

# Studying nursing

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?

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](#) <sup>[1]</sup>
- [children's nursing](#) <sup>[2]</sup>
- [learning disability nursing](#) <sup>[3]</sup>
- [mental health nursing](#) <sup>[4]</sup>

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.

## 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, 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](#) <sup>[5]</sup>.

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

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 the course in two rather than three years. You can also find these courses using our [Course Finder](#) <sup>[5]</sup>.

## How to apply

Applications for full-time nursing courses are made through [UCAS](#) <sup>[6]</sup>. For part-time courses, contact individual universities to find out their application procedures. [Which? University](#) <sup>[7]</sup> has some good tips on writing personal statements.

## Other ways to become a nurse

### Nursing degree apprenticeships

The standards for nursing degree apprenticeships have been approved and a small number of NHS organisations have started to advertise vacancies. Nursing degree apprenticeships offer flexible routes to becoming a nurse that don't require full-time study at university, although nursing degree apprentices will still need to undertake academic study at degree level and meet the standards laid down by the [NMC](#) <sup>[8]</sup>.

You will need to secure a position as a nursing degree apprentice and your employer will then release you to study at university on a part-time basis. You will train in a range of practice placement settings.

Most nursing degree apprenticeships will take four years. If you already have prior learning and experience, you may get some recognition of this through APEL and so the nursing degree apprenticeship may take you less than four years to complete.

In terms of entry requirements for nursing degree apprenticeships, you will typically need level 3 qualifications as you will be studying to degree level. Those completing a [nursing associate](#) <sup>[9]</sup> apprenticeship will be able to count this training towards the degree-level apprenticeship, and so reduce the length of the apprenticeship. .

Vacancies for nursing degree apprenticeships are advertised on the [NHS Jobs website](#) <sup>[10]</sup> and the Government [Find an apprenticeship website](#) <sup>[11]</sup>

[Read the 2016 nursing degree apprenticeship factsheet on the Gov.uk website](#) <sup>[12]</sup>

### Nursing associate

The role of nursing associate is currently being trialled in England. It sits alongside existing nursing care support workers and fully-qualified registered nurses in both health and social care.

It will open up a career in nursing to people from all backgrounds and offer the opportunity to progress to training to become a registered nurse. As the trainee roles are being piloted in a variety of health and care settings, nursing associates will have wider opportunities and more flexibility to move between acute, social and community and primary care.

[Read more about the nursing associate role](#) <sup>[9]</sup>

- Your application [Expand / Collapse](#)

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](#) <sup>[13]</sup>. 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. [Reading our information on roles in nursing and watching our films will also help.](#) <sup>[14]</sup>

The [UCAS website](#) <sup>[15]</sup> 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.

There are other routes to becoming qualified as a nurse, such as studying part time whilst working in a [clinical support](#) <sup>[16]</sup> role, through a nursing degree apprenticeship (as mentioned above) or by taking an accelerated programme after [graduating in another subject](#) <sup>[17]</sup>.

- Recruiting for values [Expand / Collapse](#)

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.](#) <sup>[18]</sup>

- Your nursing training [Expand / Collapse](#)

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](#) [19] while on your course.

## **Find out about financial support while studying nursing at university** [20]

- What happens after nurse training? Expand / Collapse  
Passing an [NMC](#) [8]-approved course will give you an academic degree and professional qualification. In order to practise as a nurse, you must [register with the NMC](#) [21].

Job vacancies for registered nurses are advertised on the [NHS Jobs website](#) [10] and elsewhere. General information on looking for work can be found in the [Career planning](#) [22] section and under [Looking for a job](#) [23].

As mentioned above, as a nurse there are opportunities to work in a wide range of settings and you can progress from one grade or band to another. You'll need some experience in a more generalist role, but you can specialise in an area that interests you, such as [intensive care](#) [24] nursing, [health visiting](#) [25] or [occupational health nursing](#) [26]. Moving into a clinical specialism can involve studying for further qualifications.

To maintain your registration to practise 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. Revalidation includes taking part in [continuing professional development](#) [27] (CPD). [Find out more about revalidation on the NMC microsite](#) [28]

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

### Links

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- [2] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/childrens-nurse>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/learning-disability-nurse>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/mental-health-nurse>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/course-finder>
- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/applying-university-through-ucas>
- [7] <http://university.which.co.uk/advice/personal-statements/personal-statement-advice-nursing-students>
- [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#NMC>
- [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/wider-healthcare-team/roles-wider-healthcare-team/clinical-support-staff/nursing-associate>
- [10] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>
- [11] <https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship>
- [12] <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nursing-degree-apprenticeships-factsheet/nursing->

degree-apprenticeship-factsheet#eligibility-to-become-a-nursing-degree-apprentice  
[13] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/secondary-school-or-fe-college/gaining-experience>  
[14] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing>  
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[21] <http://www.nmc-uk.org/Registration>  
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[24] [https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Intensive\\_care](https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Intensive_care)  
[25] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/public-health/health-visitor>  
[26] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/nursing/occupational-health-nurse>  
[27] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/professional-development>  
[28] <http://revalidation.nmc.org.uk/welcome-to-revalidation/>