Pathways to a nursing career with The Open University
This programme provides an ideal opportunity to nurture and develop staff within NHS Ayrshire and Arran to reach their true potential, by becoming exceptional registered nurses working within both Adult and Mental Health care settings.

Chris Rodden
Quality Improvement Lead – Professional and Improvement Education, NHS Ayrshire and Arran
Keith Allan
NHS Ayrshire and Arran

A healthcare assistant with over 16 years’ experience, who studied for an Adult Nursing degree on a NHS funded partnership programme with The Open University (OU), and who was diagnosed as being dyslexic during his degree, was delighted to receive his nursing registration.

“This programme is fantastic, excellent for any healthcare assistant that feels, ‘I’m at a crossroads in my career and I want to do something, I want to go higher, I want to take the next step, but how do I do that?’

There were a few hurdles because my educational background was zilch. I didn’t have the relevant academic qualifications to progress. My first exam was when I started with The Open University.”

Keith Allan
NHS Ayrshire and Arran
“I’ve dreamed of being a nurse since I was a kid and I am beaming with pride to have made it to the end of the course. It’s by far my greatest achievement and I have so many people to thank for helping me get there! The opportunity was life changing - I was stuck in a rut before I started. I knew that I wanted to do my training but there was no way I could afford to leave my job and carry on enjoying my independence. [With The Open University] I was able to reach my goals whilst still working.

The Open University was a fantastic programme. It was really well organised with overwhelmingly supportive tutors all the way through. I got to work alongside a consistent mentor for the four years which really helped me to flourish. We established a close professional relationship and her support has been invaluable.

50 per cent of my placements were in the Medical Assessment Unit, which set me up well for being a newly-qualified Staff Nurse here. It’s great to get to adapt to my new role whilst staying in Ward 6, Medical Admissions. My colleagues have supported me so much over the years and it’s great to share this journey with them.

The whole experience of having to juggle work with study has set me in good stead for my career now. I learnt so much about time management and how to take responsibility for my own actions.

I am delighted to have reached the end of my training and am very thankful to have had the opportunity to do it through The Open University. Being able to earn a wage and keep my house while studying meant I was able to keep my independence and develop my skills at the same time. I would highly recommend this route of learning to other staff.”

Michaela Olver, OU graduate and Registered Staff Nurse

It’s hard to imagine a more dynamic, fast-changing sector than healthcare. Innovations in policy and practice, as well as new standards for treatment and care, provide constant challenges and opportunities to professionals working on the front line.

The OU in Scotland supports and develops healthcare professionals to meet the needs of the integrated health and social care agenda in Scotland.

We work in partnership with NHS Scotland boards and private organisations enabling staff to develop in their careers, irrespective of their educational and social background.
There are opportunities for healthcare support workers to be supported and funded to undertake Pre-registration Nursing training

Clinical support staff are attracted to studying with the OU for a number of reasons, including:

- the accessibility of the distance learning model, particularly for those living and working in more remote and rural areas and people with caring responsibilities
- the part-time route of study offered, which is viewed as providing a better option for people who are otherwise unable to access full-time FEI- and HEI-based study routes
- maintaining security of employment, particularly where family commitments or financial constraints have prevented support workers from considering the HNC Care and Administrative Practice route to nursing.

The Pre-registration Nursing Programme is a balance of theory (learning for practice) and practice (learning in practice). The teaching is provided through learning resources and an online learning environment, and students are supported by a network of tutors in both academic and practice settings. In addition to support from tutors, students are supported by registered nurse mentors and other registered practitioners while undertaking practice-based learning.

"Over the years, NHS Orkney are proud to have worked in partnership with The Open University and share the journey and success of some of our healthcare support workers (HCSW) who have studied distance learning on the Pre-registration Nursing Programme, to achieve their ambition of becoming a first-level graduate nurse.

This unique and innovative programme continues to offer our valued and talented HCSWs an opportunity to remain at home on the island and maintain their employment whilst embarking on their course of studies. There is a network of support locally and through the OU for students, as well as the programme embracing innovative technology to enhance communication.

This programme is also very beneficial for the organisation, to ensure sustainability as part of our planning of our remote and rural workforce."

Sylvia Campbell
Clinical Education Facilitator

OU Graduate Nurses
Pathways to a nursing career with The Open University

Standard entry

Enrol directly onto the Pre-registration nursing programme with employer sponsorship

Joint selection process
Meet NMC’s minimum entry requirements, including numeracy, literacy, good health and good character
Disclosure and barring check

An introduction to health and social care (K101)

BSc (Hons)
Nursing Programme
Stage 1

Enhancing your healthcare practice (K117)

Step off with Certificate of Higher Education in Healthcare Practice

BSc (Hons)
Nursing Programme
Stage 2

Joint selection process
Meet NMC’s minimum entry requirements, including numeracy, literacy, good health and good character
Disclosure and barring check

BSc (Hons)
Nursing Programme
Stage 3

Adult or Mental Health Nursing BSc (Hons) and eligibility to apply for NMC Registration
Certificate of Higher Education in Healthcare Practice (T01)

This certificate (consisting of K101 and K117) will enable healthcare support staff – including healthcare assistants, support workers, aspiring assistant practitioners or aspiring students of nursing – to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to underpin effective practice.

Students can undertake this qualification independently or as a fully-funded student.

Career relevance and employability

Although this certificate provides no guarantee of promotion in the workplace, it is designed as the first step to prepare healthcare support workers for the role of assistant/associate practitioner.

If you want to progress to nurse training, the Certificate of Higher Education in Healthcare Practice allows access to Stage 2 of our preregistration nursing programme, subject to successful selection and meeting the Nursing and Midwifery Council’s (NMC) minimum entry requirements.

An introduction to health and social care (K101)

We all depend on care services at some time in our lives – at home; in hospitals, clinics or GP surgeries; or in community and residential settings. This key introductory OU Level 1 module provides an authoritative overview of health and social care, with real-life case studies taking you deep into the experience of receiving care and working in care services. It has also been written for those new to university study and will help you develop the learning skills needed for degree study. Whether you’re involved in care work (paid or unpaid), use services yourself, or simply have a general interest, this module will build knowledge and understanding, develop skills, and prepare you for further study.

If you want to progress to nurse training, the Certificate of Higher Education in Healthcare Practice allows access to Stage 2 of our pre-registration nursing programme, subject to successful selection and meeting the Nursing and Midwifery Council’s (NMC) minimum entry requirements.

"Being able to study at home has meant that I can complete my aspiration to become a nurse within my home environment. I feel privileged to be part of a team of 'home-grown' nursing students. I look forward to the opportunities that the new hospital will bring, when I am qualified."

Lorraine Stout, Rehab Support Worker
NHS Orkney

Enhancing your healthcare practice (K117)

This online, practice-based module is designed for healthcare support workers in a diverse range of healthcare settings. You will focus on the differing roles of members of the healthcare team and explore the importance of promoting health. You will go on to reflect on your healthcare knowledge and understanding, and develop skills and competencies, including those around: risk management, hygiene, nutrition and emergency care. Through supervised practice, reflection and by studying the module materials you will meet service user, patient and client need. Your knowledge, skills and competence will be assessed through written assignments, interactive computer-marked assessment and the completion of a practice portfolio.
Get credit for previous study

You may be able to count credit from previous higher education towards an OU qualification, reducing the number of modules you need to complete.

To find out more, go to open.ac.uk/credit-transfer

Student funding information

If you are interested in applying for a funded place, please contact your employer.

For independent students, if you earn less than £25,000 p.a. you may be eligible for a Part Time Fee Grant, which would cover some of the module fees open.ac.uk/courses/fees-and-funding.

For more information please contact:

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