



The management team of Northumbria's NMC Competence Test Centre. L-R: Lee Harbord, Norman Franklin, Jacqui Clark and Leanne Anderson-Clements

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New national nursing test centre about to open in Newcastle

Northumbria University is putting the finishing touches to a new national nursing and midwifery examination centre which is about to open its doors for the first time.

Up to 7,000 nurses, midwives and nursing associates will [visit the centre](#) in Newcastle each year to undertake their 'OSCE' Observed Structured Clinical Examination. The exam is the practical part of the Test of Competence that

all overseas-trained nurses are required to take before they can be registered to practice. The test of competence can also be taken by those returning to practice after a career break.

Until now there were only three test centres in the UK, but with rising demand to bring people with the right skills and knowledge onto the UK's nursing register as quickly as possible, the [Nursing and Midwifery Council](#) needed to improve national testing capacity. As such, two new centres were announced to open in Newcastle and Leeds.

A significant programme of building work has been underway at Northumbria's Coach Lane Campus to [create the Centre](#) which will deliver the OSCE to candidates from the end of March.

The Campus is already home to the University's Department of [Nursing, Midwifery and Health](#), one of the largest centres for healthcare professional education in the North of England.

The University has also had a major recruitment drive to attract a team of over 30 people to lead and run the centre.

Norman Franklin has been appointed as Head of the Centre, overseeing all clinical aspects of the Centre's provision. He is a qualified nurse who has worked in children's intensive care for more than 20 years and more recently has worked as an educator in cardiothoracic with Newcastle Hospitals.

Norman will be supported by Test Centre Manager Lee Harbord who will be responsible for its day-to-day operational management. Lee has worked in several Government Departments and Agencies, including DEFRA and the Parliamentary Ombudsman's Office, delivering many major projects, policies and procedures.

Also joining the leadership team are Business Development Manager Jacqui Clark who will work closely with NHS Trusts and other clients to manage and support their candidate bookings and Project Manager Leanne Anderson-Clements who previously was employed as a Senior Technician, in the Clinical Skills Centre within the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences.

They are joined by an expert team of examiners, assessors, technicians, and

invigilators who will ensure the exams all run to national standards.

Following successful quality assurance checks from the Nursing and Midwifery Council the University is [now able to take bookings](#) from NHS Trusts, private hospitals, care homes, individuals and other health-related sectors to put their first candidates through from the end of March.

Head of the Centre, Norman Franklin, said: “It has been an absolutely enormous task to renovate existing space and recruit a brand-new team to run the centre here at Northumbria in less than five months. My thanks go to everyone involved in this mammoth effort”.

“We are thrilled to have passed the Nursing and Midwifery Council’s quality assurance assessments and we are very much looking forward to officially opening our doors to the first candidates at the end of the month.”

[Andrea Sutcliffe](#), Chief Executive and Registrar with the [Nursing and Midwifery Council](#) added: “I’m delighted that our new OSCE test centre in Newcastle is getting up and running, helping to create additional capacity that gives people more choice over where to take their test. We’ve worked closely with the Northumbria partnership to make this happen. It will help thousands more professionals with the right skills and knowledge to join our register quickly and safely, for the benefit of people using health and care services.”

[Maurya Cushlow](#), Executive Chief Nurse at [Newcastle Hospitals](#), one of the University’s partners on the project to bring the Centre to Newcastle, said that having a new national centre in Newcastle will be a huge benefit for Trusts and healthcare providers. “We were delighted to be able to work with the University and City Council to support this bid and deliver a high-quality testing centre for nurses and midwives locally, regionally and nationally,” she said.

[Professor Debbie Porteous](#), Head of the Department of [Nursing, Midwifery and Health](#) at Northumbria University added: “To see the development of the test centre over the past year to enable opening is a testament to the collaboration and commitment of all staff involved. The opening of the centre is now the beginning of the centre’s contribution to play a fundamental role in ensuring safe patient care in the NHS.”

The OSCE is part of the Test of Competence for nurses, midwives and nursing associate and involves a face-to-face examination using actors or simulation models to play patients presenting with a variety of medical conditions or ailments. Nurses, midwives and nursing associates are assessed on how they care for and communicate with the patient to ensure they meet the required standards.

Anyone wanting to find out more information can visit [Northumbria University's OSCE centre](#) website.

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