Nurses: Thinking about your career

Member Support Services

Professional care for caring professionals
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Thinking about your career

Working as a registered nurse is both challenging and rewarding. It can open the door to a world of possibilities. Your nursing qualification can take you almost anywhere: working with all ages, with individuals, whole communities, in hospitals, homes or schools, on ships, planes or in battle zones, as a hands-on nurse, public health adviser or a leader. The list is endless.

We’ve put together this guide to help you succeed in all aspects of the nurse recruitment process. We also have a short section on continuing professional development (CPD).

Before you start, here are some ideas on what to think about when choosing job options.

- Think carefully about your nursing career so far. Which aspects have you enjoyed the most and why?
- Consider how your strengths match up with your preferences.
- Talk to colleagues, peers and mentors to gain a true insight into various roles.
- Make the effort to find out about fields you haven’t yet experienced. Gather a variety of role descriptions from job adverts and list the pros and cons of each role. Consider all the practical aspects such as hours of work, support with education and future job security.
- Be mindful of your job security and look into growth areas where there are more opportunities. For example, working with older people, management of long-term conditions and community-based roles.
- Finally make sure your personal development plan includes some career objectives.
Thinking about your career

Job searching

There are a number of different methods and techniques to use when searching for a new job. These include looking in newspapers, journals, online and through social media.

Where to start

1. Make a list of potential employers in your main field of practice.

2. Make sure your CV is up to date (see page 5). The RCN Careers Service can provide you with CV guidance and give you feedback on your CV.

3. Take advantage of careers support, such as through the national careers service sites in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. These sites are not nursing specific, but include useful resources and information on funding for education, links to useful websites and career tools.

4. Keep a record of the jobs you apply for so you can easily track and keep up to date with applications. An Excel spreadsheet (or similar) can be a good tool for recording CV submissions, networking, interviews attended and other useful resources. Here is an example:
Job searching tips

- **Check printed media.** There are many jobs advertised through printed media such as RCN Bulletin [www.rcnbulletinjobs.co.uk](http://www.rcnbulletinjobs.co.uk), journals related to your chosen career field, newspapers and local press.

- **Go online.** Think carefully about the search terms you use on job sites. For example, if you are looking to make a move into ‘public health’ try using this term, rather than a specialist title, such as ‘health visiting.’ However, if you are very clear about the type of jobs you are looking for, use a relevant term – for example ‘diabetes.’ If you really just want to find out about the types of nursing jobs that are out there, make your search location specific and type the term ‘nurse’, but within a defined postcode. This can be useful when using tools such as the Job Centre Plus web site: [www.gov.uk/jobsearch](http://www.gov.uk/jobsearch). Make sure you are secure online. Look at the type of employers that are advertising on the site – are they reputable?

- **Sign up to job alerts.** This allows you to filter your career choices, based on job title, field and location. Job sites which offer alerts include: [www.jobs.nhs.uk](http://www.jobs.nhs.uk) [www.gov.uk/jobsearch](http://www.gov.uk/jobsearch) and [www.jobs.theguardian.com](http://www.jobs.theguardian.com).
  See also: [http://jobs.scot.nhs.uk](http://jobs.scot.nhs.uk); [www.wales.nhs.uk](http://www.wales.nhs.uk); [http://v2.hscrecruit.com](http://v2.hscrecruit.com)

- ** Attend conferences and job fairs** to develop networks and leave a CV with employers who you would like to work for.

- **Use social media.** Twitter allows you to follow people and organisations. You can follow an organisation that advertises jobs on Twitter or may see some courses which are running locally at your RCN office.
  LinkedIn is a professional network to connect with like minded people in specific industries, fields and interest groups. Make sure your profile is up to date so potential networks gain an insight into the professional qualities, skills and experience you have. It is a way of contacting people who you may not have access to. For example, if you wanted to arrange some work based shadowing, you could email someone on LinkedIn. The email is confidential and the recipient would need to accept it. You can also join professional discussion forums via LinkedIn.

- **Talk to potential employers.** It may be a good idea to approach someone in the career area in which you would like to work. Usually on a job advert there will be a contact person. Employers are often happy to help, but make sure that you are not asking too much of them. Try asking for an informal visit to talk generally about career opportunities in their area, or for advice on how to build a career in their field. Once you have established a relationship, a manager may well remember you when vacancies arise in the future. Or they may provide you with other contacts that may generate job opportunities.

Always plan what you say to potential employers – think about five positive points about yourself that you can tell employers and provide a copy of your CV and contact details.

Be cautious when using social media. The NMC Code includes standards on the appropriate use of social media.
Applying for jobs

Once you have an idea of the sort of role you’re looking for, it’s time to put maximum effort into the job application process.

Your CV

While many jobs simply ask that you complete an application form, it’s also useful to create a CV that you can include in your portfolio to present to prospective employers and useful contacts.

Successful CVs are logical, accurate and concise. Most importantly they’re tailored to the people reading them – so make sure you adapt yours accordingly, using relevant key words for the job you’re applying for.

There’s no perfect format for a CV but you can use the following sections to create one that’s easy to follow.

Personal details
Name, address, preferred contact telephone number and email address.

Opening statement
A couple of sentences that summarise your personal and professional qualities and career objectives.

Key skills and achievements
Four or five bullet points to summarise key achievements in your career. This could be to highlight the amount of professional development you have completed, particular initiatives you have introduced in the work place or you can highlight skills gained through specific experience that will be of interest to your target audience.
Employment/Experience
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.

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. Wherever possible describe what you’ve achieved and the skills you have gained, giving specific evidence of your competences. Go through the job description and person specification if there is one.

Education
A list, working backwards chronologically, of the courses you have undertaken and qualifications gained, including dates and names of educational establishments. Summarise your professional qualifications and education to date. Include your NMC pin number and expiry date.

Professional activities
Details of events and training days you’ve attended, membership of professional bodies, and any RCN activities you have taken part in. Include articles published, membership of professional groups and papers delivered at conferences.

Other activities
You may want to include extra information about your interests outside work and whether you hold a driving licence.
CV tips

- Try to use “action” words. These will bring your CV to life.

- Explain gaps in employment where, for example, you raised a family, went travelling or cared for a relative. Remember that these are responsible reasons that bring extra skills and experience.

- Think about any achievements you’ve 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’.

- Don’t exceed two pages – keep to the point. If you have a lot of experience, simply summarise positions you held more than ten years ago. If you have published a lot of articles, select the most important and summarise others – for example, ‘More than 20 articles published in the nursing press on aspects of diabetes care, professional development and education’

- Avoid using different font styles. Keep it simple.

- Only use abbreviations that can be recognised easily.

- Inclusion of contact details for referees is optional. Add them if you’re and they’re happy to be contacted.

- If targeting the CV at specific employers, enclose a covering letter highlighting the main points of your CV and how they relate to the post that you’re applying for.

- Ask at least two people to proof read your CV for errors. Ask for constructive feedback, including whether it’s easy to read and if it makes an impact.

Remember the RCN Careers Service provides CV feedback for members. For more information call RCN Direct on 0345 7726100 7 days a week 8.30am-8.30pm.
Increasingly, job applications are completed online. This has the advantage of allowing you to spell check documents and correct mistakes easily. Plus you can save the document on your computer and copy and paste relevant information to future application forms. Tailor your application to each role and don’t copy irrelevant information from previous applications. Make sure you provide all of the information requested and don’t press the ‘send’ button until you are completely happy with the end result.

The following tips should help you complete a paper application form 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.
- Provide all of the information requested. If a section does not apply to you, put ‘Not applicable’ or insert a diagonal line, as appropriate.
- Include a covering letter.

Supporting statements

The supporting information section is the most important part of your application. Go through the job description and person specification thoroughly and make sure you provide evidence to show how you meet all the requirements. Some NHS jobs will provide a Knowledge and Skills Framework (KSF) outline to map your experience against.

If you’re completing a paper application form, ideally type this section and attach it as a separate sheet of paper. Start gathering evidence to present in your supporting statement. Use it to remind yourself of occasions when you used your initiative and dealt with difficult situations as this will also be invaluable when preparing for job interviews.
I am applying for the position of staff nurse on Ward 21 as I am very keen to work with patients affected by stroke. I developed my interest in this area whilst working on a medical ward where many patients had suffered from a previous or recent stroke with varying degrees of severity. I found the experience of nursing patients following stroke very satisfying as I enjoyed helping to improve their quality of life by assisting with their communication, swallowing and mobilising skills.

I believe that I meet the requirements outlined on the person specification as follows.

Education and Qualifications
I am an NMC registered adult nurse educated to degree level, with an overall grade of 2:1. I have completed the mentorship preparation module and have so far supported over 10 student nurses through their placement competencies. I have received positive comments from students about my patient teaching which has helped them to grow in confidence. One student wrote: ‘thank you for all your support. I feel I have learnt so much from you and have learnt how to improve my management skills’

Experience
I have four years’ experience of working in an acute healthcare environment, including two years on a 24 bedded medical ward and two years on a 25 bedded cardiology ward, with a small CCU attached.

During this time I have frequently been in charge of the ward, which has involved prioritising the care of patients, delegating to other nurses, health care assistants and student nurses. I have had to deal with a variety of situations such as being the most senior nurse on duty during a cardiac arrest, dealing with an episode of violence from a relative under the influence of alcohol and organising extra staff to cover unplanned sickness. These issues were resolved successfully and I have contributed to written reports about learning from critical incidents.

I have an excellent relationship with the wider health care team including medical teams, physiotherapists, dieticians and occupational therapists. For example, I recently fed back my concerns about a deteriorating patient whose blood pressure was low and whose urine output had dropped, which resulted in a speedy and timely emergency admission to critical care. This involved liaising with a junior doctor who needed reassurance about processes for escalating concerns.

I also have experience of organising safe discharges, co-ordinating patient transport, writing discharge letters and communicating with community nursing colleagues and social workers.

My experience has enabled me to maintain clinical skills in many areas including, medicines management, (including IV drugs), wound management, male and female catheterisation, interpretation of cardiac monitors and monitoring of blood sugar levels.
Knowledge, Skills and Understanding

I believe I have excellent communication skills and have always been able to deal with challenging situations. An example of this in my current role was when I had to deal sensitively with a relative who was extremely upset about the sudden death of their mother. I took the relative to a quiet office, sat with them, showed empathy and compassion and arranged for them to see the patient. The relative sent me a ‘Thank You’ card and said that my sensitivity had made this difficult experience more bearable than it might have been.

I also enjoy promoting patients’ health and teaching about the importance of healthy eating, exercise and smoking cessation. I have put up a healthy eating notice boards on the ward with leaflets and posters in different languages. I always take every opportunity to promote any lifestyle changes that will help patients manage their condition more effectively.

I am the link nurse for infection control on my ward and have presented latest research on aseptic technique at a team meeting. I was also responsible for liaising with the Infection Control nurse specialist to ensure data for an audit on the use of hand gel in CCU was collected effectively.

I am committed to continuing professional development and have attended courses relevant to my role. For example, I have recently completed a management of long-term conditions programme which will assist me in this role. I ensure any mandatory training is up to date and use online resources such as the RCN and health care websites to actively keep informed of nursing initiatives. I have also recently attended a workshop on the NMC’s revised code and revalidation project and believe that the changes are positive for improving patient care, learning from feedback and ensuring safe practice.

Personal qualities

I believe that I am a cheerful, flexible and enthusiastic nurse who is approachable at all times. I try to be respectful towards all individuals from a variety of backgrounds. I have experience of working in an inner-city hospital where I have adapted my communication skills to support patients from a wide range of cultural and social backgrounds. I ensure that I adhere to all policies, including health and safety, infection control and confidentiality.

I hope you will agree that I meet the requirements of the post and look forward to hearing from you.
Health assessment forms

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 health, as well as others, will not be compromised by the role you have applied for.

Please note: Under the Equality Act 2010, it is unlawful for an employer to discriminate against a worker on the basis of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation. The act covers the whole spectrum of employment including recruitment.

The Equality Act 2010 places restrictions on the way in which prospective employers can use information about someone’s health or disability when considering them for a post. In general, prospective employers are prohibited from asking questions about someone’s health or disability prior to offering them a job. This includes questions about previous sickness absence. There are a small number of exceptions to this rule. The Government Equalities Office has detailed guidance on this area. Go to www.homeoffice.gov.uk and search for ‘disability in recruitment’.

Guidance from the Equality and Human Rights Commission indicates that questions about sickness absence can be asked after a candidate has been offered the job (either conditionally or unconditionally) or has been placed in a pool of successful candidates. However, even then the purpose of these questions should only be to clarify that a person’s health or disability will not prevent them doing the job and enable the employer to consider whether there are any ‘reasonable adjustments’ that can be made.

If you have a disability that may affect your performance at interview or in any recruitment activities, make sure you let the employer know beforehand.

If you believe that you have been discriminated against whilst applying for a post, please contact RCN Direct. Or see www.rcn.org.uk/advice and search ‘discrimination’ for more information.

Declaring previous convictions
If you have any previous convictions, you should declare them if asked, even if they occurred more than ten years ago. Seek advice from RCN Direct if you are unsure. The interview panel will take account of the severity of the offence and whether it will impact on your role. All applicants for nursing roles need to undergo Disclosure and Barring Service checks (formerly CRB checks) or Disclosure Scotland checks in Scotland. If you have any doubts about your record seek advice from RCN Direct.
Interviews

Attending interviews can be a daunting process, but with careful preparation you can increase your chances of success.

- Go through the person specification and job description carefully.
- Underline all the skills, experience and personal attributes required for the role. Look back on your training and experience and list examples that show how you meet the requirements for the post.
- Practice the possible interview questions below.
- Use the STAR technique – Situation, Target, Action, Result – to help you reflect on examples that demonstrate you have the competences outlined in the person specification.
- Update your portfolio and take it to your interview.
- Arrange a mock interview with a friend, senior colleague or careers adviser. Ask for constructive feedback and practise again if necessary.
- Prepare some questions for the interview panel (see below) to demonstrate your interest in the role.
- Try to arrange an informal visit, where you can talk to staff, get some answers to your questions and assess whether the post and environment will meet your needs.
- Make sure you are up to date with national initiatives in health care.
- Plan your route to the interview and allow time for delays.
- Plan what you are going to wear for the interview. You need to look smart, professional and comfortable.

NHS - Value Based Recruitment (VBR)
NHS Employers in England are working on Value Based Recruitment (VBR) following the Francis inquiry. Values are beliefs about what is important. When preparing for your interview, it would be helpful to familiarise yourself with how your values and behaviours fit with the NHS organisational values. Employers are seeking recruits who can demonstrate values such as wanting to treat people with respect, kindness, compassion and dignity, as well as being passionate about quality. These values may be assessed in role play, written responses to scenarios or verbally. Further information can be found at: www.nhscareers.nhs.uk/features/2014/june/

Research
If you need to research information on relevant topics, the RCN Library can help. It is home to Europe’s largest nursing specific collection of books, journals and e-resources. They can also do literature searches for you. See www.rcn.org.uk/library
Dealing with interview nerves

Whether you’re going for your first or 31st interview, nerves affects us all. Your interviewers will understand this, but there are ways to lessen the symptoms and help ensure that you are able to give your best.

Preparation

The night before
Check you have all your paperwork and that you know your route to the interview venue.

Lay out your clothes and try to take some time before bed to unwind and ensure you get an early night.

The morning of the interview
- Try to eat some breakfast.
- Have one last look at your interview paperwork, but don’t try to cram.
- Leave plenty of time to get to the interview.
- When you arrive, don’t be embarrassed to ask for a glass of water or the opportunity to freshen up.
- Take deep breaths, filling your lungs, to help control adrenaline.
- Employ logic to beat nervous thoughts. Any interview question should be treated exactly as you would treat a job situation, because that’s exactly what the question represents.

During the interview
- Remember to smile. Smiling releases endorphins, which make us feel better.
- Maintain open body language and eye contact and try to avoid nervous fidgeting.
- If you don’t catch a question, ask for it to be repeated.
- Take time to consider your answers and don’t be afraid of natural pauses in the flow of conversation.
- Speak slowly as nerves generally make us talk faster.
- Focus outward and not inward. The more you focus on what’s going on in your body the bigger your worries become. Try looking at something ahead and notice the detail or concentrate on listening to the interviewers.
Interview questions

Below are some questions that you could be asked.

- Why do you want the job/what attracted you to the post?
- Tell us about a recent situation where you were required to use your own initiative.
- How do you cope with pressure/stress?
- What makes a good team player/ what role do you play in a team environment?
- Please give an example of a situation where you have collaborated with the multidisciplinary team.
- How would you ensure you provide high quality care?
- Please describe your involvement in teaching/ how would you help to create a learning environment?
- How do you keep up to date?
- What do you think are the main risks in this area of nursing? How could you minimise those risks?
- How do you resolve frustrations at work?
- Tell us about a national government initiative in nursing and how it could apply to this role.
- What do you think is the biggest challenge facing nurses in the NHS today? How can we deal with this?

You don’t need to be an expert on every aspect of health care development and policy. Read summary documents on major initiatives and get help from the RCN. See www.rcn.org.uk/library and www.rcn.org.uk/publications for a range of clinical publications.

Scenario questions

- What would you do if you found a patient in cardiac arrest?
- During the medication round you see that several of the drugs on the previous drug round have not been signed for. What would you do?
- What would you do if you visited a vulnerable client at home, who was unable to get out on their own and you were unable to get a response when you knocked on the door?
- How would you deal with a relative who was aggressive and verbally abusive?
- What would you do if you visited a family at home and were concerned about the safety of a child?
• What would you do if a patient told you he wanted to make a complaint about their nursing care

• What would you do if you were the only nurse on duty when:
  > a patient falls out of bed
  > a member of the domestic staff cuts themselves on broken glass
  > you notice that drugs are missing
  > a patient complains that their belongings have been stolen?

• What would you do if a colleague told you they had made a drug error?

**Difficult questions**

**What are your weaknesses/development needs?**

Turn a negative into a positive. For example: “In the past, I have had a tendency to try to take on too much, but I have dealt with this by learning how to delegate responsibilities, prioritise by writing lists, planning my day in advance, and attending a time-management course.” Remember as you will be new to the job, you can discuss possible weaknesses in terms of support that will help you adapt, including a good induction programme, or a short course on skill development, such as IV administration.

**What do you understand by the term ‘equality and diversity at work’?**

Try to avoid saying “treating everybody in the same way” as this can appear oversimplistic. This question is usually about equality of access to services and treating colleagues with support and respect. It is also about being self-aware; how your own background, upbringing and culture may affect your interactions with those who are different from you in any way.

Try to get hold of the organisation’s equality and diversity policy or statement so that you can refer to it. Have a basic understanding of equality legislation around gender, sexuality, age, race and disability discrimination.
Please give an example of a work situation that didn’t work out very well

To avoid dwelling on weaknesses, focus on the past, rather than the present and finish with what you learnt from the experience. For example:

‘As a junior staff nurse, I didn’t fully appreciate the importance of advocating for the patient. A junior doctor was trying to take blood from a patient and found it very difficult to find a vein. The patient was anxious and moving their arm around. The patient was clearly in a lot of pain and eventually the doctor had to give up and a more senior doctor took blood. I am now very experienced at venepuncture and can see that if the doctor had used a pillow to support the patient’s arm he would have had more success. I would now have no hesitation in taking the doctor aside to discuss training on venepuncture and to suggest more effective ways of taking blood. I would have intervened earlier to support the patient and halt the procedure’.

The interview panel will want to know that you have common sense, and that patient safety and wellbeing are your priorities. For many scenarios there is a similar process that involves:

- assessment of the situation
- taking appropriate action/following procedures and guidelines
- appropriate communication
- record keeping
- evaluating and learning from the situation.
Questions to ask at interview

At the end of a job interview a good interviewer will offer you the opportunity to ask questions. Having survived the interview, your first temptation may be to say that you don’t have any questions and make a bolt for the door. Remember that an interview is a two way Process; you want to know whether this is the job for you. Questions that may help you to find out more about the organisation and also impress the employer include.

- **How would you describe the work culture?**
- **What do you offer in terms of continuing professional development?**
- **I notice that you have recently introduced... How will this impact on the ward/unit/organisation?**
- **What are the most significant issues that the ward/unit/organisation will face over the coming months?**
- **Do you have any doubts about employing me to this position?**

You may feel nervous about asking this question, so only do so if you feel comfortable, but it does give you the opportunity to address any issues raised. It also shows your willingness to learn from constructive criticism.

Forms of assessment used by the interview panel

Employers may use other forms of assessment beyond the traditional interview format. These may include written tests, role plays, structured observations and group discussions. Please see the section on assessment centres below.

After the interview

Don’t over analyse – you have done your best. Dwelling on past performances can be detrimental to future interviews. Take some time out before returning to your normal routine.

Ultimately, even if you are unsuccessful this time, every interview is a learning process that helps you to improve in the future. Requesting feedback from the panel will help with this process.
Assessment centres

An assessment centre consists of one or more activities to enable the selection panel to decide who best meets the requirements of the job.

These centres look for:

Communication
Able to demonstrate knowledge clearly and concisely, does not interrupt others, listens attentively, demonstrates positive body language and good eye contact, contributes ideas, facilitates the contribution of others.

Adaptability
Demonstrates leadership potential, enthusiasm and determination along with the ability to deal with new situations and resolve problems with confidence.

Clinical understanding
Able to prioritise and identify appropriate clinical actions and demonstrate knowledge of theory, able to be factually accurate.

What to expect

An assessment centre can last for up to four hours, with breaks between activities. You may meet the other candidates and undertake joint activities with them, although some centres will focus more on individual exercises. An assessment centre may be used as an initial screening exercise, prior to progression to interview. Or you may need to pass a certain element, such as a numeracy test, before you can progress further.

Tests of numeracy and literacy skills
Numeracy tests often include drug calculations. Literacy tests may include a written comprehension of a text, where candidates are tested on their ability to understand and summarise information and write clearly.

Written scenarios/case study exercises
These often test clinical competences and nursing knowledge. For example, you may be given a clinical scenario and a series of questions to answer, or a care planning exercise.
Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)
This is an assessment of clinical competence, where components of the competence are tested individually. Often simulation techniques are used with mannequins. For example, you may be asked to demonstrate how you would safely assess and manage a patient presenting with a specific problem.

Presentations
You may be asked to present on a topic, either sent in advance of the assessment date or given on the day, with time allowed to prepare the presentation beforehand.

Group discussion about a topic
You may be given a topic to discuss, or a problem to solve. Often employers are testing communication skills, checking that you interact well with others, listen to them and contribute, to the task. Success depends on contributing enough, without dominating and interrupting the discussion. It is helpful to stay positive throughout and to reflect on what has been discussed periodically.

Role-play exercises
You may be asked to work with other candidates to show how you would respond to a professional scenario. Sometimes actors, or one of the assessors, will play the role of a patient or client. You should behave as you normally would in your nursing role.

Psychometric tests
Psychometric tests are structured assessment methods. They may include aptitude or ability tests, personality questionnaires, or a combination of both. Employers may be keen to look for certain values or attitudes which are necessary for providing compassionate, dignified care.

Scoring schemes
You will usually be rated on your performance in each of the component sections of the assessment. Employers will select the candidate(s) with the highest overall score(s). Some tests may have a right or wrong answer. In other tests, employers will mark against a scale according to specific criteria (see opposite).

Sample scoring scheme

Development needed
Fairly competent
Competent
Very competent
Assessment centre tips

- You will be assessed against the criteria outlined in the job description and person specification, so it is important that you know these documents well.
- Read the guidance notes carefully. Make sure you take stationery if asked.
- Visit the employer’s website so you know as much about the organisation as possible.
- Reflect on your own style and its impact on potential group activities. If you are naturally very talkative, remind yourself that you may need to focus more on listening. If you are very quiet, remember that you will need to speak up to make an impact on the assessors.
- Reflect on your “best self”. Think of a time when you have worked really well in a team or when your contribution was valued by colleagues or patients. Think about the skills you used in that situation and the behaviours you displayed.
- If you have a disability that may affect your performance in any activities, make sure you let the employer know beforehand.
- Plan your outfit and make sure you look clean, smart and professional.
- Make sure you plan your journey and how long it will take, allowing for delays.
- Get plenty of rest the day before as it will be quite tiring.
- Be positive and enthusiastic, but don’t act. Try not to see the other candidates as competitors.
- Assume that you are being assessed at all times.
- Have good eye contact with the people you meet and smile when appropriate.
- Make sure you read all of the information relevant to each task and listen carefully to any instructions. If there is anything you are not clear about, ask one of the facilitators.
- Take opportunities to have a break and take refreshments, where offered, as these will help keep up your stamina throughout the day.
Results

**If successful:**

Congratulations, all your hard work has paid off. Employers will usually make you a conditional offer at first. They will then follow up with a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (formerly known as a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB)). In Scotland the checking and barring service is operated by Disclosure Scotland.

If you haven’t done so already, you will also be asked to complete a health questionnaire, which will be assessed by an occupational health professional. You may need to meet with an occupational health nurse or doctor if you have any specific health or wellbeing needs. They will also assess whether any reasonable adjustments should be made on the basis of a disability. Please see the section on health assessments on page 9.

The employer will also follow up references and check your NMC registration details, if applicable. If you have any concerns about any of the above, call RCN Direct.

Always wait for confirmation of your start date in writing before resigning from your current post. Make sure you are sent a contract and terms and conditions of employment and clarify any concerns before accepting the job in writing.

**If unsuccessful:**

It’s natural to feel disappointed and hurt after an unsuccessful interview, but try not to let these feelings act as a barrier to moving on. Don’t give up, there will be other opportunities.

- Reflect on your performance; write down what you felt worked and what didn’t.
- List the questions with which you had most difficulty. How would you respond next time?
- Contact a member of the interview panel and ask for constructive feedback on your performance
- If you believe that discrimination - on the grounds of sex, race or disability - has occurred contact RCN Direct.
- Make use of all the resources available to you as a member of the RCN including the RCN Careers Service, which can help you to improve on any weak spots.
Continuing Professional Development: searching for courses or education programmes.

The RCN Learning Zone is a web based resource that supports you throughout your professional development. There are also some online learning activities available at [www.rcn.org.uk](http://www.rcn.org.uk) just search ‘continuing professional development’.

The RCN has a list of accredited courses, events and conferences available at [www.rcn.org.uk/newsevents/otherevents2](http://www.rcn.org.uk/newsevents/otherevents2). The RCN are not always direct providers of these activities, but have been accredited by the college for following sound educational principles.

**Second registration nursing course**

If you’re a nurse on part one of the NMC Register and wish to register in a second field of nursing (adult, child, learning disability or mental health), speak with your local university to find out if they offer admission to their nurse registration programmes through the accreditation of prior learning (APL) route.

Also keep an eye on the UCAS website for shortened nursing programmes.

Your employer may also liaise with your local university or higher education provider if it is in their interests for you to gain a second registration.

**Second registration midwifery courses**

Second registration midwifery programmes are also provided through some universities with a nursing and midwifery department. For more information see the UCAS website.
Return to practice courses

The NMC can provide individuals with a list of NMC-approved return to practice programmes; please search for ‘approved programmes’ from the website. See http://hee.nhs.uk and search ‘return to practice’. Your local education and training board (listed at the HEE web site), may also have information about RTP opportunities in your area.

A number of funded RTP courses are also provided by universities across Wales. For more information please see www.rcn.org.uk/advice and search ‘return to practice’.

NMC approved courses

The NMC holds a list of approved training programmes, available at www.nmc.org.uk

Other useful course search sites:

E-magister provide health related courses, for example, medication administration and record keeping, available at www.emagister.co.uk

The Education for health website offers short courses on asthma and diabetes and courses relevant to practice nurses: www.educationforhealth.org.uk

Sexual Health Charity FPA: www.fpa.org.uk/professionals/training-course
British Association for Sexual Health and HIV: www.bashh.org

Specialist health protection learning and professional development activities are provided by Public Health England (PHE): https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/health-protection-training

Public health courses:
Phorcast – www.phorcast.org.uk

Centres for heart care:
www.rbht.nhs.uk/healthprofessionals/education

The British Heart Foundation:
www.bhf.org.uk/healthcare-professionals
Useful resources

Contact RCN Direct

RCN Direct is the gateway to the RCN and provides comprehensive information and advice on a whole range of issues including:

- Careers
- employment
- nursing
- membership
- journal subscriptions.

www.rcn.org.uk/direct

Advice: 8.30am-8.30pm, seven days a week, 365 days a year
Membership: 8.30am-8.30pm, Monday-Friday (excluding bank holidays)
Tel: 0345 772 6100
Overseas: 00 44 20 7647 3456

RCN online

www.rcn.org.uk/advice
www.rcn.org.uk/guides
www.twitter.com/thercn

The RCN Learning Zone can help you improve your numeracy skills. See www.rcn.org.uk/learningzone

The RCN Library has several drug calculation and numeracy skills books which RCN members can borrow. See: www.rcn.org.uk/development/library

The Graduate Careers web site, Prospects, provides guidance on preparing for assessment centres at: www.prospects.ac.uk/assessment_centres.htm

Careers support An RCN guide for health care assistants and assistant practitioners. See: www.rcn.org.uk/publications

Country specific careers services

England nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk
Wales www.careerswales.com
Scotland www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk
Northern Ireland www.nidirect.gov.uk/index/