

Registering as a nurse or midwife in the United Kingdom

For applicants from countries outside the
European Economic Area



Note: If you trained as a nurse or midwife outside the European Economic Area (EEA), this booklet is for you.

If you are a European Union (EU) National **and** were trained in an EU country then you should apply for registration through the EU registration route.

Warning: It is a criminal offence in the United Kingdom (UK) to pose as a nurse or midwife or to provide false or misleading information. If at any point in the application process we discover that your application is fraudulent, we will not continue with your application and you may be liable for prosecution. If, after registration, we discover that any part of your application was fraudulent, we will remove you from the Register. In addition, you will then be liable for prosecution.

Finding your way through this booklet

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Introduction

If you want to work as a nurse or a midwife in the UK you must register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council. The NMC regulates all the nurses and midwives working in the UK. Established by the UK government, we safeguard the health and wellbeing of the public by setting high professional standards of education and conduct for nurses and midwives.

The NMC Register has three parts

- nurses
- midwives
- specialist community public health nurses

The nurses part of the Register is divided into four fields of practice

- adult nursing
- mental health nursing
- learning disabilities nursing
- children's nursing

You can apply to be on the nurses or midwives parts of the Register, as long as you meet our standards.

If you are a nurse it is likely that you have trained as a general nurse. As a result, you should apply for registration with us as an adult nurse.

If you want to register on more than one part of the Register, you should apply for each part at the same time.

You can apply for registration as a nurse or midwife in the UK even if you do not live here. You do not need to come to the UK for us to consider the first part of the application. However, once you have been approved to proceed to apply for an Overseas Nursing Programme or Adaptation to Midwifery Programme you will need to be in the UK to attend the university and clinical placement.

Once registered with the NMC, you can work in the National Health Service or private health. The employment climate in the UK is very changeable. We can not help you find a job or give you references from any of the information you give us.

To work as a nurse or midwife in the UK, you must meet immigration conditions. Immigration in the UK is handled by Work Permits UK, so you should contact them for information. We cannot help you with your work permit application.

Before you apply, we think it is important for you to understand the context of nursing and midwifery practice in the UK, and the type of training and education that students undertake.

➔ *For information about nursing, go to page 5*

➔ *For information about midwifery, go to page 6*

The context of nursing practice in the UK

Becoming a nurse

All registered nurses trained in the UK will have completed a pre-registration nursing programme. The NMC sets standards for the length and content of these programmes, which take place in approved education institutions (usually universities). Only nurses who have successfully completed an approved programme and who have met the NMC requirements of good health and good character can apply to join the Register as a nurse.

Requirements for renewal of registration as a nurse with the NMC

Registration is renewed every three years and on each occasion, evidence of continued professional development must be provided. This standard requires the applicant to demonstrate 450 hours of practice activity and undertake a minimum of 35 hours of learning activity relevant to your practice during the three years prior to the renewal of registration. This continuing professional development is known as PREP (Post-registration education and practice) and is the professional standard set by the NMC.

Whatever the terms of nursing employment, every registrant must provide evidence of continued professional development in order to sustain registration as a nurse with the NMC.

Responsibility and sphere of practice

Registered nurses may work in a variety of health related settings including the National Health Service, private hospitals, nursing homes or in the community. In any circumstance the nurse is accountable for his or her own practice. This responsibility cannot be delegated elsewhere as the nurse is recognised as an autonomous practitioner. However, each nurse must ensure that their sphere of practice is competent and evidence based, by targeting required learning and experience to maintain their expertise, whatever the circumstances of employment.

➔ *If you would like to apply to register as a nurse in the UK, go to page 8 for more information*

The context of midwifery practice in the UK

Becoming a midwife

All registered midwives will have completed a midwifery programme of education. The NMC sets standards for the length and content of such programmes. These programmes take place in education institutions (usually universities). Only students who have successfully completed an approved midwifery programme of education and who have met the NMC requirements of good health and good character can apply to join the Register as a midwife.

Requirements for renewal of registration as a midwife with the NMC

Registration is renewed every three years and on each occasion, evidence of continued professional development must be provided. This standard requires the applicant to demonstrate 450 hours of practice activity and undertake a minimum of 35 hours of learning activity relevant to their practice during the three years before the renewal of registration.

Whatever the terms of midwifery employment, every registrant must provide evidence of this continued professional development in order to sustain registration as a midwife with the NMC.

Practising as a midwife in the UK

Registration on the midwives part of the NMC Register provides evidence of qualification and continued professional development. However registration alone does not permit registered midwives to practise their profession.

Annually, midwives must notify the local supervising authority of their Intention to Practise. The NMC sends each midwife a personalised Intention to Practise form every year. This form enables the local supervising authority to check and monitor that each midwife is eligible to practise.

Completion and submission of the annual Intention to Practise notification to the local supervising authority is a legal requirement of every midwife who works in the UK.

Responsibility and sphere of practice

Midwives can work in the National Health Service (NHS), private hospitals, with nursing and midwifery employment agencies or as independent practitioners working as part of a private business. In any circumstance midwives are accountable for their own practice. This responsibility cannot be delegated elsewhere as midwives are recognised as autonomous practitioners. The conditions in which midwives work vary widely and practice takes place in a variety of environments. However, midwives must ensure that they are competent in their sphere of practice, and using evidence-based learning and experience to sustain their expertise, whatever the circumstances of their employment.

Supervision of midwives

The UK is the only place in the world where supervision of midwives occurs. Supervision of midwives has been in place since the inception of the profession in 1902 and is a statutory

requirement protected by law. The function of supervision of midwives is to safeguard the health and wellbeing of women by providing professional advice and guidance to midwife practitioners and to service providers.

Each midwife has a named supervisor of midwives who in turn is appointed by the local supervising authority's midwifery officer. Supervision of midwives is based within regional health authorities, and overseen by the NMC. Women and families, employer organisations and midwives can talk directly to supervisors of midwives about any concerns they have about the safety of care as practised by a midwife.

The local supervising authority's midwifery officer can put in place mechanisms to support further education and practice developments for a midwife, or suspend a midwife from practice. The midwife could then be referred to the NMC for investigation that might result in removal from the Register. This important process supports the self-regulation of the profession.

➔ *If you would like to apply to register as a midwife in the UK, go to page 8 for more information*

How to apply to register as a nurse or midwife

We have given you a personal reference number. You will need this every time you contact us.

Stage 1

For us to begin processing your application

- You will have to pay an administration fee when you apply
- You should return the initial application form with your choice of registration ticked
- You should also send us certified (signed by a solicitor) photocopies of your
 - registration certificate
 - passport (details page)
 - birth certificate
 - marriage, civil partnership or deed poll certificate (if you do not use the name on your birth certificate)
- You should also send us your International English Language Testing System (IELTS) candidate number and test score

Stage 2

When we receive the documents listed above and the required fee we will send you an application pack, which contains

- your application form
- your post-registration experience form
- two employment references
- transcript of training form
- registration authority/licensing body form

We will give you detailed information to help you complete the forms and tell you what information we need.

You must not photocopy the application forms. But you should send certified photocopies of all your supporting documents as we cannot return original documents. If any of these documents are not in English, you will need to translate them.

You must fill in the application form in English. No one else must fill in the form for you. Make sure all the forms are signed and dated.

You must return the completed application forms and supporting documents within six months. If you cannot do this, we will close your file and keep your application fee. If you ask us for a second pack, you will have to pay a second fee. If you have difficulty meeting the six month deadline, you should ask for an extension. We will only give you one extension.

Your application forms and documents should be sent by post or special delivery. We cannot accept faxed or emailed applications.

If you decide to apply, you should read the rest of this booklet carefully and consider if you meet the requirements as they are described. Once you have submitted your application fee, the NMC will not refund this sum should your application fail to meet the required standards.

Special advice for refugees and asylum seekers

If you are a refugee or asylum seeker, you could contact us for advice before you make an application.

If you want to apply for registration, you must fill in the application form in full. If you can not fill in any part of the form, send it to us with a supporting letter saying why.

However you will at the very least need to send us certified photocopies of

- your nursing or midwifery diplomas and registration certificates
- your transcript of training broken down into theoretical and clinical hours of study
- employment references confirming your good health and good character

If you cannot provide any of these documents, we may not be able to assess your application, because we need as much information as possible about your training and experience. Agencies who support asylum seekers and refugees may be able to help you to get the information you need to apply for registration with us.

Please keep copies of all documents that you send to us, as we cannot return them to you.

If you decide to apply for registration, you must send us, with your application form

- a copy of your immigration letter
- a copy of your UK Home Office letter confirming your status
- a letter from social security
- a UK Home Office PIN card

If you can provide these documents, you will not need to pay the application fee.

General requirements to join the Register

Language requirements

English is the main language that is spoken and written in the UK and you must be able to show that you can communicate clearly and effectively. You must complete the academic version of the IELTS test and achieve an overall average score of seven (out of a possible nine) and at least seven in each of the listening, reading, writing, and speaking sections. We will not accept lower scores.

We will independently verify your scores with the IELTS organisation. Please note that the NMC considers an IELTS test result to have a validity of no more than two years.

Practice requirements

When you apply you must have been practising as a registered nurse or midwife for at least 12 months (full-time or the part-time equivalent) after qualifying. Also, if you have been qualified for longer than this, you must have practised for at least 450 hours in the previous three years.

If you do meet NMC requirements, but have not practised as a nurse for more than five years, you will have to take a longer version of the Overseas Nurses Programme. If you have not gained 12 months post-registration experience after you qualified as a nurse then you should not apply for registration.

Education requirements

You must have successfully completed at least 10 years of school education before starting a post-secondary education nursing or midwifery programme, leading to registration in your home country as a first level registered nurse or midwife. In the UK, post-secondary school nursing and midwifery programmes generally start at the minimum age of 17 years and 6 months. If you started your training at an age earlier than this, your application is unlikely to be successful.

➔ *Specific requirements for nurses can be found on page 11*

➔ *Specific requirements for midwives can be found on page 13*

Specific requirements for nurses

We will not accept your application if you are a second level nurse or the equivalent, for example an enrolled nurse, a licensed practical nurse, a vocational nurse, a state certified nurse, a nursery nurse, a nurse midwife technician, a nurse aid and so on.

Also, we do not accept medical qualifications as a basis for registration. If you have trained as a doctor or a medical technician in your home country, you will not be eligible for registration with us, even if this qualification allows you to carry out the duties of a nurse in your home country.

Your training programme must have been entirely focused on nursing. The NMC will not accept nursing qualifications that contain what it considers to be general education.

For all three year nursing courses, at least half (or 2300 hours) must be in clinical or practical training, and at least one third (or 1533 hours) must be theoretical training.

Adult (general) nursing

You must have completed a three year full time course at post secondary level leading to registration as a general nurse.

This must include theoretical and practical instruction in

- general and specialist medicine
- general and specialist surgery
- childcare and paediatrics
- maternity (obstetric) care
- mental health and psychiatry
- care of the elderly
- community/primary care nursing

Mental health nursing

You must have completed either

- a three year general nursing course followed by a twelve month mental health nursing course, or
- a three year full time mental health nursing course

Either route must include theoretical and practical instruction in

- mental health nursing in a range of care settings, including acute and enduring/chronic illness
- care for children and young people who have mental health problems
- specialist mental healthcare (eg. substance abuse, challenging behaviour and care in secure and locked environments)
- care for elderly adults who have mental health problems
- continuing care and rehabilitation
- community care

Children's nursing

You must have completed either

- a three year general nursing course followed by a 12 month children's nursing course, or
- a three year full time children's nursing course

Either route must include theoretical and practical instruction in

- care for children in a range of care settings, including specialist medicine and surgery
- care for children in emergency, neonatal and high-dependency environments
- care for children at home, in school and in the community
- working with families and carers to care for sick children of all ages

Learning disabilities nursing

You must have completed either

- a three year general nursing course followed by a 12 month learning disabilities nursing course, or
- a three year full time learning disabilities nursing course

Either route must include theoretical and practical instruction in

- learning disability nursing in a range of care environments, including residential and day-care settings
- learning disability nursing in a range of environments to support people who have complex needs and mental health problems
- care for people of all ages (from childhood to old age) who have learning disabilities
- working with families and carers to support people who have learning disabilities
- continuing care and rehabilitation

If you have completed a 12 month programme post-registration in mental health, learning disabilities or children's nursing, we can only consider you for registration if you have also undertaken training for at least three years in general nursing that meets the standards set out above. If you did comprehensive or general nurse training in your home country, you will only be able to apply for registration in the UK as an adult nurse. If you did your mental health, learning disabilities or children's nursing as a joint course with general nursing, it is very unlikely that it will meet our standards.

We may consider some postgraduate programmes as 'specialist', so you cannot use them as a basis for applying for registration. For example, you could not use courses in paediatric oncology, neonatology or paediatric critical care for registration as a children's nurse. Similarly, a certificate in postgraduate forensic psychiatry may not be suitable for registration as a mental health nurse. If you have taken this type of programme, you should check with us before you apply.

➔ *For more information on how we will assess your application, go to page 15*

Specific requirements for midwives

We will not accept your application if the education and training you undertook was not specific to the role of the midwife, allowing you to meet the specific requirements of midwifery practice. Combined nursing, child health and midwifery courses are not acceptable.

You must have completed a three year (5000 hours) full time or if you are already a registered nurse in the UK, an 18 month (2500 hours) course focused entirely on midwifery, with a balance of half practical/clinical training and half theoretical training. The calculation we use will be based on the hours of theoretical study and clinically supervised learning.

This must include theoretical and practical instruction in

- advising pregnant women, involving 100 pre-natal examinations
- carrying out 40 deliveries
- taking part in breech deliveries either as clinical practice or simulation
- performing episiotomy and suturing of episiotomy or tears
- supervising and caring for 40 women who are at risk in pregnancy, labour or the post-natal period
- supervising and caring for 100 post-natal women and healthy new-born babies
- observation and care for new-born babies who need special care, (this may include neonatology)
- caring for women who have pathological conditions relating to gynaecology or obstetrics
- an introduction to medicine and surgery
- experience as a midwife working in a primary or community care setting

Post-qualification experience

You must meet the following requirements prior to submission of your application

The Nursing and Midwifery Council will require further evidence of your experience as a midwife and indication of good health and character.

You must have completed a minimum of one year (full-time or part time equivalent) in midwifery practice following your registration in the country in which you trained.

If you have not practised midwifery in the five years prior to your application to the NMC, you must return to midwifery practice in your home country. (There is special guidance for Refugees and Asylum seekers on page 6.) This return to practise must be for a minimum of 12 weeks (450 hours) full time or equivalent part time hours and references will be required from employers to assure the NMC that return to competence in midwifery practice was achieved by the end of the return to practise period.

Continued professional development

You must provide evidence of continued professional development (35 hours over each period of three years) since the original registration as a midwife.

You must demonstrate evidence of good health and good character by the provision of two references signed by either senior midwifery managers or a midwifery tutor if your recent experience has been in education.

➔ *For more information on how we will assess your application, go to page 15*

How we assess your application

We will assess your application on its merits, so we cannot tell you what our decision is likely to be beforehand.

We check your application form and documents against the relevant standards, depending on the part of the register you are applying for. If we need any more information, we will ask for it at that stage. We can not give you a decision until we have received all of the information that we need. The more information you can give us, the quicker we will be able to make a decision.

When we have checked all of the necessary information, you can expect to receive an assessment letter with the decision within three months.

If your application is successful

If you meet our minimum standards, you will have to carry out extra education or clinical practice before registration. If you are a nurse you will have to undertake the Overseas Nurses Programme. If you are a midwife you will be required to undertake the Adaptation to Midwifery Programme. These courses are run by universities in the UK.

Places across the UK are limited for the Overseas Nurses Programme and for Adaptation to Midwifery Programmes. If you are not already living in the UK, we strongly advise you not to travel to the UK without having a confirmed place on a course.

- ➔ *More information on the Overseas Nurses Programme can be found on page 16*
- ➔ *More information on the Adaptation to Midwifery Programme can be found on page 17*

The Overseas Nurses Programme

If your application meets our minimum standards, you will have to undertake all or part of the Overseas Nurses Programme. This standard relates to the assessment of your ability to practise in a UK healthcare environment and was developed to be comparable to the requirements made of UK trained nurses. The core component of the programme is 20 days protected learning time (which everyone must undertake) plus, where appropriate, a period of supervised practice.

The protected learning time will contain study specifically relevant to the practice of nursing in the UK for example covering the structure of the UK health care system, the NMC Code of Professional Conduct and your personal accountability as a registered nurse.

The programme contains competencies designed to ensure fitness for practice in the UK. You will achieve these within the field in which you are qualified to practise (adult, mental health, learning disabilities or children's nursing). You will receive a list of the competencies when you are officially informed by the NMC that you must do the programme.

If you have had educational and practice experience in your home country that closely matches UK requirements for entry to the Register, you will only have to take the 20 protected learning days to adapt your previous education and experience to working in healthcare in the UK.

If you also have to take a period of supervised practice, you may take this only in practice settings that have been properly audited by the approved educational institution responsible for the programme. The approved educational institution will arrange those placements as part of the programme as well as an appropriate mentor for you. Your mentor will be a registered nurse on the same sub-part of the Register to the one you are applying for and will meet our standards for mentors.

Please go to www.nmc-uk.org and follow the link for "Overseas" to access the most up to date information regarding the Overseas Nurses Programme.

Placement on the NMC Register as a nurse

On successful completion of the Overseas Nurses Programme you will be entered on to the NMC Register as a nurse.

The Adaptation to Midwifery Programme

If your application meets our minimum standards, you will be required to undertake an Adaptation to Midwifery Programme. This programme will prepare and assess your ability to practice in a UK health environment and meets the same standards as are the requirements of UK-trained midwives as they enter the NMC Register.

The content of the Adaptation to Midwifery Programme will include

- The framework of supervision of midwives
- The role of the NMC as regulator of the profession
- Demonstrate a women-centred approach to care based on partnership, which respects the individuality of the woman and her family
- Promote ethical and non-discriminatory practices
- Reflect the quality dimension of care through the setting and maintenance of appropriate standards
- Develop the concept of lifelong learning and continued professional development
- Encompass key skills including appropriate communications with women and with professional colleagues
- Take account of the changing nature and context of midwifery practice
- Base practice on the best available evidence

Placement on the NMC Register as a midwife

On successful completion of a Midwifery Adaptation Programme you will be entered on to the NMC Register as a midwife.

Please go to www.nmc-uk.org and follow the link for **Registration** to access the most up to date information regarding the Adaptation to Midwifery Programme.

If your application is not successful

If you do not meet the minimum standards your application for registration will be rejected. In this case we will explain why and give you advice on what options are available.

What if you disagree with our decision and want to complain?

You may disagree with our decision and want to complain to us about this. This may be because

- you think that we have not taken account of all your experience
- you think that we have misunderstood information you have given us
- you have more information that you could send us

If this is the case, you should write to us explaining why you disagree and setting out any concerns or questions you have. We will then handle your complaint under our complaints procedure.

However, please note that you are not allowed to complain about our standards. When the NMC sets a standard we develop it in consultation with key stakeholders, and our Council finally agrees it. We cannot change a standard to suit your needs. Instead you must be able to show that you do meet the necessary standard.

If you disagree with our response and explanation, you can provide us with more information. If you are still not satisfied with our decision when it has gone through our complaints procedure, you may make a complaint to the Director of Standards and Registrations.

What if you still disagree with our decision and want to appeal?

An appeal may only be made if the Registrar has made a decision. The Registrar does not become involved in making decisions on applications from overseas nurses and midwives until they have provided complete evidence that they have met our standard.

When the Registrar has assessed this evidence (including supporting references for good health and good character) they will decide whether you may go onto our Register. If the Registrar turns down your application, you may appeal to our Council, whose decision is final. You must appeal in line with part 4 of the Registration Appeals of the NMC.

Useful contacts

NHS Careers

PO Box 376
Bristol
BS99 3EY
+44 845 6060 655
www.nhscareers.nhs.uk

NHS Careers International Nurses Advice Line

+ 44 8458 505888 (0900 to 1700 GMT only)

British Council

British Council Information Centre
5th Floor, Bridgewater House
58 Whitworth Street
Manchester
M1 6BB
+44 161 957 7755
www.britishcouncil.org

International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

www.ielts.org

Work Permits UK

DFEE
Moorfoot
Sheffield
www.workingintheuk.gov.uk

Praxis (support for refugees and asylum seekers)

Pott Street
London
E2 0EF
+44 20 7729 7985
www.praxis.org.uk

The Refugee Council

Head Office
240-250 Ferndale Road
London
SW9 8BB
+44 20 7346 6700
www.refugeecouncil.org.uk

The information in this booklet is correct as of September 2008. Please check our website for updates.

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