

Higher Diploma - Specialist Transition Structure Information Sheet for Applicants

What is the purpose of the Specialist Transition Structure Programme?

The purpose of the 'Specialist Transition Structure' is to enable practitioners to achieve recognition at Higher Diploma Level for previous learning in their area of specialist practice. External clinical placement is not required in the specialist transition structure as applicants have previously achieved competency in clinical skills within their speciality. The focus therefore, is on articulating specialist practice within the domains of competence at higher diploma level.

What is required of the applicants prior to and throughout the course?

All learners must provide, through an APL process, documentary evidence of having successfully completed a course of study in their area of specialist practice i.e. An Bord Altranais/English National Board specialist nursing course of at least 6 months duration. Applicants will then be awarded 30 credits following completion of the 'Specialist Transition Structure' module that is achieved through the production of a professional portfolio of evidence.

To be awarded the Higher Diploma the learners will need to study for a further 30 credits to achieve the required 60 credits. These 30 credits will be made up from the 'Research Skills in Nursing Practice' (20 credits) and one elective module either 'Contemporary Issues in Nursing' or 'Applied Social and Behavioural Sciences' (10 credits each). In the case of applicants who have not studied nursing at level seven, the course co-ordinators recommend the 'Contemporary Issues in Nursing' Module. External clinical placements are not required.

Who can apply?

Applicant requirements

- Successful completion of a professional An Bord Altranais/English National Board specialist nursing course or equivalent **of at least 6 months duration**.
- The course must be recognised as a specialist qualification with An Bord Altranais or the English National Board e.g. Renal, Coronary Care, Intensive Care, Urology, Accident and Emergency. Theatre.
- Three years of experience in the specialisation area, with 6 months minimum of this experience current at the time of application. Successful applicants must remain working in the area of specialisation throughout the course.

Work/placement requirements

Learners undertaking the Specialist Transition Structure pathway must be working in an environment and in a role that enables them to facilitate evidence based practice:

- Support from health service managers is crucial; therefore all learners undertaking this pathway will need to gain management support. When requesting information and an application form for the programme, a full description of the programme outcomes will be sent to the manager who will be requested to complete a declaration of support for the learner.
- Learners' work areas of specialisation will be audited for suitability by the ITT placement auditing process. If a placement area has been audited for use in undergraduate nurse education by ITT or another 3rd level provider this will suffice.
- Learners must have an approved practice mentor.