme outcomes
- 1.2 ensure students' health and character allows for safe and effective practice on entering the programme, throughout the programme and when submitting the supporting declaration of health and good character in line with the NMC's **health and character** decision-making guidance⁴. This includes satisfactory occupational health assessment and criminal record checks
- 1.3 ensure students are fully informed of the requirement to declare immediately any cautions or convictions, pending charges⁵ or adverse determinations made by other regulators, professional bodies and educational establishments and that any declarations are dealt with promptly, fairly and lawfully
- 1.4 ensure that the registered nurse or registered nursing associate responsible for directing the educational programme or their designated registered nurse substitute or designated registered nursing associate substitute, are able to provide supporting declarations of health and character for students who have completed a pre-registration nursing associate programme⁶
- 1.5 permit recognition of prior learning that is capable of being mapped to the *Standards of proficiency for nursing associates* and programme outcomes, up to a maximum of 50% of the programme. This maximum limit of 50% does not apply to applicants to pre-registration nursing associate programmes who are currently a NMC registered nurse without restrictions on their practice, and
- 1.6 provide support where required to students throughout the programme in continuously developing their abilities in numeracy, literacy, digital and technological literacy to meet programme outcomes.

³ www.nmc.org.uk/registration/joining-the-register/english-language-requirements

⁴ www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/registration/character-and-health-decision-making-guidance.pdf

⁵ By 'pending charge' we mean police charge pending conclusion of the criminal proceedings in line with the NMC's guidance on health and character.

⁶ Rule 6(1)(a)(i) of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (Education, Registration and Registration Appeals) Rules 2004 (SI 2004/1767)

2 Curriculum

Approved education institutions together with practice learning partners must:

- 2.1 ensure that programmes comply with the *NMC Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education*
- 2.2 comply with the *NMC Standards for student supervision and assessment*
- 2.3 ensure that all programme learning outcomes reflect the *Standards of proficiency for nursing associates*
- 2.4 design and deliver a programme that supports students and provides an appropriate breadth of experience for a non-field specific nursing associate programme, across the lifespan and in a variety of settings
- 2.5 set out the general and professional content necessary to meet the *Standards of proficiency for nursing associates* and programme outcomes
- 2.6 ensure that the programme hours⁷ and programme length are:
 - 2.6.1 sufficient to allow the students to be able to meet the *Standards of proficiency for nursing associates*,
 - 2.6.2 no less than 50 per cent of the minimum programme hours required of nursing degree programmes, currently set under Article 31(3) of Directive 2005/36/EC (4,600 hours)
 - 2.6.3 consonant with the award of a Foundation degree (typically 2 years)
- 2.7 ensure the curriculum provides an equal balance of theory and practice learning using a range of learning and teaching strategies, and
- 2.8 ensure nursing associate programmes which form part of an integrated programme meet the nursing associate requirements and nursing associate proficiencies.

⁶ 'Programme hours' are hours protected for learning, in theory and practice. Hours which are not protected for learning, in which students are in effect working in their substantive place of work, do not count towards programme hours.

3 Practice learning

Approved education institutions together with practice learning partners must:

- 3.1 provide practice learning opportunities that allow students to develop and meet the *Standards of proficiency for nursing associates* to deliver safe and effective care, to a diverse range of **people**, across the lifespan and in a variety of settings⁸
- 3.2 ensure that students experience the variety of practice expected of nursing associates to meet the holistic needs of people of all ages
- 3.3 ensure technology enhanced and **simulation**-based learning opportunities are used effectively and proportionately to support learning and assessment
- 3.4 take account of students' individual needs and personal circumstances when allocating their practice learning including making **reasonable adjustments** for students with disabilities, and
- 3.5 ensure that nursing associate students have protected learning time⁹ in line with one of these two options:
 - 3.5.1 Option A: nursing associate students are **supernumerary** when they are learning in practice
 - 3.5.2 Option B: nursing associate students who are on work-placed learning routes:
 - 3.5.2.1 are released for at least 20 percent of the programme for academic study¹⁰
 - 3.5.2.2 are released for at least 20 percent of the programme time, which is assured protected learning time in external practice placements, enabling them to develop the breadth of experience required for a generic role, and
 - 3.5.2.3 protected learning time must be assured for the remainder of the required programme hours.

⁷ Nursing associate students are not required to have placements in each field of nursing, but should, through their education programme, benefit from experience of children and adults, and patients/service users with mental health conditions and learning disabilities. They should understand the most significant factors to be aware of when providing care to different types of service user.

⁸ Protected learning time is designated time in which students are supported to learn. All students are appropriately supervised until they have demonstrated proficiency in aspects of care. Supernumerary status is one approach to protected learning time.

⁹ The 20 percent specified here is not the total sum of theoretical learning students will need to undertake, please see standard 2.7 which requires equal weighting of theory and practice in the curriculum.

4 Supervision and assessment

Approved education institutions together with practice learning partners must:

- 4.1 ensure that support, supervision, learning and assessment provided complies with the *NMC Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education*
- 4.2 ensure that support, supervision, learning and assessment provided complies with the *NMC Standards for student supervision and assessment*
- 4.3 ensure they inform the NMC of the name of the registered nurse or registered nursing associate responsible for directing the education programme
- 4.4 provide students with feedback throughout the programme to support their development
- 4.5 ensure throughout the programme that students meet the *Standards of proficiency for nursing associates*
- 4.6 ensure that all programmes include a health numeracy assessment related to nursing associate proficiencies and calculation of medicines which must be passed with a score of 100%
- 4.7 assess students to confirm proficiency in preparation for professional practice as a nursing associate
- 4.8 ensure that there is equal weighting in the assessment of theory and practice, and
- 4.9 ensure that all proficiencies are recorded in an ongoing record of achievement which must demonstrate the achievement of proficiencies and skills as set out in *Standards of proficiency for nursing associates*.

5 Qualification to be awarded

Approved education institutions together with practice learning partners must:

- 5.1 ensure that the minimum award for a nursing associate programme is a Foundation Degree of the Regulated Qualifications Framework (England), which is typically two years in length, and
- 5.2 notify students during the programme that they have five years in which to register their award with the NMC. In the event of a student failing to register their qualification within five years¹¹ they will have to undertake additional education and training or gain such experience as is specified in our standards in order to register their award.

¹⁰ www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/registration/registering-more-than-five-years-after-qualifying.pdf

Glossary

Approved education institutions (AEIs): the status awarded by the NMC to an institution, or part of an institution, or combination of institutions that works in partnership with practice placement and work placed learning providers. AEIs will have provided us with assurance that they are accountable and capable of delivering NMC approved education programmes.

Educators: in the context of the NMC Standards for education and training educators are those who deliver, support, supervise and assess theory, practice and/or work placed learning.

Equalities and human rights legislation: prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and other characteristics. Anti-discrimination laws can be country specific and there are some legally binding international protections.

(Good) health and character requirements: as stipulated in NMC legislation (Articles 9(2)(b) and 5(2)(b) of the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001) 'good health' means that the applicant is capable of safe and effective practice either with or without reasonable adjustments. It does not mean the absence of a health condition or disability. Each applicant seeking admission to the register or to renew registration, whether or not they have been registered before, is required to declare any pending charges, convictions, police cautions and determinations made by other regulatory bodies.

People: individuals or groups who receive services from nurses, midwives and nursing associates, healthy and sick people, parents, children, families, carers, representatives, also including educators and students and others within and outside the learning environment.

Practice learning partners: organisations that provide practice learning necessary for supporting pre-registration and post- registration students in meeting proficiencies and programme outcomes.

Quality assurance: NMC processes for making sure all AEIs and their approved education programmes comply with our standards.

Reasonable adjustments: where a student requires reasonable adjustment related to a disability or adjustment relating to any protected characteristics as set out in the equalities and human rights legislation.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL): a process that enables previous certificated or experiential learning to be recognised and accepted as meeting some programme outcomes, this means it includes both theory and practice achievement.

Simulation: an artificial representation of a real world practice scenario that supports student development through experiential learning with the opportunity for repetition, feedback, evaluation and reflection. Effective simulation facilitates safety by enhancing knowledge, behaviours and skills.

Student: any individual enrolled onto an NMC approved education programme whether full time or less than full time.

Supernumerary: students are not counted as part of the staffing required for safe and effective care in that setting.

The role of the Nursing and Midwifery Council

What we do

We regulate nurses, midwives and nursing associates in the UK. We exist to protect the public. We set standards of education, training, conduct and performance so that nurses, midwives and nursing associates can deliver high quality care throughout their careers. We maintain a register of nurses and midwives allowed to practise in the UK.

We make sure nurses, midwives and nursing associates keep their skills and knowledge up to date and uphold our professional standards.

We have clear and transparent processes to investigate people who fall short of our standards.

These standards were approved by Council at their meeting on 26 September 2018.