



Programme Specification

A statement of the knowledge, understanding and skills that underpin a taught programme of study leading to an award from
The University of Sheffield

1	Programme Title	Nursing Associate (Apprentice route)
2	Programme Code	NURU152
3	HECoS Code	100290
4	Level of Study	Undergraduate
5a	Final Qualification	Foundation Degree
5b	QAA FHEQ Level	5
6a	Intermediate Qualification(s)	Not applicable
6b	QAA FHEQ Level	Not applicable
7	Teaching Institution (if not Sheffield)	Not applicable
8	Faculty	Health
9	School	Allied Health Professions, Nursing and Midwifery
10	Other Schools providing credit bearing modules for the programme	None
11	Mode(s) of Attendance	Full-time
12	Duration of the Programme	2 years
13	Accrediting Professional or Statutory Body	Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)
14	Date of production/revision	December 2024

15. Background to the programme and subject area

The Nursing Associate is a role that has been introduced into the health and care workforce in England from 2019. It was developed and proposed by HEE England in response to a period of sustained reform of UK health services. The development of the programme has involved a number of service partners to ensure that it meets local needs and prepares you for work in a range of environments. In 2018 the NMC issued standards for the education of Nursing Associates which regulate this apprenticeship programme. The programme meets these NMC standards, which were updated in 2023, and allows you to register with the NMC after successful completion of the programme. It also ensures that throughout your education, you will achieve the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours required under the [Nursing Associate Apprenticeship standard](#).

Shifting patterns of disease and population demographics bring fundamental changes to the purpose, organisation and resourcing of health and social care. Professional groups engaged in care delivery and management are being asked to accommodate new concepts and ways of working that challenge past perceptions, roles, and conventions. Against this backdrop of reform, the future expectations for nursing are being crafted, with nursing being identified as having a significant role in achieving the goal of a flexible, patient centred, cost effective and efficient health service. At the same time the role of the nurse is changing and, it has been noted that the nursing associate is a potential role that can support them in the delivery of care.

The purpose and importance of nursing within this complex and evolving health care system was, and still is, clearly described in all key policy documents (DoH 2007, DoH 2008, NMC 2008/2010/2018). All confirm the central role nurses will play in the reform and future management of care services. All emphasise the emergence of nurses as leaders, managers, and coordinators of care, engaged as members of multidisciplinary teams, prepared and empowered to lead change and clinical decision making.

The Nursing Associate is a generic role (not defined by a field of nursing) but within the discipline of nursing. Nursing Associates are intended to bridge a gap between health care assistants and registered nurses. Alongside this the Nursing Associate has been developed in preparation for the support of the registered nurse as competent in practice and equipped with a range of intellectual and support skills that will help deliver confident and creative care. Nursing Associates will be equipped with the knowledge, skills and behaviours that enable them to support the delivery of nursing care in and across a wide range of health and care settings.

The programme aims to prepare the Nursing Associate for the complex world of health care practice and to be able to tolerate the uncertainty integral to this working environment. They will develop an understanding of how the NHS and health and social care organisation's function and interrelate, how policy and organisational factors impact on and influence the engagement and performance of all those involved and, importantly, develop the technical, intellectual, and interpersonal skills necessary to support the registered nurse and engage actively and competently in multi-disciplinary, inter-agency, integrated care delivery.

Nursing Associates will work within the sphere of nursing and care, working under the leadership and direction of registered nurses. Nursing Associates provide care for people of all ages and from different backgrounds, cultures, and beliefs. The Nursing Associate will provide high quality holistic and person-centred care to individuals and support the registered nurse in providing and monitoring care, HOWEVER, the registered nurse will retain responsibility as primary assessor, planner, and evaluator of care.

The Nursing Associate will appreciate the importance of the registered nurses' role in performing a holistic assessment prior to planning care, and the need for themselves as a Nursing Associate to utilise their own skills in order to identify when an individual needs their plan of care re-visiting, be this due to improvement, deviation or deterioration of needs.

The Nursing Associate will be a key member of health and care teams in enabling and improving the delivery of safe, reliable care across a range of health and care services and settings. They will extend the capacity and capability of the nursing workforce allowing registered nurses to focus on more specialist care and advanced practice. Nursing Associates will be occupation specific and whilst working under the leadership and direction of registered nurses, will have a degree of autonomy and will exercise professional judgement to ensure that they are always working within the parameters of their practice.

Service delivery now requires organisations and individuals to work together across care pathways and within new local models and frameworks of integrated care that are no longer linear and set by organisational boundaries. Access to care, and care itself, will be more tailored to the needs of local health populations. Nursing Associates will have the breadth of knowledge and a flexible, portable skillset to serve local health populations in a range of settings.

Working individually and with others, Nursing Associates will work to reduce unwarranted variation in health and care as a means of ensuring the delivery of the right care in the right place at the right time.

Throughout the programme apprentices will come into contact with, and work alongside, highly skilled, experienced, and respected practitioners and academics, some of whom receive national and international attention for their contribution to nursing and medicine.

The programme comprises 20% theory and 80% practice as defined by the nursing associate apprenticeship standard (<https://www.instituteforapprenticeships.org/apprenticeship-standards/nursing-associate-nmc-2018-v1-1>) and the standards for pre-registration nursing associate programmes (<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/standards-for-nursing-associates/> accessed 03/09/2024). Apprentices will work in their base placement and be released for study days, with the School of Allied Health Professions, Nursing & Midwifery, which account for 20% of their programme hours. They will also be released to pre-arranged external placements for 20% of the programme. In order to meet the NMC standard of 2300 hours protected learning, apprentices will also have protected learning hours whilst on base placement.

The programme is made up of:

- 120 credits at level 4 and 120 credits at level 5.
- Set programme outcomes.
- Set standards of proficiency as stated by the NMC (<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/standards-for-nursing-associates/standards-of-proficiency-for-nursing-associates/> accessed 03/09/2024).
- 675 protected hours external placement.
- 675 protected hours theory.
- 950 protected hours learning time whilst on base placement.
- 1075 hours clinical base placement.

Completion of the programme includes the End Point Assessment which allows the apprentice to complete their apprenticeship and be eligible for the award of Foundation Degree. Success in both the academic degree and their apprenticeship will allow an application to join the NMC professional register as a qualified nursing associate.

The School of Allied Health Professions, Nursing and Midwifery has a successful history in the delivery of both pre-registration and post-graduate programmes and in the Research Excellence Framework (2021) the School sustained its position in the top third of UK Universities (<https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/research> accessed 03/09/2024). The School also has well established links with local health providers and a successful track record in co-ordinating high quality practice placements for students.

According to NHS Digital (2023) there is currently a shortage of around 43,600 nurses so career prospects are excellent (<https://digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/publications/statistical/nhs-vacancies-survey/april-2015---december-2022-experimental-statistics> accessed 03/09/2024). The School of Allied Health Professions, Nursing and Midwifery are currently working with trusts to look at how students can best be recruited/supported to meet the specific requirements of each trust and guarantee employment at the end of the programme.

16. Programme aims

1. To enable the Nursing Associate Apprentice to become compassionate, competent, and confident nursing associates at academic level 5, qualified to deliver a wide range of clinical care and inter-personal skills underpinned by a systematic knowledge base.
2. The Nursing Associate Apprentice will be able to practice safely and effectively within their parameters of practice, demonstrating appropriate values and behaviours in a wide range of health and care settings.
3. To enable the Nursing Associate Apprentice to achieve all the requirements as stated in the NMC's 2023 Standards for Pre-Registration Nursing Associates. This also includes the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours required as an apprentice under the [NMC apprenticeship standard](#).

17. Programme learning outcomes

Knowledge and understanding:

K1	Explain the principles underpinning duty of care, equality and diversity and the need for candour and will consistently demonstrate the application of those principles in and across a range of settings across life-course.
K2	Explain the principles underpinning leadership frameworks and associated team-working and leadership competencies and demonstrate a range of those competencies, attitudes and behaviours required of a nursing associate.
K3	Demonstrate the importance of being research aware, research and innovation, and their own role in this, across the health and care landscape in improving the quality of patient safety and care and in addressing the challenges faced within the context of rising public expectations.
K4	Demonstrate knowledge of the main methods of enquiry in the subject and the ability to use established techniques to undertake critical analysis of information in order to propose solutions.
K5	The ability to evaluate critically the appropriateness of different approaches to solving problems and to apply these in a work context.

Skills and other attributes:

S1	Exercise personal responsibility and work independently within defined parameters of practice, taking the appropriate initiative in a variety of situations and performing a range of clinical and care skills consistent with the roles, responsibilities, and professional values of a nursing associate.
S2	Exercise those skills, attitudes and behaviours that support the planning, delivery, and evaluation of high quality person-centred, holistic care.
S3	Work across organisational boundaries/ in a range of health and care settings and apply, in practice, the range of clinical and care skills appropriate to their parameters of practice.
S4	Communicate effectively across a wide range of channels and with a wide range of individuals, the public, and health and social care professionals, maintaining the focus of communication on delivering and improving health and care services and will possess those inter-personal skills that promote clarity, compassion, empathy, respect and trust.
S5	Exercise those skills, attitudes and behaviours that support personal development and life-long learning together as well as those associated with the development of others.
S6	The ability to apply their knowledge and skills to new situations, including in the workplace.

S7	Utilise and evaluate the effectiveness of communication skills in a variety of forms and for a range of audiences.
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18. Teaching, learning and assessment

Development of the learning outcomes is promoted through the following teaching and learning methods:

Lectures

Lectures will be the main form of delivery. This will ensure that you receive and take on board essential factual information to prepare you for the role of the nurse associate in the work-based learning environment. Lectures will be a mixture of face-to-face and virtual sessions.

The principles of team-based learning will be developed in year one to start to develop problem solving skills, team working and communication skills for further development and application in year two. (K1-5)

Online study

Lectures will be supplemented, but not replaced by, online study materials and sessions, which will facilitate understanding of the professional requirements of the nursing associate role in order for you to develop the knowledge acquired through lectures further. This will be supported by discussions on Blackboard and during seminars. (K1-5 and S1-5)

Seminars

These are either staff or student led and are used throughout the programme but will vary depending on the module undertaken. They are designed to reinforce information imparted through lectures by allowing students to work through, analyse, understand, and respond to that information. They are used to enable students to make the link between theory and practice. Seminars will be a mixture of face-to-face and virtual. When virtual, this will be via discussions on Blackboard as well as live discussions using Blackboard Collaborate. (K1-5 and S1-7)

Problem solving

Both individually and in small groups, these sessions will encourage critical reflection between theory and practice, in order to better prepare for undertaking the nursing associate role. (K1-5 and S1-7)

Tutorials

Will be Utilised for pastoral discussion and personal development as well as academic support for assessed work. (K1-5 and S1-7)

Independent Study

Independent study is used: to assimilate and clarify material explored in lectures, to prepare for seminars, to prepare for assessments and to generally examine literature pertinent to the unit outcomes. (K3-5 and S1-7)

Clinical skills sessions

Evidence based practice sessions will be delivered by appropriately skilled teachers. The school have access to a clinical skills facility, and this is used to develop your clinical skills competence throughout the programme using simulation, Patients as Educators, and the experience of multiprofessional learning. (K3-5 and S1-7)

Practice Component

Practice Learning

You will spend a good deal of time in the work-based learning situation. You will be supported by appropriately prepared practice supervisors with whom you will work in order to develop your clinical practice. You will collate evidence to demonstrate learning and will be continually assessed in practice to strengthen the links between theory and evidence-based practice.

All students are allocated an academic assessor at university, and a practice supervisor and practice assessor in the clinical setting. They will meet the student on a regular basis at pre-arranged times which provides the opportunity to discuss the student's academic and clinical progress, both face-to-face and digitally. (K 1-5 and S 1-7)

19. Reference points

The learning outcomes have been developed to reflect the following points of reference:

Documents:

NHS Long Term Workforce Plan (2023) Available at: www.longtermplan.nhs.uk, (accessed 4th September 2024).

NMC Standards Framework for Nursing and Midwifery Education (2023). Available at: www.nmc.org.uk/standards-for-education-and-training/standards-framework-for-nursing-and-midwifery-education/, (accessed 4th September 2024).

NMC (2023) Standards for pre-registration nursing associate programmes. Available at: www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/standards/2023-pre-reg-standards/new-vi/standards-for-pre-registration-nursing-programmes.pdf, (accessed 4th September 2024).

NMC (2023) Standards of proficiency for registered nurses. Available at: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/standards-for-nursing-associates/standards-of-proficiency-for-nursing-associates/> (Accessed 4th September 2024).

NMC (2023) Realising Professionalism: Standards for Education and Training Part 2: Standards for student supervision and assessment. Available at: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards-for-education-and-training/standards-for-student-supervision-and-assessment/> (Accessed 4th September 2024).

NMC Standards for Education and Training (2023). Available at: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards-for-education-and-training/> (Accessed: 4th September 2024).

QAA (2024) Benchmarks for Health Studies Programmes. Available at: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements/subject-benchmark-statement-health-studies> (Accessed: 4th September 2024).

NMC (2018) The Code. Available at: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/> (Accessed: 4th September 2024).

NMC (2021) Revalidation. Available at: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/revalidation/> (Accessed: 4th September 2023).

University of Sheffield (2019) The Sheffield Masters Graduate (online) Available at: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/sheffieldgraduate> (Accessed: 4th September 2024).

20. Programme structure and regulations

The Nursing Associate Apprenticeship Foundation Degree leads the student to a registrable qualification as a Nursing Associate. The programme is a full-time attendance programme lasting 2 years during which the student gains experience of a wide range of client care experiences and contexts. For 60 percent of the programme the student is based in their clinical place of work from which practical experiences are planned, co-ordinated and directed. For 20 percent of their time an alternative practice experience will be organised by the University. The remaining 20 percent of the programme is spent in studying the theory that informs nursing associate practice. The theory element follows a programme level approach where all modules, credit bearing and non-credit bearing, are interlinked, and encourage progression throughout the two Parts. The programme is 20% theory and 80% practice. This equates to 675 hours of theory and 2700 hours of practice resulting in a programme that is 3375 long based upon a 37.5-hour week.

The structure and content of the programme are determined by the Statutory Instruments that govern programmes leading to a registrable qualification in professional nursing associate practice.

A student who successfully completes all elements of parts 1 and 2 of the programme of study is eligible for the award of Foundation Degree Nursing Associate Practice and registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Council as a nursing associate.

Detailed information about the structure of programmes, regulations concerning assessment and progression, and descriptions of individual modules are published in the University Calendar available on-line at <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/calendar>.

21. Student development over the course of study

Students will be supported in the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes through a range of experiences which promote independent learning.

In Part 1 of the programme students are introduced to professional and bio-psycho-social aspects as well as reflective and analytical concepts through classroom and supervised work-based learning experiences which will begin to cement their understanding of the role and contribution of the nursing associate within contemporary health and social care. The earlier stage of the programme is carefully planned to ensure that students are inducted fully to the underlying principles of learning and the on-line environment. This will help students to develop competence and confidence in planning, innovation, and self-motivation.

In Parts 2 of the programme, they will continue to develop specific knowledge and skills commensurate with the role of the nurse associate within multi-professional, multi-agency practice providing opportunities for students to develop care delivery, management, and co-ordinating skills. Research appreciation, methodologies, design, and methods are threaded through the programme enabling students to critically examine the evidence underpinning their practice.

In each Part, students will complete proficiencies within the Practice Assessment Document that will enable them to develop into independent, autonomous practitioners on registration with the NMC after successful completion of the programme.

Structured support and supervision are key features within the programme; as the student progresses through each of the modules there is a shift from high (Part 1) to low intensity (Part 2) reflecting the increasing independence of the learner within the learning process. This is organised both in the academic and the work-based learning environments.

In addition to the development of discipline-based knowledge and understanding, the programme also develops a range of intellectual and transferable skills. Reflective, analytical inquiry into practice through reading, seminar presentations, group work, digital literacy and module assessments develop critical awareness, ability to synthesise evidence-based literature and materials and ability to produce succinct reports. Technical and organisational competence are gained through the range of planned clinical practice experiences, as these support the development of an individual who is proficient and adept in holistic care that encompasses excellence in clinical and interpersonal skills and professional behaviours.

22. Criteria for admission to the programme

Detailed information regarding admission to programmes is available from the University's On-Line Prospectus at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/courses/>.

- GCSE Maths and English grade C or above or equivalent Functional Skills (Level 2)
- Currently, or on enrolment, employed in a health or care role.
- Ability to study at level 5.
- Insight into the nature of nursing and health care provision, and the role of the nursing associate.
- Insights into the nature of apprenticeships and the balance of work/study.
- Values based interview with the employer and university.

23. Additional information

The programme is run on a full-time basis, 80% of which is spent in clinical practice. It has 8 credit bearing modules and 2 non-credit bearing modules spread over 2 parts. Students will need to have successfully completed all modules in Part 1 before they can progress onto Part 2. Having completed all the requirements of the programme at the end of Part 2, the student will be entitled to apply for admission to the professional register as a Nursing Associate with the NMC.

All elements of assessment must have been passed prior to each progression point.

This specification represents a concise statement about the main features of the programme and should be considered alongside other sources of information provided by the teaching department(s) and the University. In addition to programme specific information, further information about studying at The University of Sheffield can be accessed via our Student Services web site at <http://www.shef.ac.uk/ssid>.