

Frequently asked questions on careers in nursing

We are nurses. We are the NHS. We have your questions answered.

You can also contact our [helpline](#) ^[1].

• What does a nursing career offer?

Studying for a nursing degree or degree apprenticeship offers several benefits. Above everything else is the chance to make a difference to people's lives every day and work as part of team of people who want to do the same.

There's the employability. A nursing degree makes you highly employable. Then there is the opportunity to travel. A nursing degree means you can work anywhere.

There's a wide-range of career opportunities and prospects. For example, not all nurses work on a ward. Some work in the community while others work in research, teaching or management. Nurses can also take further training to prescribe medicine, perform surgery or be public health leaders.

Pay is also better than you think. A newly qualified nurse will start their career in the NHS on at least £29k a year. There's also a generous pension with an employer contribution of up to 20.68%.

Find out more about the [pay and benefits of working in the NHS](#) ^[2]

• What do nurses do in the NHS?

Newly qualified nurses all work as part of a team and provide direct patient care. They work in a variety of settings, including hospital wards, operating theatres,

schools, prisons, clinics, doctors' surgeries and patients' homes.

As your career progresses, you can specialise in areas such as theatre nursing or practice nursing, while others undertake further postgraduate studies to become more senior nurses such as district nurses, health visitors or advanced clinical practitioners. Others move into management, clinical research or teaching.

Whatever you're doing, your role has purpose, as you're making a difference to people's lives everyday.

• What are the different nursing fields?

When you first train as a nurse, you'll need to study for one of the four fields of nursing - [mental health](#) [3], [learning disabilities](#) [4], [children's](#) [5] or [adult nursing](#) [6].

A small number of universities run 'dual field' nursing degrees, in which you can combine two of the fields during a four-year degree.

Use our [course finder](#) [7] to search for degrees in the different fields of nursing.

• What qualifications do I need?

Each university sets its own entry requirements to get onto a full-time degree in nursing, but as a general guide you'll need at least five A-C grade GCSEs (including English, maths and a science subject) and at least two (preferably 3) A levels. Many universities require A level biology.

Alternative level 3 qualifications are sometimes accepted by universities (eg approved Access to nursing courses, BTEC National Diplomas or International Baccalaureates), but you must check with each university directly before making an application.

Find out more about [studying to be a nurse](#) [8] and use our [course finder](#) [7] to get a list of universities approved to run nurse degree programmes.

• Do I need to go to university?

Nursing degree apprenticeships have been developed and small numbers are now available. These will offer flexible routes to becoming a nurse that won't require full-time study at university - although nursing degree apprentices will still need to undertake academic study at degree level.

If you are working in the NHS as a [senior healthcare assistant](#) ^[9] or [assistant practitioner](#) ^[10], your employer may support you to do the university course on a part-time basis.

Use our [course finder](#) ^[7] to get a list of universities approved to run part-time degree programmes in nursing.

Those completing a [nursing associate apprenticeship](#) ^[11] will also be able to count this training towards a registered nursing degree.

[Find out more about training to become a nurse](#) ^[12]

• **What is a nursing secondment?**

A secondment is an opportunity for you to train as a nurse by going to university on a part-time basis, while working for an NHS organisation as a senior healthcare assistant/assistant practitioner. In other words, your employer may support you to train through this route. You will usually continue to be paid by your employer.

Use our [course finder](#) ^[7] to get a list of universities approved to run part-time degree programmes in nursing.

[Find out more about training to become a nurse](#) ^[13].

• **Will relevant experience help?**

You may be able to get some accreditation for previous relevant experience and/or study, and if you can do this, you can complete the nursing programme in a shorter time (up to a year less than a standard three-year programme).

Use our [course finder](#) ^[7] to identify universities offering accelerated programmes in nursing. You can then check to see whether the university you are interested in offers Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)/ Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL).

• **Is there financial support?**

Financial support is available through the NHS Learning Support Fund (NHS LSF) which offers eligible students additional support while studying for their degree. The new package includes:

- training grant of £5,000 per year (for new and continuing students)
- parental support payment of £2,000 per student per year to help with childcare costs
- specialist subject payment of £1,000 per year for new students only on mental health and learning disability nursing degrees
- help towards additional travel and accommodation costs to clinical placements over your normal daily travel costs
- an exceptional hardship fund of up to £3,000 per student per academic year

Student loans are also available. Visit our [financial support](#) ^[14] pages for the latest information.

• **Am I too old to train?**

There is no upper age limit to start nurse training but you should discuss any concerns that you might have about your suitability for training with the universities offering courses.

Use our [course finder](#) ^[7] to get a list.

You might consider attending some university open days or contacting the university's admissions office before making a formal application.

• **How do I train to be a health visitor?**

You will need to train as a nurse or a midwife and then you will need to do further study at university. Some universities offering health visiting training programmes may ask for a particular branch of nursing so we recommend checking.

Find more information on a career in health visiting ^[15].

• **Where can I find more information?**

You can find more information on our [nursing careers pages](#) ^[16] where you can also register for ongoing support and advice via email.

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/faqs-nursing>

Links

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