

Bedford College,
Department of Social Policy
and Social Science.

B.SC./S.R.N. COURSE IN NURSING STUDIES

The field of health care delivery is changing rapidly and in 1980 Bedford College decided to revise its undergraduate nursing programme to prepare its graduates to meet the challenges. Its new four-year undergraduate programme leads to a degree in Nursing Studies coupled with SRN qualification.

The central intellectual focus of the course is the study of nursing itself - its history, its changing and constant contents and practices, its occupational divisions, its managerial dimensions - all seen from the point of view of contextual forces. As one of the main purposes of the course is the production of a competent and educated nurse of a general kind, its aim is to develop nursing students' understanding of the complexity of nursing care by helping them to acquire a dynamic and creative approach to the changing situation of nursing practice and to be responsive to new emphases.

The process of nursing practice requires nurses to develop systematically new knowledge from theories and concepts of the generic sciences. As a newly-developing discipline, nursing traces its roots to the biophysical and social sciences, to professional disciplines, to the humanities and to an evolving body of nursing theory. Nursing practice is about health care delivery to populations, about individual patients and their problems and about evaluation of the impact of its service on the health status of the individual and populations. Therefore, nurses need to learn to apply theories from the generic sciences as well as to be responsive to society's changing health needs brought about by contemporary health/illness problems. As promotion of health is broader than individual health services, efforts at health maintenance require that nurses be competent to act in the political area, influencing and shaping such policy as affects the health of populations.

Curriculum:

The Unit offers a programme which is designed to prepare general nurses for beginning nursing practice. It provides students with a broad understanding of the social context inside which nursing takes place, of the scope and nature of contemporary health problems, of research methods, along with special knowledge of the social services and nursing practice skills in hospitals and in the 'community'. The integrated nature of the course requires it to operate within any given week of the university terms on two sites. While two-and-a-half days a week are spent involved in clinical practice arranged and organised through the Middlesex Hospital, two-and-a-half days per week are involved in non-clinical experience on the university campus. Clinical practice is augmented during the summer term which for this particular purpose is being extended by about 3-4 weeks when nursing students undergo a period of full-time nursing practice in the hospital.

The first year of the course introduces the student to a core course in nursing, to sociology, to anatomy and physiology. The issues and themes of the core course - origins of nursing, health/illness phenomena, nursing work and organisation, nursing versus the medical model - are developed in more depth throughout the subsequent years of study. Nursing practice will take place in a variety of wards where the student will be introduced to varying levels of nursing care. Students will explore what are commonly known as the 'activities of daily living' which relate to psycho-social and physiological phenomena without which a human being is deemed not to be able to survive. The activities of eating, breathing, sleeping, eliminating, moving, communicating etc., will be considered from the point of view of norms and deviations so as to understand the objectives of optimal health as a basis of nursing care and medical pathology.

The second year will cover sociology, human relations, therapeutics and pathology. Nursing practice will concern itself with nursing of the adult sick in areas of surgery and medicine. Nursing students will also undergo a nursing experience in psychiatric nursing. All of the nursing experiences will be underpinned with appropriate courses at a theoretical level illuminating nursing practice.

During the third year, nursing students will take courses in microbiology, social policy, history of nursing, and research methods. Nursing placements will be in obstetric and paediatric institutions and all of practice will be accompanied by relevant course material. Further nursing knowledge will be provided in the areas of 'community nursing' in gynaecology and in trauma.

The fourth year will cover sociology of health and illness and applied nursing research, and will provide for a consolidation period of nursing practice underpinned by a course in nursing administration. Students will consider chronic illnesses, geriatrics, theatre and intensive care.

During the third year, students are required to commence on a dissertation to be completed by the fourth year in an area of choice related to nursing practice.

Admissions:

Admission to the undergraduate programme is for those who have the necessary level of preparation for the study of nursing at Bedford College. Preferred requirements at O-Level are good grades in English Language and Literature, Maths, Biology and Chemistry. At A-Level, the preferences are good grades in Biology and the Social Sciences.

University Examinations:

Examinations of all subjects during the particular academic year will be conducted during the third term of each year. The student's class of degree is calculated according to her/his performance on all units taken except that a greater weight is given to courses taken in the later years of the degree.

Each course will require term papers and/or projects which are marked. Grades received will help students orient themselves in relation to their academic and practical strengths and weaknesses. Practical examinations will take place during placements on a fail or pass basis.

Uniform:

As Bedford College's undergraduate nursing course differs from that of the conventional nurse training, nursing students do not wear hospital uniform but a simple white dress without cap.

General Nursing Council:

For the purposes of the SRN qualification, the course is accredited by the General Nursing Council so that students who pass the university examinations will, on application to the GNC, receive their SRN qualification.

Registration fee for the GNC at the time of going to press is £11.00, payable on day of registration with the Nursing Studies Unit.

Nursing Placements:

As the amount of nursing practice students have to undergo in order to qualify for their SRN component of the course is determined by the General Nursing Council, the hours of nursing practice will be monitored. Students who absent themselves from practical placements without explanation will be subject to disciplinary procedures by the department. If students fall ill, medical certificates will be required and time missed must be made up.

Disciplinary Measures:

Unlike traditional nursing students, nursing undergraduates are not employees of the N.H.S. and therefore not subject to a labour contract. However, for the purposes of disciplinary procedures, each student is required to sign a separate document outlining in detail undergraduate students' duties, obligations and privileges.

Marion Ferguson,
Director of Nursing Studies,
October, 1982.
