

# Queen's University Belfast

## Undergraduate Admissions Policy

### 2012 Entry



## **Admissions Policy**

### 1. Scope

This policy applies to all undergraduate admissions to Queen's University Belfast. It relates to entry in the academic year 2012-13 and is reviewed annually.

### 2. Institutional Context

The admissions policy derives from the mission statement and corporate plan for the period 2006-2011.

#### 2.1 Mission Statement

The University's vision is captured in its mission statement which has been updated to reflect new strategic priorities.

“Queen's is a broadly-based, research driven University with a dynamic world-class research and education portfolio and strong international connections. The University promotes the widest possible access to this portfolio of excellence in an environment of equality, tolerance and mutual respect and it fully embraces its leadership role in Northern Ireland and beyond.”

#### 2.2 Corporate Plan (2006-2011)

The Corporate Plan is underpinned by three main targets for the next five years “Plan 435i”. The priorities relating to admissions include:

- selection and recruitment of an appropriately qualified and diverse student body which has the potential to excel in a challenging and rewarding environment and contribute to the quality of the student experience;
- progress towards an average entry tariff score of 400 points for undergraduates;
- within the context of the widening participation strategy, build on current developments and meet the commitments made in the access agreement to increase the number of mature students, students with disabilities and students from lower socio-economic groups.

#### 2.3 To achieve these aims the University

- encourages applications from suitably qualified applicants, particularly from groups which are currently under-represented in Higher Education;
- selects on the basis of fair, transparent, reliable and objective criteria, applied equitably and consistently;
- admits the best qualified applicants to degree courses in line with the University's priorities, the targets agreed in academic plans and within the overall constraints applied by the government and professional bodies.

#### 2.4 The policy of the University, enshrined in its charter since 1908, promotes equality of opportunity for all applicants regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, marital status or whether or not they have dependants.

- 2.5 The admissions policy complies with relevant legislation affecting the admission of students and is consistent with the QAA Code of Practice on Recruitment and Admissions. It is also guided by the principles outlined in the Report of the Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group 2004 (the Schwartz Report).
- 2.6 The University is committed to ensuring that its graduates gain detailed knowledge of their subject and, through the delivery of a comprehensive Employability and Skills Policy, students are enabled to develop a range of personal and professional skills and experiences to equip them for high quality challenging (graduate level) employment.

### 3. Roles and Responsibilities

#### 3.1 Education Committee

- The Education Committee has overall responsibility for institutional policy relating to Admissions.

#### 3.2 University Management Board

- Setting target numbers

The number of full-time undergraduate students which the University can admit is currently controlled by a government imposed overall limit referred to as the MASN (Maximum Aggregate Student Number). Additional limitations are imposed for courses such as Medicine, Dentistry, Nursing and Social Work where numbers are controlled by professional or regulatory bodies. Within the overall total, quotas for individual Schools are set on an annual basis by the University Management Board.

- Entry requirements and asking grades

A Sub-Group of the University Management Board annually reviews the recommendations made by Schools after the Confirmation period, in conjunction with the Admissions and Access Service, as part of the academic planning process.

#### 3.3 University Schools

Heads of School are responsible for appointment of Academic Selectors to work with the Admissions and Access Service. The following duties may be delegated to the Academic Selector:

- Reviewing and advising on entrance requirements and asking grades for programmes within the School and advising on selection procedures.
- Liaising with the Admissions and Access Service in relation to non-standard applicants and those who are borderline.
- Providing detailed and up-to-date course information to prospective students.
- Organising School open days and follow-up visits.

### 3.4 Admissions and Access Service

With the exception of Nursing, the University operates a centralised undergraduate admissions service. The responsibilities of the Admissions and Access Service include:

- Managing the undergraduate admissions service.
- Liaising with Academic Selectors to advise on entrance requirements and asking grades for individual undergraduate courses. Entry criteria are reviewed and updated annually as required.
- Making decisions on UCAS applications in line with agreed criteria.
- Working closely with Academic Selectors in the decision-making process including consultation and provision of advice on non routine cases.
- Deciding on the number of offers which should be made to meet University and School targets for recruitment of students.
- Managing all University communication with UCAS.
- Providing acknowledgement letters/emails to all applicants and distributing information in June to those holding offers as their firm/insurance choice.
- Ensuring University Schools have appropriate information about applicants at various stages of the admissions cycle.
- Providing advice and guidance in response to specific admissions enquiries from prospective students, parents and Schools and Colleges.
- Providing statistical information and reports to senior management and individual Schools to enable review of applications and to monitor trends.
- Ensuring admissions policy and procedures are applied fairly and consistently across the University.
- Monitoring, reviewing and updating admissions processes regularly.
- Taking the lead role in advising on and developing the University's response/policy on new qualifications, changes in the 14-19 curriculum and to the application system.

## 4. Information for Prospective Students and Other Stakeholders

The University aims to provide comprehensive, accurate, user-friendly and accessible information and advice to applicants and other stakeholders in the admissions process. This is to enable an informed choice of programme(s) to be made appropriate to their needs, interests, academic qualifications and potential.

Detailed information on entrance qualifications, asking grades and associated admissions procedures for individual undergraduate programmes is provided.

The main sources of information are as follows:

- Printed undergraduate prospectus
- Online prospectus
- School brochures and leaflets
- University and departmental websites
- Prospective student portal.
- UCAS Entry Profiles

## 5. Selection Principles/Assessment of Applications

5.1 All applications are considered individually on their merits and the full information on the application form, including the personal statement and reference, is considered.

5.2 In the interests of consistency and transparency, it is essential that the University's selection criteria are objective. For the majority of courses, academic qualifications are therefore the main criterion and previous academic background (including, for example, performance at GCSE and AS or in the first year of a BTEC National Diploma or Access Course) may be taken into account in deciding whether or not to make a conditional offer, particularly in the case of high demand courses. For students who have studied beyond A-level or equivalent, performance at this level may also be taken into account.

### 5.3 Additional Methods of Selection

The University endeavours to ensure that any assessment methods used are reliable and valid and give an accurate indication of potential to successfully complete the chosen programme of study. Additional methods of selection are used for a number of degree programmes and may include interviews, aptitude tests, auditions and written work.

- For Social Work and Nursing, candidates who are shortlisted are called for interview as this is a requirement of the professional body. Some other courses such as Pharmacy interview graduate applicants and some other candidates if commitment or motivation is in doubt.
- For Dentistry, and Medicine, multiple mini interviews are used as a standard part of the selection procedure for all shortlisted candidates. Ranking and final decisions are made on the basis of performance at interview.
- A portfolio interview is required for Architecture if the applicant does not have an acceptable formal qualification in Art.
- Candidates intending to apply for Medicine or Dentistry are required to undertake an admissions test (UKCAT) prior to submitting an application.
- The selection procedure for Social Work is complex and a 600 word statement is required if applicants satisfy the course requirements and academic thresholds. This is marked and the outcome determines which applicants will be called for interview.

Any significant change, proposed by a School, to its methods of selection is referred to the Admissions Policy Review Group and Education Committee for consideration and approval, prior to implementation.

5.4 Experience, motivation and commitment to the chosen course may be considered.

5.5 All applicants to courses where their studies will involve interaction with vulnerable groups will be required to give permission for an enhanced AccessNI (ANI) check (or suitable alternative in the case of international students) to be carried out. AccessNI is part of central government and operates under the provisions of Part V of the Police Act 1997.

5.6 All offers made for Dentistry, Medicine, Nursing, Midwifery and Pharmacy are conditional on a satisfactory medical assessment; Dental, Nursing and

Midwifery students must also be tested to show that they are not infected with TB, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and HIV before final acceptance on to the course.

#### 5.7 Applicants with Disability/Special Needs or Medical Conditions.

The University is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all of its students and actively encourages potential students who may be disabled or have additional needs/support requirements. Applications are considered on the same academic grounds as those of other candidates and there is no disability assessment prior to an offer being made. Applicants will be asked to complete a questionnaire by Disability Services so that support can be put in place prior to enrolment. In certain cases a risk assessment may be deemed necessary and if so a panel of appropriate experts and School representatives will be established. In the extremely unlikely event that there are fitness to practise concerns where reasonable adjustments cannot be made the University reserves the right to withdraw an offer. In addition, a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) may be required for students with particular disabilities.

#### 5.8 Applicants Returning to Education

The University also welcomes applications from students who have interrupted their studies for several years or did not have the opportunity to enter higher education immediately after completion of full-time education. Applications are considered on an individual basis but evidence of successful recent academic study at a suitably high level is normally required. Modified entrance targets may be set but these would not apply to applicants who have studied A-level or equivalent qualifications continuously since leaving school.

Many such students undertake Access courses as an alternative route into higher education. They are designed to address the needs of students who would like to undertake a degree programme but who have been away from education for some time and do not have the necessary qualifications for admission. Applications from students undertaking these qualifications and who have had a break in study (normally a minimum of two years) are welcomed. Where offers are made these are based on completion of the full qualification which is normally available on a one year full-time or two years part-time basis.

#### 5.9 Applicants with a Criminal Record

The University acknowledges the key role of education in the rehabilitative process and a criminal record will not preclude an applicant from being offered a place at the University. However, as part of its duty of care to its staff and students, the University will ask for information about any relevant items on a criminal record. (See Appendix 1 for further details)

### 6. Acceptability of Qualifications/Entrance Requirements

Applicants are required to fulfil the University's General Entrance Requirement and also course requirements. The latter are expressed in terms of both grades and (where applicable) subjects. Appendix 2 provides outline information and equivalences in terms of the most commonly offered qualifications. Further details can be found in the undergraduate prospectus and on the University website ([www.qub.ac.uk](http://www.qub.ac.uk)) or direct from the Admissions and Access Service.

## 7. APEL/APCL

APL includes experiential learning or prior certificated learning for academic purposes. These are discussed below:

- Accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) is a process by which a student's learning through experience is assessed and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.
- Accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL) is a process through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

The University has a long history of using APEL and APCL, albeit in a limited number of subject areas, for module exemption or advanced entry into a programme, eg. an applicant holding an HND award that is compatible with a given degree may gain entry into year 2 or 3 of the degree programme.

Under exceptional circumstances, APEL has been approved for admission to specific programmes. In these cases the process is administered by the subject area on a case-by-case basis. Candidates with inappropriate qualifications, but with extensive relevant experience, may be considered for admission to a particular programme, at the discretion of the programme selector. In such circumstances, applicants should provide evidence for the accreditation of prior experiential learning through, for example, a portfolio, by undertaking an APEL module or other task determined by the selector.

## 8. Admissions Process

- 8.1 With the exception of Nursing, all applications for admission to full-time undergraduate courses in the University must be submitted through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). In addition to applying through UCAS, applicants for the Bachelor of Divinity, Bachelor of Theology, Bachelor of Arts (Joint Honours with Theology) or Diploma in Theology must also register with one of the recognised Theological Colleges. Applications for Nursing, for part-time degree courses and those from visiting students should be made direct to the University. The School of Nursing and Midwifery's Admissions Policy is attached as Appendix 3.
- 8.2 Applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible. This normally enables decisions to be made more quickly, though all applications received by the normal closing date will be given equal consideration. Late applications may be considered depending on competition for places on individual programmes.
- 8.3 International applicants for courses other than Medicine and Dentistry may apply up to 30 June of the year of entry.
- 8.4 If additional details are required or clarification about any of the information on an application, the Admissions and Access Service will contact the applicant or his/her referee. This will have an impact on the time taken for a decision to be made.
- 8.5 Admissions decisions will be made quickly and efficiently and, for the majority of degree programmes, normally within 5 weeks of initial processing at UCAS. However, where programmes attract large numbers of applications or where it is

necessary to receive all applications before making decisions (in order to consider the gathered field) or where interviews are required, decisions inevitably take longer, though every effort is made to keep delays to a minimum.

The University has established benchmarks for decision turnaround. These benchmarks may be subject to change in light of the implementation of developments to the Student Information System.

- 8.6 Conditional offers are made in terms of grades rather than UCAS tariff points. The level of offers reflects the competition for places available and the achievement which it is considered is required to do well on the course. The University accepts a wide range of qualifications. Other non-academic conditions may also form part of the offer.
- 8.7 Performance in individual units at AS/A-level will not be included as part of conditional offers. However, this information is available to the University and may be taken into account in borderline cases in August.
- 8.8 For 2012 entry the A\* grade at A-level will be taken into account in tie-break situations after the release of results in August but will not be used in conditional offers.
- 8.9 The University recognises the value of skills developed in the Extended Project, which is an integral part of the Diploma qualification. For A-level applicants, who decide to undertake the Extended Project, this will normally be acceptable in place of the fourth AS-level subject in a three A-level plus one AS-level conditional offer.
- 8.10 Offers (if made) to applicants repeating examinations, or who take them over a longer period than is the norm, may be higher for some subject areas. Applications from those who have had more than two attempts at obtaining the required qualifications are not normally considered. Further restrictions may apply for high demand courses.
- 8.11 Applicants who are unsuccessful in gaining admission to their original choice may be considered for alternative courses.
- 8.12 Applications for deferred entry are welcomed. They will be considered under the conditions which apply in their year of application and applicants must satisfy the conditions for entry by 31 August of that year or other date as advised by UCAS.
- 8.13 Changes to any of the University's courses, involving significant restructuring or discontinuation, will be communicated to applicants affected by such changes by the Admissions and Access Service. This will be done at the earliest possible opportunity.

## 9. Feedback, Complaints and Appeals

- 9.1 The Admissions and Access Service will provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants on request. See Appendix 4 for details on how request for feedback is dealt with.

- 9.2 Admissions and Access Service staff are able to respond to most queries about decisions to the satisfaction of the vast majority of applicants. However, an appeals/complaints procedure is available to applicants who do not accept the explanation offered (see Appendix 5).
- 9.3 This procedure is based on the University-wide Student Complaints Procedure. It covers all applicants to University credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing courses, and thus can be used by persons who are not currently Queen's students.

The procedure covers the following types of appeal/complaint:

- complaints about the University's handling of a query or an application for admission;
- allegations that admissions criteria were not applied correctly or even-handedly.
- appeals against the assessment of status ie Home and EU or International for fees purposes. It should be noted that these will only be considered prior to admission and not retrospectively once a student has registered.

The procedure does not cover strategic decisions relating to the overall size and shape of schools, or to caps on student numbers in particular courses whether imposed by the University, government or professional bodies. Any correspondence on these matters should be directed to the Director of Academic and Student Affairs who has overall responsibility for admissions policy.

## 10. Data Protection

- 10.1 In completing the online UCAS form, applicants give permission to the University to process their personal data for the purposes of managing the University's selection and admissions procedures and for maintaining its student records. The information will also be used to make statutory returns to bodies such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).
- 10.2 Social Work applicants are asked for permission to share information with the University of Ulster, if appropriate, in order to ensure that so far as is possible they are only asked to provide one 600-word statement and are interviewed only once, regardless of the number of Social Work courses in Northern Ireland for which they have applied. The procedure has been agreed with the Northern Ireland Social Care Council.

## 11. Fraudulent Statements/Omissions

Offers of a place are based on the information provided by the applicant and are made in good faith by the University. False statements or omissions of relevant information may lead to the withdrawal of an offer or a place. If appropriate, UCAS will be notified in such cases.

Additionally, in response to the increasing practice of downloading material from commercial and other websites and copying from applications submitted in previous years, UCAS has recently introduced 'similarity detection' software to detect the use of plagiarism in personal statements. In instances where there is significant similarity both the universities and the applicant are advised. See Appendix 6 for procedures for handling such occurrences.

12. Verification of Qualifications

For the majority of UCAS applicants, results are provided directly to the University. Other applicants will be required to produce original certificates relating to their qualifications prior to registration.

13. Training

Admissions and Access Service staff are provided with regular training on admissions matters to ensure that they have the appropriate level of knowledge and expertise to carry out their duties to a high standard.

## **Admission of Applicants with a Criminal Record**

It is the policy of the University to consider applications for admission on their individual merit in the light of all available information. The primary selection criteria are those related to the qualifications, skills, abilities and personal qualities of an applicant. The University will investigate the criminal record of a new applicant only if the primary selection criteria for a course have been met. The University acknowledges the key role of education in the rehabilitative process and a criminal record will not debar an applicant unless the nature and seriousness of the offence in question is incompatible with:

- (i) the course applied for;
- (ii) the ultimate professional or vocational goal;
- (iii) participation in an academic and social setting and the University's responsibility to ensure a safe and neutral environment.

The following regulations are therefore intended to establish appropriate procedures so that applications from candidates who have a criminal record are handled in an open and non-discriminatory manner. All information will be treated in strictest confidence.

### **Regulations Concerning Admission of Applicants who have a Criminal Record**

1. To help the University reduce the risk of harm or injury to its students, staff, visitors or other users of its facilities, it must know about any relevant items on a criminal record that an applicant may have. In addition, the University must also meet its obligations under the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups legislation. Applicants seeking further information on the following regulations should contact the Admissions and Access Service at the University or the relevant School and, where appropriate, refer to the University's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy.
2. **Applicants to courses in Medicine, Dentistry, Education, Nursing, Midwifery, Psychology (postgraduate only), Social Work, Professional Legal Studies, and other courses covered by the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups legislation.**

Applicants must declare any items on a criminal record, including spent sentences, cautions (including verbal cautions), bind-over orders, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and prosecutions pending. Prior to admission to these courses, the University will request that the appropriate authority carries out the required checks on applicants under the University's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy.

**Failure to provide permission for an appropriate check will prevent further consideration of the application.**

An applicant who acquires a criminal record or is informed of a prosecution pending after applying and before the date of admission to the University should inform the Head of Admissions and Access Service of this matter in writing without delay.

### **3. Applicants to all other courses**

- (a) Applicants must declare **on their applications** any relevant items on a criminal record. Relevant is defined as criminal offences involving any kind of violence, offences concerning the intention to harm or resulting in actual bodily harm, the unlawful supply of controlled drugs or substances where the conviction concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking, offences involving firearms, arson or those listed in the Sex Offences Act or the Terrorism Act 2006. Items that are spent (as

defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Order (NI) 1978) are not considered to be relevant and you should not reveal them.

- (b)** If the University discovers that an applicant has failed to disclose information about relevant items on a criminal record, as outlined in paragraph 3(a) above, it may withdraw or amend any offer(s) of admission or terminate the applicant's subsequent enrolment at the University.

An applicant who acquires a relevant item on a criminal record after applying and before the date of admission to the University should inform the Head of Admissions and Access Service in writing without delay.

- 4.** In line with the procedures used for all applicants and following the requirements of its Statutes, the University may, subject to the applicant's permission, seek further information, including a character reference, from any individual or body where it is considered appropriate.

### **5. Consideration of cases**

Cases will initially be considered by the Head of Admissions and Access Service or nominee within the relevant School. If an offer is not made at this stage, or if the case requires further consideration, it will be referred to the Admissions Review Panel (ARP). The ARP will normally comprise:

- (i) the Director of Academic and Student Affairs (in the Chair)
- (ii) the Head of Admissions and Access Service or nominee within the relevant School
- (iii) a Head of School or Director of Education, usually from the School or one of the Schools (as appropriate) applied to
- (iv) the Legal Services Manager or nominee.

The meeting will be serviced by the Admissions and Access Service. The panel membership will be chosen as far as possible to reflect the diversity of the Northern Ireland Community. Neither applicants nor their representatives will have the right to appear before the ARP. Minutes shall be taken as a formal record of the meeting and retained.

- 6.** If an applicant is rejected on the basis of the information obtained under the above regulations, the applicant will be informed of the decision in writing by recorded delivery. The letter will also state whether he or she can re-apply for that course and the minimum amount of time that must elapse before any re-application will be considered. Potential applicants who were rejected on a previous occasion should contact the relevant School for further details.

### **7. Appeals**

The applicant may appeal in writing to a Pro Vice Chancellor on any of the following grounds:

- (i) new evidence has become available which could not have been made available to the ARP (evidence withheld from the ARP will not normally constitute new evidence); or
- (ii) the decision was too severe or inappropriate.

The appeal, stating with reasons the grounds for appeal, must be made in writing within ten working days of the date of the letter stating the decision. Copies of previous correspondence and any supporting documentation must be attached to the letter of appeal.

8. A Pro-Vice-Chancellor will convene the Admissions Review Appeal Panel (ARAP) to consider the grounds for appeal (see below).

The Panel normally will comprise:

- a Pro-Vice-Chancellor or Dean (in the chair);
- a Head of School or Director of Education from a School other than the one(s) applied to;
- a member of staff from the School or one of the Schools (as appropriate) applied to; and
- the Legal Services Manager or nominee.

The meeting will be serviced by the Admissions and Access Service. Panel members will not have had any prior involvement in the case. The Panel membership will be chosen as far as possible to reflect the diversity of the Northern Ireland community. Minutes shall be taken as a formal record of the meeting and retained.

9. If it is decided that there are no grounds for appeal, the applicant will be informed of the decision in writing, with reasons, within five working days of its having been made. The decision of the ARAP is final.
10. Where the ARAP decides that there are grounds for appeal it will normally meet within 15 working days of the date of that decision. The Admissions and Access Service shall write to the applicant notifying him or her of the date and venue of the meeting. The appellant will have the right to appear before the ARAP accompanied by a member of teaching staff from his or her present or former school or college or a friend. No legal representation will be permitted at any stage during the procedure. Minutes shall be taken as a formal record of the meeting and retained.
11. The ARAP may seek written evidence from any witness or person who in the ARAP's judgement may have relevant information to contribute. Any such person will have the right to see relevant documentation to be considered by the ARAP in advance of the hearing and shall have the right to appear in front of the ARAP if he or she wishes, accompanied by a student or staff member of the University. However, neither the appellant nor any witness will be required to appear in front of the ARAP if they do not wish to appear.
12. Should the appellant fail to appear before the ARAP at an appointed time and without valid reason, the ARAP will have the right to reach a decision in the appellant's absence.
13. The ARAP's findings and recommendations will be communicated to the appellant in writing by recorded delivery within 5 working days of the ARAP's meeting. The letter will also state whether he or she can re-apply for that course and the minimum amount of time that must elapse before any re-application will be considered.
14. The ARAP will also send a report to the Director of Academic and Student Affairs and Head of Admissions and Access Service, summarising the ARAP's conclusions and recommendations. The decision of the ARAP is final.

## Acceptability of Qualifications/Entrance Requirements

### 1 General Entrance Requirement

The General Entrance Requirement can be satisfied in a number of ways as shown below. In all cases GCSE English Language at Grade C or an equivalent qualification must be offered. The University accepts Level 2 Essential Skills in Communication in lieu of a grade C in GCSE English Language.

Please note that the same subject cannot be counted at different levels in satisfying the General Entrance Requirement.

- 1.1 Passes in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (grades A, B or C) and the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) as follows:

Either

- a) Passes in at least five subjects, two of which should be at A-level or
- b) Passes in at least four subjects, three of which should be at A-level

A-level (Double Award) will be acceptable in place of two A-levels.

Two AS-levels will not be acceptable in place of one A-level in fulfilment of the General Entrance Requirement.

More detailed information is available from the Admissions and Access Service website: [www.qub.ac.uk/ado](http://www.qub.ac.uk/ado)

- 1.2 Passes in the Scottish Qualifications Certificate (Standard Grade (Grades 1-3), Intermediate 2, Highers and Advanced Highers) as follows:

Either

- a) Passes in at least five subjects, three of which should be at Higher level or
- b) Passes in at least four subjects, all of which should be at Higher level.

- 1.3 A BTEC National Diploma/Extended Diploma or Higher National Certificate or Diploma

Educational background, including subjects studied at GCSE/GCE, may be taken into account.

- 1.4 An OCR National Diploma or Extended Diploma

Educational background, including subjects studied at GCSE/GCE, may be taken into account.

- 1.5 The Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Diploma

1.6 The Advanced (14-19) Diploma. Specific additional/specialised learning may be required.

1.7 The International Baccalaureate Diploma

1.8 The Cambridge Pre-U Diploma

1.9 The Irish Leaving Certificate

In terms of the Irish Leaving Certificate, the General Requirement can be satisfied by passes in five subjects to include English, four of which should be at the Higher Level at grade C or better.

1.10 The European Baccalaureate

1.11 Other qualifications deemed equivalent by the University

## 2 English Language Requirements for International Students

One of the under-noted approved tests in English may be offered in place of GCSE English Language:

- i) IGCSE English Language or a recognised overseas O-level English Language.
- ii) The Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English. (For some degree programmes the Certificate in Advanced English may be acceptable).
- iii) The University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) GCE O Level English Language Syllabus number 1119.
- iv) The British Council IELTS Test.
- v) TOEFL.
- vi) INTO English Test
- vii) London Test of English Levels 4 and 5.
- viii) University of Reading Test in English for Education Purposes (TEEP).
- ix) Pearson Test of English (PTE) Academic.

Other English Language qualifications may be acceptable (contact the Admissions and Access Service for advice).

## 3 Recognised Subjects

All subjects set by recognised examination boards are, in principle, acceptable for fulfilling the General Entrance Requirement. The University will take account of restrictions imposed by the examination boards and possible overlap between subjects. In considering applications from candidates, individual departments or schools reserve the right to take account of the range, content and number of subjects being offered. Applicants who require advice about acceptability should contact the Admissions and Access Service.

#### 4 Course Requirements

In addition to the General Entrance Requirement, applicants must fulfil course requirements. These are expressed in terms of both grades and (where applicable) subjects required at A-level, AS-level and GCSE or equivalent. Outline information is given in Table 1 and full details are provided in the undergraduate prospectus course finder section and on the University and School websites. It should be noted that A/AS-level General Studies and A-level Critical Thinking are not normally included as part of conditional offers.

The University accepts a wide range of qualifications and a guide to the equivalences in terms of those most commonly offered is given in Table 2. Prospective students offering other qualifications should contact the Admissions and Access Service for advice.

#### 5 Offers for International Students

The University welcomes applications from international students and further details about the acceptability of qualifications from individual countries are available on the International Office website.

International students do not contribute to the Government imposed MaSN (Maximum Aggregate Student Number) and are therefore not in competition for places with Home and EU students. For some courses the grades required by students from outside the European Union may therefore be lower than those listed in the undergraduate prospectus. Details may be obtained from the Admissions and Access Service.

#### 6 GCE A-Levels in Applied Subjects (formerly known as AVCE or Vocational A-levels)

As noted above, all subjects set by recognised examination boards are, in principle, acceptable. GCE A-levels in Applied subjects are treated by the University in the same way as all other subjects and there is generally no restriction on the number which can be offered. Specific course and subject requirements must be fulfilled and attention is drawn to the following:

i) **Medicine and Dentistry**

Offers are made in terms of three A-levels plus a fourth AS-level and up to one A-level in an Applied subject can be offered. A-levels in Applied subjects do not satisfy any of the specific subject requirements.

ii) **Pharmacy**

Up to one A-level in an Applied subject can be counted but only when offers are expressed in terms of three A-levels plus a fourth AS-level, not as part of a three A-level target. A-levels in Applied subjects do not satisfy any of the specific subject requirements.

iii) **Other courses with specific subject requirements**

The University prospectus course finder section gives details of the specific GCE subjects which are required/acceptable for individual degree courses. In some cases there may not be a suitable A/AS-level in an Applied subject. In others, an A-level (Double Award) in an Applied subject may be required and this will be clearly stated.

7 BTEC Higher National Diploma

Applications from candidates offering this qualification are welcomed and are considered individually on their merits for admission to either Stage 1 or Stage 2 depending on how closely the syllabus correlates to Stage 1 and on their performance in first year of the HND qualification.

8 BTEC National Awards/Subsidiary Diplomas/OCR National Certificates

These qualifications are not acceptable for Medicine, Dentistry and Pharmacy but for all other programmes a maximum of (normally) one BTEC National Award/Subsidiary Diploma/OCR National Certificate will be counted as part of an applicant's portfolio of qualifications.

9 Cache Diploma in Child Care and Education

Applicants offering this qualification are considered individually on their merits. Overall academic background is taken into account plus the nature of the course applied for.

10 Key Skills, Certificate of Personal Effectiveness and the Open University's Young Applicants for Schools and Colleges Scheme (YASS)

The University acknowledges that the development of transferable skills are an important aspect of both school and university education and students are encouraged to develop these whether or not it is through a formal qualification. While the University does not require them for any programme and they will not normally form part of the conditions of any offer, they may however be used in a tie-break situation.

11 National Vocational Qualifications

Not acceptable on their own for admissions purposes.

12 Certificate and Diploma in Financial Studies

Following an academic assessment, it was considered that there was insufficient evidence of the level and content of the subject material to enable an evaluation to be made of the adequacy of preparation for degree studies. Applications from candidates will be considered on an individual basis and a final decision taken in the light of the full portfolio of qualifications, previous academic performance, relevant experience and the nature of the course applied for. In practice, these qualifications have normally been included in conditional offers.

13 BTEC First Certificate/OCR National Award and BTEC First Diploma/OCR National Certificate at Level 2

- The University will accept a maximum of one BTEC Level 2 First Certificate/OCR National Award or one BTEC Level 2 First Diploma/OCR National Certificate in fulfilment of the General Entrance Requirement or where performance at GCSE Level is used in the selection process for individual programmes.
- Normally a maximum of the equivalent of four GCSEs in acceptable vocational qualifications will be counted where performance at this level is used in the selection process.

14 Other qualifications

The Cambridge Pre-U Certificates (Principal Subjects) are acceptable as alternatives to A-levels in meeting course requirements.

## Entry Requirements 2011 and 2012

School / Main Subject	Target Grades 2011 *	Target Grades 2012 *
<b>English</b>	<b>ABB/BBB</b>	<b>ABB/BBB</b>
<b>History &amp; Anthropology</b>		
Ancient History	<b>BBB</b>	<b>N/A</b>
Modern History	<b>ABB/BBB</b>	<b>ABB/BBB</b>
Social Anthropology	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
<b>Politics, International Studies &amp; Philosophy</b>		
Philosophy	<b>ABB</b>	<b>ABB</b>
Politics and International Studies	<b>ABB</b>	<b>ABB</b>
Politics, Philosophy and Economics	<b>ABB</b>	<b>ABB</b>
<b>Music &amp; Sonic Arts</b>	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
<b>Languages, Literatures and Performing Arts</b>		
Drama	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
Film Studies	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
French	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
German	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
Irish & Celtic	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
Spanish	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
<b>Law</b>	<b>AAA</b>	<b>AAA</b>
<b>Management and Economics</b>		
Accounting	<b>AAB</b>	<b>AAA</b>
Actuarial Studies	<b>AAA+a</b>	<b>AAA+a</b>
Business Management	<b>ABB</b>	<b>AAB</b>
Economics	<b>ABB</b>	<b>ABB</b>
Finance	<b>ABB</b>	<b>ABB</b>
International Business with a Language	<b>ABB</b>	<b>AAB</b>
<b>Sociology, Social Policy &amp; Social Work</b>		
Criminology	<b>ABB</b>	<b>ABB</b>
Social Work	<b>ABB</b>	<b>ABB</b>
Sociology	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
<b>Mechanical &amp; Aerospace Engineering</b>		
Aerospace Engineering \$	<b>BBC</b>	<b>BBB</b>
Mechanical Engineering \$	<b>BBC</b>	<b>BBB</b>
<b>Planning, Architecture &amp; Civil Engineering</b>		
Architecture	<b>ABB</b>	<b>ABB</b>
Civil Engineering \$	<b>BBC</b>	<b>BBB</b>
Environmental Planning	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
<b>Electronics, Electrical Engineering &amp; Computer Sci.</b>		
Business Information Technology	<b>ABB</b>	<b>ABB</b>
Computer Science \$	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
Electrical & Electronic Engineering \$	<b>BBC</b>	<b>BBB</b>
<b>Chemistry &amp; Chemical Engineering</b>		
Chemical Engineering \$	<b>BBC</b>	<b>BBB</b>
Chemistry \$	<b>BBC</b>	<b>BBB</b>
<b>Maths &amp; Physics</b>		
Mathematics \$	<b>ABC</b>	<b>ABB</b>
Physics \$	<b>BBC</b>	<b>BBB</b>
<b>Geography, Archaeology and Palaeoecology</b>		
Archaeology - Palaeoecology	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
Geography	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
<b>Psychology</b>	<b>ABB</b>	<b>ABB</b>
<b>Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Science</b>		
Biomedical Science	<b>ABB</b>	<b>ABB</b>
Human Biology	<b>ABB</b>	<b>ABB</b>
Dentistry	<b>AAA+a</b>	<b>AAA+a</b>
Medicine	<b>AAA+a</b>	<b>AAA+a</b>
<b>Biological Sciences</b>		
Agri-Food & Land Use	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
Biological Sciences (incl. Biochemistry)	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>
<b>Pharmacy</b>	<b>AAB</b>	<b>AAB</b>
<b>Theology</b>	<b>BBB</b>	<b>BBB</b>

**Notes**

Specific grades in individual subjects may be required to fulfil course requirements (refer to prospectus).

The grades stated above should be treated as a guide as variations can occur in certain circumstances. Offers for repeat candidates may be higher in some Schools.

\* In certain Schools the A-level target grades may vary depending on the combination of subjects offered and/or the degree option applied to.

\$ These subject areas also offer MEng/MSci options. The target grades stated above refer to entry to the BEng/BSc course. Typical target grades for entry to the MEng/MSci degree are ABB or AAB.

**Equivalence Table**  
(This should be treated as a guide only)

A-level grades <sup>1</sup>	A-level + 4 <sup>th</sup> AS	Access to HE <sup>2</sup>	BTEC National Diploma <sup>3</sup>	Irish Highers <sup>4</sup>	Scottish Highers (SH) <sup>5</sup>	Scottish Advanced Highers (AH) <sup>5</sup>	International Baccalaureate Diploma	European Baccalaureate
AAA	AAB + a	75%	16D + 2M	AABBBB	AAAAB	AAA	36/37 points overall + 6,6,6	85%
AAB	ABB + a	70-75%	14D + 4M	ABBBBBB	AAABB	AAB	34/35 points overall + 6,6,6	80%
ABB	BBB + b	70%	12D + 6M	BBBBBB	ABBBB	ABB	33/34 points + 6,6,5	77%
BBB	BBC + b	65-70%	10D + 8M	BBBBB/ BBBBCC	BBBBB	BBB	32 points + 6,6,5	75%
BBC	BCC + b	65%	8D + 10 M	BBBBC/ BBBCCC	BBBBC	BBC	30 points + 6,5,5	73%
BCC	CCC + b	65%	5D + 13M	BBBCC	BBBCC	BCC	29 points + 6,5,5	70%

### Notes

1. Different combinations of A-levels and AS-levels may also be acceptable eg two A-levels plus two AS-levels.
2. For Science and Engineering programmes if offers are made for entry direct to Stage 1, an average of 80% is normally specified.
3. Offers are based on performance in individual units rather than the overall grades awarded.
4. In the majority of cases, offers will normally indicate that a B2, rather than simply a B is required.
5. Separate targets are shown for Scottish Highers and Advanced Highers but offers are normally made on the basis of a combination of the two.
6. In all cases, specific grades in individual subjects/units may be required to fulfil course requirements.

## The School of Nursing and Midwifery's Admissions Policy

### Scope

This policy applies to all undergraduate admissions to the School of Nursing and Midwifery in Queen's University, Belfast. It is reviewed annually in line with central University policies. The School operates its own admissions procedure out-with the UCAS system, in line with Statutory, Professional, and University regulations including policy statements and guidance.

### Responsibilities of the School and its Registry Office:

- Maintaining current promotional and admissions materials and reviewing them annually and at other times as necessary.
- Liaising closely with the University Admissions and Access Service and the University Co-ordinator for Access Programmes.
- Liaising closely with the School's HOU for Disability on disability admission matters.
- Liaising closely with the University's Legal Services Unit for guidance on admission issues with legal implications.
- Submitting admissions related information for University publications and attending related events.
- Ensuring the admission procedures and processes are just, fair, equitable, inclusive and transparent.
- Conducting individual joint panel interviews for applicants to undergraduate programmes where applicable, and in so doing, adhering to the Equality Commission and University guidance for interviews.
- Maintaining records of its admissions procedure on a year to year basis and other activity in line with QAA and other quality assurance requirements and monitoring patterns and trends, and providing statistical analysis as appropriate.
- Working closely with Clinicians to ensure the interview process is shared, inclusive and current.
- Providing annual contemporary training updates for all interviewers.
- Providing written feedback on request to applicants who have been unsuccessful at any stage of the admissions process or have a complaint, taking cognisance of the Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation and procedure.
- If a complainant, having exhausted all internal procedures for dealing with their complaint, remains dissatisfied, the School advises on the next stage available to them in the complaints process.
- Attending a range of promotional careers events within Northern Ireland's Schools and Colleges.
- Liaising regularly with Northern Ireland Careers Teachers and Careers Officers and providing contemporary information on entrance requirements for courses.
- Providing statistical information on admissions to central University, the DHSSPS and the statutory bodies (NMC and HLSP).
- Supporting the work of commissioned and overseas programmes and providing identified assistance with promotional materials and guidance.
- Keeping the School's Senior Management Team informed throughout the admissions process and updating them on issues that require analysis, debate or review.

### Screening for Good Health and Good Character

Candidates for all undergraduate programmes which result in professional registration must undergo Access NI Criminal Records screening prior to beginning the programme as follows:

1. All applicants complete an application form that contains a section requiring them to state their full criminal and other relevant history. They must also complete a form to allow the school to do a Criminal Records check by requesting the applicant's criminal record from Access NI. Failure to consent to a Criminal Records check will mean the application will not be progressed.
2. Access NI Criminal Records checks are only taken up by the School once an applicant has been made a conditional offer.
3. The reports from Access NI Criminal Record checks are returned to an identified person within the School's Registry Office. If the criminal record matches the information in the relevant section of the application form and is of a trivial nature with no cause for concern, the application will progress and no further action will be taken.
4. If there is a discrepancy in the Access NI Criminal Record check, or the check reveals a criminal history that has not been stated on the application form, the applicant is invited to the School to discuss the matter. The panel for this discussion normally consists of a senior member of teaching staff and a senior clinician. It is no defence to claim that they were unaware of their record or that they did not understand that they were required to disclose their record. The panel is guided by the NMC's direction to Universities and the QUB University Fitness to Practise Policy. This panel takes into consideration 'fitness to practise', 'fitness to register' and the likelihood of the employability of the applicant on completion of the programme.
5. The School of Nursing and Midwifery requires applicants to declare any criminal record or other relevant record they may attract following application and prior to admission to the course. The same procedure is followed (as for 4 above) in relation to the details of the criminal record.

Criminal Records screening on entry to the course:

1. On entry to the course students are made aware of their duty to inform the School immediately of:
  - a. any criminal activity they engage in that involves investigation by the police or other authority, or
  - b. any criminal record they attract during their course. Failure to do so may compromise their position on the course and ultimately their registration with the NMC on completion of the course.
2. A student who takes a temporary withdrawal from the course will be required to complete a self-declaration form prior to return to the course, declaring any criminal record they may have attracted during their absence.
3. A student who takes a temporary withdrawal that exceeds 2 years will undergo a further Access NI Criminal Records check for the period of absence, prior to return.

Criminal Record and Occupational Health screening – Completion of the Course and Registration with NMC

1. On completion of the course, students are required to complete a self-assessment form which asks them to declare any health or conduct issues, including criminal activity that may impact on their right to register with the NMC.
2. If they are deemed to be of good health and good character and have successfully completed the course their names are forwarded to the NMC for registration.
3. If a student is found to have a criminal record, this will be investigated and may be referred to a University Fitness to Practise panel for a final decision.
4. A final review of their health records is undertaken by Occupational Health and any outstanding health issues addressed.

A time-line depicting the application process for the  
BSc (Hons) Nursing Sciences Course

- In September – October each year the application forms and guidance notes are updated to reflect required changes.
- In September each year the final draft of the proposed academic entrance criteria is made for entry in September and February of the following academic year.
- In October each year the advertisement is updated to reflect requirements and signed-off as regards content and graphics.
- Around 2<sup>nd</sup> week in November the advertisement is placed in the Belfast Telegraph and on the School's webpage (with application form for downloading).
- The closing date is normally the end of the first week in January
- Nearing the closing date, the short-listing criteria are set and rigidly applied.
- In February, Clinical and Teaching staff receive interview training, and an agreed interview programme is set. Normally 2 – 3 training events are held.
- Rejection and invitation to interview letters are reviewed around the end of January.
- The short-listing process commences following the closing date. Interview invitations and rejection letters are posted at exactly the same time. Applicants being offered an interview receive written notification around the beginning of February of the date and time of their interview.
- An interview grid is designed and the names of interviewers are placed in the time slots. Where possible, branch specific QUB interviewers interview with branch specific clinicians.
- Interviews are normally conducted in the 4 weeks preceding Easter and any deferred interviews are held in the week following Easter.
- Conditional offer letters are updated for use in April.
- The DHSS&PS sets its numbers for the 2 intakes and branch specific/intake specific conditional offers are made based on interview score. Applicants are asked about their 2<sup>nd</sup> choice and the reserve list at this stage. A reserve list is maintained for each branch with an agreed cut-off interview score for each branch, normally in March each year.
- In April/May, applicants who have accepted their conditional offers are given Occupational Health assessments and Access NI criminal records checks are requested.
- Criminal Records/Health/Disability issues are dealt with as they arise.
- Access course results are available from late June onwards but no unconditional offers are made until the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in August.
- GCSE, A Level and other results are available from the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in August and students are required to confirm their results in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August by visiting the Registry Office with the necessary documentation. Those who fail to reach the required results or who fail to attend have their names removed from the lists and the next person on the reserve list who achieves the required grades is made an offer.
- Remaining Access NI criminal records checks are conducted at this stage.
- Students commence the course around the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> week of September providing they meet the conditions of offer, including satisfactory criminal records check, occupational health check and references.

- Applicants on the waiting list for a branch that has been filled who have indicated a willingness to be considered for another branch are placed on that waiting list.
- In December of each year, the February numbers are reviewed and applicants are asked to restate their interest. Where possible, places for February are filled from the reserve list including those students who expressed a desire to accept their 2<sup>nd</sup> choice.

A time-line depicting the application process for the  
BSc (Hons) Midwifery Sciences and BSc (Hons) Midwifery Studies Courses

- In October each year the application forms and guidance notes are updated to reflect required changes and the final draft of the proposed academic entrance criteria is made for entry in September of the following academic year.
- In November each year the advertisement is updated to reflect requirements and signed-off as regards content and graphics.
- In January the advertisement is placed in the Belfast Telegraph and on the School's webpage (with application form for downloading). The closing date is normally the end of April.
- Nearing the closing date, the short-listing criteria are set and rigidly applied.
- In February, Clinical and Teaching staff receive interview training, and an agreed interview programme is set.
- Rejection and invitation to interview letters are reviewed around the end of January.
- The short-listing process commences following the closing date and all applications that meet the minimum academic criteria are reviewed by a shortlisting panel. The panel may choose to apply one or more additional shortlisting criteria, for example: qualifications to be completed before shortlisting; evidence of caring experience; evidence of recent academic study. This is not an exhaustive list.
- Interview invitations and rejection letters are posted at the same time. Applicants offered an interview receive written notification around the beginning of May of the date and time of their interview.
- An interview grid is designed and the names of interviewers placed in the time slots. Interviews are normally conducted in May and June.
- Conditional offer letters are updated for use in April.
- The DHSS&PS sets its numbers for the intake and conditional offers are made based on interview score. A reserve list is maintained with an agreed cut-off interview score, normally in June each year.
- In June/July, applicants who have accepted their conditional offers are given Occupational Health assessments and Access NI criminal records checks are requested.
- Criminal Records/Health/Disability issues are dealt with as they arise.
- Access course results are available from late June onwards but no unconditional offers are made until the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in August.
- GCSE, A Level and other results are available from the 2<sup>nd</sup> week in August and students are required to confirm their results in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August by visiting the Registry Office with the necessary documentation. Those who fail to reach the required results or who fail to attend, have their names removed from the lists and the next person on the reserve list who achieves the required grades is made an offer.
- Remaining Access NI criminal records checks are conducted at this stage.
- Students commence the course around the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> week of September providing they meet the conditions of offer, including satisfactory criminal records check, occupational health check and references.

### **Procedures on Feedback to Unsuccessful Applicants**

The University will provide feedback, on request, to unsuccessful UCAS applicants. The feedback given will be with reference to the selection criteria for the degree programme and, prior to making a request, applicants are asked to consult the Entry Profile on the UCAS website ([www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)) for the programme for which they have applied. It provides detailed information about selection criteria under the heading “How we choose our students” and may answer the questions they have.

Normally, the request for feedback should be made within six weeks of the decision to the Admissions and Access Service by letter, email or telephone:

Admissions and Access Service  
Lanyon North  
Queen’s University Belfast  
Belfast  
BT7 1NN

[admissions@qub.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@qub.ac.uk)

Tel: 028 9097 3838

Applicants who would like to receive feedback in person should contact the Service to arrange an appointment, although it may not be possible to facilitate this at certain stages of the admission cycle. Where possible, responses to requests made in writing (email or letter) will be provided within ten working days. However, at busy periods, an acknowledgment may be sent outlining the reasons for any delay.

The request for feedback should come from the applicant, or if coming from a school adviser or parent/spouse, must be accompanied by a clear written statement signed by the applicant confirming that s/he is willing for their application to be discussed with another named individual who is acting on their behalf.

Without this written permission, general advice on selection procedures will be provided to schools/colleges and parents but this will not be based on reference to an individual application or record.

Feedback is distinct from a complaint about how an application has been processed or an appeal (asking for a review of the admissions decision) for which a separate procedure is in place (see Appendix 5 to the Admissions Policy). Feedback is intended to explain the reasons for the decision and may include advice about what additional qualifications or measures might be taken to strengthen an application to the same programme in a future year.

The facility developed by UCAS to enable institutions to provide a brief explanation to applicants via Track outlining the reasons for an unsuccessful decision is used for some degree programmes.

## Admissions Appeals/Complaints Procedure

### 1. Introduction

Each year, this University receives approximately 20,000 UCAS applications for admission to primary degree programmes, and a further 8,500 - 9,500 applications for admission to postgraduate programmes. However, the undergraduate intake each year is dictated by a government-imposed cap (the *Maximum Aggregate Student Number*, or MaSN), which means that not all suitably-qualified candidates can be accommodated. There is no government cap on postgraduate places, but in a number of cases postgraduate numbers are in practice determined largely by the availability of funding, which is limited and awarded on a competitive basis.

University policy is formulated by the Academic Council and Senate in line with the University's strategic plan. Admissions criteria - i.e. the entry qualifications and grades for individual courses - are recommended by the Admissions and Access Service and Schools for the purposes of implementing the strategic plan, within the overall constraints placed on student numbers by both government and professional bodies.

Most admissions decisions are based on transparent academic criteria. The University's course finder contains a detailed description of the various entrance qualifications and grades required for particular courses, but published grades are indicative only and an offer made to an applicant may vary from the published criteria.

Some degree courses require additional evidence of a candidate's suitability – e.g. evidence of motivation and commitment, relevant experience, UKCAT performance for Medicine and Dentistry, or evidence of artistic ability in the case of Architecture. Interviews may be used to identify whether candidates have the desired attributes but in all such cases selectors are required to have clearly stated selection criteria.

Admissions and Access Service staff are able to satisfy most queries about admissions decisions on a daily basis, and the vast majority of applicants are satisfied with the explanation given. This is regarded as feedback and intended to explain the reasons for the decision and may include advice about what additional qualifications or measures might be taken to strengthen an application to the same programme in a future year (see Appendix 4 of the Admissions Policy). The following procedure has been drawn up to cover cases where unsuccessful candidates do not accept the explanation offered.

### 2. Scope of the Procedure

This procedure is based on the University-wide Student Complaints Procedure. It covers all applicants to University credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing courses, and thus can be used by persons who are not currently Queen's students.

The procedure covers the following types of appeal/complaint:

- complaints about the University's handling of a query or an application for admission for example a procedural error, irregularity or maladministration;
- allegations that admissions criteria were not applied correctly or even-handedly, resulting in a formal request for a review of the admissions decision;

- Appeals against the assessment of status ie Home and EU or International for fees purposes. It should be noted that these will only be considered prior to admission and not retrospectively once a student has registered.
- Emergence of new material information which may have affected the decision. In such cases the applicant must also provide details of why the new information was not made available at the time of application. If this information was available or known to the applicant at the time of application but not included for whatever reason, it will not normally be considered.

The procedure does not cover strategic decisions relating to the overall size and shape of schools, or to caps on student numbers in particular courses whether imposed by the University, government or professional bodies. Any correspondence on these matters should be directed to the Director of Academic and Student Affairs who has overall responsibility for admissions policy.

In cases of collaborative provision, i.e. where a University programme is delivered jointly with another institution, responsibility for admissions decisions may vary according to the terms of the collaborative arrangement, and enquiries should be directed in the first instance to the Admissions and Access Service at Queen's. Where the admissions query relates to a programme designed as an entry route to Queen's (e.g. an Access course for mature students), enquiries should be directed to the institution offering the entrance qualification (e.g. a college or institute of further and higher education, in the case of Access students).

### 3. Submission and Investigation of Enquiries/Complaints/Appeals

#### 3.1 First Stage: Informal Resolution

Enquiries about admissions decisions should normally be made by the applicant in question and should be directed to the Admissions and Access Service in the first instance (telephone 028 9097 3838, email admissions@qub.ac.uk or write to the Admissions and Access Service, Queen's University Belfast BT7 1NN) within 6 weeks of receiving a decision. If necessary, the Admissions and Access Service will consult with relevant selectors before responding to the query. A written response will be made to every written enquiry (i.e. by letter or email), normally within 10 working days, and this written response will mark the completion of the informal stage.

#### 3.2 Second Stage: Formal Letter to Director of Academic and Student Affairs

An applicant who is dissatisfied with the written explanation should put his/her concerns in writing to the Director of Academic and Student Affairs, Level 6, Administration Building within 10 working days of the date of the Admissions and Access Service letter (3.1 above). The formal letter to the Director of Academic and Student Affairs should set out the grounds for dissatisfaction with the response from the Admissions and Access Service, and include any previous correspondence.

The Director of Academic and Student Affairs (or nominee) shall then consult with the Admissions and Access Service and staff within the University school as necessary, and shall undertake such further enquiries as are deemed necessary before providing a written response normally within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint. When a complaint is made about specific members of staff, those staff shall have the right to see copies of relevant

documentation, to present evidence to the Director of Academic and Student Affairs or his/her nominee, and to be informed of the outcome of the complaint/appeal.

### 3.3 Third Stage: Appeal

- (i) Any student still dissatisfied after the second stage may appeal in writing to a Pro-Vice-Chancellor within 10 working days of the date of the letter stating the decision of the Director of Academic and Student Affairs. Copies of previous correspondence and any supporting documentation should be included. A Review Panel shall then be convened, to meet normally within 25 working days of receipt of the appeal letter. However, there is no appeal against an admissions decision which, in the judgement of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, results from the correct and impartial application of written criteria. In such cases, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor shall communicate this decision in writing to the appellant, normally within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal.
- (ii) Where a Review Panel is deemed necessary, the Panel shall normally comprise:
  - a Pro-Vice-Chancellor or Dean (in the chair);
  - a Head of School or Director of Education from a School other than the one (s) applied to;
  - a senior administrator from outside the Academic and Student Affairs Directorate;
  - the President or other sabbatical officer from the Students' Union;
  - an academic selector.

Panel members shall not have had any prior involvement in the case. The Panel membership shall be chosen as far as possible to reflect the diversity of the Northern Ireland community.

The Review Panel will be serviced by the Admissions and Access Service.

- (iii) The Panel may seek written evidence from any witness or person who in the Panel's judgement may have relevant information to contribute. Any such person shall have the right to see relevant documentation to be considered by the Panel, in advance of the meeting of the Panel.
- (iv) Minutes shall be taken as a formal record of the meeting and retained.
- (v) The Panel's findings and recommendations shall be communicated to the appellant within 10 working days of the Panel's meeting. The Panel shall also send a report to the Director of Academic and Student Affairs, Head of the Admissions and Access Service and the relevant Head of School, summarising the Panel's conclusions and recommendations.
- (vi) There is no further appeal permitted beyond the Third Stage.

4. Deadlines

The deadlines set out in this procedure relate to investigations carried out in semester-time only, and may not prove possible to meet at particularly busy periods for the Admissions and Access Service (e.g. August-September) or when key staff are on leave, or otherwise indisposed. The University will at all times strive to respond to enquiries as quickly as circumstances allow and applicants will be advised of the reasons for any delay.

5. Confidentiality and Enquiries from Third Parties

All parties to a complaint are expected to maintain strict confidentiality, both during and after any enquiry/appeal/complaint. Enquiries about admissions decisions should normally be made by the applicant in question.

When an admissions decision is queried by a third party (e.g. a school enquiring on behalf of a pupil), the Admissions and Access Service may supply a generalised answer on admissions policy but is precluded from discussing individual cases by the terms of the Data Protection Act. However, complaints/appeals will be accepted if the applicant confirms in writing that the third party is acting on his/her behalf and the applicant wishes the complaint/appeal to be investigated.

6. Central Monitoring of Admissions Complaints/Appeals

The University sees complaints and appeals, if substantiated, as opportunities to put things right for the applicant and to learn lessons which might ultimately lead to improved standards. Accordingly, the Admissions and Access Service will prepare a summary report of admissions appeals and complaints, preserving anonymity, for Education Committee each year.

## Procedures for Handling Similarity Detection Warnings

In response to the increasing practice of downloading material from commercial and other websites and copying from applications submitted in previous years, UCAS has introduced new software to detect the use of plagiarism in personal statements. In instances where there is significant similarity both the universities and the applicant are advised.

Where this occurs the University recognises that there is often a perfectly good explanation for the alleged similarities. In addition, it is appreciated that applicants may have been provided with extensive guidance from schools/colleges and therefore may not even be aware that they have been using material, previously submitted. Each case will be considered on an individual basis by the Admissions and Access Service in the first instance. In general, the approach will be to ensure that where plagiarism has been shown to have occurred, applicants receive information about the University's position on this to prevent any possible reoccurrence at a later stage. However, where the personal statement is viewed as an important part of the selection process, there is a range of possible outcomes.

Details of the action which will be taken, depending on the nature of the case and the course applied for, are given below.

1. For most degree programmes, where the personal statement is not a major factor in the selection process, and where the applicant is eligible for an offer, the Admissions and Access Service will write to the applicant. This letter will advise that a similarity detection warning has been received and provide reassurance that this will not impact on the decision. The applicant will be encouraged to comment/forward an explanation and a copy of the procedures in place to deal with plagiarism amongst the student population will be enclosed for information only. Any response received from the applicant will be retained with the UCAS application.
2. For professional courses (Medicine, Dentistry, Pharmacy and Social Work), where a high level of integrity and trust is required, and in cases where the personal statement is taken into account in determining whether or not an offer is made, the Admissions and Access Service will write to the applicant (assuming that the application is likely to be given serious consideration on the basis of academic and other criteria). This letter will advise that a similarity detection warning has been received and the applicant will be requested to provide a written explanation. When received, this will be forwarded to the academic selector who will decide on what action, should be taken from the range of options below.
  - 2.1 Accept that there is no substantive evidence to suggest that plagiarism has occurred and request that the Admissions and Access Service advise the applicant accordingly.
  - 2.2 Determine that a *prima facie* case of plagiarism has occurred but that it is not sufficiently serious to impact on the selection process. The Admissions and Access Service will be asked to convey this to the applicant, enclosing a copy of the procedures in place to deal with plagiarism amongst the student population for information.

- 2.3 Request that a new personal statement is provided and consider the application on this basis.
- 2.4 In more serious cases, where the academic selector is not satisfied with the explanation or the new personal statement (if one has been requested), the applicant may be called for interview and the matter investigated more fully.

Following this, the Interviewing Panel may decide

- to consider the application without prejudice
  - to request a new statement (if not previously requested) and consider on this basis
  - not to consider the application further. In such cases an appeal will be permitted under the Admissions Appeals and Complaints Procedure
- 2.5 The Interviewing Panel will normally consist of two members of staff from the School (including the Academic Selector) and a member of staff from the Admissions and Access Service.
  - 2.5 In reaching its decision, the Academic Selector or the Interview Panel will take the following into account
    - (i) The extent of the plagiarism.
    - (ii) The degree of intent.
    - (iii) The previous educational background of the applicant.
    - (iv) The academic reference on the UCAS application.
    - (v) The extent of the applicant's knowledge and understanding of the seriousness of the misconduct.
  - 2.6 In all cases, irrespective of the outcome, the original feedback from the applicant will be retained with the UCAS application.