# INTERNATIONAL NURSING SUMMER SCHOOL

## 1. Introduction

‘Globalisation’ is the buzzword of the 21st century, but what, exactly, does it mean? And what repercussions does it have for the provision of nursing care and for the education of nurses? Crigger (2008) defines the concept as ‘the social and political collaboration of international organizations and people, to improve the quality of civil societies across the world’. Whilst, on the one hand, this process of worldwide interaction and integration may be seen as inspiringly positive, it naturally brings complications. Today’s increasingly globalised society is challenging healthcare systems and influencing professional practices, with demands on nurses and other healthcare professionals to deliver culturally competent care – the ultimate goal being better health worldwide (Wilson, Mendes, Klopper, Catrambone, Al‐Maaitah, Norton and Hill, 2016). Thus, nurses are required to perceive and to comprehend a broader picture with regard to global issues and to be able to adopt a critical/analytical stance (Bradbury‐Jones, 2009; Davidson, Meleis, Daly and Douglas). Nursing education and research are highlighted as important factors (Parcells and Baernholth, 2014; Riner, 2011) and there are growing calls to internationalise university Nursing degree programmes. Long (2016) argues:

One method of gaining knowledge, skills and experience with different cultures for nurses and nursing students is through an international immersion experience with training in language, culture and community nursing.

It was in light of the aforesaid that the Nursing Summer School was created between the University Hospital of North Midlands (UHNM) and Keele University (United Kingdom) and the University CEU Cardenal Herrera (Spain). The Summer School is designed for groups of undergraduate Nursing students who are interested in obtaining a global view of nursing as part of their university programme. It combines hospital-based clinical practice with supplementary academic and cultural activities and offers students an excellent opportunity to combine learning about nursing and clinical practice in Britain with immersion in British lifestyle and culture. Candidates for the programme are undergraduate Nursing students from the second year of their degree onwards. It especially benefits those students who are unable, for various academic or domestic/family reasons, to participate in the Erasmus+ programme (which requires a minimum three-month stay in the country of destination.) The three-week intensive programme runs in July/August each year, after the conclusion of the academic term.

## 2. Origins of the project

The idea of the Nursing Summer School developed from an academic link between the Spanish and UK universities of CEU Cardenal Herrera and Keele and, subsequently, with the latter’s partner, the University Hospital of North Midlands (UHNM). The particular circumstances of each of these institutions suggested the potential benefit of a group collaboration.

Due to an acute national shortage of available registered nurses in Britain, the UHNM, like most other British hospital trusts, suffers problems with recruiting nursing staff. Consequently, in October 2016, the Trust embarked upon an energetic overseas recruitment campaign. As well as targeting other European countries, it looked to Spain, where an abundance of newly-qualified nurses are finding it difficult to secure positions, nursing experience being a chief requirement for those posts that are advertised. From 31 December 2018, the Public Employment Services (Servicios de Empleo Público (SEPE)) registered a total of 5,246 unemployed nurses. Highly-trained young nurses are finding themselves in very precarious situations, being obliged to accept low-paid temporary contracts with little or no assurance of future professional stability. So, as well as offering students an international clinical placement as part of their nursing training, the Trust would be in a position to encourage Spanish university students to consider a Registered Nurse position with it, upon graduating.

The School of Nursing and Midwifery, Keele University (from hereon SNAM) is fully committed to the internationalisation of its educational and research programmes, supporting students in developing the knowledge and skills they require to function effectively in an international and inter-cultural health care environment. Furthermore, it is committed to developing sustainable international partnerships for the education of students overseas and all pre-registration (BSc) students have the opportunity to undertake an international elective.

For its part, the University CEU Cardenal Herrera has, as a priority, the training of graduates prepared to face a highly competitive labour scenario and actively seeks to enrich the academic development of its students (of Nursing and of other degrees) by offering the opportunity for international experience.

Thus, each of the institutions in question was keenly interested in developing a mutually beneficial relationship. An Erasmus + traineeship was created, allowing CEU students to benefit from clinical practice with the UHNM (while increasing the possibilities of the trust in terms of international recruitment) and, likewise, offering the possibility for Keele University Nursing students to undertake an overseas placement in a Spanish hospital.

Subsequently, the summer school was established to enable more students (up to 10) to participate in a short but meaningful international experience. It was seen by the UHNM as something of a natural progression of the overseas recruitment that had been taking place, involving the induction and training of newly-arrived nursing staff.

## 3. Informative sessions

Representatives of the three institutions made the consensual decision that suitable candidates for the scheme should be selected from among CEU students preferably (but not uniquely) in the 3rd year of their Nursing degree course. By this time, they will have already had some clinical/hospital work experience and some specific instruction in English for Nursing (an optional subject in the second semester of 3rd year Nursing degree).

An initial informative session was conducted with all eligible Nursing students, at the beginning of the academic year (September). This was simply to inform students of the aims and functioning of the programme and to motivate potential candidates to consider future participation.

A second session was held in October, specifically for those students interested in participating in the programme. Further details of the Summer School were discussed, including arrangements/costs of accommodation on the Keele University campus. Only those students with satisfactory academic situations and with acceptable levels of English were encouraged to apply to take part in the programme. After a period of consideration and consultation, several students made formal written applications.

## 4. Selection procedure

In a university-based pre-selection procedure based on academic record and proficiency in English, 12 applicants were chosen for interview. UHNM and Keele staff visited the CEU for this purpose, and the interviews were conducted on the university’s Elche campus. A total of 8 students were selected to take part in the Summer School (one of these eventually withdrawing from the programme due to unforeseen family circumstances).

Staff of UHNM/Keele/CEU maintained contact by e-mail and by skype, in order to discuss plans for the upcoming Summer School. Towards the end of the second semester, a further skype conference was conducted between representatives of the three institutions, together with the participating students. This proved useful in solving final queries about professional requirements and expectations, leisure/cultural possibilities, airport collection, accommodation facilities, etc.

## 5. Functioning of Summer School

The first group of 7 3rd year Nursing students from the CEU completed a placement period of 4 weeks at UHNM, in July/August 2017. During this time they spent three days per week in the hospital, observing work being carried out in departments such as the Critical Care Unit, the Stroke Unit, the Neonatal Unit and in operating theatres. They were also encouraged to study the patient care plans and notes whilst in the various practice areas and to discuss arising issues/queries with their assigned mentor. On the fourth day, the students would spend time with members of the corporate education team from whom they received instruction in the policies and procedural practices pertaining to nursing care in British NHS hospitals. The remaining day was occupied with leisure/cultural activities.

The students were lodged in rented student accommodation on the campus of Keele University, enjoying access to all the usual domestic/leisure/sports amenities available on campus. During the Summer School, contact was maintained between the CEU academic tutor and students via e-mail and telephone.

### 5.1. Problems encountered

Spanish students experienced some frustration at being allowed only to observe (and not to administer) patient care. When procedures were repeatedly observed, on a daily basis, within a particular department, this became somewhat monotonous for the students. This was countered successfully by providing opportunity for the students to spend time in various different hospital departments.

Though the students’ level of English was generally acceptable, a lack of proficiency was noted, especially with regard to medical terminology. This concern was addressed by the education team members and a glossary of commonly used medical terms was issued to the students for individual study. Time was also needed for the students to become accustomed to the local accent and dialect (as used by both staff and patients in the hospital!)

## 6. Assessment

All students completed the placement period satisfactorily and were awarded certification to this effect at the end of their stay. Both anecdotal and written evaluations made at the conclusion of the programme suggest that the students’ time at UHNM proved, unanimously, to have been a very positive experience, and one that they would wholeheartedly recommend to their university classmates. In order to obtain as objective a feedback as possible, each student completed (anonymously) a questionnaire. Using a scale of 1 to 5, (very unsatisfactory, unsatisfactory, adequate, good, excellent, respectively) they were asked to respond to the following questions:

**Information, reception and accommodation**

- How useful was the information you received to prepare you for your stay in England?

- Was the organisation regarding your arrival sufficient?

- Did you find it difficult to travel to the hospital?

- Was your accommodation and University facilities to you satisfaction?

**Hospital practice**

- Did you find the introduction to your wards adequate?

- How did you rate the ward/department experience?

- Did you feel that in your allocated clinical area that the staff took time to explain process

 and procedures to you?

- Do you feel that your learning needs have been met during your time working within the

 hospital?

**Overall experience**

- Overall did you feel that there was sufficient support for you during your time in England?

- How did you find the overall programme?

- Would you recommend a similar experience for other nursing students at your university?

**Open questions requiring written reponse**

- Would you change any of the programme for future students?

- Were there any surprises that you learnt about nursing in England?

- What particular benefits have you gained from attending the Summer School?

### 6.1. Results

Overall appraisal was very positive. Key issues revolved around placement allocation, expectations of professionalism and the role of a nurse with respect to the issue of culture/cultures.

The open questions provided several interesting (and some inspiring) answers. For example, with regard to the question: ‘What were the benefits for you from attending the summer school?’ In addition to the frequently mentioned social and cultural benefits, as well as those of improving language skills, there were some very clinical-focused replies. For example:

‘Learning a different way of delivering nursing care, different management features and understanding how a complex team should work together with the patients.’

‘I could understand that nursing procedures can be done in a different way and I could share my experience.’

The question: ‘Were there any surprises that you learnt about nursing in England?’ solicited the following replies:

‘I was surprised by the fact that the doctors are one part of the team, not the most important part of it. I noticed this after seeing the daily job of the different professionals and how they coordinate on the ward, such as physiotherapist, occupational therapist, pharmacist…all of them focused on the patients and their needs.’

‘I was surprised that I was not allowed to carry out some procedures, such as giving an injection, that I can do as a student on hospital practice in Spain.’

‘There are different expectations in England and Spain of the role of the family in nursing hospital patients. In Spain the family plays a big part in nursing the patient. It is more profesionalised care in British hospitals.’

Such answers would be useful in planning forthcoming schools and in designing the information materials that would be distributed prior to the students undertaking the hospital practice. It would also prove useful to hospital tutors in shaping the teaching/support of their student charges.

### 6.2 Evaluation/future recommendations

Upon conclusion of the school, the hospital staff involved held a general evaluation meeting to discuss challenges encountered and key opportunities for the future. This has led to various improvements being made in the planning and running of future summer schools. In particular, these include the following:

- In academic terms, before the students’ Summer School experience, increased focus

 should be made upon the kind of scientific vocabulary likely to be encountered, as well

 as some information provided as to the daily routine of the British NHS hospital

 department.

- Following reflection and discussion, the hospital and university teams involved agree

 that it would be a good idea to expose the students to an increased number of clinical

 practices, that is, increased rotation between departments, but for shorter periods of time.

- Students should be given clear information, prior to their visit, as to what will be

 expected of them, underlining, in particular, the fact that their role will be largely to

 observe and not to administer care.

- Sufficient time should be given for the health care professionals (especially allocated

 mentors) in potential practice areas to prepare for the students’ visit, in order to

 maximise the benefit to the student.

- Provision should be made for pastoral care, especially for those students who may be

 leaving their home and country for the first time.

## 7. Key outcomes and implications of the project

* **With respect to the UHNM**, the programme has helped to establish international relationships of a professional/academic nature, creating opportunities for staff/student exchanges and, providing long-term support for the UHNM’s current recruitment drive and succession planning.
* **From the perspective of the University CEU Cardenal Herrera**, the benefits to students of the kind of project outlined here are numerous. In addition to developing language skills, students gain valuable life-skills that will help them to develop academically, professionally and personally. This particular project enables Spanish Nursing students (of the CEU Cardenal Herrera) to obtain first-hand experience of nursing practice within an acute hospital environment in the UK. The programme has the potential not only to increase the students’ employability, but also to present them with actual employment opportunities – something currently lacking in their native country.
* **With regard to Keele University SNAM**, this initiative enabled students to gain an international perspectives on nursing and nurse education by allowing them to meet and work alongside students from different healthcare and academic systems. Furthermore, it encouraged the development of a more nuanced understanding of some of the challenges and opportunities that confront the nursing profession currently from an international perspective.

Similar study programmes are becoming increasingly common in undergraduate nursing schools. In addition to being a direct response to the need for nurses to acquire cultural awareness and related competencies, the formation of such strategic international partnerships enables the sharing of knowledge, the enhancement of nursing education and practice, and, ultimately contributes to global improvement in health standards.

## 8. Planning for the future

### 8.1. Working with the UHNM Trust

Interested students were offered the opportunity of a job interview, with the potential for an offer of future employment upon successful completion of their degree studies and the required English language test. Two students interviewed for a post at UHNM are presently preparing for the International English Language test in order to take up positions with the Trust. This is in-keeping with the Trust recruitment aims and in support of future workforce planning. (The UHNM Trust offers a robust Preceptorship programme that has been adapted to suit the specific need of overseas nurses.)

### 8.2. Preparing future student cohorts

A debriefing session was held between students and the university tutor at the beginning of the new academic term. The students’ evaluations of the programme recorded by the University of Keele were corroborated in full. Furthermore, some students accepted the invitation to participate in the initial informative meeting that was to be held on the Summer School, for the coming academic year, and to share details of their experience with their university peers.

## 9. Institutional representatives

**Nursing team, University Hospital of North Midlands**

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