



## Review

# An integrative review of graduate transition programmes: Developmental considerations for nursing management



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## ARTICLE INFO

## Keywords:

Nurse  
Programme  
Transition graduate  
Neophyte

## ABSTRACT

Graduate transition programmes have been developed to recruit new nursing staff and facilitate an effective transition from nursing student to Registered Nurse within the clinical environment. Therefore the aim of this paper was to explore the various elements included in nursing graduate transition programmes. An integrative review was undertaken incorporating a strict inclusion criterion, critical appraisal, and thematic analysis of 30 studies. There are numerous transition programmes available yet there remains a lack of transparency regarding their aims/objectives, course content, support timeframe and the type of support provided. This inconsistency has resulted in a lack of clarity regarding efficacy or superiority of any one programme over another. Innovative multifaceted programs may assist in supporting the graduate registered nurse to transition effectively into the clinical environment. Providing these support programmes may allow nurse managers to recruit new graduates and therefore decrease the staff budget expenditure.

*Implications for nursing management:* No graduate programme was shown to be superior to others yet graduate programmes appear to positively influence the experience of the graduate and increase staff recruitment. Comparative research is needed to ascertain the integral components of these programmes.

## 1. Background

Internationally graduate nurses have found that they are currently entering an overburdened and understaffed healthcare system where they must transition quickly from nursing student to effective, competent practitioner (Duchscher, 2008). This nurse shortage and consequent overburdened health care system is a global issue with concerns documented in the UK (Harrison-White and Simons, 2013) Australia (Kelly and McAllister, 2013) and Japan (Tominaga and Miki, 2011). Indeed, the International Council of Nurses (ICN) has raised the issue of a global shortage of tertiary educated registered nurses (Nardi and Gyurko, 2013) citing the workforce shortage as a serious contemporary concern that may result in a worldwide health care crisis (Nardi and Gyurko, 2013). For example within Australia 47.68% of the nursing workforce are between 40 and 59 years of age (Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA), 2015). Many in the workforce are entering retirement, and subsequently leaving a paucity of junior and less experienced staff to manage the increasing health care demand (NMBA, 2015). Duchscher (2008) and Hofler (2008) suggested that the current shortage of experienced nurses is a global human resource crisis

that has resulted in inexperienced new graduates filling the void in various nursing specialties. This dependence on novice nurses can create a disorientating and discouraging initial work experience which can consequently result in high levels of burnout and stress (Duchscher, 2008; Tominaga and Miki, 2011). Therefore, in light of the workforce shortage, and intense clinical environment, programmes that encourage the recruitment and possible retention of new graduates, namely transition programmes have become an important consideration for nurse managers and health care facilities.

## 2. Methods

An integrative review was chosen as the most suitable method to synthesise the literature regarding nursing transition programmes. Integrative reviews summarise research of various designs to gain a comprehensive understanding of the concern (Whittemore and Knaf, 2005). As the process of transition from student to nursing practitioner is multifaceted an integrative review was the most appropriate method to consider the evidence available.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.nepr.2017.10.009>

Received 27 October 2016; Received in revised form 6 September 2017; Accepted 8 October 2017  
1471-5953/ © 2017 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

**Table 1**  
Studies included after Critical Appraisal (CASP).

Author	Year	Study Design	Sample size	Site	Findings
Becroft et al.	2006	programme evaluation Survey	318 Graduate RNs	USA	There are a number of obstacles to therapeutic mentor-mentee relationships including diversity, stress and time restraints.
Cleary et al.	2009	Quantitative Evaluation	45 Graduates RNs	Australia	Graduate programmes can make a positive impact in the transition of newly Registered Nurses. These programmes should include professional development opportunities.
Cubit & Ryan	2011	Mixed Methods: Online Survey and Focus groups	13 Graduate Registered Nurses	Australia	The role of preceptor ship can be complicated by rostering, personalities, timing, skill mix, or role ambiguity.
Duchscher	2008	Qualitative Methods	14 Female Graduates	Canada	Preparatory education on transitioning should include structured orientation and mentoring that bridges the expectations and realities of professional life.
El Haddad et al.	2013	Scholarly critique	–	Australia	The transition to practice of graduate Registered Nurses can be problematic and poses a significant challenge to healthcare industry in terms of employment and transition support.
Feng & Tsai	2012	Semi-Structured Interviews	7 Graduate Nurses	Taiwan	The transition from student to new Registered Nurse is stressful. Graduates require time to increase their knowledge and gain clinical skills.
Gilmour et al.	2015	Survey	318 Graduate Registered Nurses and Midwives	Australia & New Zealand	Workforce policy for the sustainability of the nursing workforce should employ new graduates and provide supported post-graduate education.
Goode et al.	2009	Evaluative Questionnaire	665 new graduates nurses	USA	Transition programmes should run for a period of 12 months to provide support for when new graduates realise their lack of skill and experience altered self-perceptions. Therefore it may take up to one year to become competent in their role due to the differing specialisations, technology and standards.
Halfer	2007	Programme evaluation	Not specified	USA	Many facets can be included in a graduate transition programme including mentorship, classroom learning and transition sessions.
Harrison-White & Simons	2013	Qualitative: Focus groups	3 preceptor RNs	UK	There is strong evidence to support the use of preceptorship in the initial 12 months post qualifying.
Hillman & Foster	2011	Programme Evaluation	3 Preceptees RN graduates 251 new graduate nurses	USA	Graduate programs can boost nurse retention rates and therefore can result in cost savings for health care facilities.
Hofler	2008	Review	National reports from 1995 to 2005	USA	Standardised transition programmes should include clinical and non-clinical education, career development, and mentoring and skill development.
Kelly & McAllister	2013	Semi structured interviews	13 third year Bachelor of Nursing Students	Australia	Evidence-based preceptor preparation is needed to form appropriate preceptor programmes that will provide support and confidence to new graduates.
Kowalski & Cross	2010	Cohort study	55 graduates in a nurse residency programme	USA	There is increasing pressure to transition new graduates into competent practitioners quickly to meet the healthcare demand. 12 month nursing internships or residency programmes may provide support and decrease costs associated with turnover
Krugman et al.	2006	Descriptive Comparative Survey	All graduates from 34 hospital sites	USA	New graduate nurse employment retention and satisfaction is improved through the use of a multifaceted structured graduate programme.
Lavoie-Tremblay et al.	2008	Correlational descriptive study	309 neophyte nurses	Canada	The influences of the workplace environment can influence the experience and therefore the retention of new graduates. The experience of new graduates is plagued with concerns regarding psychological distress, and disillusionment.
Missen et al.	2014	Systematic Review	11 studies	Australia	Evidence suggests that transition or graduate programmes are needed to support new nurses in the clinical environment. This is evidenced by increased job satisfaction and retention rates. However, the literature is inconsistent regarding the most appropriate programme length and structure.
Missen et al.	2016	Semi structured interviews	15 Graduate programme Co-ordinators	Australia	There is variation in programs including the rotation, study days, and educational content. Due to the diversity of the health care setting one educational framework may not suit all specialisations.
Morrow	2009	Literature Review	–	Canada	Consistent re-evaluation of graduate programmes is required as new graduates continue to be disenfranchised, marginalised and experience transitioning associated challenges.
Myers et al.	2010	Focus groups	6 new graduate focus groups and seven preceptor groups.	USA	There are many factors that contribute to the experience of the new graduate nurse. This includes, a lack of confidence, anxiety regarding interpersonal relationships, time constraints, incompetence, and a lack of critical thinking.
Nardi & Gyurko	2013	Systematic review	62 publications	United Kingdom	New models need to be designed that will allow schools of nursing to produce practice ready nurses that can meet the global healthcare demand.
Nematollahi & Isaac	2012	Positional Discussion	56 graduate nurses	United Arabic Emirates	A graduate nurse program may assist in bridging the well documented theory practice gap.
Ostini & Bonner	2012	Qualitative study	5 graduates	Australia	Graduate programmes can improve the retention of nurses in rural areas through the use of a structured support process.

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