

# Empowering the Workforce through Further Education – a Joint Collaboration with NHS Grampian and Robert Gordon University

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## INTRODUCTION

A collaboration with NHS Grampian and Robert Gordon University (RGU) gave current healthcare professional staff an opportunity to progress from Diploma level to Degree level. Staff were invited to apply for the distance learning course to develop the workforce and empower staff to become better leaders. Many staff have been given this unique opportunity and have overcome many obstacles to completing the course.

## AIM

Reflectively looking back, undertaking the BSc in Nursing/ Healthcare Practice positively impacted on individuals' self-awareness and attitude towards lifelong learning, quality improvement and leadership. Delivered online via Microsoft Teams with dedicated online contact time, students enhanced their professionally aligned critical thinking and analytical skills, doing this alongside working in their substantive areas within NHS Grampian.



## METHOD

This course was achievable due to the NHS / RGU collaboration and flexible support via teams, email, the online library and virtual learning platform, whilst working clinically (Osika et al. 2022). Initially the course was structured to build academic confidence then flawlessly moved onto professional practice development (RGU 2020). This course gave students the tools and confidence to make positive change and become more empowered Practitioners.

By moving the healthcare professional workforce to graduate level, this will aid NHS Grampian on their journey to Magnet recognition (American Nursing Credentialing Center 2023). Additionally, ensure excellence of care delivery, benefiting both personal professional and organisational goals for lifelong learning and ongoing quality improvement (The Kings Fund 2022).



## OUTCOMES/RESULTS

Despite initial reservations and obstacles that included the navigation of participants substantive roles, all achieved the goal of graduating with the BSc in Healthcare Practice.

Due to significant challenges experienced in the National Health Service (NHS) after the covid pandemic, alumni achieving their goals was particularly celebratory. This is due to all services being stretched and the backlog of patients that were unable to access care during the pandemic (Scottish Government, 2021).

Contributory factors to the achievement were the flexibility of participant's line management, NHSG and the online format. This meant participants were able to join classes during situations that would usually be prohibitive, such as periods of short staffing. The availability of the lessons via recording was also contributory to this as it meant participants could take the class when convenient to them.

The online format also helped where participants required reasonable adjustments due to neurodiversity, such as dyslexia, autism, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) etc. The flexibility that online learning offers has opened university education to those who previously felt unable (Hamilton and Petty, 2023). At least one of the authors falls in this bracket and the compassion and understanding expressed by the faculty contributed positively to the attainment of that person's goal.



## CONCLUSION

Alumni experienced and overcame significant challenges to complete the program. Although, having protected learning time ensured focussed learning. However, now as graduates, on reflection, report personal increases in self-confidence and dedication to evidence-based improvements in practice.

In overcoming the initial reservations, the authors, conclude that the greatest barrier to becoming a graduate, to date was themselves. This is evidenced in the achievements of all authors and the inspiration to continue studies to MSc level onward. The positive mindset developed during the programme, along with a more critical mindset, has influenced an open dialogue with staff previously strongly opposed to further study.



## REFERENCES

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