

Attrition among student nurses: some lessons from the numbers

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Goodhart's Law - paraphrased

'Any Observed statistical regularity will tend to collapse once pressure is placed upon it for control purposes'

'When a measure becomes a target it ceases to measure anything useful at all'

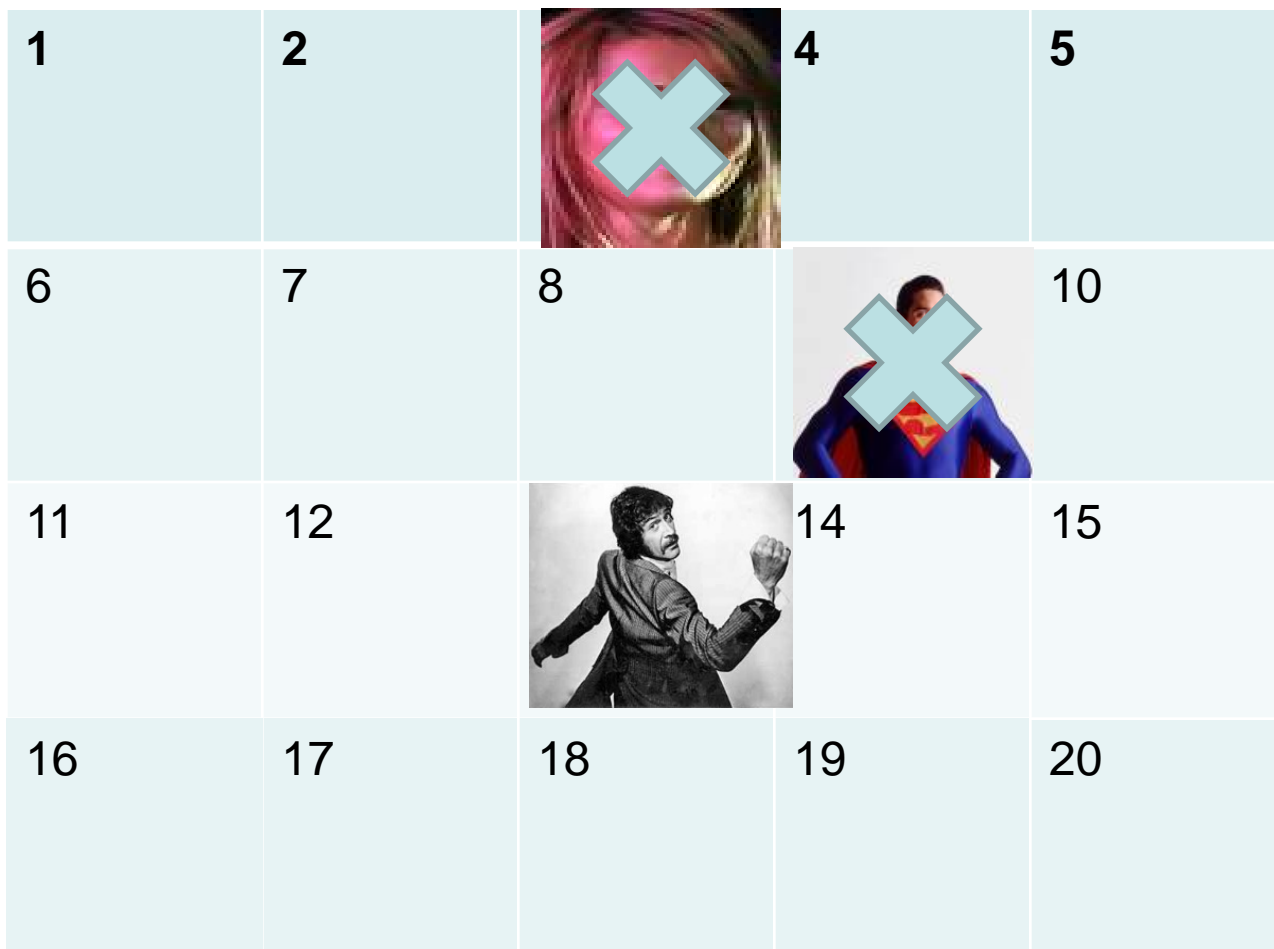
'Metrics can be gamed'

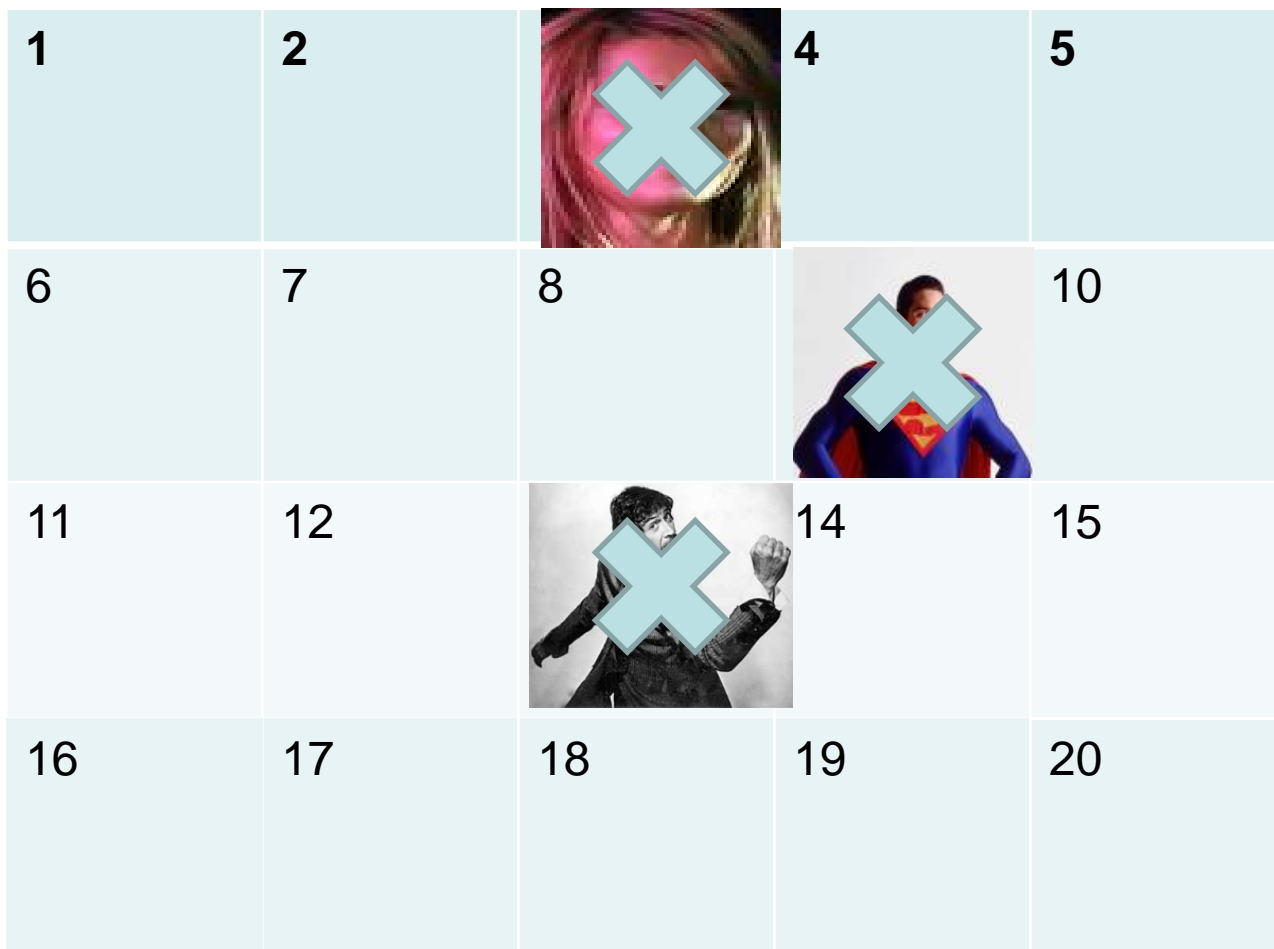
Attrition – the challenge

- DH national target for attrition since 2009-10 has been 13% for each programme









Definitions of Attrition

There are now 3 NHS definitions of student attrition and a fourth if one counts the Office for Students / HESA method

1. Repair Definition

‘The Percentage of students who do not complete within the standard pathway for that programme’

Leavers (withdraws+fails+transfers out) as
% of starters

Health Education England (2018) Repair: Reducing Pre-registration Attrition and Improving Retention report

Moving Targets -Repair definition

Intake	Starters	Sep 15	Sep 16	Sep 17	Sept 18	Attrition
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Of 9/15 intake 10 defer to 9/16 and 20 withdraw.

9/15	100	100	90	80	70	30%
9/16	100	N/A	100	90	80	20%
9/17	100	N/A	N/A	100	90	10%
9/18		N/A	N/A	N/A	100	

2. Dept. of Health definition

Leavers (withdraws+fails+transfers out) -
(transfers in) as % of starters

Department of Health (2006) Managing Attrition Rates for Student Nurses and Midwives:
A Guide to Good Practice

Moving Targets – DH definition

Intake	Starters	Sep 15	Sep 16	Sep 17	Sept 18	Attrition
9/14	In Sept 15 – 10 students defer from 9/14 to 9/15					
	100+10	100+10	90+10	80+10	70+10	20%
	100+10	N/A	100+10	90+10	80+10	
9/17	100+10	N/A	N/A	100+10	90+10	0%

3. HEE definition

Leavers (withdraws+fails+transfers out) -
(transfers in) as % of starters

Differs from DH definition in that it includes all live cohorts including Years 1 and 2. It varies according to the time of year.

Moving Targets – HEE definition

Intake	Starters	Sep 15	Sep 16	Sep 17	Dec 18	Attrition
9/14						
9/15	100+10	100+10	90+10	80+10	70+10	20%
9/16	100+10	N/A	100+10	90+10	80+10	10%
9/17	100+10	N/A	N/A	100+10	90+10	0%
9/18	100+10	N/A	N/A	N/A	100+10	-10%
DH / HEE Definition of Attrition ₂		= Leavers (withdraws, fails, transfers out) - (transfers in) as % of starters as at December 18 = 0% against target of 13%. If measured in August it may be 8%				

Attrition at BU (DH method)

Programme	Attrition Last 4 completed intakes	Average UK 2014 intake
Adult Nursing	20%	24% ¹
Midwifery	20%	
Occupational Therapy	12%	
Physiotherapy	3%	
Operating Dept. Practice	11%	
Mental Health Nursing	18%	
Children & Young People Nursing	13%	

Achievement by Qualification on Entry to Adult Nursing last 4 intakes

Qualification	Proportion of entrants	Relative performance
HE Level 4 to M	26%	103%
A Level	29%	106%
Access to HE	24%	99%
Other Level 3	19%	90%

Relative performance = comparison between expected and actual output. In the case of Other Level 3 we had an output of 95 qualified nurses against an expectation of 105.

Achievement by Age 2010-2017

Age	
18	RAG rating to reflect performance by age. Over the period measured there was considerable variation within an age band over different years.
19	
20	
21-24	No explanation is offered.
25-29	
30-39	
40+	

Changes following move to student loan system (2017)

- Increasing proportion of 18/19 year entrants
- Decreasing proportion of mature entrants
- Early indications are of raised attrition with finance given as a problem in many cases
- This echoes national picture¹
- Salary supported students have an attrition rate of 3%!

¹Buchan.J et al. (2019) A critical moment: NHS staffing trends retention and attrition p28 – Health Foundation

Other angles – potential projects

- Refresh HSS attrition strategy post-Repair
- Black and minority ethnic groups' progression
- Progression of deferred / interrupted students
- Deep analysis of student financial problems
- Widening participation students
- Students with additional learning needs
- 'Course not what I expected'
- Chronic difficulties and life events
- Travel to placement – parking
- Theory / Practice divide and Practice / practice divide