

FAQ's Non-Medical Prescribing (NMP) Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programmes

1. Would I be suited to study distance learning rather than the traditional taught way?

To study as a distance learner requires self-discipline, as well as careful planning when you are to study around work and family commitments. If you have not undertaken distance or blended learning academic study before it is probably not for you. If you have undertaken electronic distance learning packages before and found it an easy way to learn then it may suit you. You can only study this way for the BSc not the PG Cert. This is how the programmes have been validated by De Montfort University and Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).

2. How much time should I allow for study if I choose to undertake my study by distance learning?

The distance learning mode will require you to attend the programme induction day and up to 14 days attendance at University, which this is in line with the NMC minimum of eight face-to-face days for this programme (NMC Std.6, 2006). The rest of your studies are undertaken in your own time. The NMC (Std. 6, 2006) recommend you are provided with 10 additional days of protected learning outside of the 78 hours (12 days) that you will spend observing your medical mentor and other Independent Prescribers in practice. You will be given directed learning prior to each day you attend University to maximise your learning experience when you are in the classroom. We would suggest you prepare to set aside approximately eight-ten hours per week in addition to the NMC requirements of study to enable you to consolidate your learning through self-directed study.

3. I wish to undertake a traditionally taught programme. How much study time will I need to set aside?

For those on the taught BSc there will be 26 days attendance required at University. You will be required to undertake 12 days (78 hours) of practice-based learning, observing your medical mentor or other Independent Prescribers. In addition to the practice or University attendance, we suggest setting aside at least eight hours per week to enable you to build on the learning you undertake in the classroom.

4. Is this the same amount of private study if I chose the PG Cert option?

No. You will need to consider a further 20 hours over the whole programme to meet the additional work required in developing your algorithm.

5. I have not studied for more than three years, what are my options to ensure I meet the entry criteria?

If you have not studied for more than five years you may have to undertake a return to study module to then be eligible to access a level 6 module to meet the entry criteria for the programme. The return to study module offered by De Montfort University is at level 5 (diploma) but prepares you very well for level 6 study. You need to provide evidence of level 6 study as a minimum to enter either programme. This can be a module that relates to the role of a prescriber or ideally a Consultation and Examination module such as NMAH 3314 or MPHE7107. The content of a Consultation module that you undertake at another institution must include diagnostic skills and examination skills as well as consultation elements. If you are unsure about this please discuss with the programme leader.

6. I have not studied pharmacology before, how can I prepare?

It is as recommended that you start with improving your anatomy and physiology knowledge. Particularly: renal; hepatic and neurological anatomy and physiology. Then move onto cellular biology such as: cell membrane transport; receptors; enzymes; ligands and chemoreceptor's. This will give you a good basis for moving onto the appropriate level of pharmacology. A good starter text is Barber & Robertson *Essentials of Pharmacology for Nurses (2012) (2nd Edition)*. This is a pre-registration book but will help you focus particularly on the early knowledge of pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics. You will also be provided with a workbook prior to commencement of the programme upon successful completion of your interview. The course commences with some anatomy and physiology lectures and then builds on your pharmacology knowledge over the duration of the course and includes therapeutics in pharmacology.

7. I have heard that I will have to undertake a numeracy assessment and gain 100 per cent to pass this?

Yes. There is a numeracy assessment as part of the assessment for the pharmacology and therapeutics module within the programmes and the NMC (Std.11, 2006) Standards of proficiency for nurse and midwife prescribers require 100 per cent to pass this. The questions are structured like drug calculations in practice and are problems you will have met many times during your career. You may find that the prescribing lead will undertake a numeracy assessment prior to authorising your application form. It is important to seek help if you have difficulties with numeracy from books on drug calculations. Alternatively the programme leader will email you a practice paper for you to produce at interview. This must be attempted honestly without the use of a calculator. During the module support is offered for numeracy and there will be opportunities to undertake practice questions or be directed to further learning support.

8. Will I need to be able to use a computer to undertake any of the prescribing modules?

Yes. Many of the learning materials are accessed on the virtual learning environment or via the internet. You will need to be able to use search database such as CINAHL and BNI and be able to conduct searches on the internet. Many journals are now held electronically and to find supporting evidence for your work requires these skills. Much of your work will also be submitted in a format such as Microsoft Word or you may be sending tutorial drafts via email as attachments. Most of your work is submitted electronically and therefore basic computer skills are essential for entry. It may be prudent to undertake a short computer basics course prior to application so your progress is not held back by poor computer skills.

9. Will I need to be interviewed prior to being accepted on the programme?

Yes. All applicants are interviewed ideally with either their prescribing or education lead in their Trust and with either the NMP programme leader or one of the module leaders. If you are from the independent sector you will be required to attend for interview or it is possible to conduct this over the telephone.

10. I have heard I have to have a nurse preceptor as well as a medical mentor to support me on the programme, why is this?

The nurse preceptor should be a Non-Medical Prescriber who can act as a 'buddy' for the duration of your practice component of the course. They can be a valuable support and mentor during this challenging course. Once you have qualified they are there to provide the preceptor support in your early months as a new prescriber. The NMC are keen for this role to be provided to maximise your peer support and enable you to have the confidence to prescribe safely and confidently. It is vital for those in the independent sector who may feel isolated or even those within the NHS who work in very specialist roles. For those in the independent sector the nurse preceptor must also provide a character reference for you prior to interview.

11. Why does the pharmacology exam require me to get 80% to pass?

This is a requirement of the NMC (2006) Standards of Proficiency for Nurse and Midwife Prescribers and also holds true for Allied Health Professionals (AHP) as well who are guided by the same standards as the nurse and midwives. There is not a nurse/AHP version of prescribing which is at a different level to the doctors. With the full opening up of the BNF all prescribers work in the same way i.e. assessing, examining, diagnosing and planning treatment options and making decisions about which drugs might be the most efficacious for that patient. (See National Prescribing Centre, Single Competency Framework 2012). Even if you are not intending to prescribe from a very wide formulary your patients may have other pre-existing conditions that require medication. Once you chose to prescribe patient safety dictates you must understand how your decision to prescribe is affected by either their other health problems or medications and what your prescribing decision may

do to current medications and treatments. Therefore your pharmacology knowledge must prepare for this advanced skill.

12. I am an Allied Health Professional who wishes to become a prescriber what are the options for me?

Physiotherapists and Podiatrists can now study for their Independent and Supplementary Prescribing award with the nurses and midwives. For Radiographers Pharmacists undertake a different programme, please contact us for more information. Currently the law only allows radiographers to become supplementary prescribers rather than independent prescribers, if you are a radiographer you can study with us. Please note we do not run the conversion course for physiotherapists and podiatrists who were initially supplementary prescribers who wish to study for independent prescribing status.

We have many enquiries from paramedics who wish to become prescribers but this is not possible at the moment. If you require further information please contact the Programme Leader Karen Ford kford01@dmu.ac.uk or 0116-2013861 to discuss further.

13. If my CRB is over two years old when I start the programme is it okay for me to get a new one before I finish?

No. You must have an enhanced CRB that is no older than two years to be accepted onto the programme. You must provide a copy with your application form and the original must be taken to interview. You will be required to complete a good character declaration when you complete the course before the programme leader can sign you off and put your name forward to the professional body for the recordable qualification to prescribe.

14. I am an aesthetic practitioner and would like to undertake the course but I am not sure about the entry criteria.

The entry criteria are clearly listed in programme details. You can undertake at either BSc or PG Cert (if you already have a degree). You will need the support of a nurse preceptor to provide a character reference as you are not working within an NHS Trust. If you are part employed by the NHS and in private practice your NHS employer must complete their approval on the managers section of the application form to ensure they are aware of what you are studying even if you self-fund. You will also need to provide evidence of successful completion of a module in consultation skills that includes diagnostics i.e. being able to consider a differential diagnosis and examination skills. In addition you must meet the other academic entry criteria.

15. I am working in a specialist field and want to undertake a prescribing programme that focuses on my speciality. Will I have to study other therapeutic areas and learn about other drugs I am unlikely to prescribe?

You cannot undertake a bespoke prescribing course for your speciality. The course at De Montfort University and other universities is approved by the NMC/HCPC and

will give you a good grounding in generic pharmacology principles and therapeutics and it is then for you to adapt and explore this in relation to your specialist field. Many of your patients will be on other medication and it is vital you are aware of the impact of your prescribing decision on their current medication in terms of how it affects the drugs they are on or what you prescribe (interactions) as well as side effects of what they are already taking etc. You have access to the whole BNF but will be expected to prescribe within your competence and local formulary boundaries. In the future you may wish to move to a different role and will need this foundation to ensure you continue to develop and seek evidence to support safe prescribing decision making.