We hope you find this book a helpful guide to navigate your journey from thinking about applying for a programme in nursing or midwifery to qualifying as a healthcare practitioner. The book is not intended as a manual or instruction book, but as a companion to enable you to be successful at the university of your choice, and to get the most out of your nursing and midwifery programme. Although the book is primarily intended for students, the content of the chapters can be used by academics in supporting students to get the best out on their programme. The sequencing of the chapters is intended to accurately mirror your journey and reflect on the potential challenges and opportunities ahead.

The chapters are written in a conversational style. The authors of each chapter aim to speak to you directly, offering you advice and guidance from their experience in and of nursing and midwifery education. The chapters do not have to be read in sequence although you may choose to do this, but you may also use the book as a resource and dip into the various chapters as the need arises. Each chapter has clear aims and contains useful tips and suggestions.

An Annotated Overview of the Chapters

The first section is focused on some of the issues you might like to consider in planning to apply for a nursing or midwifery programme. Chapter 2 is written by a student and here you will be able you read first hand an honest view of Sue McGowan’s experience on a nursing/midwifery programme. She is giving you the sort of advice and guidance she would like to have had!

Chapter 3, How Your Programme is Structured, considers the requirements of nursing and midwifery programmes, in terms of their theory and practice components. In Chapter 4, Applying for a Nursing/Midwifery Programme, you are offered clear guidance on how to complete the application process.

Chapter 5, The Student with a Disability, Chronic Health or Learning Needs, deals with important and sensitive issues. This chapter defines what disability is and provides detailed information about the rights and responsibilities of disabled nursing and midwifery students. The chapter stresses the importance of disabled students being appreciated and supported by the university so that everyone, regardless of need, has a fair chance to succeed.
Chapter 6 is The Interview. In this chapter, the authors' intention is to help you get the best out of the interview to ensure that you secure a place on the programme you wish and at your chosen university. The interview is often a very daunting and anxiety-provoking experience and this chapter aims to help you to manage such anxieties. Advice is given about how to create a good impression and how to deal with typical questions that arise at the interview.

The second section is focused on helping you to develop your academic and study skills. Chapter 7 takes a light-hearted look at Using Information Technology and is of particular relevance to you if you have little or no previous experience of using computers. This chapter will help you to get the best out of technology, including some good ideas about purchasing equipment, and how to avoid common disasters that beset students. Chapter 8 is Getting the Most from Your Library. You are advised on how to access a range of support services and specialist library staff who will support you in accessing useful literature for your academic work.

Chapter 9, Becoming Analytical, is designed to help you to write academic essays. This chapter will also help you to become aware of how you can develop in-depth approaches to learning and understanding (in the classroom and in the practice environment) and, importantly, what to do in the face of adversity. The author of this chapter suggests that as you gain experience, both in the classroom and in practice environments, it will become clear that there is no single best or correct way of doing things, and that different people will approach the same issue in a range of different ways.

In Chapter 10, Critiquing the Healthcare Literature, you will gain an insight into the skills of criticism and appreciate why taking a balanced and reasoned view of the literature is an important issue. You will also be introduced to the skills of how to manage, simplify and collate healthcare literature.

In Chapter 11, Organizing and Planning Your Theoretical Assessments, you will be offered an opportunity to think about how to adopt a structured approach to the production of your academic essays. In Chapter 12, How to Write in an Academic Way, you are given advice about the form and style of writing required at universities, while Chapter 13 illustrates How to Reference Your Work and Avoid Plagiarism. In Chapter 14, Making the Most of Assessment Feedback, you will consider how reflection on your theoretical and practice assessments will contribute to your personal and professional development.
The third section is focused on clinical skills development. Chapter 15, Maximizing Your Learning in Practice Placements, explains that the practice component of nursing and midwifery programmes contributes 50% of the programme and therefore it is important that you make the most of this experience. This chapter guides you on the preparation you should undertake to maximise clinical learning opportunities. It is important to be able to identify and respond to your own clinical learning in order to develop new skills that will equip you for your future professional life.

This theme is developed further in Chapter 16, Developing Your Clinical Skills, where advice and hints will be contextualized within a clinical skills centre. This is particularly important as it is crucial for all healthcare practitioners to be competent in basic life support skills, infection control, safe moving and handling practice and a range of care intervention skills. An understanding of the concept of ‘duty of care’ will be nurtured along with the importance of being able to apply evidence-based findings to clinical practice.

The fourth section is focused on helping you to cope with some of the stresses and strains that might arise from the programme. In Chapter 17, Surviving the Clinical Environment, you are offered some advice on how to meet some of the personal challenges that can arise. Chapter 18, How to Survive Exams, discusses different types of seen and unseen assessments and how to deal with examination stress in a positive way. Here, you are offered guidance on how to plan and manage your revision, reflecting your own personal learning styles.

Chapters 19 and 20 offer advice on obtaining support from your students’ union and personal tutor respectively. Your personal tutor is an important figure in your education and this chapter offers advice on how to get to know your personal tutor, what support you can expect from him or her and how you might go about developing a productive working relationship with them.

Similarly, it is important for you to understand how your students’ union can support you in your road to success in nursing and midwifery education.

In the final section, we consider issues relating to your development and growth both as a person and as a practitioner. Initially, we discuss a subject that is not often addressed in nursing and midwifery education. The programme might affect you personally in a number of ways and a degree of personal change through a nursing and midwifery programme is to be expected. Such changes can be very positive, but may also require you to make some adjustments to your personal life. Chapter 21 considers personal change and will be
a vehicle for you to reflect on the impact of change on your professional and personal life. The chapter considers both the positive aspects of change (such as developing your self-confidence and becoming more assertive) and also the challenging side of change and the impact this might have for those closest to you. The chapter helps you to appreciate the importance of being proactive in managing the change process.

In Chapter 22, Preparing Yourself for Your Nursing/Midwifery Career, attention is turned to securing the post that you really want. A number of searching questions are posed, such as what is the right post for you; how you might support yourself in the transition from student to qualified nurse/midwife; and how to maintain your professional portfolio and develop your career. Chapter 23 gives some final thoughts and offers some suggestions on how to develop your nursing/midwifery career and how to keep a momentum to your studies.

We hope that you find this book informative and that you will find much in these pages to help you to succeed in your chosen programme.