

Blended Learning FAQs

Contents

- Our work [1]
- Online learning [2]
- Health careers [3]
- News, blogs and events [4]
- About [5]
- Covid-19 [6]

Below are some key questions answered about the blended learning approach to healthcare degree study.

They also include some questions specific to the **adult nursing degree programme** currently running across England and the planned **midwifery** programme, planned to start in early 2021.



Why has this new approach been adopted?

Health Education England has developed the programme which opens healthcare professions (including nursing, midwifery and medical degrees) to a much wider group of people.

The blended learning programme is aimed at people who have the skills and aptitude to be excellent healthcare professionals, but whose current situation doesn't allow them to study in the traditional way. This may be due to caring commitments, an inability to study on campus at university or other barriers to study that a blended approach will support.

This is a significantly different offer in healthcare education that will support the growth of a digitally ready, expert and professional NHS workforce suited to the demands of care and service now and in the future.

It is also hoped that by promoting alternative routes into healthcare will grow a more diverse student population and NHS workforce.

It will give students easy access to new and emerging technologies and will help them and their employing trusts meet the requirement for strong digital capabilities. It will also give the NHS access to a twenty-first century workforce that is agile and enthusiastic about change.

What is Blended Learning?

Blended learning means the use of a combination of learning approaches supported by technology. For example, some theory will be delivered online either in a group or for you to study on your own. Using technology, you may be immersed in a learning environment, using virtual reality-type sessions similar to gaming or in online training labs where you work your way through a series of tasks and skills tests. Some sessions could be 'face to face' in person. It all depends on the best option for the topic you're learning at the time, and your course provider will be able to give you full outline of the programme.

What technologies will be used to create the learning environment?

There will be a range of technologies employed to successfully manage the various aspects of the course. These include Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Simulation, Avatars, Virtual Learning Environments (VLE), gaming and flipped classrooms.

The technologies being used have been reviewed by learning technologists to ensure that they are effective in providing effective results, particularly within education.

What qualification will I gain?

When you successfully complete the course, the minimum academic award will be a bachelor's degree depending on the programme of study.

The courses cover all the content for you to meet the requirements to register as a nurse or midwife with the Nursing and Midwifery Council or as doctor with the General Medical Council (GMC).

Once qualified, you will be equipped with the knowledge and expertise to study further and gain specialist skills in other areas of healthcare if you want to.

How long does it take to complete the programme?

We have created this programme specifically to allow flexibility to people who have commitments such as a young family or caring responsibilities and we are keen to make it as easy as possible for people to complete the programme.

Depending on the programme of study, training can take between two to seven years. For example, most students on a bachelor's nursing degree, training takes three years to complete however if students need more flexibility, they can take up to a maximum of five years.

Does the programme cost the same as a traditional degree?

Yes, course fees are the same as you will get the same, high-quality level of training and support as you would if you were attending university to study in the traditional way. However, there's financial support for students on health-related courses [7].

Can I study flexibly?

We use the term blended learning as it is a combination of learning approaches supported by technology. Training programmes allow you to fit your theoretical learning around your studies, work and life, supporting you to learn when and where is best for you.

There will be some flexibility with the practice placements to fit with your needs as much as possible.

What are the entry requirements for different programmes?

It is advised that you check with your course provider (the university providing the blended learning degree) to determine the entry requirements before you apply for your chosen topic.

How will I get the practice I need within a clinical setting?

Course providers have formal arrangements with local clinical-practice providers across the health and care spectrum, including hospitals and in the community. In addition to using immersive technologies and skill-labs they will ensure you get hands-on practice experience and 'on the job' supervision as you would on any similar degree course.

You will spend up to 50 percent of your time on practice learning in a variety of care settings developing valuable hands-on skills and knowledge.

Who are the course providers delivering the programme?

Health Education England has commissioned a range of universities, who were chosen because of their high quality educational offer for students.

Each degree course will be delivered by a selection of providers and you can find out more on the specific pages depending on your area of interest.

How have the universities responded to this new way of delivering the degree?

All Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) such as our course providers - are becoming equipped to offer a vast range of learning and education in this way. Some organisations are leading the way and have delivered courses in this format for a long time.

Many have robust systems to respond to technological development in education and healthcare at pace, ready and able to maintain or exceed student experience of learning. At the same time, all course providers need to consider the impact of this remote form of study on students' wellbeing. Providers are required to offer effective support, access to teaching staff and opportunities to socialise with other students.

This style of training may be new to some educators who will need support to upskill and develop their current faculty staff as well as attract new people and innovative ways of teaching to rise to the challenge.

Which aspects of the programme will be taught online?

A significant proportion of the theoretical teaching and learning will be delivered online. Your chosen course provider can give you full details of the curriculum on offer which will outline exactly how each module of the programme will be taught.

Do I need a computer to join the programme?

You will need to have a device that allows you to connect to the internet with applications available such as email, word processing, secure file storage and ideally a stable broadband connection.

The course provider will be able to give you a list of requirements. Most of the applications are free and/or supplied by the university and course providers will be able to help to get the technology (e.g. laptop) you need, if you haven't already got one.

I am not very good with technology; will this programme help me become more confident using it to study?

Yes, if you need help to improve your digital skills you will get help from your course provider.

An element of enrolment will help identify any digital skills gaps and, if needed, you will be given support and training by the course provider.

I live in an area with poor internet connection; can I still access this programme?

Yes. We understand that some areas of the country have poor internet connection and course providers have developed alternative ways in which you can get all the learning materials you need. This might include downloaded materials available offline or access to internet cafes or libraries.

English is not my first language; can I still apply?

Yes, but you will need to meet the pre-requisite English Language requirement for the programme, you can find this on the any of the course providers' website.

I will be a mature student, is this programme suitable for me?

Yes, mature students are actively welcomed to join the healthcare workforce; we particularly value the wealth of transferrable skills that you could bring to the programme and chosen profession.

I have a disability or health condition, is this programme suitable for me?

Yes. People with some disabilities can have long and successful healthcare careers. Nurses, midwives and doctors do need to be able to carry out safe and effective care without supervision and good health is necessary to practice.

Your course provider will have specialist teams to discuss your specific needs to help you get the most from the programme and your learning experience.

Is support provided to help me with my learning?

Yes. All course providers offer comprehensive support including direct access to tutors, as well as

additional materials, tools and techniques. These can include developing study skills, managing online learning, taking care of your wellbeing whilst studying and much more ? all to enhance your learning experience whilst on the programme.

Will I be able to interact with lecturers and other students?

Yes. Each course provider has a different approach, but overall there will be many opportunities to interact with your lecturers and other staff and students on the programme using a variety of social media tools, managed learning environments, tutor-led group chats and online discussion forums as well as face-to-face meetings and group teaching.

Your practice placements will allow you to meet and interact with other health professionals, patients, their families and carers. Specifically in the case of the midwifery programme, this will include women, newborn infants, partners, and families.

Socialisation and interactivity are critical elements to effective learning and students on blended learning programmes will get the chance to experience some of the social aspects associated with university including online freshers? weeks, outreach activities and virtual social groups.

How does this style of learning differ from traditional nursing, midwifery and medical degree programmes?

Traditionally, significant amounts of the theoretical learning for these professions have been delivered as face-to-face training. This programme uses online learning and face to face practice learning that is complemented by the use of appropriate digital learning technologies, including immersive technologies.

You will be taught at the same level and be able to learn and achieve all you need to know, just in a different way.

Why was this style of learning developed?

To effectively respond to national policy and the impact of new and emerging technologies in healthcare and a requirement for a workforce with strong digital capabilities skilled and ready to deliver high quality, safe 21st century care, we need to look at different approaches to educating NHS staff.

Will this approach change the professions?

This is simply a different way of education and learning and on completion nurses, midwives and doctors emerging from these programmes will be fully equipped and as highly skilled as their colleagues who have studied in the traditional way.

In addition to this, they will be particularly confident in the use of digital technologies and in adopting new ways of working, while giving the people they are caring for the same, high quality, and potentially a new experience of care.

Is it likely that all healthcare degrees will be delivered in this style in future?

It is too early to say and is unlikely one single method of teaching will be adopted. Health Education England is continually exploring different approaches to learning for the health and care workforce. Working with regulators and broad range of educators we are committed to ensuring we find new ways of study to suit different learning needs, ensuring equity of access and effective use of evidence to inform best delivery of contemporary healthcare education.

Blended Learning Nursing Degree: Frequently asked questions

Specifically in relation to the nursing degree we have added some other, more direct questions and responses.

What qualification will I gain?

When you successfully complete the programme, the minimum academic award will be a bachelor's degree. The programme covers all the content for you to meet the requirements to register as a nurse with the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

Students can then go on to study for a masters or a specialist area of nursing if they want to. However, if you already have a degree in certain subjects, you can gain a masters from the programme.

Will I be a fully qualified nurse by successfully completing this programme?

Yes. The programme covers all the content for you to meet the requirements to register as a nurse with the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

Will completing this programme qualify me to work as a nurse in every field of nursing?

This programme is specifically designed for registration in the adult nursing field of practice. A registered nurse in this field of practice has an extremely diverse range of care opportunities across health and social care.

Once qualified, you will be equipped with the knowledge and expertise to study further and gain specialist skills in other areas of nursing.

I qualified as a nurse in another country; can this programme help me convert my qualification?

No, you will need to check on the Nursing and Midwifery Council website [8] for information on the requirement to register as a nurse if you were trained outside the EU / EEA

Will this approach change the nursing profession?

This is simply a new way of learning and on completion the nurses emerging from these programmes will be fully equipped and as highly skilled as their colleagues who have studied in the traditional way.

In addition to this, these nurses will be particularly confident in the use of digital technologies and in adopting new ways of working, while giving their patients the same, high quality, and potentially a new experience of care.

Who are the course providers delivering the programme?

Health Education England is currently working with seven universities to deliver the blended learning nursing degree programme. They are:

- Birmingham City University [9]
- Coventry University [10]
- University of Gloucestershire [11]
- University of Huddersfield [12]
- University of Sunderland [13]
- Open University and Middlesex University [14]
- Open University and the University of West of England [15]

The course providers are not in an area close to me, which is important due to my commitments.

All the universities delivering the blended learning nursing degree have formal arrangements with various clinical-practice providers across the country. Therefore there is some flexibility with placements to fit with your needs.

You may choose a university to study with that is not near to you but which can offer practical experience placements that suit you better. You can see where placements are available by university on page two of our interactive map [16] or look at our decide where to study page [17].

Blended Learning Midwifery Degree: Frequently asked questions

Specifically in relation to the midwifery degree we have added some other, more direct questions and responses.

What qualification will I gain?

You have the option of studying for a Bachelor's degree or MSc, depending on your previous qualifications and the institution they choose.

Those who study the Bachelor's degree course will have the option to study for a Master's or specialist area of Midwifery if they want to. If you already have a degree in certain subjects, you may be able to go straight on to a Master's degree..

Will I be able to practice as a midwife in the UK by successfully completing this programme?

Yes. The course covers all the content for you to meet the requirements to register as a midwife with the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

I qualified as a midwife in another country; can this programme help me to be a midwife in the UK?

No, you will need to check on the Nursing and Midwifery Council website [8] for information on the requirement to register as a midwife if you were trained outside the EU / EEA

Will this approach change the midwifery profession?

This is simply a new way of learning and on completion the midwives emerging from these courses will be fully equipped and as highly skilled as their colleagues who have studied in the traditional way.

In addition to this, these midwives will be particularly confident in the use of digital technologies and in adopting new ways of working, while providing care for women, newborn infants, partners and families the same, high quality, safe care.

Who are the course providers delivering the course?

Health Education England is currently working with four universities to deliver the blended learning nursing degree course. They are:

- Birmingham City University [9]
- University of Leeds ? School of Healthcare [18]
- The University of the West of England [19]
- University of Worcester [20]

The programme providers are not in an area close to me, which is important due to my commitments.

All the universities delivering the blended learning midwifery degree have formal arrangements with various clinical-practice providers across the country. Therefore, there may be some flexibility with placements to fit with your needs.

You may choose a university to study with that is not near to you but which can offer practical experience placements that suit you better.

The four universities delivering the midwifery programme will provide placements across the country as follows (more detailed information will be provided as the programme develops):

- Birmingham City University - will provide placements the **Midlands**
- Leeds University - School of Healthcare - will provide placements in the **North East and Yorkshire**
- The University of the West of England - will provide placements in the **South West**
- Worcester University - will provide placements in the **East, South East, North West and London**

Watch our video

[Return to the top of the page.](#)

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Links

- [1] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work>
- [2] <https://www.e-lfh.org.uk/>
- [3] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/>
- [4] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/news-blogs-events>
- [5] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/about>
- [6] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/covid-19>

- [7] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/study-and-training/considering-or-university/financial-support-university>
- [8] <https://www.nmc.org.uk/nm-trained-outside-eu>
- [9] <https://www.bcu.ac.uk/>
- [10] <https://www.coventry.ac.uk/>
- [11] <https://www.glos.ac.uk/>
- [12] <https://www.hud.ac.uk/>
- [13] <https://www.sunderland.ac.uk/>
- [14] <https://www.mdx.ac.uk/>
- [15] <https://www.uwe.ac.uk/>
- [16] <https://indd.adobe.com/view/52a26315-a795-45f8-90e8-e97b435ebbb6>
- [17] <https://www.hee.nhs.uk/our-work/blended-learning/decide-where-study-nursing>
- [18] <https://medicinehealth.leeds.ac.uk/healthcare>
- [19] <https://www.uwe.ac.uk/about/faculties-and-departments/health-and-applied-sciences/nursing-and-midwifery>
- [20] <https://www.worcester.ac.uk/courses/midwifery-msc-shortened-programme>