

Return to nursing - FAQs

We are the NHS. We want you back. Get the answers you need and return to nursing.

• Why should I consider returning to nursing?

Now is a great time to return! Our programme will support you and enable you to renew your registration with your professional body and re-enter practice with the competence and confidence. Not to forget that there are also jobs available!

We know that you already have the skills and experience that can make a big difference to patients, clients, carers and their families so we are keen to get you back.

• Do I need to retrain?

If your registration has lapsed, you'll either complete an [NMC](#) ^[1]-approved return to practice course which takes between three and 12 months or do a Test of competence.

Courses

There are [RtP nursing courses](#) ^[2] across England and specific RtP general practice nursing programmes available in the [East of England](#) ^[3], [London](#) ^[4], [North East](#) ^[5], [North West](#) ^[6], [South West](#) ^[7] and [West Midlands](#) ^[8] regions of England. The amount of retraining you require depends on how long you have been out of practice. The longer you have been out of practice, the more practice hours you will need to complete.

Test of competence

The test of competence is made up of:

- a multiple-choice computer based test (CBT)
- a practical test known as the Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

You can apply through the NMC website where you'll also find materials and reading to help you prepare. There is a cost for taking the test and the NHS will pay this but you may have to pay up front. You can then claim reimbursement once you have registered with the NMC and are in employment.

Active registration

If you have been out of clinical practice but your registration is still active, you can apply for a post and establish if you can be supported by a preceptorship programme. The programme will support you to update your skills and knowledge and ensure that you are job ready. Job opportunities are advertised on the [NHS Jobs website](#) [9].

• Will my course be funded?

Yes, if you apply directly to a university, the NHS will pay your course fees, clinical placement fee and £1,000 stipendiary to help towards travel, childcare and book costs. If you apply to return via an NHS trust, you'll receive a salary while training or the £1,000 stipendiary to help with costs.

Unfortunately, the NHS is unable to fund:

- overseas nurses who haven't previously been registered with the [NMC](#) [1]
- returnees who do not reside and work in England

• Any other financial support available?

If you apply directly to a university a £1,000 stipendiary is provided to support you to return to practice and will help towards travel, childcare and book costs etc. Your university return to practice lead will be able to provide further details at your interview.

• Will the course lead directly to a job?

Many organisations now offer RtP placements that lead to a permanent position, but it is entirely dependent on each organisation and it is advisable to explore this further at your interview. NHS organisations advertise posts on the [NHS Jobs website](#) [9].

In some areas there is an employer-led return to practice programme, where you are employed as a return to practice nurse, normally on band 3, and are guaranteed a post once you have successfully completed the programme. Keep an eye on [NHS Jobs](#) [9] for return to practice nursing opportunities.

- **Can I work flexibly?**

Flexible working for nurses is an option. We suggest you discuss this at your interview with the employer who is supporting your clinical placement.

- **Is there anything I can do to prepare?**

Universities offer a reading list of key documents that you might be interested in studying to help you update your knowledge of current policy. Universities also offer study skills courses to help you prepare for studying on a university course. This would be discussed at interview with the return to practice lead.

Local trusts and universities offer open days too so you can ask any questions before you apply for the programme.

- **?How long will the course be?**

The return to practice programme can take three to 12 months to complete, and is a combination of classroom and placement-based learning. The hours you spend on placement will vary, depending on how long you have been off the register. This will be negotiated with you when you apply.

- **Are there courses near me?**

Use our [course finder](#) ^[10] to find [return to nursing practice](#) ^[11] and [RTP - general practice nursing programmes](#) ^[12] where you live or want to study.

You can also check [NHS Jobs](#) ^[13] to see if there any opportunities for employer-led return to practice programmes in your area.

- **I have been out of practice for a while**

The return to practice course is open to all, regardless of how long you have been out of practice. The course will update you on any new developments in nursing and you will have support and mentoring throughout.

- **Will I be supported upon returning?**

Re-registered practitioners might be supported by a preceptorship programme on their return to the workforce and the programme can be tailored to your requirements. [View Health Education England's video about preceptorship for nurses](#) ^[14]

- **I get a pension. Can I return part-time?**

[Return to practice programmes](#) ^[11] and [RTP - general practice nursing programmes](#) ^[15] are usually delivered part-time. In respect of employment, we recommend reading the factsheet on the [NHS Pensions website](#) ^[16].

NHS employment opportunities are advertised on the [NHS Jobs website](#) ^[9].

- **What is abatement?**

Abatement is the process by which your NHS pension is reduced pound-for-pound if your earnings on re-employment in the NHS, plus the enhanced element of your NHS pension, exceed your pre-retirement NHS pensionable earnings.

- **I don't live in England. Can I apply?**

Funding from the NHS for the return to practice programme is available for nurses who currently reside and work in England. Nurses from outside England are welcome to apply for the programme, but I am afraid funding isn't available.

- **Do I need a degree to return to practice?**

You do not need a degree to return to practice. However, as nursing and midwifery is now only studied at degree level, the [NMC](#) ^[1] require the Return to Practice programmes to be undertaken at degree level. If you successfully pass the course, you will receive credits at degree level which can be used towards completion of a degree.

• Are there any other ways to return?

Another route back into nursing and midwifery is a test run by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC ^[1]), the Test of Competence (ToC). Launched in January 2020, it involves an online multiple-choice test and an Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) ^[17]. Like the return to practice course, this route is now funded by the NHS.

If you decide to undertake the ToC, preparation is key so it is highly recommended that you are supported by an employer who can facilitate your return to practice. If you are interested in this route, contact returntopractice.wm@hee.nhs.uk ^[18]; they will be able to refer you to someone in your local area who can advise you.

More information on the test, including preparation materials and how to apply is available on the [NMC website](https://www.nmc.org.uk) ^[19].

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

Links

[1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NMC> [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/returning-nursing> [3] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field_leading_to_a_career_in_tid=3239&field_qualification_type_tid=All&field_study_mode_tid=All& [4] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field_leading_to_a_career_in_tid=3239&field_qualification_type_tid=All&field_study_mode_tid=All& [5] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field_leading_to_a_career_in_tid=3239&field_qualification_type_tid=All&field_study_mode_tid=All& [6] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field_leading_to_a_career_in_tid=3239&field_qualification_type_tid=All&field_study_mode_tid=All& [7] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field_leading_to_a_career_in_tid=3239&field_qualification_type_tid=All&field_study_mode_tid=All& [8] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field_leading_to_a_career_in_tid=3239&field_qualification_type_tid=All&field_study_mode_tid=All& [9] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/> [10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder> [11] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field_leading_to_a_career_in_tid=3195&field_qualification_type_tid=All&field_study_mode_tid=All& [12] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field_leading_to_a_career_in_tid=3239&field_qualification_type_tid=All&field_study_mode_tid=All& [13] <https://www.jobs.nhs.uk> [14] <https://vimeo.com/115880179> [15] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/returning-nursing/return-general-practice-nursing> [16] <https://www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/pensioner-hub/re-employment> [17] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Objective_structured_clinical_examination_OSCE [18] <mailto:returntopractice.wm@hee.nhs.uk> [19] <https://www.nmc.org.uk/registration/returning-to-the-register/completing-a-test-of-competence-for-return-to-practice>