# Identifying the education and support needs of newly qualified nurses

## Faculty of Wellbeing Education and Language Studies (WELS)

Call for PhD projects starting in October 2024

The Open University

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The Open University

# Project description

## School

Health, Wellbeing and Social Care

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## Aims

The project aims are:

- To review the international evidence on attrition of nurses during their first year in the healthcare workforce. (This will include an analysis of groups who may be particularly vulnerable to attrition).
- To explore newly qualified nurses' experiences of transition from student to registered nurse and their views of preceptorship programmes.
- To compare the structure, content, and duration of preceptorship programmes for newly registered nurses.

# Methodology

A flexible approach to the chosen methodology and methods will be adopted to reflect the research question and the research approaches that the doctoral student wishes to develop. Expected are a systematic literature review and a mixed-methods approach (e.g., qualitive interviews and survey study).

# Contribution

Current National Health Service (NHS) workforce vacancies are in the region of 124,000 Full Time Equivalents. One third of the vacancies are nursing posts and understaffing has a serious and detrimental impact on health service provision. So, finding way to support the nursing workforce represent an international priority. The NHS Long Term Workforce plan aims to reduce the nursing vacancy rate to 5% by 2028. In recent years around 40,000 NHS nurses and health visitors leave the workforce annually making this target a challenge. The first year of a newly qualified nurse's career is known to be challenging with attrition due to 'reality shock' estimated as ≥10%. A lack of confidence is a common theme reported by newly qualified nurses, but the factors underlying this are not well understood. Moreover, little is known about the structure and content of Preceptor Programs across healthcare organisations and whether they meet learners' needs.

Finding from this program of research will contribute to the international evidence base with a robust international overview of factors that cause attrition amongst nurses during their first year of qualifying. By understanding UK nurses' experiences and the characteristics of preceptorship programs we

aim to make recommendations that will impact upon policy and practice particularly around preceptorship program curriculum content. Our aim is to enhance the support for nurses during their first year of qualification to reduce attrition.

# PhD project

The doctoral researcher will develop the focus of the study and lead the research with support from the supervisory team. They will complete a learning needs assessment to guide their knowledge and skills development. They will develop skills in conducting a systematic review, synthesising research evidence and study protocol development. The doctoral researcher will be supported to lead on all elements of the study and will be guided by the supervisory team through ethics application, literature searches, data collection and analysis. The doctoral researcher will we expected to contribute to the research culture of the School by attending key meetings including the Nursing and Scholarship Research Group. They will be supported to disseminate their findings internally and externally with opportunities to develop international collaborations.