

RESPONSE BY THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON TO THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF NURSING
COMMISSION ON NURSING EDUCATION

The University is grateful for the opportunity to respond to the issues raised by the Commission on Nursing Education established by the Royal College of Nursing. As the Commission will be aware, the University of London is a federation of many separate teaching and research institutions, including Medical Colleges and the British Postgraduate Medical Federation. It has therefore been necessary to consult widely.

Within the University at present, first degree courses in Nursing are run at Chelsea College in association with the School of Nursing at St George's Hospital Tooting, and at Bedford College in association with the Macdonald Buchanan School of Nursing at the Middlesex Hospital. An MSc degree in Nursing is also offered at Chelsea College. In addition to these courses, a number of Schools of the University have collaborative arrangements with hospitals for students wishing to pursue degree courses while undergoing professional training. For example, an association exists between the London Hospital's Princess Alexandra School of Nursing and both Queen Mary College and Goldsmiths' College. Students pursue a BSc (Economics) degree or a BA (Social science and Administration) degree and work in the Hospital during vacations. After graduation they can obtain an SRN qualification after a shortened period of training. It is understood that St Bartholomew's School of Nursing has similar arrangements with the City University. The University is also involved through its Department of Extra-Mural Studies in the approval, but not the provision, of courses at Schools of Nursing nationally, leading to the qualification of Diploma in Nursing.

The first degree course offered at Chelsea College (which it is planned will be amalgamated with effect from October 1985 with King's College and Queen Elizabeth College under the name of King's College London) is of four years' duration leading to a BSc in Nursing studies in the Faculty of Science and qualification as an SRN. This course began in 1977 and the first students graduated in 1981. About twenty five students are accepted each year from a large number of suitable applicants. An overall number of about 100 students is therefore currently on the course. The College's School of Human and Environmental Sciences and School of Molecular Sciences, which between them include Departments of Human Biology, Physiology, Biochemistry and Pharmacology, provide the necessary teaching in the Basic Medical Sciences with the exception of Anatomy, for which teaching is provided by the Charing Cross and Westminster Medical School. In addition, there is an externally funded Nursing Education Research Unit, whose Director is a Recognised Teacher of the University. Several of the staff in the Department of Nursing Studies have an academic qualification in the Behavioural or Social Sciences. The students receive training in St George's Hospital and in the community, not only from the nursing staff at the Hospital but also from the lecturers in the College Department of Nursing Studies, who regularly spend time on the wards. Earlier problems of co-ordination between the College, the Hospital and the District Health Authority have been resolved in part by the number and quality of trained nursing staff on the wards at St George's Hospital and in particular by the close co-operation that has been established between the staff of the College and of the Hospital School of Nursing, which completely endorses the aims of the degree course. The staff of the Hospital School of Nursing are closely involved in the selection of students.

The MSc degree in Nursing at Chelsea College is offered on a part-time basis over a period of two calendar years and sets out to develop a more scientific base for Nursing, including evaluation of the body of research in Nursing, research techniques and their applications, and the

preparation of students to initiate and undertake research. Teaching and supervision is provided by lecturers in the College Department of Nursing Studies, all of whom have research degrees, and a contribution is made by non-nursing lecturers, for example, in Philosophy of Science and Statistics as well as some biological science teaching on laboratory research techniques. The first degree course at Bedford College evolved from collaborative arrangements, similar to those referred to previously, under which the Middlesex Hospital School of Nursing offered six entry places a year to students following a course for the BSc in Social Science and Administration at either the London School of Economics or Bedford College. Bedford College considered however, that an integrated four year course leading to the simultaneous award of a BSc degree in Nursing Studies and the SRN qualification would be preferable as providing an opportunity to link the professional training experience with the academic studies in the Social Sciences, and this new style of integrated course was introduced in 1981. The initial intake was eight students and it was anticipated that the annual intake should ultimately rise to twenty. In view of the practical problems arising from the planned amalgamation of Bedford College and Royal Holloway College at Egham with effect from October 1985, the College decided not to accept any further intake beyond 1982-1983 and the course will be phased out by the end of 1985-1986.

In July 1982, in the light of concern at the possible effects on Nursing of forthcoming institutional restructuring in the wake of reductions in funding from 1981, a Working Party was established to review the provision of Nursing Studies in the University. The Working Party's recommendations, endorsed by the University, were firstly, that the University should continue to provide degree courses in Nursing Studies; secondly, that a four year integrated course leading to a BSc in Nursing Studies in the Faculty of Science and an appropriate Nursing qualification should be the key element in its undergraduate programme; and thirdly, that the immediate object for the University should be the development of a single strong Department of Nursing Studies, capable of sustaining not only an integrated undergraduate course but also post-graduate teaching and research. The Working Party reluctantly endorsed the decision of Bedford College to phase out their Nursing Degree course but proposed, however, that the intake to the BSc course in Nursing Studies offered by Chelsea College be increased to compensate for the loss of the Bedford course and that in the long term the University as a whole should consider increasing the intake of Nursing students to at least fifty a year.

Some Schools and Colleges had already indicated at that time that they were considering the setting up of courses in aspects of Health Studies other than Nursing (for example, Physiotherapy, Chiropody, Radiography) and that in some instances these developments were seen as being closely related to the BSc in Nursing Studies. The University recognised that the development of degree courses in Health Studies generally had important implications for the future, and, in the light of this set up a further Working Party which is currently considering a policy for Health Studies (including Nursing) within the University. Discussions in relation to Nursing are taking place against the background of decisions already taken in regard to academic provision already made for that subject, but it is anticipated that amendments to existing provision might be necessary in the context of any recommendations made in regard to other Health Studies.

The foregoing paragraphs attempt to summarise the extent of the formal position of the University's current involvement with degree level studies in Nursing. A substantial number of teachers of the University are therefore participating in nursing education by formal or informal teaching and by acting as examiners. In addition, members of the

clinical academic staff of the General Medical Schools and the postgraduate Institutes work closely with nurses in the course of their clinical work, teaching and research. They have no doubt that well-educated nurses of high calibre are required for good patient care and health service management.

It is not surprising in view of the variety of interests and experience in nursing education held by University institutions and by individual members, particularly in the Faculty of Medicine, that a wide range of responses has been received to the 14 key points identified in the questionnaire. These responses cannot easily be put into a University consensus. The aim of this submission therefore is to emphasise general issues that specify the role of the University in nursing education.

The University believes that while Nursing will probably continue to receive entrants from a variety of educational backgrounds, it will be greatly strengthened by the inclusion of more graduates. These should become leaders of clinical nursing teams, pioneers of teaching and research, and bringers of special knowledge and skills to management and administration. Those graduates who enter Nursing from other disciplines or acquire degrees in other subjects after professional training bring to the profession a breadth of knowledge, maturity and understanding of life that is best obtained by a University education; the graduates in Nursing Studies in addition bring to the profession an awareness of Nursing as an academic discipline.

Each of these paths to the graduate nurse has merit and the University believes that in the absence of a radical change in nursing education each should continue to be available, and that the numbers should be increased.

However, neither is a realistic model for a course leading to a single basic qualification. The degree followed by vocational training model requires a 5½ years training period before qualification, or 4½ years in the case of special arrangements such as those existing between the Princess Alexandra School of Nursing and Queen Mary and Goldsmiths' Colleges. During this time the student is part of the Nursing workforce for 2½ years, or 1½ years plus two summer vacations in the first three years in the case of the of the latter programme. The degree in nursing studies model is of shorter duration (4 years) but throughout this period the student is supernumerary to the workforce. The cost of basic nursing education would be greatly increased to an extent that is unlikely to be acceptable in the present financial climate. A total transfer of basic nursing education from Schools of Nursing to Universities would be associated with problems in the Universities of imbalance between vocationally orientated and non-vocationally orientated courses, science and arts students, and male and female students. It is also likely that other professions within the health sciences such as Chiropody, Occupational Therapy, Physiotherapy, and Radiography would seek similar arrangements.

In this connection the University recognises that there may be an identifiable body of knowledge, attitudes and skills that would be appropriate for a common course of study by entrants to the health professions, and this is one model currently under consideration by the University's Health Studies Working Party. Such a course should be taught within the mainstream of higher and further education and those taking the course should be students and not employees.

Should such courses be set up within the University of London it would have to be decided whether they were to be in the Faculty of Science or Medicine; associated with Medical Schools or with multi-faculty institutions teaching a wide range of physical and behavioural science

courses, and to what extent multi-disciplinary teaching could be achieved.

The University urges that opportunities remain available for post-basic nurses to pursue courses of higher education and to participate in research that will lead to Doctorates or to Master's degrees.