

CHELSEA COLLEGESUBMISSION TO THE RCN COMMISSION ON NURSING EDUCATIONSEPTEMBER 1984.

As Chelsea College has been involved with nursing education since 1977, this is a welcome invitation to comment on the benefits of university based courses. To date, the success of our integrated undergraduate course has been reflected in the high calibre of entrants, the large number of applicants and the marked achievements of graduates, all of which has led to our confidence in the long-term future of such developments.

In our view, these benefit the university and profession. Close links with the Wandsworth District Health Authority have been forged providing mutual advantage. Students gain clinical experience while actively contributing to care, and academic and professional nursing staff from the district work in a true partnership. Lecturers provide expertise, particularly in research supervision and teaching while specialist tutors and nurses in the hospitals and community help supervise students' practice.

Research activities of staff in the Department of Nursing Studies have increased substantially over the last four years. While providing some members of the nursing profession with further research training, this also helps to improve care through lecturers' contacts with health district staff during clinical supervision and consultation. A masters degree in nursing, commencing this autumn, exemplifies this relationship. Twelve experienced nurse graduates are enrolled for this two-year part-time course, explicitly designed to provide them with more understanding in nursing and research skills.

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Nursing students have added a maturity and charm to the body of science students in this college. They have demonstrated a conscientious, scholarly outlook, participating well in both college and hospital life. Taking the items from your questionnaire in order:

1. Student status has been achieved for our undergraduate nurses. Local education authority awards cover the full four-year course, although the allowance is reduced for the extended summer term. Academic staff insist that students are seen as supernumerary to the nursing establishment in order to achieve specific educational objectives for each allocation. This has been effected through careful consultation with both the School of Nursing and nurse managers. Regular "liaison" meetings reduce problems of fluctuating or inappropriate ward staffing levels. Students are highly valued by members of the ward and community team.

During times of "heavy work-load" they are always ready to give care to those in need. Conflict between their own educational needs and those of the patients are rare. Far from causing problems, their participation in care serves to develop their own sense of obligation to the patients. It becomes their choice to help as part of the team, which they do willingly. Their motivation to nurse is enhanced by their clinical experience throughout the four years which they see as educational as well as vocational. This, therefore, evolves from the "student" rather than the "worker" role.

2. From our experience it would seem that nursing education benefits from a university base. Academic standards have been safe-guarded through the participation of staff in other disciplines, as advisors and teachers. Multi-disciplinary courses are necessary for a subject so broad and complex as nursing.

Professional and applied courses may be welcomed by most institutions with a strength in human life sciences and social sciences. Application of these subjects to health studies provides a worthwhile focus which could well develop further in the future.

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At present there is a substantial problem for a university to determine the academic standards of professional nursing qualifications. Entry to courses in higher education would be facilitated by a more widely recognised system of diploma and degrees.

6. In order for higher education institutions to be involved in nursing education, the Department of Education would need to coordinate funding.
9. As most nursing students are school leavers, the majority of whom have been taught by graduate teachers, it would seem appropriate that nursing tutors were also graduates. This would facilitate more integration and exchange of courses in higher education and promote depth of understanding in certain component subjects. For instance, a mix of teachers of psychology and biology as well as nursing graduates among tutors would provide more variety and cohesion.
11. Academic staff can be involved in clinical supervision of undergraduates to ensure an integration of university and clinical education. This also helps staff to retain professional skills, generate research ideas and contribute to the service by teaching and example.
12. From evidence of previous years, the number of applicants to undergraduate nursing courses has risen consistently. University cuts have prevented a proportional increase in university places. However, we recognise a need for both pre-registration and post-basic undergraduate courses. This is reflected by the University Grants Committee recommendation that nursing places should be preserved at their present level rather than reduced as for certain other subjects.
14. University examinations and course assessments are used to evaluate students' professional knowledge and skills. This is agreed and monitored by officials of the statutory body represented on the university special advisory committee on nursing studies. Such a system is both reasonable and concordant with the university. It is well recognised that there is a wide and deep appreciation of nursing and allied subjects represented in such a degree course,

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which requires comprehensive and sensitive assessment. Clinical skills are also assessed continuously by academic and clinical staff in a way which reflects the specific course objectives. A system of external examiners ensures comparable standards between institutions.

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Chelsea College
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