Published on *Health Careers* (https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk)

How to become a nurse

Did you know nursing is the UK's most employable type of degree, with 94% of students getting a job within six months of finishing their course?

If you're eligible you can also receive at least £5,000 in financial support every year of your degree.

Nursing degree

Most people qualify by studying a degree in nursing. Nursing degrees aren't all about having your nose in a book. There is lots of practical hands on experience with patients in hospital and community settings.

The first thing to decide is which field of nursing you want to study in, so use the links below to find more about them. In all of these fields you'll have the opportunity to make a real difference to the lives of people each and every day. The four fields of nursing are:

- adult nursing [1]
- children's nursing [2]
- learning disability nursing [3]
- mental health nursing [4]

There are some degree courses that allow you to study in two of the fields. These are known as 'dual field' degrees. Once you have qualified you'll be able to work as a nurse anywhere in the UK and even internationally.

Can't see the video? You'll need to accept all cookies [5]. Alternatively, visit our YouTube Channel to view our videos [6]

Entry requirements

Entry requirements for nursing degree courses vary because each university sets its own entry criteria, but you are likely to need at least two (usually three) A-levels or equivalent qualifications at level 3, such as a T level or BTECs, plus supporting GCSEs including English, maths and a science (usually biology or human biology). Contact universities directly to find out whether qualifications equivalent to A-levels or GCSEs are acceptable.

Courses often specify preferred or essential A-level or equivalent subjects, such as one science (for example biology) or social science (for example psychology). Some universities offer courses with a foundation year for those without the necessary entry qualifications.

Where to study nursing

Many universities offer degrees in nursing. You can find a list of courses by using our Course Finder [7].

If you already have a degree in a relevant subject, you can often get recognition for this (a process called Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning - APEL), enabling you to do a postgraduate course in two rather than three years. You can also find these courses using our Course Finder [7].

> "Studying a nursing degree allows me to work wherever I want" Cherie Lawrence, mental health nurse

Financial support while at university

At least £5,000 will be available from September 2020 to help eligible undergraduate and postgraduate student nurses fund their studies. Best of all, it won't need to be repaid. Find out more about with these annual payments [8] and the other financial support [9] available.

How to apply

Applications for full-time nursing courses are made through UCAS [10]. For part-time courses, contact individual universities to find out their application procedures. Have a look at the UCAS website [11] for some good tips on writing personal statements.

Online degrees

From January 2021, some universities are offering adult nursing courses where the theoretical content is mainly delivered online, making it easier to fit studies around home life. You can search for the courses, sometimes called 'blended' courses on our course finder [12].

Other ways to become a nurse

Registered nurse degree apprenticeships (RNDA)

A registered nurse degree apprenticeship (RNDA) offers a flexible route to becoming a nurse that doesn't require full-time study at university.

You will need to secure a position as an RNDA and your employer will release you to study at university part time. You will train in a range of practice placements, for example hospitals, GP practices, people's homes and mental health facilities.

Most RNDAs take four years, but possibly less if APEL (accreditation of prior experience and learning) recognises your previous learning and experience. For example, if you have a relevant level 5 qualification, the length of your apprenticeship could be reduced to two years rather than four.

You'll typically need level 3 and maths and English qualification/s to start an RNDA. If you have a level 5 qualification as a nursing associate [13] or assistant practitioner [14], your apprenticeship might be called a 'top up' RNDA or 'conversion' to registered nurse course.

Vacancies for RNDA are advertised on the NHS Jobs website [15] and the Government Find an apprenticeship website

[16]

Nursing associate

The role of nursing associate sits alongside existing nursing care support workers and fully-qualified registered nurses in both health and social care.

It opens up a career in nursing to people from all backgrounds and offers the opportunity to progress to training to become a registered nurse. Trainee roles are often available in a variety of health and care settings. This means that nursing associates have wider opportunities and more flexibility to move between acute, social and community and primary care.

A nursing associate is not a registered nurse, but with further training, it can be possible to 'top up' your training to become one.

Read more about the nursing associate role [17]

- ## Your application

  Universities will normally expect you to attend an interview. You'll also need to demonstrate that you have found out about nursing as a career and understand what the work involves. This is possible through relevant experience [18]. Experience in any healthcare setting is useful but if you can work alongside registered nurses, so much the better. Work experience placements can be difficult to find, so alternatives would be to shadow a nurse or talk to a nurse about their role. Find out exactly what is required for your chosen courses and get organised as soon as possible.

  The UCAS website [19] allows you to search for courses and view entry requirements. More detailed information about specific courses can be found in university prospectuses and on their websites.

  BBC Bitesize also has some useful stories from current nurses on how they became nurses:

  - Kate's story [20]
  - Keilagh's story [21]
  - S [22]arah's story [22]

- ## Recruiting for values

  If you’re applying for a university programme leading to a role providing NHS healthcare, you’ll be asked to show how you think the NHS values would apply in your everyday work.

  Find out more about NHS values and the constitution. [23]

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Your nursing training

Approved full-time nursing degree courses last for three (or four years if taking a dual-field degree), or longer if taken on a part-time basis. Accelerated courses for graduates take two years. Courses involve spending half your time studying at university and half gaining practical, supervised experience in a range of healthcare settings.

Approved courses must meet the NMC's standards of education and training but programmes vary in their content, the way they are structured, and how they are taught and assessed. The facilities available and amount of support and supervision may also differ from course to course. Find out more by looking at university websites and prospectuses, attending university open days and contacting admissions staff.

Support at university

See our information about the support available [24] while on your course.

Find out about financial support while studying nursing at university [9]

What happens after nurse training?

First, you must register with the NMC [25] allowing you to practise as a nurse in the UK. You can then apply for a job, usually through the NHS Jobs website [26].

There are opportunities to work in a wide range of settings and to progress your career in specialist roles or maybe into teaching, management or research. You'll need some experience in a more general role before you specialise in an area that interests you, such as intensive care [27] nursing, health visiting [28] or occupational health nursing [29]. Moving into a specialist role may involve studying for further qualifications.

To maintain your registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council, you'll need to go through the process of revalidation. The process is straightforward and will help you as a nurse or midwife to demonstrate that you practise safely and effectively. You will have to revalidate every three years to renew your registration. Find out more about revalidation on the NMC microsite [30]

Source URL:https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/how-become-nurse

Links
[1] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/adult-nurse

[2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/childrens-nurse
[3] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/learning-disability-nurse
[4] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/mental-health-nurse
[5] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/privacy-and-cookies/#CookieDeclarationChangeConsentChange
[6] https://www.youtube.com/NHSCareers [7] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder [8] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/nursing-careers/annual-nursing-payments
[9] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/study-and-training/considering-or-university/financial-support-university [10] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/study-and-training/considering-or-university/applying-university-through-ucas [11] https://www.ucas.com/undergraduate/applying-university/writing-your-personal-statement
[12] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder?field_leading_to_a_career_in_tid=162&field_qualification_type_tid=All&field_study_mode_tid=26
[13] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/nursing-associate [14] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/assistant-practitioner
[15] https://www.jobs.nhs.uk/ [16] https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship
[17] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/roles-nursing/nursing-associate
[18] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/secondary-school-or-fe-college/gaining-experience
[19] http://www.ucas.com/ [20] https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z6by7nb
[21] https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zkgbmfr [22] https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/z49b6v4
[23] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution
[24] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/support-university [25] http://www.nmc-uk.org/Registration [26] http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/
[27] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Intensive_care [28] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/health-visitor
[29] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/occupational-health-nurse
[30] http://revalidation.nmc.org.uk/welcome-to-revalidation/