

# Programme Specification: Post Graduate Taught For Academic Year 2026/27

## 1. Course Summary

<b>Names of programme and award title(s)</b>	Postgraduate Certificate in Critical Care
<b>Award type</b>	Postgraduate Certificate
<b>Mode of study</b>	Part-time
<b>Framework of Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) level of final award</b>	Level 7
<b>Normal length of the programme</b>	1 year
<b>Maximum period of registration</b>	The normal length as specified above plus 3 years
<b>Location of study</b>	Hospital - Nursing & Midwifery Keele Campus
<b>Accreditation (if applicable)</b>	This is a non-accredited programme
<b>Regulator</b>	Office for Students (OfS)
<b>Tuition Fees</b>	<b>UK students:</b> Part-time fee for 2026/27 is £4,400 per year*

**How this information might change:** Please read the important information at <http://www.keele.ac.uk/student-agreement/>. This explains how and why we may need to make changes to the information provided in this document and to help you understand how we will communicate with you if this happens.

\* We reserve the right to increase fees in subsequent years of study by an inflationary amount. Please refer to the accompanying Student Terms & Conditions for full details. Further information on fees can be found at <http://www.keele.ac.uk/studentfunding/tuitionfees/>

## 2. Overview of the Programme

The Postgraduate Critical Care programme (PG CC) is designed to provide healthcare professionals with the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary to inform safe, proficient and evidence-based practice to care for critical care adults, typically in a Intensive Care environment. The programme aligns to the National Standard for Adult Critical Care Nurse Education (2023). The national education framework outlines the core curriculum content to achieve the 60 credits at L7. This is inclusive of systems based teaching, nursing management of key intensive care therapies such as invasive and non-invasive ventilation, hemofiltration, pharmacological support, end of life and palliative care, nutrition and rehabilitation. The programme is taught using a blended approach, including in person and online learning, with opportunities for small group work, reflection and independent study.

This PG certificate builds on previous clinical experience and Step 1 proficiencies and applicants are required to complete Steps 2 and 3 of the National Competencies for Adult Critical Care Nurses as part of the work-based learning module (CC3N, 2023).

Upon completion graduates are recognised as certified adult critical care nurses having completed their Qualification in Specialism (QIS) and recognised by the Critical Care Network and aligning Professional bodies.

Critical Care National Nurse Leads (CC3N, 2023). National Standards for Adult Critical Care Nurse Education. V3.

### 3. Aims of the programme

This programme aligns to the CC3N National Standards for Adult Critical Care Nurse Education (CC3N, 2023) core curriculum and the associated clinical competencies (CC3Ns Step 2 and 3). This framework is met by completing 60 credits, specifically Critical Care Practice (NUR-40045- 30 credits), Clinical Practice (NUR 30163-15 credits) and a Level 7 research module (15 credits).

The broad aims of the programme are to:

- prepare a first level registered nurse and other healthcare professionals to work autonomously to provide total holistic care to both level 2 and level 3 patients (levels as defined by the Intensive Care Society (2021).
- move the learner through a progressive development process from a novice in critical care, through to a competent and independent practitioner using the National proficiency documents (CC3N, 2023). Steps 2 and 3 are completed during the academic critical care programme where the learner will gain the necessary depth of related theory and knowledge from the outlined core curriculum and gain skills in supervision of others and complex problem solving.

Intensive Care Society (ICS). (2021). Levels of Adult Critical Care. Second Edition. Consensus Statement. 2021-03-Levels-of-care-second-edition-1.pdf

### 4. What you will learn

The intended learning outcomes of the programme (what students should know, understand and be able to do at the end of the programme), can be described under the following headings:

- Subject knowledge and understanding
- Subject specific skills
- Key or transferable skills (including employability skills)

#### Subject knowledge and understanding

Successful students will:

- have developed a systematic understanding and critical awareness of the knowledge required to understand and manage current problems relating to the critical/ intensive care discipline, field of study and professional practice.
- be able to demonstrate safe, proficient, evidence based practice in the application of knowledge together with a practical understanding of enquiry to create and interpret knowledge to inform clinical judgement to independently undertake complex holistic management of a critically ill adult.
- be able to demonstrate effective self- management and leadership skills to effect change, lead and manage unpredictable, unplanned clinical situations whilst considering their and others wellbeing.

#### Subject specific skills

With the completion of Step 2 proficiencies students will gain the necessary depth of related theory and knowledge from the outlines core curriculum (CC3N, 2023). You will be able to:

- Demonstrate skilled performance in the activity with enhanced theoretical knowledge and understanding giving rationale for practice.
- Demonstrate application of knowledge and understanding in relation to relevant policies, procedures and guidelines.
- Participate in problem solving through critical analysis and evaluation of more complex situation.
- Develop more varied critical care experience with minimum supervision and guidance, attaining competence in related knowledge and skills.

With the completion of Step 3 proficiencies the student will gain skills in the supervision of others and complex problem solving (CC3N, 2023). You will be able to:

- Demonstrate competent performance in all the activities specified without direct supervision based upon relevant evidenced based knowledge, intuition and established practice.
- Independently problem solve complex situations and offer solutions through critical analysis and evaluation.
- Supervise and instruct others in a range of activities related to their role and responsibilities
- Apply knowledge, understanding and research to relevant policies, procedures and guidelines to critically analyse and improve practice

## Key or transferable skills (including employability skills)

On successful completion you will be able to:

demonstrate enhanced skills in clinical reasoning, be able to act independently when problem solving, planning, delivering, monitoring and evaluating complex care within their scope of practice.

- demonstrate effective collaboration with the interdisciplinary team, patients, their families/ significant others during working practice and in challenging situations.

### Keele Graduate Attributes

The Keele Graduate Attributes are the qualities (skills, values and mindsets) which you will have the opportunity to develop during your time at Keele through both the formal curriculum and also through co- and extra-curricular activities (e.g., work experience, and engagement with the wider University community such as acting as ambassadors, volunteering, peer mentoring, student representation, membership and leadership of clubs and societies). Our Graduate Attributes consist of four themes: **academic expertise, professional skills, personal effectiveness, and social, environmental and ethical responsibility**. You will have opportunities to engage actively with the range of attributes throughout your time at Keele: through your academic studies, through self-assessing your own strengths, weaknesses, and development needs, and by setting personal development goals. You will have opportunities to discuss your progress in developing graduate attributes with, for example, Academic Mentors, to prepare for your future career and lives beyond Keele.

## 5. How is the programme taught?

The PG CC programme, has three core modules, achieving 60 credits at masters level integrating theory and practice. The learning and teaching methods of delivery follow a blended approach using synchronous and asynchronous styles, face to face and online methods according to the content and module assessments. The learning methods support the student to meet the learning outcomes by providing a balance of independent, supported learning, the provision of dialogue and development of skills and knowledge through peer and expert support. Critical thinking aligned with contemporary evidence is also essential for the development of competent practice.

Learning and teaching methods used on the programme vary according to the subject matter and level of the module. They include the following:

- Seminars and Workshops: The core content of each module is delivered through a series of tutor-led or group-led seminars or workshops.
- Observations and Supervised Practice: Clinically focused modules such as clinical practice, health assessment and supplementary and independent prescribing have a practice requirement to the module that involves supervision support and assessment from supervisors in clinical practice.
- Web-based learning using the Blackboard Ultra (KLE). All modules on the programme maintain an active web presence where module details and learning materials can be accessed on campus and remotely. A variety of methods are utilised to support teaching on the modules including synchronous, asynchronous sessions delivered both on campus and virtually.
- Group work and peer support. All modules use focused group work and class discussions within allocated tutor time.
- Directed independent study. Time supported by the employer partner to engage in learning activities adding depth and breadth to their knowledge of topics, to practice skills and to reflect on critical incidents and their practice.
- Apprentices engage with core content relating to safeguarding, career development and PREVENT on the apprenticeship platform, APTEM. These activities are reviewed by the Academic Mentor and discussed during progress reviews. These contribute to the apprentices learning plan.

Apart from these formal activities, students are also provided with regular opportunities to talk through particular areas of difficulty, and any special learning needs they may have, with their Academic Mentors or module lecturers on a one-to-one basis.

## 6. Teaching Staff

The PG CC programme is led by a experienced senior lecturer and Critical Care Nurse who leads on the Critical Care pathways including Advanced Critical Care. The programme team also includes lecturers with a critical care qualification and similar awards.

All members of staff are registered with the appropriate Professional Body, with many members of staff have higher degrees and PhDs in disciplines relating to the core modules of the pathway. Some staff are active researchers publishing in national and international journals. The majority of staff have recognised and recordable teaching qualifications. Moreover, they have extensive experience of teaching at undergraduate and postgraduate level and many are External Examiners to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in other

Higher Education Institutes. A number of teaching staff hold fellowship or senior fellowship status with Advance HE, demonstrating expertise in engaging with a broad understanding of effective approaches to learning and teaching support as a key contribution to high quality student learning. Fellowship | Advance HE ([advance-he.ac.uk](https://www.advance-he.ac.uk)).

Integral to the programme is the incorporation of clinical experts, as visiting lecturers they facilitate subject specific content and are actively involved in the formative/ summative assessments.

The University will attempt to minimise changes to our core teaching teams, however, delivery of the programme depends on having a sufficient number of staff with the relevant expertise to ensure that the programme is taught to the appropriate academic standard.

Staff turnover, for example where key members of staff leave, fall ill or go on research leave, may result in changes to the programme's content. The University will endeavour to ensure that any impact on students is limited if such changes occur.

## 7. What is the structure of the programme?

Critical Care education has been defined by the Critical Care Nurse Education Review Forum (CCNERF), they believe

*"Critical Care nurses should have access to high quality post registration education which develops staff to be competent practitioners and is fully transferable between units across the UK"* (CC3N, 2023).

This is to ensure that the post registration education provides workforce transferability, value for money and programmes that are fit for purpose (CC3N, 2023). The programme will prepare a first level registered nurse and other healthcare professionals to work autonomously to provide total holistic care to both level 2 and level 3 patients (Intensive Care Society, 2021). It is designed to enable students to achieve a minimum of 60 credits, Master's level, that incorporates successful completion of the CC3N Steps 2 & 3 competencies (CC3N, 2023).

Keele's PG Certificate in CC is innovative, inclusive and flexible in design, having been developed with practice representatives and aligning to the national education framework. The core content also aligns with service requirements including the Guidelines for the Provision of Intensive Care Services (GPICS). Delivery is responsive to the needs of the service, including facilitation of flexible delivery.

The programme consists of three compulsory modules:

**Critical Care Practice** (NUR-40045, 30 credits). This module includes learning on each physiological systems (respiratory, cardiovascular, renal, gastrointestinal, liver, neurological, integumentary). In addition to the following topics with specific reference to critical care:

- Promotion of a positive holistic patient experience and awareness of the holistic nature of nursing care including patient choice
- Recognition of health abnormalities
- Investigations and interpretation of results
- Assessment, planning, implementation and evaluation of care for a critically ill adult
- Relevant specialist situations, such as acute oncology and care of the pregnant or recently pregnant lady
- Pharmacology, pharmacokinetics, medicines management and the challenges of these within critical care
- Psychosocial care of the patient and their family, including during admission to Critical Care and discharge to the ward
- Pain, delirium sedation and sleep
- Treatment modalities and interventions used in Critical Care
- Emergency situations
- Inter & Intra hospital transfer
- Ability to plan and contribute to recovery pathways alongside the wider MDT
- End of Life Care / Organ donation and care of the donor
- Infection Prevention & Control
- The vulnerability of critically ill patients (including consent, mental capacity and deprivation of liberty (dols))
- Legal requirements of role, acts of parliament that influence care delivery and ethical dilemmas that could arise in practice
- Communication, leadership, management and team skills
- Human factors, including: knowledge of fixation, red flags and situational awareness
- Health and wellbeing for the learner and their colleagues

**Clinical Practice module** (NUR-30163, 15 credits). This module is taken alongside the Critical Care Practice module. This work based learning module supports the application of the taught critical care module within clinical practice, namely a level 3 environment (ICS, 2021).

**Research Module** (15 credits) - normally 'Research Application in Clinical Practice' - assists the student to develop the skills to review pertinent literature, research and evidence to inform and challenge critical care

practice and disseminate current research to enhance practice development. It encourages the development of student potential in both academic and clinical practice

Module Sequence: The research module can be taken prior to or following the Critical Care Practice and Clinical Practice module. The Clinical Practice module is taken alongside the Critical Care Practice module to demonstrate application of theory to practice.

The Postgraduate Certificate can also be part of the Enhanced Clinical Practice (ECP) Critical Care apprenticeship route. This would require completion of a further 60 credits, including compulsory and optional modules. This would also need to be supported by your employer. For more information please speak to the Programme Lead and further information can be located here:

<https://www.keele.ac.uk/apprenticeships/apprenticeshipprogrammes/enhancedclinicalpractitioner/>

Critical Care Network National Nurse Leads (CC3N, 2023). [National Standards for Adult Critical Care Nurse Education. education\\_standards\\_final.pdf](#)

Please add details

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## Module Lists

### Level 7

Compulsory modules	Module Code	Credits	Period
Critical Care Practice	NUR-40045	30	Trimester 1-2
Clinical Practice	NUR-30163	15	Trimester 1-3
Research Application in Clinical Practice - Level 7	NUR-40120	15	Year

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## 8. Final and intermediate awards

Upon achieving 60 credits, the student will be awarded a Postgraduate Certificate in Critical Care.

This PG Certificate can also be completed as part of the Postgraduate Diploma Enhanced Clinical Practice (Critical Care) apprenticeship route using the apprenticeship levy. This would need support from your employer, for more information please speak with the Programme Lead [Enhanced Clinical Practitioner - Keele University](#)

To continue to a Postgraduate Diploma or full Master's award a discussion with the Programme Lead / Postgraduate Portfolio Lead will be facilitated to discuss options and routes.

This PG Certificate in CC can be taken as part of the Enhanced Clinical Practitioner Apprenticeship Postgraduate Diploma, requiring a further 60 credits to be completed.

<https://skillsengland.education.gov.uk/apprenticeships/st0895-v1-2>

## 9. How is the Programme Assessed?

The wide variety of assessment methods used on this programme at Keele reflects the broad range of knowledge and skills that are developed as progression is demonstrated through the programme. Teaching staff pay particular attention to specifying clear assessment criteria and providing timely, regular and constructive feedback that helps to clarify understanding and helps improve performance. The following list is representative of the variety of assessment methods used on the programme:

The three core modules have a variety of assessments including essays, work based assessments, poster design and critique of the evidence base.

- Clinical Practice module: reflective essay and work based proficiencies demonstrating understanding an application in a critical care setting.
- Critical Care Practice module: online task (practical sheet) and design of an educational poster including demonstrating understanding of the content/ knowledge and application to critical care management.
- Research module: demonstration of gathering and critiquing the evidence base.

Marks are awarded for summative assessments designed to assess the achievement of learning outcomes. Formative assessment enables monitoring of self-progress and identification and addressing of any specific learning needs. Feedback, including guidance on how the quality of work can be improved is also provided on all

summative assessments within five working weeks of submission, unless there are compelling circumstances that make this impossible, and more informally in the course of tutorial and seminar discussions.

## 10. Accreditation

This programme does not have accreditation from an external body.

## 11. University Regulations

The University Regulations form the framework for learning, teaching and assessment and other aspects of the student experience. Further information about the University Regulations can be found at:

<http://www.keele.ac.uk/student-agreement/>

Applicants without a first degree can be considered using University guidance dependent on relevant clinical experience or prior study.

**Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)** is considered on a case by case basis and those interested should contact the Programme Lead. The University guidance on this can be found here [Recognition of prior learning - Keele University](#)

If this programme has any exemptions, variations or additions to the University Regulations these will be detailed in an Annex at the end of this document titled 'Programme-specific regulations'.

## 12. What are the typical admission requirements for the Programme?

Typically all students will have completed the pre-requisite Step 1 proficiencies (CC3N, 2023)

See the relevant course page on the website for the admission requirements relevant to this programme:

<https://www.keele.ac.uk/study/>

All students will require employer support to complete the programme, who will also assign a Practice Assessor to enable completion of the work based learning proficiencies.

## 13. How are students supported on the programme?

The programme handbook provides key information and guidance on structure and content of the programme. Module documentation provides details on module content, specific assessments, including formative feedback and dates for summative submission.

The programme complies with University policy on student pastoral and academic support. Primarily, the Programme Lead and specific module leads will undertake the role of your Academic Mentor. Module Leads will provide additional support. Both are available to meet as required at a mutually agreed time and will be contactable by email, Microsoft Teams or via the KLE.

The University has a range of support services which are detailed on the Keele website including: Keele Student Support Services, Library Staff and Professional Services Staff and signposted to during the induction.

The student will have an important role in liaising closely with all partners in the programme. Support is also available in clinical practice, a Clinical Supervisor typically called a Practice Assessor is also required to assess knowledge and skills related to the work based learning proficiencies. In addition, Employer Partners may also sign post to additional services including Trust Educational Leads, Clinical Practice Facilitators and services within the workplace to support the learning journey.

Peers are also a valuable support resource both from the workplace and from within the cohort.

## 14. Learning Resources

Access to learning material will be provided by the module team via electronic learning platforms including Blackboard (KLE) and/or Microsoft Teams.

You will have access to the library and IT services based on campus and at the Clinical Education Centre.

Library Information: the library operates on two sites. The campus site houses IT services and the Health library is based at the Clinical Education Centre at the Royal Stoke Hospital site. Further information and support can be located here Library - <https://www.keele.ac.uk/library/>

## 15. Other Learning Opportunities

A range of learning opportunities will be available to facilitate your learning in the workplace and at Keele. Within

the workplace, you will be encouraged, with the support of your Practice Assessor to seek out a range of experiences which align to your proficiencies and work based learning. This will broaden understanding of other specialties/ clinical environments and develop confidence and competence within your chosen area of practice.

At Keele, simulated practice will be facilitated both within the Faculty of Medicine and Health Science (Darwin simulation centre) and at the University's Clinical Education Centre at University Hospital of North Midlands NHS Trust, Stoke on Trent. Both offer state-of-the-art facilities and simulation resources to enable you to undertake practice in clinical assessment in a safe and protected environment. The two simulation centres will support the embedding of knowledge, skills and interprofessional education into curriculum delivery.

## 16. Additional Costs

There are no expected additional costs. Students are expected to support the cost for resources such as printing and photocopying.

The proficiency documents are available online with no cost to the student, this is a NHS platform facilitated by the employer.

These costs have been forecast by the University as accurately as possible but may be subject to change as a result of factors outside of our control (for example, increase in costs for external services). Forecast costs are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain representative. Where additional costs are in direct control of the University we will ensure increases do not exceed 5%.

As to be expected there will be additional costs for inter-library loans and potential overdue library fines, print and graduation. We do not anticipate any further costs for this programme.

## 17. Quality management and enhancement

The quality and standards of learning in this programme are subject to a continuous process of monitoring, review and enhancement.

- The School Education Committee is responsible for reviewing and monitoring quality management and enhancement procedures and activities across the School.
- Individual modules and the programme as a whole are reviewed and enhanced every year in the annual programme review which takes place at the end of the academic year.
- The programmes are run in accordance with the University's Quality Assurance procedures and are subject to periodic reviews under the Revalidation process.

Student evaluation of, and feedback on, the quality of learning on every module takes place every year using a variety of different methods:

- The results of student evaluations of all modules are reported to module leaders and reviewed by the Programme Committee as part of annual programme review.
- Findings related to the programme from the annual Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and from regular surveys of the student experience conducted by the University, are subjected to careful analysis and a planned response at programme and School level.
- Feedback received from representatives of students on the programme is considered and acted on at regular meetings of the Student Staff Voice Committee.

The University appoints senior members of academic staff from other universities to act as external examiners on all programmes. They are responsible for:

- Approving examination questions
- Confirming all marks which contribute to a student's degree
- Reviewing and giving advice on the structure and content of the programme and assessment procedures

Information about current external examiner(s) can be found here:

<http://www.keele.ac.uk/qa/externalexaminers/currentexternalexaminers/>

## 18. The principles of programme design

The programme described in this document has been drawn up with reference to, and in accordance with the guidance set out in, the following documents:

**a.** UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education:

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>

**b.** Keele University Regulations and Guidance for Students and Staff: <http://www.keele.ac.uk/regulations>

## Version History

## **This document**

**Date Approved:** 15 May 2026

## **Previous documents**

<b>Version No</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Date Approved</b>	<b>Summary of and rationale for changes</b>
1	2025/26	NICOLA WITTON	08 December 2025	