

# **Desk Research to review the public facing admission criteria for NHS funded Nursing Degrees in England.**

Mary Somerville, Research Fellow  
Institute of Vocational Learning and Workforce Research  
August 2015

# The desk research reviewed:

- ❖ information from Higher Education Institute (HEI) websites
- ❖ web-based information from other sources

# Objective

- ❖ How easily can a “non traditional” student access appropriate information about entry requirements and to scope the range of qualification requirements?

Non-traditional pathways were defined as non-A-level entrants (for example, QCF qualifications, BTEC, International Baccalaureate (IB) or Access Courses)

# Identified 52 HEI with Adult Nursing programmes

For each institution, we looked at:

- ❖ UCAS points
- ❖ IB points
- ❖ other information
- ❖ Functional Skills
- ❖ GCSE (English, Maths and Science)

# Other sources of information which may be used by prospective nursing students

- ❖ Websites which a prospective learner might look at
- ❖ NHS Careers (now Health Careers) nursing microsite
- ❖ RCN
- ❖ others

# Findings

## GCSE

- ❖ Some websites specified 4 GCSE AT C+, and others specified 5 GCSE at B+.
- ❖ Requirements for English, Maths and Science were recorded. One Institution stated a requirement of B at GCSE for all three subjects. The majority stated a C grade was required, and five gave no information.

## Functional Skills

- ❖ Eight websites stated that Functional Skills were not accepted, one website stated Level 3 was required, five stated they would accept Level 2 and the remaining 37 gave no information.

## Findings (2)

### **UCAS points**

- ❖ The range of UCAS points required was 160-330. The average was 274 points (280 UCAS points is equivalent to BBC at A level on the 2015 tariff)

### **International Baccalaureate**

- ❖ It appears that applicants with IB are being asked to reach a higher threshold in order to progress, and this warrants further investigation.

## Findings (3)

### **BTEC**

- ❖ 27 HEIs gave guidance on the required grade profile for BTEC students,

### **Access Courses**

- ❖ Most HEI websites did mention the Access Course as a route into the programme, with some giving guidance on grade profiles and asked for relevant subjects to be in the programme.

**Other information** was noted (Interview/selection procedure, DBS checks and Occupational Health requirements)



# Summary

Potential applicants to nursing degrees will obtain information (and potentially misinformation) from a number of sources.

- ❖ Non A level routes into nursing are many and varied and confuse many people, giving rise to the potential for poor quality IAG.
- ❖ Those applicants who are following a non traditional pathway into nursing may already feel that they may fail to obtain a place as they are “competing” with students with high A level grades.
- ❖ The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) state that Key Skills and Level 2 Literacy & Numeracy is acceptable for nursing training (<http://www.open.ac.uk/health-and-social-care/main/study-us/nursing/pre-registration-nursing> accessed 12/8/15) but this research has found that at least 28 HEIs do not accept equivalences and ask for a full GCSE in Maths and English at minimum C grade, whilst 18 require science GCSE as well. (Note that 50% of websites visited did not give any information on Science GCSE requirements)
- ❖ It is recommended that Higher Education Institutions are encouraged to broaden their acceptance of Functional Skills.

# Conclusions

- ❖ The outcome of this preliminary exercise has shown the complexity of obtaining the information that a nontraditional applicant needs to navigate. This group of applicants need to be motivated and determined to persist in finding the detail of entry requirements and then to make the application.
- ❖ It is recommended that HEE considers developing guidance for Higher Education providers to improve standardization of the information given on websites, including guidance on ensuring that IB requirements are in line with A level grades guidance, and to address the disparities in admissions profiles, particularly with reference to the acceptance of GCSE equivalences. This could be done in conjunction with Council of Deans of Health.
- ❖ However the real issue is to find out whether nontraditional learners are getting fair access onto nursing degrees. The published policy of each institution must be seen to translate into offers of places and appropriate ongoing support to succeed.