



**RCN Career Service**

## **Tips for completing application forms and CVs**



Royal College  
of Nursing

## Tips for completing application forms and CVs

The first step in convincing a potential employer to select you for a post in nursing is to write an effective application form or curriculum vitae (CV).

### Writing a CV

Your CV is your personal marketing tool, used to show an employer that you have the necessary skills and professional, education and personal experience to undertake a particular role. Your CV can be used for the following:

- in response to a job advert that asks you to apply in writing
- whenever you are asked to enclose a CV along with a standard application form
- whenever you feel that an employer's standard application form does not cover all of the points you would like to raise – however, you should always complete the application form as well
- to make speculative applications – that is, to generate interviews for a post which you'd like to apply for but have not seen advertised.

### Preparing to write your CV

Start by making a list of your experience and posts held, beginning with the most recent. For each post held, list the date of employment, name of employer, job title, your responsibilities and your main achievements.

Next, gather together all your educational certificates and make a list of the courses you have undertaken and qualifications gained, working backwards chronologically. Include dates and names of educational establishments. You should also list any professional activities – articles published, papers presented at conferences, membership of professional groups, etc.

### Format

There is no single perfect format for a CV. Ideally it should be logical, clear and concise and should ensure maximum attention is given to your strengths. Make sure your CV includes the following:

- **personal details** – include your name, address, preferred contact telephone number and email address, if applicable
- **opening statement** – provide a couple of sentences that summarise your

personal and professional qualities. If you have a lot of experience you may want to include two or three major professional achievements in the statement

- **experience** – begin with your most recent post and list dates, position(s) held and the name of the employer. Include three or four of the responsibilities you held at your most recent and senior posts and two or three major achievements relevant to the position for which you are applying. Go through the job description and person specification if there is one
- **qualifications** – provide details of your professional qualifications and education to date. Include your NMC pin number and expiry date
- **professional activities** – include a list of articles published, membership of professional groups and papers delivered at conferences
- **personal** – you may want to include extra information, such as your interests, but do so in general terms and only if they are relevant to the job. You might also include whether you hold a driving licence.

An example of a CV that uses the above format is given on page 6.

## General tips

- Try to use ‘action’ words, such as the following:

co-ordinated	created	developed	established	fulfilled
identified	implemented	improved	initiated	launched
led	managed	motivated	negotiated	organised
produced	recognised	successfully	trained	transformed

- Try to omit the pronoun ‘I’.
- Explain gaps in your paid employment – for example, in order to raise a family. Remember that caring for a family member is a responsible job. You should also think about any achievements you have gained through voluntary work.
- Try to use numbers to create an impact. For example, ‘managed a team of 30 staff’, ‘responsible for a budget of £500,000’.
- Do not exceed two pages. If you have a lot of experience, simply summarise positions you held more than ten years ago. If you have published a number of articles, select the most important ones and summarise the others – for example, ‘More than 50 articles published in the nursing press on aspects of diabetes care, professional development and education’.
- Use good quality paper.
- Avoid the use of too many font styles. Fancy typefaces and borders are generally not needed.

- Avoid the use of abbreviations that will not be recognised easily.
- Inclusion of contact details for referees is optional. Add them if you are happy for them to be contacted.
- Enclose a covering letter which highlights the main points of your CV and how they relate to the post for which you are applying.
- Arrange for at least two people to proof read your CV for errors. Ask for constructive feedback on whether it is easy to read and if it makes an impact.

### **Application forms**

The following tips should help you complete application forms successfully:

- always do what the form asks, for example, complete in black ink and use block capitals, if requested
- take several photocopies before you start and practise completing the application in full
- complete the final copy in pencil first
- always provide all the information asked for. If a section does not apply to you, put 'Not applicable' or insert a diagonal line, as appropriate
- always include a covering letter.

### **Health assessment form**

You will usually be asked to complete a health questionnaire. This should be sent to the occupational health department and remain confidential to that service. If you have declared any issues related to your health you may be called for an interview with an occupational health nurse, who will check that your, and others', health and safety will not be compromised by the role you have applied for.

### **Declaring previous convictions**

If you are asked to declare any previous convictions you must do so, even if they occurred over ten years ago. The interview panel will take account of the severity of the offence and whether it will impact on your role. If you apply for a post working with vulnerable people, such as children, the employer will undertake a police check which will identify any police record. If you have any doubts about your record, talk to the employer about your concerns, so that any potential problems or queries can be ironed out at an early stage.

## Supporting information

The supporting information section is the most important part of the form. Go through the job description and person specification thoroughly and make sure you provide evidence to show how you meet all the requirements asked for. Ideally you should use a word processor to type this section, using a separate sheet of paper, if necessary.

### Sample 'supporting information' for a student nurse

I wish to apply for the post of staff nurse on Daventry Ward. I am currently completing my nurse training at Thames Valley University and would welcome the opportunity to work within a team caring for patients with immunological disease, where I feel I am best able to offer my skills of:

- providing quality patient care, based on latest research
- one to one counselling
- liaison with the multidisciplinary team
- support for family members
- effective team working.

I have recently completed my management assignment and developed skills in organising and prioritising a busy workload and maintaining a safe working environment for patients and staff. I gained experience of arranging patient discharge, liaising with the multidisciplinary team and delegating responsibilities to qualified staff and health care assistants.

On my latest placement I have provided teaching sessions on aseptic technique, catheter care and pressure sores for first year student nurses. Indeed I am particularly interested in pressure area care and gained 70% for a 5,000 word assignment on this topic.

I am fully aware of my responsibilities under the NMC Code of Conduct and understand the importance of informed patient consent, safe administration of medicines, accurate record keeping and confidentiality.

During my training I particularly enjoyed working on Daventry Ward. I found the environment to be both stimulating and challenging. I enjoyed primary nursing and found reward in helping patients meet the challenge of their illness. I received excellent feedback from my mentor about achievement of my learning objectives and was quick to learn on this busy ward.

I would hope to be able to bring to the ward team my strengths of enthusiasm, resilience and commitment and to be able to gain valuable experience prior to undertaking further study in the future.

## Sample CV

### Jane Nurse

2 Forest Road  
Dablington  
Dabingshire  
DSD 4XX

Telephone: 01234 567890 (Home) 987 654321

An enthusiastic surgical nurse with over 4 years experience of providing expert nursing care to patients with a range of urological conditions. A conscientious professional committed to improving standards of care through evaluation of practice, knowledge of research and life long learning.

### EXPERIENCE

#### DABLINGTON NHS TRUST

**Bank nurse (D grade - mainly surgical nursing)** January 2002-present

- Plan, implement and evaluate patient care using a range of recognised nursing models
- Supervise and assess learning of care assistants and pre-registration students
- Use research to improve standards of care
- Completed return to practice course

**Career break - raising family** September 1996-January 2002

- Ran a helpline for sufferers of prostate cancer (voluntary, part time) organised by The Prostate Cancer Trust

#### BOBINGTON NHS TRUST

**Staff Nurse (F grade) – 24 bedded surgical urology ward** May 1995 – September 1996

- Planned, implemented and evaluated the care of patients with a wide range of urological conditions
- Led nursing team and deputised for ward manager on a regular basis
- Managed the ward's stock control system
- Contributed to ward managers' meetings on a regular basis
- Organised staff rotas
- Mentored qualified nurses and students
- Wrote a comprehensive induction programme for new staff
- Initiated and devised a nutritional status assessment tool in collaboration with multi-disciplinary team

**Staff Nurse (E grade) – 24 bedded surgical urology ward** October 1993-May 1995

- Managed ward on a regular basis
- Supervised, taught and assessed learning of pre-registration students

**ENDINGHAM NHS TRUST**

**Staff Nurse (D grade) – 28 bedded surgical ward** June 1992-October 1993

- Planned, implemented and evaluated care of patients with a range of conditions

**QUALIFICATIONS**

ENB Urology course, Bobington College of Nursing	January 1995
ENB Teaching and Assessing in Clinical Practice course, Bobington College of Nursing	April 1994
Registered General Nurse, Endingham College of Nursing	June 1992
Pin No: 111111 (Expires Nov 2006)	
2 A'Levels and 8 GCE O'Levels, Endingham High School	1986- 1988

**PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES**

Paper titled '*Principles of pain management after surgery*' presented to RCN Pain Forum conference in 1993

**PERSONAL**

Clean driving licence. Regular voluntary helpline work for sufferers of prostate cancer.

If you would like any further support, contact the RCN Career Service on telephone number 0845 408 4391.

**RCNDIRECT**  
[www.rcn.org.uk/direct](http://www.rcn.org.uk/direct)  
**0845 772 6100**

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shapes health policies*

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