

**Working in healthcare?  
Thinking about a career in nursing?  
Talk to The Open University about their unique work-  
based BSc (Hons) degree in Nursing starting in  
October 2023**

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Qualifications and Entry Criteria**

**Q. What is the entry criteria to study nursing at The Open University?**

- A. Current programme entry requirements **at the closing date for applications** include:
- Hold a substantive permanent post in the Trust contracted at 26 hours or above.
  - Have the support of your line manager to apply.
  - Literacy: GCSE grade C or above in English or equivalent (e.g. Essential Skills level 2). NB: Successful completion of module K102 at the time of application will be accepted as equivalent.
  - Numeracy: GCSE grade C or above in Maths or equivalent (e.g. Essential skills level 2).
  - Good character, evidenced through self-declaration and an enhanced criminal record disclosure.
  - Good health, evidenced through self-declaration of health status, occupational health screening, review of previous sickness and absence record.
  - Two references – one of which must be from your current employer/line manager.
  - If someone has studied a professional academic programme previously in another university, we will require a reference from that academic institution.

**Q. What certificates will I need?**

- A. Certificates for Maths and English qualifications (as above) will need to be sent along with your application form, demonstrating that you meet the numeracy and literacy requirements.

**Q. I don't have all my certificates and my school is no longer there – what can I do?**

- A. Make contact with the examining board, who should hold a record (e.g. CCEA). You will need to do this as soon as possible to ensure you have the certificates in time for submission at the time of application.

**Q. I do not work in a Nursing Assistant / Healthcare Assistant role within the Trust. Can I still apply?**

- A. **Yes.** You can still apply if you work in an area where you are not involved in direct patient care (for example, within laboratory services, porter and/or catering services, etc) and meet the entry requirements stated above. This is also true for staff who work in social care settings but do not have the title "Nursing Assistant/Healthcare Assistant."

**Q. Is there an age limit for applicants?**

- A. **No.** We encourage all ages to apply for the programme.

**Q. I have dyslexia, can I still apply?**

A. **Yes.** The Open University pride themselves on supporting students with disabilities and if you are successful at interview we will endeavour to provide the necessary reasonable adjustments you require.

**Q. I have completed the Open University modules K102 and/or K104 (or K101 and/or K117 before these modules were replaced). Will these allow me to gain credit on the nursing programme.**

A. If you have successfully completed the above modules in recent years, you will likely gain credit for either or both of these modules. You will need to apply for this credit using The Open University Credit Migration/Transfer procedure and if successful, you can have these accredited towards year one of the BSc Nursing programme.

However, prior to the credit migration process, you need to successfully apply for a place on the nursing programme.

**Q. Is there any study I can undertake before starting the nursing programme?**

A. You can undertake K102 and K104 independently and then you will not have to complete these modules as part of the nursing programme. However, you will still need to successfully apply for a place on the nursing programme.

## **The Open University BSc (Hons) Nursing Degree**

**Q. How long does it take to complete The Open University nursing degree programme?**

A. The Open University pre-registration degree programme takes approximately four years of part-time study to complete. The programme is divided into three parts (over the 4 years) and consists of 50% theoretical work and 50% practice placement.

**Q. How is the programme assessed?**

A. Each module on the programme is assessed in a variety of ways and these include, assignments, exams and interactive computer marked assessments. These are marked by academic module tutors. Practice placements are assessed by both a Practice Assessor and a Practice Tutor / Academic Assessor. Practice assessment includes completion of an electronic practice assessment document and professional practice discussions.

**Q. How long are my practice placements?**

A. You will need to spend 2300 hours in practice placement over the duration of your programme. This usually takes place over 9 placements during the 4 years of the programme (3 placements in each of the 3 parts of the programme). Placements will normally be approximately 6 – 8 weeks duration.

**Q. Can I choose where I go on placement?**

A. **No.** You will be **required** to work in the placement you are allocated as placement areas accessible to OU students, are limited and you will have specific placement experiences to be achieved.

Placements will predominantly be within the boundaries of your employing Trust. If you are considering Learning Disability or Children and Young People Nursing, some placements will be necessary in other HSC Trusts. If you are offered a place on the programme you will be asked to give a written commitment that you will be able to travel to any of the placement areas that you are allocated to, over the 4 years of the programme.

- Q. Will I be provided with a uniform for placement?**
- A. **Yes**, you will be provided with a uniform by your employing trust practice education team and this must be worn during practice placement. Uniform policy must be adhered to.
- Q. How many places are available at The Open University each year?**
- A. Undergraduate nursing places at The Open University are commissioned by the Department of Health and local Health and Social Care Trusts. The numbers are dependent on workforce plans and are not finalised until April each year. However, in 2022 there were approximately 180 nursing places available across the four fields of practice.
- Q. What fields of nursing practice are offered by The Open University?**
- A. The Open University offers all 4 fields of nursing, Adult, Children's and Young People, Mental Health and Learning Disabilities.
- Q. How is The Open University programme delivered?**
- A. The theoretical component of The Open University programme is mostly delivered online in interactive tutorials, module website materials and tutor forums, and you then develop your skills and apply this theory during practice learning experiences (placements).
- Q. What support will I receive while undertaking the programme?**
- A. During the theory modules you will receive support from your module tutor and while on practice placement you will have the support of practice supervisors and a specified practice assessor to guide your development. You will also be supported in practice by a dedicated Practice Tutor from The Open University.  
A Staff Tutor from the Open University is linked with each Health and Social Care Trust and in addition, the Practice Education Team within each local Trust will provide all Open University students with excellent support and guidance. The Open University Student Support Team (SST) will also provide all students with valuable support during the 4 years of the programme.
- Q. What documentation will I be expected to complete during my time on practice placement?**
- A. Evidence of your learning in practice, across the programme, is recorded in a portfolio, known as the electronic Northern Ireland Practice Assessment Document (eNIPAD). You will have to complete this document electronically.
- Q. I currently work 9am – 5pm. Will I be expected to do shift work while on practice placement?**
- A. **Yes**. Some shift practice hours, including night duty and weekend practice hours is a Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) requirement for you to successfully complete the programme. You will be expected to commence and finish your shift in line with your colleagues in the practice placement. It should also be noted that all students on the OU nursing programme are required to undertake periods of night duty (3 night duty shifts on each part of the programme).
- Q. I am on a Term-Time contract. Can I remain on this contract if I am successful on gaining a place on the programme?**
- A. **No**. You will be expected to be available to engage in the programme flows for each part of the programme and attend tutorials and practice placements as they occur. There is no break in the programme over the 4year programme and thus term-time cannot be accommodated. You should discuss this with your line manager before applying.

## **Pay and funding arrangements**

**Q. Will I get paid the same wage while taking part in the programme?**

A. To take part in the programme you must hold a permanent contract working a minimum of 26 hours per week. You will continue to be paid the salary for your substantive post for the duration that you are on the OU nursing programme.

**Q. Will I still get my unsociable hours payment?**

A. When you are working in your substantive post, you will continue to be paid as you have always been paid. When you go on practice placement experiences, you will be paid for any unsocial hours of practice undertaken while you are there.

With regard to any other issues regarding contracts, salary or unsocial hours payments, you should speak to your line manager and the relevant HR department in your Trust so that you are fully aware of any relevant local Trust policies that could impact upon your salary.

## **General Questions**

**Q. Can I still undertake bank or agency work while on the programme.**

A. **Yes**, provided that it does not impact on your study or your placements. You must **not** work bank shifts on allocated study days.

**Q. If I gain a place on The Open University nursing programme will I be able to take holidays / annual leave when I want to?**

A. The only occasion when there are restrictions on you taking annual leave is during those periods that you are on placement. Placement dates are predetermined and will not be changed (other than in very exceptional circumstances). These placement dates will be provided to at the start of each part of the programme.

However, outside of the placement dates, annual leave can be negotiated with your manager as per normal arrangements. During the period of completing The Open University nursing degree your annual leave entitlement will continue to be based on your substantive post within the trust.

**Q. My manager will not support my application at this time. Can I complete the programme in my own time instead?**

A. **No**. You will not be able to complete the nursing degree without the full support of your line manager. However, it is possible to undertake some modules in your own time, that may count towards the OU Nursing Degree, in the future. If you would like to know more regarding studying modules outside of the OU Nursing Degree, the following link will provide you with helpful information. [T01 | Certificate of Higher Education in Healthcare Practice \(open.ac.uk\)](#)

**Q. When I complete my nursing degree through The Open University will I be guaranteed a job as a Registered Nurse?**

A. At this point in time, the majority of Health and Social Care Trusts are providing students who successfully complete The Open University Nursing Degree, with positions as registered nurses. Notwithstanding the above, the current nursing workforce challenges being faced in Northern Ireland is likely to mean that you will be in high demand when you successfully complete this programme.

- Q. What happens if I become ill, or pregnant or need to leave the programme (temporarily) for other reasons.**
- A. The Open University takes the welfare of its students very seriously. There are processes in place to support students who need to take a break from the programme for a period of time, depending on your circumstances. Each individual circumstance is different and will be considered on a case by case basis.

**For more information about the programme, contact: The Open University Nursing Team.**

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