

## How to become an operating room nurse in the Nordic countries

### Norway

Upon earning a 180-credit bachelor's degree in nursing, individuals aspiring to work as operating room nurses undergo a further specialized education, tailored to the profession of operating room (OR) nurse.

This includes either a 90 credits ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) program or a 120 credit master's degree program. In both programs 45 credits are dedicated to clinical practice. Eligibility for this education currently mandates a two-year nursing experience, although this requirement is currently under review.

There are two OR nurses present during surgery, both scrub nurses and circulation nurses are trained OR nurses

### Finland

The operating room nurses complete a comprehensive 210-credit bachelor's degree in nursing. The inclusion of perioperative studies in their curriculum depends on the University of Applied Sciences. Some university-affiliated hospitals may provide supplementary continuing education options in perioperative care, typically demanding a few years of practical experience for admission.

Unlike professions such as physiotherapy, midwifery, paramedics, and radiography, there is presently no standardized perioperative training for these roles in Finland.

### Iceland

Upon earning a 180-credit bachelor's degree in nursing, individuals aspiring to work as operating room nurses undergo a further specialized, education, tailored to the profession of OR nurse. The OR nursing study is not a complete master's programme, but an 80-credit diploma at master's level over 2 years. Clinical hours, totaling 1,608 for training, are presently valued at 30 credits, but according to ECTS credit guidelines, these 1608 clinical training hours should be equivalent to 53.6 credits. Each student commits to a 19-month work contract with one of the five public hospitals in Iceland equipped with operating rooms, primarily Landspítali University Hospital. During this period, all clinical hours are compensated as paid work. By adding 40 credits in methodology, statistics and a master's thesis, students can complete a full master's program. However, this extension will entail an extra study year. The program is set to undergo revision, with the 2026 intake transitioning into a complete 120-credit master's program. This revision will involve a reevaluation of the correlation between clinical hours and academic credits.

## Denmark

In Denmark, there is no formal specialist training in OR nursing, unlike other nursing specialists such as nurse anesthesia training. Individuals who wish to become OR nurses undergo local training in the operating department where they apply for a job, after obtaining a 180-credit bachelor's degree in nursing. Training methods vary, with some departments utilizing nationally approved competence cards that outline the knowledge, skills, and competencies of OR nurses for employee training. In other settings, OR nurses undergo organized exchange training, covering both theoretical and practical aspects at the diploma level. This collaborative training is conducted in partnership with the clinic and a professional college.

Primarily, there are two OR nurses present during surgery: a scrub nurse and a circulating nurse. However, in some instances, other occupational groups such as patient transporters or health and social care assistants may also act as circulating nurses.

## Sweden

Upon earning a 180-credit bachelor's degree in nursing, individuals aspiring to work as operating room nurses undergo a further specialized education, tailored to the profession of OR nurse consists of 60 credits. Some institutions stipulate a prerequisite of one year of work experience to be eligible for the operating room nurse training, while others have opted to eliminate this requirement.

Primarily, there is one OR nurse present during surgery serving as the scrub nurse with the primary responsibility. Healthcare assistants support the OR nurse in the role of the circulating nurse. Healthcare assistants usually undergo a three-year upper secondary education, with training primarily based on practical experience in the operating theatre for about 6-8 months. There is also a one-year continuing education program designed for health personnel intending to specialize in operating theatres. While some institutions may assign an OR nurse as a circulating nurse, this is not common practice.