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# Bedford College

(University of London)

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY  
Head of Department  
Dr. I. F. BURTON

REGENT'S PARK LONDON NW1 4NS

Telephone: 01-485 4400

Telegrams: Edforcoli London NW1

REF: IFB/RS

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Miss P. Sayer  
The General Nursing Council  
23 Portland Place  
London W1A 1BA

Dear Miss Sayer,

I think I am now in a position to write to you more firmly about the position of the Department and of nursing studies within it.

You will know from your discussion with Mrs. Ferguson, that the final decision by the College to merge with Royal Holloway College on the RHC site at Egham was taken only towards the end of the summer term. Obviously, such a move poses problems for nursing studies and indeed for the Department generally. We have spent this term exploring various possibilities, both to transfer the course entirely to Egham and to continue its present association with the Middlesex Hospital. You will know also, that the University has set up a working party to consider the future of nursing studies in the University, this being one of a number of such working parties set up by the University, principally in an endeavour to reconcile the interests of different subjects with those of various schools of the University.

It would be wrong to over emphasize the uncertainty facing the Department. Firstly, the future of the College has been assured by its merger with Royal Holloway College. Secondly, the Department is in a very strong position in Bedford College, and RHC has welcomed the fact that the merger will mean that the social sciences will form part of the merged college. The Department will be transferred to Egham in the summer of 1984. Up until recently, I was working on the assumption that the probable date would be 1985, but it now seems very likely to be 1984. The College will continue to maintain a base in central London for inter-collegiate teaching and part of the Department - the Medical Sociology Section and Professor Brown's MRC research staff, will be located in that base, and will not move to Egham at least in the foreseeable future. All existing students for nursing studies and those for social work will complete the courses they have begun in central London, either at the central London base, or, if that is not then been set up, at Frazer Lodge where nursing studies is now located. The College accepted my proposal that the lease of Frazer Lodge should not be surrendered until the London base had been established.

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We have, therefore, no worries out of the merger in respect of existing nursing studies students. Nevertheless, we have always thought it undesirable that they should continue long away from the main Department once it has moved to Egham. We have been very anxious not to break the continuity of the course by dropping an intake prematurely; although we had always anticipated that it would be necessary to do so in the year prior to the recommencement of the course when the Department transferred to Egham. Mrs. Ferguson and I have now come to the conclusion, taking all these various factors into account, that it would be right for us to suspend the 1983 intake and I have now taken steps to implement this.

We have spent much time this term in investigating the possibility of transferring the course to Egham, in association with a hospital there. We have benefited from your informal advice and that of other qualified people concerning the possibilities afforded by the various hospitals in the area. I much regret that our conclusion has been that it would not be possible to base the course at Egham in association with a local hospital. The hospital best suited to provide the range of clinical experience for the number of students we hope to have would appear to be Kingston, and in terms of travelling for the students and for the staff that would present problems too great to be surmounted. The final decision will be taken by the University and by your council as being the two authorities responsible for the course, but our advice to the University's working party is that a course at Egham, based on a local hospital, would not be viable.

Our conclusion, which we have communicated to the University's working party, is that the much better course of action would be to retain our links with the Middlesex Hospital, and re-structure the course so as to enable us to continue our collaboration twenty miles apart. This restructuring would involve the abandonment of the present arrangement, whereby students spend two and a half days per week in the University and two and a half days in the hospital. Instead, each session would be divided into two semesters, one of which would be spent in the University and the other in the hospital. The University's course-unit degrees use a semester of 12 - 13 weeks for many of its courses, and we see no problem with that aspect of the proposal. At any one time, there would be two years students at Egham and two years students in central London, and when the second semester was spent in central London, it would be followed, as now, by a period of continuous clinical practice of about 8 weeks in June and July. A similar period would follow upon the taking of the final examinations in the fourth year; a similar use might be made of the period in the third year, but alternatively this could be devoted to university work.

We recognise that such a re-structuring would constitute a proposal for a new course, and we shall be submitting it to you in that context at the appropriate time. It is our intention to begin this course at Egham in October 1984. At first glance, the basic structure would be acceptable to the Middlesex Hospital, and it would provide for the appropriate number of practice hours. No change would be made in the content of the nursing practice, although of course, different elements might appear at different stages of the course and the replacement of the two and a half days, by full-time practice might entail some further reorganisation.

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We will also wish to look at the possibility of using the students' study day during their clinical practice to accommodate teaching in nursing by the Department's lecturers, either in the hospital or in the London base, which will very probably be located in Bloomsbury at a convenient distance from the Middlesex Hospital.

Finally, I should report that in view of our difficulties in attracting the right quality applicant, until more is known about the future structure and location of the course, we have decided not to proceed with the appointment of a third lecturer at this stage. One or two particularly well qualified candidates had told us that they would not be willing to accept an appointment until the future was clearer, and that appeared to us to be a reasonable attitude to adopt.

You will understand that this has been a busy term, in some ways even worse than last session. Nevertheless, we would appreciate an opportunity to discuss the situation further with you early next term. In the meantime, I would welcome any observations you may wish to make.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. I.F. Burton  
Head of Department

c.c. Principal

c.c. Marion Ferguson ✓