

Academic levels of study

Academic levels of study are standard across all higher educational institutions. Each university has its own quality assurance mechanisms, which are monitored by the quality assurance agency, and their own internal mechanisms for validating programmes. If it is a professional qualification (eg nurse prescribing), then these modules will be validated by the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

Level 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is equivalent to the first year of study on a normal university course. Anyone who has undertaken a registered general nurse (RGN) qualification prior to the year 2000 will have studied at level 1 In order to progress to level 2, you need 120 credits at this level or the equivalent (experiential learning)
Level 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is the undergraduate diploma level. You will have achieved this if you have studied Project 2000 and qualified as an RNdipHE (registered first-level nurse). It is equivalent to the second year of a university course Many modules at universities are offered at level 2 and you should consider taking these if you have not done any previous level 2 study (ie if you have only studied at the basic RGN level). The main difference is that there is less analysis in the work you have to undertake
Level 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is degree level and to gain an honours degree you need 120 credits at level 3. In order to access level 3, you must have either 120 credits at level 2 or be able to prove that you are capable of this level of study (eg RGN qualification and ongoing accredited study days) Most universities offer modular approaches to degrees where each module has a certain number of points. Most degree programmes will have compulsory core modules, one of which will cover research methods Studying at level 3 means there is more in-depth analysis and critique of research
Post-graduate diploma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interim between degree and Masters level study. It is a stop-off point where some people do not want to do a full Masters dissertation but have studied at level 4
Level 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Masters degree level. In order to access this level you need to have completed a level 3 degree or show through experiential work that you are capable. Talk to your local university about this Masters level study incorporates application of research and the assimilation of new ideas. All Masters degrees will demand a dissertation, which is usually research-based
MPhil and PhD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If undertaken full time, these can be completed in a minimum of 3 years or 7 years part-time. Study at this level is about research and national networking. Your research should be on an original idea, and bring new concepts and research evidence into the forefront of the area that you are studying