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### Developing the role of undergraduate nurses in improving public health

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# Developing the role of undergraduate nurses in improving public health.



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## Background

In January 2016 The Royal College of Nursing published its report; The Value and Contribution of Nursing to Public Health in the UK (RCN, 2016). It consolidates the view that improving public health is a priority in UK Government policy in health and social care (NHS England 2014, NHS Scotland 2012, Scottish Government 2015, Public Health Agency, NI 2015 and Public Health Wales 2015). The report endorses shift from traditional 'public health nursing' as being an arguably specialist, often desperate from core nursing practice, and exploiting the monumental workforce potential offered in developing the core role of all nurses to respond to the emergent policy agenda.

## Rationale

The Review of Public Health in Scotland; Strengthening the Function and Re-Focusing Action for a Healthier Scotland, published February 2016 pays scant credence to those approaches noted by the RCN. Indeed reference to nursing of any kind appears in single figure volume throughout its eighty-one page entirety; nor does it cite the RCN in contributing to The Review (Scottish Government, 2016). However, one of the mainstays of The Review is the theme 'G; Planned development of the public health workforce and a structured approach to utilising the wider workforce'. It could be argued there exists fertile ground in establishing from Scotland's 'public health leaders' (as noted in The Review) key attributes that graduate nurses should possess in order that higher education institutions can re-orientate their contribution within their formal and informal curricula to best improve the health of the population of Scotland (Bennet, 2012; While, 2014; Willis, 2015).

## Focusing the lens

A research paradigm maintains philosophical and ontological congruence. Moreover it allows the researcher to align their beliefs about reality (ontology), the relationship between the researcher and what can be known (epistemology) and how best to undertake research relative to the question and context (Houghton, Hunter, Meskell, 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005)

Establishing the best view of the answers sought (Adapted from Crotty, 1998)					
Research question	Paradigm	Ontology	Epistemology	Methodology	Methods
What is truth with certainty?	Positivism	Reality is static/ordered	Objective/dualist, knowledge is neutral and value-free	Deductive, experimental, manipulative, scientific verification of hypothesis	Quantitative; experiments, focus on reliability and validity
What causes or influences outcomes?	Post-positivism	Reality can never be fully known, but is still ordered toward an objective truth	Objective knowledge not fully accessible by theory, but 'probable' truth possible	Emphasis on defined concepts and variable, controlled conditions, empirical testing	Quantitative or qualitative methods of systematically analysis
What is the meaning of lived experience?	Interpretivist	Reality is subjective and continually evolving; there is no one truth	There is no ultimate or 'correct' way of knowing as there are multiple interpretations of reality	Inductive reasoning, focus on the researcher-participant interaction	Mainly qualitative aimed at capturing interpretations of phenomena

Policy-based research should focus on best courses of action rather than theories which explain phenomena. The researcher thus should avoid a focus in which all participant views are equally valid and instead focus on a 'preferred option' (Pratt, 2003). Post-positivist methodologies place an emphasis on 'critical multiplism' (a form of pluralism) giving way to qualitative and quantitative methods. This allows an emphasis on triangulation as a tool (Creswell, 2009)

## Research Aims

1. What consensus exists among leaders in public health in Scotland of the roles than nursing should play in improving public health?
2. Which potential suite of attributes could higher education institutions develop in undergraduate nursing programmes to fulfil these roles?



## Method

A sequential exploratory mixed-method design using a modified 3-round Delphi technique. Reid (1998, p. 232) defines Delphi as;

'...a method for the systematic collection and aggregation of informed judgments from a group of experts on specific questions or issues.'

Sampling; A combination of purposive and snowball sampling will recruit from the Scottish Public Health Network, a statutory group of leaders in public health accountable (and including) the Scottish Directors of Public Health. This will be the expert panel.

### Round 1

Item generation questionnaire (two questions);

"Please write five sentences which best describe the knowledge, attitudes and skills you believe newly qualified nurses should have in fulfilling a public health role in the wider workforce"

"Please identify, from your perspective, the barriers to these nurses carrying out their role effectively and those factors you feel could facilitate it"

### Round 2

Using thematic content analysis (Burnard, 1991) as a form of data reduction (whilst still remaining faithful to respondent views) the statements are re-issued seeking a response on a five-point Likert scale (strongly agree-strongly disagree).

### Round 3

After calculating mean scores and standard deviation for each statement item panel members are asked in the context of the statistical analysis to apply a score to each, refining further an iterative consensus.

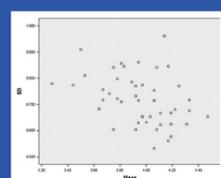
## Analysis and Presentation

The framework offered by Greatorex and Dexter (2000) will be employed, including their suggested use of three graphical representations to generate a 'statistical story'.

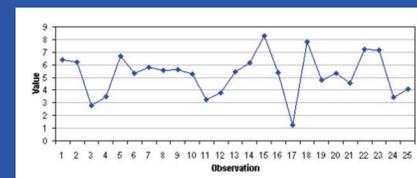
Fountain Graph; presenting each item mean and SD to illustrate the expert groups level of agreement. This will offer (via comparison within responses) how the panels opinions may/may not change, and by what degree, across the whole study.

Item Graph; presenting each item, mean and SD for an item as it appears in each round of the Delphi allowing for understanding of opinion between iterations.

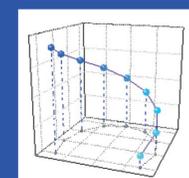
Trajectory Graph; presenting item mean and SD on a scatter plot across rounds allowing for a projected course of items that fall within categories



Fountain Graph



Item Graph



Trajectory Graph