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# Clinical Pocket Reference

*An essential  
resource for  
internationally  
educated nurses*

# Become a UK Registered Nurse

**SECOND EDITION**

Sarah Connor, Siobhán McCawley,  
Mairéad Murphy



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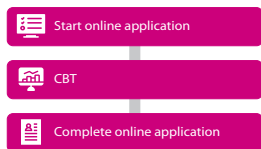
# BECOME A UK REGISTERED NURSE

This resource will assist you to register as a nurse once you have completed your qualification outside the UK. It is written to match the 2020 Objective Standard Clinical Examination (OSCE) guidelines from the Nursing and Midwifery Council, the professional regulatory body for nurses and midwives in the UK.

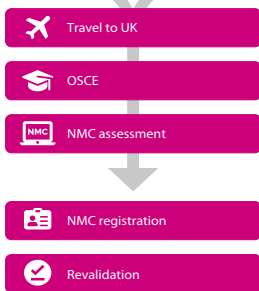
## Before starting the application process:

1. Check that you meet all criteria to apply:  
**Education / Qualification / Current licence / English language** competency
2. Ensure that you are applying to the relevant part of the register: adult (general) nursing, children's nursing, learning disabilities nursing or mental health nursing.

### NMC PROCESS



### EMPLOYMENT PROCESS



Visit the NMC website to ensure that you are following the most up-to-date advice and application process: [www.nmc.org.uk](http://www.nmc.org.uk)

# Clinical Pocket Reference

## Become a UK Registered Nurse

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### **Essential web links for knowledge and practice**

On this page you will find a selection of essential links that will help underpin your knowledge for clinical practice. These references will also support the rationale for practice. Every section within the resource is fully referenced, and you can copy and paste these references into your browser to extend your knowledge on any particular topic. This includes extensive references on the requirements for nurses who have qualified overseas or in Europe. These are all outlined in detail in the full resource.

[www.nmc.org.uk](http://www.nmc.org.uk)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england>

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/>

[www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/principles-of-nursing-practice](http://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/principles-of-nursing-practice)

[www.stepintothenhs.nhs.uk/careers/videos](http://www.stepintothenhs.nhs.uk/careers/videos)

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/registration/joining-the-register/register-nurse-midwife/trained-in-the-uk>

<https://www.resus.org.uk/library/abcde-approach>

<https://www.resus.org.uk/library/2021-resuscitation-guidelines>

<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/projects/outputs/national-early-warning-score-news-2>

<https://sepsistrust.org/professional-resources/clinical/>

<https://www.glasgowcomascale.org/>

<https://www.bapen.org.uk/screening-and-must/must/must-toolkit/the-must-itself>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/cg139>

<https://www.resus.org.uk/library/2021-resuscitation-guidelines/adult-basic-life-support-guidelines>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/essence-of-care-2010>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/6cs/wp-content/uploads/sites/25/2015/03/introducing-the-6cs.pdf>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/patient-safety/standard-infection-control-precautions-national-hand-hygiene-and-personal-protective-equipment-policy/>

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/adult-pocket-guide.pdf>

<https://bnf.nice.org.uk/>

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/standards-for-nurses/>

<https://www.nice.org.uk/about/nice-communities/medicines-and-prescribing>

<https://www.who.int/health-topics/palliative-care>

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## SECOND EDITION

**Sarah Connor**, Divisional Director of Nursing Medicine and Emergency/Urgent Care, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust, Epsom, UK

**Siobhán McCawley**, Lead Nurse for Education and Practice Development, Kingston Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Kingston-upon-Thames, UK

**Mairéad Murphy**, Director, Drake Medox, London, UK

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**Clinical Pocket Reference for Nurses**, 4th edition

Bernie Garrett, Paul Ong, Paul Galdas

**Clinical Pocket Reference Fundamental Care**, 2nd edition

Juliet Bostwick, Andrew Kerry, Katie Mills

**Clinical Pocket Reference Practical Medicines**

**Management**, 2nd edition

Charlotte Maddison, Neil Kelly

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**Clinical Pocket Reference Ltd**

1 & 3 Kings Meadow

Osney Mead

Ferry Hinksey Road

Oxford OX2 0DP, UK

Email: [info@clinicalpocketreference.com](mailto:info@clinicalpocketreference.com) Tel: 01865 811116

[www.clinicalpocketreference.com](http://www.clinicalpocketreference.com)

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## Contributors

**Sarah Connor**, Divisional Director of Nursing Medicine and Emergency/ Urgent Care, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust, Epsom, UK

**Siobhán McCawley**, Lead Nurse for Education and Practice Development, Kingston Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, Kingston-upon-Thames, UK

**Mairéad Murphy**, RN, Director, Drake Medox, London, UK

**Juliet Bostwick**, Principal Lecturer, Programme Lead, Adult Nursing, Oxford School of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK

**Paul Galdas**, Professor of Nursing, Department of Health Sciences, University of York, UK

**Bernie Garrett**, Associate Professor, School of Nursing, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

**Andrew Kerry**, Senior Lecturer, Adult Nursing, Oxford School of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK

**Neil Kelly**, Assistant Professor (Mental Health Nursing), School of Health, Coventry University, Coventry, UK

**Charlotte Maddison**, Senior Lecturer, Oxford School of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK

**Katie Mills**, Senior Lecturer, Adult Nursing, Oxford School of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK

**Paul Ong**, Senior Lecturer, Oxford School of Nursing and Midwifery, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK

## Abbreviations

ABCDEFG	Airway; Breathing; Circulation; Disability; Exposure; Further Information; Goals	mL	millilitre (= cubic centimetres, cm <sup>3</sup> or cc)
ABG	arterial blood gas	MUST	Malnutrition Universal Screening Tool
ACVPU	alert; new onset of confusion; responds to verbal stimuli; responds to pain stimulus; unresponsive to all stimuli	NBM	nil by mouth
ADL	activities of daily living	NEWS 2	National Early Warning Score 2
ANTT	Aseptic Non Touch Technique	NHS	National Health Service
APIE	assessment, planning, implementation, evaluation	NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
BMI	body mass index	NMC	Nursing and Midwifery Council
BNF	British National Formulary	NSAID	non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug
BP	blood pressure	NSF	National Service Framework
CBT	computer-based test	O <sub>2</sub>	oxygen
CO <sub>2</sub>	carbon dioxide	OSCE	Objective Structured Clinical Examination
COPD	chronic obstructive pulmonary disease	PaCO <sub>2</sub>	partial pressure of CO <sub>2</sub>
CPD	continuing professional development	PaO <sub>2</sub>	partial pressure of O <sub>2</sub>
CPR	cardiopulmonary resuscitation	PEF	peak expiratory flow
CQC	Care Quality Commission	PEG	percutaneous endoscopic gastrostomy
CRP	C-reactive protein	PERRLA	equal, round and react to light and accommodation
CRT	capillary refill time	PIDA	Public Interest Disclosure Act
DBP	diastolic blood pressure	PIN	personal identification number
DH	Department of Health	PPE	personal protective equipment
DoLS	deprivation of liberty safeguards	RBCs	red blood cells
DPI	dry powder inhaler	RCN	Royal College of Nursing
DRD	drop rate denominator	RCP	Royal College of Physicians
EBP	evidence-based practice	RN	registered nurse
ECG	electrocardiogram	SaO <sub>2</sub>	saturation of oxygen
EEA	European Economic Area	SBAR(R)	Situation; Background; Assessment; Recommendation (Readback)
EPDS	Edinburgh Postnatal Depression Scale	SBP	systolic blood pressure
EU	European Union	SC	subcutaneous
FBC	full blood count	SMART	specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely
g	gram (gramme)	ToC	Test of Competence
GCS	Glasgow Coma Scale	TPN	total parenteral nutrition
hr	hour	U&Es	urea and electrolytes
ID	identity	UK	United Kingdom
IM	intramuscular	UKVI	UK Visas and Immigration
IV	intravenous	UOAM	use of accessory muscles
kg	kilogram	UTI	urinary tract infection
L	litre	VIP	visual infusion phlebitis
LFT	liver function test	vol	volume
MDI	metered-dose inhaler	WBCs	white blood cells
mg	milligram	WHO	World Health Organization
MHFA	mental health first aid	WOB	work of breathing
min	minute		



# 1. Requirements for UK registered nurses

## 1.1 Healthcare provision and culture in the UK

### 1.1.1 History of the NHS

From its beginning on 5 July 1948 the National Health Service (NHS) has delivered healthcare to the citizens of the United Kingdom (UK). It was the first healthcare system to be available to all, financed from taxation and free at the point of delivery. Since then payment contributions have been introduced for some services, such as dental health and ophthalmology.

By the 1960s the NHS had become the country's biggest employer, helped by migration of healthcare workers to the UK. The increasingly multicultural NHS workforce forced the country to face its prejudices, creating a generally tolerant and welcoming society, which you as a nurse will be part of. Today we celebrate the hundreds of thousands of people who have come to the UK to work in healthcare, many of whom have made the UK their home. Their sense of compassion, diligence and dignity, sometimes in the face of resistance to diversity, has made a huge contribution to the development of modern British society.

The development of the NHS has been accompanied by the development of medicine and surgery, both technically and in terms of culture. Initially the NHS had a hierarchical, paternalistic culture, and decisions were made about patients without consulting them, but now shared care is the norm; patients play an active part in decisions about their own treatment. In addition, nurses are now recognized as experts in their own right and have the opportunity to develop specialist skills, for example as nurse practitioners.

The NHS retains a central place in the hearts of the nation, demonstrated by the huge wave of popular recognition for NHS workers at the start of the 2020 Covid-19 pandemic.

*You can read more in the NHS Constitution for England ([www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england)).*

### Time out

Spend a little time online researching the values that underpin the concept of the NHS. The link below provides some interesting reading to be compared with your own healthcare experiences.

[wellcomecollection.org/series/WyjG4ycAACrGnmBX?utm\\_source=Google&utm\\_medium=adgrant&utm\\_campaign=history\\_nhs&gclid=EAlaIqobChMIyYm3qtXU7AIVEu7tCh1j9w8zEAAYAiAAEgJnE\\_D\\_BwE](http://wellcomecollection.org/series/WyjG4ycAACrGnmBX?utm_source=Google&utm_medium=adgrant&utm_campaign=history_nhs&gclid=EAlaIqobChMIyYm3qtXU7AIVEu7tCh1j9w8zEAAYAiAAEgJnE_D_BwE)

### 1.1.2 UK healthcare culture

In preparation for the Test of Competence before registration in the UK, you will read and learn about nursing in the UK, the standards and ethics expected of nurses, the required competencies and the scope of practice. You also need to know about the NHS (Section 1.1.1) and what it is like to live and work in the UK. Many aspects of living and working in the UK – health services, clinical settings, housing, travel, food, weather, culture – may differ from your previous experiences; it can take time to adjust to a new environment. Be aware that the culture of healthcare, too, may be different from what you are used to.

Person-centred care defines the way nurses work in the UK (see Section 2.2.1). You might be working in the NHS, within the independent sector or caring for elderly people and people with disabilities in care or residential homes. The same principles of person-centred care apply, no matter what the clinical setting.

As a registered nurse (RN), you will sometimes work under pressure. This can be stressful, but you will have colleagues around you to support you (see Section 9.2). Don't forget you should always ask if you are in doubt (see Section 2.1.1).

Whether you work in a care home, the community or a hospital, you will find yourself surrounded by people from many different cultures, who behave in different ways. There will be people of different sexual orientations, people with different religions, and people who speak different languages among your patients and colleagues.

#### Time out

Look at the cover of this resource and look around you at work and in the street. How many different languages can you hear? How many cultures do you see represented?

While it is important to retain your own identity, it is essential that all nurses uphold the Nursing and Midwifery Council's (NMC's) *Code* (Section 1.3.2). The 'Prioritize people' section states:

'You put the interests of people using or needing nursing or midwifery services first. You make their care and safety your main concern and make sure that their dignity is preserved... You make sure that those receiving care are treated with respect, that their rights are upheld and that any discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards those receiving care are challenged.'

---

Extract reproduced with permission, with thanks to the NMC, *The Code*, 2018.

## Time out

'You put the interests of people using or needing nursing or midwifery services first. You make their care and safety your main concern and make sure that their dignity is preserved...

You make sure that those receiving care are treated with respect, that their rights are upheld and that any discriminatory attitudes and behaviours towards those receiving care are challenged.'

How have you met this requirement in your work today?

**Sources/bibliography:** Department of Health (2015) *The NHS Constitution for England*, London: DH: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-nhs-constitution-for-england); NMC (2018) *The Code: Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates*, London: NMC: [www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/](http://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/).

## 1.2 What is a UK registered nurse?

When people need your care, they are often at their most vulnerable: they may be anxious, in pain, frightened or experiencing a feeling of loss of control. When you become a RN, you will be in a position to ensure the safety of each patient in your care and to make each patient feel safe. You must at all times remember that your patient is first and foremost a person – an individual – and that their illness, stresses, anxieties and needs are all individual to them.

Patients have the right to expect that you have the correct training and qualifications to enable you to care for them effectively and to maintain their safety. In addition to your knowledge, skills and experience, you must communicate effectively and appropriately, so that patients feel safe and well cared for. You must adhere to the NMC *Code* (see the references below), behave professionally, advocate for each patient (stand up for their needs and rights) and always keep your patient at the centre of everything you do (see Section 2.2.1).

This resource has been developed to assist you to register successfully as a nurse in the UK if you have previously completed your qualification and registered outside the UK, or to assist you to return to practice. It includes links to resources to help you make an informed choice about your future and to register with the NMC, the professional regulatory body for nurses and midwives in the UK. The resource is fully referenced so that you can read more about each subject covered.

### 1.2.1 Learning about becoming a registered nurse in the UK

In the UK, there are four fields of nursing (adult, child, mental health, and learning disability) as well as midwifery. This resource relates

mainly to adult nursing, although the processes and links to support your application to the NMC are relevant to all fields.

Becoming a RN in the UK will have many similarities to the process in any part of the world. However, there are some differences too; the links below lead to resources offering accounts of nursing by practising UK nurses. The 'This is modern nursing' video ([www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/become-a-nurse](http://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/become-a-nurse)) from the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) will give you insights into the scope of the role and help you decide whether this is indeed the right move for you.

Obtaining as much background information as possible on nursing and living in the UK will prepare you for your job interview, to gain UK registration, and to live and work here. It is a good idea to familiarize yourself with differences in culture and legislation to reduce the chance of encountering difficulties, and so that you feel confident and can work effectively as soon as you start in a busy clinical setting. The following links will provide you with background information, and you can search more widely online too. There are very many sites (some of questionable accuracy, so do check the credibility of all those visited) offering information on life in the UK, the principles of nursing practice, and so on.

**Principles of Nursing Practice:** [www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/principles-of-nursing-practice](http://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/principles-of-nursing-practice)

**Step into the NHS:** [www.stepintothenhs.nhs.uk/careers/videos](http://www.stepintothenhs.nhs.uk/careers/videos)

**Step into the NHS (real life stories):**  
[www.stepintothenhs.nhs.uk/careers/real-life-stories](http://www.stepintothenhs.nhs.uk/careers/real-life-stories)

### 1.3 Professional regulation

#### 1.3.1 The Nursing and Midwifery Council: the regulatory body for nursing

The NMC is the professional regulator for nurses and midwives in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and the Islands. It maintains a register of all qualified nurses and midwives who are currently practising. The NMC exists to safeguard the health and wellbeing of the public, by setting the standards of education and conduct for nurses and midwives, so that they deliver high-quality healthcare. It ensures that nurses and midwives keep their skills and knowledge up to date, and uphold the standards of the professional code ([www.nmc.org.uk/about-us/our-role](http://www.nmc.org.uk/about-us/our-role)).

### 1.3.2 The Code

The NMC *Code* lays out a set of professional standards for conduct, performance and ethics for nurses and midwives to follow. These can be found online at: [www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/](http://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/).

#### Key statements

The *Code* contains a series of statements listed under the following four headings:

- prioritize people
- practise effectively
- preserve safety
- promote professionalism and trust.

### 1.3.3 NMC Standards

The NMC's *Standards of proficiency for registered nurses* are grouped into seven 'platforms':

1. Being an accountable professional
2. Promoting health and preventing ill health
3. Assessing needs and planning care
4. Providing and evaluating care
5. Leading and managing nursing care and working in teams
6. Improving safety and quality of care
7. Coordinating care.

Annexe A to the proficiencies covers the communication and relationship management skills required by RNs, and Annexe B specifies the nursing procedures that RNs must be able to perform safely. A range of useful resources can be accessed from the NMC website, covering topics such as the role of the NMC, joining the register, good health and good character, and behaviour and conduct.

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Extract reproduced with permission, with thanks to the NMC, *Future Nurse*, 2018.

**Sources/bibliography:** NMC (2018) *The Code: Professional standards of practice and behaviour for nurses, midwives and nursing associates*, London: NMC: [www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/](http://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/code/); NMC (2018) *Future Nurse: Standards of proficiency for registered nurses*, London: NMC: [www.nmc.org.uk/standards/standards-for-nurses/](http://www.nmc.org.uk/standards/standards-for-nurses/).

## 1.4 Eligibility and the registration process

### 1.4.1 NMC criteria for internationally educated nurses

Before starting an application to register as a nurse in the UK, you should read the information and guidance provided on the NMC website to ensure that you are eligible to apply. There are different routes to registration, and the NMC has eligibility criteria and guidance specific to: