



UCAS End of Cycle Report 2017: Nursing

2017 UCAS end of cycle report for nursing

UCAS has published an end of cycle [report](#) on application and acceptance patterns by subject, including a special focus on B7 Nursing subjects. In this briefing we provide an overview of the key findings for nursing and outline some of the work the Council is involved with in relation to this agenda.

In 2017 there were 54,985 applications to nursing, a fall of 18% (-11,750) compared to 2016. UCAS reports that the proportionate fall in applicants to nursing was larger than the overall 2.6% fall in applications for other subjects. 2017 saw the largest drop in nursing applications on record.

Despite the decline in applications, the number of acceptances to nursing fell by just 270 (-0.9%) compared to 2016, totaling 28,620 - the second highest on record. Due to the smaller pool of applicants in 2017, the acceptance rate for nursing increased by 8.8% to 52.1%. UCAS reports that nursing has previously had one of the lowest acceptance rates in the sector.

Most of the applicants accepted to nursing were domiciled in the UK (98%), with 1.5% from the EU, and 0.5% from outside the EU. The number of acceptances from the EU fell by 18% (-90) in 2017, whilst acceptances from outside the EU increased by 70% (+40). The number of acceptances from those domiciled in England and Northern Ireland fell, whilst those from Scotland and Northern Ireland increased¹.

Nursing acceptances by country of provider

According to UCAS, acceptances to providers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were the highest on record, while acceptances to providers in England were the second highest on record:

- England: 22,575 (-3%; -710)
- Scotland: 3,615 (+8%; +265)
- Wales: 1,625 (+8%; +125)
- Northern Ireland: 805 (+6%; +45)

¹ England (78%): 22,045 (-2.6%; -585); Scotland (11%): 3,225 (+9.3%; +275); Wales (6%): 1,730 (+6.2%; +100); Northern Ireland (4%): 1,090 (-1.2%; -15)

Acceptances by age of applicant

Compared to many other subjects, nursing has previously attracted a higher proportion of mature applicants (aged 21+). However, in 2017 the number of mature applicants accepted to nursing decreased, whilst the converse was true for those aged 18 and 19 years old. To some extent, the increased number of acceptances from 18 and 19-year old applicants helped to offset the decline in acceptances from mature applicants. UCAS reports that 2017 is the first time since 2008 that the number of 18-year old applicants accepted to nursing has been greater than for those aged 21 to 25 years old:

- 18 years: 4,730 (+11%; +480)
- 19 years: 2,720 (+2%; +60)
- 20 years: 1,560 (+6%; +90)
- 21-25 years: 4,575 (-13%; -680)
- 26 years or older: 8,450 (-6%; -545)

Acceptances by route

2017 saw a decline in the number of acceptances via applicants' firm choices, whilst the number accepted through insurance choices and clearing increased to the highest on UCAS records. Most of those who went through clearing were accepted via the main scheme (1,990), an increase of 26% compared to 2016. There was also a substantial increase in the number of applicants who applied direct to clearing, rising from 290 in 2016 to 595 in 2017 (+105%).

- Firm choice: 17,040 (-8%; -1,570)
- Insurance: 490 (+7%; +30)
- Clearing (main scheme and direct): 2,585 (+39%; +720)
- Extra: 705 (-11%; -85)
- Other main scheme: 825 (+15%; +105)
- Record of prior acceptance (RPA): 390 (+117%; +210)

Entry rates to nursing

More 18, 19, and 20-year old applicants are choosing to study nursing. UCAS analysis of the acceptances from 18-year old applicants reveals that nursing continues to recruit well from more disadvantaged areas. In relation to age, the entry rate² to nursing for 18-year old applicants continued increased across the four

² The number of acceptances from a UCAS application cycle divided by the estimate base population

nations. In England, the rate was 0.8% (1 in every 120) however, rates in Wales (1.0%), Scotland (1.1%), and Northern Ireland (1.5%) were higher.

Nursing continues to recruit a higher proportion of 18-year old students from more disadvantaged backgrounds (POLAR3) compared to other subjects. The entry rate for 18-year old applicants from POLAR3 quintile 1 (most disadvantaged) was 0.7% (1 in 140), compared to 0.6% for POLAR3 quintile 5 (most advantaged), equivalent to 1 in every 170 of the 18-year old population. Rates for quintiles 2,3 and 4 were 0.8% (1 in 120). Reflecting on the entry rates from different POLAR3 quintiles for nursing UCAS report:

“The patterns for nursing by POLAR3 quintile are very different to those in other subject areas. When all subject groups are considered together, the historic entry rates for POLAR3 quintile 5 have been 2 to 3 times higher than quintile 1.” (UCAS, 2017, pp.22)

Nursing continues to recruit more females than males, with the entry rate for women (1.5%) 30 times higher than the rate for men (0.1%).

Future work

The Council will continue to monitor application and acceptance rates throughout the 2018 UCAS cycle and will proactively engage with sector bodies to represent member interests. UCAS has confirmed to the Council that for the 2018 cycle at least, it will continue to publish application and acceptance figures for B7 Nursing. Whilst this news is welcomed, it is important that we continue to monitor application and acceptance rates at the detailed subject level across nursing, midwifery and the allied health professions. We are aware that HEFCE has also been collecting data on application and acceptance rates and we encourage members to participate in this research.

We are grateful to those members who have previously provided us with intelligence on their application and acceptance rates and we anticipate making similar requests during the 2018 cycle. The evidence and data that has been provided to us by the membership has played an important role in our influencing activities with government and other sector bodies. For instance, it helped to shape our submission to the Health Select Committee and supported the recent learning disability nursing and paramedic roundtable meetings, which brought together members with senior representatives from Health Education England (HEE), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), NHS England and the College of Paramedics.

We will continue to support HEFCE’s programme board, which is developing strategic interventions for small and specialist healthcare subjects and to engage with funding bodies, government and other sector bodies in relation to future healthcare education funding, placement tariff, routes into nursing including the apprenticeship agenda, CPD, and advanced practice.

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