

BC AL/336/3213

Janet Ferguson

Bedford College
(University of London)

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

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REF: IFB/RS

23 February 1981

Mr. D.R. Brenchley,
Tynemouth College
Queen Alexandra Road West
North Shields
Tyne and Wear,
NE29 9BZ

Dear Mr. Brenchley,

Thank you for your letter of 4th February. I appreciate your sending me a copy of Miss Marian Blacklock's report of her experiences here. I think I can best reply first by setting out our intentions when interviewing candidates.

We do not interview candidates principally for purposes of selection for which we rely mainly on the referees report on the UCCA form. We do conduct a rather more searching interview where the UCCA form evidence suggests that the candidate is academically weak or lacks sufficient motivation or qualification for the course chosen. What we are concerned about is that the candidates should understand what sort of a Department they would come to if they accepted an offer from us. Except for overseas candidates, therefore, no one receives an offer without being called for interview. When candidates arrive, I address them in a group of anything from 6 to 20 and after trying to put them at their ease, I say something about the Department, and in particular about its research activities and their relevance for students joining the Department. I also give them some factual information about our procedure and above all emphasise the need for them to come to their own decision.

Clearly, Miss Blacklock got nothing from my talk and misunderstood the thrust of what Mrs. Ferguson had to say. We are anxious that students should know that degrees in Nursing are relatively new, that ours is brand new and, therefore, necessarily experimental. We have considerable experience in the Department in the application of the social sciences to the areas of medicine and health care and it is from this that we are proceeding to establish a Nursing Studies Degree. The Degree is not simply an addition of nursing practice to academic study, but an integrated academic study of nursing that involves clinical practice and requires study of other relevant disciplines in the social and biological sciences.

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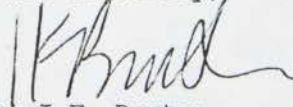
Questions such as those Miss Blacklock is reported as asking concerning how much time is allocated to practical nursing could be answered factually (the equivalent of 2 days a week in the first year, 2½ in the second and third, and 1½ in the fourth plus 6 weeks full-time after the examinations and during the long vacation in the first three years and 8 weeks in the fourth with provision for further practice for those who require it) but Mrs. Ferguson, rightly in my view, chooses to use such questions to explore the role of practice in a nursing degree. Again, it would seem that Miss Blacklock had, understandably, not yet confronted the fact that the great majority of patients in hospital and in the doctors' consulting rooms are not there because of microbe infections, so that a nurse must acquire other skills in addition to those required to deal with disease in the traditional sense. It would seem that Mrs. Ferguson (and again I would support her absolutely in this) was concerned with exploring academic issues concerning nursing whereas Miss Blacklock wanted specific information about the course, and particularly about the nursing practice. I don't think Miss Blacklock understands the difference between a degree in Nursing and a standard SRN course and I don't expect her to. We do want her to know that there is a difference and that students on such courses will experience problems as a consequence. It is better to be confronted with that before starting on the course than to discover it later, even if the knowledge upsets some assumptions about nursing.

Obviously, Miss Blacklock thinks she could not be happy on the course. We would, nevertheless, be happy to have her, and must leave it to her to make her decision, I hope with advice from your colleagues.

Finally, you ask about advising other students. I think it important that they understand that a degree course in Nursing Studies involves academic study of nursing in all its contexts, inside and outside the hospital and that the students will have to deal with the difficult problems of reconciling academic and professional objectives.

Please let me know if I can help you further.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. I.F. Burton
Head of Department

TYNEMOUTH COLLEGE

Mr. D. R. Brenchley, M.A.
PRINCIPAL.

Queen Alexandra Road West,
North Shields,
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NE29 9BZ.
Telephone North Shields 578414.

North
TYNESIDE
Metropolitan Borough Council

Your Ref:

This matter is being dealt with by:

Our Ref: DRB/EMLA

Date: 4th February 1981.

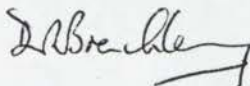
Dear Mr. Burton,

When our students return from university or polytechnic interviews we invite them to record their experiences for the benefit of later applicants for the same subject or institution. The report on the visit of one of our students, Miss Marian Blacklock, to Bedford College for the B.Sc. Nursing Studies course caused us some concern and we felt some reluctance about simply placing it in our files, in view of the impressions she had received.

We have therefore asked her to amplify her comments and, although some of the points are relatively minor (e.g. on dress and shift work) the general impression given to Miss Blacklock seems to have been an unhappy one.

I would welcome any observations on Miss Blacklock's statements so that we may decide how best to proceed in advising other students considering applying for nursing degrees.

Yours sincerely,



PRINCIPAL.

I.F. Burton, Esq., B.A., (Belfast), Ph.D. (London).,
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LONDON NW1 4NS.

REPORT ON INTERVIEW AT BEDFORD COLLEGE

Date of Interview:- 14th January, 1981.
Time of Interview:- 12 noon.
Place of Interview:- Sociology Department, Bedford College.
Head of Department:- I.F. Burton J.P. B.A. Belfast Ph.D. London.
Subject:- B.Sc. Nursing Studies.

On arrival all candidates wishing to read for a degree in the sociology department were grouped together and had an informal chat about the College and the department with Mr. Burton.

All candidates for the Nursing Studies degree were given a group interview because according to our interviewer it is impossible to tell whether a person is suitable for nursing by having a personal interview.

Although the course was not yet organised our interviewer said that she had a few ideas in her head and we could ask her some questions. She was asked how much time per week, term or year would be allotted to practical nursing. Her reply was that she didn't know, but should there be a certain amount of time given to it? We were given the impression that she didn't really care; and that our nursing practice should just be fitted in when we could manage.

When she was asked which was the most important part of the course - the degree or the nursing she replied "Obviously the nursing". She then gave us an example:- if two nurses were applying for a post, one with a degree, another without, she would disregard the fact that one had a degree and treat them as equals. This gave us the impression that she thought the degree was a waste of time.

When asked if our nursing theory would be taught separately at the hospital she said it depended on the staff; but in any case what was theory? Should we be taught how to make a bed or just get on with it?

Her view of nursing was that a nurse should be like a social worker, and that a nurse should understand and do something about a patient's environment. She said that disease was not caused by microbes but by people. I felt she may have a point here but most disease is caused by microbes.

Asked whether our uniform would be provided she said that we would only wear a white coat. We felt that the patients would tend to get confused as doctors, pharmacists wear white coats. A uniform would ensure that patients knew who we were and our status would be known. We would do very little shift work - this is ridiculous as night nursing is completely different to day nursing.

After the interview we were told that we could visit the Macdonald-Buchanan School of Nursing, and the Middlesex Hospital if we wished. On arrival at the School of Nursing we were told it was compulsory to attend as we were to have a chat with a senior member of staff to see if we were suitable for nursing, although it was still left to the college to decide whether we should receive an offer.

The staff at the hospital were surprised to learn that the course was not organised as two tutors at the School of Nursing had spent a great deal of time planning a course which obviously had been disregarded by our interviewer.

I have subsequently received an offer of a place on this course and although I would very much like to attend as I liked both the hospital and the college I feel I cannot accept it because of the poor impression I gained of the course.

Marian Blacklock.