

BC AL/336/3512

BEDFORD COLLEGE

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Department of Sociology

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WITH COMPLIMENTS

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THE REPORT OF THE WORKING PARTY ON NURSING STUDIES

I have been asked by our Academic Board, with the approval of Council, to reply on behalf of the Board and send you our comments on the Report of the Working Party on Nursing Studies. I enclose the detailed comments of the Department of Social Policy and Social Studies which is responsible for our present degree in Nursing Studies.

I would simply like to underline two matters. Our acceptance of the recommendation that Nursing Studies should cease to be taught at Bedford College after our present students have graduated stems from our recognition of the problems of resources both at the level of the University and internally. The Nursing Studies degree at Bedford had scarcely time to establish itself when reductions in staff as a result of freezing vacancies have put serious pressure on other very important and successful courses which the Department offers. At the present moment, therefore, it is clearly best to concentrate the numbers of Nursing Studies' students at Chelsea and enable our own Department to concentrate on these other courses.

I would however like to underline the general academic point which is made in the Department's comments, namely that there is a very strong case for a Nursing Studies degree which takes as its focus nursing as both a social and a medical activity. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the University may in time find itself able to support two departments offering slightly differing approaches.

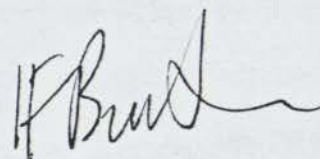
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cc Dr Ivor Burton /Department of Social Policy and Social Science
Dr Roy Miller /Royal Holloway College

Response of the Department of Social Policy and Social Science
to the Report of the Working Party on Nursing Studies (Feb. 1983)

1. In general, the Department welcomes the Report, agrees with its findings concerning the resources available for the development of Nursing Studies in the University, and accepts the recommendations which derive from those findings. It has some reservations on the Report's analysis of the academic development of Nursing Studies and these in the main support the observations on the Report of the Special Advisory Committee in Nursing Studies (Draft Letter of the Chairman to the Vice Chancellor) which which it generally agrees.
2. Recommendation 7.1.(ii): The London University faculty structure is a very flexible one and several subjects successfully operate in more than one faculty. For that reason, no objection can be taken to a recommendation that a B.Sc. in Nursing Studies should be based in the Faculty of Science. Nevertheless, the 'three essential elements' adumbrated in para. 1.8 of the Report in no way amount to anything remotely approaching an orthodox degree in the Faculty of Science, and the difficulty the Working Party clearly experienced in formulating these elements (at least concisely) emphasises the fact that Nursing Studies transcends traditional academic boundaries. It is very important, therefore, that this recommendation should not be interpreted in the future as confining the academic development of Nursing Studies to subjects within the Faculty of Science.
3. Recommendation 7.1.(iii): There can be no doubt, in the present economic climate, that a single strong department is to be preferred to two weaker ones. There are, however, very strong, indeed almost irresistible arguments in favour of there being a variety of approaches in what is as yet a relatively new and still emerging academic discipline. This requirement does not rule out the possibility of maintaining more than one model of development within a single department, but the Department of Social Policy and Social Science would continue to argue in favour of a second department as the preferable solution. It cannot in our view be too strongly emphasised that the arguments in favour of a single department are resource arguments, not academic arguments, all of which point in the other direction.
4. Recommendation 7.2.(ii): The Department would agree with the desirability of strengthening what will be the only course in Nursing Studies in the University. Equally, it will wish to strengthen its other areas of excellence and specialism at a time when it is compelled to drop an activity upon which it has expended considerable resources, perhaps to the detriment of those other areas. Since in any event the Department will be responsible for completing the courses of existing students, the last of whom will not graduate until 1986, there seems little room for strengthening the course at Chelsea except out of new resources from the University.
5. General: It was perhaps inevitable that a Working Party principally concerned with rationalising resources for Nursing Studies in the light of institutional changes should have given less attention than the Department would have wished to its arguments in favour of constituting a degree course in Nursing Studies with a strong basis in the social sciences.

It would, therefore, in responding to the Report, like to reassert its contention that nursing is both a social and a medical activity, in different proportions in different contexts. Questions that Nursing Studies as an area of academic enquiry must answer, such as why some patients thrive whilst others do not, require an academic contribution from both the social sciences and the biological/medical sciences, as well as empirical data from nursing practice. An undergraduate education in Nursing Studies will increasingly draw upon the findings of research in Nursing Studies, and it must therefore include a basic education in the social sciences as well as in the medical/biological sciences. So the statement in para 4.9 that 'the opportunity to acquire particular skills in either the social or the medical aspects of nursing must be left to postgraduate experience and training' could be misleading if it was taken to imply that a basic skill in both social and medical/biological sciences was not necessary for undergraduate training and education.



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Social Policy and Social Science.