

# theanswer

Autumn 2006

IN THIS ISSUE:

**You've got the grades, but how do you secure that first job?**

**Newly qualified?** – it's time to register with the NMC

**Mentorship** – hear both sides of the story



**FRIDAY 2 MARCH 2007,  
 10:00–16:30 AT COWDRAY HALL,  
 RCN HEADQUARTERS, LONDON**

We know where nursing has come from, but where is it heading? Are you prepared for the challenges of a changing health service? What opportunities are there for you as a nurse of the future, and how can you play an active role in shaping your career?

From careers and job-search advice, to discussions on the role of student nurses in the provision of health care, to developing visions of the future nurse, this conference will help student nurses to look forward and analyse, discuss and shape their career. This will be an opportunity for nursing students from across the UK to come together in a supportive and informative environment, to share experiences, learn and debate those issues that affect the nursing student community.

Talks, seminars and debating sessions will all be included in the day.

**REGISTRATION INFORMATION**

Registration is open to RCN student members only and is free of charge. Places are limited and a booking deposit of £10.00 is required to secure all places. Deposits will be refunded after the event, subject to attendance. Bookings will not be accepted without this deposit. Cancellations received one full month before the event will incur no charge. Regrettably, no booking deposit refund will be given after this date.

**Completed booking forms should be returned to Lisa Heneghan, Student Administrator, Royal College of Nursing, 20 Cavendish Square, London W1G 0RN.**

**ASSISTANCE WITH TRAVEL AND/OR ACCOMMODATION COSTS**

Financial assistance is available up to a maximum of £100. Reimbursement of such costs will take place after the event. Further information will be provided upon registration.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

Please contact Lisa Heneghan, Student Administrator,

Tel: 020 7647 3758  
 Fax: 020 7647 3431  
 Email: [lisa.heneghan@rcn.org.uk](mailto:lisa.heneghan@rcn.org.uk)

**BOOKING FORM**

RCN MEMBERSHIP NUMBER*	BOOKING FEE PAYMENT: <input type="checkbox"/> I enclose a cheque for £10.00 to secure the booking (made payable to the Royal College of Nursing) <input type="checkbox"/> Payment by credit/debit card: I authorise you to debit my VISA / MASTERCARD / MAESTRO or SWITCH (please circle) for the sum of £10.00
TITLE (MR, MS, MRS, MISS)	CARD NUMBER
SURNAME	ISSUE NUMBER (SWITCH) OR START DATE
FORENAME	EXPIRY DATE
PREFERRED MAILING ADDRESS	CARDHOLDER'S NAME
POSTCODE	CARDHOLDER'S BILLING ADDRESS
TELEPHONE (DAYTIME)	CARDHOLDER'S SIGNATURE
EMAIL	ISSUE FOR DEBATING SESSION:
UNIVERSITY	
YEAR OF STUDY	
INDIVIDUAL REQUIREMENTS (DIETARY, DISABILITY ETC.)	

\* This conference is open to RCN members only. If you do not know your RCN membership number please contact RCN Direct on 0845 772 6100

Ref: N Monahan, PND

# Editorial

**W**elcome back from what I hope was a good summer break, with your batteries recharged and ready to face the new academic year. Unfortunately, we are still facing a bleak outlook on job prospects for newly qualified nurses. Many broadsheets and tabloids have quoted that only 20 per cent of newly qualified students were able to secure jobs. Evidence from the Council of Deans, in their recent survey of employment prospects for students qualifying in summer 2006, shows that less than 20 per cent of students had secured a post at this stage, compared to at least 70 per cent in previous years. A very worrying statistic, I think you will all agree, especially when put into context with the financial deficits facing the NHS.

Personally, I feel let down. I was actively recruited to enrol in nurse education and at the time I had the impression that nursing was a valued occupation as well as a secure career option – an impression I am currently reviewing. I fear that the present employment situation and the perceived devaluing of nursing will result in fewer applicants for pre-registration courses, putting additional strains on the NHS and the profession in the future.

The deficits do not only affect health care staff, but also have a direct impact on patient care and patient safety. To find out more and to support the RCN *Keep nurses working, keep patients safe campaign* on deficits, go to [www.rcn.org.uk/deficits](http://www.rcn.org.uk/deficits) Take time to sign the petition which will be presented to Downing Street in October.



**“Don’t forget to sign the RCN petition on deficits”**

Despite government assurances that the NHS as a whole isn’t in deficit and repeatedly stating that 85,000 new nurses have been employed since 1997 (a fact that we do appreciate), we are in a crisis.

However, I still believe that nursing is a valued and valuable profession and the NHS remains an organisation to be proud of. Alongside the ANS Executive Committee, I will continue to campaign for a fair deal for nursing students, adequate job opportunities for newly qualified nurses and a secure future for the NHS.

So, in this issue of *the answer*, we have pulled together some essential advice to maximise your chances of securing that first job and also some tips on registering with the NMC.

**Andy Scott Donkin** is deputy consultant editor of *the answer*.

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**the answer**  
 Editor: Sarah Williams  
 Production: Louise Pope  
 Art Director: Drew Corps, Navig8  
 Designer: Lesley Runciman, Navig8

**Editorial Advisory Board**  
 Deputy Consultant Editor: Andy Scott Donkin  
 RCN Student Adviser: Susan Watt  
 RCN Student Administrator: Nina Monahan

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**Scotland:** Iain Kightley  
**Northern Ireland:** Rachel Foster  
**West Midlands:** Stuart Beppard  
**London:** Sara Pulfer

**Email:** [theanswer@rcn.org.uk](mailto:theanswer@rcn.org.uk)

**KEEP NURSES WORKING KEEP PATIENTS SAFE**

Sign the RCN petition on deficits at [www.rcn.org.uk/deficits](http://www.rcn.org.uk/deficits)

## news

# Making progress: Update on the ANS strategy

The ANS Executive Committee is continually working on the major issues that are facing nursing and midwifery students throughout the country.

We have been lobbying for better and equal bursaries across the four countries, and a toolkit to help students lobby on hardship is due to be launched in the autumn. Representatives also met with the Students Grants Unit (SGU) to assist with the development of an improved communications strategy.

A member of the Executive Committee sits on the NMC Task and Finish group, which keeps the ANS abreast of developments in the NMC's consultation on mentorship. Our committee member ensures that the student perspective is always considered when decisions affecting students are taken. The ANS Executive has also written a letter to the NMC calling for a national

register of mentors, in order to give students the confidence of knowing their mentors are suitably qualified.

In light of the current financial situation of many NHS trusts, the issue of nursing posts for newly qualified students has been the main focus of our activities. Following resolutions passed at Congress, RCN Council is undertaking work to ensure all newly qualifying nurses have jobs to go to. Council is also working to ensure better support for pregnant nursing students.

The ANS Executive continues to form links within the RCN and with other organisations both nationally and internationally. This ensures the voice of nursing students is heard wherever there can be a positive influence on nurse education and definitive improvements in the student experience.

To find out more about the ANS Executive Committee, go to [www.rcn.org.uk/students](http://www.rcn.org.uk/students)

# Jet, set, go...

Congratulations go to the winners of the RCN/RNPFN student nurse travel awards 2006, worth £500 each, which were awarded earlier in the summer. They were:

- **Elizabeth Burchell** from the University of Worcester, who will be going to Tanzania this autumn
- **Parul Khan** from Luton University who will be going to Malaysia this summer
- **Rachel Pearson** from the University of Manchester who will be going to Honduras this summer
- **Catherine Studd** from Anglia Ruskin University who will be going to India this winter.

The awards for next year will be reviewed over the next few months, so keep an eye on the RCN website for details of any future funding opportunities.



Last year's winners Katy Dunn and Stacie Cotterill in the Solomon Islands. They will be reporting back on their trip in the next issue of *the answer*

# The new Student Zone is now live!



Using your valuable feedback and requests, we've redesigned the Student Zone to create a really user-friendly and relevant site for you, our student members.

The new zone keeps you up to date with all the latest news and issues affecting today's nursing students. With input from all the RCN's regions and countries, the zone is one of the first places you should look to find out what's going on in your area.

Do you know who your local ANS executive member is, or who you should go to if you need advice or support? If not, log onto the zone, where you can find out more about the ANS.

Navigating your way around the zone is clear and easy – linking you through to all the member services you'll need, including the online library, the learning zone, the student discussion zone and RCN discounts.

It's all there on the new student zone – so take a look today!

And, register your email address on the student zone for a chance to win a touch screen data organiser or one of five £20 high street vouchers.

Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/students](http://www.rcn.org.uk/students)

## news

# New tool to lobby for a better bursary

The ANS are calling for the student bursary to be raised to £10,000. To aid lobbying, they are developing a bursary toolkit for all students.

The toolkit will advise students on how to contact and lobby their local politicians, and how to raise the issue of student poverty and debt to ensure it is heard on a local and national level.

It sets out the reasons why the ANS is asking for this change to the bursary system and presents the UK-wide context from a student perspective, to ensure that students are sending out a consistent message to Government.

For the latest information, visit [www.rcn.org.uk/students](http://www.rcn.org.uk/students)

# Exchange home help for housing

A new homesharing scheme that could help get you one step closer to the property ladder is currently being piloted.

'Householders', who tend to be older people or those with a disability or health problem, open their homes to 'homesharers', who are usually younger people, keyworkers or those trying to save money for a property of their own.

In this way the householder gets the help, support and security they need while the homesharer finds a place to call home, possibly rent free, and maybe in an area or property that would have been financially out of their reach.

More information can be found at [www.homeshare.org.uk](http://www.homeshare.org.uk)

# Deadline extended for ANS nominations

Now is your opportunity to represent your fellow students on the RCN's national student group, the Association of Nursing Students.

There are still vacancies for ANS Executive Committee student representatives in the following regions:

- East Midlands
- West Midlands
- Northern
- North West
- Scotland

As a student representative, you will develop valuable political and leadership skills, get involved in campaigning on issues that affect student nurses, and make a real contribution to advances in nursing and the promotion of high standards of nursing practice.

For nomination forms please contact Pat Stroud on [pat.stroud@rcn.org.uk](mailto:pat.stroud@rcn.org.uk). The extended deadline for nominations is noon on Friday 29 September 2006.

# Have your say at Congress 2007!

Do you have a burning issue that you think should be debated at Congress? Would you like the opportunity to influence the RCN agenda on student matters for the year ahead? The RCN is calling for all resolutions and matters for discussion to be submitted by Friday 27 October for consideration on the Congress 2007 agenda.

The proposal form and guidance information are available at [www.rcn.org.uk/congress2007](http://www.rcn.org.uk/congress2007)

# News in brief

## Help for dyslexic students

To ensure students with dyslexia are given every opportunity to succeed and for the NHS to benefit from the skills they have to offer, the RCN Practice Education Forum has been awarded RCN funding to undertake an extensive literature review.

Nurse education materials will be analysed for their accessibility and recommendations from the findings will be implemented to help support dyslexic students in practice placements.

## AGM: book your place now

Sustainability and health is the theme of this year's RCN Autumn conference and AGM which is being held on 17 and 18 October at Cardiff City Hall. Visit the website for details on how to join this important debate.

For more information go to [www.rcn.org.uk/agm](http://www.rcn.org.uk/agm)

## Student awards launched

The RCN Nursing Student of the Year awards have been launched.

The deadline for nominations is 10 November 2006 and nomination forms will be available soon. Keep an eye on the news section of the Student Zone for further information.

Visit [www.rcn.org.uk/students](http://www.rcn.org.uk/students)

## Genetics: implications for your practice

If you are interested in the growing influence of genetics and inherited disorders on health care, then don't miss the RCN conference on 16 November, at RCN HQ.

For more details and to book your place, visit [www.rcn.org.uk/events](http://www.rcn.org.uk/events)

career focus

# Maximising your potential

You have got the grades, but how do you go about securing that first job? RCN Head of Employment Relations Josie Irwin gives her advice during these uncertain times

Many nursing graduates looking for their first job this year are finding it tough. The lack of jobs is almost unprecedented. The context is funding issues in the NHS at the same time as local and national reconfiguration of health services is taking place – both have led to NHS trusts halting recruitment and freezing vacancies. The situation is expected to improve over the next year but what can students do now to maximise their chances of finding a job?

For those of you who are still going through your course, focus on what is going to make you employable. The first thing is to get your registration so you can practice (see page 7). But you also need to ensure that you have skills that are transferable to different settings. It is never too early (whichever cohort you

are) to think about your career aspirations and developing your CV. See what support and advice your lecturers or the careers department in the university or college can offer.

Keep an open mind about where you might want to work once you have completed the course and keep an eye on the kinds of jobs that are being advertised.

Some trusts have reviewed their temporary staffing policies and are targeting new graduates to work in flexible pools internally, but are then redeploying staff just as soon as vacancies or opportunities arise.

For example, NHS Professionals is offering preceptorship programmes delivered in partnership with NHS trusts. Preceptorships facilitate the transition from pre-registration student to registered and accountable practitioner. Newly registered nurses are treated as flexible workers and are paid as registered nurses by the NHS trust during the preceptorship. They are booked from NHS Professionals as required for service need and for a specified clinical area, for a minimum of 3 days or 20 hours a week over a period of 4 to 5 months.

With greater integration of health and social care, the emergence of new providers of NHS services and increased care outside hospitals, there

“ My advice to qualifying students would be to start looking as soon as you can – when a job becomes vacant they will go extremely quickly because everyone is in the same predicament. Apply for most jobs even if they ask for experience because you may be able to ask for the preceptorship at interview, which they should be providing for you. ”

Finally – don't give up!

**Samantha Ballinger (due to qualify in September)**

are increasing opportunities for newly qualified graduates to work in other sectors, for example, in social care settings or the independent sector.

Look at NHS Jobs, the electronic recruitment service for the NHS. Over 80 per cent of the 575 registered organisations use NHS jobs as their primary source for candidate attraction. NHS Jobs is now one of the UK's top five internet recruitment sites, attracting over 50,000 visitors every day.

Remember, people need good nurses as much as they ever did. Your education and experience will help you to become one of those good nurses. [nhs](#)

“ An excellent website for job seeking is NHS jobs, as positions are emailed to you directly and it is very straightforward and self-explanatory. However, seeking jobs is a very stressful time and my days are now spent filling in application forms. As soon as I can I intend to work abroad, but for now I just need some experience and money to enable me to make the move. ”

**Mandy Quarry (due to qualify in September)**

For NHS Jobs, visit [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk)  
For updates on the situation in the NHS, visit [www.rcn.org.uk/deficits](http://www.rcn.org.uk/deficits)

career focus

# Career clinic

## Essential advice on how to be the best candidate for the job

When applying for a nursing, midwifery or health visitor post your main objective is to present yourself as the best possible candidate. Thorough research is vital. Understanding what you have to offer in relation to the job and communicating that effectively in written form as well as at interview is fundamental.

Before you even start looking at the application form take the time to develop your self-knowledge by reflecting on your previous experience and valuing yourself. List all the significant aspects of your previous experience on the left hand side of a sheet of A4, and enter key skills and phrases down the right hand side. Include paid/unpaid work, voluntary experience, social activities and education achievements in addition to your nursing or midwifery training. What motivates you? Understanding what drives you is an important part of the process of managing your career effectively.

Next, develop occupational awareness by finding out about how nursing and midwifery posts are advertised, what the selection process involves and details about the hospital/organisation and the specific post you are applying for.

Link these stages by thinking about the relationship between yourself and the job opportunity. Why do you feel suited to the post on offer? What led you to the decision to apply? What do you feel



you would contribute to the post? This will help you to answer questions that may come up in the interview.

After this preparatory work, develop an action plan. Include steps such as the following:

- identify vacancy sources
- research the job and the organisation
- target your application by relating your self-knowledge to the job description and person specification.
- prepare for the second stage of the selection process. Find out what is expected of you.
- draw up a list of questions you might be asked and the evidence to support your answers.

Finally, implement the action plan. This is where some people stumble at the starting gate! Having worked through the planning stages – put lots of effort into preparation by thinking about the job and mulling things over. When it comes down to actually applying, don't rush! Some positive self-talk may be

needed – recognise what you have already achieved in completing a challenging course and practical training. It may help to talk things through with a friend or to seek help from your careers adviser or tutor.

Once you have made it through these important first steps, your job hunt will be well on its way! [nhs](#)

The advice above has been extracted, with permission from the authors, from the new *Nurses and Midwives Job Seekers Guide*, produced by the University of Liverpool. For further information on the next steps in job seeking, such as preparing CVs and application forms, tips for interviews and other advice and information, get a copy of the publication by contacting Wendy England, Careers Adviser, University of Liverpool on [careers@liv.ac.uk](mailto:careers@liv.ac.uk)

For guidance on careers and help with job applications, CVs and interviews, contact the RCN Career Service on telephone [0845 408 4391](tel:08454084391)

## registration

# Newly qualified? Then it's time to register with the NMC

As a newly qualified nurse, you will have to register with the Nursing and Midwifery Council before you can start work. Here we guide you through the registration process.

### What does the NMC do?

The role of the NMC is to protect the public by ensuring that nurses, midwives and specialist community public health nurses provide high standards of care. The NMC sets and improves standards for the education, training and conduct of those on the register, and it provides advice and considers allegations of misconduct, lack of competence or unfitness to practise due to ill health.

### How do I register?

The NMC and your higher education institution (HEI) share the joint

responsibility to ensure that each newly qualified practitioner passes quickly and smoothly from higher education through NMC registration and into the employment market.

The NMC requires HEIs to confirm the details of newly qualified nurses, midwives and specialist community public health nurses once you have completed your pre-registration training. These are:

- your personal details including your name and date of birth
- your course completion details
- a supporting declaration of good health and good character form.


When the NMC has received these details, an NMC Initial Registrations application pack will be dispatched directly to you. It is important that you keep your HEI updated with any changes to your name and/or address, as those personal details will be transferred to the NMC upon completion of your course. Any slight error can cause delays so it's worth making sure these are correct.

Once your completed application pack, payment, supporting declaration of

good health and good character form are received, they will then be reviewed by a member of the Registrations Team. Provided that it all complies with the rules set within the NMC Order 2001 your application will be accepted.

The NMC will then confirm your registration in writing, and send you a Statement of Entry, which confirms which part of the NMC register you have been entered for, and your NMC PIN card. On average the process takes no longer than 21 days.

Be aware that you have only 5 years from the date you complete your training to register your qualification with the NMC. Also, now that the NMC has moved to annual payment of fees, you will be required to pay a fee at the end of the first and second years of your registration period. The NMC will send you a request for payment 45 days prior to your registration expiring.

It is important to note that anyone who is newly qualified and who has not yet been registered with the NMC is unable to practice in the UK as a registered practitioner. 

For more details and to check your registration online, visit [www.nmc-uk.org](http://www.nmc-uk.org)

## profiles

# Mentorship: both sides of the story

Have you ever wondered what it is like being a mentor? Do you feel that you have always got the most out of your practice placement? A mentor and a student share their experiences.

### The mentor:

**Wendy Bevan, Ward Sister**

I have been a mentor for about four years and most of my students are on their first placement. On the ward there are plenty of opportunities for students to learn the principles of essential care and to practise those skills – this will underpin their nursing throughout their whole career.

I expect my students to be punctual, to wear the appropriate uniform, and to be interested in what's going on around them by asking lots of questions. In turn, they should expect me to be non-judgmental, receptive, approachable and supportive.

I enjoy the opportunity to learn from them and to exchange ideas. We should not be dismayed if the relationship is not all it could be as long as the mentor and student work together to seek help.

**“I enjoy the opportunity to learn from students and to exchange ideas”**

We both have a responsibility to do our best within the relationship. I must secure time to spend with my student, which can be difficult on a busy ward –

I'm sure you have all experienced that scenario. The student needs to demonstrate a mature, committed approach to the placement to enable both sides to gain the most from the relationship.

A successful, satisfactory placement encourages the student and is rewarding for the mentor. I love being a mentor as it gives me the opportunity to meet some great students and to share my enthusiasm for nursing, which is rarely easy but often fun.

### The student:

**Karen Shepherd, second year, adult branch**


On one of my placements I had a very good relationship with my mentor. She was aware of my learning objectives and what was expected of me at my level of training. She was familiar with the various skills books and paperwork I needed to complete and she arranged a timetable to ensure these were completed.

Working with such a supportive mentor led me to seek out learning opportunities, brought together theory and good practice and brought real value for me in my everyday ward experience.



**“A student's most valuable resource in practice is their mentor”**

I have had the experience of working with mentors who have misunderstood their role, underestimated the needs of their students or, through heavy workloads, have been unable to afford their students the time needed. I am also a realist and recognise that some students and mentors simply clash and do not have a good working relationship.

As students we have to accept responsibility in achieving our learning objectives, be pro-active in our learning and recognise that our most valuable resource in practice to develop our competencies is our mentor. 

For more information, read *Helping students get the best out of their practice placements: an RCN toolkit*. Download your copy from [www.rcn.org.uk/publications](http://www.rcn.org.uk/publications)

## health matters

# Sexual health and nursing students

Advice from RCN Sexual Health Adviser, Kathy French



The first national strategy for sexual health and HIV was published in 2001 and the Welsh Assembly and the Scottish Executive followed later. Since these publications were issued, much has been done to ensure the aims of the various strategies are met. However it is well known that many nurses lack the skills to meet the sexual health needs of their client group.

Everyone is a sexual being and nurses are often the people with whom patients raise concerns or fears. These could be fears on the alteration of body image following surgery or fear of a pregnancy or sexually transmitted infection. If they feel they are in safe hands they may ask an opinion. Nursing students are frequently close to their patients and may be the individual who suspects serious abuse with a child or young person. Not knowing what to do can be very difficult. Sexual health nursing in its broadest sense is one area where issues of consent and confidentiality are often most challenging

It is understandable that nurses may not be equipped to help their clients when they themselves have not had any opportunity to discuss sexual health during their training. Some universities provide excellent input for students whilst others do not appear to see any link with nursing and sexual

Nurses who are considering a career in the field of sexual health can access post registration courses via [www.guna.org.uk](http://www.guna.org.uk) and information about the distance learning course is available from [www.rcn.org.uk/sexualhealthlearning](http://www.rcn.org.uk/sexualhealthlearning)

If you have any comments, email [kathy.french@rcn.org.uk](mailto:kathy.french@rcn.org.uk)


health. Issues around sexual health can lead to opportunities to explore other issues in the learning environment.

The problems of stigma, prejudice and marginalisation are rife and sexual health is one area where the client often lacks a voice.

**“As nurses we need to reduce the stigma of seeking help on sexual matters”**

Student nurses are in an ideal position during their programme of training and education to challenge these and indeed apply some of the issues to other areas of care. It is also known that sex and relationship education within schools is often lacking or inconsistent as well.

The RCN, with financial support from the Department of Health and the Teenage Pregnancy Unit, published the *Sexual Health Skills* distance learning course for nurses, and it has been a real success. Nurses from many areas have completed this module – often nurses who could not previously access such training because of cost or time commitments or whose managers did not see the relevance of this to their area of work.

Student nurses should seek out what is available locally to them and insist on having sexual health addressed in their programme so they are equipped to help any client in their care. As nurses we need to do all we can to assist our client groups in order that they can access help if and when they need it, and to reduce the stigma attached to seeking help in sexual matters. 

## ensa 2006

# Finding common ground in Copenhagen



## Andrew Scott Donkin reports back from ENSA 2006

In early August the European Nursing Students Association (ENSA, formally ENSG) held its annual conference. The conference, hosted by ENSA's outgoing Danish president Stale Skaar, was held in the country's capital, Copenhagen, during a spell of glorious weather. Thirty-eight delegates attended, representing 12 countries within geographic Europe.

Representing the RCN was myself and Grant Ciccone, who was a member of the ENSA Working Group. As the RCN is the largest of the European nursing student organisations, ENSA had requested staff representation to provide administrative and advisory support. Susan Watt attended as a senior adviser to offer guidance and critique, and Nina Monahan went to take notes and provide general administrative assistance.


The annual four day conference, incorporating the AGM, gives nursing

students across Europe the opportunity to discuss nursing and nurse education issues particular to their own countries and those common internationally. There was also plenty of opportunity (usually over a scarily expensive drink) to network with fellow nursing students, building friendships and developing an understanding of European nursing.

The first two days of the AGM were almost entirely taken up with the business of revising the ENSA's constitution. It was a necessary process in order to legitimise the organisation, but it left delegates wanting to hit themselves over the head with the design furniture the Danish are famous for!

We also had the opportunity to hear a keynote speech by Annette Kennedy, President of the European Federation of Nurses Associations (EFN), who spoke of the current work of EFN and the role

and influence of nursing students at the European level. Annette also spoke of the limitations and successes of the Bologna process, a standardisation of qualifications throughout Europe, highlighting the work still to be done.

This AGM also saw the launch of the new and exciting ENSA website [www.nursingstudents.eu](http://www.nursingstudents.eu) The site allows networking and discussion opportunities with other student nurses throughout Europe. Registration and membership is free to all student nurses and I would urge everyone to log on and have a look. The website will also highlight the work undertaken by the Executive Committee (onto which I was lucky enough to be elected) on behalf of ENSA and current information on issues affecting nursing students and qualified professionals. 

Visit [www.nursingstudents.eu](http://www.nursingstudents.eu)

## council and regional roundups

### Council roundup

Since Congress there have been many key decisions facing Council that will help shape the future of the RCN. Not least is the ongoing work of the PDF project, branch review, the future activist and the property strategy. It is easy to look at these decisions in isolation, but they should be viewed as the starting points for the future of the RCN in a rapidly changing environment of health care in the UK. In order to face these challenges the structure of the RCN must also change and the way it conducts its business of representing nurses and nursing will also change for the better.

Work is continuing on the bursary system, looking at ways of providing a fairer and more equitable system fit for future nursing and midwifery students.

The NHS deficits continue to have a major impact on jobs for newly qualified nurses and this issue was included in the recent RCN deficits evidence submitted to the House of Commons Select Committee. The NHS pensions review is ongoing and the flexible options for all members including its future members lie at the heart of negotiations.

All items discussed at Council have relevance to students, as Council's future structure will affect how we interact as members, and the issues covered by its campaigning will affect the workplace and terms and conditions. Have a look at the RCN website and seek out news and events and see how you can become involved.



**Andrew Hart**  
RCN Council

andrew.hart@rcn.org.uk



**Richard Cummins**  
RCN Council

richard.cummins@rcn.org.uk

# Regional roundups

#### Northern Ireland:

Hello everyone! We hope you've all had a relaxing and enjoyable summer holiday – and didn't work too hard!

Work has already started on next year's ANS Northern Ireland Students Conference – more information available soon. The student's forum will be meeting soon in Belfast and all RCN student members are welcome to come and share their views or concerns. If you want to become more involved in the forum or as a student steward, or if you have a problem, contact us and we'll do our best to help you out.

Sadly, DJ's term of office draws to a close this October and we wish him every success in his future career as a registered nurse.



**Victoria Clarke**  
Northern Ireland

C1916003@qub.ac.uk



**Oladimeji Sa'ad (DJ)**  
Northern Ireland

saadoladimeji@hotmail.com

#### Scotland:

In Scotland, we have been busy representing students, and are currently working on mentorship and practical learning issues, alongside Susan Watt and the NES. The forum is preparing itself for another busy meeting and is expecting an excellent turn out like before – if you would like more details please email Iain.

We are also preparing for the freshers' fayres and are working to increase our number of student stewards.

I (Iain) am arranging university visits to increase the awareness of the ANS and what the RCN can do for you, and look forward to meeting many of you then.



**Iain Kightley**  
Scotland

ikightley@btinternet.com



**Claire Alexander**  
Scotland

c.d.alexander@dundee.ac.uk

#### Wales:

Hello all, for those of you who have reached the end of your course: good luck and best wishes for your nursing future.

Thank you and good luck to Pam whose term in office is coming to an end. Her work for the RCN has been an inspiration and we wish her all the best in the future.

At the time of writing,

nominations had not been released but good luck to all those who are standing for positions in the RCN elections and please vote!

If you have any news in your area please email us.



**Pam Bennie**  
Wales

blackmagic1969@hotmail.co.uk



**Chris Cooper**  
Wales

nursechris@univ.bangor.ac.uk

#### East Midlands region:

Currently seeking nominations. For info contact pat.stroud@rcn.org.uk

#### Eastern region:

This will be my last regional roundup as ANS Eastern regional representative. The last two years have seen some significant changes in nursing and

## regional roundups

nurse education, including the review of pre-registration education by the NMC and the current NHS deficits resulting in a lack of jobs for students. The ANS has campaigned successfully on these issues and many others, ensuring the voice of student nursing is heard at many levels.

In the Eastern region, as well as nationally, we are still studying and qualifying in uncertain times. We must therefore continue to demand jobs for all newly registered nurses. Urge the government to look at the long-term future of nursing rather than short-sighted quick fixes. You can do this by writing to your local MP.



**Andrew Scott Donkin**  
Eastern

scottdonkin@mac.com

#### London region:

Welcome to all London students, and congratulations to those who have finished their courses. I can imagine how excited you are – it is an excellent achievement to get this far, and you have succeeded!

I would recommend that you grab any job opportunities made available to you, whether temporary or short contracts, because the job crisis is devastating! It is a national problem but I hope something will be sorted out soon.

The London student officers and I have decided to hold the forum meetings at the RCN HQ once a month (first date tbc), and I hope to see many of you there debating current issues. Please email me if you have any issues or

are interested in becoming active within the RCN.



**Ayodele Tijani**  
London

joytij83@yahoo.co.uk

#### North West region:

The picture across the North West is probably similar to many others. For April qualifying students the previous jobs freeze had already made finding employment difficult and now, with redundancies across the region, newly qualified nurses are competing for vacancies against their more experienced colleagues.

Needless to say many are finding it hard to secure full-time jobs and are being offered bank nurse positions until the financial position improves. This has disheartened some students who are working full time as a bank nurse on a ward where they had hoped to secure a job!

I urge you to keep in touch with the ANS for support and advice if you are experiencing difficulties in your search for work.



**Benn Mott**  
North West

gedben@aol.com

#### Northern region:

Currently seeking nominations. For info contact pat.stroud@rcn.org.uk

#### South East region:

Currently seeking nominations. For info contact pat.stroud@rcn.org.uk

#### South West region:

The South West is being hit hard by the cuts in the NHS. The majority of newly qualified nurses are yet to find appropriate employment and the situation does not seem to be improving. Derriford Hospital has announced that 300 more jobs will go – will this round of cuts ever end? Our strength remains by working together – we say 'fightback' not 'cutback'. We must not risk patient care as nursing posts are lost and we cannot allow the NHS to lose its greatest asset, its workforce. Please continue to be active in the campaign against the cuts.

Don't worry, be happy and 'Fightback'



**Mark Rickman**  
South West

mark@markrickman.wanadoo.co.uk

#### West Midlands region:

The region is still subject to the crippling NHS financial crisis and the lack of job availability for newly qualified students. Many NHS trusts are continuing to cancel their graduate recruitment events as they state they have no need to recruit at this time! Student activists from across the region are continuing to support students in need of advice and guidance during these difficult times, but the general consensus still appears to be 'don't give up!'

The student forum meets regularly and we are currently seeking student activists from the University of Worcester, Coventry University and University of

Wolverhampton (Burton Campus and City Campus). For more details on your local activist or to enquire about the next forum meeting, contact the regional office on 0845 456 7842.



**Stuart Beddard**  
West Midlands

Stuart.Beddard@wlv.ac.uk

#### Yorkshire and the Humber:

Hi everyone, the dire job situation appears to be more widespread, as Hull, Sheffield and Bradford all report newly qualifieds having difficulty obtaining employment within their local trusts. For the next financial year South and West Yorkshire universities have announced no reductions in their budgets for nurse education, however York and Hull have announced a 10 per cent drop in their financial budgets, which in turn will lead to further reductions within the nurse education field.

Another future issue that needs attention is Band 5 and 6 jobs being removed from the international register. This means overseas students who are already undertaking nursing studies may have problems securing employment on qualifying.

If anyone has any problems or issues they would like to discuss please email or contact me through our new discussion zone.



**Sarah Foulger**  
Yorkshire / Humber

sarahfoulger1@hotmail.com

## real lives



# Where are they now?

Former Student Chair for RCN Scotland Paul Irving updates us on what he's been up to since graduating

My name is Paul Irving and I was the RCN Scotland Student Chair for two years whilst a student nurse at Napier University of Edinburgh. Since qualifying I have had a varied and enjoyable career. Once qualified, I ventured south to Oxfordshire, where I went to work in psychiatry before becoming a post-

registration RMN student. Unfortunately I was unable to finish training because the trust had to withdraw the training allowance.

I moved trusts and was appointed as senior staff nurse and the mental health link in a community hospital. I was able to use my RGN skills and the skills I had developed in psychiatry. I was eventually put in charge of the hospital at night, which included an eight-bed maternity ward and labour suite, and a

minor injuries unit.

My next post was at a large teaching hospital where I was appointed a senior staff nurse in acute and gastrointestinal medicine. I still work part-time in this area but I am now working within the nurse education department of the hospital too. I am responsible for planning, evaluating and developing a programme of pre-registration education taught by the trust to enhance and support the programme taught at the

local university. The other aspect of my job is running the role transition programme designed to support newly qualified staff nurses in their transition from student to staff nurse. I have to say this is one of the most rewarding and enjoyable posts I have had so far.

RCN-wise I am still as active as ever, and I am now a workplace steward, vice chair of my branch and a board member for the South East Region. ANS

# Letters

Dear Editor,

I read in the last ANS strategy update that 'the NMC has announced one hour protected time with students' (page 4, Summer 2006). I have looked on the NMC and RCN websites but could not find any further information about an announcement. Please could you let me know where I can find some more detail? Thank you for your help with this.

**Susie Jones**, Adult Nurse Student

**Ed says:**

This was in a consultation issued by the NMC in December 2005. It is called *Proposals arising from a review of fitness for practice at the point of registration* and is available from the NMC website. The results of the consultation are not yet published, however you can access the responses to the consultation at [www.nmc-uk.org](http://www.nmc-uk.org) under 'NMC consultations'.

## a day in the life of...



**I** am a mental health student and I have just finished my second year of studies in Cambridge. I recently completed an eight month placement at a medium secure unit (MSU) within the private sector and would like to share this experience with you.

Prior to the placement, I had to attend an induction week. The induction covered a variety of areas including the Mental Health Act (1983) – the majority of the patients are detained under various sections of the Act – and the therapeutic and adverse effects of commonly prescribed medications. All new employees at the unit are required to attend the course, irrespective of experience. I also attended the in-house break away training before I visited my ward.

The MSU is unique in that it consists of eight wards caring for 200 patients from varying backgrounds, including male, female, people with learning disabilities and those undergoing rehabilitation. The unit also has a specialist ward for patients with

personality disorders.

I had several meetings before the beginning of my placement with the nursing development officer, responsible for the training needs of all the staff. These meetings were very reassuring and we agreed an agenda for my learning outcomes. The resources available throughout the unit were easily accessible, including a computer on each ward with internet access, which proved incredibly useful. Also, the on-site library was fully stocked with a variety of books and journals specifically on mental health.

I worked on the rehabilitation unit, which had 19 patients with various mental health problems. Alongside my mentor, who was the ward charge nurse, I was also given a day-to-day mentor. The support and supervision I received from them was fantastic. My daily duties included administering medication and offering psychosocial interventions, such as anxiety management and stress vulnerability coping strategies. I also enjoyed escorting the patients (under

supervision) into the community, providing the support they required, such as assisting them to buy food, and helping to reduce any anxiety. These trips were a positive way of teaching social skills. During the placement, I was allowed to attend many types of reviews, including mental health review tribunals and care programme approach reviews. I also attended weekly ward rounds and worked within the MDT.

At times this placement was challenging but there was always an experienced member of staff to offer advice and support, and I never felt alone or vulnerable. It is an experience I shall value and would encourage other students with a similar opportunity to go for it! I am sure the skills I have developed in such a challenging environment will serve me well in my future career. ANS

**John Marham**, second year nursing student, mental health branch.

Why not air your views? Join the discussion at [www.rcn.org.uk/students/discuss](http://www.rcn.org.uk/students/discuss)

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