



BRIEFING PAPER

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Funding for healthcare students in England

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Summary

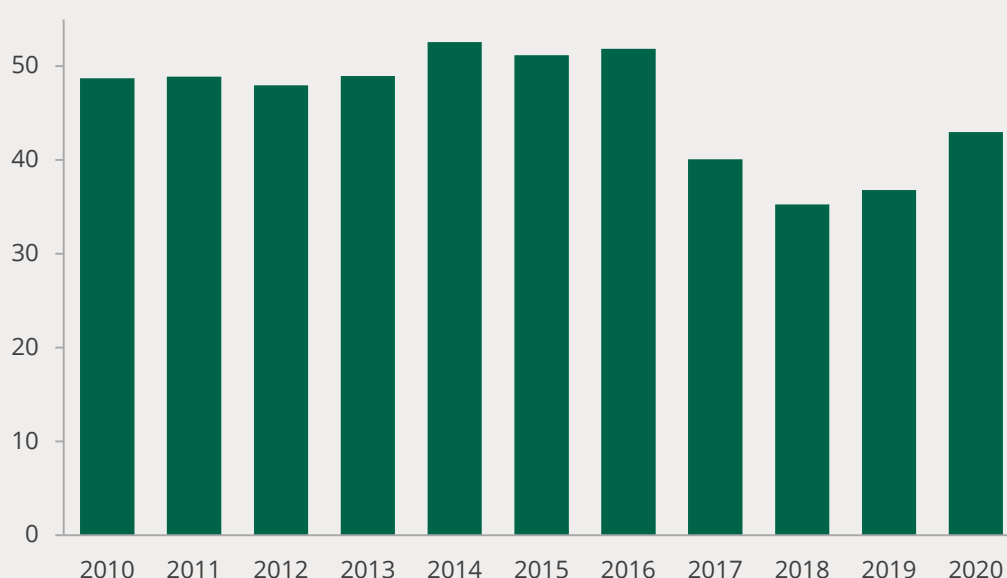
Up until August 2017 students taking certain healthcare degrees, including nursing and midwifery, were funded by **NHS Bursaries** – these were a package of support which included the payment of tuition fees and funding for living costs. NHS Bursaries were abolished for all new entrants starting healthcare courses in the academic year 2017/18 and these students were transferred onto the **standard support system** of loans for fees and maintenance.

These changes were highly controversial and concerns were expressed about the impact of these changes on recruitment to healthcare professions.

Applicants for nursing fell in the first two years after the change in funding was introduced. The number from England fell by 23% in 2017 and 12% in 2018, an overall fall of 32%. There were much smaller falls in applicants from the rest of the UK.

Nursing applicants up in 2019 & 2020, but still below peak

Thousands - applicants from England via UCAS at 30 June deadline



There was an **increase of 4% in 2019 and a larger increase of 17% in 2020**, but these only partially reversed the earlier falls. The increase in applicants in 2020 has been linked in part to the coronavirus pandemic and the way it has underlined the high esteem the profession is held in.

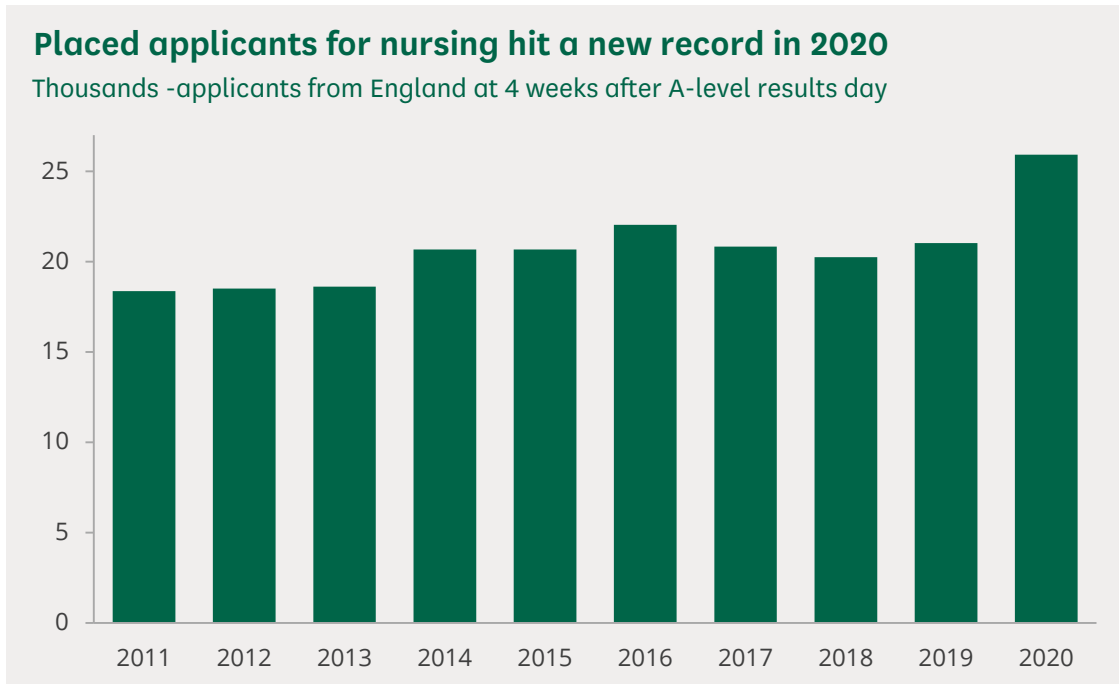
Applicants and entrants to nursing degrees tend to be somewhat older than most other full-time students. **The drop in nursing applicants was largest among mature students** and smallest among those aged under 20. However, **the increase in applicants in 2020 was substantially larger among mature students.**

Nursing saw the largest fall in applicants of any subject allied to medicine in 2017 and 2018. There were falls of more than 20% in applicants for nutrition, aural and oral science and medical technology.

At four weeks after the A-level results day **in 2020 there were 25,900 nursing applicants from England with a confirmed place. This was up by 23% on the same date in 2019 and a new record high.** The largest increases were among older

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applicants with a 31% increase in placed applicants aged 30-34 and a 40% increase in those aged 35 and older.



There have always been many more applicants than places for nursing and the number of applicants from England who were **accepted** has fallen by a much smaller amount: **a fall of 3% in 2017 and a further fall of 4% in 2018. If all part-time students are included the fall in entrants from England in 2017 was down by 13%.**

The funding reforms did not affect medical and dentistry students and paramedics as these students are funded differently.

On 18 December 2019 the Government [announced](#) that **from September 2020 new and continuing nursing, midwifery and allied health professional students** would receive a **maintenance grant of £5,000 per year and extra payments of up to £3,000**. On 19 January 2020 it was further [announced](#) that the new grants would for the first time **include paramedics**.

The cancellation of 2020 A-level examinations and use of centre assessed grades meant **more students than expected met their grades for medical and dental school places**. To alleviate pressure on places the government lifted the cap on these places in 2020-21. The latest data show an **increase of 650, or 8%, in the number English students with places on medicine and dentistry courses in 2020**.

This paper outlines the current funding system for: healthcare students, medical and dentistry students and paramedics and discusses the impact of the 2017 reforms on entrants to healthcare degrees.

Background to the reforms is given in library briefing, [Reform of support for healthcare students in England](#), 2 February 2017.

1. Background

In 2016 the Government announced that the funding of healthcare students would be reformed. Following a consultation, from 1 August 2017 **NHS Bursaries** for undergraduate students starting courses in nursing, midwifery and other allied health professions (AHP) **were abolished** and these students became funded in the same way as all other full-time undergraduate students. The changes were brought in under the [Education \(Student Fees, Awards and Support\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2017](#) SI 114. Subsequently in 2018 NHS bursaries were abolished for postgraduate students.

These reforms were highly controversial and concerns were expressed about the impact that the changes would have on recruitment for these professions.

England is the only one of the four UK regions that has ended the bursary scheme for nursing students – Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales have all retained some form of bursary-funded model for pre-registration nurse education.

Medical and dentistry students also receive NHS Bursaries for part of their courses, but these students were not included in the reforms and these students **continue to receive NHS Bursaries**.

Box 1: NHS Bursaries

The last cohort of students to receive NHS Bursaries for nursing, midwifery and AHP degrees started their courses in September 2016. For these new full-time students the NHS Bursary consisted of the following elements:

- A **non-means tested grant of £1,000** per year (pro-rata for part-time students)
- A **means tested bursary** to help with living costs of up to:
 - £3,191 for students living away from home and in London
 - £2,643 for students living away from home and outside London
 - £2,207 for students living at home.
- Other **bursary elements** such as **extra week's allowances** for courses that run for longer than 30 weeks and 3 days each academic year, and practice placement expenses.

Students who qualified for a bursary also had the costs of their **tuition paid directly** to their higher education institution by the NHS. Healthcare students could also apply for a non-income assessed **reduced rate maintenance loan** from Student Finance England.

Paramedics were also not covered by the reforms as they were never included in the NHS bursary system.

Background to the reforms is given in library briefing, [Reform of support for healthcare students in England](#), 2 February 2017.

1.1 Funding for second degrees

In 2008 the Government abolished funding for students taking second degrees that were at an **equivalent or lower level** to one that they already held. The equivalent or lower level qualification (ELQ) rules

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contained **exemptions** for a limited number of subjects that were deemed to be of public benefit – medicine and dentistry were included as exempt subjects.

The list of exempt subjects has been extended over time and now includes some healthcare subjects.

2. Funding for nursing, midwifery and AHP degrees

Since 1 August 2017 all new entrants to nursing, midwifery and other allied health professional (AHP) degrees have been funded by the **standard student support package** - students are eligible to apply for a **tuition fee loan** to cover the cost of fees and a **maintenance loan** to help with living costs. Students may also be eligible for other grants depending on their circumstances.

Information on funding for students is available on the GOV.UK website at [Student Finance](#), in a booklet by Student Finance England, [Student finance – how you're assessed and paid 2019/20](#) and on the NHS Health Careers website at [Financial support at university](#).

At the time of the reforms the Government said that transferring healthcare students to the standard student finance system would **increase the amount of support for these students by 25 percent** and enable universities to provide up to **10,000 additional training places** for nursing and other health professional courses.¹

Discretionary funds for nursing students

As part of the reforms in funding a new Learning Support Fund (LSF) came into force on 1 August 2017. The LSF provides **supplementary funding** to higher education student loans, for eligible new students starting pre-registration healthcare courses on or after 1 August 2017.

The LSF consists of three different allowances:

- **Child Dependants Allowance** – this allows students who have parental responsibility for a child under 15 years, or under 17 years if registered with special educational needs, to claim a **£1000 grant per academic year** which is paid in three termly instalments.
- **Travel and Dual Accommodation Expenses** – this lets students who have been on a practice placement to claim back travel and temporary accommodation costs incurred as part of the placement.
- **Exceptional Support Fund (ESF)** – students who find themselves in financial difficulty can apply for a grant of **up to £3000 per academic year** to help bridge the shortfall between their income and expenditure to allow them to continue with their studies.

Information on the LSF is available in an NHSBSA publication, [NHS Financial Support for Healthcare Students 2019/20 – Guidance for students Learning Support Fund](#).

LSF is **supplementary** funding and students who are eligible for support are still eligible to apply for other forms of extra support

¹ HM Treasury, [Spending Review and Autumn Statement, November 2015](#), p32

through the standard higher education student support system such as - Childcare Grants and Adult Dependents Grants and institutional hardship funding which is available from universities.

2.1 Funding as a second degree

Up until 2017/18 students taking second degrees in healthcare subjects were not eligible for student funding.

As part of the funding reforms the Government **extended the equivalent or lower level qualification (ELQ) exemptions** to cover new **undergraduate students** starting ordinary degrees, or honours degrees in **nursing, nursing and social work, midwifery and allied health professional subjects on a full-time or part-time basis**. Students starting these courses in September 2017 would therefore be eligible for the full student support package.²

In 2018/19 the ELQ exception was extended further to include new students starting diplomas, foundation degrees, ordinary degrees or honours degrees in pre-registration **dental therapy and dental hygiene** courses on a full-time or part-time basis and **full-time postgraduate pre-registration courses in nursing, midwifery and AHP**.

2.2 Funding from September 2020

The Government announced in a press release on 18 December 2019, "[Nursing students to receive £5,000 payment a year](#)", that **from September 2020 new and continuing nursing students** would receive extra payments in addition to their standard student funding:

Nursing students will benefit from guaranteed, additional support of **at least £5,000 a year** to help with living costs.

The funding will be given to all new and continuing degree-level nursing, midwifery and many allied health students from September 2020. It is expected to benefit more than 35,000 students every year.

The announcement of the funding comes ahead of the [UCAS university application](#) deadline of 15 January.

The funding comes as part of the government's pledge to increase nurse numbers by 50,000 over the next 5 years.

Students will receive at least £5,000 a year, with up to **£3,000 further funding available** for eligible students, including for:

- specialist disciplines that struggle to recruit, including mental health
- an additional childcare allowance, on top of the £1,000 already on offer
- areas of the country which have seen a decrease in people accepted on some nursing, midwifery and allied health courses over the past year

² Health [Reforming healthcare education funding: creating a sustainable future workforce Government Response to public consultation](#), July 2016 p16

This means that some students could be eligible for up to £8,000 per year, with everyone getting at least £5,000. The funding will be available from next year. Further details on who can access the support will be available in early 2020.

The new maintenance grant funding is an **extension of the NHS Learning Support Fund** (NHS LSF), which provides supplementary funding for eligible pre-registration healthcare students.

From 1 September 2020, the NHS LSF will be extended to include a **Training Grant** and additional **Parental Support** will replace the current Child Dependents Allowance.

The NHS LSF is made up of six elements of supplementary funding. These are:

- **Training Grant**
£5,000 per year academic for all new and continuing students
- **Specialist subject payment**
£1,000 for all new students studying a specialist subject.
- **Regional incentive**
Further details about this allowance will be made available in due course.
- **Parental Support**
New and continuing students with child dependants will have access to £2,000 per academic year.
- **Travel and Dual Accommodation Expenses**
Reimbursement of additional travel and any temporary accommodation costs incurred as a result of attending a practice placement.
- **Exceptional Hardship Fund**
Up to £3,000 per academic year for students who find themselves in unforeseen financial hardship.

Students wanting to apply for any elements of the NHS LSF must be studying **on an eligible programme** at a university **in England** – students studying at institutions in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are not eligible to apply for the new grants.

The **NHS Business Services Authority** (NHSBSA) is administering the new maintenance grant on behalf of the Department of Health and Social Care. Students have been able to register online for an account and apply since the 1 July 2020, information on applying is available on the NHSBSA website at [NHS Learning Support Fund](#).

The NHSBSA have published guidance on the Learning Support Fund:

- [Financial support for healthcare students 2020/21](#)
- [NHS financial support for health students \(4th edition\) NHS Learning Support Fund](#)

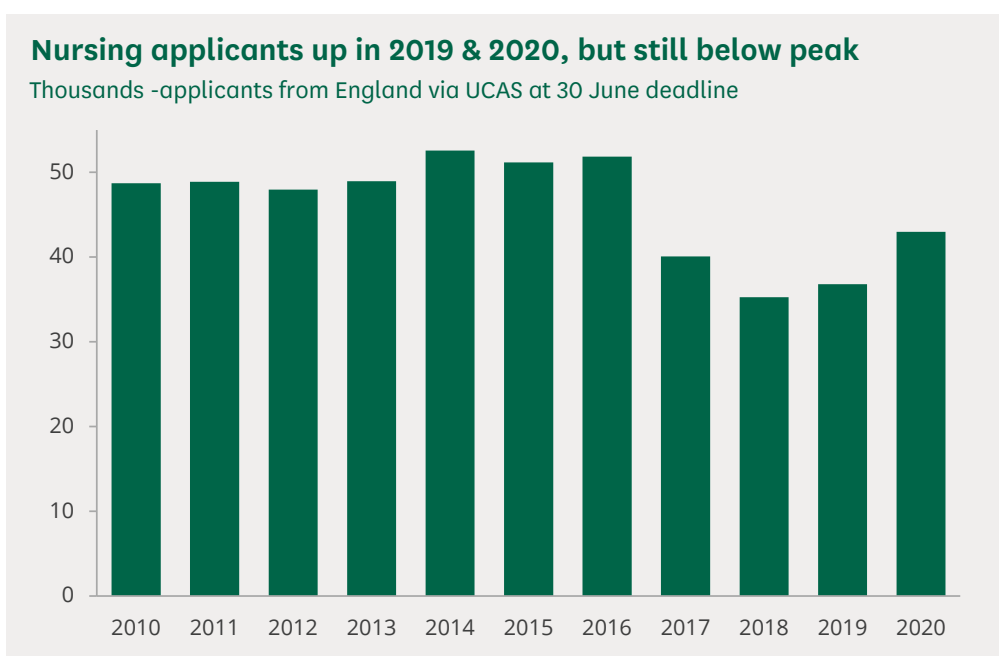
3. Impact of changes on applications and entrants

3.1 Nursing

Applications

The number of applicants through UCAS for nursing from England up to the 30 June (pre-clearing) deadline went down from 51,840 in 2016 to 40,060 in 2017; **a fall of 23%**. There were falls in applicants from the other home countries, but these were much smaller; 2% from Scotland 6% from Northern Ireland and 10% from Wales.³

Numbers **fell again in 2018**. Applicants from England up to the 30 June deadline fell to 35,260 or **12% down** on the equivalent stage in the 2017 cycle.



There was an **increase of 4% in 2019 and a larger increase of 17% in 2020**, but these only partially reversed the earlier falls. Trends are shown in the chart opposite. The 2018 figure was the **lowest since nursing courses first started to be included in the UCAS system a decade ago**.⁴

Applicants and entrants to nursing degrees tend to be somewhat older than most other full-time students. **The 2016-18 drop in nursing applicants was largest among mature students** and smallest among those aged under 20. The largest increase in 2019 was in those under 20 at 9%. There was little or no increase in some of the older age groups in 2019. In contrast, **the increase in 2020 was substantially larger among older groups; 28% in the 20-34 group and 40% in**

³ [2017 cycle applicant figures – June deadline](#), UCAS

⁴ [2019 cycle applicant figures – June deadline](#), UCAS

the 35+ group compared to 17% overall. Trends are set out in the table on the following page.

The increase in applications to study nursing has been linked to the coronavirus pandemic and the way it has underlined the high esteem the profession is held in. The number of new applicants to nursing between January and June 2020 were up by 63% on the same period in 2020. The Ucas head of analysis said:⁵

One trend we should all be particularly thankful for is the number of people who've clearly been inspired in recent weeks to study nursing. Never has the nation been so indebted to these professionals, who have worked tirelessly and selflessly over recent weeks and months to keep us safe.

English applicants to nursing by age										
Number by 30 June deadline each year										
	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Trend	change	
									2016-18	2018-20
Under 20	15,150	15,250	15,070	13,090	12,470	13,610	14,480		-17%	+16%
20-24	14,170	13,200	12,510	9,590	8,190	8,120	8,940		-35%	+9%
25-29	8,300	7,930	8,220	5,700	4,620	4,770	5,540		-44%	+20%
30-34	5,550	5,250	5,570	3,870	3,290	3,300	4,210		-41%	+28%
35+	9,380	9,530	10,470	7,810	6,690	7,010	9,800		-36%	+46%
TOTAL	52,550	51,160	51,840	40,060	35,260	36,810	42,970		-32%	+22%

Source: [2020 applicant figures — 30 June deadline, UCAS](#),

An [Ucas Insight](#) from June 2020 looked at the diversity of those applying for and starting courses in nursing and social work.

Entrants

There have always been many more applicants than places for nursing.

In the past only around 40% of applicants were accepted. The drop in applicants in 2017 and 2018 reduced the gap between applicants and acceptances, but did not see the number of applicants fall below the number of places. This meant that the number of applicants from England who were accepted fell by a much smaller amount. In 2017 from 22,630 to 22,045, **a fall of 3%**. There was a **further fall of 1% in 2018** to 21,745. The acceptance rate was 44% in 2016 and increased to 55% in 2017 and 62% in 2018.⁶

The number of **acceptances from England increased by 6% in 2019 to 23,060. The highest number for at least a decade.**⁷

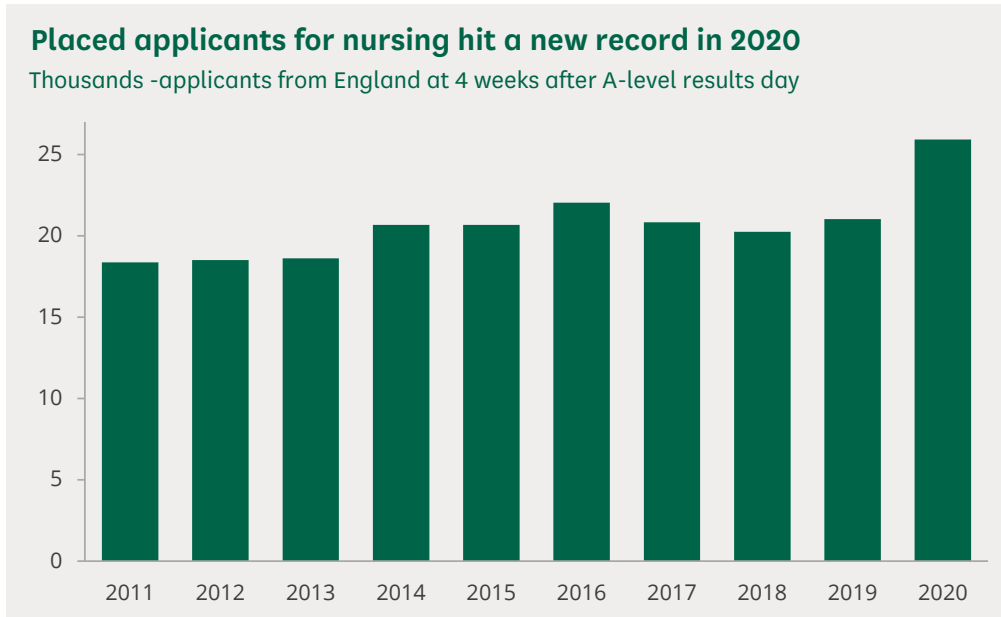
Final data on accepted applicants in 2020 are not expected to be published until mid-December. The latest data are the number of placed applicants at 10 September -four weeks after A-level results day. Final numbers may be somewhat higher, but **applicants from England**

⁵ Wonkhe blog 8 July 2020, [Keep calm – students still want to study](#)

⁶ [‘End of cycle data resources’](#), UCAS

⁷ *ibid.*

with a confirmed place in 2020 are already at a new record high of 25,900. This was up by 23% or 4,900 on the same date in 2019.



Source: [Daily clearing analysis 10 September 2020](#), UCAS

The largest increases were among older applicants. There was a 31% increase in placed applicants aged 30-34. The 40% increase in those aged 35 and older came after a 2019 total which was also a record high. The increase in those aged 35 and older accounted for around one third of the overall increase in placed applicants. 18 year old applicants ('school leavers') are the largest single age group. Their numbers with a confirmed placed were up by 22% in 2020.⁸

The UCAS data covers full-time undergraduates only. Information from the Higher Education Statistics Agency covers all full- and part-time students. In 2017/18, the first year after the new funding rules were introduced, **the total number of first year students from England studying nursing at UK universities fell by 13% from 49,600 to 43,200.** The fall was **larger among part-time students** at 18% compared with 8% among full-timers. Numbers were broadly stable in 2018/19; an increase of 1% to 43,700. Within this there was a 6% increase in full-time starters and a 6% drop in those studying part-time.⁹

The table below shows how numbers changed by speciality in 2017/18 and 2018/19. The biggest falls over the period covered here among the larger specialities were in practice, clinical practice, learning disability and critical care nursing. There was an 8% *increase* in first year children's nursing students.

⁸ [Daily clearing analysis 10 September 2020](#), UCAS

⁹ [HE student enrolments by subject of study and domicile 2014/15 to 2018/19](#), HESA

First year nursing students from England				
Detailed subject breakdown, full- and part-time undergraduates				
	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	<i>change</i> 16/17 to 18/19
Nursing	19,775	17,210	17,315	-12%
Palliative care nursing	95	25	65	-32%
Clinical practice nursing	870	870	610	-30%
Community nursing	725	665	570	-21%
Health visiting	110	55	85	-23%
School nursing	60	45	35	-42%
Practice nursing	1,240	445	265	-79%
Midwifery	3,075	2,975	3,050	-1%
Children's nursing	2,205	2,310	2,375	+8%
Neonatal care	40	45	50	+25%
Adult nursing	13,780	11,695	12,145	-12%
Older people nursing	20	20	5	-75%
Dental nursing	160	170	160	+0%
Mental health nursing	3,480	3,085	3,225	-7%
Learning disability nursing	510	315	300	-41%
Medical nursing	385	180	155	-60%
Critical care nursing	515	440	350	-32%
Surgical nursing	255	260	220	-14%
Emergency nursing	65	195	135	+108%
Nursing not elsewhere classified	2,210	2,205	2,540	+15%
TOTAL	49,575	43,210	43,655	-13%

Source: [HE student enrolments by subject of study and domicile 2014/15 to 2018/19](#), HESA

3.2 Other Allied Health Professions

Applications

The following table summarises recent data on number of applications through UCAS to all subjects allied to medicine. Unlike the earlier data on nursing these figures are for *applications* not *applicants*. As applicants can make up to five choices, which are all counted separately, there are many more applications than applicants. There is also the possibility that changes in the number of applications per applicant over time obscure trends in the underlying number of applicants. Equally, if the number of applications per applicant varies by subject then direct comparisons of the absolute numbers may not show the full picture.

Applications from England to subjects allied to medicine

Thousands of applications to full-time undergraduate courses through UCAS by 30 June

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	change 2016 to 2019
Anatomy,Physiology and Pathology	23.4	23.9	25.1	21.9	21.7	22.6	-10%
Pharmacology,Toxicology and Pharmacy	18.7	17.1	16.7	15.2	15.2	16.7	+0%
Complementary Medicine	1.8	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.0	1.8	-17%
Nutrition	4.3	4.5	4.9	4.5	3.8	3.4	-30%
Ophthalmics	4.4	4.5	4.9	5.2	5.6	6.6	+34%
Aural and Oral Sciences	3.7	3.9	4.0	3.1	2.9	2.9	-28%
Nursing	191.8	186.3	188.1	144.8	121.1	123.3	-34%
Medical Technology	12.3	11.7	13.0	10.6	9.5	9.3	-28%
Others in Subjects allied to Medicine	49.5	49.5	49.0	46.9	45.0	50.7	+3%
Combinations within Subjects allied to Medicine	1.1	1.2	1.0	0.7	0.9	0.9	-10%
TOTAL	310.9	304.6	308.9	255.2	227.6	238.3	-23%

Source: [End of cycle data resources](#), UCAS

Applications to nursing make up most of these applications and **nursing has seen the largest drop since 2016 of 34%**. Other **subjects with falls of more than 20% were nutrition, ophthalmics, aural and oral science and medical technology**. The absolute number of applications to these subjects was small compared to nursing. There were recent increases in applications to only one of these subjects; ophthalmics.

Entrants

The number of students from England **accepted** to full-time undergraduate courses in subjects allied to medicine was around 42,800 in 2016 and 2017. It increased by 320 (0.7%) in 2018 and by 3,130 (7.3%) to 46,200 in 2019. New records for acceptances were set in 2018 and 2019.

Acceptances to nursing fell by 4% between 2016 and 2018. There were larger falls in nutrition (17%) and complementary medicine (4%) while 'Anatomy,Physiology and Pathology', 'Pharmacology,Toxicology and Pharmacy' and 'Others in Subjects allied to Medicine' all increased by 8-9%. There were increases in acceptances from England across all subjects allied to medicine in 2019 other than nutrition.¹⁰ These increases took many subjects to new cord levels, including nursing.

Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (including part-time students) shows a 8% fall in first year students from England in 2017/18. The pattern by subject was broadly similar to that shown in the UCAS data on acceptances.¹¹

¹⁰ ['End of cycle data resources'](#), UCAS

¹¹ [HE student enrolments by subject of study and domicile 2014/15 to 2017/18](#), HESA

3.3 Comment

The impact of the changes to funding for nursing students were discussed in a Health Committee report, [Nursing Workforce](#), 26 January December 2018.¹² The report raised concerns about the drop in number of mature students applying for nursing degrees and stated that this could potentially lead to a shortage of nurses in areas which particularly attracted mature applicants such as mental health nursing and learning disability nursing:

Figures just published by UCAS confirm a drop in older nursing students:

the number of acceptances for older age groups fell in 2017. This year, 4,575 applicants aged 21 to 25 were accepted, a fall of 680 (-13 per cent) compared to 2016, and 8,450 applicants aged 26 and over were accepted, a fall of 545 (-6.0 per cent).

This is of great concern, given that a significant proportion of trainee nurses are over the age of 25. Of particular concern is the fact that mature students make up an even larger proportion of students in the shortage areas of mental health nursing and learning disability nursing. (para 61-62)

There are shortages across a wide range of NHS staff groups, However, the most urgent challenge is the current shortage of nurses. We need to act now to address this.

[Interim NHS People Plan](#), 3 June 2019
p8

Retrospective payments for the 2017-2020 cohort?

From September 2020 a new funding system will be introduced for nursing, midwifery and AHP students - this funding will be for **new and continuing students**. The changes mean that there will be a cohort of students who studied between 2017 and 2020 who were solely supported by the student funding system and who missed out on NHS Bursaries and on the new training grant. It has been suggested that this cohort should receive backdated funding, or a reduction in their student loan repayments.

The issue of the 2017 - 20 cohort has been raised in parliament and answers to PQs state that students who have completed their course will **not receive backdated grants**:

[Nurses: Training](#): Written question - 19994

Conor McGinn: 24 February 2020

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, with reference to his Department's announcement on 18 December 2019 that funding will be allocated to the provision of grants to nursing students from September 2020, whether that funding will include compensation for students that were not eligible for an NHS bursary as a result of the removal of the NHS bursary scheme in 2017.

Helen Whately: 27 February 2020

The maintenance grants announced on 18 December 2019 are available to new and continuing students from September 2020. Students who started courses in the 2017/18 academic year and will have completed their studies will not receive backdated payments.

¹² Health Committee, [The Nursing Workforce](#), 26 January 2018, HC 353 2017-19

4. Funding for medical and dentistry degrees

Information on funding for medical and dental students is set out on the NHS Careers website at [Financial support for medical and dental students – England](#).

Students on five-year courses are eligible for the standard student support package from Student Finance England (SFE) of maintenance loan and tuition fee loan in their **first four years**.

From **year five onwards**¹³, tuition fees will be paid by the **NHS Student Bursary Scheme** and students are eligible to apply for a **means-tested NHS bursary** to cover maintenance costs and a **reduced-rate maintenance loan** from SFE.

Students will also have access to a **non-means tested grant of £1,000** as part of their NHS Bursary award. Other allowances are also available to cover specific circumstances such as: dependants allowances and extra weeks attendance allowance.

Information on NHS Bursaries is available in an NHSBSA booklet, [NHS Bursary Funding for Medical and Dental Students 2019/20](#).

4.1 Funding as a second degree

Students taking second undergraduate degrees in medicine and dentistry are eligible for a certain level of student support.

Funding amounts will vary depending on whether a student is doing the course as a **second undergraduate degree**, or as a **graduate accelerated programme**. Students will have to fund **fees for the first four years** of the undergraduate degree (although they are eligible for maintenance support) and for **half of the fees for the first year** of the graduate course.

Funding arrangements for second degrees in medicine are explained on the Royal Medical Benevolent Fund (RMBF) website at [Medicine as a second degree](#), these funding arrangements also apply to dentistry degrees:

Standard 5+ years medical degree

Years 1-4

You'll have to pay the tuition fees yourself for the first four years. This is normally the standard rate of £9,250 but check the amount with individual medical schools before you commit yourself to the course.

For living costs, you'll be eligible to apply to Student Finance England Finance for:

Student loan for maintenance

- Adult Dependants' Grant

¹³ This includes students doing a six year course with an intercalated year

- Childcare Grant
- Parents' Learning Allowance
- Disabled Students' Allowance
- Travel Expenses for medical students

Year 5

You'll be eligible for support from NHS Business Services Authority for living cost and tuition fee support – your tuition fees will be paid in full. This support is the same as that received in year 5 by students doing medicine as a first degree depending on when you start your course. See the financial support section for England for more detail.

This page is provided on the basis of current information from the Student Finance England Assessing eligibility Guidance and the NHS Bursary Scheme Rules, 5th edition.

Accelerated 4 year graduate entry programme

First year

You can be charged up to a maximum of £9,250 for the year in tuition fees. You'll have to pay the first £3,465 yourself but you can apply to Student Finance England for a tuition fee loan to fund the difference between £3,465 to a maximum of £9,250.

These figures are adjusted if tuition fees rise in line with inflation.

For living costs you'll be eligible to apply to Student Finance England for:

Student loan for maintenance

- Adult Dependants' Grant
- Childcare Grant
- Parents' Learning Allowance
- Disabled Students' Allowances
- Travel Expenses for medical students

Years 2 to 4

During these years you'll be eligible for support from NHS Student Bursaries (England).

The Department of Health will contribute the first £3,715 towards the tuition costs and graduates can apply for a tuition fee loan for the £5,535 difference up to £9,250. Your living cost support will be the same as that received in year 5 by students doing medicine as a first degree. See the article on [financial support for medical students in England](#) for more detail.

A BMA publication, *Medical student finance guide 2018, English domicile students* gives information on funding for a second undergraduate medical degree and gives a list of charities that may be approached for support in un-funded years:

I'm a graduate student on the undergraduate course – where can I access financial support?

Your university may be able to offer you financial support in the form of grants or hardship bursaries, but don't forget to contact other [charitable organisations](#) too to see what help they can offer.

For example, The BMA Charities Trust Fund provides awards specifically for graduate students on undergraduate medicine course. (p25-26)

The British Dental Association website gives information on alternative sources of funding for dental students at [Other sources of funding](#).

4.2 Medicine and dentistry applicants in 2020

The summer examinations in 2020 were cancelled and students were awarded grades based on centre assessed grades (CAGs). Using CAGs led to a level of grade inflation and more students than expected met their first choice university offers and grades for medical and dental school places. To alleviate pressure on places the government announced that for 2020-21 the cap on medical and dental school places would be lifted:

For medicine and dentistry, we are lifting the specific cap set on places for these subjects and providers should offer places to students who meet the terms of their offer this year, where clinical placements are available. I will provide additional funding through the Teaching Grant in line with existing per student rates to support the delivery of these courses.¹⁴

As of 10 September 8,820 English applicants for medicine and dentistry had a place on a course. This was 650 higher than at the same point in 2019, an increase of 8% and a new record high number. Numbers had been in the 6,300 to 6,500 range between 2011 and 2017 before a planned expansion in intake led to increases to around 7,200 in 2018 and 8,200 in 2019.¹⁵

The Office for Students launched a [consultation](#) on 15 October about how the increased 2020 intake in medicine and dentistry will affect funding calculations in future years as this cohort moves to later academic years.

¹⁴ Department for Education [Letter to vice chancellors](#), 20 August 2020

¹⁵ [Daily clearing analysis \(10 September 2020\)](#), UCAS

5. Funding for paramedics

Information on training for paramedics is available on the NHS Health Careers website at [Entry requirements and training \(paramedic\)](#).

Funding for paramedics **has always been different to funding for other allied health professional courses** like nursing, medicine and dentistry, due to the different training routes that were available to paramedics, some of which were funded. Students could receive different support packages depending on their training route.

Students taking paramedic science degrees receive the **standard student funding package**. Since March 2018 paramedicine has been an all degree profession so most paramedic students will be eligible for funding from SFE.

Students following a different training route may be eligible to receive funding through the **Local Education and Training Boards** (LETBS which is former Strategic Health Authority) or **Local Ambulance Service Trusts**. Students funded through this route may in some cases also be eligible for SFE funded student support, this is explained in an SFE document [NHS Guidance Higher Education Student Finance in England 2019/20 Version 2.0 August 2019](#) :

Students on some Paramedic courses may be eligible to receive funding through the Local Education and Training Boards (LETBS formerly Strategic Health Authorities) or Local Ambulance Service Trusts. Students who receive funding from these sources are **deemed to be in receipt of a healthcare award** and fall within the definition of a healthcare bursary (regulation 2 (1)) and whether they are eligible to apply for support from SFE depends on if the funding they receive from the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) is income assessed or non income assessed.

- Where the student is awarded **non income assessed** funding for the paramedic course from their LETBS or health authority (see comment above re SHA) or Ambulance Service Trust the student is **ineligible** to apply for support under the SSR (regulation 4(3)(c)).
- Where the student is awarded **income assessed** funding for the paramedic course via their LETBS or Ambulance Service Trust the student the student **is entitled** to a reduced rate maintenance loan (RRML) only from SFE (regulation 68(e)(i)).

Paramedics have **never been eligible for NHS bursaries**, so the funding changes put in place by the 2017 reforms do not apply to paramedics and **they are not therefore eligible for extra funding from the LSF**.

Information on paramedics' access to the LSF was given in a PQ on 25 February 2019:

[Paramedical Staff: Training](#): Written question - 222012

Julian Sturdy: 15 February 2019

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, for what reasons student paramedics are unable to access the NHS Learning Support Fund on the same terms as other allied health profession students.

Stephen Hammond: 25 February 2019

The NHS Learning Support Fund (LSF) was implemented in 2017 to ensure course sustainability so that subjects previously funded through National Health Service bursaries continued to offer some non-repayable funding for the unique characteristics of these courses – such as placement length, clinical placement requirements and student demographic. The LSF is applicable only to those courses which, at the time, were within the scope of the education funding reforms in 2017.

In 2017 the route into paramedicine had various education and funding models which did not include access to an NHS Bursary, therefore it was not part of the funding reforms and students were not eligible to access LSF funding.

From March 2018 paramedicine became an all degree subject, with students accessing loans and allowances from the Student Loans Company. In line with the general student population and depending on personal circumstances, students can access funding for all their tuition fees and a maintenance loan of between £7,300 and £11,300 a year.

There are no immediate plans, within the current spending review period, to review those professions which can access the LSF.

5.1 Funding changes from September 2020

On 19 January 2020 the Government announced in a press release, [Paramedic students will get £5,000 support payment each year](#), that the new system of extra payments for nurses, midwives and Allied Health Professionals would include paramedic students:

This is the first time paramedic students will benefit from additional NHS funding while at university.

The funding will be provided on top of existing support, including student loans.

The new funding for paramedics was raised in a [PQ](#) on 21 January 2020:

Paramedical Staff: Training: Written question - 3308

Mike Amesbury on: 14 January 2020

To ask the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, whether his plans for restoring bursaries for nursing, midwifery and allied healthcare students will include Paramedic Science BSc students.

Edward Argar on: 21 January 2020

From the academic year 2020/21, new and continuing paramedic science students on eligible pre-registration undergraduate and postgraduate courses at English universities will receive an annual maintenance grant of at least £5,000 per academic year. Some paramedic science students may also be eligible for additional funding, including non-repayable financial support to help with childcare costs. The NHS Business Services Authority will be publishing further information as soon as possible.

The new grants and extra funding through the NHS Learning Support Fund will be available from 1 September 2020 to new and continuing students attending undergraduate or postgraduate paramedic degree level courses and who are eligible for student loans. This includes bachelors and masters level courses **but does not include courses at Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) or foundation level.**¹⁶

5.2 Funding as a second degree

Paramedic courses were **never part of the NHS bursary scheme** so the **ELQ exemption** for students taking second degrees in nursing, midwifery and AHP courses **does not generally apply** to paramedic degrees. Most students taking second degrees in paramedic science will therefore have to fund their own degrees.

Information on the ELQ rules relating to paramedic courses was given in a PQ on 19 April 2018:

Paramedical Staff: Training: Written question - 135158

Michelle Donelan: 29 March 2018

To ask the Secretary of State for Education, if he will classify paramedic science as an exception course to allow those who study it as a second degree to obtain a student loan.

Mr Sam Gyimah: 19 April 2018

The Department of Health and Social Care decided, as part of the reforms to healthcare education funding, to provide an exemption from equivalent or lower qualification (ELQ) rules for new students starting undergraduate pre-registration nursing, midwifery and allied health profession courses from 2017/18 to allow students to receive support for these courses as a second course.

This exemption has now been extended to new students starting pre-registration courses in dental profession subjects and pre-registration postgraduate courses in nursing, midwifery and the allied health professions from 1 August 2018. As students on paramedic science courses could already access the standard student loan system, these courses were not included in the reforms noted above, and therefore they do not attract this exemption from the ELQ rules.

It is the responsibility of the Department of Health and Social Care to decide which healthcare courses should be in scope of receiving an ELQ exemption.

However some students who receive funding from a LETB or Local Ambulance Service Trust may be deemed to have received a healthcare award and students studying on courses which attract an income assessed healthcare award may be eligible for a reduced rate maintenance loan for living costs, even if they hold a qualification that is an ELQ.¹⁷ This is applicable to all courses which attract NHS/Healthcare bursaries starting before, on or after 1 August 2017.

¹⁶ NHSBSA, [NHS financial support for health students \(4th edition\) NHS Learning Support Fund](#), p14

¹⁷ SFE, [NHS Guidance Higher Education Student Finance in England 2019/20 Version 2.0 August 2019](#) p20-21

22 Funding for healthcare students in England

The Paramedic Education and Training Steering Group is conducting a review on future funding for paramedics and a report was due for publication in November 2017.

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