"The theory-practice dialogue is the core of nursing studies"

The new dual study programme "Bachelor of Nursing" at the University of Duisburg-Essen (UDE) and Essen University Hospital (UK Essen) is intended to provide a pioneering answer to the increasingly complex challenges of healthcare. This winter semester 2025/26, a primary qualification, evidence-based and practice-oriented degree programme has started at the University of Duisburg-Essen. In this MVF interview, Andrea Schmidt-Rumposch, Director of Nursing and Member of the Executive Board of University Medicine Essen, and Prof. Dr Erika Sirsch, Head of the new Bachelor of Nursing (B.Sc. dual) degree programme at the University of Duisburg-Essen, explain what is planned and, above all, why.





Interview: Andrea Schmidt-Rumposch (left), Director of Nursing and member of the Executive Board of Essen University Medical Centre, and Prof. Dr Erika Sirsch, Professor of Nursing Science with a focus on interprofessionalism at the University of Duisburg-Essen

>> Healthcare is facing increasingly complex challenges: The "Bachelor of Nursing" degree programme at the University of Duisburg-Essen (UDE) and Essen University Hospital (UK Essen) is intended to provide a pioneering answer to this, according to the UK Essen's "Nursing Science" site. Ms Schmidt-Rumposch and Professor Dr Erika Sirsch, what is special or even unique about this degree programme?

Schmidt-Rumposch: Unlike at other universities, the programme takes place at just two learning locations: the University of Duisburg-Essen and Essen University Hospital. This ensures a particularly close integration of theory and practice. The University Hospital Essen is the sole organiser of the practical training. Learning at a maximum care provider with a university research mandate offers students the opportunity to gain insights into highly specialised areas such as oncological care, intensive care, transplantation and emergency care. Overall, the University Hospital Essen offers a learning environment that actively involves nursing staff in a structured way in order to further develop evidence-based nursing care and translate scientific findings into practical care concepts.

Sirsch: In our degree programme, we specifically teach skills that will enable graduates to take on more independent healthcare tasks in the future - for example in the care of people with dementia, diabetes, chronic wounds or in pain management. In this way, we are responding to the changing tasks of the professions in healthcare. In the international**" g ms"** context, nurses have been performing extended medical tasks for years. In Germany, we are still lagging

behind in this respect. This challenge has now also been recognised by politicians: In the last government period, new legislation was initiated and enshrined in the current coalition agreement, which strengthens higher education nursing training and is intended to create the legal framework for the performance of extended curative tasks by academicised nursing professionals. In order to experience how the roles of academically qualified nurses are organised in other countries, we offer students the opportunity to complete an internship abroad lasting several weeks as part of a compulsory elective module. There they can gain practical experience in different healthcare systems and take away ideas for the further development of nursing in Germany.

"The dual study programme is an important part of our sustainable recruitment strategy."

Andrea Schmidt-Rumposch

From the winter semester 2025/26, the primary qualification, evidence-based and practice-oriented degree programme that optimally prepares nursing professionals for the requirements of interprofessional healthcare will be launched at the University of Duisburg-Essen. How long did it take to develop the degree programme?

Sirsch: The accreditation was completed very successfully in July of this year. We worked on the development of the degree programme for a total of two and a half years.

A valid training contract with the UK Essen is required to start the practice-integrated degree programme. How many were completed at the start of the degree programme?

Schmidt-Rumposch: As Professor Sirsch has just explained, we are in a dynamic process. We have interviewed external applicants as well as nursing staff already employed by us who are considering a lateral entry. We have now started the degree programme with 13 students. This number is to be gradually increased.

There are currently (as at 31.7.25) 413 vacancies at the UK Essen, many of them in the field of nursing. However, only 30 study places are available each year. Why "only" 30?

Schmidt-Rumposch: Such a comparison is an understandable idea, but falls short in view of the complexity of the situation and the nursing profession.

Our training programme is only one key component of our long-term recruitment strategy. In addition, not all nursing care is the same. We need to take a closer look at which positions need to be filled. This is why we also focus on other aspects, such as individual career planning with career development, a mix of qualifications with the use of advanced practice nurses and trainee programmes to recruit nursing staff. We also do everything we can to ensure that our staff stay with us in the long term. Active dialogue and participation are important to me. Our decision to offer "only" 30 study places is linked to our high quality standards. Individual students receive close, personalised support in order to guarantee a high-quality education. This applies in particular to practical training: During each practical phase, students are supervised by teaching staff. After the practical phases, the assignments are reflected on in the first theory unit. Students also have the opportunity to take advantage of the mentoring provided by the Faculty of Medicine.

Theory meets practice: theoretical knowledge is applied directly in everyday clinical practice. To this end, the programme combines theory and practice phases at the University of Duisburg-Essen with practical assignments at the UK Essen. The degree programme is the result of close cooperation between the University of Duisburg-Essen and Essen University Hospital. This cooperation also characterises the training: theoretical knowledge is tested in practice in the SkillsLab and deepenedin the clinics - for example in oncology, cardiovascular medicine or transplantation. I'm sure other universities do the same. Or do they not?

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Sirsch: Other universities do the same. One special feature in our case is the very close cooperation between the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Duisburg-Essen and Essen University Hospital. Nursing scientists and practice instructors from Essen University Hospital were involved in the detailed planning of the curriculum right from the start of the programme development. Vice versa, nursing scientists from the university were involved in the development of the practical curriculum. The dual study programme is thus a unified whole. On the one hand, practice-orientated courses are held in the skills lab and the topics are then taken up in the practical assignments. On the other hand, specifically qualified APNs are also involved in courses on a pro rata basis.

Close interprofessional collaboration is necessary for the successful treatment of people in need of care, and this is already part of the curriculum of the degree programme. Joint introductory events for medical and nursing students take place right at the beginning of the programme.

The programme is designed to prepare students for modern, scientifically sound care of people of all age groups in acute, long-term inpatient and outpatient settings and to create the basis for professional nursing practice. How are the necessary qualifications to be taught?

Sirsch: First of all, evidence-based action is fundamental to the courses. It is promoted among students through the close integration of theoretical and scientific components. In addition, the theory-practice dialogue forms the core of the nursing degree programme and is also one of my focal points as head of the degree programme. Interprofessional teaching skills from the Institute for Didactics in Medicine and Essen University Hospital are also integrated into the Bachelor of Nursing degree programme under the direction of nursing science.

After eight semesters (240 ECTS), graduates can graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree (B.Sc.) and a state-recognised professional qualification as a nurse. Will or can all graduates be taken on by the UK Essen?

Schmidt-Rumposch: Our aim is to recruit graduates for the University Medical Centre Essen in the long term. The dual study programme is therefore an important part of our sustainable recruitment strategy. The advantage is that the students get to know our organisation intensively over the four years. And vice versa, we also get to know them and support their professional and personal development. There are several options for starting a career with us: a direct start in a preferred specialist area or participation in our trainee programme, in which graduates are shown additional orientation opportunities.



Andrea Schmidt-Rumposch *completed her nursing studies at the "Jenny Marx" Medical College at Humboldt University in Berlin between 1987 and 1990 and then began working as a nurse at Charité.*

She studied health and nursing management and held various management positions at Charité, including Head of Nursing at Charité Centre 12 for Internal Medicine and Dermatology and Deputy Director of Nursing at Charité. In 2017, she moved to Essen University Hospital as Director of Nursing and Chief Nursing Officer.



Prof. Dr Erika Sirsch *is head of the Bachelor of Nursing degree programme (B.Sc. dual) and Professor of Nursing Science with a focus on interprofessionalism at the University of Duisburg-Essen. After training as a nurse in 1980, she worked for more than 20 years in various areas of acute care. She studied nursing science at the University of Witten/Herdecke, where she completed her doctorate in 2014. From 2015 to 2023, she was Professor of Acute Care at the Faculty of Nursing Science at the Vallendar School of Philosophy and Theology, serving as Dean from 2019 to 2023.*

Mrs Schmidt-Rumposch, Professor Sirsch, thank you for the interview. <<

The interview was conducted by MVF editor-in-chief Peter Stegmaier.