

## 2 How to Gain the Most from this Text

Congratulations. In choosing to pursue a career in health and social care you are embarking on an exciting journey that will stretch you to the limit and lead to an extremely rewarding future.

This book will provide you with the necessary underpinning skills to ensure that you gain the most out of your course. You will learn how to read ruthlessly, think, structure your ideas, write well, develop techniques to cope with pressure and find ways to manage your time. As a result this book will:

- Help you to make connections between what you learn in the classroom and what you learn on placement
- Prepare you for practice experience
- Enable you to understand who you are, the skills you already have and how to hone these
- Demystify some of the language you will inevitably encounter
- Ground your learning through case studies and examples
- Make learning into a fun and enjoyable experience

### Finding your way around the text

The book looks at the main academic skills required by all student health and social care practitioners. It starts by putting these skills into their broadest context and helps you to understand how skills developed in the classroom relate to placement and vice versa.

This is followed by a quick 'survival guide' to get you through the first few weeks of university life, describing some of the things you may encounter. The book is then divided into three broad sections:

- **Organising your learning.** This section focuses on the self-management skills that will underpin your personal and professional development, with tips about how to set and achieve goals, ways to manage your time, techniques you can use to cope with anxiety and the wider support mechanisms you may need to tap into.

## How to gain the most from this text

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- **Building and developing skills.** Here the focus is on the academic skills you need to succeed. From how to research information to expressing your ideas in writing, this section contains it all.
- **Planning and preparing for the future.** This final element of the book helps you to move beyond university. It offers advice to help you gain your dream job and describes ways to engage with a lifelong learning process.

## Navigating the text

Each chapter contains a number of ingredients including:

### JARGON-BUSTING

where key words are demystified and technical terminology translated into English.



### AT A GLANCE

a quick (and often humorous) way of deciding whether the chapter is relevant for you.

### STARTING POINTS

a series of self-tests, quizzes or questionnaires to help you recognise your skills and identify gaps in your knowledge.



### KEYS TO SUCCESS

tools, rules and techniques required to unlock your potential and succeed in your studies. Case studies, student narratives and model answers provide concrete examples of how to apply your learning.

### SKILLS IN PRACTICE

this section moves away from the classroom to show you how to develop and apply your skills on placement.



### IN A NUTSHELL

a summary of the information contained in the chapter.



### References and signpost to further reading and resources

offering links to further resources you may find useful.

## Who is this book aimed at?

This book is relevant for students undertaking programmes of study or courses related to health and social care practice, including general nursing, mental health nursing, midwifery, paramedic practice, operating department practice, radiography, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and social work.

It recognises that you are bringing with you a unique set of skills based on your previous experience and that a number of different pathways and routes of study lead to qualification. The book is relevant for students on full-time or part-time courses, can be used in work-based learning contexts and is suitable for individuals studying to diploma or degree level.

A website accompanying the book can be found at [www.skills4health.co.uk](http://www.skills4health.co.uk). This contains a wealth of additional materials, including two-minute tutorials, links to further resources and a number of quizzes to help test your skills and further broaden your understanding. It also includes a template for a personal and professional development record. This will enable you to evidence your learning, track your progress and document your achievements in a format that you can take with you to interview and beyond.

## **A note about terminology**

Your university will have its own way of describing the roles that practitioners play in your education, including clinical tutors, practice teachers, supervisors, placement educators. For the purposes of this book, I have used the word 'educator' to describe the person who educates you in practice. Likewise, you will hear the people you work with described in various ways, including patients, clients and service users. For consistency, I have chosen to use the word client, which I believe is a term used by colleagues in both health and social care settings.

## **Gaining the most from the text: you do not have to eat the whole elephant at once**

Remember, it is unnecessary to know everything straight away. The one sure way to feel completely overwhelmed and bored by any text is to try reading it from cover to cover in one go. Some parts will not be relevant or not make any real sense until you are putting a particular skill into practice as part of your course.

In order to gain the most from the book it is probably best to dip in and out of it as you go along. Buy your own copy so that you can use it as a workbook, complete the 'self-test' exercises, work through the activities and as you do, identify where you need to focus your attention. Draw, doodle, add your own notes as this will help you to interact with the book, remember what you read and make connections with your work. In a sad way, come to regard the book as your friend and companion as you journey through your course and your career (but when someone asks you if you have made any new friends at university do not include this book among them!)

Oh, and if I have not said this already. Good luck. Enjoy...