

Delivering Excellence



NHS communications development: the NHS postgraduate certificate in health communications (PgCert-HC).



**Courses 06-09
2019-2020**



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

The course is highly practical and part-time. 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. These address engagement and, respectively, interpersonal, leadership and external communications.

The course is 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 STP structures.

Key topics include

- Ethics and the Francis commitment to openness, transparency and candour
- Consultation
- Leadership
- Partnership and collaborative working
- Health promotion and social marketing
- Reputation management
- Digital and social media
- Influencing at board level
- Benchmarking and evaluation.

Who should apply?

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

Specifically it will benefit: those at Head or Director of Communications level; or those at Band 6/7 or above who wish to develop their practical knowledge, skills and confidence.

Candidates should expect a competitive entry process. It requires participants to demonstrate a strong desire to join the course, a commitment to its completion and an understanding of its value to the wider NHS.



Course fees are typically based on matched-funding between a student's organisation and NHS Improvement.



Missenden Abbey – exceptional teaching facilities

Teaching style & time commitment

The part-time course comprises four modules. Each module involves:

- A residential teaching week either at Bucks New University's Missenden Abbey conference centre (originally an 1133 Augustinian foundation) or at Huddersfield University's Business School. Both offer exceptional teaching facilities, comfortable accommodation and good catering.
- An extended coursework to be completed in the weeks after the residential period.

Each module's focus is both practical and strategic. The mode is 'active learning': meaning highly participative workshop sessions. We include inputs from senior, professional NHS communicators and guest keynote speakers from across the NHS, public/third and commercial sectors as well as major media.

Successful completion leads to the award of the Postgraduate Certificate in Health Communication and the right to use the post-nominal letters PgCert-HC. From Cohort 6, candidates may also follow a parallel accredited route to the CIPR (Chartered Institute of Public Relations) Diploma - the UK's premier professional communications award. There are also established, and accredited-pathways to both Bucks' own MA in professional practice and to the MSc in strategic communications at Edinburgh's Queen Margaret University.

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 communications and service marketing 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 are £10,000 plus VAT. This includes all teaching, residential hotel and University registration fees, course materials, graduation ceremony, certificates etc. Course fees are typically met by matched-funding between a student's organisation and NHS Improvement.



The NHS and the Centre for Health Communication Research

The Centre for Health Communication Research (CHCR) 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 course is part of an NHS joint communications development programme and is aimed at aspiring leaders in engagement and communications from across health and care.

To date (2015-18), five cohorts/78 students have achieved 100% graduation.

After a comprehensive procurement process over summer 2018, CHCR – partnered with Bucks New University – will continue to deliver the PgCert-HC. Four further cohorts are scheduled during 2019-20.

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

CHCR focuses on the communication dilemmas, 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 as 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. Its vision is to encourage the use of effective and professional communications to improve patient outcomes and to strengthen the patient experience.

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

What 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"

NHS PgCert-HC - Further information

Please contact the NHS Lead (Alison Brown): alison.brown27@nhs.net
OR visit www.chcr.org.uk OR register at <https://elearning.chcr.org.uk/> OR
contact john.underwood@chcr.org.uk or bill.nichols@chcr.org.uk