

Delivering Excellence



The postgraduate development programme
for NHS professional communicators (PGCertHC)



Courses 03 and 04
2016-17



In the spring of 2015 the NHS partnered with the Centre for Health Communication Research at Bucks New University to launch the UK's first postgraduate healthcare communication course specifically designed for NHS professional communicators.

The course is highly practical, part-time and it covers the full range of communications and engagement skills that leaders and future leaders working in NHS communications need to be effective. It consists of four week-long modules, which address external, interpersonal, internal and management / leadership communications.

The course has been designed to reflect the current challenges facing senior communicators, whether working in a provider organisation, a clinical commissioning group or in one of the new Sustainability and Transformation Plan footprints.

Key topics include

- The Francis commitment to openness, transparency and candour
- Account management and working in partnership
- Developing effective health campaigns
- Reputation management
- Digital communication and social media
- Influencing at board level
- Benchmarking your own communication function
- Social marketing

Who should consider applying for a place on this course?

This programme is intended to foster leadership resilience and continuity in the NHS communications field. It is intended for anybody who is, or aspires to be, a senior health communicator in the NHS.

Specifically it would benefit those at Head or Director of Communications level or those at Band 6/7 or above who wish to develop their skills and who aspire to positions of leadership in the field of NHS professional communications.

Candidates should expect a competitive entry process which requires participants to demonstrate a strong desire to join the course and a commitment to completion.



Course fees are typically covered by NHS organisations.
Some NHS bursaries are also available.



Missenden Abbey – exceptional teaching facilities

Teaching style & time commitment

The course is a part-time course, four weeks residential teaching over the course of twelve months. It comprises four teaching modules each of which involves:

- A residential teaching week at Bucks New University's modern conference centre
- A piece of written project work or a long essay to be completed in the weeks after the residential week

The focus of the four modules is both practical and strategic. Each module will include lectures and exercises, inputs from senior, professional NHS communicators and guest keynote speakers including senior NHS managers, top clinicians, media health correspondents etc.

Successful completion of the course leads to the award of the Postgraduate Certificate in Health Communication and the right to use the post-nominal letters PGCertHC. Candidates can also apply their postgraduate points towards a full MA if they wish to.

The course is delivered at Missenden Abbey. The Abbey was founded in 1133 by a group of Augustinian Canons from northern France. Today it is Bucks New University's well-appointed conference centre with exceptional teaching facilities, comfortable accommodation and excellent catering.

Course Directors

The course directors are John Underwood and Bill Nichols.

John Underwood holds an Honorary Chair at the University of Glasgow and is a Visiting Professor at Bucks New University. Over the past 20 years John has advised many NHS organisations - including health commissioners, health providers, professional bodies, regulators and the Department of Health – on a wide range of complex communication and reputation management issues.

Dr Bill Nichols is a marketing and engagement specialist who has worked extensively overseas in addition to working for NHS organisations in the UK. He ran his own international communications consultancy before completing a Doctorate of Business Administration at Henley Business School where he was subsequently a visiting lecturer. He is a Bucks Fellow and former course-leader for communications.

Fees

The total course fees for this postgraduate course are £10,000 plus VAT. This includes all teaching fees, residential hotel fees, University registration fees, course materials, graduation ceremony, certificates etc. NHS bursaries are available for some candidates to cover part of the fees.



The NHS and the Centre for Health Communication Research

The Centre for Health Communication Research began working with the NHS Trust Development Authority (now NHS Improvement) in 2014 to develop the UK's first postgraduate communication course specifically tailored to the needs of NHS professional communicators. The first two cohorts of students joined the course in 2015 and we are now recruiting students for the third and fourth cohorts.

The course is structured around the belief that communication should involve the engagement of staff, patients, communities and stakeholders and should be used as a management tool to help transform services and ensure service delivery on time and on target.

The Centre for Health Communication Research focuses on the communication dilemmas, challenges, issues and opportunities faced by organisations in the health sector. It works at the boundary between academe and the

public sector and acts as a catalyst for innovative thinking in the field of health communication and an independent source of best-practice advice.

The Centre aims to become recognised nationally and internationally as a best-in-class source of research, teaching and consultancy in the field of health communication and its vision is to encourage the use of effective and professional communications to improve patient outcomes and strengthen the patient experience.

The Centre is located at Bucks New University's High Wycombe Campus which boasts a new, RIBA award-winning library and technology centre. The Faculty of Society and Health has established a reputation as a vocational leader. It is also active in key research areas including tele-health, health communications, mental health and workforce intelligence.

What the course students say...

The first two cohorts of NHS professional communicators to undertake the course completed a number of evaluations and assessments. Feedback has been very positive.

"Far exceeded my expectations"

"It felt very special"

"Informative, fun and inspiring"

"Challenging – in a good way"

"Engaging"

"I'm using everything I've learned on the course. It's so relevant"

"Practical"

"Invaluable"

"I feel I've been equipped to go as far as I want to. I didn't think I could realistically be a Director of Communications but the course has helped me understand what's expected and I think I could do it"

Further information

For further details please contact john.underwood@chr.org.uk or bill.nichols@chr.org.uk