

REF: IFB/RS

9 October 1981

Miss P. Sayer  
Acting Education Officer  
The General Nursing Council  
23 Portland Place  
London W.1.

Dear Miss Sayer,

I have taken very long to reply to your letter of 11th August: first holidays intervened, then the College was plunged into great activity over the present resources crisis. It so happens that I am personally involved in the various discussions taking place with other schools of the University and life has been somewhat hectic.

I discussed the points you made in your letter with Marian Ferguson, and we both welcome your understanding of our situation. Obviously, we must monitor the course and your representative will play an important role in this. I want to avoid holding up the speedy development of the course and I am anxious lest too many committees do just that. There is the University Special Advisory Committee on which the Council is represented, and I would hope that this would fulfil some of the functions you see the steering group performing. Certainly, I would want to review the progress of the course at the end of each session and that group would consist of the persons you have in mind: Mrs. Ferguson and myself; representatives from the School of Nursing; and the Inspector. I would think a date in early July, when the examination results are available might be most suitable. I see it during the early stages of the course as more of a half-day conference than a meeting. In addition to this, it might be necessary, or desirable, to convene an interim conference some time in the spring term. I am not persuaded that more frequent meetings would be an advantage though we would certainly like individuals to visit us and to be able to ask them for informal advice. What I propose, therefore, with your agreement, is to establish a group in these terms. I will let you have a copy of its terms of reference and so on. I am not finally decided upon its constitutional status as I am particularly anxious not to involve those committees in the college that have no experience of working with professional bodies.

Finally, once again may I say how much I appreciate your understanding of our situation.

Yours sincerely,

Ivor Burton

THE GENERAL NURSING COUNCIL  
FOR ENGLAND AND WALES

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ACTING REGISTRAR MR. R.H. PYNE, S.R.N., R.F.N., F.B.I.M.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

TELEPHONE 01-580 7416

11th August 1981

IN REPLY  
PLEASE QUOTE REFERENCE.

Dr. I.F. Burton,  
Head of the Department,  
Bedford College  
(University of London)  
Department of Sociology,  
Regent's Park,  
London NW1 4NS

PS/AGH

YOUR REFERENCE.

IFB/lc

Dear Mr. Burton,

Thank you for your long and very helpful letter of the 28th July 1981. I am glad to have confirmation of the degree course details. At a later date a code number will be issued and staff from the Registration & Records Department will contact Mrs. Ferguson concerning the use of Council's standard training records.

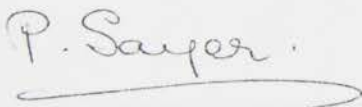
I do hope that you are now fully fit after your hospital experience and that a pleasant holiday will complete the cure.

I do understand your anxieties about the standing of a Steering Group and the part which an inspector might play in attending its meetings; she could be seen to be partial to one side or the other, that is, if there are two sides!

In other courses of this nature we have found that it is very useful to have a forum for exchange of views between the University teachers and those in the School of Nursing, including a representative of the nursing service and the person responsible for clinical work placements. Its functions are partly to give the course leader opportunity to prepare the ground as each course unit is planned and partly, as the course unfolds, to review progress. The need may not be so pressing once the course has been 'run in', but even then, the machinery for regular if infrequent meetings, perhaps annually, has been found valuable. The inspectors have been accepted in an advisory role and it must be recognised that the Council and its staff have a responsibility to build up gradually and then share, a body of knowledge about the running of these courses.

We hope therefore, that some arrangement can be evolved to carry out this essential interchange; its title and status are, of course, entirely a matter to be decided by Mrs. Ferguson and yourself.

Yours sincerely,



Miss P. Sayer  
Acting Education Officer

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

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Ref: IB/lc

28 July 1981

Miss P Sayer  
Acting Education Officer  
The General Nursing Council  
23 Portland Place  
London  
W1A 1BA

Dear Miss Sayer

Thank you for your letter of 15 June. I am sorry to have taken so long to reply but your letter contained important matters that I needed to take advice about and chanced to arrive, not only at the busiest time of the year because of examinations, but also when we were all having to cope with the problems created by the cuts in UGC funds. On top of all this, I had to take a short period of sick leave to allow an urgent investigation to take place in hospital. Fortunately the report from the investigation was good and I am now back in harness and doing my best to catch up.

First, I am pleased to hear that the Council has agreed to the up-dated proposals. Now for the details for your Computer and Records Department: I can confirm that the information you set out is correct and would add the following to fill up the blanks:

OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENT

Name: Mrs Marian Ferguson M.A., S.R.N.

Title within the College: Director of Nursing Studies

Address: Bedford College, Regent's Park, London NW1 4NS

Next, could I take up the matter of the best channel of communication between the Council and the Department. I am responsible to the College for everything that goes on the Department which is a large one. I delegate a good deal of responsibility to those in charge of the various sections in the Department, which include the Social Research Unit, the Medical Sociology section, the postgraduate and undergraduate sections, and the Social Work section as well as the Nursing Studies section. The persons in charge of those sections usually deal directly with people inside and outside the College but copy letters to me when they concern personnel matters, resources, or Departmental policy. In reverse, persons from outside the College usually reply directly to the person in charge of the section, and if they think the matter appropriate, copy the letter to me. Obviously, there are occasions when it is more appropriate for the letter to be written to me, or sometimes directly to the College authorities, but I would have thought that as a rule, the most effective form of communication between the Council and the Department would be through Mrs Ferguson.

I am well aware that these communication problems occur because universities have no proper management structure and that this must make them very difficult people to communicate with. We have to live, however, with the principle of academic freedom which allows all university



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teachers and freedom to develop their teaching and research as they think fit and which makes the role of a head of department much more that of a chairman than that of a manager. Similarly, heads of sections such as Mrs Ferguson must be able to incorporate the views of their colleagues into the administration of their particular responsibilities. This brings me to the suggestion for a Steering Group. At present, there are two groups which assist Mrs Ferguson in planning the course. One involves a group of teachers in the Department who have something to contribute to the course and I usually convene this; the other is convened by Mrs Ferguson at the school of nursing to involve those who will be concerned there with the students' clinical placements. In addition, Mr Hoy, Mrs Ferguson and myself meet from time to time. We expect to convene other ad-hoc groups in the future (eg to review arrangements for the selection of students) but I think it would be misleading to describe any of these as 'steering groups'. Only Mrs Ferguson is responsible for steering the course and she is responsible to me. She cannot devolve responsibility onto a group (and I am not willing to transfer it since so far as the College is concerned it is my responsibility and I need to have someone I can call upon to advise me who is also accountable to me). I am aware of the different management structures in the NHS and for that reason will always want to retain an effective channel of communication with the Director of Nurse Education at the school of nursing. I appreciate also the need to support Mrs Ferguson in the Department and in the College to enable her to meet the requirements of the School and of her professional colleagues there. I am also conscious of the need for the Department to involve the Council as the professional body in everything we are trying to do and want to be able to draw upon its wisdom and experience. The arrangements that I have found work well for our social work courses are based upon an informal but regular contact between the Director of the course and a representative from the validating body. I have joined in those contacts from time to time. I would not expect the representative to be a member of a working group and I imagine that he would think it inappropriate in view of his responsibilities to the validating body. Now certainly we would want to have someone from the Council to whom we could turn and who would, as a result of regular contact with us, be in a position to offer regular support. Obviously, Miss Gibbs-Fricker would be very acceptable in that role. I have to say, however, that I do not see her as exercising as a member of a steering group any share in the responsibility for the course. I would welcome contact with her myself and would hope she would come and see us at Bedford College when Mrs Ferguson and I could show her around and discuss with her matters that she or we would wish to raise. And of course I would expect her to have a regular contact with Mrs Ferguson that need not involve me and when, so to speak, they would be talking as one professional person to another. I cannot, however, envisage her participating in working groups with members of my department who have, unlike Miss Gibbs-Fricker, a responsibility to me. Nor do I see her participating in similar groups convened at the school of nursing where Mrs Ferguson is involved and where the course is under discussion because again she would be the one person with no responsibility to either Mrs Ferguson or Mr Hoy and I must be able through them to exercise a total responsibility for the course to the College and also to the University. None of what I have said, of course, is meant to detract in any way from my recognition of the role of the Council in validating the course. I would certainly make any appropriate arrangements that might enable them to carry out their statutory responsibilities

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just as I would want in addition for them to be involved informally with the course on a regular basis, but I would have to insist that these two roles, the validating authority and the advisory role, were kept separate and distinct so that they did not undermine the authority of the university to control the award of its degrees and my responsibility to the College and to the University for maintaining the standards of the University and so that they did not conflict with the principle of academic freedom I have referred to earlier.

Now in view of what I have said (and it may well be that I have misunderstood what you intended by your suggestion), you may wish to discuss the matter with us, ie with Mrs Ferguson and myself. This is one of those matters when clearly I must be present at any meeting you have with Mrs Ferguson and be involved in all correspondence. It could be that at some stage our Principal might need to be involved. For the present, however, I have not raised the matter except in the most general terms (except with Mrs Ferguson) because it could have very wide implications which I am sure we should try to avoid.

I look forward to your reply, and again apologise for my delay in answering your letter.

Yours sincerely

DR I F BURTON  
Head of the Department

✓  
C.C. Mrs Ferguson