

**Realising professionalism:  
Standards for education and training**

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# Part 3: Standards for pre-registration nursing programmes

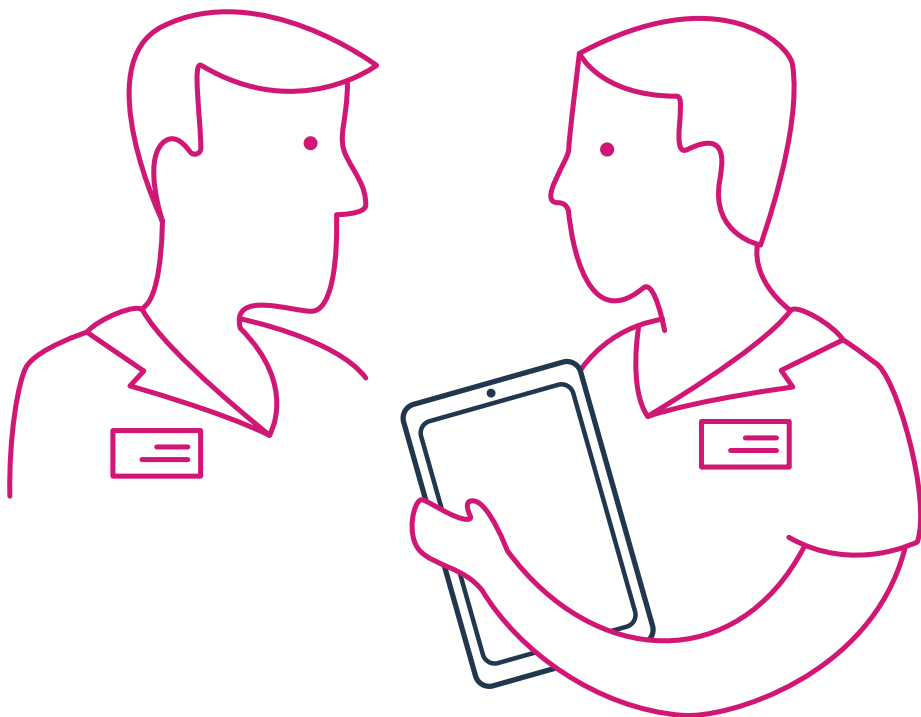
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Published 17 May 2018

These standards were updated in 2023. To find the most up to date standards, [visit our website](#).

# About these standards

Realising professionalism: *Standards for education and training* includes the *Standards framework for nursing<sup>1</sup> and midwifery education, Standards for student supervision and assessment*, and programme standards specific to each approved programme.



Our *Standards for education and training* are set out in three parts:

## Part 1: Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education

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## Part 2: Standards for student supervision and assessment

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## Part 3: Programme standards

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- Standards for pre-registration nursing education
- Standards for pre-registration nursing associate education
- Standards for prescribing programmes

These standards help nursing and midwifery [students](#) achieve the NMC proficiencies and programme outcomes. All nursing and midwifery professionals must practise in line with the requirements of [The Code](#), the professional standards of practice and behaviour that nurses, midwives and nursing associates are expected to uphold.

<sup>1</sup> We have used the phrase 'nursing' in this document to apply to the work of nurses and nursing associates. Nursing associates are a distinct profession with their own part of our register, but they are part of the nursing team.

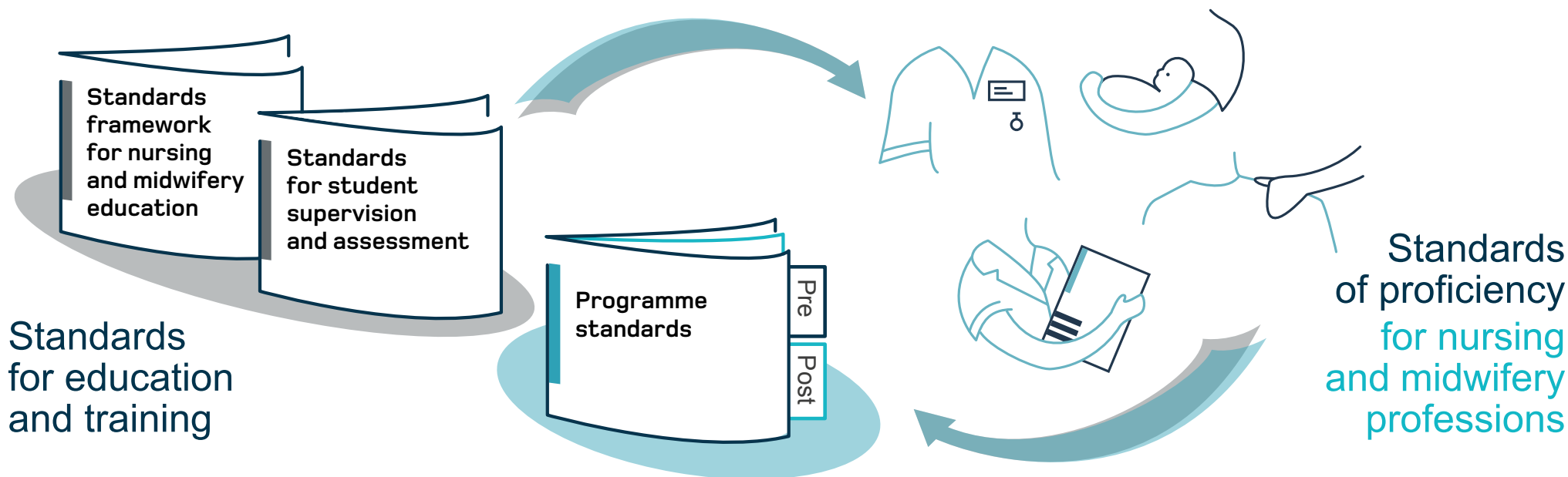
# Introduction

Our *Standards for pre-registration nursing programmes* set out the legal requirements, entry requirements, availability of [recognition of prior learning](#), length of programme, methods of assessment and information on the award for all pre-registration nursing education programmes.

Student nurses must successfully complete an NMC approved pre-registration programme in order to meet the *Standards of proficiency for registered nurses* and to be eligible to apply, and be entered onto, the NMC register.

Public safety is central to our standards. Students will be in contact with people throughout their education and it's important that they learn in a safe and effective way.

These programme standards should be read with the NMC *Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education* and *Standards for student supervision and assessment* which apply to all NMC approved programmes. There must be compliance with all these standards for an education institution to be approved and to run any NMC approved programme.



Education providers structure their educational programmes to comply with our programme standards. They also design their curricula around the published proficiencies for a particular programme and students are assessed against these proficiencies to make sure they are capable of providing safe and effective care. Proficiencies are the knowledge, skills and behaviours that nurses and midwives need in order to practise. We publish standards of proficiency for the nursing and midwifery professions as well as proficiencies for NMC approved post-registration programmes.

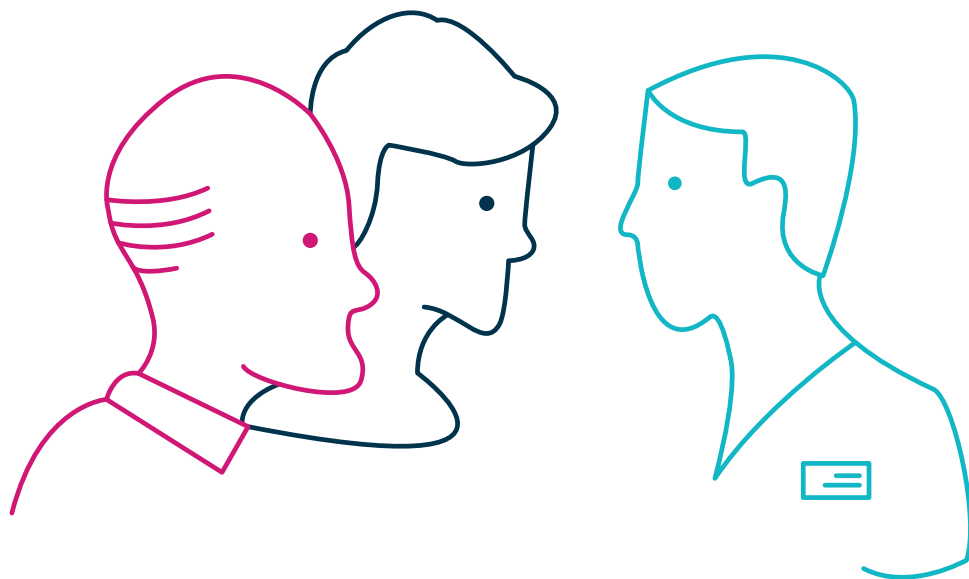
Through our [quality assurance](#) (QA) processes we check that education programmes meet all of our standards regarding the structure and delivery of educational programmes, that the programme outcomes relate to the expected proficiencies for particular qualifications and that the [approved education institutions](#) (AEIs) and [practice learning partners](#) are managing risks effectively. Using internal and external intelligence we monitor risks to quality in education and training; this intelligence gathering includes analysis of system regulator reports.

Before any programme can be run, we make sure it meets our standards. We do this through an approvals process, in accordance with our *Quality assurance framework*.

## Legislative framework

Article 15(1) of the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001 ([‘the Order’](#)) requires the Council to establish standards for education and training which are necessary to achieve the standards of proficiency for admission to the register, as required by Article 5(2) of the Order. The standards for pre-registration nursing programmes are established under the provision of Article 15(1) of the Order.

Overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of the quality of any educational programme lies with an AEI in partnership with practice learning partners.



# Four fields of nursing practice

In accordance with the Nurses & Midwives (Part and Entries in the Register) Order of Council 2004 (SI 2004/1765), which states that entries in the register are to include a registrant's field of practice, UK students that qualify in a specific field of practice as a level 1 nurse may apply to enter the NMC register as a nurse in one or more of the four fields of nursing practice: adult, children, learning disabilities and mental health.

AEIs and their practice learning partners have ownership and accountability for the development, delivery and management of pre-registration nursing programme curricula. Pre-registration nursing programmes may offer various routes to registration however, all programmes leading to registration must include routes within the programme specific to the relevant fields of nursing practice for which approval is being sought.

The *Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education* and these programme requirements give AEIs in partnership with practice partners the flexibility to design their own curriculum and the autonomy to decide on the proportion of generic and field specific hours provided. In designing curricula for dual award (that is, a programme of study that leads to registration in two fields of nursing practice) the NMC expects the AEI to design and deliver a programme of suitable length that ensures the student is proficient in delivering safe and effective care in both fields of nursing.

Programme curricula must cover the outcomes set out in platforms 1-7 of *Standards of proficiency for registered nurses* and the communication and relationship management skills and nursing procedures set out in the Annexes to that document. All nursing students across all fields of nursing must have the necessary learning supervision and assessment in preparation for professional practice as a registered nurse. The adult nursing field must also include the content and competencies specified in relevant EU legislation.

We believe that involving our service users and members of the public in the planning and delivery of curricula will promote public confidence in the education of future nurses. We encourage the use of supportive evidence and engagement from [people](#) who have experienced care by adult, children's, learning disabilities or mental health nurses to inform programme design and delivery for all fields of nursing practice.

Nursing students will learn and be assessed in theory, [simulation](#) and practice environments. AEIs and practice placement partners must ensure that students meet the proficiencies relevant to their anticipated field(s) of nursing practice by the end of the programme. On successful completion of a programme students will be registered by the NMC as qualifying in one or more field of nursing practice.

# The student journey

Standards for pre-registration nursing programmes follow the student journey and are grouped under the following five headings:

## 1. Selection, admission and progression

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Standards about an applicant's suitability and continued participation in a pre-registration nursing programme

## 2. Curriculum

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Standards for the content, delivery and evaluation of the pre-registration nursing programme

## 3. Practice learning

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Standards specific to pre-registration learning for nurses that takes place in practice settings

## 4. Supervision and assessment

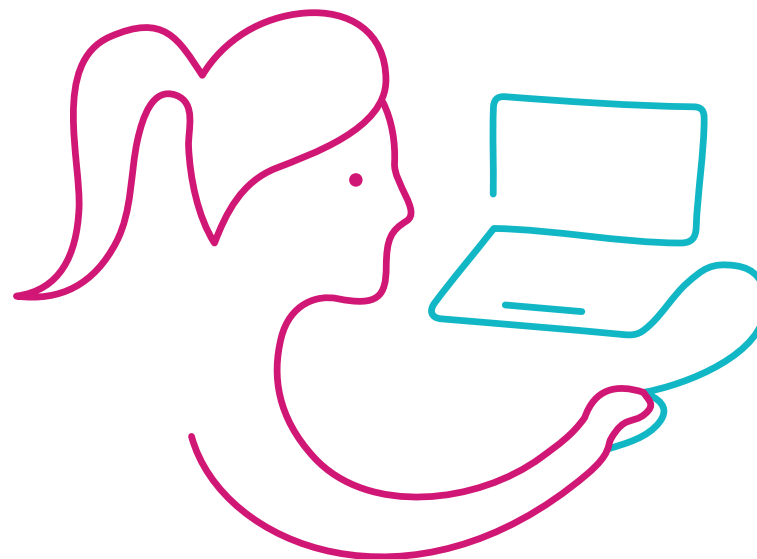
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Standards for safe and effective supervision and assessment for pre-registration nursing programmes

## 5. Qualification to be awarded

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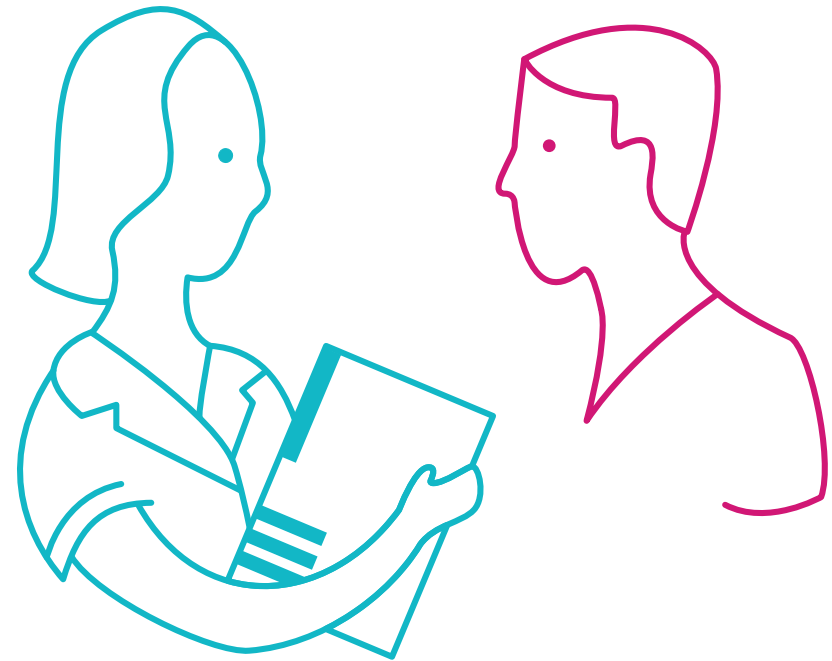
Standards which state the award and information for the NMC register.



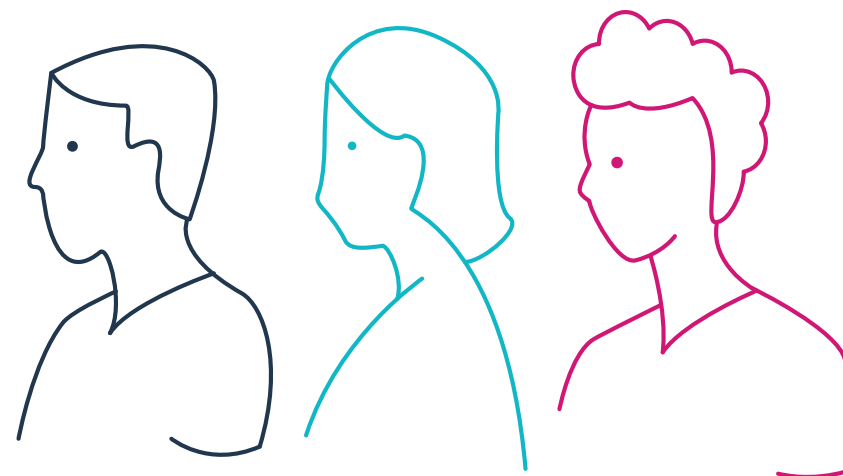
# 1 Selection, admission and progression

**Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must:**

- 1.1 Confirm on entry to the programme that students:
  - 1.1.1 are suitable for their intended field of nursing practice: adult, mental health, learning disabilities and children's nursing
  - 1.1.2 demonstrate values in accordance with the Code
  - 1.1.3 have capability to learn behaviours in accordance with the Code
  - 1.1.4 have capability to develop numeracy skills required to meet programme outcomes
  - 1.1.5 can demonstrate proficiency in English language
  - 1.1.6 have capability in literacy to meet programme outcomes
  - 1.1.7 have capability for digital and technological literacy to meet programme outcomes.



- 1.2 ensure students' [health and character](#) are sufficient to enable safe and effective practice on entering the programme, throughout the programme and when submitting the supporting declaration of health and character in line with the NMC's [health and character decision-making guidance](#). This includes satisfactory occupational health assessment and criminal record checks
- 1.3 ensure students are fully informed of the requirement to declare immediately any cautions or convictions, pending charges<sup>2</sup> or adverse determinations made by other regulators, professional bodies and educational establishments, and that any declarations are dealt with promptly, fairly and lawfully
- 1.4 ensure the registered nurse responsible for directing the educational programme or their designated registered nurse substitute is able to provide supporting declarations of health and character for students who have completed a pre-registration nursing programme<sup>3</sup>
- 1.5 permit recognition of prior learning that is capable of being mapped to the *Standards of proficiency for registered nurses* and programme outcomes, up to a maximum of 50 percent of the programme and comply with [Article 31\(3\)](#) of Directive 2005/36/EC (included in [Annexe 1](#) of this document)
- 1.6 for NMC registered nurses permit recognition of prior learning that is capable of being mapped to the *Standards of proficiency for registered nurses* and programme outcomes that may be more than 50 percent of the programme
- 1.7 support students throughout the programme in continuously developing their abilities in numeracy, literacy, digital and technological literacy to meet programme outcomes, and
- 1.8 ensure that all those enrolled on pre-registration nursing programmes are compliant with [Article 31\(1\)](#) of Directive 2005/36/EC regarding general education length as outlined in [Annexe 1](#) of this document.



<sup>2</sup> By 'pending charge' we mean police charge pending conclusion of the criminal proceedings in line with the NMC's guidance on health and character.

<sup>3</sup> Rule 6(1)(a)(i) of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (Education, Registration and Registration Appeals) Rules 2004 (SI 2004/1767).



## 2 Curriculum

### Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must:

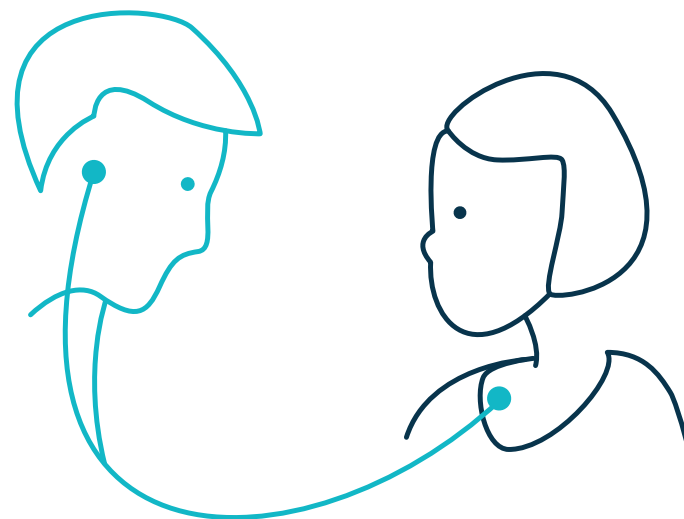
- 2.1 ensure that programmes comply with the NMC *Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education*
- 2.2 comply with the NMC *Standards for student supervision and assessment*
- 2.3 ensure that programme learning outcomes reflect the *Standards of proficiency for registered nurses* and each of the four fields of nursing practice: adult, mental health, learning disabilities and children's nursing
- 2.4 design and deliver a programme that supports students and provides exposure across all four fields of nursing practice: adult, mental health, learning disabilities and children's nursing
- 2.5 state routes within their pre-registration nursing programme that allows students to enter the register in one or more of the specific fields of nursing practice: adult, mental health, learning disabilities or children's nursing
- 2.6 set out the general and professional content necessary to meet the *Standards of proficiency for registered nurses* and programme outcomes
- 2.7 set out the content necessary to meet the programme outcomes for each field of nursing practice: adult, mental health, learning disabilities and children's nursing
- 2.8 ensure that field-specific content in relation to the law, safeguarding, consent, pharmacology and medicines administration and optimisation is included for entry to the register in one or more fields of nursing practice
- 2.9 ensure the curriculum provides an equal balance of theory and practice learning using a range of learning and teaching strategies
- 2.10 ensure that programmes delivered in Wales comply with legislation which supports use of the Welsh language
- 2.11 ensure pre-registration nursing programmes leading to registration in the adult field of practice are mapped to the content for nurses responsible for general care as set out in [Annexe V.2](#) point 5.2.1 of Directive 2005/36/EC (included in [Annexe 1](#) of this document)
- 2.12 ensure that all pre-registration nursing programmes meet the equivalent of minimum programme length for nurses responsible for general care in [Article 31\(3\)](#) of Directive 2005/36/EC (included in [Annexe 1](#) of this document)
- 2.13 ensure programmes leading to registration in two fields of nursing practice are of suitable length to ensure proficiency in both fields of nursing, and
- 2.14 ensure programmes leading to nursing registration and registration in another profession, are of suitable length and nursing proficiencies and outcomes are achieved in a nursing context.

# 3 Practice learning

## Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must:

- 3.1 provide practice learning opportunities that allow students to develop and meet the *Standards of proficiency for registered nurses* to deliver safe and effective care to a diverse range of people across the four fields of nursing practice: adult, mental health, learning disabilities and children's nursing
- 3.2 ensure that students experience the variety of practice expected of registered nurses to meet the holistic needs of people of all ages
- 3.3 provide practice learning opportunities that allow students to meet the communication and relationship management skills and nursing procedures, as set out in *Standards of proficiency for registered nurses*, within their selected fields of nursing practice: adult, mental health, learning disabilities and children's nursing
- 3.4 ensure technology enhanced and simulation-based learning opportunities are used effectively and proportionately to support learning and assessment and pre-registration nursing programmes leading to registration in the adult field of practice comply with [Article 31\(5\)](#) of Directive 2005/36/EC (included in [Annexe 1](#) of this document)

- 3.5 take account of students' individual needs and personal circumstances when allocating their practice learning including making [reasonable adjustments](#) for students with disabilities
- 3.6 ensure students experience the range of hours expected of registered nurses, and
- 3.7 ensure that students are [supernumerary](#).



# 4 Supervision and assessment

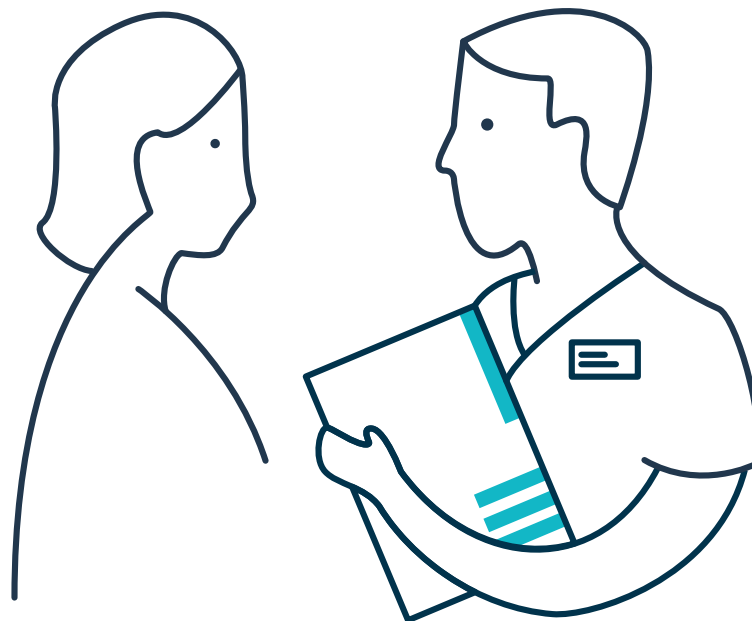
## Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must:

- 4.1 ensure that support, supervision, learning and assessment provided complies with the NMC *Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education*
- 4.2 ensure that support, supervision, learning and assessment provided complies with the NMC *Standards for student supervision and assessment*
- 4.3 ensure they inform the NMC of the name of the registered nurse responsible for directing the education programme
- 4.4 provide students with feedback throughout the programme to support their development
- 4.5 ensure throughout the programme that students meet the *Standards of proficiency for registered nurses* and programme outcomes for their fields of nursing practice: adult, mental health, learning disabilities and children's nursing
- 4.6 ensure that all programmes include a health numeracy assessment related to nursing proficiencies and calculation of medicines which must be passed with a score of 100%
- 4.7 ensure that students meet all communication and relationship management skills and nursing procedures within their fields of nursing practice: adult, mental health, learning disabilities and children's nursing
- 4.8 assess students to confirm proficiency in preparation for professional practice as a registered nurse
- 4.9 ensure that there is equal weighting in the assessment of theory and practice
- 4.10 ensure that all proficiencies are recorded in an ongoing record of achievement which must demonstrate the achievement of proficiencies and skills set out in *Standards of proficiency for registered nurses*, and
- 4.11 ensure the knowledge and skills for nurses responsible for general care set out in [Article 31\(6\)](#) and the competencies for nurses responsible for general care set out in [Article 31\(7\)](#) of Directive 2005/36/EC for pre-registration nursing programmes leading to registration in the adult field of practice have been met. ([Annexe 1](#) of this document).

# 5 Qualification to be awarded

**Approved education institutions, together with practice learning partners, must:**

- 5.1 ensure that the minimum award for a pre-registration nursing programme is a bachelor's degree, and
- 5.2 notify students during and before completion of the programme that they have [five years](#) to register their award with the NMC. In the event of a student failing to register their qualification within five years they will have to undertake additional education and training or gain such experience as specified in our standards.



# Annexe 1

## DIRECTIVE 2005/36/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL on the recognition of professional qualifications (as amended by Directive 2013/55/EU)

### Article 31

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#### Training of nurses responsible for general care

1. Admission to training for nurses responsible for general care shall be contingent upon either:
  - a completion of general education of 12 years, as attested by a diploma, certificate or other evidence issued by the competent authorities or bodies in a Member State or a certificate attesting success in an examination of an equivalent level and giving access to universities or to higher education institutions of a level recognised as equivalent; or
  - b completion of general education of at least 10 years, as attested by a diploma, certificate or other evidence issued by the competent authorities or bodies in a Member State or a certificate attesting success in an examination of an equivalent level and giving access to a vocational school or vocational training programme for nursing.

2. Training of nurses responsible for general care shall be given on a full-time basis and shall include at least the programme described in Annex V.2, point 5.2.1.

The Commission shall be empowered to adopt delegated acts in accordance with Article 57c concerning amendments to the list set out in point 5.2.1 of Annex V.2 with a view to adapting it to scientific and technical progress.

The amendments referred to in the second subparagraph shall not entail an amendment of existing essential legislative principles in Member States regarding the structure of professions as regards training and conditions of access by natural persons. Such amendments shall respect the responsibility of the Member States for the organisation of education systems, as set out in Article 165(1) TFEU.

3. The training of nurses responsible for general care shall comprise a total of at least three years of study, which may in addition be expressed with the equivalent ECTS credits, and shall consist of at least 4,600 hours of theoretical and clinical training, the duration of the theoretical training representing at least one third and the duration of the clinical training at least one half of the minimum duration of the training. Member States may grant partial exemptions to professionals who have received part of their training on courses which are of at least an equivalent level.

The Member States shall ensure that institutions providing nursing training are responsible for the coordination of theoretical and clinical training throughout the entire study programme.

4. Theoretical education is that part of nurse training from which trainee nurses acquire the professional knowledge, skills and competences required under paragraphs 6 and 7. The training shall be given by teachers of nursing care and by other competent persons, at universities, higher education institutions of a level recognised as equivalent or at vocational schools or through vocational training programmes for nursing.
5. Clinical training is that part of nurse training in which trainee nurses learn, as part of a team and in direct contact with a healthy or sick individual and/or community, to organise, dispense and evaluate the required comprehensive nursing care, on the basis of the knowledge, skills and competences which they have acquired. The trainee nurse shall learn not only how to work in a team, but also how to lead a team and organise overall nursing care, including health education for individuals and small groups, within health institutes or in the community.

This training shall take place in hospitals and other health institutions and in the community, under the responsibility of nursing teachers, in cooperation with and assisted by other qualified nurses. Other qualified personnel may also take part in the teaching process.

Trainee nurses shall participate in the activities of the department in question insofar as those activities are appropriate to their training, enabling them to learn to assume the responsibilities involved in nursing care.

6. Training for nurses responsible for general care shall provide an assurance that the professional in question has acquired the following knowledge and skills:
  - a comprehensive knowledge of the sciences on which general nursing is based, including sufficient understanding of the structure, physiological functions and behaviour of healthy and sick persons, and of the relationship between the state of health and the physical and social environment of the human being;
  - b knowledge of the nature and ethics of the profession and of the general principles of health and nursing;
  - c adequate clinical experience; such experience, which should be selected for its training value, should be gained under the supervision of qualified nursing staff and in places where the number of qualified staff and equipment are appropriate for the nursing care of the patient;
  - d the ability to participate in the practical training of health personnel and experience of working with such personnel;
  - e experience of working together with members of other professions in the health sector.

7. Formal qualifications as a nurse responsible for general care shall provide evidence that the professional in question is able to apply at least the following competences regardless of whether the training took place at universities, higher education institutions of a level recognised as equivalent or at vocational schools or through vocational training programmes for nursing:
- a competence to independently diagnose the nursing care required using current theoretical and clinical knowledge and to plan, organise and implement nursing care when treating patients on the basis of the knowledge and skills acquired in accordance with points (a), (b) and (c) of paragraph 6 in order to improve professional practice;
  - b competence to work together effectively with other actors in the health sector, including participation in the practical training of health personnel on the basis of the knowledge and skills acquired in accordance with points (d) and (e) of paragraph 6;
  - c competence to empower individuals, families and groups towards healthy lifestyles and self-care on the basis of the knowledge and skills acquired in accordance with points (a) and (b) of paragraph 6;
  - d competence to independently initiate life-preserving immediate measures and to carry out measures in crises and disaster situations;
  - e competence to independently give advice to, instruct and support persons needing care and their attachment figures;
  - f competence to independently assure the quality of, and to evaluate, nursing care;
  - g competence to comprehensively communicate professionally and to cooperate with members of other professions in the health sector;
  - h competence to analyse the care quality to improve their own professional practice as a nurse responsible for general care.

## V.2. NURSE RESPONSIBLE FOR GENERAL CARE

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### 5.2.1. Training programme for nurses responsible for general care

The training leading to the award of a formal qualification of nurses responsible for general care shall consist of the following two parts.

#### A. Theoretical instruction

##### a. Nursing:

- Nature and ethics of the profession
- General principles of health and nursing
- Nursing principles in relation to:
  - general and specialist medicine
  - general and specialist surgery
  - child care and paediatrics
  - maternity care
  - mental health and psychiatry
  - care of the old and geriatrics

##### b. Basic sciences:

- Anatomy and physiology
- Pathology
- Bacteriology, virology and parasitology
- Biophysics, biochemistry and radiology
- Dietetics
- Hygiene:
  - preventive medicine
  - health education
- Pharmacology

##### c. Social sciences:

- Sociology
- Psychology
- Principles of administration
- Principles of teaching
- Social and health legislation
- Legal aspects of nursing

#### B. Clinical instruction

- Nursing in relation to:
  - general and specialist medicine
  - general and specialist surgery
  - child care and paediatrics
  - maternity care
  - mental health and psychiatry
  - care of the old and geriatrics
  - home nursing

One or more of these subjects may be taught in the context of the other disciplines or in conjunction therewith.

The theoretical instruction must be weighted and coordinated with the clinical instruction in such a way that the knowledge and skills referred to in this Annex can be acquired in an adequate fashion.



# Glossary

**Reasonable adjustments:** where a student requires reasonable adjustment related to a disability or adjustment relating to any protected characteristics as set out in the equalities and human rights legislation.

**Approved education institutions (AEIs):** the status awarded by the NMC to an institution, or part of an institution, or combination of institutions that works in partnership with practice placement and work placed learning providers. AEIs will have provided us with assurance that they are accountable and capable of delivering NMC approved education programmes.

**Educators:** in the context of the NMC *Standards for education and training* educators are those who deliver, support, supervise and assess theory, practice and/or work placed learning.

**Equalities and human rights legislation:** prohibits unlawful discrimination on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and other characteristics. Anti-discrimination laws can be country specific and there are some legally binding international protections.

**(Good) health and character requirements:** as stipulated in NMC legislation (Articles 9(2)(b) and 5(2)(b) of the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001) 'good health' means that the applicant is capable of safe and effective practice either with or without reasonable adjustments. It does not mean the absence of a health condition or disability. Each applicant seeking admission to the register or to renew registration, whether or not they have been registered before, is required to declare any pending charges, convictions, police cautions and determinations made by other regulatory bodies.

**People:** individuals or groups who receive services from nurses and midwives, healthy and sick people, parents, children, families, carers, representatives, also including educators and students and others within and outside the learning environment.

**Practice learning partners:** organisations that provide practice learning necessary for supporting pre-registration and post-registration students in meeting proficiencies and programme outcomes.

**Quality assurance:** NMC processes for making sure all AEs and their approved education programmes comply with our standards.

**Recognition of prior learning (RPL):**

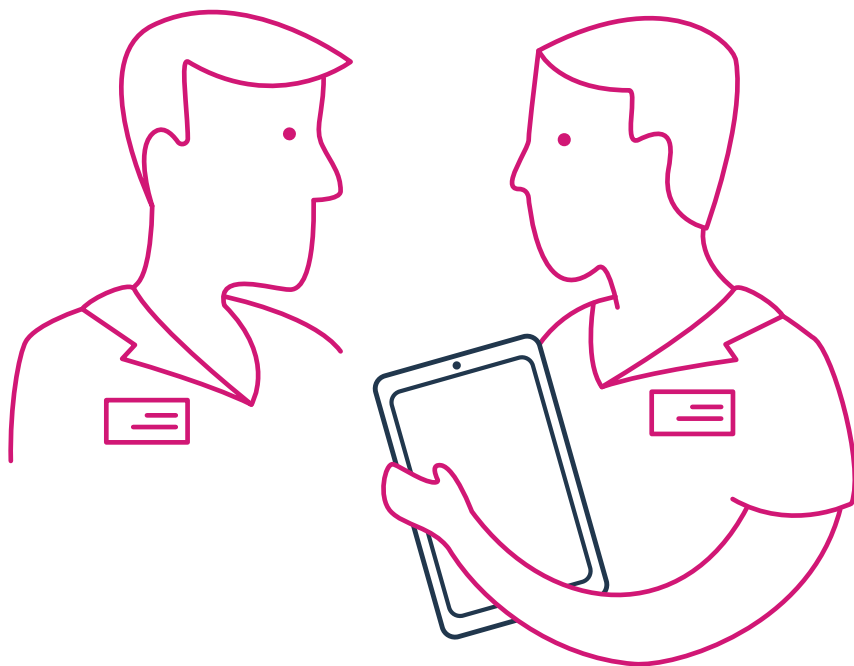
a process that enables previous certificated or experiential learning to be recognised and accepted as meeting some programme outcomes, this means it includes both theory and practice achievement.

**Simulation:** an artificial representation of a real world practice scenario that supports student development through experiential learning with the opportunity for repetition, feedback, evaluation and reflection. Effective simulation facilitates safety by enhancing knowledge, behaviours and skills.

**Stakeholders:** any person, group or organisation that has an interest or concern in the situation in question, and may affect or be affected by its actions, objectives or policies. In the context of the *NMC Standards for education and training* this includes students, educators, partner organisations, service users, carers, employers, other professionals, other regulators and education commissioners.

**Student:** any individual enrolled onto an NMC approved education programme whether full time or less than full time.

**Supernumerary:** students in practice or work placed learning must be supported to learn without being counted as part of the staffing required for safe and effective care in that setting. For apprentices, this includes practice placements within their place of employment; this does not apply when they are working in their substantive role. Placements should enable students to learn to provide safe and effective care, not merely to observe; students can and should add real value to care. The contribution students make will increase over time as they gain proficiency and they will continue to benefit from ongoing guidance and feedback. Once a student has demonstrated that they are proficient, they should be able to fulfil tasks without direct oversight. The level of supervision a student needs is based on the professional judgement of their supervisors, taking into account any associated risks and the students' knowledge, proficiency and confidence.



# The role of the Nursing and Midwifery Council

## What we do

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We regulate nurses, midwives and nursing associates in the UK. We exist to protect the public. We set standards of education, training, conduct and performance so that nurses, midwives and nursing associates can deliver high quality care throughout their careers.

We make sure nurses, midwives and nursing associates keep their skills and knowledge up to date and uphold our professional standards. We have clear and transparent processes to investigate nurses, midwives and nursing associates who fall short of our standards.

We maintain a register of nurses, midwives and nursing associates allowed to practise in the UK.

**These standards were approved by Council at their meeting on 28 March 2018 and have been updated to include the regulation of pre-registration nursing associate programmes on 8 October 2018.**

