NMC CBT Preparation: Numeracy and Clinical Practice

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The NMC CBT is the computer-based part of the Test of Competence. Prepare for its numeracy and clinical questions using the blueprint and candidate materials for your nursing field. This guide shows how to organise revision, work through calculations, and explain the reasoning behind an answer.

Check where the CBT fits in overseas nurse registration, revise the NMC Code's four themes, and plan separately for the practical OSCE.

Learning outcomes

- Identify official CBT preparation resources
- Connect clinical questions to professional standards
- Explain safe numeracy practice
- Create a revision approach based on rationales
- Confirm the test category and current blueprint
- Clinical knowledge domains
- Numeracy as a patient-safety skill
- Reading a clinical scenario
- A structured revision cycle
- Exam-day and post-exam administration

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1. Confirm the test category and current blueprint

NMC arrangements differ by nursing or midwifery field. Candidates must use the official preparation materials for the route that applies to them. The CBT includes clinical and numeracy components; read current candidate information for the structure, allowed resources and pass requirements.

2. Clinical knowledge domains

Core study areas should include patient assessment, infection prevention, medicines safety, communication, professional accountability, person-centred care, deterioration and safeguarding. Link every topic to a concrete nursing decision and ask what information is missing before an action can be justified.

3. Numeracy as a patient-safety skill

Practise interpreting units, estimating whether a result is plausible, checking the

medication order and documenting calculations. Numeracy questions should never become a licence to perform unsupervised dosage decisions in clinical settings. Focus on unit consistency and validation.

4. Reading a clinical scenario

Identify the patient's immediate condition, then distinguish confirmed facts from speculation. Ask whether an action falls within the nurse's competence and whether urgent escalation is required. Distractors often sound plausible but bypass identity checks, consent, medication verification or safety.

5. A structured revision cycle

Start with official topic documents. For each weak area, write a concise conceptual summary, study two contrasting patient scenarios and review the underlying reference. Then attempt original timed MCQs through the dedicated practice mode, examine rationales and revisit weak concepts.

6. Exam-day and post-exam administration

Use the NMC-authorised booking platform and identity requirements. Read official arrival and conduct instructions. Confirm outcomes through the proper channels and follow current policies for any retake. Do not trust messages selling guaranteed results or claiming access to confidential test content.

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CBT revision tasks and what they test

Concept	Meaning	Key distinction
Official blueprint	Defines assessed domains	Use your specific registration field
Clinical knowledge	Application of nursing principles	Patient-centred safety reasoning
Numeracy	Units, orders and plausibility	Double-check calculations and authority
Practice questions	Formative knowledge checks	Not official live CBT items
Exam guidance	Booking and resit conditions	Can change over time

A practical CBT revision cycle

Sequence for safe reasoning and preparation

Applied case: A learner repeatedly misses medicines numeracy items despite knowing formulas.

Review dimensional analysis, unit conversion and how to check whether the answer is sensible. In real practice, medication administration still requires local policy and an authorised prescription.

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CBT format, numeracy and a four-week study plan

Correct CBT structure and field selection

The NMC nursing Test of Competence CBT contains Part A, 15 numeracy questions with 30 minutes, and Part B, 100 clinical multiple-choice questions with 2 hours 30 minutes. A numeracy answer may require a number and, for some items, units. The four-option clinical questions assess application as well as recall. Exam codes vary by nursing field, for example RNA adult nursing, RNMH mental health, RNLD learning disabilities and RNC children's nursing; selecting a different field can make the sitting unusable for the intended registration application.

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Numeracy: six topics and units that can cause harm

For step-by-step calculation arithmetic, review our nursing dosage calculations and dimensional-analysis examples; then apply the current official NMC test specifications and locally required medication-safety checks.

Official test specifications address measuring the correct dose, metric units, oral medicines, injections, intravenous infusions and fluid balance. Safe calculation starts with identifying what the question asks and ensuring units match. In a supervised educational example, a fluid chart shows 250 mL oral intake and 150 mL IV intake with 325 mL recorded output. Recorded balance is +75 mL. This arithmetic alone does not establish whether the person needs additional fluid: unmeasured losses, clinical status and the prescribed fluid plan matter.

Clinical Part B: learn to select the safest response

Questions can cover professional accountability, assessment, person-centred communication, medicines management, infection prevention, evidence-based care, teamwork and escalation. When two options appear plausible, identify the immediate threat and whether the action lies within the registered nurse's competence. Choose an answer that prioritises assessment, patient safety, verified information and appropriate escalation; avoid actions that change prescriptions or ignore consent without justification.

A four-week revision cycle based on errors

Week 1: map the official blueprint and complete a diagnostic set by topic. Week 2: revise weak concepts using the NMC proficiencies and authoritative clinical material. Week 3: practise applied patient-safety cases and numeracy problems under appropriate time limits. Week 4: use official Pearson practice resources and review errors by category: knowledge gap, misread stem, unit error or unsafe priority. A study log with the question concept, the reason for the mistake and the corrective reference is more valuable than repeating a guessed answer key.

Test-day checks and common preventable mistakes

Use the correct candidate account, field-specific exam code and booking confirmation. Follow Pearson’s ID and centre instructions as published for your sitting. Do not confuse NMC nursing CBT with the nursing associate version, even though question counts may look similar. Confirm the latest resit rules and waiting periods from the regulator. My Nursing Hub practice materials should clearly disclose that they are original revision exercises, not leaked or official exam items.

Reference table: verified details and exceptions

Part	Official structure	Revision emphasis
A: Numeracy	15 questions / 30 min	Units, dose reasoning, fluids
B: Clinical	100 questions / 150 min	Safe application of proficiencies
Total	115 questions / 180 min	Two-part preparation and field selection
Adult nursing code	RNA	Use correct nursing field
Mental health code	RNMH	Use correct nursing field

Worked scenario: where students commonly go wrong

A practice numeracy result differs by a factor of 1,000. Stop and recheck whether the quantity is expressed in grams or milligrams, inspect the question’s wording and repeat the unit conversion independently. In practice, discrepant calculations must be resolved through medicines policy and qualified checks, not administered on the assumption the answer "looks close".

Three questions answered

How many questions are in the NMC CBT?

For nursing, 115 across Part A numeracy and Part B clinical.

Is Part A only multiple choice?

Part A contains short-answer numeracy items, unlike four-option Part B clinical MCQs.

Where are official practice questions?

The NMC links to Pearson Professional Assessments practice materials; use those to familiarise yourself with the format.

Key official sources for this expanded content

- NMC CBT information and exam codes (accessed and reviewed October 2026)
- NMC ToC nursing preparation materials (accessed and reviewed October 2026)
- NMC seven platforms (accessed and reviewed October 2026)

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References and verification

For official practice, use the NMC CBT practice tests hosted by Pearson. Choose your nursing field and Part A or Part B. My Nursing Hub's own questions are independent study exercises.

- NMC Test of Competence
- NMC Code
- NMC overseas registration

Editorial review: Prepared 10 October 2026 for review by Faizan. Content has not been independently clinically peer-reviewed; review current standards before practical use. MCQs: Questions belong in the separate Nursing general Nursing Practice Mode (chapter-specific questions being developed), not within these lessons.

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