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HOW TO  **SURVIVE** YOUR
**NURSING OR
MIDWIFERY
COURSE**

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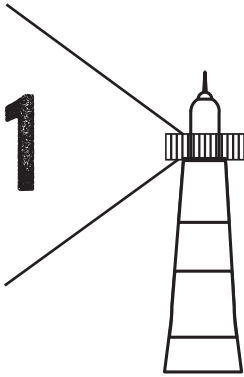
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SO YOU WANT TO BE A NURSE OR A MIDWIFE?

- ➔ Stepping out into university as a nursing or midwifery student
- ➔ Nursing and Midwifery Council Standards and Competencies and Professional Code
- ➔ Managing expectations – academically and professionally
- ➔ Professional qualities, values, principles and assumptions
- ➔ Balancing academic studies, practice learning placements and family life
- ➔ Practice learning placements – unlocking the fear of your first one
- ➔ Writing academic assignments
- ➔ Managing emotions in a caring profession



CHAPTER OVERVIEW

This chapter introduces you to the fundamentals of choosing nursing or midwifery as a profession, helping you to manage both the academic and professional elements of your education. It highlights the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) standards for pre-registration midwifery education (2009) and nursing education (NMC 2010), standards for competence for registered nurses (NMC 2014) and the rules and standards for midwives (NMC 2012), so that the core principles and values of nursing and midwifery become an integral part of your development, and enable you to achieve the required standards in becoming a confident, competent and compassionate professional. To ensure you achieve both in university and in your practice learning placement, this chapter also introduces you to the three key tools you'll need to

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understand and apply from the outset – your learning style, academic writing style, and time management.

- Stepping out into university as a nursing or midwifery student
- Nursing and Midwifery Council Standards and Competencies and Professional Code
- Managing expectations – academically and professionally
- Professional qualities, values, principles and assumptions
- Balancing academic studies, practice learning placements and family life
 - Finding your learning style, finding your rhythm
 - Time management – juggling, struggling or actually managing
 - So what's it to be – juggling, struggling or managing?
- Practice learning placements – unlocking the fear of your first one
 - Cementing your mentor relationship
- Writing academic assignments
- Managing emotions in a caring profession
- Top tips

STEPPING OUT INTO UNIVERSITY AS A NURSING OR MIDWIFERY STUDENT

So you've gone and done it! You've consciously taken that first step through the university doors to start your nursing or midwifery programme. Excited, scared or a bit of both? You've thought about this a great deal and you've prepared as best you can, and the way you see it this day has been a long time coming and you can't wait to get started. There's a great buzz around the university – meeting new people, where's the lecture hall, oh, there's the library, grab a quick coffee, check out the computing hub – and it seems like everybody's in the same boat. Or are they? Sure your goal is the same – pass everything, get a good degree and land that job, but...



Great! You've all an idea of what you want to do then. So first things first – what brought you here? What key qualities can you offer to this profession and how can you use them in your studies and practice learning placement?



ACTIVITY 1.1 PROFESSIONAL DOMAINS, PERSONAL QUALITIES – ADVERTISE YOURSELF

Go on tell me – advertise yourself, promote your uniqueness, but please, keep it real!

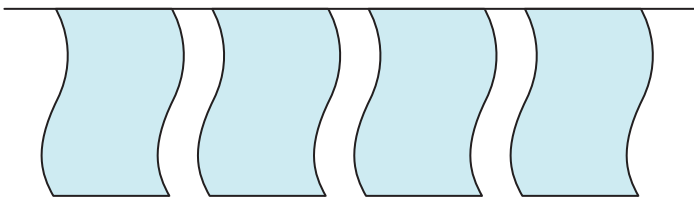


Figure 1.1 Professional domains, personal qualities – advertise yourself

So that's you! Now this is us and what we can offer – and yes, we'll keep it real too. Nursing and midwifery are great professions – personally satisfying and extremely rewarding. But step out into this programme and your life will change forever. It's extremely demanding and is a programme unlike any other at university; 50 per cent learning the theory at university and 50 per cent putting what you've learned into practice on clinical placement over your three to four year programme. In your practice learning placements, you'll work day shifts, night shifts, weekends too, while trying to keep up with university assignments and juggling everything else in your life. Early starts, late finishes, long days! So are you ready for all this?

Okay here it is – evidence-based learning, case-based learning, problem-based learning, inter-professional education, lectures, tutorials, seminars, workshops, clinical skills simulated environments, online learning materials and resources, practice placement learning. Oh, and don't forget the self-directed learning. Then there's the assessment of all that – timed written exams, short answer questions, online modules, drug calculations, multiple choice questions, reflective journals, ongoing achievement records, case studies, learning logs, oral presentations, objective structured clinical assessments (OSCA), objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs), essays, reports, blogs, wikis, posters, a dissertation.

And so back to you – there's your self-directed study (O'Shea 2003), matching up the reality of what happens in practice with what you've learned in the classroom, adding new knowledge to what you already know, learning new skills like critical thinking, critiquing, reflection, academic writing, note-taking, referencing, researching, communication, dealing with emotions, advocacy, infection control, oh, and avoiding plagiarism. Then there's the NMC Code (2015a) and their *Standards for Competence* (2014) to uphold, and there's also understanding professionalism – what you can and can't say or do, how to deal with difficult situations, how to report unprofessional behaviours, and how to keep yourself safe as a professional. Add to that - learning who's who and

what they do in your university, sorting out your support needs, accessing what you need exactly when you need it. Phew! It reads like an encyclopaedia, I know, but just think of the end result – supported studies, personal support, your career taking shape, entry to a lifelong profession, worldwide and endless opportunities, a rewarding life.

Well, is it everything you expected when you signed up to the nursing or midwifery profession? Are you ready to take it all on board? You are! Then it's over to you now. You've stepped out into university; we'll give you the tools to manage it all. Take responsibility, keep your finger on the pulse and you'll surely stay 'on course'!

NURSING AND MIDWIFERY COUNCIL STANDARDS AND COMPETENCIES AND PROFESSIONAL CODE

Rules, regulations, professional expectations – we can't avoid them. All institutions have them and all professional bodies are enshrined in them, and the NMC is no exception. So what exactly is the NMC?

Well, it's a professional body whose main aim is to protect both patients and the public by monitoring the personal and professional activity of nurses and midwives working in the United Kingdom (UK), whether in the National Health Service (NHS) or private settings. It also protects nurses and midwives by setting standards and providing guidance on all aspects of practice. So how about some key NMC facts:

- It's directly accountable to the UK Parliament.
- It's governed by an independent council.
- It maintains a register of all registered nurses and midwives who've completed their initial training, met and continued to uphold the registration standards, and so are eligible to practise.
- It sets out a code of conduct, which all nurses and midwives must adhere to throughout their professional career, regardless of the setting – NHS or private healthcare, hospitals, the community, prisons, social care, education.

- It sets standards for pre-registration nursing and midwifery education, and supports learning and assessment of students in practice.
- It investigates and acts upon any concerns about a nurse's or midwife's conduct or actions.

So what does this mean for you – the student nurse or midwife? After all, it's your professional body too!

Well, as soon as you sign up for a student nursing or midwifery programme, you're automatically bound by the NMC Code (2015a) and its standards. From your first student placement, you'll be in the privileged position of caring for people from all walks of life, cultural backgrounds and ages, and so you're expected to act professionally, with honesty, integrity, respect and confidentiality at all times. A tall order, we know! But to manage all this, you're given guidelines that support and protect you, your patients and the staff you're working with. So what are these guidelines?

The Code (NMC 2015a) sets out four key domains (Figure 1.2), within which all nurses and midwives need to achieve the following outcomes:

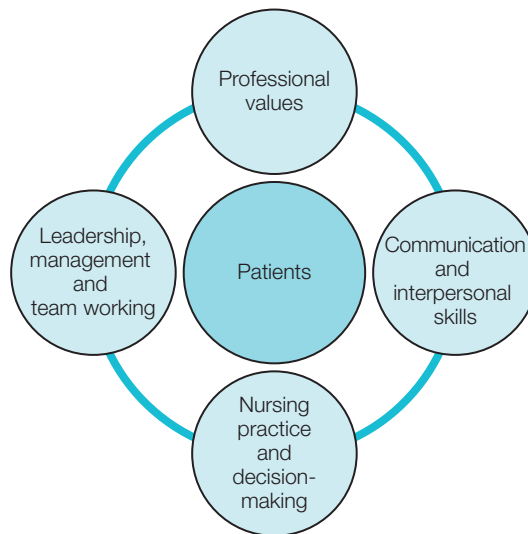


Figure 1.2 NMC four domains

Within these four key domains, you'll find knowledge, skills and values that all nurses and midwives need to meet to achieve specific levels of competence. As a student nurse or midwife, you too are expected to achieve specific competencies in practice from day one of your programme of study.



Competency?
What's that?

Well, it's a way of demonstrating that you've achieved a specific level of knowledge and understanding that enables you to practise safely as a nurse or midwife. Exactly that! Without this, you can't be registered to practise. So reflect – how can you place this principle at the heart of your professional values, not only in your formative years in nursing or midwifery but in your professional role as a clinical practitioner? Have you considered too how all this might affect your personal life and how different things will be from now on?

MANAGING EXPECTATIONS – ACADEMICALLY AND PROFESSIONALLY

Being a nursing or midwifery student is all about 'managing': writing assignments, meeting deadlines, connecting theory with practice, achieving practice placement learning outcomes, adhering to The Code (NMC 2015a) professional guidelines and managing your professionalism. In short, meeting and managing academic and professional expectations from day one of university. Surprised? Yes, even at university you're expected to manage your behaviour, attitude and approach to things, not to mention respect the university's rules and regulations, as outlined in your university's Student Charter. Be mindful also of the professional expectations in your NMC Placement Charter. Building trust, confidence and respect is a 'two-way street' – our expectations are reasonable, make sure yours are too!

You expect us to inspire your learning through our teaching, support your learning in your practice learning placement, respond to your needs – academic, personal and professional – in a timely manner, and generally deliver a good service. That's our end of the bargain, now what's yours?

In return, we expect you to:

- take responsibility for your own learning and self-directed study
- adopt good organisation and time management strategies
- touch base with Student Services to arrange your initial support needs and tap into their support network when things get difficult
- engage with your university's Student Learning Environment, such as Moodle
- become familiar with the library, its search engines and borrowing processes
- make regular contact with your Personal Development Tutor/ Director of Studies (PDT/DoS)
- utilise your natural learning style effectively
- learn academic writing and use key study tools, for example, Turnitin (www.turnitinuk.com); Harvard referencing style (<https://libweb.anglia.ac.uk/referencing/harvard.htm>); APA referencing style (www.ukessays.com)
- meet assignment deadlines
- make the most of feedback to help improve your written work and enhance your practice
- plan your placement journey and arrive on time
- tell us of any concerns you have about your studies, placement or personal life
- behave responsibly – after all, you're effectively an ambassador for your university and your chosen profession
- uphold the NMC Code (2015a) and its professional domains, respect the patient, their needs and rights, privacy and confidentiality
- familiarise yourself with the relevant legislative policies (Appendix 1).

Learn these skills, identify their transferable value across all health-care settings and in all your communications, and you'll surely manage as a student and develop as a confident professional.

PROFESSIONAL QUALITIES, VALUES, PRINCIPLES AND ASSUMPTIONS

The practice of nursing and midwifery is based upon values, professional principles, morals, ethics – while we'll talk more about these in Chapter 10, it's important to acknowledge their importance at the very outset of your student journey. Nursing and Midwifery are 'values-based professions' (NMC 2015a). So what does all that mean really?

Well, values are the things we hold dear – they're based on our beliefs, thoughts, knowledge and feelings, and so are important in our lives. They define us as individuals. But how do we relate all this to our nursing and midwifery practice, and what do we mean by professional qualities, attitudes, morals, ethics, values and principles? Why is it important to consider them from our very first day at university?

Well, it's all about making sure the people we're caring for are given the best possible care and choices to improve their health and well-being. It's also about working within a moral and ethical code which safeguards patients and families. These are the fundamental principles of nursing and midwifery practice and, of course, the main reason why we consciously took that first step. Don't be mistaken – applying the values we hold dear is a tall order, especially when patients' attitudes and expectations, stressful and busy working environments, and teamwork are all in the mix, and can influence our thoughts and behaviour. But we've all been patients at one time or another, and being treated with dignity, care and compassion helps our recovery. So to ensure you too can achieve this, you'll need to understand and accept the principles of the professional practice you've signed up to – be caring, non-judgemental, supportive, respectful of individuality, organised and professional

at all times – no more, no less! It's these aspects of behaviour and personality that are sought after even before you get a place at university, through a values-based selection and recruitment process which helps universities to attract and employ the right people who can demonstrate and develop these key attributes (www.nmc.org.uk/; www.rcn.org.uk/; www.rcm.org.uk/). Take all this with you into your practice and you'll surely become the nurse or midwife you set out to be.

BALANCING ACADEMIC STUDIES, PRACTICE LEARNING PLACEMENTS AND FAMILY LIFE

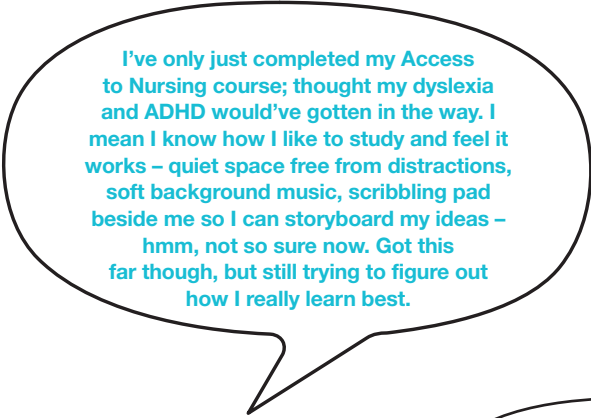
Let's face it, we've been dragged into the 21st century with all its busyness, and despite our longing for a quiet life, we never seem to get it; we only get busier. If it's not this or that, then it's that or this; always something grabbing our attention and demanding our time – just got to keep up with what's new!

So what's new in your life now that you've started to study? Can you honestly keep up with that 5-hour lecture day, school run, after school club, dinner, homework, housework, shopping, part-time job, library search, note-taking, writing up until 1am, grabbing a few hours' sleep, early shift again at 7am, first placement. Phew! Exhausted, stressed just thinking about it? In a sentence, how do we strike the balance between our academic studies, our practice learning placement and our family life?

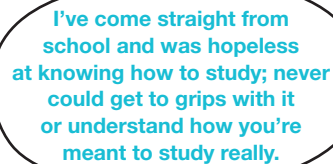
I suppose you've heard it said that there's a time for everything. It's true, but how we organise and utilise that time while working our way through a highly intensive programme is key to keeping on track and well. First things first though – find your learning style (<http://vark-learn.com/the-vark-questionnaire/>; www.businessballs.com/freepdfmaterials/vak_learning_styles_questionnaire.pdf; Honey and Mumford 2001) and your study rhythm, and you should strike a balance to a manageable, stress-free academic and professional life.

FINDING YOUR LEARNING STYLE, FINDING YOUR RHYTHM

You do it your way, I do it my way, we all do it differently – and still we learn; learn the same things, but differently. We complete our assignments and we sit our exams, and somehow we pass. For many of us, our early experience of learning was in a small class at school with follow-up homework, but will the same learning style help us learn and understand in the same way now, when lectures, practice learning placements and self-directed study are our main sources of learning? Will this learning style help us understand why we learn the way we do from these three sources? So why do we learn this way and not that?



I've only just completed my Access to Nursing course; thought my dyslexia and ADHD would've gotten in the way. I mean I know how I like to study and feel it works – quiet space free from distractions, soft background music, scribbling pad beside me so I can storyboard my ideas – hmm, not so sure now. Got this far though, but still trying to figure out how I really learn best.



I've come straight from school and was hopeless at knowing how to study; never could get to grips with it or understand how you're meant to study really.

Okay, so we need to make sure your learning style works well for you so that you:

- understand lectures and how they work
- know how to get the most from your practice learning placements
- get to grips with self-directed study.

And overall, we need make sure you can make the connections between all three learning sources and understand what you need to learn and why. So what kind of learner are you?



ACTIVITY 1.2 LEARNING STYLE TASK

Choose a task; tell me your story – why did you choose nursing or midwifery?

- Draw a picture = visual.
- Write a letter = auditory.
- Design and create something = tactile.

So which one did you instinctively choose? Doesn't that tell you something about your learning style? Still not sure how all this works? Then complete Activity 1.3 (see Appendix 2 for answers).



ACTIVITY 1.3 VISUAL, AUDITORY OR TACTILE LEARNER – OR SIMPLY A BIT OF EVERYTHING?

Do you:

- use mind maps or shapes to connect and understand information?
- read information aloud so you can hear it?
- record information so you can listen back?
- use colours to highlight information and then read it?
- tap your fingers on your arm when counting?
- discuss concepts with others?
- use colours to highlight information and then create a picture or object?
- follow a mind map more easily than written instructions?
- use music or mnemonics to learn information?
- move around or walk when you're reading?
- see patterns in information?
- enjoy practical tasks that help you learn?

(Gribben 2012: 6)

Put simply, if you prefer to see things in pictures so you can understand and study better, then you're clearly a visual learner. If you find that listening to information makes things sink in better, then you're an auditory learner. As for the tactile learner, well it's a case of actively doing, feeling, practising what you need to learn so it all makes sense. If you like to use strategies from some or all learning styles to help support your learning and understanding then quite simply, you're a little bit of everything. We all have our own unique way of working – systems, strategies, even rituals. There's no right or wrong way. Take time to refine the learning style that's unique to you, work with it, make it work for you, and you'll soon find your study rhythm, and with that lectures, practice learning placements, self-directed study and overall success should easily fall into place (El-Gilany and Abusaad 2012). Of course it doesn't stop there; this brings me nicely to our next point – time management. Find your study rhythm and add a good dose of time management, and your days will be more organised and balanced, with more juggle and less struggle.

TIME MANAGEMENT - JUGGLING, STRUGGLING OR ACTUALLY MANAGING

I'm hopeless at organisation and managing my time. I just drift along hoping everything gets done when it should.

Oh me too. I start off with good intentions but quite quickly lose my way; never seem to catch up or sort it out.

So much to remember, so many things to do. I worry I'll forget the important things. Gosh, where to start?

Actually getting organised so we manage our time better might not be a bad idea, you know. Especially when you think of everything we've to juggle – assignments, placements, exams and, well, life!

SO WHAT'S IT TO BE – JUGGLING, STRUGGLING OR MANAGING?

We arrive at university and before long we can all sometimes feel overwhelmed – by the new environment, a new life, lots of new things going on at the same time and seemingly endless pieces of information. Sometimes it feels all too much and before long we can feel things slipping and we struggle. It's not meant to be like this, I hear you say. I'm sure you've been in a similar situation before when you struggled. Correct? Then let's look at how you managed that situation and what worked for you.



ACTIVITY 1.4 MANAGING STRATEGIES – ANYTHING YOU'D DO DIFFERENTLY

What strategies have you successfully used that could help you manage this situation? Note them in the Juggling Man.

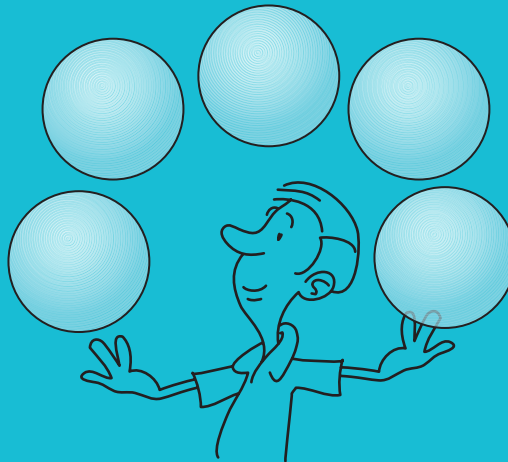


FIGURE 1.3 Juggling man

Isn't it true that when we're in the thick of the 'bad' situation it's hard to see the way ahead? We need to start somewhere, so I suppose making a timetable of your university commitments is as good a place as any – lectures, tutorials, seminars, personal development

meetings ... anything else? Next, consider when you study best – morning, afternoon, evening? Colour that slot into your timetable, dividing up the various times between research, reading and critical thinking, sorting information and finally writing up. So, for example, if you study best in the morning it makes sense to use that time for these tasks; you're more alert then! Then add in any family commitments. Remember, if you can delegate some of these duties, do it; having help makes life seem more manageable. And to make things even less of a juggle, learn to prioritise.

You've tried all these but still you're feeling the struggle? Then don't go it alone, tap into your Student Support First Aider (SSFA; Chapter 2) and get the support you need exactly when you need it, and not when things feel somewhat overwhelming. There's a wealth of support on offer, such as academic support to help you devise strategies to maximise your study time and manage your workload, and what about the personal support talking therapies to help you manage the stress? So, take action early; channel your energies into what's important at that moment rather than endlessly stressing and struggling and feeling hopelessly 'lost'.

And so to placements – create a new timetable that accommodates all your life at that time – practice learning placement, university assignments and family commitments. Note that it's placement time, so expect a different rhythm to your days; remember the shift pattern. As well as carrying on with all your other commitments, you need to factor in travel time to your placement. It's wise to do a trial run of the various travelling routes and times. Always check the travel forecast before setting out, take the shortest, most direct route and leave enough travel time so you're always on time!

Sure, we all travel to work, work different shifts and need to arrive on time, but when you're part of a team delivering patient care you need to consider others. You're about to start your shift, others are finishing. How do you feel when you're tired and desperate to get home, and you're waiting around for a latecomer? If a shift hand-over is rushed, potentially something important can be missed and

mistakes made. Reflect on that! Of course, we can all oversleep or unexpectedly get stuck in a traffic jam behind an accident – once perhaps – but habitual latecomers aren't looked upon favourably. So make every effort to be on time, set your alarm, plan your journey and build yourself a good reputation as a reliable, trustworthy, committed professional who's a team player, takes work seriously and actually wants to be there. Do that and watch doors open to opportunities you never imagined. Do the right thing, facilitate a smooth handover, alleviate stress and start your shift on a positive note. But if the unexpected happens, call your placement mentor!

PRACTICE LEARNING PLACEMENTS – UNLOCKING THE FEAR OF YOUR FIRST ONE

Practice learning placements are wide-ranging and varied (Appendix 3); you get to put what you've already learned into real-life practice alongside a qualified nurse or midwife who'll be your mentor or guide throughout your placement, so make the most of it (RCN 2009; Whitehead 2013). Having attended university for a number of weeks now, your first practice learning placement is just around the corner. Excitement! Can't wait to get started; work with patients, learn from others – your mentor and team. Apprehensive too? Then take the fear out of your first placement by speaking to your mentor before you start, or emailing them; this is a great opportunity to introduce yourself, go over the basics as detailed in your student placement book, and to learn about your duties, responsibilities and rights in the placement (Levett-Jones and Bourgeois 2015). If the opportunity arises, do a trial run of the journey, meet with your mentor, see exactly where you'll work and arrange any extra support you might need because of your specific difficulties. However, this isn't always possible due to personal commitments or location, so don't worry about it – but *do* always make contact with your mentor before you arrive.

If you're wondering about your practice learning placement time sheets, learning log, writing up patient notes, passing on information,

drug administration, patient confidentiality, then this is the time to ask. Get your questions answered and you'll have unlocked some of the fear of your first placement; watch the worries disappear!



Sometimes, just sometimes, placements do go wrong, even for the best of us. You don't particularly connect with your mentor; it's not the interesting learning environment you thought practice would be; you're finding it all too much – placement, family life and keeping up with assignments; or the unexpected happens – personal crisis. If any of this happens, talk to your Link Lecturer or PDT/DoS, explain the situation and try to find a solution. Yes, there are solutions! Whether it's taking time out or repeating your placement, there's no shortage of support. They'll fully support you, help you to arrive at your decision and direct you to any support services you might need to use. The important thing is you don't get lost in the process, so talk to them, access the support, find a way forward; it's all there for you – yes you!

Want to avoid things going wrong? Then consider:

1. You're dealing with patient care, supporting their health and well-being, and so details about them are important. Know your role in any handover, safeguard yourself and your patient, and take time to write patient notes accurately, mindful of confidentiality (Scovell 2010). Remember, if it's important enough to say something about a patient in the handover then it's important enough to write in the notes; don't leave that important detail to memory – neither yours nor someone else's.
2. You're part of a team – arrive on time, respect individuals, communicate positively and show willing in teamwork.

3. You're still a student and still learning, so keep in touch with your university and tap into the wealth of support at your fingertips.
4. You're a student – yes, but you're bound by a code of conduct, as are your mentor and team, so if you're concerned about someone's professional practice then report it (NMC 2015b). Don't let the matter escalate into what could become a complicated or potentially serious situation.

CEMENTING YOUR MENTOR RELATIONSHIP

Relationships matter – we live, thrive and survive through our relationships with others. They encourage, support and advise us, and are often key to our success. Professional relationships are no different, except they offer something more – professional expertise. Draw on your mentor's experience so that what you learn in university makes sense in the practice learning environment. Don't forget your mentors were students too at one time – they understand you!

Of course, positive relationships with your lecturers, peers and patients are important, but the most important relationship in your formative years is with your practice learning placement mentor. Their role is to teach, support and assess you during your pre-registration period, and to sign off on your ability as 'fit to practise' and register as a nurse or midwife (RCN 2009). So take positive steps to build up trust and confidence in your relationship, respect their knowledge and experience, trust their advice and support, and be open to their feedback (Somerville and Keeling 2004; Duffy 2013). Do all this and you'll surely enjoy your practice learning placement and achieve your placement learning outcomes.

WRITING ACADEMIC ASSIGNMENTS

Writing a letter to a friend, a school magazine article or social media posts isn't quite the same as writing an academic assignment. Wouldn't student life be so much easier if it was, and we could write exactly how we speak? Language styles are very different! What's

acceptable in social circles, ‘text speak’ or even the writing style we’re using in this handbook isn’t acceptable in academic assignments. Oh no! Write like this and you’ll lose valuable marks.

But isn't it difficult
learning to
write academic
assignments?

No! It's just a matter of technique and rules – knowing what to write, what not to write and how, and there you have it. Remember, it's not an automatic skill; it needs to be learned and takes time! Different universities, modules and assignments use different writing styles, so always check with your tutor about the writing style they'd like you to use. Remember, too, the study skills workshops, such as 'Essay Doctor' or 'Referencing and Plagiarism', and one-to-one study support on various aspects of academic writing offered by your universities' Learning Information Services. So make finding out about all of this one of your 'Top 10' actions! After all, they're there for you! We'll cover more of this support in Chapter 2.

Writing in an academic-style language doesn't mean that you've to write in a way that's complicated, long-winded or difficult to understand. No! It has to be brief, clear, direct, straightforward, informative and readily understood by the reader. We'll cover some of the basic rules in Chapter 6. So, learn, practise and apply the academic language style early on in your studies, and you'll see how quickly it becomes part of your academic and working practice, so that you'll:

- be aware of the relevant style, its rules and its importance
- have the correct style at the forefront of your professional practice
- continually respect the appropriate writing styles as an important value in your chosen profession when producing professional emails, reports, notes and other written communications
- have no difficulty producing practice learning placement reports.

That's the writing but what about the lecturers' feedback? That's important too! So take their constructive developmental comments as a positive to help you improve and develop your future academic writing. Do all that and you'll surely gain those much needed marks, and, who knows, perhaps open doors to new professional opportunities by contributing to research papers, projects and reports.

MANAGING EMOTIONS IN A CARING PROFESSION

Nursing and Midwifery practice is personally demanding and emotionally engaging (Hunter and Deery 2009; Hunter and Warren 2013). Caring for people and facilitating well-being wherever possible is all about building and managing relationships. Managing your own emotions while dealing with others' emotional situations isn't only linked to being professional but is also required to deliver the high standard of evidence-based care laid down by your employer, and as guided by the NMC Code (2015a).

Faced with many different situations across different healthcare sectors, you'll need to build up a variety of skills to help you negotiate and deal with the varied, ever-changing demands of patients, families and peers. We're emotional beings, some more than others, but what families don't need when dealing with their own emotional situation is to deal with yours too! This doesn't mean that you should switch off your emotions – do that and you're not in the right profession! No – chat to mentors, team members, take their advice and build on that. It's all part of the learning process.

So what does this mean for you? Well, it means:

- recognising and acknowledging your own feelings in addition to those of your patients, their families, and your team members
- being able to constantly respond to changing expectations
- managing your emotions and feelings through support and supervision
- knowing how and when to disengage emotionally
- knowing how to take care of yourself.



ACTIVITY 1.5 STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS IN EMOTIONAL SITUATIONS

You're on your first placement and are faced with an emotional situation. How would you deal with this while also taking care of yourself? List your personal strengths and limitations, and their potential effects on the situation.

Now take a step back and reflect on your responses. Consider also your mentor's or team's advice to help you manage 'emotions' in an emotional situation? And remember, always take care of yourself – if you don't do that you'll struggle to take care of others.

So that's it – we've covered the basics of what you'll need when starting out as a student nurse or midwife. Like everything, basics are only the first layer; we'll build on this as we progress through the chapters, discussing topics more fully and providing tools to help you manage and feel supported. You've stepped out, so keep going.

TOP TIPS

- ✓ Read your University Student Charter, NMC Placement Charter, NMC Code, NMC Standards and Competencies, and disability legislation.
- ✓ In a group, discuss the professional guidelines and what they mean in your lives now.
- ✓ Arrange your support needs at the start of your course.
- ✓ Make a weekly timetable of your commitments – university, placement, family and social, and pin it on your noticeboard.
- ✓ Create a traffic light system of priorities so you keep on track with your studies.
- ✓ Create a juggling man of who's who in your university and placement.
- ✓ Keep a pocket size reflective diary and reflect often on your studies and your practice.
- ✓ Identify your natural learning style and use it effectively.
- ✓ Familiarise yourself with the library and its services.

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- ✓ Practise your academic writing; create index cards of the Dos and Don'ts in academic writing, carry them with you or pin them on your noticeboard.
- ✓ Familiarise yourself with Turnitin.
- ✓ Practise the Harvard and APA referencing styles.
- ✓ Use storyboarding to create:
 - a glossary of medical terminology
 - graphical symbols you'd use in patient reports, e.g. draw a happy or sad face for communication, knife and fork for eating
 - a visual noting and reporting system, e.g. draw hands with symbols on them for handover of placement, use graphical associations, colours
- ✓ Do a trial run of the journey from your home to your placement.
- ✓ Manage your shifts and time-off requests using a hardcopy timetable or online ShiftHub software.
- ✓ Keep in touch with your university while on placement.

So those are the tips, but don't forget your toolkit at the end of the book!

FURTHER READING

- Byrom, S. and Downe, S. (eds) (2015) *The Roar Behind the Silence: Why Kindness, Compassion and Respect Matter in Maternity Care*. London: Pinter & Martin Ltd.
- Johnson, R. (2010) *Skills for Midwifery Practice*, 3rd edition. London: Churchill Livingstone.
- Lillyman, S., Gutteridge, R. and Berridge, P. (2011) 'Using a storyboarding technique in the classroom to address end of life experiences in practice and engage student nurses in deeper reflection', *Nurse Education Practice*, 11(3): 79–86.
- Medincle: www.medincle.com/
- NMC (2015a) *The Code: Professional Standards of Practice and Behaviour for Nurses and Midwives*. London: NMC: www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code.
- Taylor, D.B. (2012) *Writing Skills for Nursing and Midwifery Students*. London: SAGE.
- The Student Room 'How to cope on nursing placements': www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/how_to_cope_on_nursing_placements