



THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH



COMMEMORATIVE ISSUE



YEARS of
NURSING STUDIES
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
EDINBURGH

Leaps in the Dark

TRANSFORMING
NURSING

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History of Nursing Studies
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Front cover: Nursing Studies group of 1961–66
Back cover: Nursing Studies group of 2006–10

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Introduction

2016 saw Nursing Studies at the University of Edinburgh celebrate 60 years of higher education leadership. The year saw a number of high profile events take place, from royal and civic receptions, to conferences and special lectures. One of the high spots of the year was the visit on April 19th 2016, of the University's Chancellor, her Royal Highness Princess Anne. The Princess met many students, alumni, current and former University staff to celebrate the impact Nursing Studies has had in transforming the nursing profession.

When Edinburgh nursing students joined the University in the late 1950s and early 1960s they blazed a trail in a profession that until that point had been hospital-based rather than requiring academic study. Visionaries such as Professor Crew, the Professor of Public Health and Elsie Stephenson the first Director of Nursing Studies envisaged a wider role for nurses that went beyond hospitals and cure. Nursing Studies spearheaded the movement from a service to an academic education for nurses and established nursing firmly within academia where 'the unthinkable became the thinkable, then the norm' as higher education opened up for women more generally. Today all nurses require a degree.

Nursing Studies at the University of Edinburgh has succeeded in establishing an impressive catalogue of 'firsts'. Elsie Stephenson's appointment in 1956 as the first director of the first academic department of nursing in Europe were followed by the first PhD completion in 1959, the establishment of an integrated undergraduate MA nursing degree in 1960 and the first International School of Advanced Nursing Studies funded by The World Health Organisation WHO in 1962. During the 1970s there were further firsts marked by the appointment of Margaret Scott Wright to the first Chair of Nursing Studies in Europe in 1971. During the same year the first European University Nursing Research Unit was set up as was the first joint academic/clinical appointments funded by the Nuffield Trust.

These strong foundations provided the environment to prepare well-equipped graduates for clinical service by promoting nursing excellence, advanced knowledge and research. Many graduates have gone on to occupy influential leadership positions in policy and academe nationally and internationally.

The Diamond Jubilee celebrations culminated in November 2016 with the *Leaps in the Dark Alumni Conference* where a diverse group of

current and former staff and students met to look back at their time at Edinburgh and to look forward to the University of Edinburgh's contribution to developments in the field of nursing and healthcare across the globe. The conference was designed to document the 'leaps' taken by individuals and groups during each of the six decades of the Department's history. The conference title echoed Dr Rosemary Weir's history of the Nursing Studies Department: "A Leap in the Dark" published in 1996 to commemorate the fortieth anniversary (Weir 1996). Weir's publication documented the origins of nursing scholarship in the University of Edinburgh and the influential figures that played key roles in the evolution and development of the first academic Nursing Department in the UK and Europe.

We wished to fill a gap in understanding the personal and professional achievements and the national and international impact of the Department on nursing and healthcare by updating its history from a student and staff perspective to complement Weir's 1996 study for the Diamond Jubilee Year.

Rosemary Weir



“Everything showed how important the study of nursing is and how we all do and will benefit from the expertise and research provided by all your excellent staff and students.”

**The University's Chancellor,
her Royal Highness Princess Anne**



1956 – 1965 A Leap in the Dark

1954

A proposal is made that a Nurse Tutor Course be located entirely within the University setting. Funding is sought from the Rockefeller Foundation.

1955

Mary Elizabeth Tennant, Assistant Director, International Health Division, Rockefeller Foundation visits the University and funding is provided for the establishment of a Nurse Training Unit.

1956 **FIRST**

Elsie Stephenson is appointed director to establish the new unit located in George Square with a remit to develop nurse education and to establish a research base for the discipline.

1957

The Unit moves to Chalmers Street and is renamed The Nursing Studies Unit.

1959

The Rockefeller research fellow, Audrey John achieves the first nursing PhD for her thesis "A study of the psychiatric nurse and his/her role in the care of the mentally sick".

1960 **FIRST**

In a pioneering move, the first nursing registration programme integrated with a five-year Master of Arts commences. A two-year programme in Advanced Nursing Education with Registered Nurse Teacher status is established.

1962 **FIRST**

The first International School of Advanced Nursing Studies is launched supported by the WHO. It offers programmes to overseas students in nursing administration or education.

1963

Foundations of Anatomy and Physiology by Janet S Ross and Kathleen J Wilson (lecturer) is first published; a major nursing textbook now in its 12th edition. The University creates a Faculty of Social Sciences incorporating the Department of Nursing Studies. The first edition of International Journal of Nursing Studies is published with Elsie Stephenson as honorary editor.

1965

The Integrated Degree programme is replaced by the BSc Social Science (Nursing). The Nursing Studies Association is established.

1966 – 1975 Nursing: a Research-Based Profession

1967

Elsie Stephenson dies aged 51. The Elsie Stephenson Fund is set up with the purpose of "increasing opportunities for some of the best brains in Britain to develop their gifts to the full in Nursing and to encourage the Nursing profession to make appropriate use of all the tools and skills relevant to it".

1968

Dr Margaret Scott Wright succeeds as Director of the Nursing Studies Unit. Edwina, Countess Mountbatten Trust set up to support undergraduate students to observe nursing practices in different parts of the world.

1971 **FIRST**

Dr Margaret Scott Wright becomes the first Chair of Nursing Studies in Europe. The Scottish Home and Health Department give financial support for the establishment of the first Nursing Research Unit in a European university. Dr Lisbeth Hockey is appointed as its first director. The Unit carries out research and has an educational responsibility to teach nurses research methods.



1973

Inaugural Elsie Stephenson Memorial Lecture: The Canadian Scene, Professor Helen Carpenter, University of Toronto.

1975

Certificated courses in nurse teaching and administration are replaced by Masters degrees in Nursing Education and Nursing Administration. An exchange programme with the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing is developed.

1976 – 1985 Awards & Celebrations

1976

Professor Scott Wright leaves to become Director of the School of Nursing at Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia. Professor Annie Altschul, becomes the second Chair of Nursing Studies.

1978

Elsie Stephenson's husband, William Gardner, bequests a fund to support activities to further the knowledge and practice of nursing.

1979

An innovative MSc in Health Education is established in collaboration with the Health Education Board for Scotland.

1980 **FIRST**

The Elements of Nursing: a Model of Nursing based on a Model of Living by Nancy Roper, Win Logan and Alison Tierney (lecturer), the first UK model of nursing is published.

1981

25th Anniversary of the Department of Nursing Studies. Dr Lisbeth Hockey is awarded the OBE in recognition of her contribution to nursing research. 2nd Elsie Stephenson Memorial Lecture: Past Aspirations – Present Hopes, Phyllis J Runciman, Queen Margaret College.

1983

Dr Lisbeth Hockey retires; Dr Penny Prohit, from the University of Louvain, Belgium, becomes the second Director of the Nursing Research Unit. Professor Altschul awarded the CBE for her commitment to nursing. 3rd Elsie Stephenson Memorial Lecture: A Time for Vision, Dame Catherine Hall, Chairwoman, UKCC.

1984

Dr Penny Prohit, becomes the third Chair of Nursing Studies; Dr Alison Tierney becomes the third Director of the Nursing Research Unit.

1986 – 1995 Change & Development

1986

The undergraduate programme is renamed BSc (Nursing). 4th Elsie Stephenson Memorial Lecture: Trends in Transatlantic Nursing: Recent and Prospective, Professor Margaret Scott Wright, Calgary University.

1987

Clinical Excellence in Nursing: International Networking Congress jointly hosted by the Department of Nursing Studies, the RCN and Sigma Theta Tau, the International Honour Society of Nursing.

1989

Helen Sinclair becomes Head of Department. A lectureship in Anatomy and Physiology is funded by Dr Kathleen Wilson; Dr Roger Watson is appointed.

1990

5th Elsie Stephenson Memorial Lecture: Opportunities for the Nursing Profession in the 1990s, Christine Hancock, General Secretary, RCN. The undergraduate degree is offered as an Honours degree in recognition of its academic content.

1991

25th Anniversary of the Nursing Studies Association with a commemorative edition of Nurse Education Today. A special issue of the International Journal of Nursing Studies commemorates 25 years since the death of Elsie Stephenson.

1993

Following the retiral of Helen Sinclair, Dr Kath Melia becomes Head of Department. Links are forged with the University of Navarre, Pamplona in Spain, facilitating postgraduate students to undertake the MSc in Nursing and Health.

1994

The MSc in Cancer Nursing, partly funded by Macmillan Cancer Relief Fund, is established; Nora Jodrell appointed as Director. 6th Elsie Stephenson Memorial Lecture: Community Health Nursing in Crisis, Dr Lisbeth Hockey, former Director, Nursing Research Unit.

1994

The Nursing Research Unit is incorporated into the Department to embed research activity within Nursing Studies. Nursing Practice: Hospital and Home – The Adult by Margaret Alexander, Tonks Fawcett (lecturer) and Phyllis Runciman is first published, now in its 4th edition.

1995

The 50th Nursing Studies PhD is awarded to Maxine Mueller for her thesis "Organising Participation: an Ethnography of 'Community' in Hospital".

1996 – 2005 From Strength to Strength

1996

Dr Kath Melia becomes the fourth Chair of Nursing Studies. Nursing Studies 40th Anniversary celebrated with guest lecture by Dr Anne Marie Rafferty, Director, Centre for Policy in Nursing Research.

1997

Dr Alison Tierney receives a Personal Chair in Nursing Research.

1998

RCN International Nursing Research Conference hosted by Nursing Studies.

1999

7th Elsie Stephenson Memorial Lecture: Connections between service and academe, Dr Linda Pollock, Nursing Director, Lothian Primary Care Trust.

2001

Undergraduate programme revised to increase community emphasis and renamed Bachelor of Nursing with Honours. Festschrift for Professor Annie Altschul in association with the UK Centre for Nursing History, University of Manchester. 8th Elsie Stephenson Memorial Lecture: Opinions, Evidence and Aspirations in Nursing Practice, Professor Karen Luker, University of Manchester. Dr Rosemary Mander appointed Head of School of Nursing Studies.



2002

Professor Alison Tierney awarded the CBE for services to nursing research and education.

2003

The University undergoes major restructuring and Nursing Studies moves as a subject area to the School of Health in Social Science. Professor Kath Melia appointed the first Head of the School; Tonks Fawcett is appointed Head of Nursing Studies. 9th Elsie Stephenson Memorial Lecture: Standing on the Shoulders of Giants, Dr Beverley Malone, General Secretary, RCN.

2004

Nicola Lester wins the Nursing Standard Award for Student Nurse of the Year.

2005

Nursing Studies at Edinburgh ranked top in the UK in The Guardian's university league table for nursing and midwifery. Dr Rosemary Mander receives a Personal Chair in Midwifery.

2006 – 2016 Innovation & Progress for the Future

2007

Peer-Assisted Learning (PAL), is incorporated into the nursing curriculum. Deborah Ritchie appointed Head of Nursing Studies.

2010

Professor Pam Smith appointed Head of Nursing Studies. Online undergraduate and postgraduate programmes developed for the Kamuzu College of Nursing (KCN), at the University of Malawi.

2011

Professor Charlotte Clarke is appointed Head of School of Health in Social Science.

2012

Tonks Fawcett receives a Personal Chair in Student Learning (Nurse Education). 10th Elsie Stephenson Memorial Lecture: Elsie Stephenson's Legacy: Nurse Leaders in Universities Today, Professor Fiona Ross, The Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. Risk and Dementia Care: Approaches to Everyday Living, co-authored by Professor Charlotte Clarke awarded first prize in the BMA Book Awards.

2013

Innovative Masters of Nursing in Clinical Research established. The 100th Nursing Studies PhD is awarded to Juan Du for her thesis "The Unrecognised Role: hospital-based nurses' experiences of health promotion". Annie Altschul Memorial Lecture: 'The Changing Face of Mental Health Nursing in the 21st Century, Jane Bunclark, Consultant Nurse, South London & Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust.

2014

Dr Sheila Rodgers appointed Head of Nursing Studies. Shion Gosrani wins the 2014 Undergraduate Award in Nursing & Midwifery Category. 11th Elsie Stephenson Memorial Lecture: Avoiding Black Holes: Nursing and the Care of Older People and their carers living at home, Professor Claire Goodman, University of Hertfordshire.

2015

Nursing Studies at Edinburgh ranked top in the UK in The Guardian's university league table for nursing and midwifery for the tenth year in succession.

2016

Nursing Studies hosts the 100th RCN International Nursing Research Conference.

A history of Nursing Studies



New Leaps in the Dark

During the conference, nursing alumni were invited to reflect on their experiences through an anonymous questionnaire. A set of questions asked how their time at Edinburgh had shaped their lives, both in terms of their careers, and as people. It also asked about the impact of studying at Edinburgh and on the development of nursing over the decades that followed. The project, called *New Leaps in the Dark*, was funded by an Innovation Initiative grant awarded by the alumni department of the University. Some of those thoughts are captured here for the first time in the alumni's own words.

To read the report in full, visit:
www.ed.ac.uk/health/newleaps

Personal & professional leaps in the dark

In order to find out why our alumni had studied at Edinburgh, we asked alumni 'Did you personally or professionally take a leap in the dark going to Nursing Studies?' Responses could be broken down into four broad categories:

PURPOSEFUL LEAPS

For many undertaking the integrated degree course, or postgraduate qualifications in Nursing Studies, their decision had been a purposeful one. Being a student and combining this with studying to become a nurse solved a dilemma for many; satisfying personal wishes to do nursing whilst placating parents who wanted them to go to University. For some it was a challenge to get here:

"My mother did not think nursing was good enough for me."

STUDIED 1977-78

"I had to fight hard with careers advisors to do a degree in nursing and not medicine."

STUDIED 1977-78

"For me, it was the best of both worlds."

STUDIED 1965-70

"I wanted to be a nurse, I wanted to have a degree, Edinburgh University was the obvious place for me."

STUDIED 1964-69

PROCRASTINATING LEAPS

For some, studying Nursing at Edinburgh was indeed a real leap in the dark, with some saying they were unsure if they wanted to be nurses or have a career in nursing and others went into Nursing Studies whilst keeping their options open:

"I wasn't sure if I wanted to do nursing or social work, so the course gave me an opportunity to have a grounding in both."

STUDIED 1979-84

"I did nursing studies to keep my options open and to increase my opportunities to travel and work abroad."

STUDIED 1993-98

"I felt I was taking a leap in the dark, but it has proved essential learning in my life for which I am deeply grateful."

STUDIED 1974-78

"I had no idea what social sciences really included but I wanted the opportunity to study outside my comfort zone."

STUDIED 1979-84

7

8

PIONEERING LEAPS

Some alumni felt the excitement of being on a new and innovative programme, and recognised its importance throughout their subsequent careers:

"I was the only one out of six students who started and completed. Although it was the fourth intake, it still felt very new; it was difficult to develop good relationships with the staff of the local hospital who were still suspicious of student nurses doing a degree course."

STUDIED 1963-68

"I can see it was a leap in the dark for the department and the fulfilment of the visionary nurse educators who had gone on before."

STUDIED 1968-73

"Professionally I didn't fully appreciate how experimental the course was."

STUDIED 1978-83

"I felt the excitement at being a pioneer/guinea pig, the first of a group of two with the eyes of the nursing world on you, and inspirational people lecturing."

STUDIED 1960-65

"After leaving, and in the years that followed, it seemed that anyone who was anyone in nursing nationally had passed through the department either as one of our tutors or as someone I had met on the tutor's or admin courses, or at the international school."

STUDIED 1968-73

POSTIVE LEAPS

For more recent alumni (who had studied from the 80s onwards) it was very clear that they had made a positive decision to study at Edinburgh:

"Nursing was in the process of professionalising and developing its own research base and it was exciting to be part of that."

STUDIED 1983-85

"I chose nursing at Edinburgh based on recommendations from a number of postgraduate students within the UK, and the department had an excellent reputation for teaching and researching nursing from a qualitative, social science point of view."

STUDIED 1993-94

"I was attracted by the reputation of the course and the Open Day."

STUDIED 1991-95

"I knew I was extremely lucky to train with such a great group of people and learn from such knowledgeable lecturers... I realised the department was breaking boundaries and influencing nursing nationally and internationally."

STUDIED 1994-98

"I don't feel the phrase 'leap in the dark' describes my personal decision... it was a careful decision on my part... to do a nursing degree or PhD is no longer a leap in the dark but a very normal thing to do."

STUDIED 2009-13

Class of 1992



PASSIONATE PROFESSORS

For almost all of the alumni, the strongest memories were associated with the department's staff, both academic and administrative. Various described as thought-provoking, fascinating, empowering, encouraging, stable, inspiring, funny, delightful and 'mother hens'! Their memories of their mentors were strong:

"How forward thinking/inspirational the lecturers were, (they had) the built-in belief in nursing and the potential role we had in it."

STUDIED 1994-98

"The lecturers were passionate about helping us become highly skilled compassionate and competent practitioners."

"She (Nursing lecturer) had vision and leadership. I was terrified initially that I would not be able to answer her questions! My gradual transition from being frozen with fear in her tutorials—to fully appreciating how she taught me to think and justify my conclusions."

STUDIED 1967-72

"Having small class sizes, meaning that education was always participatory and challenging, and developed us in ways that students on courses with large sizes are not—I think that is a very special experience."

STUDIED 1998-2002

Audrey John PhD & Kathleen Wilson BSc
at Graduation with Elsie Stephenson 1959

PROTECTIVE PEERS

Alumni also frequently mentioned the camaraderie of the intake groups and the forging of life-long friendships with fellow students, as well as the opportunity they had to meet students across the University and from all over the world in their elective courses and social lives:

"(We had) the wonderful opportunity to access a wide variety of modules across the University. I really valued the opportunity to study outside subjects as nurses share an interest in people and outside subjects only enhanced the depth of human understanding."

STUDIED 1994-98

"We were a tight-knit group which challenged the status quo in various ways..."

STUDIED 1964-69; 1970-74; 1976-81 AND 1998-2002

PRACTICE PLACEMENTS

In the early years, practice placements were not always easy for those on the undergraduate programme, and alumni reminisced about their experiences, both good and bad. But in spite of the many challenges they faced, most were proud of their alma mater and felt well equipped for their nursing careers:

"(We had) difficulties with the negative attitudes of the other student nurses we were on hospital placement with."

STUDIED 1977-81

"Very often the other student nurses were jealous, not unreasonably, and life could be uncomfortable. I think this was why, as a cohort, we have a strong bond."

STUDIED 1964-69

"Putting on the gabardine coat for district nurse placement—I felt so proud to be out and about as a nurse—albeit a student nurse."

STUDIED 1973-78

"A memory that stands out is the sessions that brought anatomy, physiology, pharmacology, the care of the patient and psychological care together beautifully."

STUDIED 1991-95

"I learnt the fundamentals that I use in practice today. I discovered like-minds in my thinking about nursing as a discipline distinct from, yet related to medicine, and read Ivan Illich, 'Limits to Medicine' and loved working in George Square Library; I will never forget the first IM injection I gave or the nuggets of advice such as wash your hands if you do not know what to do, and the value of using a pain assessment tool."

STUDIED 1986-92

Stand-out memories

To gain insight into alumni's experience of academic nursing we asked 'what memory(ies) stand(s) out for you about your time in the Nursing Studies Department?' and again these formed distinct groups:

PATIENT FOCUS

The undergraduate students asserted that they were 'constantly encouraged to question', and to think 'habitually about the patient' and to focus on 'the patient as an individual, part of the family, part of the community' were recurring memories. One alumna gave an account of trips to Princes Street in a wheelchair (to experience what it felt like to be disabled).

"(the course had a) huge impact—we were taught that we were patient advocates and I never forgot that. It gave me the courage to step into teaching roles. We were taught by people who were passionate about nursing and that made me passionate about nursing too and I have never lost that."

STUDIED 1978–83

The Impact of Nursing Studies

There was no doubt that studying nursing at Edinburgh had a huge impact on our alumni, and the sense that they had participated in something that went beyond the usual scope of nursing education was strong. Three aspects were particularly mentioned; the strong patient-focus it instilled in them, how the course had encouraged them to think critically throughout their careers, and its significant influence on shaping their future careers.

CRITICAL THINKING

A key outcome from studying at the University of Edinburgh was the encouragement to read, think and to question everything. This included respondents from the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes who emphasised this aspect of their development:

"I do not take things at face value without checking out their validity. I am constantly searching for better ways of doing things in all walks of life."

STUDIED 1964–69

"I became passionate about 'doing things properly', not cutting corners, keeping care of the patient as a primary focus, teaching students and it definitely brought critical thinking and challenging practice to the forefront of the way I practise nursing."

STUDIED 1994–98

"It prepared me to assume an equal and valid role in the multi-disciplinary team and made me comfortable with questioning, debating and discussing practice."

STUDIED 1991–95

"I think that the course helped me develop an analytical approach to problems in the health services, and the other subjects which I studied gave useful perspectives and made it easier for me to work together with other professions during the whole of my working life."

STUDIED 1969–74

"The course gave me confidence... I worked freelance as a consultant working in an international development which I am still doing. I would/could never have been able to do this had it not be for the Department of Nursing Studies. It enabled me to look outside the system."

STUDIED 1964–69

International Summer School 1966

PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS

The experience seemed to encourage independent thinking and career choices that could allow this philosophy to continue in working lives:

"(the course had the impact for me making the) decision to work outside the hospital environment—more autonomy and able to be more patient-centred, not having to follow rules that were not evidence-based."

STUDIED 1979–84

"The course experience was the making of me. Although I did not nurse practically for long, I had an opportunity to become a research nurse for a one year project and I loved it. After a break to have a family, I was lucky enough to join an academic department and undertook a MSc and subsequently to conduct and collaborate in health services projects; Nursing Studies gave me the confidence to pursue my potential."

STUDIED 1967–72

"It gave me a love for reading about issues I encountered about which I knew little. It gave me the confidence to take jobs which were often new and innovative, developing new services."

STUDIED 1968–73



PROFILE

“Nursing Studies raised the profile of nursing and inspired nurses to do research and promote excellent standards of care.”

STUDIED 1963–68

“The course was a catalyst for transformation of nurse education—other universities doing similar things.”

STUDIED 1965–69

“I think that the Department continues to promote a standard of excellence in nursing education” and another reflected that “the development of the Edinburgh University degree course has promoted nurse education and research throughout the world,” and that “without it, I am sure nursing would not have progressed and be where it is today.”

STUDIED 1994–98

“Nursing Studies has been a beacon and leader in high quality nursing/education and has inspired many.”

STUDIED 1991–95

“(The creation of degree nurses) was the moment when people stopped saying ‘only a nurse.’”

STUDIED 1979–84

LEADERSHIP PREPARATION

“A lot of my set were community-based—as well as being leaders / educators—(we all saw work / problems from a different aspect) the profession need us on the ground to spread this different way of thinking.”

STUDIED 1970–75

“Nursing Studies created strong leadership and influenced generations of nurses dedicated to question practice and positively influence care amid rapidly developing healthcare systems.”

STUDIED 1993–98

“Nursing Studies pioneered degree nursing, and the need for nurse leaders, both nationally and internationally, and highlighted the need for nurses to have a high level of knowledge and skills in addition to compassionate and caring attitudes.”

UNDATED

“The answer lies in the length, spread and depth of where Edinburgh graduates of Edinburgh practice—breadth of roles, globally placed, in government, leadership, education and practice, consultant—senior leaders!”

STUDIED 1978–83 AND 1992–93

“Studying in the Department helped me work in the field I enjoy so much and become the person that I am today. In the beginning it was hard work, but in the end, it has opened up a world of possibilities. Since, I have taught international healthcare policy, expanded my networks and was an active member establishing the European Association for the History of Nursing”

STUDIED 1995–2001

Perhaps not surprisingly, the early alumni felt immensely proud to have been part of the earliest undergraduate course.

“It led the way, set the standard; (and gave) a life-long feeling of belonging to a special community of nurses.”

STUDIED 1964–69

The Impact of Nursing Studies nationally / internationally

Finally we asked alumni what impact they thought Nursing Studies has had on nurses and nursing nationally or internationally. Although hard to quantify across the decades, the responses included adjectives such as ‘positive’, ‘huge’, ‘major’, ‘massive’, and ‘incredible’. Its effect was felt in two main ways—it raised the profile of nursing in general, and produced nurses who were questioning, patient focused with intellectual rigour, in short it produced many future leaders of the profession:

Class of 2007–11



Conclusion

Over the decades, the perception of undergraduate education for nursing seems to have changed, initially being seen as experimental, it is now seen as unexceptional. Indeed, over time, the reputation of Nursing Studies has grown and there is a sense from alumni feedback that nursing has earned its place as central to modern healthcare and now commands more respect from other professions.

From the beginning, Edinburgh graduates stated that they 'felt and thought differently from work colleagues'. In the early decades this was understandable as the education was quite different from the apprenticeship model of traditional nurse training. But feedback from later graduates confirms that the Nursing Studies alumni still feel different. This may be because studying nursing at a prestigious and established university like Edinburgh, with its sixty year history of academic nursing, is able to add something special to nursing degree courses. The feeling of difference could be due to the course content, or the Department's ability to continue to attract passionate, committed and inspiring lecturers and tutors.

Smaller class sizes relative to other universities (which remain a feature of the Nursing Studies Department today) combined with the lecturer mentoring and tutor support during clinical placements (despite some hostile receptions from traditionally trained nurses in the early days), seem to have equipped alumni with a patient focus, resilience, determination and critical thinking skills which have undoubtedly served them well, and endured, career-long.

It is clear that the course had influenced some alumni to work in the community and primary care settings. Nursing Studies

alumni however seem to have pervaded all areas of practice and the confidence-building aspect of the courses offered seems to have been a key element in equipping the alumni with career choices, and preparing them for particular nursing roles in all parts of the profession.

Many graduates have gone on to raise the profile of the nursing profession, and influence nursing practice, research and education throughout their working lives. Nurse leaders have emerged having been inspired and stimulated by their studies within Edinburgh, and the Department specifically. They in turn, according to these respondents, have gone on to influence nursing on the national and international stage.

The memories captured in this project are a living testimony of the enduring legacy of nursing education and scholarship provided by Nursing Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Insights have been provided into the personal and professional 'leaps' taken by Nursing Studies alumni, and the impact nationally and internationally that academic nursing has made over the six decades of the duration of the Department of Nursing Studies.

As Rosemary Weir pointed out in 1996 in her original 'A Leap in the Dark', The University of Edinburgh had certainly taken a leap into the unknown by opening its doors to Nurse Education and then Undergraduate Nursing in the 1950s. This was a brave move and one that has proved to have been both ahead of its time and very worthwhile. Graduates of Nursing Studies at The University of Edinburgh have shaped healthcare and nursing over the past 60 years and will continue to do so into the next phase of this unfolding story.



Nursing Studies
staff & students 2016

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