

# MOVING INTO NURSING 2005-6

A career guide for final year nursing & midwifery students



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# FOREWORD

by Philip Clarke,  
Careers Adviser,  
Queen's Careers Service



**W**elcome to *Moving Into Nursing*, which is a careers guide written specifically for final year nursing students from Queen's. This guide has grown out of materials and handouts used in the Queen's Careers Service nursing careers days for final year students run each year. The aim is to provide a relevant one-stop information resource, useful whether you are considering nursing in Northern Ireland, Great Britain, The Republic of Ireland, or even abroad. Making the transition from study to nursing employment can be demanding, and this guide is intended to give you the information and resources to make it a less challenging experience. I hope it will be a reference you will make use of again and again.

The guide includes information on:

- finding nursing work
- applications and CVs
- interview skills
- nursing careers
- managing and developing your nursing career.

In producing this guide I have been greatly aided by nursing staff from many of the HPSS trusts in Northern Ireland and other nursing employers, as well as by the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Queen's.

I hope you find it a useful resource now and in the future.

# FOREWORD

by Professor Jean Orr,  
Head of School of Nursing  
and Midwifery



**I** am delighted to write the foreword for the first nursing and midwifery careers guide. This is a most welcome initiative to assist students to plan and inform career decisions.

Nurses are in great demand locally, nationally and internationally. The importance of nursing and midwifery roles is highlighted in many government reports; influential bodies such as the World Health Organisation see nurses and midwives as crucial to improving health worldwide. Without the skills and knowledge of nurses and midwives, many health targets will not be met and individuals, families and communities will not achieve their health potential.

The opportunities for nurses and midwives to take on a range of challenging roles have never been greater. For example, past students of Nursing and Midwifery at Queen's are heading up voluntary organisations, working with charities in Africa, becoming nurse consultants, leading clinical teams in hospitals, teaching and researching in the University and working in the community. The range and scope of work provides great job satisfaction and professional and career progression.

I know many of you will want to pursue further study and at Queen's we have one of the largest portfolios of post-registration and postgraduate courses in the UK. Our courses put great emphasis on clinical skill. The major investment in state-of-the-art technology will complement the extensive range of learning and teaching equipment already held in our Clinical Skills Education Centre, which is amongst the best in Europe. Nurses and midwives undertaking continuing professional development at Queen's will now be even better prepared to meet the increasing demands of modern healthcare. By continually seeking ways to improve professional education, we are helping you to make a significant contribution to the care and well-being of patients, clients and their families.

Queen's provides an excellent foundation for working in a wide range of settings within the health and social care sector; it also provides opportunities for future development in clinical practice, management, education and research.

I wish you every success and fulfillment in your future career.

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## HOW QUEEN'S CAREERS SERVICE CAN HELP YOU

The Nursing Careers Adviser post is part-funded by the School and is based at:

Queen's Careers Service, 14 Malone Road, Belfast BT9 5BN  
Tel: 028 9097 4208  
Fax: 028 9038 2327  
Web: [www.qub.ac.uk/co](http://www.qub.ac.uk/co)

Please direct careers questions to the e-guidance facility on the website. The Career Service is on the Malone Road near the main Queen's campus, or around 10 minutes walk from the School of Nursing and Midwifery.

Support is provided to students through structured careers sessions such as the careers days in final year which are tailored to individual branch requirements.

The Careers Adviser can help you bridge the gap between education and employment, and assist in preparing for your first job. Services offered to students and graduates from the School of Nursing and Midwifery include:

- Assessing yourself eg strengths, weaknesses, qualities etc
- Researching ideas and opportunities
- Recruitment mechanisms for newly qualified staff
- Completing application forms, CVs and covering letters
- Preparing for interviews.

## HOW TO CONTACT THE CAREERS ADVISER

Activity	Help Provided	When	Where
Nursing drop-in	Quick queries. Small group discussions eg writing applications, interview skills	Mondays 10.00–11.00 am (no appointment necessary)	Interview Room 1/2, Clinical Skills Laboratories, School of Nursing & Midwifery
Duty adviser	As above	Tuesday pm, Thursday all day	Queen's Careers Service, 14 Malone Road
Guidance interviews	In-depth discussion on career plans etc	Booked by appointment	As above
E-guidance	Quick queries where its difficult to call in person	Anytime	<a href="http://www.qub.ac.uk/co">www.qub.ac.uk/co</a> (Click on 'students/graduates', then click on 'careers advice by email'. Queries will be answered within 5 working days).

## Acknowledgements

A big thank you to:

- All the trusts and other organisations who contributed financially towards the costs of producing this guide.
- The nursing staff who helped with the interviews for the nursing profiles, or who gave valuable assistance and advice in other ways.
- The School of Nursing and Midwifery at Queen's University for their support – particularly Professor Orr, head of School, for the financial support and foreword and Helen Gallagher, for the example adult branch questions.
- Wendy England and Alison Bailey-Calcutt, Careers Advisers at the Universities of Liverpool and Salford respectively for permission to use the example interview questions and scenarios for children's, mental health and learning disability branches from their *Nurses and Midwives Job Seekers Guide (3rd Edition)*.

# FINDING YOUR FIRST JOB

Where to start looking for your first nursing post.



**Y**our final year is your first step on the nursing career ladder. But where do you start with finding your first job?

Remember: the person who gets that job is not necessarily the best candidate; it's the person who is the best prepared.

This section will cover five important areas:

- Looking for jobs
- Where to look for vacancy information
- The application process
- Looking at your strengths, abilities and experience (self-assessment)
- Timetable for your final year

## Looking for jobs

First of all, get yourself a strategy and set realistic objectives.

## Develop your knowledge of the job market in your chosen area

Consider the area(s) of nursing in which you are interested and where you want to work. Do you want to work in Belfast, or a more local trust? Or do you want to work outside of Northern Ireland? Investigate the options within your chosen areas of interest at hospitals/trusts in the geographical areas you are willing to consider.

It's a good idea to consider a range of options and not just to pin your hopes on one particular job. Prepare to be flexible. Make use of contacts. If you've completed clinical placements at the hospital you want to work at, inform senior staff of your interest and ask colleagues to keep you up to date. Those you work with are always looking out for keen, committed

staff. You might also have friends or family working there (or who know someone who does). Ask them to keep you informed of any opportunities that might be coming up.

## Investigate posts, work environments, career progression

Talk to your contacts about the work, the working environment, the staff. Look at the hospital website for more information. Try to get hold of organisational literature eg recruitment literature, annual reports, staff newsletters etc. Build a picture of what it would be like to work there.

If you have no contacts you can make use of, contact the personnel department regarding recruitment and make an application. Ask them if they keep applications on file for when posts come up.

### Investigate alternatives

You don't have to go straight into nursing employment if you don't feel ready. You could undertake further study or take time out, for example. It always pays to have a back-up plan in case your original one doesn't work out. Consider alternative nursing areas, further qualifications, training or other employers. Talk to the Careers Adviser about your options if you are unsure. Relying on just one application, or being very specific about what posts you are willing to consider, can narrow your options and restrict your chances of finding something suitable.

### Where to look for job vacancy information

#### Find out where vacancies are advertised

Vacancy information for nurses in Northern Ireland include:

- Newspaper vacancies (especially the *Belfast Telegraph* on Tuesdays and Fridays; also the *Irish News* on Thursdays).
- Health service vacancy bulletins (such as CSA, RCN etc).
- Nursing publications (such as *Irish Nurse*, *Nursing Times*, *Nursing Standard* etc).
- Own contacts made through placements, through the course or through friends and family etc.
- Speculative applications to hospitals.
- Nursing job fair arranged by the School of Nursing and Midwifery each May/October; also nursing careers days in January/August arranged by the Careers Adviser.

Check these regularly. If you are considering vacancies outside Northern Ireland, for example in the Republic of Ireland or Great Britain, look in national and local newspapers and/or make speculative applications direct to employers. Contact employers to find out where they advertise for staff. You can also check in the nursing publications mentioned above.

#### Different job-hunting techniques

There are various methods you can use to look for a job:

- Advertised vacancies – newspapers, specialist publications, employer bulletins etc.
- Speculative applications – this is where you send a CV or application form to an employer without an actual post necessarily being available at the time you apply.



- Networking/creative job searching – using contacts made through clinical placements, your nursing course, School staff, plus your own network of friends, family and fellow students.
- Nursing job fairs and careers days.

### Selection and application processes

Applying for nursing posts in Northern Ireland (and usually in the Republic of Ireland and Britain too) is invariably through an application form. The application process is normally in the first instance to complete and return the form. If successful, you will be offered an interview, which in turn can lead to a job offer. This would be the conventional system of recruitment and selection for nurses in Northern Ireland.

However, some job applications (including more senior positions) may involve second interviews and presentations. Other graduate application processes can include psychometric testing, assessment centres, skills tests and so on. Make sure you are aware of what you will be required to do when applying for a job. Seek further help if you need it. Completing the form is dealt with in a later section – for now it is important to emphasise the importance of planning your applications:

- Apply for a number of posts, keeping a record of your applications. Think carefully about what you are applying for, and the reasons why.
- Check closing dates.
- Consider arranging an informal visit to the hospital or other place of work. This could be before your application, or prior to attending a job interview. Such a visit can allow you to have a look round, meet staff you might be working with, get a 'feel' for the working environment, ask questions that you might not get the chance to ask in the interview and so on.
- Read through the application form and information pack and the instructions carefully, so you can plan your application accordingly.
- Keep an up to date copy of your CV to hand to help you plan what you want to say about yourself.
- Don't jump at the first job that's offered unless you are sure you want it.
- Review and reflect regularly how you are getting on with your applications.

### Self-assessment

This is all about looking at yourself, reviewing and auditing your significant previous experience. It is the first step to take before completing an application form or writing a CV. This process should include considering course work, clinical



placements, other relevant work experience, voluntary work and other activities and interests.

So that you can plan what you want to say and feel confident in talking about yourself, it is a good idea to sit down and list on a sheet of paper all the significant things you have done or achieved. These can include:

- specific achievements
- work experience
- notable coursework projects
- funded conferences
- voluntary work
- RCN/Unison steward

- current or past responsibilities eg class representative
- elective placements
- extra-curricular activities eg active involvement in committees, student bodies etc
- awards
- other achievements, skills etc not already noted
- notable travel experiences.

Consider each in terms of the skills you have used and developed. Employers are looking for evidence of such skills as communication, teamwork, problem solving, decision-making and managing your time effectively.

Try to come up with evidence of situations where you have, for example:

- taken the initiative
- worked in a team
- made something happen
- acted independently
- organised people
- persuaded others.

Use the self-knowledge you have developed to enable you to match yourself with what opportunities are actually out there. Use it to make realistic and achievable decisions about what you are going to do once you've completed your course, and use in your future career development.

## Final-year timetable

Semester/month	Action required
<b>Semester one</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Start giving serious consideration to areas of nursing you wish to go into. Talk to School staff, placement mentors, a Careers Adviser etc.</li> <li>• If considering taking time out you need to start looking now as there might be early closing dates for some options and programmes.</li> <li>• If considering further education, start investigating course options now.</li> </ul>
<b>Semester two</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attend nursing careers days.</li> <li>• Attend nursing job fair.</li> <li>• Attend other relevant dates eg other job fairs, trust open days etc.</li> <li>• Start applying for jobs – check availability of posts and get permission from staff you want to use as referees.</li> <li>• Start applying for further courses (check courses in prospectus and closing dates with School of Nursing and Midwifery website/Registry).</li> </ul>
<b>Summer (September intake)/Autumn (March intake)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue with further applications.</li> <li>• Seek advice from School staff, Careers Adviser, trusts etc as required.</li> </ul>

# APPLICATION FORMS

Impress employers by taking time with your applications.

**M**uch of the following information is derived from discussions with health trusts in Northern Ireland, who are keen to encourage a high standard on forms returned by applicants for nursing posts. It will cover the following:

- 'Selling' yourself
- Sections requiring particular attention
- Do's and don'ts.

At the end of this section is an example of a completed nursing application form to illustrate the points discussed.

## 'Selling' yourself

The main purpose of completing an application form is to a) get yourself shortlisted for interview, and b) market yourself to a potential employer. On the application form you must come across as committed, motivated and enthusiastic. Pay particular attention to the language you use. Don't come across as bland or lacking in interest. Bear in mind that employers look at a lot of forms, and if yours is dull and missing that crucial 'spark' then it may not be given as much consideration as others. Use good examples from your experience to illustrate your strengths and abilities (as discussed in the section on self-assessment in 'Finding a job').

## Sections requiring particular attention

All sections of the application form are important. You need to complete the whole form in full, including all relevant details in the correct boxes. Of particular note are the following since these are

**APPLICATION FORM (IN CONFIDENCE)** Applicant ref:

Completed form should be returned not later than 4.30 pm on the closing date to: **Staff Nurse 'D'**

To facilitate photocopying this form must be completed in black pen using block capitals or typewriter. No CV's accepted. If you want your application acknowledged please enclose a stamped addressed envelope. Dates of any holiday arrangements: From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

SURNAME: Briggs	TITLE (Ms, Mrs, Miss, Dr etc)
FIRST NAME: Josephine	MAIDEN NAME
HOME ADDRESS: 12 Happy Street BELFAST	ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE (if different)
Postcode: BT1 5AB	Postcode
HOME TELE NO: 028 9623456	BUSINESS TEL NO
DATE OF BIRTH: 21/06/81	NAT REG NO: 141 12 34 56 7
DO YOU HOLD A CURRENT DRIVING LICENCE: Yes/No	NATIONALITY: EEC/Non EEC

Please name two referees (not relatives) one of whom should be your most recent employer/manager.

Name: QUB reference	Name: QUB reference
Address:	Address:
Daytime Tel No:	Daytime Tel No:
Fax No/E-Mail:	Fax No/E-Mail:
Occupation:	Occupation:

Please indicate how you received news of this vacancy:

1. Job Bulletin	4. Belfast Telegraph
2. CSA Travel	5. Professional Journal (Please specify)
3. Internet Travel	6. Other (Please specify) QUB website

Whilst the Trust will treat the information given in this application as confidential, applicants are advised that legal processes may require the Trust to disclose the data to certain statutory bodies.

sections that can confuse applicants, or, in the case of 'Additional Information' (or its equivalent), are of real significance.

## Education

This section should include your GCSEs, A Levels, BTEC, GNVQ or equivalent qualifications. If you have completed an Access, or similar course designed for entry to higher education, it should go here.

## Further education

This is where you should put your nursing diploma and/or degree. If you have completed another degree, or higher education course, it should also go here. This section is not for qualifications gained at a further education college – they should go in the previous section.

**EDUCATION**

Subjects Passed	Level Attained	Grade	Year
English	GCSE	A	1997
Mathematics	GCSE	A	1997
English Literature	GCSE	A	1997
Double Award Science	GCSE	B	1997
French	GCSE	B/C	1997
German	GCSE	A	1997
History	GCSE	A	1997
Music	GCSE	B	1997
French	GCSE	B	1997
Biology	A Level	B	1999
Physics	A Level	B	1999

**FURTHER EDUCATION**

Degree/Diploma/Certificate	Year Obtained	Exams to be taken
Diploma in Nursing	September 2002	3 Assignments to be marked

**PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS**

Name of Professional Body/State Registration	Part No/ with Date & Results	Final with Date & Results	Registration No/ Enrolment/Pin No/	Examinations yet to be taken
Nursing and Midwifery Council	Registration to be applied for upon completion of course			

**EMPLOYMENT HISTORY - PRESENT POST**

Name & address of present employer	Title	Students
Queens University of Belfast School of Nursing and Midwifery Lisburn Road BELFAST	Commencement date Current salary/wage NHS grade (if applicable) The period of no	

Type of contract (please detail) Permanent/Fixed Term/Temporary

**SUMMARY OF DUTIES OF POST** (include number and grades of staff)

**Previous employment**

Start with the most recent employment and work back in reverse-chronological order. You might also be asked to account for any 'gaps' in your employment history eg unemployment, illness etc. (See also 1 in the CV checklist section further on in the guide for more information on this issue).

**PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT** Please list your previous jobs beginning with the most recent. (Should there be gaps in your employment history through changing jobs or being unemployed please detail these also)

Employer	Grade/Position	Period of employment From To Day/Month/Year	Brief outline of duties	Reason for leaving
The Priory Nursing Home Seaside Road Belfast	Care Assistant (Casual)	1.7.99 - Present	Helping nursing staff feeding, bathing, toileting patients	To take up nursing post
Big Berbers Fast Food Outlet Bradbury Place Belfast		1.6.97 - 5.3.99	Serving customer orders	To study for A Levels

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

This area invited in this section to give additional information you feel is relevant to your application. This should include your reasons for applying for the post, why you think you should be appointed and any hobbies and interests you may have. (Continue on a separate sheet if necessary)

At present I am a third year (final) nursing student at the Queens University of Belfast. I began my training at Queens University Belfast in September 1999, after working for several years as a Care Assistant in a Nursing Home, which prompted me to take this career path.

The experience I gained whilst working in the Nursing Home gave me a good basic knowledge of nursing skills which have helped me in my clinical placements.

Throughout my nursing diploma I have had the opportunity to put into practice the theory I have acquired on my course via my clinical placements and so increased my knowledge base.

Having had placements within the \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital Trust I feel it is a hospital that I would like to commence my career as a Staff Nurse.

**Professional qualifications**

This section should include information such as the relevant professional body eg Nursing and Midwifery Council, details of which part of the register you are on, the date of your actual (or expected) registration and your registration/PIN number and details. If you are applying while awaiting registration, state that this is the case.

**Employment history – present post**

If you have a part-time job eg in a nursing home, this information should go into this section. If you are currently on the nursing diploma/degree you could use the box to state that you are presently studying for your nursing qualification at Queen's. However, make it clear that you are not employed (unless this is actually the case) as this could cause confusion

**Additional information (the 'blank bit')**

This is – in many ways – the most important section on the form. You will either be asked to provide a statement of your suitability for the post and how you meet the criteria, or you will be asked a more specific series of questions. In most cases if applying for nursing posts in Northern Ireland it will be the former.

You will need to structure your statement so that it is both informative and interesting to read. The following gives examples of what topics you could include in this section. Use this as a guide though – you don't have to follow this to the letter!

**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

Make sure you relate your statement to the job description for the post, especially the essential criteria – these are used to select candidates for interview

Describe your interest in the post and the area of nursing for which you are applying.

Illustrate how this interest developed.

How does this relate to your long-term career aims?

Provide evidence of your suitability for the post:

- use examples from your clinical placements, the course, projects etc
- using the job description and essential criteria as a guide, describe your nursing skills as they relate to the post
- try to outline in particular:
  - evidence of your commitment to nursing and care
  - positive statements regarding your strengths and teamworking ability
  - your ability to apply what you have learnt to the care of patients
  - some knowledge of nursing policy and practice, healthcare issues and the
  - organisation to whom you are applying.

Outline what you have learned and gained from your experiences in nursing.

Outline your personal interests eg hobbies/pastimes, sports, notable travel experiences IF asked for.

**REHABILITATION OF OFFENDERS**

By virtue of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) Order (NI) 1978 and because of the nature of the work for which you are applying this post is exempt from the provisions of Article 5 of the Rehabilitation of Offenders (NI) Order 1978. Accordingly you are not entitled to withhold information about convictions which would otherwise be considered as spent under the provisions of the 1978 Order. Failure to disclose such information could result in dismissal or disciplinary action in the event of employment.

State whether or not you have been convicted of any criminal offences. **Yes/No. If YES please give details below.**

It should be noted that convictions for offences do not necessarily deter an applicant from obtaining employment.

---

**YOUR HEALTH**

Whether you have been in employment or not, on how many days and occasions over the past 2 years have you been unfit for work.

FROM	TO	No. OF DAYS	REASONS FOR ABSENCE
			Nil

Please give details of any illness you suffer from or have suffered from which could affect your capacity to work.

The Trust reserves the right to verify the above information with your current or previous employer, and any offer of employment will be subject to satisfactory medical examination.

---

**DISABILITY**

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines disability as:

"a person has a disability ... if he/she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities"

Having read this definition

Do you have or have you had a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on your ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities? Yes  No

If yes, could you advise what assistance, if any, you may consider necessary if shortlisted to attend interview

Please note disabled applicants will be given the opportunity to fully discuss their employment needs in detail to enable the Trust to identify if reasonable adjustments can or should be made.

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**PERSONAL DECLARATION**

I declare that all the foregoing statements are true and complete to the best of my knowledge and belief

I understand that any willful misstatement or omission renders the liable to disqualification or, if appointed, to dismissal

I also hereby consent to the Trust making any necessary additional enquiries in the event of discrepancies/inconsistencies identified during the recruitment and selection process including any associated documentation for the position applied for.

Signature: *J. Blagoev* Date: *20 / May 2003*

**CANVASSING WILL DISQUALIFY**

PLEASE ENSURE THAT YOU HAVE COMPLETED ALL RELEVANT PARTS OF THIS APPLICATION FORM INCLUDING THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MONITORING SECTION. ALL ONLY APPLICATIONS CONTAINING THE INFORMATION SOUGHT WILL BE CONSIDERED.

**Medical history**

Detail periods of sickness during your course. Be truthful, as this will form part of the reference from the School of Nursing and Midwifery. Don't be too concerned if you had to have a block of time off due to sickness – regular days off here and there are likely to cause more concern. If you're worried about this, see the Careers Adviser.

**Rehabilitation of offenders**

You must declare ALL convictions, cautions included. The NHS is not subject

to rehabilitation of offenders legislation and any offences, cautions, convictions etc MUST be declared. If you omit anything then you might lose the job for which you have applied, or worse, if already in the job, you could be dismissed. If you do have any convictions, these will not necessarily prevent you from consideration for the post (depending on the offence). Each situation will be considered on an individual basis. If you are not sure what to put here, see the Careers Adviser for a confidential discussion.

Applicant ref:   
(For official use only)

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES MONITORING

The \_\_\_\_\_ Hospital Health and Social Services Trust is committed to equality of opportunity for all job applicants regardless of sex, disability, marital status, religious affiliation, political opinion, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or age, and therefore selects staff solely on the basis of merit.

Monitoring is undertaken in the interests of ensuring that the Trust's Equal Opportunities Policy is effective and you are requested to complete the following questionnaire by ticking appropriate boxes.

**FAILURE TO FULLY COMPLETE THIS SECTION WILL RESULT IN YOUR APPLICATION BEING REJECTED!**

1. Sex	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>	
2. Marital Status	Single <input type="checkbox"/>	Married <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/>
3. Religious affiliation	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>		
I am a member of the Protestant community I am a member of the Roman Catholic community I am member of neither the Protestant nor the Roman Catholic community			
Note: if you state "other community" the Trust may be required to use the residual method, which means a determination can be made on the basis of personal information contained in the application form			
4. Disability	In accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, a disability is defined as: 'a person has a disability ... if he/she has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long term effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities' Having read this definition do you have or have you had a disability?		
	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
5. Ethnic Origin	White <input type="checkbox"/> Black African <input type="checkbox"/> Black Caribbean <input type="checkbox"/> Other Group (Please specify) _____	Chinese <input type="checkbox"/> Indian <input type="checkbox"/> Irish Traveller <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani <input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed Ethnic Group <input type="checkbox"/>	

Access to this information will be strictly controlled and will not be available to those considering your application for employment. Monitoring will involve the use of statistical summaries of information in which the identities of individuals will not appear. The information will not be available for any other purpose other than equal opportunities monitoring, and will have no effect on the outcome of your application.

If your application for employment is successful, the information will subsequently be transferred to the monitoring system operated by the Trust's Equal Opportunities Unit. There it will be strictly controlled in accordance with an agreed Code of Practice.

NOTE: It is an offence under the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1998 to give false information to the Trust for monitoring purposes.

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## Do's and don'ts

### Do

- Read through the whole form, including the instructions
- Photocopy the form and have at least two copies spare for practice/initial drafts
- Make it easy and interesting to read
- Answer questions clearly
- Be positive about yourself
- Check carefully for spelling and grammatical errors
- Make sure you have fully completed the form and answered all the questions
- Be honest
- Choose referees carefully – make sure you have their consent prior to giving their names and details

### Don't

- Leave it to the last minute
- Copy someone else's
- Leave gaps in your academic/employment history
- Avoid awkward past experiences
- Use jargon, initials, empty phrases (without evidence)
- Fill the form out in a rush
- Invent or fabricate things

### Equal opportunities monitoring form

Make sure you fully complete this section. Failure to do so may mean your form is not processed. This section is detached by human resources and forms no part of the actual selection process.

# CVS AND COVERING LETTERS

When it comes to your CV, appearance is just as important as content.



**A** CV is a very useful tool for recording work experience, achievements, further qualifications, training etc in a format that you can customise to best illustrate your achievements. It can be used for:

- Job applications where a CV is requested.
- Speculative applications where you might be applying to an employer or agency seeking work opportunities that haven't been advertised in the usual way (or at all).
- Post-Registration Education and Practice (PREP). See the section 'Professional development' for more information on this.

In the UK and Ireland, CVs are generally two sides of A4 paper. If you are applying for work outside Europe other formats might be used eg in the USA a CV is called a 'resume' and is generally only one side of paper. Make sure you use

the most appropriate format for the job/employer/region you are applying to.

Much of the information on completing application forms, particularly with regard to 'selling' yourself, as described above, also applies to CVs. This section will cover:

- Constructing your CV
- CV layout, formats and presentation
- Example CV format
- CV checklist
- Covering letter.

## Constructing your CV

An employer might initially only spend 30 seconds to a minute scanning a CV. This is to see if it's worth reading more fully. Therefore, there are three crucial points to remember before you start:

- your CV is neither your autobiography nor just a list of achievements

- the purpose of the CV is to advertise a product ie **you**
- don't just inform but persuade.

Your CV should – as with the application form – include:

- evidence of your commitment to nursing
- evidence of your ability to apply what you have learned to a work situation
- some knowledge of current issues in nursing and healthcare
- positive statements about your strengths and abilities
- what is unique about you as an individual some knowledge of the employer.

Important terms here are 'evidence' and 'positive statements'. The CV should make you come alive as a rounded, three-dimensional person. You need to sound enthusiastic, motivated, keen to learn and the sort of person they would be mad not



to employ! Make sure what you say is to the point and interprets the information you give eg if describing clinical work experience, don't just say what you did, but what you learned and what skills you developed. Think about the language you use – try to use 'action' words and phrases, not bland middle-of-the-road ones.

### CV layout, formats and presentation

There is no single – or best – way to draw up a CV. There are as many different ways to do it, as there are individuals. There are, however, a number of CV formats, which can be adapted for use. Probably the most useful for new entrants to nursing is the 'chronological' format, and an example of this format is given below with some suggestions as to what to include in each section. This displays an individual's qualifications, skills, abilities and experiences in a logical, chronologically arranged flow. It's particularly useful for those who only have a limited amount of work experience.

#### Example CV format (2 sides of A4)

##### 1. Name

##### Address

##### Telephone/mobile/e-mail

[Make sure you are regularly contactable at these]

##### Date of birth

##### 2. Profile/career aims (optional)

- An outline of your particular qualities, experience and qualifications.
- For speculative applications to hospitals/trusts you could say something about your overall career aims and the nursing areas in which you are interested.

##### 3. Professional qualifications

- Give type of nursing qualification eg RGN, RMN etc.
- Date of qualification/registration, which part you are registered at on the NMC registration system and your registration/PIN number.
- Where qualification taken.
- Any notable aspects eg elective period, project etc.
- Further qualifications/training undertaken, including external and in-house.

##### 4. Other qualifications

- Previous degree/other higher education qualifications and dates (if applicable).
- A Levels/other and dates (give details of subjects and grades).
- GCSEs and dates (summarise these eg '10 GCSEs grades A-C, including English, Maths and Science'; don't give each subject and grade)

##### 5. Professional work experience

- Give employers, dates of employment and job title/grade.
- Provide brief details of duties, but concentrate on what you learned/gained from the experience ie skills. How has this improved your understanding, work performance, professionalism etc.

##### 6. Other work experience

- Especially other care-related work, voluntary work etc. Use above format.
- If your other experience is in another area of work, give only very brief details.

##### 7. Activities, interests & skills

- Details of involvement in activities at Queen's other than academic and clinical work eg roles in clubs/societies, staff/student committees, training, sports etc.
- Outside interests ie what you do in your spare time, notable travel etc.
- Relevant skills eg IT skills, language skills.

##### 8. Referees

- Two required – ideally one academic and one clinical/work-related.
- Give name, job title, address, telephone number, e-mail address etc.
- Make sure you have obtained their consent prior to giving their names and details.
- If you are running out of space you could put these on a separate sheet and send it with the CV.

Later in your career, or if you are a mature entrant with varied experience, you could use a 'skills' CV, which details particular skills gained eg communication and interpersonal skills, teamwork, managerial/supervisory skills etc. These are described in detail on the first page of the CV, with details of qualifications, previous employment and so on described much more briefly. The Careers Service holds various books and resources covering different CV formats.

Whichever format you use, make sure that your CV is attractive and interesting to look at:

- Ensure it is word-processed on good quality white paper.
- Don't pack it with writing; leave a reasonable amount of 'white space' around the text.

- Use bold lettering, italics, underlining, etc to make it visually interesting (but don't go overboard, or it will become difficult to read).
- Make sure all spelling and grammar is correct – check it over and get someone else to check it for you

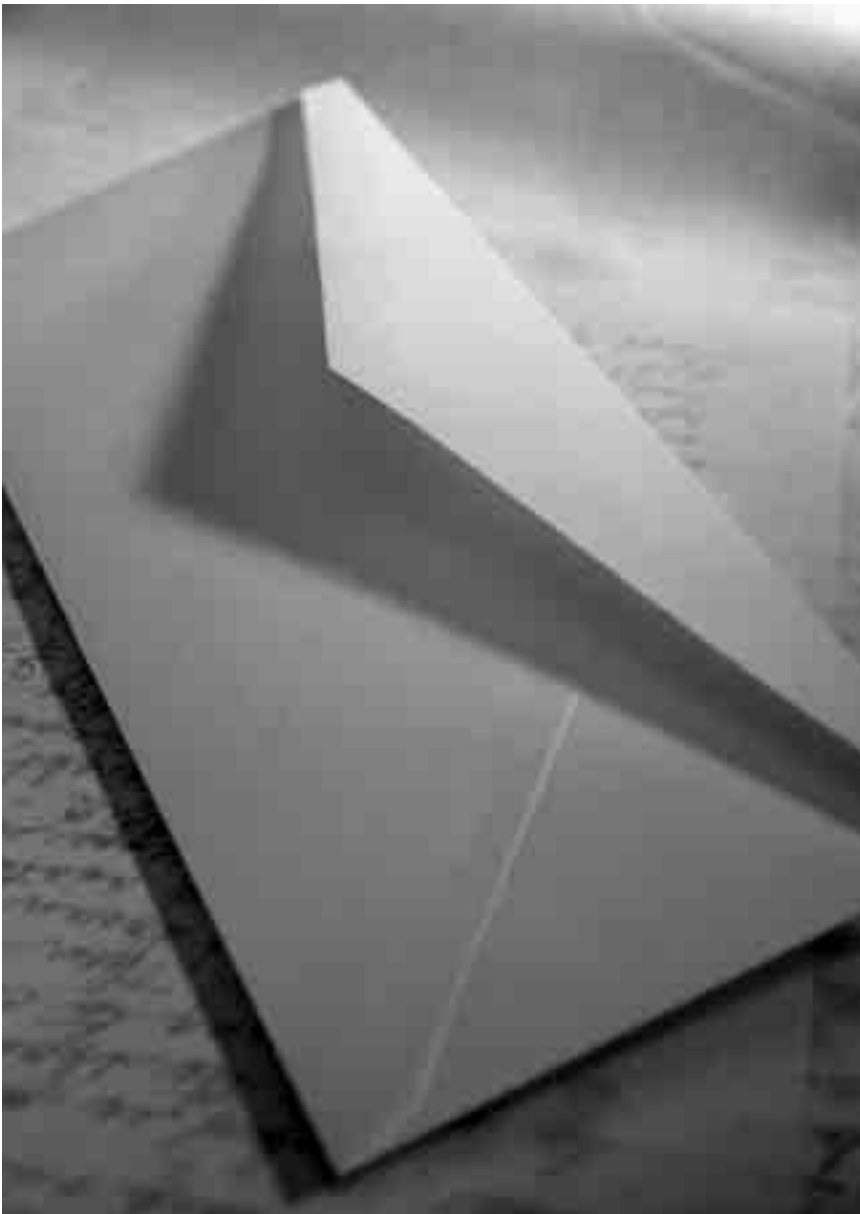
### Covering letter

A covering letter is used when you send your CV to an employer or other organisation. It's important to remember that it is the first thing that is read, so it must create a good, positive impression. It should be given as much care and attention as the CV; if your covering letter is poor then the CV may not be read at all.

It should follow a straightforward business letter-style format, but again,

there is no one particular way of presenting the letter. You could use paragraphs, bullet points, sub-headings etc. However, the following points are important:

- Make sure the letter is going to a named person – find this out if you are unsure.
- Next, state what you are writing in connection with. If it's in response to a job vacancy, say what the job is and where you saw it advertised (including the date).
- Tell them what you are doing at present. For example, you might be about to complete your degree or diploma in nursing at Queen's.
- In the next couple of paragraphs outline your particular suitability for the job. Draw attention to relevant details in your CV to guide employers to the information you want them to notice. Relate this to the job description.
- Say something about why you are applying to them ie what it is that attracts you to them as an employer etc.
- Finally, tell them if there are dates you are unavailable for interview and use the usual closing remarks ('Yours sincerely', etc).



### CV checklist

- Avoid gaps in your chronology – if you have had, for example, long-term periods of ill-health, or started but did not complete another course, or have a criminal conviction, or something else you are unsure how to deal with in the CV, you **MUST NOT** leave it out altogether. Instead, within the CV or covering letter a) give brief details of the facts, not dwelling on the issue and b) deal with it in as positive a way as possible ie emphasise any positive outcomes. If in doubt about how to deal with this, see the Careers Adviser for further confidential advice.
- Allocate space in keeping with its importance – make sure the most important information goes on the first page and that you give more detail about nursing and related skills, experiences, qualifications etc.
- Keep the text clear, easy to read and to the point – don't waffle or include irrelevant detail.
- Back up statements about your skills and qualities with evidence/examples.
- Ensure the CV gives a strong impression of what you have achieved and can do.
- Be positive.

# INTERVIEW SKILLS

Preparation is key to being successful in interviews.



**P**erforming well in interviews is something that can be learned; no one is born with fully-formed interview skills. Good preparation and practice will help you develop the necessary skills to turn in a job-winning performance. If you are nervous or apprehensive about the whole process, good preparation will help you to feel more confident and make it a more positive experience. This section will give you some tips on how to dramatically improve your interview skills. It will cover the following:

- What to expect in a nursing interview in Northern Ireland
- Preparing for the interview
- What the employer is looking for
- How to anticipate questions
- Example interview questions for D grade posts by branch
- Body language
- What went wrong: learning from your mistakes
- How to get help with interview skills.

## What to expect in a nursing interview in Northern Ireland

There will normally be two people interviewing you and the atmosphere will be fairly relaxed. The interview usually lasts no more than half an hour. The interview questions will deal with issues outlined in the job description and criteria. Each interview is standardised ie the same questions are asked in each interview to each candidate. This is to ensure objectivity in the recruitment process. There are no trick questions and they won't try to trip you up. The interviewers won't expect deep knowledge but will expect you to know something about a range of things eg experience, practice, policy, procedures etc.

## Preparing for the interview

- Research the job thoroughly – job description, employer website and literature, personal experience (eg

notes), contacts etc. This can help you anticipate questions and issues the interviewers are likely to cover. If you have applied for a particular ward or directorate, have a few key points as to why you would be the right person for the post eg own experience, knowledge or preferences for a particular specialism.

- Think about what you intend to say about yourself. What impression are you intending to give in the interview?
- Arrange an informal visit – this helps you gather information and gives you an insight into the working environment, staff you may be working with and so on. It is also a chance to ask questions. This is a 'win-win' situation: you look keen and motivated to the employer *and* you can find out a lot more than you would just by attending the interview.
- Make a list of questions to ask at the end of the interview – this always looks good, but don't ask questions for the sake of it. Plan a few to ask eg

regarding induction, training, career progression. **Don't** ask about salary or leave entitlement!

- Plan what you will wear and dress to impress! Make sure you look professional and presentable. Wear clothes that will be comfortable ie not too short, not too tight, not too itchy.
- Plan your journey and aim to arrive with a few minutes to compose yourself before the interview is due to start.
- If you are not going to be able to make the interview, telephone the employer to inform them. One of the most frustrating things for local trusts is the non-appearance of interviewees who haven't let them know they won't be coming. This could count against you later on. Northern Ireland is small enough for this information to get around.

### What the employer is looking for

Interview questions vary, but all interviewers are trying to assess the following:

- **What can you do?** This will include questions relating to your nursing abilities and experiences.
- **What kind of person are you?** These questions will be probing your ability to fit in and be a valuable member of the team (or not).
- **What is different about you?** All the applicants will have broadly the same qualifications, levels of experience and so on. What makes *you* stand out from the crowd?
- **Why us?** The interviewers will want to know why you want to work for them as an employer rather than someone else.

### How to anticipate questions

Read the criteria for the job, paying particular attention to the essential criteria. Read the job description. These will tell you most of what you need to know about and what questions they will be asking you. You might not be able to predict the actual questions word for word, but you should be able to predict the question areas.

Questions tend to fall into certain categories:

- **Criteria-based**  
Related to the essential and, possibly, the desirable criteria set out for the job.
- **Situational**  
Questions which focus on example situations which might happen in the job.



- **Experiential**  
Concerned with past performance and behaviour; how you dealt with certain situations.
- **Personal**  
Concerned with personal skills, qualities, strengths and weaknesses.

### Example interview questions for D grade posts by branch

During the interview, help the interviewer(s) by guiding them to your strengths. Use the questions to illustrate your abilities, experience and suitability for the post. Think before you answer a question. Don't frustrate the interviewer by not listening properly to the question, by failing to answer the question or by providing superfluous information; be succinct and to the point.

If you get stuck for an answer, buy yourself some seconds by asking them to repeat or rephrase the question. Always have a couple of questions to ask at the end, as this indicates interest and enthusiasm for the post.

**Don't** ask questions regarding pay, rotas, holidays etc. These could be answered through the informal visit or after being offered the job. Examples of questions to ask could be regarding induction, training, career prospects and progression, for example.

#### Adult nursing

- What do you think are the main responsibilities of a D grade staff nurse?
- A doctor phones your ward and asks you to administer a certain medicine to a particular patient. Can you accept this prescription over the phone? What course of action would you take?
- How would you ensure the safe administration of medication to a patient?
- How would you deal with the sudden death of a patient on your ward with regards to communicating this to relatives?
- How can you ensure infection control standards are adhered to at ward level?
- How would you handle a complaint from a relative about nursing care?
- How can you ensure a safe environment for elderly patients on your ward?
- How would you deal with an elderly patient who has just fallen out of bed?
- How can you ensure that care is being accurately documented?
- What makes a ward/department a good learning environment?

#### Children's nursing

- Where do you see your position in an emergency situation?

## INTERVIEW SKILLS

- What are some of the key issues in family centered care?
- How do you see yourself relating to/working with others, especially nursing colleagues?
- Discuss the advantages/disadvantages of respite care for children?
- A young child is being kept alive by a ventilator. Following surgery he develops a serious lung infection. How would you help the parents to cope?

### Mental health

- Discuss a piece of research you have undertaken or recently read about.
- What do you understand by...?
- What approaches should be used to reduce the incidence of violence?
- What skills do you have that may help you in managing other non-qualified staff?
- A man in his thirties arrives at A&E with his elderly mother. The man is clearly disturbed and has aggressive outbursts that are frightening his mother. What do you do?

### Learning disability

- How would you prove that there is quality of care provided within a home?
- What are the advantages of goal planning or care planning?
- A lot of service users display challenging behaviour; what is challenging behaviour and how would you deal with it?
- A service user's relative feels that his son's developing independence skills have been severely hampered by his

- new placement at the home. Staff are aware that potentially he may threaten others with physical violence, due to his previous experience when he lived alone. How would you manage this situation?
- If you were out with a service user and they were accused of shoplifting what action would you take?

### Body language

Various research has shown that in face-to-face communication situations, non-verbal (body language) signals can account for over 50 per cent of signals sent out by an individual. Tone of voice can account for almost 40 per cent, while only around ten per cent is related to what is actually said. Therefore, in job interviews – where communication skills are all – it is crucial that you give out positive non-verbal signals.

It is almost a cliché to say that interviewers make up their minds about interviewees within the first minute or so, and that they spend the rest of the interview reinforcing their initial impression. Nevertheless, it is largely true. The impact (or lack of it) you make at the start of the interview is vital to its outcome. You may well be a wonderful nursing student or applicant on paper but if you don't come across well in the interview, you're likely to be unsuccessful.

#### The first minute

- Walk tall into the interview room – try to be confident and deliberate about your entrance.

- Make sure you smile at – and make immediate eye contact with – the interviewers.
- Wait for them to initiate any handshake – don't do so yourself as this may make the interviewer(s) uncomfortable. If you are required to shake hands make sure the handshake is firm and dry, not limp.
- Wait to be asked to sit down, then sit in a comfortable position and be aware of posture ie don't slouch!

These simple examples of positive body language will help to create a good impression and give you a flying start to the interview.

#### During the interview

- Maintain eye contact but don't stare.
- It is acceptable to look away from time to time, especially when considering your answer to a question. However, the more positive signal is to look to the side, rather than down when doing so.
- If there is more than one interviewer, look at the other(s) from time to time, so that they are involved in what you are saying too.
- Remember to smile now and again – you will come across as a warmer person if you do.
- Use positive body language as you listen to and answer questions (see below).
- Don't fidget or keep adjusting your posture – this can be very distracting.

#### End of the interview

The end of the interview is also very important. You should aim to leave the interviewers with a positive impression of you. Have a question or two to ask at the end, to show your interest eg regarding induction, training, professional development etc. Don't ask a question, though, if all have already been satisfactorily answered. It is better not to ask anything if the only question you can think of is something obvious or can be found in their application literature. Make sure you smile at the end, thank the interviewers for their time, give a firm handshake (if offered) and walk tall out of the interview room. THEN you can really relax!

#### What went wrong: learning from your mistakes

Hopefully you will be successful. However, if not, you need to find out what went wrong so that you can improve your performance next time. There are many reasons why an interview

During the interview	
Positive body language	Negative body language
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nodding/head signals – nodding when listening to a question indicates that you are listening</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of eye contact – suggest evasiveness, untrustworthiness etc</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendly 'eyebrow flash' – slight raising of the eyebrows calls attention to the face and encourages eye contact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not smiling – can come across as cold</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mirroring techniques – subtly reproducing signals given by the interviewer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hands behind head – suggests smugness, superiority</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maintaining alert raised head position</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjusting tie, etc – suggests insecurity</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Averting gaze from time to time – to avoid staring (sideways rather than down)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Slouching – suggests insolence, aggression</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unhurried movements – don't fidget!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pulling at collar – suggests tenseness, telling untruths</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relax as interview progresses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nervous movements – picking at fluff on jackets, trousers etc</li> </ul>



can go wrong. Nerves can get in the way, good answers to questions may not come to mind, the questions may not be the ones you expected and so on. Sometimes, if there is a lot of competition, there may not be anything wrong with you or your interview performance – it's just that someone else had the edge on the day. However, in most cases a lack of success can be due to one or more of the following:

- Lack of confidence – while it is expected that you will be nervous, a lack of confidence can often be due to a lack of preparation and understanding of what is expected.
- Poor personal presentation – eg unsuitable clothes, too casual and unfocused in answers to questions, manner etc.
- Lack of preparation.
- Poor communication skills – mumbling, chewing gum when talking, talking with hand in front of your mouth.

- Negative attitude – being critical about the course, placements, other staff etc.
- Overselling – pretending you are someone you are not.
- Talking too much and not answering the questions properly.

### How to get help with interview skills

There are some simple ways to improve interview performance:

- Prepare beforehand.
- Research job and employer and try to anticipate questions that might come up based on the job description and your application.
- Know what you have learned, particularly knowledge areas and skills developed.
- Practise answering questions – set aside time prior to the interview and get friends or family to ask you typical questions, as if it were an interview.

- Make the placement the centre of all your responses; if in doubt about what to say at any point think carefully and try not to panic.
- Seek help/advice from School staff, the Careers Adviser etc, either individually or in small groups.
- If unsuccessful, get feedback within a couple of days of the interview. Employers don't usually mind doing this and it can identify areas that you might need to work on.

### AND FINALLY ...

In interviews remember to:

- BE POSITIVE
- BE HONEST
- BE YOURSELF

# THE FIRST JOB: WORKING AS A NEWLY- QUALIFIED NURSE

You've got that job, so what's next?



## Registration

Registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) is the first step in your career as a working nurse within the UK. This section provides a quick guide to what happens when you complete your nursing qualification and what you need to do next.

Queen's School of Nursing and Midwifery will forward the necessary information about you to the NMC at the end of the course, so that it can issue you with the application for registration form. The NMC requires:

- Completed application for registration form, plus the fee of £86 (this fee covers registration for three years, after which it is currently £43 per year).
- Course completion details (sent by Queen's).
- Declaration of good health and character form (also sent by Queen's) – newly-qualified nurses will still be required to go through the various

checks and to self-declare any previous offences/convictions etc.

The registration process can take up to a month to complete. Many trusts consider employing newly-qualified nurses ahead of actual registration, although you will not be able to work as a staff nurse grade D until you are registered. It is possible that some trusts may consider backdating a grade D salary to the actual time of your appointment, even if you weren't working at that level.

You should receive your professional identification number (PIN) card and statement of entry seven to ten days after registration, although you are eligible to practice as soon as you are registered. In order to minimise any delay to this process you should ensure that the information both you and Queen's School of Nursing and Midwifery send to the NMC is accurate and compatible ie there are no discrepancies between the information Queen's provides and the information you provide – and vice versa.

Newly-qualified nurses will then be registered on the new three-part register. This has been introduced as the previous different part numbers were felt to be too complicated and confusing. The three parts are for:

- registered nurse (formerly parts 1-9 and 12-15)
- registered midwife (formerly part 10)
- registered specialist community public health nursing (initially part 11).

Newly-qualified nurses will be registered under the new system. Existing nurses will 'migrate' to the new register. For more details on registration, fees and other information check out the NMC website at [www.nmc-uk.org](http://www.nmc-uk.org).

If you want to register for work in the Republic of Ireland, you must first be registered in the UK. The website for An Bord Altranais contains full details of the procedure and downloadable application forms. See the reference section for contact details.

# NURSING PROFILES

Find out more about working in your chosen area.

## Adult nurse

NAME Rachel Jamison  
JOB TITLE Staff nurse grade D  
in vascular surgery  
EMPLOYER Belfast City Hospital  
YEAR QUALIFIED 2002



### My job

I initially looked at general surgery, but there were no vacancies at the time I applied. As I had done a placement in vascular at the Royal Hospital I knew what to expect. I also did most of my placements at Belfast City Hospital and felt comfortable there. A lot of the work is caring for patients before and after operations eg pain management, dressings, administering drugs and preparing for tests and other procedures.

I now feel confident in the delivery of patient care and applying my nursing skills. I have developed my communication skills. I am more competent in the administration of medicines and antibiotics and more confident in using different types of pain relief. I would like to move away from vascular surgery in time, perhaps to general surgery or cardiology, maybe even to community nursing later after more experience.

### Tips for moving from study to employment

It was a big transition from student to staff nurse, with all the responsibility virtually overnight. You only really start to learn when you have become qualified. It did become easier after a few months. It helps that other staff are very supportive and there is always someone to ask. Make the most of your final placement – try to do as many things as if you were a staff nurse. Before you start, try to find out as many things as possible about the ward you are going to, and don't be afraid to ask questions.

### Good points about the work

- Personal satisfaction in helping patients.
- Professional development is satisfying – 'seeing yourself with more skills'.
- Seeing people get better.
- Making patients comfortable.
- Team working and support.

## Children's nurse

NAME Rosaleen Williamson  
JOB TITLE Staff nurse grade E  
EMPLOYER Mater Hospital  
YEAR QUALIFIED 2000



### My job

I originally qualified in general nursing, but being an A&E nurse I see people from the whole range of nursing branch areas – adult, children's, mental health and learning disability. I see a lot of children in A&E and I felt I needed to gain a qualification in this area in order to extend my clinical skills and experience. I was seconded for a year to do the shortened children's branch qualification at Queen's, and am now qualified on Parts 12 & 15 of the Register. Around 25 per cent of those I see are children under 16 years, and there is a 'seasonal' cycle to this with weekends and holidays especially busy with child patients.

### Tips for moving from study to employment

The most important difference is the level of responsibility: as a student you are covered to a certain extent, but as a staff nurse the buck stops with you. It's important to gain experience in the management of patients in your clinical placements. Put yourself forward, ask questions and take responsibility where you can. If interested in A&E, experience of working alongside doctors is useful due to the close teamworking environment there.

### Good points about the work

Every day is different and there is always something new to learn no matter how experienced you are. A&E is a great career pathway because of this and the experience you gain – if you can cope with the work, then you can cope with the work anywhere. It is fairly unique in offering work experience with patients from all four branch areas. However, it can be heartbreaking seeing children hurt or ill. At present I am studying for a part-time specialist practice degree in emergency care, in order to qualify as a nurse practitioner in minor injuries working with the full range of patients.

### Mental health nurse

**NAME** Cathy Parker  
**JOB TITLE** Staff nurse grade E  
**EMPLOYER** South & East Belfast Regional and Adolescent Inpatient Unit  
**YEAR QUALIFIED** 2000



#### My job

My role is as primary nurse within a team in a residential centre for young people between the ages of 13 and 18 years. Their problems include eating disorders, psychosis, low moods and trauma, and they can be here for any length of time between two weeks and a year. I have been working here for a year and a half; before that I worked for a trust for two years and did agency work. My responsibilities include managing care plans and ensuring treatment is carried out. Due to the nature of my work, I also have to get involved in all aspects of residential care, including cooking and cleaning, as well as nursing itself.

#### Tips for moving from study to employment

There was a big difference between being a student and a qualified nurse. For example, there wasn't the same level of responsibility involved in running a ward. It was also difficult remembering everything but there was always someone to ask or to remind you. It's important to remember what you are accountable for. Working as a student in the same hospital that I then went to work in full-time helped with the transition.

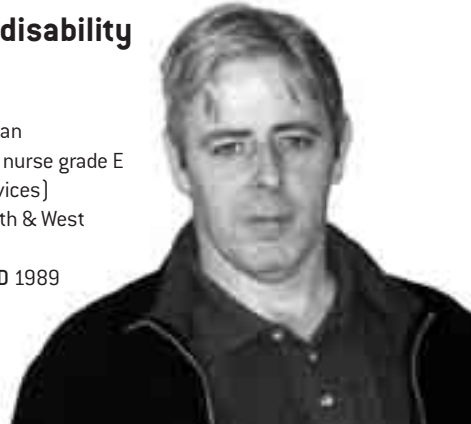
**'It can be rewarding when patients respond to treatment and are able to lead happier lives.'**

#### Good points about the work

The main reason I wanted to do my present job was to help treat young people early enough in order to prevent problems affecting them later in life – to avoid the 'revolving door' syndrome that often sees adults coming in and out of hospital for treatment. I also get to know the young people who come to the centre and build relationships with them, due to the length of their stay. It can be rewarding when patients respond to treatment and are able to lead happier lives.

### Learning disability nurse

**NAME** Aidan Ryan  
**JOB TITLE** Staff nurse grade E (children's services)  
**EMPLOYER** North & West Belfast Trust  
**YEAR QUALIFIED** 1989



#### My job

I work with young people up to the age of 18 years in the behaviour service, annexed to the residential service at Muckamore Abbey Hospital. The job involves providing constructive day activities for them, as well as working with the outreach education team and various therapy professionals. I have undertaken diploma-level study through Keele University in the field of management of aggression, and now lead the team at Muckamore in this. This involves, amongst other tasks, providing induction training for new staff and breakaway days for staff in professions allied to medicine. These are areas I would like to pursue further, particularly the training and advisory roles. Competition for higher-level posts can be intense though.

**'Don't be afraid to ask for help – there's always someone to consult.'**

#### Tips for moving from study to employment

Expect a big jump from the course to the job. Don't be afraid to ask for help – there's always someone to consult. Maintaining your own knowledge and competence is crucial; access to post-registration training is available through your trust.

#### Good points about the work

You develop good relationships with your colleagues, as well as the multidisciplinary team. I've found that it's possible to develop closer working relationships than in other nursing environments. There are opportunities for further training and being involved in working groups such as quality assurance and management of aggression. It's also possible to do a shortened (one year) paediatric qualification.

## District/community nurse

NAME Pleasaunce Perry  
 JOB TITLE District nursing sister  
 EMPLOYER South & East  
 Belfast Trust  
 YEAR QUALIFIED 1979



### My job

I manage three nursing sisters, five staff nurses and a number of nursing auxiliaries, so my job is mainly concerned with managing, coordinating and assessing the work of the team. I also see some patients, predominantly assessing new patients and their particular needs. Over the years I have undertaken a considerable amount of further education and training, including a degree in health studies and a nurse practitioner qualification. I am currently undertaking an online extended prescribing course. In the future I would like to make more use of my nurse practitioner skills. I would also like to use my prescribing course when completed.

### Tips for moving from study to employment

District nurses are normally recruited from experienced nursing staff. One major difference is – although you are still a part of a team – you don't have the support of colleagues around you to the same extent as in hospital nursing. The pace of work can be slower and less intense. However, it can fit in more easily with family/domestic responsibilities.

**'There is less of a formal hierarchy than in the hospital environment.'**

### Good points about the work

It is satisfying nursing people, and getting to know them, over an extended period.

The role is multidisciplinary and involves working with other health professionals. There is greater flexibility and a wider range of clients and medical/health problems. This involves variety as well as challenges, but it is professionally satisfying. There is less of a formal hierarchy than in the hospital environment, and district nursing can offer more specialised nursing roles. There is a lot of driving involved as staff nurses spend most of their time away from their work base.

## Agency nurse

NAME Toni Crane  
 JOB TITLE Agency nurse  
 EMPLOYER Premiere People  
 YEAR QUALIFIED 1994



### My job

Having worked in permanent nursing employment and having completed a nursing sciences degree, I decided to enrol with a local agency in 2001 because I thought it would be a good idea to experience a range of different clinical areas. I felt this would help me assess in which direction to take my nursing career. As an agency nurse you might be in charge of, or work alongside, nurses on the ward, depending on your experience and qualifications. You can be sent to a variety of clinical areas or, if you find an area you really like, you can arrange a 'block booking' so that you can stay there. As there is a high demand for nurses, there are always plenty of opportunities and you can usually be placed according to your preferences for clinical areas and shift patterns. My next career move is back to studying as I am starting an MSc in nursing at Queen's this autumn.

### Tips for moving from study to employment

Agency work can be a good way to check out different nursing pathways and can help you to take control of your career. It's helpful for nurses with children and other family responsibilities, as you can find work that fits around them. You won't be thrown in at the deep end and there is always someone to ask if you need help.

**'It can be a challenge, but if you're not afraid you'll do well.'**

### Good points about the work

You can develop a range of clinical skills, as well as skills relevant to nursing, such as communication and interpersonal skills. It also allows you to build your confidence and adaptability. It can be a challenge, but if you're not afraid you'll do well. Due to the variable and non-permanent nature of agency work it can be difficult to progress within your nursing career.

# FURTHER EDUCATION OPTIONS

If you want to pursue further study then it's wise to consider all your options.



**M**any nurses – both those just completing a degree or diploma and those in the first years of employment – consider taking further courses. These can include taking a further nursing degree, such as health studies or specialist practice, stand alone modules or a masters higher degree. This section is intended to give an overview of what is available at Queen's.

Why undertake further study? There are a number of benefits, as detailed below, and in today's nursing environment the concepts of lifelong learning and continuing professional development are fundamental to the development of both individual nurses and care services in general.

#### Potential benefits of further study

- Career development and progression.
- Promotion to higher grades.

- Develop clinical knowledge and skills.
- Develop personal and employability skills.
- Moving to different/related careers within nursing.
- Expansion of nursing career options.
- Undertake research into areas of interest.

#### Potential drawbacks of further study

- Work/study/life balance.
- Costs, especially if self-financing.

The School of Nursing and Midwifery at Queen's offers a wide variety of further education options including certificates, diplomas, degrees, postgraduate qualifications and stand alone modules. For full details of courses, entry requirements and application procedures please see the School of Nursing and Midwifery's *Graduate and Continuing Education Prospectus*, which is also available online at [www.qub.ac.uk/nur](http://www.qub.ac.uk/nur).

Graduate and continuing education within the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Queen's is an evolving and growing area. New programmes, modules and stand alone courses are being created on an ongoing basis, reflecting and responding to individual and service needs, as well as the particular expertise of School staff. For example, a new community qualification is being developed, as is a specialist practice programme in forensic mental health.

Now is the time to be proactive in the management of your nursing career with regard to further education: if you have an area of interest that is not currently offered, then let staff in the division know. Provision within graduate and continuing education is continually under review and they welcome input from students and nursing professionals in the process of developing programmes of study.



## Courses offered

### Degree programmes

The BSc (Hons) health studies aims to develop analytical and academic skills to improve and advance clinical practice. It offers a broad scope through different pathways or core/optional modules. There is also the BSc (Hons) specialist practice, which offers the opportunity to become a specialist practitioner within particular patient care or client group settings. The course has specific learning outcomes linked to knowledge, skills and attitudes and involves a number of pathways within a modular design. It will allow participants to demonstrate higher levels of skill within more complex and critical care situations. Graduates of the nursing diploma can also complete their nursing degree.

### Postgraduate programmes

Masters degree programmes are intended to deepen and broaden practice, management, teaching and research within nursing. The taught programmes develop analytical thinking and research skills, and are assessed through thesis, examination or independent research. Courses are a year in length if taken full-time, or two years if taken part-time. Examples include the MSc in nursing and the MSc in specialist practice. The range of modules within taught masters programmes is being added to, with the list reflecting areas of expertise within the School of Nursing and Midwifery. Again, programmes are under constant development and review.

### Research programmes

Research degrees at postgraduate level are similarly under review and further development, with the School expanding its research capacity and culture. The

research profile is increasing and extending to all areas of nursing practice, and research programmes will, again, reflect areas of expertise amongst School staff. MPhils and PhDs involve original research, and projects could be developed from a nurse's own ideas and areas of interest, or as a result of service needs and requirements. There are an increasing number of research students within the School undertaking MPhil and PhD qualifications, and this number is set to expand with the research profile of the School.

### Stand alone modules

As with other programmes the range of stand alone modules is always evolving and constantly under review. New courses are being added each year, in response to the needs of individuals and services.

### Other courses

Other courses include the certificate and diploma in health studies. Refresher training, study skills etc are also available at post-basic level.

### Funding

At present most courses are self-funding. Trusts are usually willing to discuss with staff how to accommodate those wishing to undertake some form of further study. Similarly, masters and research courses are also normally self-funding. However, it's always worth talking to trusts, the School of Nursing and Midwifery Registry, course directors etc for any ideas or information they may have about funding opportunities. There are also a variety of trusts and charities that may provide funding, although this would rarely be enough to cover the full amount required. Criteria for funding usually concerns subject matter and/or location;

any funding available is usually for those who could not afford to take courses otherwise, or who have no other sources. Directories and other reference materials are available at Queen's Careers Service, public libraries and on the web.

## Applications

Applications for courses are usually made in May/June each year. There are application forms for different course areas. The Registry holds relevant information and application forms. They can be contacted at:

School of Nursing and Midwifery  
 Medical Biology Centre  
 97 Lisburn Road  
 Belfast BT9 7BL  
 Tel: 028 9097 5717  
 E-mail: nur.registry@qub.ac.uk  
 Web: [www.qub.ac.uk/nur](http://www.qub.ac.uk/nur)

## Midwifery

Related to nursing, but a separate discipline, is midwifery. The main course option for applicants from a non-midwifery background is the BSc (Hons) in midwifery studies, which lasts 18 months. It is aimed at registered nurses who wish to train as midwives. Six months to a year's experience of ward-based work is a shortlisting criterion, and it is rare for an applicant to be considered without this. There will be around 24 places in 2004 and the course is normally advertised in April with a start date in the autumn semester. Also available is the three year BSc in midwifery sciences, which is a direct-entry course (no nursing qualification required). As above the course is normally advertised in April with a start date in the autumn semester. The 2004 entry course director is Jill Stewart Moore and the assistant course director is Mary O'Prey.

## In-service and other training

There is a wide variety of in-service training and courses available through the trusts. Employers may also enable employees to undertake part-time or distance/open learning courses at their discretion.

For more detailed information please refer to the online prospectus on the School of Nursing and Midwifery's website at [www.qub.ac.uk/nur](http://www.qub.ac.uk/nur). Further course options are available at other institutions, and you should consult their prospectuses for further details if interested.

# PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Staying up to date is vital in the nursing profession.

## Managing your career

Nursing roles do not stand still and your education and training do not end with completion of your degree or diploma. Nursing is in constant development and nurses have to keep up to date with new practices, new guidelines and legislation, new training and education. It is crucial to **manage** your career and to develop and maintain a selected range (or 'portfolio') of skills, qualifications and experiences. Not only do employers seek these, but by setting them within a framework, which you manage, you can stay in control of your career development; it gives you ownership of your career by making you the driver.

## Developing skills

Through your course you will have developed a number of skills. These include:

### ■ Communication

- oral communication
- written communication
- presentations
- presentation of information.

### ■ Interpersonal

- team working
- dealing with a variety of people
- negotiation
- leadership
- networking
- respecting the views of others.

### ■ Rational thinking

- information management
- critical analysis of evidence
- problem solving
- decision making.

### ■ Self-management

- self-motivation
- organisation/time management
- using own initiative
- resilience.

These can be built upon and developed, along with new skills, when you enter nursing employment. By planning and managing your career and professional development you can 'target'

specific skills and experiences (and qualifications) which will allow you to move in the direction that interests you. By doing this in a proactive and systematic way, you will be improving your chances of getting where you want to be.

Your skills, including those above, can be divided into three main categories:

### ■ Key skills

- communication and interpersonal skills
- team working
- numeracy
- IT
- improving own learning and performance
- problem solving.

### ■ Personal qualities

- motivation
- initiative
- stamina
- flexibility
- honesty.

### ■ Career management skills

- critical self-awareness skills
- transferability
- leadership skills
- negotiation skills
- networking skills
- 'creative' job searching.

As well as gaining relevant experience through your nursing duties, you will develop new and existing skills through in-service training and courses, and further qualifications. However, it is vital that you are proactive in this process: actively seek to develop your skills, qualifications and experiences. Record and reflect on what you are doing and make an action plan, which you review on a regular basis.

## Lifelong learning

This is a concept, which is a key feature of employment today, particularly within nursing. The basic idea is that you don't stop learning at any career stage. Employers are keen to recruit staff that understand and actively subscribe to this by continually seeking to develop new and existing skills within their career.

## PREP

Post-registration education and practice (PREP) is a requirement for the renewal of registration and places nurses within the culture of lifelong learning. It aims to help nurses to reflect on their clinical practice, provide evidence that they are keeping up to date with and developing practice, and through this providing the best quality care for their patients. If required, you may need to provide evidence of your continuing professional development.

There are two main strands:

- **Practice standard** – this requires nurses to provide evidence that during the previous five years they have worked for 100 days (750 hours) or undertaken an approved return to practice course.
- **Continuing Professional Development (CPD) standard** – this requires the recording of CPD over the previous three years.

There is a minimum requirement of five study days over the previous three years for PREP. If these are not completed, nurses are required to attend a return to practice course. PREP/CPD is flexible with regard to activities undertaken and recorded, and formats for the PREP file, ie there are no 'approved' CPD activities you must complete; neither is there a definitive format for personal professional files. What is required is that CPD must relate to your particular roles and responsibilities.

The personal professional file must document your learning activity, as completed within the three-year time framework. It should relate to your practice including your expectations, experience and reflection on that experience.

A diary or log of your activities and experiences would be a useful tool for PREP, as would an up to date CV detailing employment, training and further education experiences/ qualifications undertaken.

# CAREER PROGRESSION

‘Where can I go from here?’



**T**his section looks at career options and progression within nursing. This will include:

- Overview of Queen’s nursing students’ destinations on graduation
- Some points on other popular nursing career areas
- Other potential nursing career options.

## Overview of Queen’s nursing students’ destinations on graduation

The majority of nursing students qualifying from Queen’s enter NHS nursing posts in Northern Ireland. Information about the range of nursing areas and posts available within NI trusts, and what they involve, can be found through:

- Nursing careers days – organised and hosted by the Careers Adviser for each intake approximately six months before graduation. Speakers from trusts and

other nursing employers allow students to find out more about their next steps within nursing and career progression options.

- Nursing job fairs – arranged by the School of Nursing and Midwifery and held at Queen’s for each intake, usually in April and October. It is attended by the majority of NI trusts, as well as other nursing employers.
- Own contacts in trusts.
- Clinical placements.
- Other nursing events.
- Informal visits (prior to interviews).
- Trust open days.
- Trust web pages, publications etc.

A small, but significant number choose other options. These include:

- Nursing in Britain, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands.
- Taking time out – combining employment with travel abroad.
- Other employment, education or training.

## Some points on other popular nursing career areas

### Community

Opportunities exist to develop your career within community-based work related to the nursing branch in which you are qualified. While many mental health and learning disability qualified nurses are based in the community, there are opportunities for further career development or specialisation as well.

Until recently district or community nursing was usually only open to nurses following a period of experience, usually at least one to two years. However, in Britain, due to recruitment issues it is sometimes possible to enter certain community-based settings directly on qualification. There are signs that this will also be happening in Northern Ireland too. While this may be attractive to some, it’s important to remember that there are



some significant differences between hospital-based work and that based in the community sector. Although part of a team, due to the nature of the work, you do not always have the immediate support that you would have in a hospital. On the other hand, there can be satisfaction in establishing relationships and getting to nurse people over an extended period of time.

It may be beneficial to gain some clinical experience before applying for community positions, even if this is not technically required, as it will help you to cope professionally with the demands of the work. Further qualifications in community-based settings will still be required and these can be gained through full and part-time study or distance learning depending on the area. Some will continue to require additional, related nursing experience prior to entry.

Queen's School of Nursing and Midwifery offers a community pathway within the BSc (Hons) health studies degree and are currently developing a community nursing specialist practice curriculum for nurses wishing to become community children's nurses, district nurses, health visitors (public health

nurses) or school nurses. It is planned for this to be in place by October 2005. Queen's also offers a variety of options within the specialist practice degree/diploma. There is also a BSc (Hons) in community nursing at the University of Ulster, which includes pathways in district nursing and health visiting, amongst others.

#### Armed services

There are three nursing services in the UK armed forces:

- Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service (QARNNS)
- Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service (PMRAFNS)
- Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps (QARANC)

There is a considerable amount of similarity between the various nursing services, and the following points about the Royal Naval Nursing Service (QARNNS) will serve as an example of what nursing is like in the armed forces:

- Nursing staff are responsible for the health and fitness of Royal Naval and Royal Marine personnel both in times of peace and conflict, and opportunities exist to serve both at sea and abroad.

The work can also include caring for members of the other services and the day-to-day care of civilians while working within the NHS.

- Nurses develop a range of skills in both primary and secondary care nursing, and this is supported by excellent facilities and equipment. Nursing skills are maintained within the NHS on a day-to-day basis. There is also access to specialist and postgraduate courses, a competitive starting salary and a wide variety of social and sporting facilities.
- Staff nurses should be aged between 21 and 33 years of age, ideally relatively newly-qualified and registered on Parts 1 or 12 of the NMC Register. If qualified more than two years, you may be eligible to join as a nursing officer junior ward manager.
- Qualities sought include a high level of motivation, confidence and a caring personality. Eight weeks basic naval training is followed by a six month preceptorship involving practical and theoretical aspects of naval administration and leadership.

So, if you are looking for a challenge and the idea of developing your nursing skills within the active environment of the

service lifestyle appeals to you, then the naval and other nursing services are worth investigating further.

#### Midwifery

Midwifery is a popular career move for many nurses. While it is a separate career area, it does share some similarities with nursing, especially in terms of skills and qualities required. The main difference is that it is dealing with a natural process, rather than sickness. The work is concerned with providing advice and support to women and their families throughout pregnancy and the postnatal period. Midwives are independent practitioners, although they work alongside a multidisciplinary team of GPs and other health professionals in a variety of settings, including hospitals and the community. For registered nurses wishing to train in midwifery, the School of Nursing and Midwifery at Queen's offers the full-time 18-month BSc (Hons) midwifery studies. This normally begins in November each year. See the section 'Further education options' for more details.

#### Agency nursing

There are a number of recruitment agencies that either specialise in nursing or who have nursing/healthcare divisions. A number of Queen's nursing graduates each year choose to work with agencies, some of which have contracts with the larger NI trusts. This can allow nurses benefits such as flexibility in their employment, working hours etc. Agencies can offer further training opportunities too.

If you are considering working in Britain, a number of agencies are UK-wide and can offer placements across the country. To work overseas, a recruitment agency may be the best way of doing so, particularly for certain countries such as the USA. There are agencies that specialise in particular countries or regions of the world. Other agencies may also be able to place you abroad, depending on where you want to go and when.

Choosing whether or not to register with an agency depends on your particular circumstances and your plans

for career development. This route may not suit everyone. However, it can be possible to alternate periods of employment with trusts with employment through an agency. If looking at agency work, ensure you have investigated your options and assessed the pros and cons of the options open to you.

#### Other nursing career areas

Other nursing careers that you could enter include:

- health visiting
- independent hospitals/residential
- NHS nursing outside NI
- nurse management
- nursing education and teaching
- nursing research
- occupational health nursing
- prison nursing
- specialist nursing
- telephone/online nursing eg NHS Direct.

Further information on the main nursing careers and midwifery can be found on the Prospects website ([www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)).

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# NURSING IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The way nursing works here in Northern Ireland.



## Overview of the health service structure in Northern Ireland

The table opposite illustrates the structure of health and social services in Northern Ireland. The 19 health and social services trusts are responsible for the provision of health and social services care in their areas, under the four regional health boards. The boards are, in turn, responsible for the planning and other strategic aspects of healthcare provision, as agents of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPNI). They are also responsible for the HSS councils, who monitor and advise the public on healthcare services.

The trusts recruit nursing staff in regular recruiting cycles and advertise vacancies through such means as the press, vacancy bulletins, nursing publications etc. Many newly-qualified nurses in Northern Ireland also find out about nursing positions through speculative applications, personal contacts and through the nursing job fairs at Queen's (see the section 'Finding your first job').

Your particular area of interest and location may not necessarily be available at the time you are looking for work, so it pays to be flexible. If you are looking for a particular area of work at a specific hospital, you may need to wait for such a post to come up. Some trusts offer a job-rotation facility for the first year. This allows you to spend a limited amount of time in a variety of nursing areas and can be a useful way of trying out different areas before committing yourself.

Career development is structured, and following suitable experience a range of opportunities and post-registration courses are available. Promotion and career development are through the nursing grades, with newly-qualified nurses normally starting as staff nurses grade D. Progression is then possible through grades E, F, G, H, etc into more senior and/or specialised positions.

Some of the most common areas of career progression include developing clinical specialisms, management, community-based opportunities, district and health visiting, research and nurse teaching. For more detailed information see the section on 'Career progression'.

## Nursing in Northern Ireland

Overview of health service structure in Northern Ireland.



# NURSING IN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Be aware of the differences in nursing between the United Kingdom and the Republic.

**N**ursing in the United Kingdom is managed by the Department of Health. There are four different authorities that manage nursing within the countries of the UK: England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Outside Northern Ireland, NHS services are run separately in England, Scotland and Wales. While the planning, management and delivery of care are broadly similar, there are some differences.

## England

The strategic health authorities are responsible for developing and managing local provision. Health services are provided by:

- Primary care trusts – provide ‘primary’ care ie first level care such as doctors/GPs, pharmacists, dentists etc. They also plan local, ‘secondary’ care.
- Secondary care – includes the NHS trusts, care trusts, mental health trusts and ambulance trusts.
- Other special health authorities offer services to the whole country eg the National Blood Authority, NHS Direct etc.

## Scotland

In Scotland local health boards are responsible for planning health provision in their areas, which are delivered by the NHS trusts. Health councils represent the interests of the public.

## Wales

Assessment and planning of local services is through the local health boards, of which there are the same number as local authorities, to allow closer working partnerships. Local services other than primary care are generally delivered by the NHS trusts. Community health councils represent the interests of the public and there are a number of specialised services delivered across the whole of Wales.



## Registration in Great Britain

If you want to work in Britain, there is no requirement for further registration once you have done so with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. In terms of deciding where to go there are a number of factors to consider:

- access to vacancy information
- areas of clinical interest
- availability of jobs/opportunities in your areas of interest
- cost of living
- local connections eg family/friends
- location.

## Registration in the Republic Of Ireland

In the Republic the official nursing authority is An Bord Altranais. UK nursing qualifications are recognised there and nurses are required to go through the registration procedure in order to be able to work in the Republic. In order to do this you must be registered with the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). Registration currently costs €126.

There are two different procedures:  
■ **Adult Branch and Midwives** – send the completed application form (downloadable from the An Bord website) together with ‘certified’ photocopies of your:

- birth certificate
- marriage certificate (if applicable)
- statement of entry (to nursing register – via the NMC).

You also need to ask the NMC to send a verification of training statement – this goes **directly** to An Bord Altranais.

■ **Other Branches** – you need to complete a more detailed registration form, available from An Bord Altranais. You also need to obtain a transcript of your training from the School of Nursing and Midwifery.

Further details are available on An Bord Altranais’ website at [www.nursingboard.ie](http://www.nursingboard.ie) and from:  
Registration Department  
An Bord Altranais  
31/32 Fitzwilliam Square  
Dublin 2, Republic of Ireland  
Tel: 00353 1 639 8500  
E-mail: [registration@nursingboard.ie](mailto:registration@nursingboard.ie)

# NURSING OVERSEAS

What to consider when looking for work further afield.

**H**ave you ever thought about practising your nursing skills abroad? If so, then this section is for you. While this option is gaining in popularity it is important to consider it in detail first. For example, do you want to just take a gap year and combine work with some travelling, or do you intend going away for a longer period (or even permanently)? Choosing nursing overseas requires careful consideration and research to avoid potential pitfalls. It is not possible here to provide detailed information: what follows is an overview of the main options and issues to consider, plus some brief points about the most popular countries and parts of the world. Further information can be obtained from the websites and organisations in the reference section.

Firstly, consider your motives. They might be:

- the challenge involved
- extending your nursing skills
- helping people in developing countries
- better standard of living
- broadening your experience
- personal/domestic reasons.

But don't forget potential drawbacks such as homesickness, culture shock, difficulties in adapting and coping with a new lifestyle and so on. Some situations could also be more difficult to adapt to than others. If you plan carefully and fully research your choices you should at least be prepared for whatever the experience brings.

The main options open are:

- **Taking a gap year** – This could be just a chance to travel and do some nursing-related work along the way eg the working visa scheme for Australia.
- **Working in a developed country** – This would involve working in an established health service, such as those in the USA, Australia, Saudi Arabia etc. Nurses are often attracted to these and other countries due to the lifestyle and standard of living. However, there are often set criteria regarding qualifications obtained and levels of experience required. Some UK nursing branches are not recognised in certain countries and



there may be requirements to 'top-up' existing qualifications.

- **Working in an undeveloped country** – This could be through a governmental agency or with a non-governmental agency (NGO) such as a charity, or could be in a more specialised area such as disaster-relief nursing. If you want to use your nursing skills to benefit others in countries where health services are not so well established, then this is worth considering. There will be certain specific requirements regarding qualifications, specialisms and experience.
- **Expeditions/trekking/holidays** – Expeditions and trekking are a relatively new area in terms of nursing. But some companies and organisations that organise these recruit medical staff to accompany the trips. There are also – at the more comfortable end of this market – opportunities to practice nursing aboard cruise liners. Such opportunities are likely to be on a fixed-contract basis with specific experience expected. Accident and emergency experience could well be required, for example.

## Specific issues to consider

### Registration requirements in your country of choice

You need to thoroughly check the registration requirements of the country you have chosen: do they recognise your branch? What level of qualification do they require? What work experience do they expect? Bear in mind that some branches are not recognised in other countries, such as the USA. Registration abroad can be a lengthy process and there may be the need to undertake further education, either in the UK or overseas, in order to upgrade your qualifications. You should contact the registration organisation(s) in the countries in which you are interested for further information. Bear in mind that in countries such as the USA, Canada and Australia where there is a federal system, registration requirements may differ from state to state.

### Maintaining registration in the UK

Maintaining UK registration is advisable, whatever the circumstances of your going abroad. This is particularly true if you are

working in the Middle East eg Saudi Arabia, where there is no national nurse registration system, working for voluntary agencies or working with the British armed services overseas. Employment is on the basis of your NMC registration, so it would be a requirement to maintain it.

If you are going abroad for a relatively short period of time, such as a gap year, and intend to return to the UK to practice nursing afterwards, or you intend going for a longer period returning at a later stage, then it is a good idea to maintain UK registration. This will require maintaining PREP (see section on 'Professional development'). Professional experience and appropriate education overseas can be counted towards PREP. It may also be possible to undertake UK/Irish-based distance learning. You should aim to keep in touch with the RCN and NMC as well as existing contacts at home.

### Contracts and conditions of employment

Checking these before making a definite commitment is very important when you are going to be away from home. It is advisable to clarify arrangements regarding, for example, accommodation, working conditions, deductions, annual leave, sickness benefits, etc. Don't rely on verbal agreements – make sure you have everything in writing. The RCN International Office has produced a checklist to help members evaluate the contracts they are being offered before committing themselves.

### Visas and work permits

This varies from country to country. In the EU work permits are not required and registration should be a formality, although the language barrier may be a problem. Outside Europe, it would normally be the case that the employer or recruitment agency obtains the visa/work permit on your behalf (assuming this is possible).

**Temporary contracts** – you need to check requirements with the nursing authorities in the host country, or if you are applying for a particular nursing organization or an agency, they will help with the process.

**Gap year** – in Australia the working holiday visa lasts for one year, but there are restrictions regarding working time allowed. Check similar restrictions in other countries, or consider going through an established organisation that can help with such arrangements.

If considering permanent emigration, applications are on the basis that there is a demand in the country you are applying

to for nurses. If you were moving abroad with a partner it is likely you would still need to obtain a separate work permit, and to comply with the usual registration requirements.

### Tax and deductions

**Tax** – depending on the circumstances of your work overseas ie time spent abroad, you may be liable for UK tax. Check with your local tax office and/or pick up the Inland Revenue leaflet *Income From Abroad?*

**National insurance** – check with your local social security office regarding arrangements while away and any entitlements to benefits when you return. A useful leaflet is *Social Security abroad*.

**Superannuation/pensions** – it may seem premature to be concerned with this but it is very important. If you work within the NHS you may be able to freeze or transfer superannuation payments. If you are going overseas to work for an aid agency you may be able to continue making payments. Beware of leaving gaps in your provision as this could have repercussions later in life.

### Medical and health insurance

Check what is offered in the country/ employer to which you intend going. There may be reciprocal health arrangements (for example, as within the EU).

### Specific countries/regions

This is intended to highlight some important points regarding popular countries/regions around the world. More detailed information can be sought from the RCN International Office or other organisations either in the UK or in the countries themselves (see 'Reference section').

#### USA

- Nursing employment mostly via agencies.
- No USA-wide system for registration – each state has its own body.
- No equivalent to children's, mental health or learning disability qualifications (unless general nursing qualification obtained first) therefore nurses with these qualifications could only work in non-nursing care work, or assistants to social workers.
- Most US states require applicants to pass the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) exam, taken in the home country prior to taking the State Board NCLEX-RN exam in the USA, in order to register – check current procedures for this.

#### Australia

- A working holiday visa allows you to go to Australia for a year. However, you are not allowed to work in the same place for more than three months.
- Possible to obtain nursing work with children's, mental health and learning disability qualifications as these are recognised.
- Each state/territory has its own regulatory authority and mutual recognition is possible between these, and in New Zealand.

#### Canada

- Current shortage of nurses.
- Children's and learning disability qualifications are not recognised.
- Mental health qualification is acceptable only in certain states ie Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan; otherwise, the RGN qualification must also be held.
- Each province has its own regulatory body.
- If eligible to register, you are required to sit the Canadian Registered Nurses Examination (CRNE) held only in Canada.

#### New Zealand

- All nurses wanting to work in New Zealand must register with the Nursing Council of New Zealand first.
- Once registered, nurses can apply for a practice certificate.
- Children's qualification is not recognised but you can register as a general nurse.
- Mental health and learning disability qualifications are recognised.

#### Middle East

- Two years experience normally required.

### Sources of vacancies

It is crucial for you to be officially registered as a nurse with the host country's regulatory authority(ies) before you enter the country. You also need to check that your qualification/experience includes all the required areas – some countries expect certain areas of theory and practice eg obstetric, paediatric, psychiatry. Sources of vacancy information include nursing journals, recruitment agencies, aid agencies and related organisations, national/local press, the internet and speculative applications to employers not necessarily recruiting (requires CV and covering letter). See the 'Reference section' for sources of further information on nursing overseas.

# REFERENCE SECTION

Websites, addresses and other sources of information to explore your options.

These are useful websites, addresses and publications for further investigation of the areas discussed within the guide. There is much more information out there, so this is just to get you started.

## Sources of nursing vacancies (including nursing journals)

- Irish Nurse online – [www.irishnurse.co.uk](http://www.irishnurse.co.uk)
- Job fairs, trust open days etc
- Local newspapers such as the *Belfast Telegraph* (Tuesdays) and the *Irish News* (Thursdays)
- NMC nursing vacancies website – [www.nmc4jobs.com](http://www.nmc4jobs.com)
- Nurserve (including overseas) – [www.nurserve.co.uk](http://www.nurserve.co.uk)
- Nursing recruitment agencies – [www.nursing-list.com](http://www.nursing-list.com)
- *Nursing Standard* online – [www.nursing-standard.co.uk](http://www.nursing-standard.co.uk)
- *Nursing Times* online – [www.nursingtimes.net](http://www.nursingtimes.net)
- NursingNetUK (including overseas) – [www.nursingnetuk.com](http://www.nursingnetuk.com)
- Queen's Careers Service (for general graduate-level vacancies) – [www.qub.ac.uk/careers](http://www.qub.ac.uk/careers)
- Trust vacancy bulletins.

## Applications, CVs and interview skills

Further information and examples can be found in:

- *Making Applications* (AGCAS guide)
  - *Making Wizard Applications* (GTI guide)
  - *First Interviews – Sorted!* (GTI guide)
- (Copies available from Queen's Careers Service)
- A CV creator facility and CV template can be found at [www.nurserve.co.uk](http://www.nurserve.co.uk).

## Further education

- NHS careers (section on further education and training) – [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk)
- ECCTIS computer database of courses in UK/Republic of Ireland – available online at Queen's Career Service.

## Continuing professional and skills development

- Nursing and Midwifery Council – [www.nmc-uk.org](http://www.nmc-uk.org)
- PREP and other professional development areas – [www.nmc-uk.org/nmc/main/advice/\\$adviceContents](http://www.nmc-uk.org/nmc/main/advice/$adviceContents).

- Royal College of Nursing – [www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk)
- Royal College of Midwives – [www.rcm.org.uk](http://www.rcm.org.uk)
- Northern Ireland Practice & Education Council (NIPEC) – [www.n-i.nhs.uk/nipecc/home.htm](http://www.n-i.nhs.uk/nipecc/home.htm)
- Internurse (online archive of nursing resources) – [www.internurse.com](http://www.internurse.com)
- Making a difference (policy on strengthening the nursing, midwifery and health visiting contribution to health and healthcare) – [www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/fs/en](http://www.dh.gov.uk/PublicationsAndStatistics/fs/en)
- Agenda for change (policy on modernisation of NHS pay system) – [www.modern.nhs.uk/scripts/default.asp?site\\_id=48](http://www.modern.nhs.uk/scripts/default.asp?site_id=48)
- NHS leadership development – [www.modern.nhs.uk/home/default.asp?site\\_id=58&id=1115](http://www.modern.nhs.uk/home/default.asp?site_id=58&id=1115)
- NHS leadership qualities framework – [www.nhsleadershipqualities.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsleadershipqualities.nhs.uk).

## Other nursing careers

- NHS careers – [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk)
- Directory of UK independent hospitals – [www.carehealth.co.uk/directry.htm](http://www.carehealth.co.uk/directry.htm)
- Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service (QARNNS) – [www.royalnavy.mod.uk](http://www.royalnavy.mod.uk)
- Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service (PMRAFNS) – [www.rafcareers.com](http://www.rafcareers.com)
- Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Service Corps (QARANC) – [www.army.mod.uk/quaranc](http://www.army.mod.uk/quaranc)
- Medical Corps, Irish Defence Forces – Director of Medical Corps, Defence Forces Headquarters, St Bricin's Hospital, Infirmary Road, Dublin 7  
Tel: (00353) 1 804 2000 [www.military.ie](http://www.military.ie)
- Queen's Careers Service (information on nursing and other careers, plus advice and guidance) – call in or go to [www.qub.ac.uk/careers](http://www.qub.ac.uk/careers)
- Prospects graduate careers information (can search for information on nursing) – [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk).

## Nursing in Northern Ireland

- Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety – [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)
- Information on Northern Ireland trusts – [www.n-i.nhs.uk](http://www.n-i.nhs.uk)
- List of Northern Ireland trusts – [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/links.asp#trusts](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/links.asp#trusts)
- Northern Ireland health boards – [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss/index.asp](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/hss/index.asp)
- Royal College of Nursing (Northern Ireland) – [www.rcn.org.uk/northernireland](http://www.rcn.org.uk/northernireland).

## Nursing in Great Britain

- List of trusts and other NHS organisations in England – [www.nhs.uk/root/localnhservices/orgs/trust/default.asp](http://www.nhs.uk/root/localnhservices/orgs/trust/default.asp)
- List of trusts in Scotland – [www.show.scot.nhs.uk/organisations/orgindex.htm](http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/organisations/orgindex.htm)
- List of trusts in Wales – [www.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.wales.nhs.uk)
- NHS (England only) – [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- NHS careers – [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk)
- Nursing and Midwifery Council – [www.nmc-uk.org](http://www.nmc-uk.org).

## Nursing in the Republic of Ireland

- List of health boards in the Republic of Ireland – [www.doh.ie/hinfo/index.html](http://www.doh.ie/hinfo/index.html)
- Job vacancies with health boards (RoI) – <http://hebe.newjobs.com>
- An Bord Altranais – [www.nursingboard.ie](http://www.nursingboard.ie)
- Nursing careers centre: An Bord Altranais – [www.nursingcareers.ie](http://www.nursingcareers.ie).

## Nursing overseas

- Royal College of Nursing International Office (members only) – [www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk)
- NursingNetUK – [www.nursingnetuk.com](http://www.nursingnetuk.com)
- The Nursing Portal – [www.nursing-portal.com](http://www.nursing-portal.com)
- International Health Exchange (work in developing countries) – [www.ihe.org.uk](http://www.ihe.org.uk)
- The Red Cross – [www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)
- Embassy contact information worldwide (for information on individual countries) – [www.embpage.org](http://www.embpage.org)
- Newspapers, magazines and other media worldwide (for vacancy pages) – [www.kidon.com/media-link](http://www.kidon.com/media-link)
- USA: Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) – [www.cgfns.org](http://www.cgfns.org)
- Australia: Australia's wage, salary and job centre – [www.wages.com.au](http://www.wages.com.au)
- New Zealand: Nursing Council NZ – [www.nursingcouncil.nz](http://www.nursingcouncil.nz)
- Canada: Canada High Commission – [www.canada.org.uk](http://www.canada.org.uk)
- Europe: EURES (European employment services site) for job vacancies in the EU countries – [www.europa.eu.int/jobs/eures](http://www.europa.eu.int/jobs/eures).

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Find out more from contributing trusts and other nursing employers.

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Further information is available on the web:-  
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