

Attrition matters: Whats missing in the debate

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Understanding the factors and characteristics of attrition is a national priority enhancement theme and a contemporary issue in higher education. Age, widening access, and entry qualifications are identified as some of the factors that influence attrition in higher education.

Education in nursing has been radically overhauled in the last two decades in response to a number of unprecedented political, technological and societal challenges (Fry et al., 2009). To achieve recognition and a credible position in society nursing has evolved from a hospital-practice-based culture to a profession governed by professional standards and ethics with a strong public image (NMC, 2010; Watson and Thompson, 2000).

Attrition of students in higher education programmes is a national enhancement theme in the UK and worldwide. The experience of year one students is noted to be a critical period. The student's experience of transition to higher education (HE) involves adapting socially, culturally and personally. However, despite the depth and breadth of the literature on this theme, narrowing down individual or collective characteristics that contribute to attrition remain elusive. This study explores if entry-level qualifications and age are linked to academic and clinical practice performance and progression, as students transition from year 1 to year 2 of a nursing programme.

This is a quantitative retrospective cohort study using pre-existing participant data from a cohort of Adult and Mental Health Nurses (n=604) at one Scottish university. Ethical approval was granted by the Dean of the School of Health, Nursing and Midwifery and the School of Education Ethics Committee.

This study adds to the growing body of evidence around the factors that influence student attrition at the end of year one. Attrition in this cohort was found to be 1% with another 14% of students carrying academic credit deficit into year 2. Age and entry qualifications were found to influence theory results; however, no significance was found in relation to clinical practice results.

Biography:

Hazel Kyle is a Mental Health nurse lecturer and a Practice Education Facilitator working in a joint appointment with the University of the West of Scotland and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, the largest Health Board in Scotland. I have been a nurse for 34 years and the last 13 years in a practice education role.

I have an interest in practice education primarily around how we assess and retain students on pre-registration nursing programmes and look to share experiences and models of practice education from a nursing and education practice perspective with colleagues across the globe.