

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH

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**EXPERIENCES OF UNIVERSITIES WITH NURSING & MIDWIFERY COUNCIL APPROVAL FOR SIMULATED PRACTICE LEARNING IN PRE-REGISTRATION NURSE EDUCATION: A QUALITATIVE STUDY**

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**Introduction:** A rapid growth in student nurse recruitment and a chronic shortage of suitable placement opportunities motivated some universities to use simulation to ensure student progression and completion. In response to this, in 2022 the Nursing & Midwifery Council (NMC) [1] increased the number of practice hours through simulation from 300 up to 600 hours for approved universities. The purpose of this research [2] was to learn from the experiences of the approved universities, to understand their drivers for seeking NMC approval, issues relating to infrastructure and design, and challenges and opportunities in delivering simulated practice learning (SPL).

**Methods:** A convenience sampling technique was used to recruit Council of Deans of Health members who deliver pre-registration nursing courses in the UK and had received NMC approval to include SPL. The sample consisted of 12 simulation leads, located across England and Scotland. Five focus groups

were conducted, lasting approximately 60 mins each, via online Microsoft Team meetings between April-May 2023. The transcripts of the focus groups were thematically analysed.

**Results:** Five major themes were identified: motivation for NMC approval with SPL; universities' experience of the approval process; integrating and advancing through innovation and collaboration; sustainability; and challenges in measuring impact of SPL.

The NMC approval process was generally viewed as supportive, offering universities an opportunity to showcase their innovative practices and engage in positive dialogue. However, challenges arose from uncertainty around the regulatory requirements and evolving terminology surrounding SPL. This resulted in anxiety among university staff regarding what would be considered acceptable and how many hours would be permitted. Nevertheless, the NMC approach was viewed as evolving and as demonstrating a willingness to learn through the experience of trailblazer universities.

Participants discussed the integration of SPL into nursing programmes, emphasising creativity and collaboration with practice partners and students. The universities incorporated SPL across all years of the nursing curriculum, particularly focusing on the first year to aid the transition from theory to practice.

**Discussion:** SPL is considered as a valuable learning experience for pre-registration nursing students, providing opportunities to acquire knowledge and skills. This research identified critical challenges such as funding and availability of facilities, staff expertise, student engagement, and lack of expert leadership. To enable the sustainability, there should be commitment from faculty leadership and professional development for staff. This will ensure the effective and standardised approach for simulated practice learning.

**Ethics statement:** Authors confirm that all relevant ethical standards for research conduct and dissemination have been met. The submitting author confirms that relevant ethical approval was granted (approval number ET2223-6347).

## REFERENCES

1. Nursing and Midwifery Council. Current Recovery Programme Standards. 2022. Available from: <https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/education-standards/current-recovery-programme-standards.pdf>.
2. Harrison N, Edmonds M, Meads C, Abdulmohdi N, Prothero L, Shaw S. Simulation in Nursing Education: an evidence base for the future. 2023. CoDH-ARU-Simulation-in-Nursing-Education-Report-Jan-2024.pdf (councilofdeans.org.uk)

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