The School of General Nursing, Queen Mary Hospital commenced its training of nurses in the early years of the Hospital probably in 1938, a year after the opening of the Hospital in 1937. In the beginning, students were taught by the Principal Matron, Assistant Matrons, Home Sister and Tutor Sister. The female student was called Probationer Nurse (PN) and the male student, Probationer Dresser (PD). A PN in 1938 recalled her student life that she normally worked three shifts of eight hours per shift and there was one day off each month. Her monthly salary was $40 and $10 would be deducted for meals and laundry and she had to pay her own pink cotton uniform which was made by a tailor at Wing On Street, Sheung Wan. It seems the pink cotton uniform for student nurses has a long history!

During the Japanese Occupation from December 1941 to August 1945, the School might had been closed, however it was recorded that a group of 10 PN and 3 PD had participated in the Final Nurses Board Examination in Spring of 1946 which indicated that they should have commenced their training in 1943/44 and continued during the Japanese Captivity otherwise they would not be able to fulfill the 3-year training requirement before sitting for the Final Nurses Board Examination.

Students were first trained at the Preliminary Training School (PTS) for about one year and then took the Preliminary Nurses Board Examination. If they passed the Board Examination, they would continue their training at the Senior Nursing School. The location of the School in
QMH changed a few times over the years. The existing school premises was once the Sisters Quarters for senior nursing staff, mostly expatriate staff. The School Principal's office on the third floor was the room for the Matron. The ground floor of the Sisters Quarters was the dining and sitting room which was later converted to the Preliminary Training School. The north-west wing on the first floor of the Main Block (now A Wing), was the lecture room and laboratory for medical students and later used as the Senior Nursing School with lecture rooms and demonstration rooms.

Since the students commenced their training at the PTS, their class name used PTS as the prefix, such as PTS-1 for the first class, PTS-2 for the second class and so on. The entry date of PTS-1 could not be traced but the class name using PTS as prefix had been continued for some years.

In the early years, nurses training were on the “time-release basis” in which the students were released from their ward duty to attend lectures in the school. With the introduction of the “Study Block System” in 1957, students were withdrawn from ward duty at regular intervals for one to two months to attend lectures and demonstrations in the school. Under this system the students could concentrate on learning without the distraction of having the responsibility for patients in the ward at the same time. Following the study block system, the class name used “Block” as the prefix and used alphabets for the sequence of entry date, such as Block-A, Block-B, and so on.

In October 1986, when the School implemented the “Total Patient Care” approach in its curriculum as required by the Nursing Board, Hong Kong (now Nursing Council, Hong Kong) the class name was changed to “Class” and used numbers for the sequence of entry date, such as Class-1 entered on 6 October 1986 and the last intake of students using “Class” as the class name entered in October 1998.
The number of intakes of students was normally three per year. To meet the demand of nursing manpower, sometimes four intakes per year might occur. However, in later years, due to the increase of study hours and limited teaching rooms, one intake was omitted in every three years. The number of students per intake varied from 30 to 65 and the number of female students to male students per intake was about 8:1. There was no sexual discrimination in this arrangement it was just because female students could work in more wards than male students. Occasionally, officers from Correctional Services Department (CSD), the then Prisons Department, had been seconded to the School for training and upon their graduation, they returned to work in CSD hospitals. In early years, student dispensers and student radiographers had to undergo the basic nursing training with students in PTS prior to their own specialty training. Nurse graduates at one time were awarded with a school badge engraved with “Hong Kong Government Schools of Nursing” but the School of General Nursing, Queen Mary Hospital did not have one for its own.

The School had trained thousands of nurses over the sixty odd years. Many nurse leaders and nursing pioneers were graduates of the School. Since QMH is a university teaching hospital, student nurses have a greater chance to expose to different kinds of diseases and their management. Nurses graduated from QMH are very proud of the good foundation and vast clinical experiences gained in the Hospital.

Over the years the School had adopted the hospital-based apprenticeship training. With the increased demand for advance knowledge and better skills from both the community and the profession, tertiary institutions established baccalaureate program for nursing in the 90's and the hospital-based nursing schools in Hong Kong began to fade out. The last intake of students in QMH was in October 1998 and the School completed its historic mission and closed down in 2002.