Anger over increase

Many students said they should have been given a right to refuse the offer. They felt the government had not looked at how financial problems affect attrition rates.

Paul Jebb, former chair of the ANS, said that while an increase was welcome, it was long overdue and not enough to cover the extra monthly expenditure faced by students. The message from nursing students was, ‘give us a decent bursary or the rate you lose us will continue to rise’.

John Robinson is ANS north of England representative

RCN to begin research on high attrition rates

The ANS submitted a resolution asking for research into reasons for the increasing numbers of students leaving pre-registration courses.

The request was overwhelmingly supported, with 97 per cent voting to accept this resolution as RCN policy.

This should be a big step forward for all nursing and midwifery students because at last there will be research to start backing our calls for change. With attrition rates estimated at between 20-30 per cent, positive action is needed to ensure there is a future nursing workforce.

The RCN has worked hard, successfully highlighting the causes behind this trend, but the problems remain.

A major difficulty has been the lack of clear, concise data, but this is something we can now change.

Any research that is available at the moment tends to be localised, rather than showing the bigger picture. We can now pull all the available information under one umbrella and use it to back up anecdotal evidence with research.

We can then start to identify the problems and work at local level with universities and the national boards to support areas with specific problems. We will also have a tool to enable us to lobby government.

Research into attrition rates will impact on the profession as a whole because many of the problems affecting students are reflected in the rest of nursing.

This is a big step forward for the ANS in its aim to improve students’ experience of pre-registration nurse education, and to ensure we have a skilled, competent and positive workforce in the future.

Craig Kirby is ANS sabbatical officer for the south of England

Importance of evidence

A resolution suggesting that evidence-based practice (EBP) can damage the art of nursing was rejected. EBP was seen as delivering better patient care. Nursing needs a sound knowledge base to secure its validity and to protect, and advocate for, patients and clients.

John Osborne

Students protest against the low bursary rise

Students asked how far an extra £122 would go. Working out at just 33p a day, it doesn’t even cover an hour’s car parking.