

CHAPTER 1

Getting the job you want

Aim

The aim of this chapter is to help you get the job you want.

Objectives

By the end of this chapter you will be able to:

- 1 Give some consideration to your future career prospects
- 2 Have further understanding of your role as a staff nurse
- 3 Read a job description critically
- 4 Put together your curriculum vitae (CV)
- 5 Understand how to complete an application for a job
- 6 Prepare for interview

Introduction

CONGRATULATIONS STAFF NURSE! Well done, you did it! Three years of hard labour, blood, sweat and for sure plenty of tears, and your name now appears on the professional register. OK, enough of the celebrations; it is time to get that job you really want.

In some areas jobs are hard to find and the competition can be stiff. You have to stand out above the crowd but you will need more than your good looks, wit and humour. The way to get the job that you want is to prepare, prepare and prepare; oh, and did I say prepare?

This opening chapter will consider the role of the staff nurse and some of the issues that can impact on the nurse's role and function. It is essential that you give serious consideration to where you want to be in 5 years' time (a common question used at interviews); so you must have an understanding of the various

career options available to you. This chapter cannot do this for you; you have to do this but, be bold, think wide and far. Your registration is in effect your passport to the rest of the world – the world really is your oyster.

Application by curriculum vitae (CV) is becoming more popular; the chapter provides pointers on CVs. You must not forget however that the completion of a standard application form (electronic or hand written) is still very much used, particularly in the NHS.

There are sections in the chapter that help you read and understand a job description, encouraging you to look at it in a critical light. When you have considered your career trajectory, you have critically analysed the job description, tailored your CV to reflect the person specification and completed the application and have been invited for interview; at this point you really do have to talk the talk and walk the walk. There are hints and tips towards the end of the chapter that will help you prepare for interview.

The role of the staff nurse

Over the years the role of the staff nurse (the registered nurse) has changed and will continue to change and evolve. The changes are often the result of professional, statutory requirements as well as the demands made by the public on nurses and health services. Nurses are members of the multidisciplinary team, often acting as a pivot, the coordinator of care, particularly in the health care setting. The team will have common goals but each with their own different roles to perform. The Royal College of Nursing, RCN (2013) has defined various roles within what it calls the nursing family (see table 1.1).

The multidisciplinary/inter-relational working arrangements of the various members of the nursing team can be found in figure 1.1.

The Health and Social Care Act 2012

This Act has introduced changes for the delivery of health and social care and has been hailed as the biggest changes to the NHS since the system was set up in 1948. A summary of some aspects of the Act is detailed in table 1.2. The Health and Social Care Act (the Act) is divided into 12 parts and is only relevant to England.

When the Act was introduced, primary care trusts and strategic health authorities were abolished as part of the radical restructuring of the health service; new health and well-being boards have been established with the aim of improving integration between the NHS and local authority services. Clinical commissioning groups have taken over commissioning from primary care trusts

Table 1.1 The nursing team – roles.

Registered nurses	Assistant practitioners	Health care assistants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use their specific knowledge to make clinical judgements in order to assess the needs of the people they care for • Prescribe, appropriately delegate and supervise nursing care • Are accountable practitioners as well as being accountable for the care that they have delegated to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the work of a variety of registered professionals, crossing professional boundaries • Makes judgements using a comparative approach • Plan their own work in line with accepted protocols and standard operating procedures • Can undertake the routine supervision of others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have nursing tasks delegated to them by the registered nurse and are supervised when providing care to people • Work within and are guided by protocols that have been set • Undertake the performance of tasks that are commensurate with their level of assessed competence • Have responsibility to inform the person delegating tasks if they do not have the competence to undertake it

Source: Adapted from Royal College of Nursing (2003, 2013) and Skills for Health (2010).

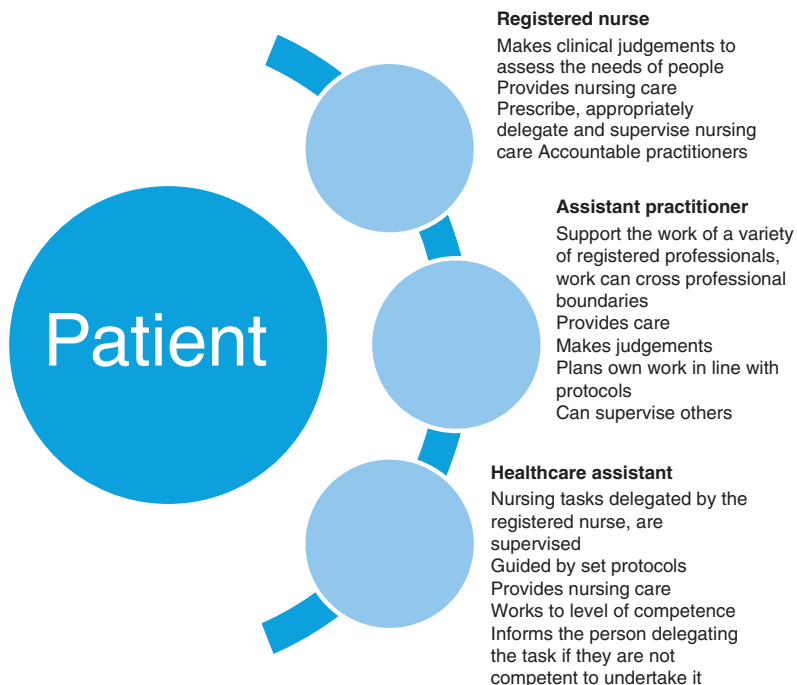


Figure 1.1 The inter-relationship aspects of the various members of the nursing team. Source: Adapted from Royal College of Nursing (2013).

Table 1.2 A summary of some aspects of the 2012 Health and Social Care Act.

- The health service in England incorporating duties of the Secretary of State for Health and new commissioning measures
 - Further provisions about public health as well as direction on the cooperation of bodies with functions relating to public health
 - Regulation of health and adult social care services (particularly Monitor), competition issues, licensing, pricing, health special administration and financial assistance in special administration cases
 - NHS foundation trusts and NHS trusts
 - Public involvement and local government concerning HealthWatch at national (England) and local levels
 - Primary care services
 - Regulation of health and social care workers
 - The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), including a slight name change from the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence
 - Information concerning health and adult social care services
 - Abolition of some public bodies, such as, the Appointments Commission, the National Patient Safety Agency and the Alcohol Education and Research Council
 - Miscellaneous, including information relating to births and deaths, duties to cooperate and supervised community treatment under the Mental Health Act 1983
 - Final provisions, comprising financial provisions and commencement of a consultation with Scottish Ministers
-

and are working with the new NHS Commissioning Board. Monitor, a new regulator has been established to regulate providers of NHS services in the interests of patients and to prevent anticompetitive behaviour. The voices of those who use services have been strengthened with the setting up of a new national body, HealthWatch, and local HealthWatch organisations. Public Health England, a new body, is leading on public health nationally and local authorities do this at a local level.

These changes to the provision have had significant impact on the ways in which nurses work as well as on whom they work with. Having insight and being able to demonstrate this insight can help you at interview as you will be expected to be able to show an understanding of how the NHS is run and how the nurse contributes to its success.

Being up to date and demonstrating this at interview means not only being on top of contemporary practice issues but also having an all-round understanding of the politics of health and social care. You will only be able to confidently state facts with regard to how the provision of care is delivered at micro and macro levels and what has an impact on this if you have done your homework.

Things to consider

Take some time and think about the people who may be interviewing you for this your dream job. They are more than likely highly educated and in positions of seniority; they have seen so many changes over the years in many forms. They have seen changes made to the roles and function of nurses, they are looking for someone who knows what contemporary nursing is all about and they want you to be able to tell them what the drivers are behind role change. Do your homework and dig deep; be ready to discuss the politics behind the role.

The job description

A staff nurse's job is a staff nurse's job anywhere – wrong, and this is why it is essential that you are critical of the job description. At first glance according to Tremayne (2009) all jobs seem to offer the same things – excitement, challenge and flexibility. This is done in order to try and make their job stand out.

During your nursing studies you will have been asked as a senior student in your academic work to 'critically analyse'. The skills that you have developed during your studies will now come into play with regard to the job description.

Critical analysis does not mean being negative; it requires you to be objective with regard to the job description and look for the good and not so good aspects. You have to be focused and try to avoid being subjective; it is so easy to do this when you are so keen to get a job. What you want is the job of your dreams.

A job description is an outline of a job; it can be anywhere from a few sentences to a few pages long. Being able to quickly and correctly analyse the job description can help you search for employment more effectively.

Often job seekers apply for jobs based only on the job title. Job titles are usually 'general', for example, 'staff nurse'; what is most important is to look at the key responsibilities to make sure that your skill set really matches the role. If you do not have some relevant skills, then there is little chance they will call you forward for interview. Spend more time reading the information as opposed to focusing on the job.

You should avoid giving the selector (those that sift the applications) the impression that you are applying for every advert out there regardless of whether you have the relevant skill set or experience for that position. Having read the job description in a critical way you will come across as being a person who knows what the potential employer is looking for as opposed to casting a very wide net. The people doing the hiring want to be sure that the applicant has clearly read the job description (see table 1.3).

Table 1.3 The job description critically analysed.

-
- Take time to evaluate your own job experience and skills before evaluating the job description. It is essential that you know your applicable skills, experience and education level
 - Print out the job description. Using a highlighter pen underline or highlight important qualifications. You can also copy and paste the description into a word processor document and highlight lines if you prefer
 - Identify the job location. This should be listed at the top. Do not apply for the job if you are not available to work in that area. There are some positions that may specify that they will require you to work at various locations (locally or nationally)
 - Identify and highlight the education required for the post. This is often listed as diploma, bachelor's degree, master's degree, certification or another form of qualification that may be related to the speciality. Decide if you qualify based on the education level
 - Highlight the skills necessary for the job. This could be written in a list or in prose format. If it is listed in sentences or paragraph form, list the skills on another piece of paper, underlining each skill that you possess. Look for skills associated with the use of information technology, interpersonal skills, familiarity with technical terms, experience in specific areas, fields (i.e. child, mental health, learning disability or adult), problem-solving skills, physical demands and more
 - Identify and highlight the experience required for the job. Pay attention to language when looking at experience. If 3 years is listed as a requirement, the employer is likely to be strict; however, if 3 years is listed as a 'desired qualification' then it may not be strictly necessary
 - Identify the daily activities that are involved in the job. Highlight hours, specific duties and daily tasks. Make sure you can complete these tasks prior to applying
 - Go through the job description looking for specific requirements. Some positions may require that you are to work on internal rotation. If you cannot fulfil these requirements, then do not apply for the job. They are non-negotiable
 - Highlight the salary and other forms of compensation. Near the end of the job description, there is usually a salary or grade stated. Sometimes, the description will say depends on experience, which means that the salary is negotiable based on how well you fulfil the qualifications
 - Decide if you fulfil the education, experience, skills and various requirements listed in the job posting. If you do decide to move forward in the application process write a covering letter and adjust your CV to address your applicable qualifications. It is essential that you write a covering letter and a CV that addresses each job you apply for specifically. This demonstrates that you have researched the organisation
 - Identify the steps that are necessary to apply for the job. Many job descriptions state clearly where a CV, a covering letter or inquiries can be sent. Highlight the deadline to apply and ensure that you adhere strictly to that deadline
-

Applying for a job can be easy, but applying for the right job is not always easy when you have to match the job profile. If you have questions about the description, find out more by calling the organisation. Only apply if you think you can actually do the job.



Over to you staff nurse

The anatomy of a job description

Choose a job description for a job that interests you and complete the following list:

- 1 What is the purpose of the position (the reasons for the position's existence)?
- 2 What is the position on offer (title, grade/salary, department, directorate and so on)?
- 3 What are the essential functions associated with the position (the tasks critical to the position)?
- 4 Periodic functions (tasks that are not essential, but are part of the job description)?
- 5 List the minimum qualifications (education, NMC registration required, experience).
- 6 What are the required behaviours (attention to detail, ability to learn)?
- 7 Describe the working conditions (description of the physical requirements, environmental issues).
- 8 Any supervision needed (how the job is supervised, whether you are expected to work independently)?
- 9 Miscellaneous 'Other tasks as assigned' (what are these).

Having dissected the job description:

- Can you do the job?
- Do you still want it?

The application form

Most employers will require all applicants, regardless of the job applied for, to complete a job application form. You have filled in an application before (and in some instances on many occasions) so this is nothing new to you, but it will be different. It is essential that you tailor the application to the job on offer, hence the need to ensure that you fully understand the detail within the job description.

There are a number of organisations (e.g. trusts) who have their own application forms, and they do this for a reason. They want you to answer certain questions often related to the specific needs of the organisation and the people they offer their service to. Each organisation's working environment

is very different and you need to decide if this is the environment you are looking for.

Ensure that you give full and focused answers when responding to the questions on the application form. As obvious as this may sound many people fail to make the link between what the job requires and what they have to offer.

The person selecting or sifting the applications often have two piles – ‘proceed and invite’ or ‘reject’; they are busy people, and they need you to tell them that you have the relevant skills for the position being offered and these skills are commensurate with the job. If this is your first application for a staff nurse’s job in a surgical unit you need to speak about your experiences as a student in a surgical area – what it is that has made you want to come back to that area? Do not tell the prospective employer on the application form that you ‘like to do dressings’; you need to do much more convincing than that.

Things to consider

It is important for your job application to be complete, correct (no errors) and accurate. Take a photocopy of the original application form and use it for a couple of practice runs so that when you come to completing and presenting the final one it will be perfect.

Table 1.4 provides a list of hints and tips associated with filling in the application form.

Table 1.4 Some hints and tips concerning the application form.

- Read the application through first; this gives a flavour of what it is they will be asking of you
 - Ensure that you have all of the information to hand, for example, dates addresses and so on
 - Be sure to complete all requested information. Do not leave anything blank. If any of the responses asked for are not applicable then write ‘not applicable’ in the space
 - Adhere to instructions, write clearly and neatly, using black ink or if instructed to do so make the application online or word process
 - Check for spelling and grammatical errors. Proofread your job application form before turning it in and also ask someone else to proofread it for you
 - If asked to complete a section chronologically, for example, list your most recent job first when completing employment information. List your most recent education first. Include schools, colleges and training institutions and universities
 - If you are required to provide details of referees do so but, ensure you have asked the permission of the person/people you are citing to act as a referee
 - Check the application form for any omission/oversights
 - Do not forget to sign and date your application
-

You will be asked about criminal convictions on the application form; you must make any declaration that relates to criminal convictions. Good character will be assessed by the provision of two references. You should use your University for one and a clinician for the other, seeking their permission prior to putting their name down. You will be required to complete an occupational health risk/assessment form.

The personal statement

The personal statement is your opportunity to impress a future employer. Sometimes, there are word restrictions applied to the personal statement and as such you may only have a few hundred words; if you get this right then you are on your way to being invited to interview.

When constructing your personal statement you should remember that the prospective employer is looking for a person who is passionate about the job on offer, not just anyone who wants any job. The personal statement provides you with an opportunity to share with your future employer how keen you are about the position they are offering without them even seeing you.

The personal statement if written well is all about setting yourself apart from the rest of the people who are applying for the position, your opportunity to show that you are the ideal candidate. The job description tells you what the employer is looking for. Go through the job description and make a list of examples that show why and how you could fulfil each prerequisite.

When you have written the personal statement then it must be checked. Check your spelling. Did you demonstrate the ways in which you have met all the necessary competencies in the job description? Have you said why you want the job? Did you read it back to yourself aloud to ensure it makes sense? Ask someone else to check it.

You should keep it simple – you are not expected to write an essay and the prospective employer will not want to read one. Ensure the points being made are concise, demonstrate enthusiasm and professionalism.

The curriculum vitae

It is common practice for employing organisations to ask potential candidates to not only submit a completed application form but to also provide them with an up-to-date CV. Your CV is your personal marketing tool (RCN, 2005); this should be used to demonstrate to a potential employer that you have the skills and professional, educational and personal experience required to undertake

Things to consider

General tips to help create a CV

- Use 'action' words, for example, 'developed', 'organised', 'led', 'initiated', 'produced'.
 - Do not use the pronoun 'I'.
 - Provide an explanation for any gaps in your paid employment.
 - Include any achievements you have gained through voluntary work or student activity, for example, set rep.
 - Do not exceed two pages.
 - If you have a lot of experience, summarise positions held more than 10 years ago.
 - If you have published a number of articles, select the most important ones, summarising the others.
 - Use good quality white paper.
 - Do not use too many font styles.
 - Ornate typefaces and borders are not required.
 - Use black font colour.
 - Do not include a photograph.
 - Abbreviations that are not easily recognised should be avoided.
 - Only include contact details for referees if you are happy for them to be contacted.
 - Enclose a covering letter highlighting the main points of your CV and how they relate to the post you are applying for.
 - Always ask for another person to proofread your CV for any errors.
 - Seek constructive feedback to determine if it is easy to read and if it makes a positive impact.
-

the position you are applying for. A CV can be used for a range of purposes and in this instance when you have been asked to enclose a CV along with a standard application form.

When preparing to write your CV begin by making a list of your experience and posts held, beginning with the most recent (these include post held prior to your nurse education). List the date of employment, name of the employer, your job title, the responsibilities and your main achievements for each of the posts held.

Make a list of the courses you have undertaken and the qualifications gained; work chronologically. Include the dates and the names of the educational establishments. List any professional activities such as any articles that you have published, papers you have presented at conferences, membership of professional groups and so on.

It is recognised that there is no single perfect format to be used for the construction of a CV. The CV should be logical, clear and concise; you should emphasise your strengths. Table 1.5 provides key components that should be included in your CV.

Table 1.5 Key components of a CV.

- Personal details: Your name, address, preferred contact telephone number and email address
 - Opening statement: Write a couple of sentences summarising your personal and professional qualities. Include two or three major professional achievements in the statement if you have a lot of experience
 - Experience: Start this section with your most recent post, listing dates, position(s) held and the name of the employer. Provide three or four key responsibilities held at your most recent posts (even as a student) and two or three major achievements that are relevant to the position being applied for. Go through the job description and person specification in order to do this
 - Qualifications: Provide details of your professional qualifications and education to date. Include your NMC pin number and expiry date
 - Professional activities: Provide a list of articles published, membership of professional groups and any papers delivered at conferences
 - Personal: You can include extra information, your interests, but only in general terms and only if relevant to the job. Also include whether you hold a driving licence
-

Source: Adapted from RCN (2005).

On paper, this is your chance to sell yourself and indicate what type of nurse you are, that you are a knowledgeable doer, that you are a kind person, compassionate and caring. In order to do this you will have to use emotive words and should not be afraid to say how passionate you are about your work.

Psychometric testing

More and more organisations are including psychometric testing (sometimes called personality or aptitude tests) and an assessment of the candidate's ability to calculate as part of the interviewing process (sometimes these tests are done prior to interview and the candidate is only then invited to proceed to interview if they are successful in the supplementary tests).

Personality tests are used to help determine how your personality relates to your choice of job, so they are important tests. An aptitude test can provide an indication of which jobs match which personality and which careers a person might have an aptitude for (they are not however fail proof). These types of tests can help assess job applicants for conscientiousness, extroversion or other traits that can be useful in helping to enhance an already established team, to forging a successful career – alternatively, to cause a derailment.

The questions are seldom straightforward, nor are the answers. There is an element of psychology involved in the setting of the questions. Applicants may try to give answers they think the organisation wants to hear. Psychometric testing is not asking you to give right answers – they are asking for you to just be yourself.

The majority of psychometric tests are completed online. Some tests enable you to save your answers and return to complete the test at a later stage; others are timed. Check if you can go back and adjust an answer before you begin a test; there are some tests that do not allow you to go back to a question once you have moved on.

As expected there are various types of psychometric tests. Personality tests aim to identify a personal type. This often takes the form of paired items or pictures and you are asked to choose a preference. For example, would you rather read a book or go to a party?

Aptitude or ability tests are those that have been designed to assess your reasoning or cognitive ability. These tests usually include:

- Verbal tests
- Numerical tests
- Spatial reasoning
- Subject/role-specific tests.

Things to consider

Preparing for the tests:

The personality test:

- Practise using tests so that you are familiar with the style being used and the format of questions.
- Answer questions honestly; do not try to guess what the 'right' answer is.

To prepare for an aptitude test:

- Practise as many tests as you can.
 - Try to determine what particular tests are being used for nursing or health care-related jobs. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers in personality tests, and aptitude tests are generally used as a starting point for recruitment. When taking these tests ensure that you:
 - Read the instructions carefully
 - Work through questions quickly and accurately
 - Do not try to guess the right answer
 - Answer honestly
 - Practise so that you are not distracted by the way the questions have been formatted or the style used
 - Pay attention to what you are being asked but do not dwell for too long; if you are unsure move on to the next question.
-

There are several career aptitude tests and assessments available online that can help you determine what type of job matches your career interests and aptitude as well as helping you to prepare to undertake one, if this is a part of the interview process.

Numeracy screening

The majority of health care organisations are now requiring all applications for new staff nurses posts to sit a numeracy test (many also require you to sit a literacy test). There is no standard test (i.e. one that is used across the country); each organisation will have their own test(s) and you may be required to attend an assessment centre to sit the tests.

Some of the questions in the test may seem to be rather basic however; standards of numeracy in most adults in the United Kingdom are poor regardless of their highest qualification. Candidates are required to demonstrate a minimum threshold score on the selection day if they are to progress to the interview stage. The organisation inviting you to interview will send you details of any pre-assessments that you will be required to undertake.

Things to consider

If you anticipate difficulty with the numeracy test the BBC have a site <http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise>; this site Skillswise has been set up for adults to use with regard to Maths and English. This is a free to access website with worksheets that can be printed off along with factsheets and online games, videos and quizzes.

The Standardised Numeracy Assessment Process (SNAP) aims to standardise the approach to dealing with the assessment of numeracy. The SNAP service provides numeracy assessment and education to health care and educational organisations across England. There are open source materials freely available to help promote numeracy in health care. <http://www.snap.nhs.uk>

When sitting down to undertake the assessment take note of the following:

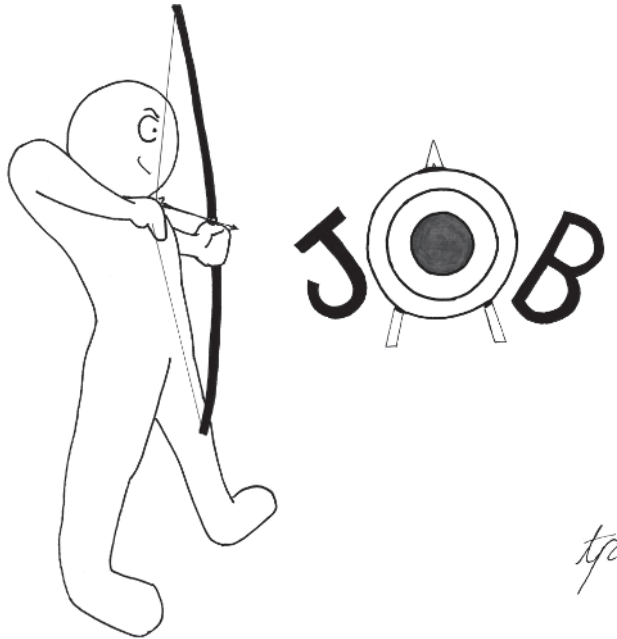
- How many questions are on the paper so you complete all of them?
- Be aware of the time allowed to provide your answers.
- Ensure that you include the correct units for all answers where appropriate. Answers will be deemed incorrect if the wrong units are indicated, or if units are not included when they are required.
- You may not be able to use a calculator.
- In some organisations the pass mark is 100%.

The interview

So far so good. Now that your application has been put in the right pile, 'invite for interview', you should be feeling a little more confident. There are a few

more hurdles to get over first and of course the biggest one is getting through the interview stage and all that it entails.

In an increasingly highly competitive nursing job market, you want to have an interview that will make a positive and long-lasting impact on the interviewer but, you have to put much effort into this aspect of the job-seeking process.



During the interview there are two things you should aim to accomplish:

- 1 Decide if the organisation is an organisation you want to work for.
- 2 Convince the interview panel you are the person they want to take on.

The interviewer believes you can do this job, otherwise you would not have come so far in the process; knowing this should boost your confidence.

When you are being interviewed for a nursing position, you will be asked about your skills and your experience, your nurse education programme and your interests. There are a myriad of questions you could be asked. Usually, there are three basic concerns that the interviewing panel will have:

- 1 What you can do for them
- 2 Why it is you want to work with them
- 3 What you are like once they get to know you.

Things to consider

Here are some questions that you might be asked during an interview for a staff nurse's post.

- What made you choose nursing as a career?
 - How has your nurse education programme prepared you for the post you are applying for?
 - What interests you about working in this trust (organisation)?
 - Do you have any professional affiliations?
 - What do you do to keep current with regard to nursing and medical practices?
 - How do you manage stress?
 - How would you manage a situation where a patient or his or her relative wants to make a complaint about your nursing care?
 - How would you care for a patient who constantly complains about pain?
 - What do you feel you contribute to your patient's health and wellbeing?
 - What do you find difficult about being a nurse?
 - What do you find are the most rewarding aspects about being a nurse?
 - Do you prefer to work alone, or as part of a team?
-

While the interview panel have questions they want to ask you, you should also prepare your own interview questions. This is not an interrogation, and should be seen as a two-way conversation with both parties having similar agendas. Table 1.6 outlines some of the typical questions that you might wish to ask at interview.

Practicalities

When the invitation to attend interview arrives be sure you know where the interview is to take place, what time and if possible who will be sitting on the panel. Ask if there are any special items you should bring along to the interview. If you are not familiar with the venue where the interview is to take place it is advisable that you make a test run a few days prior to the interview. Even if you know the area you should ask for an informal visit. On the day of interview

Table 1.6 Some questions that you may wish to ask at interview.

- Please describe what you see as a typical day on the job
 - Is there room for advancement (caution here: you do not want to appear too pushy)
 - Who do you see as the ideal candidate for this position
 - To whom would I be reporting
 - What continuing professional development opportunities are available
 - How will my performance be evaluated and how often
 - Please tell me about the overall organisational structure
-

bring a photocopy of the application form you have completed and your CV in case you need to refer to it during the interview.

Remember the basics, be sure to get a good night's sleep the day before the event and be sure you have had something to eat before the interview. Arrive early for the event – there are no excuses for arriving late for the interview; however, if there is an emergency then let the interviewer know the situation – they may be prepared to wait until you arrive or they may reschedule.

You will need to provide evidence of registration with the NMC; if this is pending then your University will be able to provide you with conformation to say that your registration is currently being processed.

Things to consider

Hints and tips

- Be wise and make allies of everyone along the way – the receptionist, the personal assistant, the secretary.
- Take a pen and pad to make notes during or immediately after the interview.
- While waiting to be called read organisational material or a nursing journal.
- Do not speak negatively of your University during interview.
- If practical, shake hands with each member of the panel and look them in the eye – engage with them.
- Come across as enthusiastic and interested.
- Do not chew gum or smoke.
- Relax.
- Use the interviewer's name from time to time during the interview.
- Use good diction – say 'yes' as opposed to 'yeah'.
- Use active verbs when you talk about your skills and expertise, for example, 'I assessed a patient', 'I instigated a University club', 'I led on a service improvement initiative'.
- Avoid saying 'I think', 'I suppose', 'I guess' – these words can make you come across as less assertive.
- When talking about your skills use positive strong words, avoiding words such as 'pretty well', 'fairly good'.
- Do not apologise for your lack of experience; instead make clear your willingness to remain a lifelong learner and your desire to implement what you have learnt on your programme of study.

It is usual for interviews to be made up of three components:

- 1 Establishing rapport
- 2 Exchanging information
- 3 Closing the interview.

Understanding these three stages will help you. Table 1.7 outlines the anatomy of an interview, the structure of the interview.

Table 1.7 The interview structure.

Establishing rapport	<p>During this stage the interviewer and the interviewee get to know each other; there is some small talk and this will last for about 5 minutes</p> <p>Even though this is a relatively short period of time it is an important period – first impressions are important. You should aim to appear confident and competent. Remember it is not only what you say but also what you are doing (your body language); fidgeting can demonstrate anxiety and yawning will demonstrate disinterest</p> <p>Sit up straight, looking at the interviewer and leaning inwards; this will depict you as an active listener</p>
Exchanging information	<p>This stage is the longest stage of the interview and can last up to 30 minutes. During this stage you will be asked a series of job-related questions</p> <p>The interviewer will do the leading here</p> <p>Listen carefully to the questions being asked and think about the responses you are going to make</p> <p>Again, your posture and body language will be speaking volumes, so be aware of this</p> <p>Your aim is to demonstrate that you are motivated and that you want this job, you are interested and you are capable of doing the job. You should be promoting yourself, your traits and how these match the job description</p>
Closing the interview	<p>During this stage the aim is to pull all of the loose ends together</p> <p>At this stage you have the opportunity to ask your questions</p> <p>If summary questions are being asked then use this opportunity to emphasise your strengths as well as your interest in the position</p> <p>Next steps are outlined and if they are not you should ask for clarification on how the process is to proceed</p> <p>If you have enjoyed the conversation tell the interviewer this</p>

What to wear for interview

Some people make this their biggest concern; it is, however, a very common question. Typically, nursing candidates should wear professional attire – for men a shirt and tie with trousers, and for women dress pants (or a tailored skirt) and a blouse.

Whatever you decide to wear, be sure that you appear neat and well groomed. Clothes should be pressed, tailored and where possible in neutral colours with a simple or traditional design. Keep accessories to a minimum as well and avoid wearing nail varnish and nail extensions.

Applying for a position overseas

Not all newly qualified nurses stay in the United Kingdom for their first nursing post; some travel overseas to destinations such as Australia, Canada and the Middle East. This work may be paid work or voluntary/humanitarian. There are specific nursing agencies that focus on helping nurses to secure employment abroad.

The RCN has produced a number of resources to assist nurses who wish to seek employment abroad. The resources cover issues such as personal safety, working visa requirements, insurance, immunisations, contract of employment, interviews and job offers.

Conclusion

The day you start your first staff nurse's job will be the first day of the rest of your professional life as a lifelong learner. The last few weeks at University and the transition into your new role as staff nurse can be fraught with a variety of mixed emotions from elation to dread.

Looking for a job can be a challenge; it is no longer an expectation that upon completion of a programme of study leading to registration this will automatically lead to a guaranteed job. There are a limited number of jobs available in some areas for newly qualified nurses; competition can be ferocious and unemployment for some is a real possibility. With perseverance, energy and the right attitude you can get the job that you want but you have to put effort into your endeavours. Preparing for the whole selection process is essential if you are to be successful.

The rest of your professional life is ahead of you and it can be said that learning does not really begin until you leave University and truly embark on your lifelong learning trajectory. All of that learning that has taken place while at University and on your clinical placements will come flooding back once you are in your new role in your new uniform with your new name badge that says staff nurse. Making the changeover from student to staff nurse can be a positive one because you are in the driving seat.

In order to feel competent and comfortable in the new role of staff nurse you will need to be supported. All newly qualified nurses should have access to preceptorship programmes, which will help your mentors help you settle in (DH, 2010) enabling you to become familiar with the environment, staff, patients, role and responsibilities.

References

- Department of Health (2010) "Preceptorship Framework for Newly Registered Nurses, Midwives and Allied Healthcare Professionals". DH: London.
- Royal College of Nursing (2003) "Defining Nursing" www.rcn.org.uk/publications last (accessed December 2013).
- Royal College of Nursing (2005) "Tips for Completing Application Forms and CVs" http://www.rcn.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/264264/Tips_for_completing_application_forms_and_CVs.pdf last (accessed December 2013).
- Royal College of Nursing (2013) "The Nursing Team: Common Goals, Different Roles". RCN: London.
- Skills for Health (2010) (2nd Ed) "Key Elements of the Career Framework" http://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/images/stories/Resource-Library/PDF/Career_framework_key_elements.pdf last (accessed December 2013).
- Tremayne, V. (2009) "How to Read a Job Advertisement". *Nursing Standard*, Vol 24, No 12, pp. 62