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Department of Sociology  
Fraser's Lodge

NURSING STUDIES

COURSE OUTLINE

Aims and objectives

Nursing Studies at Bedford College is a newly conceptualised and developing area of study. Its four-year undergraduate course leads to a degree in Nursing Studies coupled with SRN qualification.

While Bedford College has been involved with nurse training for some considerable time, at this period in time it has decided to change its direction. Its previous educational involvement with potential nurses was to offer a three-year undergraduate course in social administration followed by a shortened professional nurse training leading to state registration.

The central intellectual focus of the newly developing course is the study of nursing itself - its history, its variant contents and practices, its occupational divisions, its managerial dimensions - all seen from the point of view of contextual factors. Nursing, rather than being instructed as is the case in much of traditional nurse training, will be studied in the university where information creation is one of its many functions. As information conveying is central to all of nursing care, be the message of a verbal or a non-verbal nature, nursing students will need to learn their own most effective mode of communication.

As one of the main purposes of the course is the production of a competent and educated nurse practitioner of a general kind, its aim is to develop nursing students' understanding of the complexities of nursing care by helping them to acquire a dynamic and creative approach to the changing situation of nursing practice.

The notion of competence and education within the context of academic nursing relates to students' understanding of how knowledge from areas of medical, biological, the social sciences and others might benefit the delivery of much of nursing and of medical care. We aim at producing an analytical nurse who brings to nursing practice a mind which can discern between alternatives based on knowledge systematically collected, sifted, explored, elaborated and evaluated, inherent in which is the development of a research orientation.

Traditionally, most of nursing practice has taken place inside hospitals, where nurses carry out predominantly medically developed procedures, be they of an investigatory or a therapeutic nature.

Over the last decade, much of nursing and medical literature has indicated a disquiet, a dis-ease with much of the existing structure. Medicine itself is attacked for its narrow focus and its claimed benefits are questioned. Nursing likewise has started to question its disease-orientated practice and attempts to change its direction towards optimal health for individuals and populations. In its concern with quality performance it envisages its contribution to health care delivery practices as transcending hospital walls and moving out into the primary health care sector to a much greater extent than has traditionally been the case.

Present orientation of nursing is the provision of a highly individualised patient-centred nursing care, this in spite of the fact that much disease is socially determined. Nursing, therefore, needs to broaden itself. Individualised care where necessary and appropriate should receive its fullest attention. And where social factors can be demonstrated to be detrimental to optimal health, it needs nurses, together with patients and other health workers, to campaign for the elimination of disease-creating factors. This course hopes to seek and to create such knowledge as is necessary about such change.

### Student participation

As much of the success of the course depends on student input and on student feedback, that is on self motivation to seek knowledge and to indicate where learning abilities and facilities need strengthening, the course's structure is only likely to succeed if students participate actively in seminars, on projects, in the classroom and in the clinical areas. Students have considerable freedom to seek their own knowledge, to devise their own project, to read beyond that which is minimally required and to use course and subject tutors as their mentors.

### Curriculum

The integrated nature of the course requires it to operate within any given week of term on two sites. It also requires students and staff to be made constantly conscious that the course's aim is one of total integration, that is students and staff need to recognise that all of the subject matter is to affect the vocational aspect of the course. The timetable indicates that two and a half days per week are spent involved in clinical practice arranged and organised through the Middlesex Hospital. Two and a half days per week involved in non-clinical experience is spent on the university campus. Learning, whether of a clinical or a non-clinical nature, constitutes the academic experience, irrespective of where it takes place. Part of nursing is taught at Middlesex Hospital and at Fraser's Lodge; all of the social sciences are taught in Reed and Herringham; physiology is taught at Jebb and anatomy at the Middlesex Medical School. Most of the nursing practical experience will take place during the day and during term time student nurses will not undertake evening or week-end nursing practice. However, during the third term when nursing students undertake a seven week continuous nursing placement, students are expected to be involved in 'shift' practice. Night nursing experience will take place during the second, third and fourth year.

The first year of the course introduces the student to sociology, anatomy and physiology and a core course in nursing issues and themes only at a perfunctory level, to be developed in more depth throughout the subsequent four years of study. Nursing practice will take place in a variety of wards where the students will be introduced to varying levels of nursing care. The student will be introduced to what is commonly known as the 'activities of daily living'. These relate to social and physiological phenomena without which a human being is deemed not to be able to survive. Students will explore the activities of breathing, eating, sleeping, eliminating, moving, communicating, socialising, etc, 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, particularly in areas of surgery and medicine. Nursing students will also undergo a nursing experience in psychiatric nursing, underpinned by a course in mental health.

During the third year nursing students will take courses in microbiology, social policy and research methods. Nursing placements will be in obstetric and paediatric wards underpinned by a course in sociology of birth. Further nursing experience will be provided in 'community nursing', in gynaecology and in trauma.

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

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

#### 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 explanations 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.

#### 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 their 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 to orient themselves in relation to their academic and practical strengths and weaknesses.

#### 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 white dress. Arrangements have been made with Garroulds of Edgeware Road for students to purchase two white dresses on the production of a letter of authorisation signed by the Director of Nursing Studies. No caps are worn.

#### Disciplinary measures

Unlike traditional nursing students, nursing undergraduates are not employees of the NHS and therefore not subject to a labour contract. However, for the purpose 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  
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