Standards for education and training

Part 3:
Standards for post-registration programmes

Programmes leading to specialist community public health nurse qualifications and programmes leading to community nursing specialist practice qualifications

Contents

Our Standards for post-registration programmes were published on 7 July 2022. We re-published these standards in April 2023 and further updated them in April 2024.

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Nursing & Midwifery Council

About our standards

Our standards for education and training include the Standards framework for nursing[1] 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

Part 2: Standards for student supervision and assessment

Part 3: Programme standards:

- **Standards for pre-registration nursing programmes**

- **Standards for pre-registration midwifery programmes**

- **Standards for pre-registration nursing associate programmes**

- **Standards for prescribing programmes**

- **Standards for post-registration programmes: programmes leading to specialist community public health nurse qualifications and programmes leading to community nursing specialist practice qualifications**

- **Standards for return to practice programmes**

Supporting information for our **Standards for student supervision and assessment** is on our **website**.

These standards help nursing and midwifery **students** achieve 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, values and behaviours that nurses, midwives and nursing associates are expected to uphold.

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1 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 in England with their own part of our register, but they are part of the nursing team.

Introduction

Our standards for specialist community public health nurses (SCPHN) and community nursing specialist practice qualification (SPQ) programmes set out the legal requirements, entry requirements, requirements for the curriculum and practice learning, requirements for supervision and assessment, and information on the awards for these post-registration programmes.

Public safety is central to our standards. Registered nurses and midwives undertaking these programmes are post-registration students in this context. They will be in contact with **people** throughout their education. It's important they grow in confidence, and further develop their knowledge and skills in a safe, supportive and effective way.

These programme standards must be read with our **Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education** and **Standards for student supervision and assessment**, both of which apply to all NMC approved programmes. NMC **Approved Education Institutions (AEIs)** intending to deliver post-registration education programmes must comply with all these standards to run an approved programme.

Education providers structure their programmes to comply with our programme standards. They design their curricula around the proficiencies we set. Proficiencies are the knowledge, skills and behaviours that nurses and midwives need in order to practise.

We also publish standards of proficiency for nursing and midwifery professions, including **Standards of proficiency for specialist community public health nurses** and **Standards of proficiency for community nursing SPQs**.

Our standards for education and training highlight the need for programmes to adopt an inclusive approach to recruitment, selection and progression, ensuring admissions and all other academic processes are open, fair, transparent and demonstrate an understanding of and take measures to address underrepresentation.

Curricula for **specialist community public health nurses** and **community nursing specialist practice qualifications** may be flexible to accommodate opportunities for shared learning, including between post-registration programmes and the differing fields of SCPHN and community nursing SPQ practice that reflect the range of learning opportunities and needs and in recognising prior experience as registered professionals.

Students will learn and be assessed in theory, **simulation** and practice environments and settings.

Students are assessed against proficiencies for their intended field of SCPHN practice or SCPHN public health nurse practice.

The awards are as follows:

- SCPHN: health visitor, school nurse, occupational health nurse

- SCPHN: public health nurse[2]

Students are assessed against proficiencies for their intended community nursing SPQ practice.

The awards are as follows:

- Community nursing SPQ: in the field of community children's nursing, community learning disabilities nursing, community mental health nursing, district nursing, general practice nursing

- Community nursing in health and social care SPQ: for which other fields of community nursing may be specified[3].

We believe that involving people who use services and members of the public in the planning and delivery of curricula will promote public confidence in the education of nursing and midwifery professionals. We encourage the use of supportive evidence and engagement from people who have experienced care.

Successful completion of the programme confirms the student is capable of providing safe, effective and kind care that improves health and wellbeing. Students will learn and be assessed in theory, simulation and practice environments and settings in a specific field of practice SCPHN role, a SCPHN public health nurse role, in a specific field of practice community nursing SPQ role or in a community nursing in health and social care SPQ role.

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2 The SCPHN public health nurse qualification (PHN) qualification does not have a predetermined field of SCPHN practice

3 The community nursing SPQ in health and social care field of practice is not predetermined by the NMC. However the field of practice must be specified by the AEI as part of the NMC programme approval process.

Through our **quality assurance** processes we check that education programmes meet all of our standards, that the programme outcomes relate to the proficiencies for particular qualifications and that AEIs and practice learning partners are managing risks effectively. We monitor risks to quality in education and training using internal and external intelligence. This intelligence gathering includes analysis of system regulators' 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**.

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

Legislative framework

Article 5(2) of the **Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001** ('**the Order**') requires the NMC to establish the standards of proficiency necessary to be admitted to each part of the register and for safe and effective practice under that part of the register. This article applies to SCPHN standards of proficiency.

Article 15(1) of the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001 requires the NMC to establish the standards for education and training which are necessary to achieve the standards of proficiency for admission to any part of the register. This article applies to SCPHN programme standards.

Article 19(6) of the Nursing and Midwifery Order 2001 allows the NMC to establish standards of education and training for any additional qualifications that may be recorded on the register. Articles 15(3) to (9) and articles 16 to 18 shall apply in respect of those standards as if they were standards established under article 15(1)(a). This means the NMC may establish standards of education and training and may approve a course of education or qualification in relation to SPQs.

These post-registration programme standards are established under these provisions.

The student journey

In conjunction with Parts 1 and 2 as outlined above, standards for specialist community public health nurses and community nursing specialist practice qualification programmes follow the student journey and are grouped under the following five headings:

1. Selection, admission and progression

Standards about an applicant's suitability and continued participation in a specialist community public health nurse programme or community nursing specialist practice qualification programme

2. Curriculum

Standards for the content, delivery and evaluation of programmes for specialist community public health nurse and community nursing specialist practice qualifications

3. Practice learning

Standards specific to learning that takes place in practice settings for students undertaking programmes leading to specialist community public health nurse and community nursing specialist practice qualifications

4. Supervision and assessment

Standards for safe and effective supervision and assessment for specialist community public health nurse and community nursing specialist practice qualification programmes

5. Qualification to be awarded

Standards which state the award and information for:

- Specialist community public health nurse in the field of: health visitor, school nurse, occupational health nurse

- Specialist community public health nurse (public health nursing)

- Community nursing specialist practice qualifications: community children's nursing, community learning disabilities nursing, community mental health nursing, district nursing, general practice nursing

- Community nursing in health and social care specialist practice qualification (for those in other identified field(s) of community nursing practice).

1 Selection, admission and progression

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

1.1 ensure that on entry to the programme the applicant is an:

    1.1.1 NMC registered nurse (level 1) or NMC registered midwife capable of safe and effective practice at the level of proficiency appropriate to the NMC approved specialist community public health nurse (SCPHN) programme

    1.1.2 NMC registered nurse (level 1) with relevant professional registration, capable of safe and effective practice at the level of proficiency appropriate to the NMC approved community nursing specialist practice qualification (SPQ) programme

1.2 confirm on entry that each applicant selected to undertake a SCPHN or community nursing SPQ programme has the academic capability to study at the level required for that programme

1.3 provide opportunities that enable eligible[4] NMC registered nurses and/or NMC registered midwives, including NHS, non-NHS, self-employed or self-funded applicants to apply for entry onto an NMC approved SCPHN programme

1.4 provide opportunities that enable eligible NMC registered nurses, including NHS, non-NHS, self-employed or self-funded applicants to apply for entry onto an NMC approved community nursing SPQ programme

1.5 confirm that the necessary arrangements and governance structures are in place to support practice learning, including employer support and **protected learning time**, to enable students to undertake and be appropriately supported throughout the programme

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4 SCPHN applicants must be RN1, midwife or both. SPQ applicants must be RN1

1.6   consider **recognition of prior learning** that is capable of being mapped to the:

    1.6.1   programme learning outcomes and standards of proficiency for the applicant's intended field of SCPHN practice or SCPHN public health nurse practice

    1.6.2   programme learning outcomes and standards of proficiency for the applicant's intended field of community nursing SPQ practice or in other specified field(s) for the community nursing SPQ in health and social care practice

1.7   where programmes intend to offer SCPHN and/or SPQ students admission to an NMC approved independent/supplementary (V300) prescribing programme consider recognition of prior learning that is capable of being mapped to the RPS Competency Framework for all Prescribers[5] for applicants, and

1.8   where programmes intend to offer admission to an NMC approved independent/supplementary (V300) prescribing programme to SCPHN and/or SPQ students, ensure that the applicant is a registered nurse (level 1) and/or a registered midwife before being considered as eligible to apply for entry.

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5   Royal Pharmaceutical Society's Competency Framework for All Prescribers.

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** including the confirmation of appropriately qualified and experienced people for programme delivery[6] for:

> **2.1.1** all selected fields of SCPHN practice and/or SCPHN PHN practice and/or for
>
> **2.1.2** all selected fields of community nursing SPQ practice and/or in other specified fields of community nursing SPQ in health and social care practice

2.2 comply with the NMC **Standards for student supervision and assessment**

2.3 confirm SCPHN and/or community nursing SPQ programmes comply with the NMC **Standards for prescribing programmes**[7]

2.4 state routes within the programme for:

> **2.4.1** students to enter the SCPHN register in a specific field of SCPHN practice: health visitor, school nurse, occupational health nurse
>
> **2.4.2** students to enter the SCPHN register for the public health nurse qualification
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> **2.4.3** students to annotate their registration in a specific field of community nursing SPQ practice: community children's nursing, community learning disabilities nursing, community mental health nursing, district nursing, general practice nursing
>
> **2.4.4** students to annotate their registration in community nursing SPQ practice in health and social care

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6 See Part 1: Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education 2.15, 2.19 and 5.4

7 See: **Standards for prescribing programmes**

2.5 ensure programme learning outcomes reflect the:

    2.5.1 core and field specific standards of proficiency for SCPHN and for the intended field(s) of SCPHN practice: health visiting, school nursing, occupational health nursing

    2.5.2 core standards of proficiency for SCPHN that are tailored to SCPHN public health nursing

    2.5.3 standards of proficiency for community nursing SPQ that are tailored to the intended field and related context of community nursing practice. These may be within community children's nursing, community learning disabilities nursing, community mental health nursing, district nursing, general practice nursing or in specified field(s) for community nursing SPQ in health and social care practice

2.6 set out the general and professional content necessary to meet the:

    2.6.1 core and field specific standards of proficiency for each intended field of SCPHN practice: health visiting, school nursing, occupational health nursing,

    2.6.2 core standards of proficiency for SCPHN public health nurse qualification

    2.6.3 standards of proficiency for the community nursing SPQ that is tailored to the intended field of community nursing practice. These may be within community children's nursing, community learning disabilities nursing, community mental health nursing, district nursing, general practice nursing, or in other specified field(s) of community nursing in health and social care

2.7 set out the content necessary to meet the programme outcomes for each intended field of:

    2.7.1 SCPHN practice: health visiting, school nursing, occupational health nursing and/or SCPHN public health nursing,

    2.7.2 community nursing SPQ practice: community children's nursing, community learning disabilities nursing, community mental health nursing, district nursing, general practice nursing and/or in other specified field(s) of community nursing in health and social care

2.8 ensure that the curriculum provides a balance of theory and practice learning opportunities, using a range of learning and teaching strategies

2.9 ensure technology and simulation opportunities are used effectively and proportionately across the curriculum to support supervision, learning and assessment

2.10 ensure programmes delivered in Wales comply with legislation which supports use of the Welsh language, and

2.11 ensure programmes are:

    2.11.1 of suitable length to support student achievement of all proficiencies and programme outcomes for their intended SCPHN or community nursing SPQ award

    2.11.2 no less than 45 programmed weeks of theory and practice learning for full-time programmes/pro rata for part time programmes.

3 Practice learning

Approved education institutions must:

3.1 ensure that suitable and effective arrangements and governance for practice learning are in place for all students, including arrangements specifically tailored to those applicants who are self-employed and/or self-funded

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

3.2 ensure that students work in partnership with the education provider and their practice learning partners to arrange supervision and assessment that complies with the NMC **Standards for student supervision and assessment**

3.3 provide practice learning opportunities that allow students to develop, progress and meet all the standards of proficiency for their:

    3.3.1 intended field of SCPHN practice: health visitor, school nurse, occupational health nurse or,

    3.3.2 SCPHN public health nurse

    3.3.3 intended community nursing SPQ: these may be within the fields of community children's nursing, community learning disabilities nursing, community mental health nursing, district nursing, general practice nursing or,

    3.3.4 in other specified field(s) of community nursing in health and social care nursing

3.4 ensure that practice learning complies with the NMC **Standards for student supervision and assessment**

3.5 take account of students' individual learning needs and personal circumstances when allocating their practice learning, including making **reasonable adjustments** for students with disabilities, and

3.6 ensure learning experiences are tailored to the student's stage of learning, proficiencies and programme outcomes culminating in a period of practice learning. This is dependent on the individual learning needs of the student to demonstrate overall proficiency and achieve the programme learning outcomes for their:

    3.6.1 intended field of SCPHN practice, SCPHN PHN practice or,

    3.6.2 their intended field of community nursing SPQ practice or community nursing SPQ in health and social care practice.

4 Supervision and assessment

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

4.1 ensure student support, supervision, learning and assessment complies with the NMC **Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education**

4.2 liaise, collaborate and agree the necessary approach to the preparation, education, training, ongoing learning, support and expertise necessary for practice supervisors, practice and academic assessors that support SCPHN and community nursing SPQ student learning and assessment[8]

4.3 ensure practice supervision, the assessment of practice and academic assessment complies with the NMC **Standards for student supervision and assessment**

4.4 ensure practice supervisors:

    4.4.1 have undertaken a period of preceptorship in line with the NMC principles for preceptorship as SCPHN or community nursing SPQ qualified professionals or

    4.4.2 can evidence prior learning and relevant practice supervisor experience that enables them to facilitate effective evidence-based learning opportunities for post-registration SCPHN or community nursing SPQ students

4.5 ensure practice and academic assessors:

    4.5.1 have undertaken a period of preceptorship in line with the NMC principles for preceptorship as SCPHNs or community nurses with a SPQ or,

    4.5.2 can evidence prior learning and relevant practice assessor experience that enables them to engage in fair, reliable and valid assessment processes in the context of SCPHN and/or community nursing SPQ

4.6 ensure the student is assigned to a practice assessor who is an experienced registered SCPHN or community SPQ nurse for the programme the student is undertaking

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8   This links directly to Part 1: Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education and in particular requirement 4.7

4.6.1   in exceptional circumstances, the same person may fulfil the role of practice supervisor and practice assessor for a part of the programme where the SCPHN/community nursing SPQ student is undergoing education and training in a practice learning setting. In such instances, the student, practice supervisor/assessor and the AEI will need to evidence why it was necessary for the practice supervisor and practice assessor roles to be carried out by the same person

4.7   provide constructive feedback to students throughout the programme to support their learning and development for meeting the standards of proficiency and programme learning outcomes for:

4.7.1   their intended field of SCPHN practice: health visitor, school nurse, occupational health nurse,

4.7.2   SCPHN public health nurse,

4.7.3   their intended SPQ in the field of: community children's nursing, community learning disabilities nursing, community mental health nursing, district nursing, general practice nursing, or

4.7.4   other specified field(s) of community nursing SPQ in health and social care

4.8   ensure all SCPHN proficiencies and/or community nursing SPQ proficiencies are recorded in an ongoing record of achievement which confirms SCPHN and/or community nursing SPQ proficiencies have been met, and

4.9   assess the student's suitability for award and confirm overall proficiency based on the successful completion of all practice learning relevant to:

4.9.1   their intended field of SCPHN practice: health visitor, school nurse, occupational health nurse,

4.9.2   SCPHN public health nurse practice,

4.9.3   their intended SPQ in the field of: community children's nursing, community learning disabilities nursing, community mental health nursing, district nursing, general practice nursing, and/or

4.9.4   other specified field(s) of practice for the community nursing SPQ in health and social care.

5 Qualification to be awarded

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

5.1 ensure that the minimum academic level for SCPHN and community nursing SPQ is at postgraduate masters' level

5.2 inform the student that the SCPHN award[9] must be registered with us within five years of successfully completing the programme and if they fail to do so they will have to undertake additional education and training or gain such experience as specified in NMC standards for the award to be registered

5.3 inform the student that the community nursing SPQ award[10] must be registered with us within five years of successfully completing the programme and if they fail to do so they will have to undertake additional education and training or gain such experience as specified in NMC standards for the award to be added as an annotation to their professional registration

5.4 inform the SCPHN and/or community nursing SPQ student that following successful completion of an NMC approved programme of preparation for SCPHN or community nursing SPQ, which included an NMC approved independent/supplementary prescribing qualification, the V300 award must be registered with us within five years of successfully completing the prescribing programme. If they fail to do so they will have to retake and successfully complete the programme in order to qualify as a prescriber, and

5.5 inform the SCPHN and/or community nursing SPQ student that they may only prescribe once their prescribing qualification has been annotated on the NMC register and they may only prescribe from the formulary they are qualified to prescribe from and within their competence and scope of practice.

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9   SCPHN registration
10 Recordable qualifications

Glossary

Approved Education Institutions (AEIs): the status awarded by the NMC to an institution, or part of an institution, or combination of institutions that work 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.

Community nursing: care provided by nurses in the community including but not limited to nursing care provided where people live, at home or close to home, in adult social care settings, educational settings, primary care, community clinics, outreach centres, health and justice and other community settings or establishments.

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.

Other specified field(s) of community nursing in health and social care: this is including but not limited to nurses practicing in the context of offender health, the social care sector, hospice sector, as determined by the AEI and their learning practice partner.

People: individuals or groups who receive services from nurses and midwives, healthy and sick people, parents, children, families, carers, representatives, including educators, 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.

Protected learning time: time in a health, care or other setting during which students are learning and are supported to learn. Students must be supervised during protected learning time. The level of supervision required is a matter of professional judgment and will depend on the competence and confidence of the student, and the risks associated with the intervention being delivered.

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

Reasonable adjustments: where a student requires a reasonable adjustment related to a disability. We also use it to mean adjustment relating to any protected characteristics as set out in the equalities and human rights legislation.

Recognition of prior learning:
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 educational method which uses a variety of modalities to support students in developing their knowledge, behaviours and skills, with the opportunity for repetition, feedback, evaluation and reflection to achieve their programme outcomes and be confirmed as capable of safe and effective practice.

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

What we do

Our vision is safe, effective and kind nursing and midwifery that improves everyone's health and wellbeing. As the independent regulator of more than 808,000* nursing and midwifery professionals, we have an important role to play in making this a reality.

Our core role is to **regulate**. First, we promote high professional standards for nurses and midwives across the UK, and nursing associates in England. Second, we maintain the register of professionals eligible to practise. Third, we investigate concerns about nurses, midwives and nursing associates – something that affects a tiny minority of professionals each year. We believe in giving professionals the chance to address concerns, but we'll always take action when needed.

To regulate well, we **support** our professions and the public. We create resources and guidance that are useful throughout people's careers, helping them to deliver our standards in practice and address new challenges. We also support people involved in our investigations, and we're increasing our visibility so people feel engaged and empowered to shape our work.

Regulating and supporting our professions allows us to **influence** health and social care. We share intelligence from our regulatory activities and work with our partners to support workforce planning and sector-wide decision-making. We use our voice to speak up for a healthy and inclusive working environment for our professions.

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