

1. The Royal College of Nursing

1.1 The RCN is the world's largest professional union of nurses with over 318,000 members drawn from all parts of the professional register. It was founded in 1916 and granted its Royal Charter in 1928. The RCN has a UK-wide network of branches and national forums representing over 100 areas of nursing practice and nursing interests. The RCN is a leading player in the development of nursing practice and standards of care. It works with Government, MPs, other nursing associations, professional bodies and voluntary organisations to influence health policy for the benefit of patients, and to promote the professional development and standing of nurses. The RCN is a registered charity.

1.2 The RCN offers its members a wide range of services including:

- professional advice and information
- development of nursing practice and standards of care
- advice and representation with problems at work
- national negotiations on salaries and conditions of employment
- education and professional development activities
- campaigning and lobbying to promote the interests of patients and nurses
- counselling and personal advice service
- discounted financial, insurance and consumer services

1.3 The RCN Institute of Advanced Nursing Education, the National Institute for Nursing and the RCN Daphne Heald Research Unit pioneered work on nursing research and education and merged in 1995 to form the RCN Institute. The RCN Institute is a designated higher education institution and University College of the University of Manchester. By integrating research, practice development and quality programmes, the RCN Institute aims to contribute to the development of the nursing profession. It offers a variety of post-registration degrees, post-graduate degree programmes, post-graduate research opportunities and a range of continuing professional development opportunities. The RCN Institute entered the Research Assessment Exercise for the first time in 1996 and came fourth equal out of 36 entrants.

1.4 The RCN is a membership organisation while the UKCC is the regulatory body. The UKCC through the 4 National Boards has to approve nursing and midwifery pre registration education. The National Boards can approve post registration education for nursing, but educational institutions or service providers can also run courses for nurses that have not been approved by the Boards. The Boards can remove the approval from any course. The UKCC can remove individuals from the register or issue a caution for misconduct or remove from the register for health reasons. The RCN can remove members from membership, although this power has never been used. Both the RCN and the UKCC provide guidance on nursing practice. The UKCC guidance (based on the Code of Conduct) reflects minimum standards of conduct and practice, while RCN guidance reflects the aim in the Charter to enhance the science and art of nursing.

1.5 The College is accountable to Her Majesty the Queen in Privy Council. The purpose and activities of the RCN are defined in its Royal Charter and are as follows: