

Wales Needs Nurses – Protect Nursing Education

Cardiff University’s proposal to cease providing nursing education

Position statement

The shocking proposal from Cardiff University

- Cardiff University is consulting on its proposals to stop providing nursing courses at the University. This would result in all 78 academic staff currently working at the university losing their current positions.
- In terms of how the proposals will affect existing students, one option Cardiff University is consulting on is for nursing students to finish their degrees at the university. A second is to transfer the students to different universities. The third is to renegotiate their existing contract with HEIW.
- The university has also stated that students recruited to nursing programmes for the forthcoming academic year (2025/26) will go ahead. However, continuing to recruit students while the future of its nursing provision is in doubt raises serious questions around how ethical and viable this would be to deliver.
- Cardiff University’s consultation opened on 29 January and runs for 90 days, with final plans expected to be considered for approval by the university’s Council in June 2025.

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- The proposal comes as Wales is facing a severe nursing shortage, with thousands of vacancies placing immense pressure on an already overstretched workforce.
- In a recent report on corridor care, RCN Wales illustrated how health services in Wales are operating at unsafe levels of staffing. Ending nursing provision at Cardiff University threatens the supply of registered nurses into the largest health boards in Wales. It undermines efforts to address the critical staffing crisis across Wales, in both the NHS and social care.
- The proposed closure of such a prestigious institution’s nursing programme will have a significant impact on the future of nursing in Wales. The university’s own website publicly acknowledges that all its nursing courses are ranked 1st in Wales and 5th in the UK. They produce highly skilled, compassionate nurses who have gone on to serve communities locally and across Wales. Cardiff University graduates have won recognition as RCN Wales Nurse of the Year, and the university hosts the role of RCN Nursing Research Chair, which RCN Wales funds.
- The closure of these programmes would be a huge loss and disappointment for the profession, local communities and Wales.

What should the Welsh Government do?

- In the last few years, the number of applicants for a nursing degree has fallen significantly, posing a problem for Higher Education Institutions. This decision by Cardiff University takes place within the context of an absence of a specific Welsh Government plan to invest in nursing education according to need.
- The current Welsh Government model of the NHS bursary available in Wales does not adequately support nursing students who must complete a greater number of clinical hours than other professions, resulting in significant financial hardship. Nursing research (both clinical and public policy) has not been adequately supported to develop and flourish in Wales by the Welsh Government's research strategy. A strong research environment is needed to sustain and develop nursing in academia.

The current funding system

The Welsh Government is responsible for, through Health Education and Improvement Wales (HEIW), commissioning nursing education contracts with higher education institutions (HEIs). The Welsh Government has failed to set a clear strategic direction for higher education institutions and the future of the nursing profession.

HEIW advises the Welsh Government, in a yearly Education and Training Plan, on the number of pre-and-post registration nursing places required to meet current and future demand. The Welsh Government approves the budget for the plan and HEIW commissions the number of places on behalf of the Welsh Government.

The Welsh Government pays the tuition fees for nursing degrees directly to HEIs and gives a modest bursary to students to support their studies.

RCN Wales is calling on the Welsh Government to:

- **maintain nursing courses at Cardiff University**
- **continue to commission pre-and post-registration nursing education to make sure there are enough nurses to provide excellent clinical services to the people of Wales**
- **ensure there is adequate financial support for nursing students studying in Wales so that nursing is an attractive degree choice, and career, for all**
- **support a sustainable nursing education presence in Welsh higher education to deliver pre-and post-registration nursing education and clinical research.**