University of Suffolk

DEFINITIVE COURSE RECORD

Course Title	**Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Community Practitioner (District Nursing)**
Awarding Bodies	**University of Suffolk**
Level of Award[1]	**FHEQ Level 7**
Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies Recognition	**Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC)**
Credit Structure[2]	**120 Credits at level 7**
Mode of Attendance	**Full-time**
Standard Length of Course[3]	**1 year full-time**
Intended Award	**Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Community Practitioner** **(District Nursing)**
Named Exit Awards	**PgD Community Nursing Studies** **PgC Community Nursing Studies**
Entry Requirements[4]	All applicants for District Nursing must be on part 1 of the NMC register Adult Nursing. It is recommended that applicants have: • One year post registration experience, the year immediately preceding application to the programme must have been in the primary care setting. • Have a degree or evidence of their ability to work at master's level (to be discussed with Course Lead). • Access to practice placement and Practice Assessor/Practice Supervisor. This is the responsibility of the sponsoring practice partner to arrange prior to commencement of the course.

[1] For an explanation of the levels of higher education study, see the QAA Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (2024)
[2] All academic credit awarded as a result of study at the University adheres to the Higher education credit framework for England.
[3] Where the course is delivered both full-time and part-time, the standard length of course is provided for the full-time mode of attendance only. The length of the part-time course is variable and dependent upon the intensity of study. Further information about mode of study and maximum registration periods can be found in the Framework and Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Awards.
[4] Details of standard entry requirements can be found in the Admissions Policy and further details about Disclosure and Barring Checks (DBS) can be found on the University's DBS webpage.p

	In Addition: • Confirmation that appropriately qualified and experienced practitioners will be available to supervise and assess the prescribing element. • DBS check which needs to be within 3 years when commencing prescribing element.
Delivering Institution	**University of Suffolk**

This definitive record sets out the essential features and characteristics of the Postgraduate Diploma in Specialist Community Practitioner (District Nursing) (PgD SCPDN) course. The information provided is accurate for students entering level 7 in the 2025/26 academic year[5].

Course Summary

The purpose of the course is to prepare registered nurses working in the community to advance their clinical, leadership, research and educative practice, to ensure that on successful completion they will meet the standards of proficiency for community nursing specialist practice qualification set by the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) (2022). The course will therefore support the NHS long-term workforce plan (NHS 2023) by supporting the development of more community specialist practitioners (District Nurses).

Further according to the NHS Long-Term Plan community health services face multiple challenges with insufficient staff and capacity to meet rising patient need and complexity (NHS 2019). It is recognised that district nurses work autonomously to provide increasingly complex care for patients as well as supporting their family members. The course will therefore support clinical autonomy, independent decision making and leadership in complex and high-risk situations for the benefit of people and services (NMC 2022). Delivery of the course will further build on current good practice to prepare registered nurses to work in situations that require the management of clinical complexity and risk, both in terms of the people being cared for, caseload management and the services they work within, supporting integrated working with other agencies, professionals and disciplines to provide holistic person-centred care.

In addition, students on the programme at the University of Suffolk will benefit from the support of the teaching team comprised of academic tutors and assessors and Practice Supervisors and Practice Assessors in the practice environment.

[5] The University reserves the right to make changes to course content, structure, teaching and assessment as outlined in the Admissions Policy.

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Course Aims

The Postgraduate Diploma aims to prepare community nurses to develop the specialist knowledge and extended skills to achieve the specialist practitioner qualification community nursing (district nursing) (NMC 2022) and become safe and competent as an independent prescriber in accordance with the NMC (2023).

In providing the Postgraduate Diploma, the University, the course team and practice aim to equip you to:

1. Develop an enhanced understanding, knowledge and expertise to lead and develop primary and community care practice.

2. Gain a comprehensive understanding of care coordination within the community nursing context with critical consideration of integrated care systems and its impact in practice.

3. Become a critical and discerning practitioner who will be able to innovate and evaluate change in health and social care practice based on a sound knowledge and evidence base.

4. Effectively demonstrate the clinical leadership skills and attributes necessary to achieve effective provision of care through an inter-professional approach to education across disciplines and organisations.

5. Demonstrate competence in complex decision making to enable them to make a significant contribution to service development through innovation, leadership and research.

Course Learning Outcomes

The following statements define what students graduating from the PgD SPDN course will have been judged to have demonstrated in order to achieve the award. These statements, known as learning outcomes, are aligned to the 7 platforms within the NMC (2022) standards and have been formally approved as aligned with the generic qualification descriptor for level 7[6]

On successful completion of the programme, we expect you to be able to:

1. Gain an extensive knowledge of pharmacological and assessment/ consultation skills to meet the required regulatory standards in order to act as a Non-medical Prescriber.

2. Critically analyse the role of the District Nurse in relation to the public health agenda with acknowledgement of the challenges faced including overcoming health inequalities.

[6] As set out in the QAA Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (2024)

3. Develop an enhanced knowledge around complex decision making within care coordination, with critical awareness of ethical, legal and political issues that influence care on multiple organisational levels.

4. Utilise evidence-based practice and research to provide reasoned judgements and decisions in relation to complex issues and problems within patient assessments to deliver person-centred care in the community setting.
5. Have a critical awareness of the role of the District Nurse and the associated professional accountability and autonomy in the current healthcare environment.

6. Assess, implement and evaluate change and innovation in health and social care practice and critically analyse a wide range of influencing factors within current healthcare practice.

7. Debate the application and suitability of different research methods for gathering evidence to support the development of District Nursing.

8. Critically evaluate effective Leadership skills whilst managing integrated care in community nursing, with a focus on the importance of effective communication and management skills.

9. Develop the skills needed within leadership to become emotionally intelligent through self-awareness and reflective practice for continuing professional development.

10. Effectively utilise leadership skills in order to ensure care delivered is coordinated, safe, and of high quality for all patients.

Course Design

The design of this course has been guided by the following Professional Standards/ NMC Competency Frameworks:

- NMC Standards of proficiency for community nursing specialist practice qualifications (2022)
- NMC Standards framework for nursing and midwifery education (2023a)
- NMC Standards for student supervision and assessment (SSSA) (2023b)
- NMC Standards for post-registration programmes (2023c)

The design of the course has been, and will continue to be, determined through the collaborative working relationship between the University of Suffolk, Practice Partners with input from service users and students. The Postgraduate program is designed to ensure that the content covers the standards of proficiency for community nursing specialist practice

qualifications and is aligned to the proficiencies set out in the seven platforms of nursing practice (NMC 2022). This provides nurses with the additional knowledge, skills and behaviours they need to work as a community nursing specialist practitioner. The course is designed to develop specialist community nurses who can assess and meet the diverse needs of people of all ages, in their home, in settings close to home and in the community.

The learning and teaching approaches employed will encourage and increasingly guide the registered nurse to becoming a self-motivated, independent learner capable of directing their own study. This is within a framework of academic rigour and quality expected of Postgraduate study. The course comprises both theoretical and practical learning aimed at addressing the key principles underpinning the specialist and unique practice of District Nursing.

Course Structure

The PgD SCPDN comprises modules at level 7.

Module Specifications for each of these modules is available to students on-line in the Brightspace module site.

	Module	Credits	Module Type[7]
Level 7			
	Care Coordination in Community Nursing	20	M
	Holistic Assessment	20	M
	Leadership and Service Innovation	40	M
	Non-Medical Independent and/or Supplementary Prescribing for Nurses, Midwives, SCPHN, Radiographers, Physiotherapists, Podiatrists, Paramedics and Dieticians [V300]	40	M
	Practice Element: District Nursing	Pass/Refer	M

Awards

On successful completion of the course, students will be awarded a Postgraduate Diploma Specialist Community Practitioner (District Nursing). Students who refer on practice may be eligible for a Postgraduate Diploma in Community Nursing Studies on successful completion of 120 credits. Students who leave the course early may be eligible for a Postgraduate

[7] Modules are designated as either mandatory (M), requisite (R) or optional (O). For definitions, see the Framework and Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Awards

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Certificate in Community Nursing Studies on successful completion of 60 credits

It is essential to successfully complete all modules of the SCPDN course to qualify for registration of the prescribing qualification with the NMC. If a student fails to achieve the SCPDN qualification, their prescribing qualification cannot be added to the register, even if they successfully passed the prescribing component. This aligns with the requirements set by the NMC.

Course Delivery

The course is delivered at the University's Ipswich Campus. Students studying full-time on a PgD SCPDN are likely to have approximately 300 contact hours.

The direct contact hours will be a mix of in person and virtual lectures, seminars and guided learning using the online learning platform Brightspace. In addition, tutorials, guided group discussions and self-directed study will form part of the self-directed hours.

Placements will be arranged by the students NHS Trust or other employer. Students will also be required to participate in clinical placements involving 37.5 hours per week of allocated clinical time; a total of 900 hours across the duration of the course. Students will normally be expected to undertake 6 hours of independent study each week; but should be prepared for this to vary based on assignment deadlines and class exercises.

Course Assessment

A variety of assessments will be used on the course to enable students to experience and adapt to different assessment styles. The assessment methods used will be appropriate to assess each module's intended learning outcomes. Assessment on the course overall will comprise of summative and formative work, including assignments, reports, presentations, OSCEs and group work. There will be summative and formative examinations and ongoing assessment of clinical practice in the form of the PAD.

Special Features

On successful completion of the PgD SCPDN the following Specialist Practitioner Qualifications are recordable on the NMC register:

- SPDN: Specialist Community Practitioner (District Nursing)
- V300: Nurse Non-medical prescriber

Course Team

The academic staff delivering this course are drawn from a team that includes specialists and current practitioners. All module leads are qualified in their subjects with their own specialist knowledge to contribute and are registered with the appropriate professional body; NMC or General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC). Academic staff with the DN specialist qualification

act as Academic Assessors in line with NMC requirements for student supervision and assessment.

Course Costs

Students undertaking the PgD SCPDN will not be charged tuition fees directly. Tuition fees will be agreed between the University and their employer.

Any additional expenses are agreed with the student's employer.

Academic Framework and Regulations

This course is delivered according to the Framework and Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Awards and other academic policies and procedures of the University and published on the website.