

Return to Nurse Practice Programme 2025 Information

Introduction

The Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics for Registered Nurses and Registered Midwives (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland, (NMBI), 2021) and the Scope of Nursing and Midwifery Practice Framework (NMBI, 2015) emphasise the need for all nurses to be competent and accountable for their practice. For registered nurses wishing to return to practice, undertaking a RTNPP can support this. Since competence is not constant, individual registered nurses must continually re-evaluate their competence. Educational preparation, frequency of clinical exposure and the nurse's duration of experience, in clinical settings, influences a nurse's level of competence (NMBI, 2015). Thus, registered nurses not practicing for a period will not have had the opportunity to retain or evaluate their levels of competence. Under the Nurses and Midwives Act 2011, each registered nurse or midwife is responsible for identifying concerns about their competence and must maintain their "professional competence on an ongoing basis" (NMBI, 2015). The NMBI describes competence as "the attainment of knowledge, intellectual capacities, practice skills, integrity, and professional and ethical values required for safe, accountable and effective practice as a registered nurse or registered midwife" (NMBI, 2015). Competence is best achieved by engaging in continuous professional development and practice. (RTNP Curriculum Document 2024)

While there is currently no legal requirement, NMBI strongly recommends that a registered nurse returning to practice after an absence of five years or more, who has not maintained their clinical competence, should complete an NMBI approved return to nursing practice programme before engaging in nursing practice or being employed as a registered nurse. (RTNP Curriculum Document 2024)

Eligibility Criteria

1. Applicants must be registered or previously been registered as a nurse with NMBI.
2. The education body coordinating the programme (CNMEs) determines, in consultation with AHCP's, occupational health assessments, Garda Vetting procedures and reference checks that are applicable to prospective participants prior to confirming a place (NMBI, 2022).
3. Applicants must be returning to nursing practice following an absence of five years or more.

Application Process

The RTNP programme is advertised in national and local media and seeks expressions of interest from nurses absent from practice for a period of five years or more. Applicants must complete a standardised national RTNPP application and based on the information supplied, may be short listed for acceptance. Applicants must meet the eligibility criteria before an invitation is sent out with an invite to attend an informal meeting with programme coordinators. Those successful at the informal meeting stage will be offered a place on the programme subject to provision and confirmation of the following:

- Active Registration status with the Nursing Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI, 2022).
- Two character references. Nurse Tutor must verify these references.
- Garda and/or International Police clearance.
- Occupational Health clearance as per organisation guidelines.
- Suitability to undertake the RTNP programme.
- Number of NMBI approved clinical placement sites available.

Please Note: Participation in the Return to Nurse Practice Programme will be dependent upon receipt of all of the above-completed documentation prior to the programme start date.

Programme Duration

Please refer to the Descriptor documents for further information on the programme duration.

Hub and Spoke Delivery Model

The programme is delivered through a Hub and Spoke Model. The hub and spoke delivery model involves a 'hub' CNME that coordinates delivery of the RTNP programme theoretical content and the remaining 'spoke' CNMEs that coordinate programme clinical placement and associated requirements. This delivery model ensures responsiveness to demand for the programme, along with adaptability to the changing context of health care, including uncertain applicant numbers, diverse geographical locations, and the availability of clinical placement sites. Clinical placements are facilitated in NMBI approved clinical sites, affiliated to the Hub and Spoke CNMEs. To support this approach, well-established mechanisms and governance processes are in place between each CNME and clinical stakeholders e.g. Directors of Nursing Services/ Nursing Practice Development Units. This ensures that RTNP participants receive appropriate experience, supervision, support, teaching, and assessment during their clinical placement.

Assessment Strategy Implementation

The assessment strategy will encompass a variety of diverse modes of individual assessments including summative assessments which are referred to in simple terms as 'helping learners to learn better' and formative assessments, referred to as 'assessments for learners learning'. Theoretical content of module 1 and 2 will be assessed using this strategy.

Supernumerary Status

Participants will be supernumerary to staff in the practice placement and will work under the supervision of a registered nurse. They will require direct supervision initially, but as they refresh their skills and regain confidence, they should progress through close, indirect and then distant supervision. By the end of the programme, each participant must be capable of practicing independently (NMBI, 2022 pg. 12).

Attendance

Full attendance (100%) is required of each participant throughout the programme. Any days missed must be made up in consultation with the programme co-ordinator, nurse in charge of the ward and nurse practice development department.

Unsuccessful in Achieving Competency

Should a participant be unsuccessful in achieving competence the programme lead will inform the NMBI Director of Education, Policy and Standards and submit relevant assessment documentation if requested. NMBI will arrange a follow up meeting with the participant to identify the next steps

Financial Support

As per the HSE HR Circular 026/2015 a bursary of the sum of €1500 will be given to participants on successful completion of the Return to Practice programme. Once participants have secured employment in the public health sector a further bursary of €1500 will be given, provided candidates complete 12 months full time employment or equivalent within three continuous years within the public health service.

Centres for Nurse and Midwifery Education for the Return to Nurse Practice Programmes:

1. Regional Centre of Nurse and Midwifery Education, Connolly Hospital and St. Ita's Campus Portrane (Dublin North, Dublin North West)
2. Regional Centre of Nursing and Midwifery Education Tullamore (Offaly, Laois, Longford, Westmeath)
3. Regional Centre of Nursing and Midwifery Education HSE South East (Carlow, Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford, South Tipperary)
4. Centre for Nursing and Midwifery Education Kerry County, Bantry General Hospital, University Hospital Kerry
5. Centre of Nursing and Midwifery Education Galway (Galway)
6. Centre of Nursing and Midwifery Education Mayo and Roscommon (Mayo, Roscommon)
7. Centre of Nursing and Midwifery Education Sligo (Sligo, Leitrim)
8. Centre of Nursing and Midwifery Education Limerick (Limerick, Clare, North Tipperary)
9. Centre of Nursing and Midwifery Education, Dublin North East (Cavan, Monaghan, Louth & Meath)

Information in this information sheet has been cited from the 2024 Return to Nurse Practice Curriculum documents.

The application process will open for applications in January 2025 by way of an expression of interest, you will find the form posted on the following website: <https://www.hse.ie/returntopractice>