

Educating nurses and midwives

Setting the standards

Our standards for education set out what you must know and be able to do to practise as a registered nurse or a midwife in the UK. They also require students to demonstrate values and behaviours that the public expects of healthcare professionals.

Our standards help to shape the content and design of programmes but we do not set out the detail of the curriculum that must be followed. Programmes must equip students to meet our standards and they must allow students to spend at least 50 percent of their training gaining real experience of giving care to patients and service users in a variety of healthcare settings.

Who provides nurse and midwife education?

Nursing and midwifery are degree-entry professions, reflecting the complexity and responsibility of the roles. We refer to education providers as approved education institutions (AEIs) but they are actually partnerships between a higher education institution and a range of healthcare settings such as trusts or boards, primary care settings, surgeries and care homes. Students can only progress by performing well in both the theoretical and practical elements of their programmes.

AEIs are responsible for recruiting students within a framework set by us, which assesses the applicants' ability and their suitability for a career in nursing and midwifery. They assess applicants' values and motivations as well as their qualifications.

We maintain a database of approved nursing and midwifery education programmes. We currently approve around 1000 programmes in 77 education institutions across the UK. Some AEIs offer a wide range of programmes while others focus on fewer specialisms.

AEIs must ensure fair and open admission to nursing and midwifery education programmes. They are responsible for monitoring the progress of students and in finalising the judgments to ensure students have fully completed their programmes. They must also ensure that students have access to the resources they need, and staff involved in their programme have appropriate qualifications and continuing professional development opportunities.

Learning in practice

AEIs arrange practice learning opportunities for students and make sure these are safe, effective and provide a range of clinical experience. Practice placement partners include hospitals, surgeries, community health services, care homes or any other suitable setting in which nursing or midwifery care is delivered.

Students have access to a mentor who is a registered nurse or midwife trained to support learning in practice. Mentors must confirm that a student is able to provide care at the required level of skill and competency.

Joining the register

When students have successfully completed their programme, their AEI will let us know that they have met the education and practice standards, and that they are of sufficient health and character to be capable of safe and effective practice. Once we have received this confirmation they can apply to join our register.

Quality assurance of education

We regularly monitor AEIs to ensure that their programmes meet our standards and that they manage risks effectively. Feedback from students, nurses, midwives, service users and carers forms a key part in the review process and is included in the final report. We can withdraw approval if programmes fail to meet our standards.

We use our monitoring activity to:

- collect and use data that helps us understand and improve how we protect the public
- provide feedback to AEIs and their practice placement partners, and
- share appropriate information with others.

The reviewing team consists of lay and registrant reviewers. Lay reviewers are members of the public who have never been on our register. They contribute to the overall judgement and to recommendations for improvement for the AEI. We have developed a framework within which an external quality assurance contractor makes sure AEIs are meeting our standards.

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<http://www.nmc.org.uk/education>