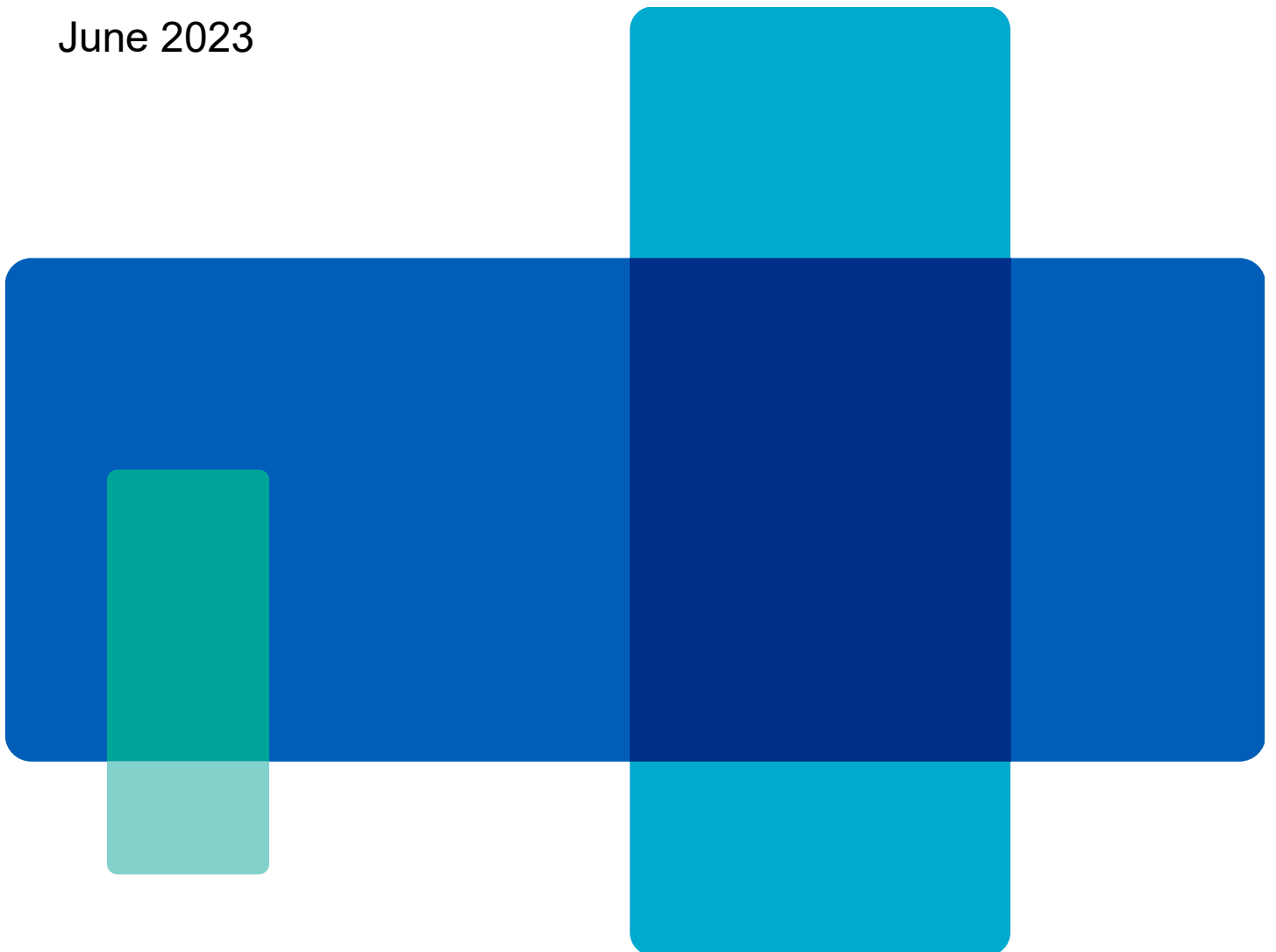


International Recruitment Best Practice Guide for managers

Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)
Preparation and Pastoral Support

June 2023



Contents

International Recruitment Best Practice Guide for managers	1
Background	3
Overseas nurses' and midwives' journey - UK registration application process	3
Language competency	4
Language tests	4
Test of Competence	5
OSCE information	6
Pastoral support: useful tips	8
First day on the job	8
Off duty	8
Sickness	8
Annual leave	9
Cultural differences	9
Practice support	10
Welfare support	10
Professional indemnity arrangement	10
Training and development	10
Preceptorship	10
Personal development and career planning (includes appraisals and revalidation)	11
Useful information and resources	12
English language requirements	12
Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)	12
Computer Based Test (CBT)	12
NMC-approved OCSE test centres	12
Appendix	14
Appendix 1: 'Connecting Cultures'	14
Appendix 2: Appendix 2 – flowchart outlining UK registration application process for overseas nurses and midwives	16

Background

The purpose of this guidance is to support a pan-London approach to international nurse/midwife recruitment that:

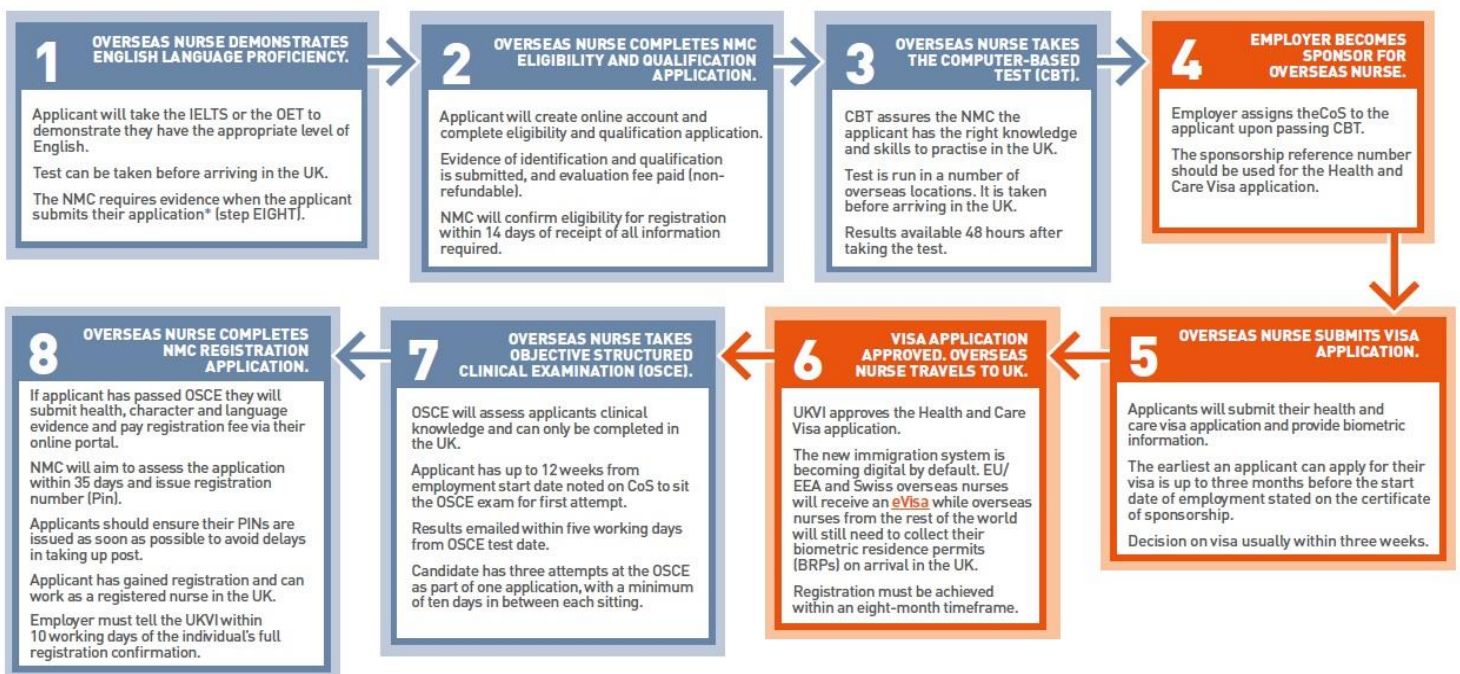
- meets with best practice principles
- ensures both the overseas nurse/midwife, and the employing organisation, have a positive experience of an efficient and effective recruitment and employment process.

This managers' guide will prepare managers and staff working with overseas nurses and midwives to provide objective structured clinical examination (OSCE) preparation and pastoral support in the clinical environment.

Overseas nurses' and midwives' journey – UK registration application process

We have summarised an overseas nurses' and midwives' journey to ensure excellent system-wide understanding of the likely process. The flowchart summary, from the NHS International Recruitment toolkit, outlines the registration and immigration process for an overseas nurse/midwife, who is out of country and will be sponsored under a [Health and Care Worker Visa](#) to work in the UK.

The flowchart applies to both nurses and midwives (see Appendix 2 for larger version).



Overseas candidates can apply for a Health and Care Worker Visa with up to 5 years validity, although 3 years is more common. Individual trusts determine the length of stay they choose to employ overseas nurses/midwives.

Language competency

The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) requires information about overseas nurses' and midwives' English language ability to make sure they can practise safely and effectively. All nurses and midwives seeking registration will need to show that they meet the standards the NMC has set and provide evidence for one of the following:

- recently achieved the required score in one of the English language tests accepted by the NMC – must achieve the required score in each of the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking
- a pre-registration nurse, midwife or nursing associate qualification which was taught and examined in English
- recent practice of at least one year in a majority English speaking country.

Language tests

IELTS (International English Language Testing System) is an NMC requirement if an overseas nurse/midwife did not train in an English-speaking country, or if the programme was not taught in English. It is also required by the Home Office for the visa application process. This test assesses general language skills in all subjects.

The overseas nurse/midwife must ensure they achieve the following grades:

- grade 7.0 or above in Speaking, Listening, Reading
- grade 6.5 or above in Writing
- overall grade of 7.0.

The OET (Occupational English Test) which assesses language skills more specific to healthcare workers has been accepted for NMC registration. Candidates listen to patient consultations, workplace conversations and medical talks; read a range of healthcare-related texts; write a referral letter; and participate in role play as a nurse/midwife. OET is scored from A (best) to E. The NMC accepts OET on Paper, OET on Computer and the [OET@Home](#).

An overseas nurse/midwife must ensure they achieve the following grades:

- at least a grade C+ in the Writing section, and
- at least a grade B in the Reading, Listening and Speaking sections.

Test of Competence

The NMC introduced a Test of Competence (ToC) for internationally registered nurses and midwives in October 2014. Nurses and midwives trained outside of the European Union (EU) / European Economic Area (EEA) are tested for their clinical competence and knowledge through a two-part process to gain registration in the United Kingdom (UK), including achieving language capability requirements.

The ToC assesses candidates against the current UK pre-registration standards and is practice-specific, including Adult Nursing (RN1), Mental Health Nursing (RN3), Learning Disability Nursing (RN5), Children's Nursing (RN8) and Midwifery Nursing (RM).

The ToC process comprises two parts:

Part one – Computer-Based Test (CBT)

The CBT is accessible around the world for applicants to access in their home countries. The CBT comprises 115 questions and is split into two parts:

- A. numeracy test – consists of 15 short-answer questions requiring a numerical answer
- B. clinical – 100 theory assessment multiple choice questions.

Candidates will receive a pass or fail result for each part of the test: Part A (Numeracy) and Part B (Clinical). If they fail, they only need to re-sit the part that they have failed. They have a maximum of three attempts as part of one application.

Candidates must complete the entire UK registration application process within two years of passing part one (computer-based test). If a candidate is unable to do this, they will need to re-sit the CBT and begin a new application.

Once in receipt of the CBT result, the NMC requires the overseas nurse/midwife to submit a range of documents.

The overseas nurse/midwife will receive a decision letter from the NMC once it has completed the necessary checks. The decision letter grants the overseas nurse/midwife the opportunity to apply, through UKVI (United Kingdom Visas and Immigration), for sponsorship and a Visa as a skilled migrant worker under Tier 2.

Part two – Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE)

Once an overseas nurse/midwife has successfully obtained sponsorship and a Visa as a skilled migrant worker, they have up to 12 weeks from their employment start date, noted on their certificate of sponsorship with the employing organisation, to sit the OSCE. They can be legally employed as a pre-registration candidate during this preparation time. The OSCE is held one of the UK-approved test centres.

OSCE information

The OSCE is based on UK pre-registration standards. Revisions to the OSCE, made by the NMC, have been implemented since August 2021.

Its new structure comprises ten separate stations instead of six. Four stations continue to be linked together around a scenario and relate to four stages of the nursing and midwifery care (APIE) process:

- **Assessment**-holistic patient-centred
- **Planning**
- **Implementation**
- **Evaluation.**

Four of the six remaining stations will take the form of two pairs of two linked stations, which test practical clinical skills. The remaining two stations, both written, are for assessing the nurse's or midwife's professional values and critical appraisal of research and evidence and associated decision-making.

Approved OSCE test centres

There are five approved OSCE test centres across the UK, providing a choice of locations to sit the OSCE:

- Ulster (Derry-Londonderry)
- Northampton
- Brookes (Oxford and Swindon)
- Northumbria
- Leeds.

Each of the universities offer the OSCE in the different fields of nursing and midwifery. Please see the '[Useful Information and Resources](#)' section for the university links and for more information on the examination and the required preparation.

OSCE training programme

The first OSCE must be taken within 12 weeks from the employment start date. The overseas nurse/midwife has up to three attempts on one NMC/Visa application. The OSCE will be booked by the relevant hospital International Recruitment Lead and the date is fixed unless the date is changed within three weeks of that time. If the overseas nurse/midwife is sick, they should provide a medical certificate, and the test can be re-booked. The date of OSCE depends on availability at the relevant test-centre.

An overseas nurse/midwife will be learning the knowledge and skills to meet the NMC standards for delivering healthcare. Some of the policies used within the organisation may be referenced at this stage.

Outline of the programme

There are many different models that organisations are using to deliver their programme. Check within your organisation on which approach is used. Some organisations outsource their OSCE training to assist with Integrated Care System (ICS) requirements.

What happens on the day of the OSCE?

Each organisation uses a different approach regarding travel arrangements and support on the day. Transport may be organised by the organisation or left for the individual to book themselves.

Overseas nurses/midwives may wish to travel together to and from the test centre. Some organisations arrange for a chaperone to accompany overseas nurses and midwives as some participants may require additional support managing any last-minute nerves or emotions pre or post OSCE. The examination is approximately four hours in duration.

Waiting for the results and next steps

Results are emailed to candidates normally within 5 working days. Candidates will need to inform the relevant international Recruitment Lead for their organisation and their ward/department manager of the result. Depending on the result, there are different pathways for the manager to follow:

- **Pass** - The overseas nurse/midwife will notify their manager of their pass. It is their responsibility to pay their NMC registration fee. It can take 5 days for the OSCE test centre to notify the NMC of the exam results. Once notified, the NMC will aim to assess the registration application within 30 days. When an overseas nurse/midwife is in receipt of the confirmation of their registration and their PIN (personal registration number), they will need to inform the International Recruitment Lead and the ward/department manager. Arrangements will need to be made to change them from their current banding to the new position for a registered nurse/midwife.
- **Fail** - They will be given reasons why they were unsuccessful, usually something minor. What happens next depends on the number of stations that were failed (see below).

Many candidates wish to rebook the OSCE as soon as possible. The candidate must wait at least ten days between the original test date and the re-sit. The date of the re-sit, along with arrangements for the individual and their on-going support and preparation, will need confirming. The manager will be informed of the examination date and will need to ensure the ward off-duty is amended accordingly.

Failed up to seven stations across both the APIE and/or skill stations

This will require a re-sit at 50 per cent of the cost of the OSCE. The candidate will only need to re-sit the stations that were failed. If the candidate needs to re-sit the APIE (Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Evaluation) station(s), they will be given their original paperwork from the APIE stations that they passed in their previous attempt to complete the re-sit stations in sequence.

Failed eight to ten stations across both the APIE and/or skill stations

Will require a re-sit at 100 per cent cost. The candidate will need to re-sit the APIE station(s) that they failed, and the skill station(s) failed. The candidate will be given the same scenario and original paperwork from the APIE stations that they passed in their previous attempt to complete the re-sit stations in sequence.

Full fail (third attempt: re-sit) – Fail on any station on the third attempt

Six months will need to elapse before the candidate can re-apply to the NMC.

If an overseas nurse/midwife does not pass the OSCE, the individual may require more ongoing support and guidance. Many may not have previously failed anything, so it can be a substantial knock to confidence. Please bear this in mind when they are working clinically and allocating them with patients, if possible. Please contact the International Recruitment Lead or relevant Practice Educator as a resource for any support or advice that may be required.

Pastoral support: useful tips

First day on the job

Welcome your overseas nurse/midwife to your area and provide your own local induction as normal. Like any new starter, joining a new team can be a daunting experience and having a good induction can help ease any anxiety experienced during this period.

If a new starter has a good induction, they are more likely to remain working in that role for a longer period. You may also want to consider having a poster of your new nurse/midwife on the staff notice board with a photograph welcoming them to the ward.

Off duty

Be mindful of the intensive study period recently undertaken by the overseas nurse/midwife when allocating workload and shift patterns, where possible. Avoid giving heavy workload and irregular shift patterns until the overseas nurse/midwife is more established and in receipt of their PIN (personal registration number).

Sickness

Often coming to a new country with a different climate can make overseas nurses/midwives more susceptible to illness. In the first 3 months particularly, keep an eye on sickness as it may also be a trigger for stress.

How to support – signpost to:

- wellbeing services offered by the trust to help them deal with this life change
- external wellbeing hubs that can offer support where needed, such as talking therapy or counselling

- the [NHS confidential staff support line](#) – for people potentially facing significant stress (free to access seven days a week).

Annual leave

Many overseas nurses and midwives may not have received annual leave before. Be prepared to explain what this is and what the local process is to book leave. Please note that annual leave accrues from when new overseas colleagues arrive in the UK. The health roster will need to reflect this.

Cultural differences

The delivery of nursing and midwifery can differ around the world. You may be working with an experienced overseas nurse/midwife, but it should not be assumed that new colleagues will know everything that an experienced nurse/midwife trained in the UK would know.

How to support:

- Help new colleagues understand what the expectations of nursing/midwifery are in the UK.
- Make other staff members aware too so that you can collectively support new overseas colleagues.
- Set expectations during the induction period and gently reinforce if you notice new colleagues are not meeting these expectations. Some examples include:
 - infection control policies – bare below elbows
 - uniform laundering rules
 - nurse/midwife and doctor relationships.
- Acknowledge that overseas nurses and midwives come from very diverse cultures which can mean that one unacceptable norm in British culture may be a usual approach in another, and vice versa. Culture forms the foundation of an individual's identity and can determine the way they communicate with colleagues and patients, and deal with situations. Understanding and respecting these differences will help to establish excellent working relationships with new overseas colleagues.

Good practice example

Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust has developed a 'Managers Guide in Supporting International Nurses' that provides an overview of the overseas nurses' journey to assist with becoming a registered nurse in the UK, and common cultural practices, mannerisms, language, and holidays. See their list of cultural diversity examples within [appendix 1](#).

Practice support

Most NHS organisations will have practice educators/practice development teams. If you have any concerns about an overseas nurse/midwife's practice, we recommend referring to this additional resource as soon as possible.

Welfare support

Encourage new overseas colleagues to join professional networks within the organisation. For example:

- Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) groups
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT+) network
- Overseas nurse and midwife networks

Remember to include new colleagues in team social events including away days/team building days.

Professional indemnity arrangement

It's a legal requirement for NMC-registered nurses and midwives to have an appropriate indemnity arrangement in place for when they practise in their professional capacity. We recommend you remind new overseas colleagues of this requirement and encourage them to join a union.

Training and development

The end of the OSCE preparation is just the beginning of their journey working within the organisation. They will need to receive ongoing development through an agreed period of support and adaptation to working in the UK and within their service.

Preceptorship

There should be a period of preceptorship for newly registered overseas nurses/midwives with an opportunity for a more bespoke version of preceptorship taking into consideration that some of the nurses and midwives may have considerable clinical experience.

The NMC strongly recommends that all new registrants have a period of preceptorship when commencing employment including anyone who has entered a new part of the register and those newly admitted to the register from other European economic area states and other nation states.

Where an overseas nurse/midwife is newly qualified, and has no previous clinical experience, the nurse/midwife **must** be offered a place on the trust's usual preceptorship programme alongside other newly qualified nursing and midwifery staff. This should also apply to those overseas nurses and midwives that have not practised clinically within the previous 12 months.

Preceptorship arrangements should be agreed as part of new overseas colleagues' personal development plans and career planning conversations at the recruitment stage and documented in their personal development guide.

A period of preceptorship will help newly registered overseas nurses/midwives to develop the confidence to practise competently and ensure they are familiar with and can meet their obligations under the [NMC Code](#).

During this period, new overseas colleagues should be supported by an experienced practitioner to develop confidence as an independent professional, and to refine their skills, values and behaviours. This is especially important for overseas and newly qualified nurses/midwives to ensure they are able to provide effective patient-centred care confidently.

Personal development and career planning (includes appraisals and revalidation)

Personal development and career planning support the concept that learning is a lifelong activity and that setting goals can help individuals to achieve career and personal aspirations. Personal development planning helps to strengthen the capacity of learners to:

- reflect upon their own learning and achievement and to plan for their own personal, educational and career development
- improve their skills, ultimately supporting improvements in the quality of patient care.

Employers should be committed to offering learning and development opportunities to their staff. Providing access to training, to extend individuals' skills and knowledge, will enable staff to take on new responsibilities and will support longer term career progression. As part of this process, staff should be offered an annual personal development review and a personal development plan should be agreed.

For overseas nurses and midwives registered with the NMC, personal development includes the requirement to revalidate every three years to be able to maintain their registration with the NMC. Revalidation is straightforward and helps demonstrate that the nurse/midwife is practising safely and effectively, allowing them to reflect on the role of the NMC Code in their practise and to demonstrate that they are 'living' the standards set out within it.

The Professional Development Guidebook, that has been developed as part of this best practice guidance, provides an outline on next steps in relation to post registration considerations and revalidation, and what overseas nurses/midwives should expect as part of their post-UK registration personal and career development journey.

The Professional Development Guide includes information on Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements and outlines the development and career conversations that commenced on pre-employment, which may include specialty training aspirations. Post-UK registration conversations should build on these.

Good practice example

Great Ormond Street Hospital NHS Foundation Trust hosts monthly ward managers' meetings which are held by Nursing Workforce. Key stakeholders (Education and Recruitment) are often invited, where feedback and key themes of our international nurses' experiences are regularly discussed. This allows managers to reflect on their experiences to ensure plans are put in place to make sure their pastoral care is of the highest quality.

Useful information and resources

English language requirements

Occupational English Test (OET) - this is a test of English for healthcare professional. Candidates:

- listen to patient consultations, workplace conversations and medical talks
- read a range of healthcare-related texts
- write a referral letter
- participate in role play as a nurse/midwife.

International English Language Test (IELTS) - this is a test of Academic English. Candidates:

- listen to conversations in everyday and education settings as well as an academic lecture
- answer questions on a range of academic texts
- write a data report and an academic essay
- give a presentation and answer questions on both familiar and abstract subjects.

IELTS is scored from 9.0 (best) to 0. In the UK, nurses and midwives need a score of 7.0 in listening, reading, and speaking and a score of 6.5 in writing.

Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)

Visit the [NMC website](#) for further information about joining the UK register and for information around the [NMC nursing exam blueprint](#).

Computer Based Test (CBT)

For more information, please read the [CBT candidate information booklet](#).

NMC-approved OCSE test centres

Visit the university websites for further information for candidates and trainers:

- [University of Northampton](#)

- [Oxford Brookes University](#) (Oxford campus and Swindon campus)
- [Ulster University](#) (Northern Ireland, Derry-Londonderry).
- Northumbria University
- [Leeds Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust](#)

On these sites, you will find:

- The Candidate Journey Map
- A Candidate Information Booklet
- ‘Top tips’ booklets for each field of nursing and midwifery
- Mock scenarios for each field of nursing and midwifery
- Marking criteria for each field of nursing and midwifery
- Information about costs, how to book the exam and location maps
- ‘Train the trainer’ course contact details.

Each test centre has its own online learning platform which candidates can access for information and guidance on the OSCE documentation and support materials including:

- observation charts used in the examination
- reading lists specific to field of practice,
- weblinks, e-books (accessed via the digital library)
- individual station template examples.

Appendix 1

‘Connecting Cultures’ – part of Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust’s Managers’ Guide in Supporting International Nurses (common cultural practices, mannerisms, language, and holidays):

- Language more commonly used: “How are you?” instead of “Are you alright?” If people ask “are you alright?”, they may at first feel like they do not look okay or there is a problem.
- Say “Thank you” instead of “cheers!”
- Using Mr or Mrs plus surname is what overseas colleagues were strongly suggested to use as a sign of respect rather than just by addressing people by their first names.
- Breaks are luxury time. So it is advisable to prompt colleagues to go on breaks because they usually do not have the chance to take it.
- Overseas colleagues don’t mean to be rude if they do not often ask questions when asked “do you have any questions?” as they usually ask someone else rather than the person asking the question.
- Overseas colleagues don’t mean to be rude if they don’t talk when our attention is not called, they just feel uncomfortable joining in conversations.
- When overseas colleagues are silent, it doesn’t mean they don’t agree or they are being rude. They may just be having a hard time expressing their thoughts. But they try to talk as much as they can.
- “Let’s eat!” You often hear overseas colleagues invite people to partake in their meal.
- When at work, overseas colleagues just hustle. They don’t normally check on others often. They are not used to asking colleagues how they are, where they spent their holiday, or how they spent their weekend.
- Nurses and midwives from India usually move their heads from left to right as a non-verbal yes rather than moving their head up and down.
- People who practise the Muslim faith pray 5 times a day usually around these timings (6am; 1pm; 3pm; 6:15pm and 7:35pm).
- Do you know your colleagues practising the Muslim faith do not eat or drink (or even chew gum) during dawn until dusk during Ramadan. You might consider putting them on night shifts during this time.
- Nurses and midwives from the Philippines value physical touch so like to pat on the back or slap someone on the shoulder. They use this to show they are comfortable with someone at work. Their intention is in no way sexual or sensual. However, it may make women from many backgrounds uncomfortable.

Holidays to consider:

Country	Holiday	Dates
Tibet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14th Dalai Lama's birthday • Losar (Tibetan New Year) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 July • 10 Feb 2024 – Mon, 12 Feb 2024*
Philippines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Christmas and New Year's Eve • Ash Wednesday • Lent • Their own birthdays • Birthdays of their loved ones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Filipinos usually celebrate on the eve and will be happy to work 25 and 26 December as well as 1 January. • 14 February 2024* • February to March 2024* An estimated 92.5 per cent of Filipinos are Christians • Filipinos love to celebrate their birthdays • Filipinos sometimes celebrate with their families virtually/hold a little celebration here in the UK.
Indians	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Onam • Diwali (Hindu) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Sept 2024 – 17 Sept 2024* • 31 October 2024*
Middle East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ramadan (Muslim faith) • Eid Al Fitr (Muslim faith) Big feast to mark the end of Ramadan fasting • Eid al Atha (Muslim faith) Commemoration of prophet Ibrahim's absolute dedication to Allah 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From 10 March 2024* Nurses and midwives practising the Muslim faith will be abstaining from eating or drinking from dawn to dusk for 30 days. It is recommended for managers to support these nurses and midwives with taking time in multi-faith rooms/quiet spaces for prayers. • Likely 10 April 2024* • 16 June 2024*
Nepal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dasain (Hindu and Buddhist) • Tihar Festival (similar to Diwali) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 to 24 October 2023* • 3 to 12 October 2024* • 13 to 15 November 2023*

Appendix 2 – flowchart outlining UK registration application process for overseas nurses and midwives

