



Nurse Education in the Tertiary Sector

NETS BRIEFING PAPER

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Nurse Education in the Tertiary sector (NETS) is a group of senior nurse educators consisting of the Heads of Schools and registered nurses with leadership roles in nursing education.

NETS speaks on significant national issues on nursing education as well as developing and supporting innovative strategies for nursing education. NETS focuses on the health needs of New Zealanders when providing curricula that will educate the future nursing workforce. This is done in partnership with practice colleagues, consumers, other health professionals and government agencies providing a quality education in nursing and health studies.

NETS has a regional structure and links with Directors of Nursing on regional issues.

Nursing Education in New Zealand

Health professional workforce changes and future developments require that the nurse graduates from the undergraduate degrees are able to practice as a beginning practitioner on employment. The development of Scopes of Practice within the HPCA Act allows us to differentiate and present a clearly defined post graduate path for nurses linking advanced knowledge with expertise in clinical practice.

Entry to the profession of nursing has been by undergraduate degree for a decade. This shift was in response to an international movement that saw professional education in the western world move to degree preparation. The exponential increase in knowledge required to function at a safe level and the importance of educating health professionals as the pace of health care provision becomes more complex, requires nurses of the future to take responsibility for lifelong learning. In addition all other entry health professional programmes in New Zealand are at the undergraduate level.

Currently 3 universities and 13 ITP's (Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics) offer undergraduate degrees while 5 universities and 8 ITP's offer post graduate qualifications in nursing. Research Master's and PhD's are predominantly offered in the university sector.

In New Zealand, nursing as an emergent discipline does not have a long tradition of undertaking research yet the profession has moved a long way in a very short time. There is a significant growth of doctoral prepared nurses

(83). The funding of nursing research has been enhanced by the acknowledgement from TEC that nursing is an emerging research discipline. Nursing researchers and research teams are eligible to apply for BRCSS (Building Research Capability in the Social Sciences) funding in the 2006 budget.

Sustaining a strong health workforce is a Government priority area. The number of EFTS (Equivalent Fulltime Students) in undergraduate programmes is relatively static. This relates to the availability of suitable quality clinical placements for student learning. Post graduate EFTS are still growing and have yet to plateau. Nursing is the largest single group of health care employees, representing 74% of the total health workforce. Post graduate EFTS for applied postgraduate nursing qualifications must continue to be resourced, to meet the workforce requirements of health.

FUNDING:

1. Clinical Training costs.

The current arrangement for access to clinical training by undergraduates requires education providers to purchase clinical training from service providers. This is an historical anomaly that occurred when the clinical training costs of all health professionals was “unbundled”. The medical profession was the focus for this exercise in 1992 and nurses were included in costings for clinical training. This process is now a revenue item for DHBs and other health providers, and has become part of the financial bottom line as opposed to being targeted for nurse workforce preparation.

It should be noted that access to quality clinical training in the preparation of registered nurses is vital in ensuring a quality graduate and consequently a quality health service.

2. EFTS categories for funding.

Proposed category changes which tagged to MOE not separate funding item.

The decision by TEC to reduce funding for taught post graduate degrees in relation to the PBRF process, is proving challenging for taught clinical masters degrees and may ultimately have an impact on the development of advanced and nurse practitioner status of RN's in New Zealand. There is a risk of falling behind other nations strategic direction for the health workforce.

3. PBRF

The PBRF formula creates challenges for professional education. The high resource demands created by a clinically based programme where a student's clinical competence needs to be assessed and comply with requirements of an external agency (The Nursing Council of New Zealand), and funding for additional staffing is required to ensure quality standards are maintained, devolves staff time away from focusing on research.