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# Recruitment, selection and retention of nursing and midwifery students in Scottish Universities

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### Summary

#### Background

High attrition rates from pre-registration nursing and midwifery programmes have been reported in both the UK and in other countries.

#### Objectives

A study was conducted to identify best practice in recruitment, selection and retention across Scottish Universities providing pre-registration programmes.

#### Design

A survey of all universities providing pre-registration programmes in Scotland was conducted. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with key personnel in each

university. Documentary evidence was collected to supplement interview data and evidence recruitment, selection and retention practices.

## Settings

All universities in Scotland providing pre-registration nursing and/or midwifery programmes.

## Participants

All 10 identified universities agreed to take part and a total of 18 interviews were conducted.

## Methods

Semi-structured face to face and telephone interviews were conducted. Relevant documentary evidence was collected. All data were subject to thematic analysis.

## Findings

Universities are predominantly concerned with recruiting to the institution and not to the professions.

Interviews are widely used, and are a requirement in the United Kingdom. However, there is no evidence base within the literature that they have predictive validity despite creating scales and scoring systems which are largely unvalidated.

The study identified initiatives aimed at addressing attrition/retention, however most had not been evaluated often due to the multi-factorial nature of attrition/retention and difficulties with measurement.

## Conclusions

Recruitment selection and retention initiatives were rarely evaluated, and if so, adopted a relatively superficial approach. Evidence from existing studies to support practices was mostly weakly supportive or absent. The study highlights the need for a coordinated approach, supporting the development of a robust evidence base through the evaluation of local initiatives, and evaluation of new strategies. Evaluation strategies must take account of the local context to facilitate transferability of findings across different settings.



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## Keywords

Recruitment; Selection; Retention; Attrition; Nursing; Midwifery; Pre-registration education; Best practice

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