

Guidelines for Student Handbooks for Taught Programmes 2015-16

These guidelines, which are for the production of student handbooks for all taught students, provide a University template with the aim of enhancing the quality and consistency of the information provided to students. They are intended as a helpful reference tool for those responsible for producing student handbooks, rather than impose a mandatory format, in order to ensure that students receive clear and reliable information relevant to them.

The suggested content is not exhaustive nor does it prescribe a particular method or style of presentation and Schools will wish to communicate in a format that best meets the needs of their students. It is very important that all students are made aware of how to access their relevant handbook(s) and that they can be made available in alternative formats upon request.

Schools will be solely responsible for the information contained in the handbooks and for the assurance that all information provided is accurate and up to date. It is therefore imperative that Student Handbooks are proofed thoroughly before publication.

If any information to be included in the handbooks appears in detail in other School or University documents available to students, then do not copy or duplicate this information. Please, instead give a reference in the handbook to where the information can be found including web references where appropriate. Web links have been provided within this guidance where these have been identified as central University information. This is to ensure that students get the most current information.

Please note that a number of sections of the suggested content below contains core University information. Approved text and web links (*italicised*) have been provided within this guidance and should be copied directly into the handbooks. Centrally supplied/standard text entries have been deliberately worded for accuracy and relevance to the majority of the student body.

Please direct any queries about student handbook content to Academic Affairs (academic-affairs@gub.ac.uk).

1. Welcome Message/Overview

This section should welcome students the specific School or programme and provide a general overview of the school, its ethos, aims and objectives and how it fits into wider Faculty and University structures.

This section also provides an opportunity to define the purpose of the student handbook, why it is so important that students read their handbook and make them aware of some of the potential consequences of not doing so.

2. Key Contacts and School Information

This section should help students to familiarise themselves with all aspects of School life and should include information on:

- Academic staff
- Administrative staff
- Personal Tutors and Advisors of Studies (including their role)
- School office details (including Opening Hours)
- Organisational structure
- School/programme specific resources and facilities and guidance on using them.

- School/location specific safety procedures.
- School policy on communicating with students e.g. emails, noticeboards etc.

3. Semester Dates

The italicised text below should be copied directly into the handbook for this section; however Schools should also include any other dates when students are expected to be present that fall outside of the normal semester dates, e.g. additional teaching/placements/professional practice requirements.

University Semester dates for academic year 2015-16 can be found at

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/SemesterDates/>

4. Student Charter and General Regulations

The italicised text below should be copied directly into the handbook for this section.

The University's Student Charter sets out how the University will work in partnership with you to support your learning and help you to realise your ambitions, as well as the standards of behaviour and personal responsibility that we expect from our students. The Student Charter can be found at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/StudentCharter/>

By enrolling at Queen's University Belfast, you undertake to abide by all of our regulations, policies and procedures so it is important that you familiarise yourself with them.

The University's General Regulations contain important information about the rules governing progression, assessment and degree classification on all programmes. They assure the University's academic standards and ensure all students are treated consistently and equitably. They are also part of the formal contract between you and the University. The University's General Regulations can be found at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/>

If you have any problems understanding any of these regulations, policies and procedures, or if you have any questions, it is important that you discuss them with your Personal Tutor or the Students' Union Advice Centre.

5. Programme Information

This section should contain a brief explanation of the programme structure and the aims of the programme.

The handbook should then direct students to the relevant programme specification as the definitive source of programme information. Schools should not reproduce this information in the handbook but link to the appropriate webpage:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/ProgrammeSpecifications/>

Please note that a link to the School webpage should be provided, rather than a link to the PDF document. If an update occurs, the document link can change whereas the webpage link will not.

Any other information that the school thinks relevant should also be included, providing it is not available to students elsewhere.

If applicable, students should also be referred to the Fitness to Practice Procedure <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/Procedures/FitnessToPracticeProcedure/>

6. Teaching and Learning

This section should provide clear information on:

- Teaching and Learning methods
- Modules
- Tutorials
- Placements
- Practicals, laboratory work and fieldwork
- Contact hours
- Attendance – including how and why you monitor attendance ie student wellbeing / UKVI / indicators of academic risk

7. Assessment and Feedback

This section should provide clear information on:

- Overview of the assessment strategy of the programme
- Coursework
 - Referencing
Centralised guidance for students is provided by the Learning and Development Service
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/learning/Resources/Referencing/>
 - Submission procedures
 - Late submission of assessed work
 - Use of Turnitin (if applicable)
- Examinations
 - Refer to Exceptional Circumstances Procedure and highlight any if there will be School specific deadlines and if so, how the student will be notified (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/StudentGuidance/ExceptionalCircumstances-AStudentGuide/>)
- *Academic Misconduct (Please use the approved wording and link only)*

In order to safeguard our academic standards and the integrity of our awards the University has procedures in place for dealing with suspected academic misconduct. The procedure details types of academic misconduct, such as cheating in an examination, plagiarism, collusion and fabrication, how suspected offences are investigated and the penalties that can be imposed. The procedure also details students' rights of appeal in cases relating to academic misconduct.

A Student Guide on the Academic Offences Procedure can be found at:
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/AppealsComplaintsandMisconduct/AcademicOffences/Student-Guide/>

The full Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences can be found at:
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/Procedures/ProceduresforDealingwithAcademicOffencesincludingresearchmisconduct/>

- Marking and moderation procedures

- Release of results
- Delivery methods and timing of feedback
- Importance of feedback

8. Progression and Degree classifications

The italicised text below should be copied directly into the handbook for this section.

The University's Study Regulations set out the rules and procedures that determine your final classification, including:

- (i) The number of credits required to progress to each level of study*
- (ii) Mark scales and pass marks for Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes*
- (iii) How your final degree classification is calculated*

The University's Study Regulations can be found at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/StudyRegulations/>

The section should also provide information about:

- if applicable, any variances/exemptions from the General Regulations for the programme with regards to progress and degree classification
- programme specific requirements concerning compulsory elements (e.g. laboratory work)
- the possible outcomes should a student fail to achieve a pass mark for an assessment:
 - at first attempt (e.g. an August re-sit capped)
 - at a subsequent attempt (e.g. the possibility they will not be permitted to proceed to the next year of their course or will not meet the requirements for the award for which they registered)

9. Student Feedback

This section should provide clear information on:

- Overview
- Mechanisms for providing feedback about programmes, including:
 - teaching and module evaluations
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/StudentFeedback/StudentEvaluationofTeaching/>
 - internal student surveys and NSS
[\(http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/StudentFeedback/StudentSurveys/\)](http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/StudentFeedback/StudentSurveys/)
- Course Representative(s)
- Staff Student Consultative Committees
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/StudentFeedback/StudentRepresentation/>

10. Employment during the Academic Year

We recognise that some students may have to work part-time whilst completing their degree. There are a number of good reasons for doing this, as part-time work can help you to:

- *develop valuable employability skills that will impress future employers;*
- *gain experience and a greater understanding of the workplace;*
- *access and develop networking opportunities;*

- *support yourself financially during your studies.*

However, the University strongly recommends that students on full-time programmes devote **NO MORE THAN 15 HOURS PER WEEK TO PAID EMPLOYMENT**. There is strong evidence to show that significant levels of part-time work can compromise your academic progress and affect degree outcomes.

Please note that International Students may have prohibitions or restrictions on working in the UK. It is very important that you confirm you have a legal right to work and if you do have the right to work, that you don't exceed the permitted hours. Further information can be found at: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/iss/VisaandImmigration/WorkingintheUK/>

We do urge you to be sensible about how you manage your study, work and social time to get the best result you can from your degree. If you do have financial pressures that mean you have to work more hours than is advisable, please come and talk to us. Both the Student Income and Finance Department in the Student Guidance Centre and the Students' Union can give you advice on funds that are available to help students in your position. The Learning Development Service (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/learning/>) can also offer advice on time management.

Register with the Student Jobshop to access a range of opportunities and fairly paid part-time jobs at <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/careers/>.

11. Departmental Student Support Arrangements

This section should describe the departmental arrangements for pastoral support, with particular reference to the role of the personal tutor. Also please advise students on where they can get support within the School if they are considering taking a break from their studies.

Sections 12 and 13 both link to the Student Gateway which provides a central point of information for all students regarding a wide range of the University's central support services and facilities. This includes essential academic information, such as on academic appeals, alongside practical information, such as student support, accommodation, student finance and health & wellbeing. Schools should not duplicate this information but instead use the text and links below in order to direct students to the correct and up to date information.

12. What to do if things aren't going well

At Queen's we understand that students may encounter times when things are not going well for one reason or another and this can have an impact on their studies. Support and advice for students on the following issues can be found at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/home/TheUniversity/GeneralServices/Informationfor/Students/StudentGuidance/Thingsnotgoingtoplan/>

- *Absence from Study*
- *Changing your Course*
- *Temporary Withdrawal*
- *Withdrawal from the University*
- *Exceptional circumstances*
- *Student Support Meetings*
- *Academic Appeals*

- *Student Complaints Procedure*
- *Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences*

13. Student Support and Development

The Student Handbook is important for identifying to students the range of support and opportunities available to them as students. Rather than providing extensive information in the Handbook which may be out of date by the time a student reads it, the Handbook should include a list of the types of support and opportunities for students, indicating that details about service access and offerings are available on-line, and accessible to students through the Student Gateway website: www.qub.ac.uk/studentinfo

The Handbook should list the range of support students may wish to consider, such as:

- PDP
- Accommodation.
- Careers and Employability
- Degree Plus
- Chaplaincy
- Counselling
- Students with disabilities
- Finance
- Health Centre
- Learning Development Service
- Library
- Queen's sport (PEC)
- Scholarships and Prizes
- Study Abroad/ERASMUS
- Study support
- Student Guidance Centre
- Students' Union
- Student Computing Centres
- International students
- Postgraduate Centre
- Postgraduate Funding
- Languages for Non-Specialists
- Health and Safety
- School support mechanisms
- Qsis and QOL
- Mature and part-time students
- Childcare
- Students Intervention Protocol
- Change of address/details
- Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy
- Starting University
- Students with Experience of Care