

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON SAC IN NURSING STUDIES

Progression to Degrees in Nursing for Holders of the Extra-Mural Diploma in Nursing.

Second Report of The Working Party* on the standards and status of the Diploma in Nursing.

INTRODUCTION

1. This working party was originally set up by the SAC at its meeting on 12th October 1984, and we presented our first Report to the SAC on 24th May 1985. On that occasion, one of the models we outlined attracted particular interest. This was that successful completion of the Diploma at a satisfactory standard should confer eligibility for entry, with advanced standing, to the existing BSc degree scheme in Nursing Studies at Kings College. In discussion, the point was made that because no precedent exists in the Faculty of Science for an 'ordinary degree', the 'top-up' qualification would need to be an Honours degree. It was also felt by the SAC that this top-up course would need to be specially designed, and that the possibility of organising this as a one-year full-time course deserved close examination.
2. For this second report to the SAC, we have taken up the comments and suggestions made by the SAC; and our report is structured as follows. As background, we offer some brief observations on current developments in provision for post-experience degree level studies in Nursing, and we note some of the distinctive features of the Extra-Mural Diploma in Nursing in this context. The centrepiece of our report is a detailed plan for a one-year top-up course to bring selected holders of the Diploma up to the standard of the BSc(Hons) in Nursing Studies at Kings College. We conclude with some comments on other possible developments for the future.

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR 'POST-EXPERIENCE' DEGREE-LEVEL STUDIES FOR NURSES

3. The increasing frequency with which the University is being asked to clarify the standing and 'currency' of the Extra-Mural Diploma as an academic qualification (in relation to other Diplomas and Degrees) reflects the recent rapid and widespread growth of interest in opportunities for advanced study by qualified nurses. Encouragement in this direction was given in particular by the Briggs Report (1972), which strongly endorsed the view that the professional education of nurses must be seen as a continuing process. The view that the Briggs Committee took was one of the factors which led to the fundamental revision of the form and content of the London Extra-Mural Diploma in the 1970s. In Scotland, a systematic framework for progression from initial professional qualifications to Diplomas and Degrees in Nursing was established by the Auld Report in 1981, and in that Report the London University Diploma curriculum is featured as a blueprint for a logical strategy for post-basic education. Within the past year, two Reports have further fuelled concern in the nursing profession to expand opportunities for degree level studies. First, the RCN Commission, (in March 1985) which recommended transfer of nursing education into mainstream higher education and transformation of all professional qualifications into academically validated Diplomas and Degrees; and second the English National Board, (in April 1985) whose 'strategy' proposals include the formation of collaborative links between Schools of Nursing (and other Health Service Institutes) and Institutions of Further and Higher Education, and also the requirement that all teachers of nursing should be graduates. This newly enlivened debate on possible frameworks for academic progression in the study of nursing has been further stimulated by the publication of the series of six Discussion Papers as part of 'Project 2000' by the Education Policy Advisory Committee for Nursing, UK Central Council for Nursing, Midwifery, and Health Visiting. The concern of the UKCC radically to improve the initial and continuing professional preparation of nurses, for the 1990s and beyond, (and their remit to harmonize professional standards across the UK and with other European Community countries) has already made the rationalization of post-experience courses in nursing a matter of some urgency.

4. Much of the foregoing, it may be noted, has close parallels in other professional fields, where a new emphasis on improved 'post-experience' and 'continuing' education is widely promoted. This has been commented on inter alia by the DES (1980), the UGC (1983), and the NAB (1984). In the health field, the NHS Training Authority has recently outlined priorities along these lines; the Council for the Professions Supplementary to Medicine has published guidelines; and indeed the Health Studies Working Party of our own Academic Council has argued that London University should play a bigger role in post-experience education, in this field.

5. There has been a rapid and vigorous response to these policy developments in many Institutions of Higher Education. In Scotland, several of the 'Central Institutions' now operate schemes whereby qualified nurses can undertake a Diploma course and can if appropriate progress to a Degree course (on an inservice basis) in the same Institution. In England, many polytechnics now offer the CNAA - validated "Diploma in Professional Studies in Nursing" (DPSN) as a 2 year day-release course and several now also run a CNAA approved scheme which permits qualified nurses who have successfully completed the DPSN to proceed to a BSc in Nursing on a 1 year full-time or 2 year part-time basis. In late 1985, two of these polytechnics (Brighton and Birmingham) received CNAA approval to admit holders of the new London University Extra Mural Diploma in Nursing to the final year of their inservice degree scheme.

London University is currently therefore anomalous in giving no guidelines on progression to Degree level studies from its own Extra-Mural Diploma in Nursing scheme. This is not only a source of frustration to many Diplomates and their teachers, and often to their health service managers (as reported to us). It is also seen by the senior officers of national nursing bodies represented on sub-committees of the Extra-Mural Committee as a serious block to the coherent development of continuing education opportunities for nurses at the present time.

THE DIPLOMA SCHEME

6. The new Diploma in Nursing, which had its first intake of students in 1981, is a 3 year part-time course covering 6 units of study, two each year. Units 1 and 2 in the first year are concerned with Foundation Studies, Units 3 and 4 in the second year are concerned with Professional Studies, and Units 5 and 6 in the third year are concerned with Nursing Research and

with Professional Development in specialist fields. Students are required to show evidence of applying their studies to their concurrent professional nursing work (which must continue throughout the period of the course). The emphasis on professional development in the curriculum and its assessment is further supported by the institutional arrangements which the new Diploma scheme has introduced. These require the course to be offered by a 'Centre' which represents full collaboration between an Institution of FHE and one or more District Schools of Nursing.

This is the pattern of partnership recommended in the ENB 'Strategy' (1985) and it has attracted widespread professional support in national discussions of the UKCC's Project 2000 (1985).

Scrutiny of Centres wishing to offer the London scheme is conducted by panels of validators established by the Extra-Mural Advisory Committee for Diplomas in Nursing and Nursing Education.

The Diploma scheme currently attracts over 400 students per year at 30 Centres across the UK, and the scheme of assessment involves 2-stage moderation, from Internal Assessors to an External Assessor for each Centre, and from External Assessors to a Chief Assessor (who sees a sample of work from all Centres). The Six Chief Assessors are all persons of senior academic and professional standing, and all widely experienced in degree-level work in Universities and elsewhere. Through the Curriculum Review Groups for the Diploma, we have sought the conjoint view of the Chief Assessors on comparability of standards with degrees, and their view is that students who achieve grades A or B on the Diploma would be well able to meet degree standards.

With these considerations in mind, we move to a detailed proposal for a one-year top up course. This proposal has been prepared by members of staff of the Department of Nursing Studies at Kings College, and it has been extensively discussed by the whole staff of that Department. It has their support, in principle.

PROPOSAL FOR A ONE YEAR TOP-UP COURSE AT KING'S COLLEGE LEADING TO THE BSc (HONS) IN NURSING STUDIES, FOR HOLDERS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON EXTRA-MURAL DIPLOMA IN NURSING.

7. A course of one calendar year (October to September) is recommended as the minimum time required to bring diploma holders to the standard achieved by the existing Nursing Studies honours graduates.

Initially it is hoped that about 6 students each year would be admitted

to the course. This could be increased to about 12 students over 2 or 3 years. A starting date of October 1986 would be feasible.

As the proposed course would be different from other degrees in the University of London, and a ^{new} departure in nursing education, these proposals are intended as an experimental pilot scheme which would be carefully monitored and evaluated over the first few years. This research would be an important task for the course leader.

The students would take 4 course units and a particular honours scheme would be calculated for classification, on the basis of the year's work.

For the 6 students proposed annually in the initial scheme, the Nursing Studies Department would require additional FTE's. We would need to negotiate for these student numbers and one extra lecturer, possibly funded by professional organisations.

Criteria for admission

8. Students would be selected by individual interviews, references and a curriculum vitae. The standard of attainment in the Diploma should normally include predominantly A and B grades in each unit, at the first attempt. On the evidence available from the first two cohorts of diplomates (1984 and 1985):

58 out of 143 diplomates (40%) would be eligible if two grades of C (only one in year III) were acceptable;

27 out of 143 (19%) would be eligible if only one grade of C was permissible; and

8 out of 143 (6%) would be eligible if all A or B grades were required.

From 1986, approximately 190 to 200 students are expected to complete the Diploma each year and approximately 75 to 80 (40%) may be expected to achieve predominantly A's or B's with no more than two C's; about 36 to 38 (19%) may be expected to achieve A's or B's with only one C; and 10 to 12 (6%) may be expected to achieve all A or B grades.

Proposed course units

9. 1/2 unit. Issues in Nursing (0743) (existing 4th year course, mandatory for Nursing Studies students)

This course covers a range of nursing topics chosen by students. Pairs of students present papers on their selected subjects to the group, which are followed by discussion and critique chaired by different students each week. Assessment includes a single essay two hour unseen exam (50%), an essay based on the presentation (35%) and marks for presentation, chairmanship skills and contributions to class debate (15%).

The addition of a small number of diplomates to the course could be expected to enrich the educational experience for both groups of students. However, the addition of a large number of diplomates could make discussions difficult and might necessitate dividing the group into two, with obvious resource implications.

The existing course tutor would also be course tutor for the diplomates, who would undertake exactly the same assessment as other students.

1/2 unit Social Sciences (existing courses)

As diplomates will have been introduced to basic concepts of psychology, sociology, and social policy in year I of the Diploma, it is proposed that they should select one from a number of existing social science 1/2 units. They would be assessed in the same way as other students. As first year

courses are essentially introductory they should be excluded. Courses should be selected which do not clash with other compulsory units ie. Wednesdays and Fridays.

Suitable alternatives include: Social and Developmental Psychology (0723) Thursday am. 1st semester. Course organiser Lynette Thomas. This course is mandatory for 2nd year Nursing Studies students and is taught at the King's Road site.

Sociopsychological Studies (S3)

1st and 2nd semester. Course organiser Ray Holland. This course is offered by the Management Group at the Campden Hill site, Kensington. 2nd year course.

Behavioural Science (AN 1332)

Thursday 2nd semester. Course organisers Dr E C Grant and Bob Farrer. (Anatomy and Human Biology). Taught at the Strand site as a 3rd year course.

Psychology Project II (4966)

Course organisers Lynette Thomas and Bob Farrer. Offered at the King's Road and Strand sites. An 8000 - 10000 word literature review. Supervision consists of fortnightly individual tutorials. For 3rd and 4th year students.

Applied Sociopsychological Studies (S4)

1st and 2nd semesters. Mondays. Course organiser Ray Holland (Management Group) 3rd year course taught at Campden Hill, Kensington.

Communication Studies (Skills and Project)(0122)

Course organiser Mr R N Ryder. Taught at the King's Road site in the Department of Education.

Advanced Communication Studies (0141)

Course organiser Mr R N Ryder. Taught at the Strand site by the Department

of Education.

1/2 unit Topics in Human Biology Related to Health. (New course)

This will be designed to build on knowledge of biological sciences introduced in year I of the Diploma. It will consist of an in-depth examination of a small number of selected topics which will be studied as integrated systems, rather than subdivided along traditional disciplinary boundaries.

Topics from which the students and course tutor will select may include: physical fitness for work and leisure; stress; nutrition; ageing; the environment, including effects of climate; circadian rhythms, shift work, jet-lag and sleep; evolution; complementary medicine, pain and acupuncture; epidemiology; human reproduction and fertility; social uses and abuses of drugs such as alcohol and tobacco; etc.

The course will be designed to be stimulating, academically rigorous and relevant to health care. Teaching methods will include lectures, seminars, laboratory work and visits to relevant medical and natural history museums. Assessment will be by unseen examination and course work. The course tutor should be a nurse/biologist (?Ros Herbert), but several members of staff would contribute to teaching.

1/2 unit Research Methods in Nursing (0741)(existing 3rd year course, mandatory for Nursing Studies students)

Diplomates will have studied research methods in year III of the Diploma, but this will considerably expand and develop existing knowledge. The course consists of one semester of research methods (Claire Goodman) and one semester of statistics (Keith Jacka) and computing (Peter Milligan). As students will have already covered some of this material, they may be advised to be selective in attendance at lectures and may study some topics of their choice

in greater depth with individual guidance from the three lecturers. Diplomates will be assessed in exactly the same way as other students on the course.

1 1/2 units. Project on Nursing Care (0744)(existing 4th year course, mandatory for Nursing Studies students)

This consists of a supervised research project in a nursing area of the student's choice. The work includes preparing a proposal for an ethical committee, reviewing relevant literature, collecting and analysing data and preparing a dissertation for examination.

Diplomates would undertake the project in the same way as other students, except that it would be carried out from January to September. If other courses finished in May and early June and the diplomates had a holiday in late June, they could work full-time on the projects in July, August and September. Projects could be submitted at the end of September. As most lecturers take time off for holidays and research during August or September, special arrangements for project supervision would be essential over the summer. One member of staff should agree to be available in the absence of the official supervisor and this task could be rotated from year to year.

Optional 1/2 unit (existing courses)

Existing 4th year students are allowed to take any one optional course offered in King's College which fits in with the time-table. This opportunity should be available to diplomates and would broaden their educational experience, all the rest of which is concerned with nursing. It would also give diplomates an opportunity to meet and work with academics and undergraduates in other disciplines.

<u>Summary of the Proposed Course</u>				
<u>Units</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>New/Existing</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Tutor</u>
1/2	Issues in Nursing	existing	0743	from 1986 Gillian Chapman
1/2	Social sciences	existing	students	choose 1 course
1/2	Topics in Human Biology related to health	new	-	?Ros Herbert
1/2	Research methods in nursing	existing	0741	Claire Goodman and Keith Jacka
11/2	Project on nursing care	existing	0744	Jenifer Wilson- Barnett
1/2	Optional course	existing	students	choose 1 course

10. The course leader

Responsibilities would include course organisation and administration, student selection, acting as personal tutor and academic adviser to all students, and co-ordinating the timetable and research projects. Evaluation of the new course would also be an important task.

At least initially, an experienced member of the Department should act as course leader. If a new lecturer were appointed for the new course, he or she should initially work with another lecturer and take over as course leader after two or three years experience. A background in biological sciences would balance existing interests in the Department.

11. A full or part-time course?

The Diploma is a day release course usually taken in conjunction with a demanding full-time job, as well as domestic commitments. Students may never have had the opportunity to concentrate on sustained academic work over lengthy periods. It is likely that they would benefit from a year of full-

time student life and it is recommended that initially the course should be offered full-time.

A possible timetable:

Issues in Nursing	Wednesday am
Human Biology	Wednesday or Friday pm
Research Methods	Friday am
Social Sciences - according to course selected	
Optional Course - according to course selected	
Nursing Projects - from January	

It would be feasible to offer simultaneously a two calendar year part-time alternative, without any extra resource implications. This would consist of two units each year:

The first year would require two days a week of day release throughout the academic year. Issues in Nursing, Human Biology and Research Methods could be taken on Wednesdays and Fridays. Choice of Social Science course would be severely limited by day release, but Psychology Project II would be feasible.

The second year would require only one day a week of day release (but ideally two), during which students would taken an Optional course and the Project on Nursing Care, which would be submitted at the end of September.

POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENTS FOR THE FUTURE

12. We have focussed our attentions in this report on the Kings College proposal for an internal top-up degree course, because we believe this is a practical way forward. We would not however exclude other possibilities for academic progression beyond the Diploma. We suggest that at some stage in the future the SAC should give further consideration to:
- a) Diploma entry to a degree in Nursing within the External degree scheme, which would be supported by a study guide and distance learning materials, as appropriate.
 - b) Diploma entry to a multiprofessional MSc in health sciences - along the lines suggested by the Working Party on Health Studies in 1985.
13. Also, in addition, the proposal which we feature in this report is premised on the Diploma in Nursing course as it stands at present. However, continuing curriculum review is an essential feature of the Diploma scheme and there are already calls for some restructuring of the present 3-year timetable, to provide for more flexible patterns of part-time study. We suggest that the SAC should seek to keep itself informed of such developments, and to be mindful of any possible implications they might have for progression to degree qualifications.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. We recommend to the SAC that it:
1. approve the proposal for a one-year top-up course at Kings College, leading to a BSc (Hons) in Nursing Studies, for selected holders of the Diploma in Nursing. ✓
 2. initiate further inquiries into the projects for an External Degree in Nursing and/or a multiprofessional MSc in Health Sciences, as suitable courses of study for selected holders of the Diploma in Nursing.
 3. establish means to keep itself informed on a regular basis about developments in the Diploma in Nursing. ✓