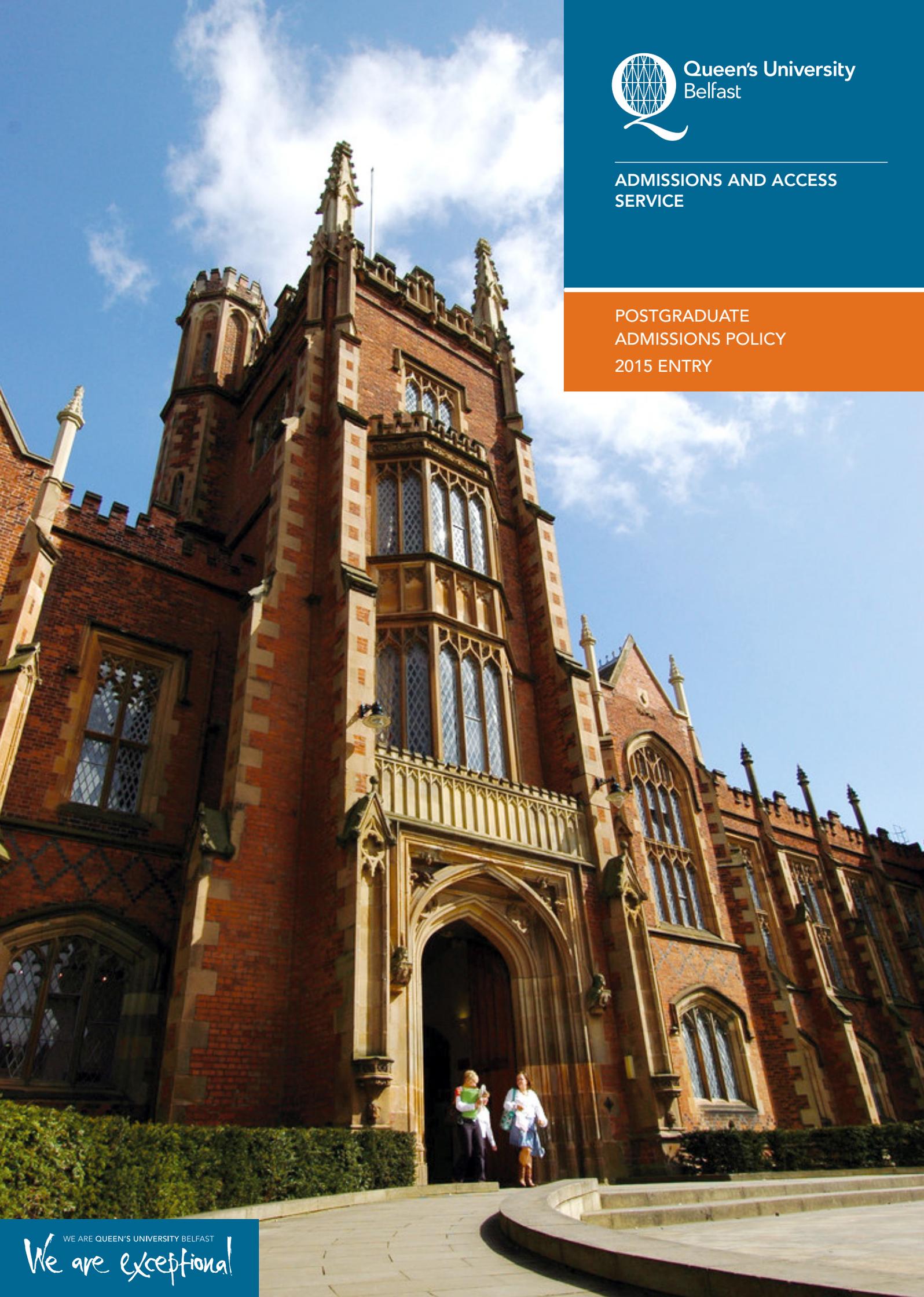




Queen's University  
Belfast

ADMISSIONS AND ACCESS  
SERVICE

POSTGRADUATE  
ADMISSIONS POLICY  
2015 ENTRY



WE ARE QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST  
*We are exceptional!*

# **Postgraduate Admissions Policy**

## **2015 Entry**

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## 1. Introduction

This policy applies to the admission of postgraduate (research and taught) students to Queen's University Belfast. It provides information on procedures and related matters together with details of the responsibilities of those involved in the process. It applies to entry in the academic year 2015-16 and is kept under review and updated periodically to reflect progress in implementing the University's corporate plan.

## 2. Institutional Context

The admissions policy derives from the mission statement and corporate plan for the period 2011–2016.

### 2.1 Mission Statement

The University's vision is captured in its mission statement:

"Our mission is to become: a world-class university that links Northern Ireland to the global community through the life-changing experience we offer to our students, the distinctive contribution made to society by our graduates and the high quality and impact of our research."

### 2.2 Corporate Plan (2011–2016)

The Corporate Plan is underpinned by three main targets for this period – Plan 924i and is available at:

[www.qub.ac.uk/home/TheUniversity/AboutQueens/CorporatePlan2011-16/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/home/TheUniversity/AboutQueens/CorporatePlan2011-16/)

The priorities relating to postgraduate admissions include:

- 2.2.1 To deliver a distinctive experience for postgraduate students, attracting increased numbers from Northern Ireland, other UK regions and international markets.
- 2.2.2 Continued enhancement in the quality of students gaining admission.
- 2.2.3 To grow an international student population to 10% of the total student population by 2016.
- 2.2.4 To develop a culture of robust, effective and timely decision-making, promoting a greater sense of ownership and responsibility in decision-making at all levels, underpinned by transparency and excellent communication.
- 2.2.5 To deliver a high quality and people-centred service with a drive towards greater 'customer focus'.

To achieve these aims the University:

- 2.2.6 Encourages applications from suitably qualified applicants.
- 2.2.7 Selects on the basis of fair, transparent, reliable and objective criteria, applied equitably and consistently.

2.2.8 Admits the best qualified applicants to postgraduate taught degree courses and research programmes in line with the University's research priorities, the targets agreed in School academic plans and the overall constraints applied by government and professional bodies.

### 2.3 Equality and Diversity

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. The University's Equality and Diversity Policy is available at:

[www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/EqualOpportunitiesUnit/EqualityandDiversityPolicy/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/EqualOpportunitiesUnit/EqualityandDiversityPolicy/)

### 2.4 Quality Assurance

The admissions policy complies with relevant legislation affecting the admission of students and meets the expectation of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B2: Admissions (2011) and Chapter B11: Research Degrees (2012) ([www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)).

## 3. Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the University Schools\* and Directorates with regard to the implementation of this policy are set out in Appendix 1.

## 4. Training

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

The Admissions and Access Service hosts regular training sessions and briefings for all School staff on the admissions procedures and the online admissions system and provides regular updates on changes as appropriate.

\*Throughout this Policy, where reference has been made to University Schools and Heads of School, this incorporates Institutes.

## 5. 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 enables an informed choice of programme(s) appropriate to applicant needs, interests, academic qualifications and potential.

Detailed information on entrance qualifications and associated admissions procedures for individual postgraduate programmes is provided. The main sources of information are as follows:

- i) Online Coursefinder
- ii) Postgraduate Prospectus available in a variety of formats including print and online
- iii) University Schools' produced promotional material
- iv) University Schools' websites
- v) Prospective student portal

The University makes every effort to ensure that the information it provides is accurate when it is published. Printed materials such as the prospectus and subject-specific literature are provided more than 12 months before a course begins. Applicants should therefore refer to the online Coursefinder to check for updated information about course content and application criteria.

## 6. Criteria for Admission and Admissions Procedures

### 6.1 Postgraduate Taught

#### 6.1.1 Criteria for Admission

- i) For the majority of courses, applications are considered by the Admissions and Access Service on behalf of the School, which has overall responsibility for the admission of students. Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that suitable arrangements for postgraduate admissions are in place in their School (see Appendix 1 – Roles and Responsibilities). Where responsibility has been delegated, the Admissions and Access Service will make decisions on postgraduate taught applications on the School's behalf on the basis of clear and approved written criteria and will refer non-standard applications to the School, when necessary.
- ii) The minimum academic requirement for a Masters degree is normally a Second Class Honours Degree from a UK university or a suitably quality-assured Higher Education Institution recognised by the University.
- iii) Specific and alternative entrance requirements (academic and non-academic) for individual courses are available via the online Coursefinder, which is updated as appropriate throughout the year, and the Postgraduate Prospectus.

- iv) The selection criteria used by the School must be clearly stated and must be adhered to in all cases, to avoid any allegations of unfairness.
- v) The academic requirements for the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) are an Honours degree (and/or higher degree) or equivalent recognised qualification relevant to one of the subject areas of the course (English, Mathematics, Science, Modern Languages, Politics, Sociology, RE, ICT/Computing) plus a GCSE at grade C or acceptable equivalent in English Language and Mathematics.
- vi) The academic requirement for the Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Legal Studies course is a recognised law degree (or non-law degree plus an approved legal studies course). Students recommended and approved by the Honourable Society of the Inns of Court of Northern Ireland or the Law Society of Northern Ireland are also eligible.

A list of recognised law degrees is provided on the website [www.qub.ac.uk/ipls/Admissions](http://www.qub.ac.uk/ipls/Admissions).

#### 6.1.2 Closing Dates for Applications

In principle there are no closing dates for the majority of postgraduate taught courses, although applicants are advised to apply as early as possible and not later than 31 August for an end of September start date. This is particularly important for those courses where there is a high demand for places and for international applicants to allow sufficient time for visa application.

The exceptions are:

- i) Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) – 1 November
- ii) Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Legal Studies - 15 November
- iii) Professional Doctorates in the School of Psychology - School sets closing dates ([www.qub.ac.uk/psy](http://www.qub.ac.uk/psy))
- iv) MD (Doctor of Medicine) - School sets closing date ([www.qub.ac.uk/mdbs/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/mdbs/))
- v) Pharmacy Distance Learning - School sets closing date ([www.qub.ac.uk/pha](http://www.qub.ac.uk/pha))
- vi) MA in Legislative Studies and Practice - School sets closing date ([www.qub.ac.uk/pisp](http://www.qub.ac.uk/pisp))

### 6.1.3 Admissions Procedures

- i) Applications for admission to the majority of postgraduate taught courses are submitted online via the Postgraduate Direct Applications Portal (<http://go.qub.ac.uk/pgapply>). Exceptionally where this is not possible, a University paper application form will be accepted.
- ii) The online application should not be used for the following courses, which have separate processes (detailed on the appropriate School's website):
  - MSc in Plasma and Vacuum Technology (e-mail [plasmaMSc@qub.ac.uk](mailto:plasmaMSc@qub.ac.uk) for information)
  - Postgraduate Diploma in Professional Legal Studies ([www.qub.ac.uk/ipls/Admissions](http://www.qub.ac.uk/ipls/Admissions))
  - Professional Doctorates offered by the School of Psychology ([www.qub.ac.uk/psy](http://www.qub.ac.uk/psy))
- iii) At the time of application, applicants will be asked to indicate whether they wish their mode of study to be full-time or part-time. Applicants are advised to consult the online Coursefinder or Postgraduate Prospectus for information on modes of study available for postgraduate taught courses.
- iv) The majority of postgraduate taught courses have an end of September start date however it may be possible to commence study on a small number of postgraduate taught courses at the end of January. Schools will advise applicants if they are eligible for a January start date, if applicable.
- v) Admissions decisions will involve at least one administrator from the Admissions and Access Service or, where decision-making responsibility has been retained by the School, at least one selector nominated by the Head of School.
- vi) Selectors must make their admissions decisions on the basis of the criteria for the individual course which may include:
  - a) The applicant's academic qualifications.
  - b) Interviews, admissions tests, written work, portfolio submission or relevant professional experience. Where interviews are required, applicants should be made aware of the purpose and format of the interview and Schools should establish specific criteria for scoring each applicant. Schools should also consider suitable arrangements for applicants who work at a distance, are based overseas or have a disability, special needs or medical conditions.

- c) References. These are only used for admission to a limited number of postgraduate taught courses or in exceptional circumstances. Where references are a standard part of the selection process this should be made clear to applicants.
- d) Evidence (from applicants for whom English is not their first language) of an acceptable level of proficiency in the use of the English Language, in the form of one of the qualifications on the University's list of acceptable English Language qualifications, available at <http://go.qub.ac.uk/EnglishLanguageRegs>. Applicants who are non-EU/EEA nationals must also satisfy UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) requirements for English language for visa purposes. Further information is available at [www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration).

## 6.2 Postgraduate Research

The Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes comply with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Chapter B11: Research Degrees (2012). These are available on the University's website at:

<http://go.qub.ac.uk/CoPResearchDegrees>

### 6.2.1 Criteria for Admission

- i) Applications are considered by the School which has overall responsibility for the admission of students. Heads of School are responsible for ensuring that suitable arrangements for postgraduate admissions are in place in their School (see Appendix 1 – Roles and Responsibilities).
- ii) Applicants must hold (or be about to qualify for) a degree from an approved university/institution or hold another qualification which the University considers to be an appropriate alternative to a primary degree. The normal expectation is that applicants will have achieved a minimum of a 2.1 Honours degree or equivalent.
- iii) Relevant publications, professional research experience or other achievements by the applicant may also be considered as additional evidence of suitability for admission. The aim is to ensure that only students who appear likely to successfully complete a research programme of study are admitted.
- iv) The selection criteria which the School is using must be clearly stated and must be strictly adhered to in all cases, to avoid any allegations of unfairness. The main criteria will be academic together with an outline of the research proposal.
- v) Applicants for a PhD by Published Works are required to establish a prima facie case that their work is of an appropriate standard. The application must include:

- a) Details of the applicant's academic qualifications.
- b) A list of the publications to be submitted.
- c) A brief statement of the nature and scope of the research work on which the application is based, and an explanation of the inter-relationship between the cited publications.
- d) A statement about joint authorship of publications, and the extent of the applicant's contribution to the work.

Applicants must be academic members of staff at Queen's, who have been a member of staff for a minimum of one year prior to application. Their case will be considered by the School Postgraduate Research Committee.

- vi) Applicants for a Higher Doctorate are required to establish a prima facie case that their work is of an appropriate standard. The application must include:
  - a) The proposed title
  - b) A statement of the intended award
  - c) A CV
  - d) A publications list, indicating works to be submitted
  - e) A précis of the work to be submitted (500 – 1000 words, with reference to how the applicant meets the requirements for the award (see Study Regulations for Higher Doctorates at <http://go.qub.ac.uk/CoPResearchDegrees>))
  - f) A statement about joint authorship of publications, and the extent of the applicant's contribution to the work
  - g) A statement describing any previous submission of the works for a degree of this or any other university

Applicants must have a significant link to the University, normally by being a graduate of the University or a current academic member of staff. Normally applicants will also have a minimum of ten years research experience at a postdoctoral level. Their case will be considered by the School Postgraduate Research Committee who should have the right to seek views from outside its membership.

#### 6.2.2 Closing Date for Applications

Each academic School has their own closing date and applicants should check the relevant School webpage for confirmation of this deadline and eligibility requirements. The School will consider for funding any application that is received by their closing date if the applicant meets the published eligibility criteria for the funding and has indicated that they wish to be considered for an award.

Applications submitted beyond the proposed deadline will still be accepted at the discretion of the School concerned but consideration for funding cannot be guaranteed.

Applicants are also advised to check the relevant School webpage for information on deadline dates for the submission of applications for any additional funded research projects, which may become available outside the common deadline date.

### 6.2.3 Admissions Procedures

- i) Applications for admission to postgraduate research programmes are submitted online via the Postgraduate Direct Applications Portal (<http://go.qub.ac.uk/pgapply>). Exceptionally, where this is not possible, a University paper application form will be accepted.
- ii) Applicants to the PhD by Published Works and Higher Doctorate degrees must complete a paper application form which is available from the Admissions and Access Service.
- iii) Applicants will be asked to indicate a proposed start date in their application form. The School may wish to change a start date and this will be communicated to the applicant by the Admissions and Access Service.
- iv) Admissions decisions will involve at least two members of the School's staff (one of whom may be the Head of School), approved by the Head of School.
- v) Selectors must make their admissions decisions on the basis of the stated criteria which will normally include:
  - a) The applicant's academic qualifications.
  - b) Interviews, admissions tests, written work, portfolio submission or relevant work experience. Where interviews are required, applicants should be made aware of the purpose and format of the interview and Schools should establish specific criteria for scoring each applicant. Schools should also consider suitable arrangements for applicants who work at a distance, are based overseas or have a disability, special needs or medical conditions.
  - c) References (normally two supportive references are required).
  - d) The proposed topic of research:
    - can it be studied to the depth required for the degree?
    - can it be completed within the time limits for the degree?
  - e) The availability of a suitable supervisory team for the duration of the research.
  - f) The availability of the resources which will be required to support the research.

- g) Evidence (from applicants for whom English is not their first language) of an acceptable level of proficiency in the use of the English Language, in the form of one of the qualifications on the University's list of acceptable English Language qualifications, available at <http://go.qub.ac.uk/EnglishLanguageReqs>.

Applicants who are non-EU/EEA nationals must also satisfy UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) requirements for English language for visa purposes ([www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-visas-and-immigration)).

- h) The applicant's funding arrangements.
- vi) Applicants must not be admitted unless appropriate supervision, resources and facilities can be provided for the duration of the research.
- vii) Supervisors may only be appointed where they have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor research students effectively. Each research student will have a minimum of two supervisors who will be part of a supervisory team. There will be a principal supervisor and a second supervisor will normally be appointed in a supporting role. A third supervisor may, exceptionally, be appointed where a student's research is interdisciplinary.
- viii) When considering postgraduate research applications, Schools should not delay a decision on admission until the outcome of the award application is known.

### 6.3 Admissions Decisions

The Admissions and Access Service provides detailed guidance notes in the Postgraduate Admissions Good Practice Guide for use by Heads of School, Directors of Education, Directors of Research, School Managers and other staff involved in the decision making process and those responsible for administering postgraduate applications. The Guide outlines the decisions which are available to selectors.

### 6.4 Turnaround Time for Applications

Applicants who submit an online application via the Postgraduate Direct Applications Portal will be notified when their application has been submitted successfully. When an application has passed an initial check by the Admissions and Access Service, the applicant will be contacted by email and provided with an application number. Applicants will also be notified if an application contains insufficient information in order for a decision to be made. The application will be returned to the applicant via the Portal, where it will be possible for the necessary amendment(s) to be made and the application to be re-submitted.

Selectors aim to make a decision online within 10 working days of receipt of a complete postgraduate research application and within 5 working days in the case of a complete postgraduate taught application. This is returned to the Admissions and Access Service, together with the names of the Selectors involved in the decision making process. An application is deemed to be complete when sufficient information has been received in order to make a decision.

For admission to some programmes, a 'gathered field' will operate, where applications from suitably qualified applicants will be held until the application deadline before decisions are made. The University will endeavour to keep such delays to a minimum.

## 6.5 Notifying Applicants

The Admissions and Access Service is responsible for conveying the majority of official decisions to the applicant. Decisions on postgraduate applications should normally be communicated to applicants within 2 working days of the decision being received in the Admissions and Access Service.

When a decision has been approved by the Admissions and Access Service, the postgraduate online application system will automatically send an email to the applicant. The email will advise the applicant that their application has been updated and indicate that they should log on to the Postgraduate Direct Applications Portal. The applicant will then be able to view the decision that has been made on their application. It is also indicated in this area that a letter will follow and that any offer of admission does not constitute an offer of financial support. The mailed decision letter will provide more detailed information to the applicant.

## 6.6 Offers

All communications indicate that the offer is an offer of admission for a place and not an offer of financial assistance.

The offer letter (which, for postgraduate research applicants, is sent with an additional information sheet) and the Admissions and Access Service guidance notes include or refer applicants to details on:

- i) The expected total fees
- ii) Extra charges (such as 'bench' fees) which will be levied and any other expenditure on practical items relevant to the individual applicant
- iii) The expected start date
- iv) The expected period of study for which the research applicant will be enrolled
- v) The requirements which the institution places on the research student

The Admissions and Access Service guidance notes are provided via the 'New Students' website and a link to the website, [www.qub.ac.uk/new-students/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/new-students/) is supplied in the offer letter. Non-EU/EEA applicants also receive a paper copy of the guidance notes with their offer letter. The 'New Students' website, which

has been designed for applicants who are holding offers, includes information on replying to an offer, returning degree results, financial responsibilities, applying for accommodation and other support services provided to Queen's students. For non-EU/EEA applicants, detailed information in relation to immigration procedures and the International Students' Orientation programme is also provided.

For Postgraduate Research applicants, additional notes on the requirements which the University places on the research student are supplied, along with a link to the Institutional Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes (<http://go.qub.ac.uk/CoPResearchDegrees>) which includes Study Regulations for Research Degree Programmes, the Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes, the online Student Handbook and other guidance.

Applicants should log onto the Postgraduate Direct Applications Portal in order to accept or decline an offer of a place.

## 7. Deferred Entry

Applications for deferred entry are not normally permitted. This is because either a course may not be offered in a subsequent year or, in the case of research, the research project and/or intended supervisor may not be available in a subsequent year. Requests will be considered on an individual basis, particularly in relation to non-EU/EEA applicants who may have experienced delays in obtaining an entry visa in time to commence their studies.

## 8. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The University invites applications to its degree programmes from all prospective students who possess the ability, knowledge and experience required to benefit from them. The University operates a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) scheme which encompasses Accreditation of Prior Certificated Learning (APCL) and Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL). The University's RPL Policy is available at [www.qub.ac.uk/dasa/AcademicAffairs](http://www.qub.ac.uk/dasa/AcademicAffairs).

## 9. International Applications

International applications are welcomed and should be submitted in the normal way through the online Postgraduate Direct Applications Portal.

### 9.1 Status for Tuition Fee Purposes

The University charges different levels of tuition fee: the 'Home/EU' fee rate and the higher 'Overseas' fee rate. The amount a student will be required to pay depends on a number of criteria.

Details of these criteria and further guidance can be obtained from UKCISA: The UK Council for International Student Affairs. UKCISA provides advice and information to international students studying (or intending to study) in the UK. Information and advice to students is free. For more information please visit [www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk).

The University's International Admissions Team will decide an applicant's fee status on the basis of the relevant fees regulations. Fee status is determined in accordance with the following regulations:

The Student Fees (Qualifying Courses and Persons) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (as amended).

In addition to the information supplied at the time of application, applicants may be asked to provide additional details about themselves and their family to help the University assess fee status. If this is necessary applicants may be asked to complete a Fee Assessment Questionnaire. Applicants should also provide scanned copies of relevant documents (for example copies of passports, official letters, evidence of travel, employment, etc) to support the information provided.

The Student Finance Framework has been developed by Queen's University to provide a consolidated guide on all matters which have an impact on tuition fees and associated charges. The Framework also includes a Fee Appeals Process. The Student Finance Framework and full details of the Fee Appeals Process (contained within Section 10 of the Framework document) including information on the Grounds for an Appeal are available at:  
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/tuitionfees>

## 9.2 Comparability of International Qualifications

Qualifications obtained from countries outside the UK and Republic of Ireland should be deemed comparable and meet the equivalent level for entry to the course/research programme applied for. The University will only recognise qualifications that are awarded by suitably quality-assured Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) with recognised degree awarding authority and listed as recognised HEIs by the National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (UK NARIC- [www.naric.org.uk](http://www.naric.org.uk)) or the British Council ([www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)).

## 9.3 English Language Requirements

Applicants whose first language is not English are required to produce evidence of their proficiency through qualifications such as a Secure English Language Test (SELT) eg IELTS or an acceptable alternative such as an INTO English language test eg English for University Study or Pre-sessional English ([www.intohigher.com/qub](http://www.intohigher.com/qub)). A full list of acceptable English language qualifications and appropriate scores is available at:

<http://go.qub.ac.uk/EnglishLanguageReqs>

For those applicants who are required to obtain an English language qualification prior to taking up their place on a course/research programme, the conditional offer should be made in terms of achieving an appropriate score in IELTS (or equivalent qualification acceptable to the University) or an INTO English language test. Subject to their agreement, at the time of application, details of applicants made offers conditional on English language will be made available to INTO Queen's so that they may be considered for a place on an English pre-sessional programme, if appropriate. Please note that the qualifications which are accepted by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) for visa application purposes can be subject to change, and it is recommended that prospective applicants consult the UKVI website at: <https://www.gov.uk/visas-immigration>

#### 9.4 Immigration Procedures

International Student Support is responsible for providing advice and guidance to international applicants and students on the Points Based System (PBS) for immigration, particularly in terms of student entry visas and leave to remain in the UK visa renewals.

International applicants who have met all the course entry requirements and have accepted an unconditional offer of a place to study on a postgraduate programme are eligible to pay a deposit towards their tuition fees, which may assist in the visa application process. Applicants for one-year postgraduate taught courses are required to pay a mandatory tuition fee deposit before a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) can be issued for visa purposes.

The Admissions and Access Service will include appropriate information in the offer letters and guidance notes for international applicants and is responsible for carrying out the appropriate checks, in conjunction with International Student Support, to assess immigration history before issuing CAS for applicants where appropriate. A CAS is valid for 6 months from the date of issue. The Admissions and Access Service will also issue the appropriate documentation required to allow applicants to apply for ATAS clearance where applicable.

Non-EU/EEA applicants who intend to undertake postgraduate research in Science, Engineering or Technology disciplines, or study for postgraduate taught Masters courses in Materials Science, Materials Technology, Chemical, Process and Energy Engineering, Aerospace Engineering, Mechanical Engineering or Physics are required to obtain an ATAS Certificate before an application for a visa or entry clearance can be made.

An ATAS Certificate is valid for 6 months from the date of issue by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Applicants may apply for an ATAS Certificate up to 6 months in advance of the beginning of the degree programme.

At the time of enrolment and registration, all new and returning non-EU/EEA students are required to provide evidence (passport and visa) that they have the correct immigration permission to undertake the specified degree programme at the University.

#### 10. Applicants with a Disability, Special Needs or Medical Conditions

The University is committed to ensuring equal opportunities for all of its students and actively encourages applications from people with disabilities. Applications are considered on the same academic grounds as non-disabled applicants and there is no disability assessment prior to an offer being made.

The University has developed extensive support for disabled students. The reasonable adjustments available are outlined in the Student Disability Policy at [www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/Policies/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/Policies/).

On receipt of an offer from the University, applicants will be asked to complete a questionnaire by Disability Services to determine reasonable adjustments, should they be accepted and placed on their chosen course at Queen's.

Where it is anticipated from the information provided that the applicant will require significant support or will require modifications to the academic course, they will be invited to meet staff from Disability Services and relevant members from the academic School to discuss the applicant's individual needs. In a small number of cases where there are fitness to practise concerns or where reasonable adjustments may not be feasible to implement, advice will be obtained by Disability Services from the School, the University's Senior Medical Officer and appropriate disability organisations to ensure every reasonable effort is made to support the student in taking up the offer on their chosen course at Queen's. Following these discussions, staff from Disability Services and the School will offer to meet with the applicant to discuss the support available to enable them to make an informed judgement on the suitability of the course. In the exceptional and unlikely event where fitness to practise issues remain a concern or reasonable adjustments cannot be implemented, the University reserves the right to withdraw an offer.

Applicants who wish to appeal a decision not to implement adjustments requested which may prevent the applicant from taking up their offer of a place on a programme may write to the Director of Academic and Student Affairs to request a review of the decision. Further information is available in Annex 1 of the University's Student Disability Policy at [www.gub.ac.uk/directorates/sqc/disability/Policies/](http://www.gub.ac.uk/directorates/sqc/disability/Policies/).

#### 11. 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 criminal convictions that are not subject to filtering. Appendix 2 sets out the University's procedures.

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

#### 12. Applicants with Mitigating Circumstances

The University is not best placed to fairly and consistently take account of any mitigating circumstances affecting an applicant's performance in pre-entry qualifications. Examples of mitigating circumstances include personal or family illness. The University expects applicants to have taken appropriate action via their institution to ensure that the relevant examination bodies have allowed for such circumstances prior to the publication of results or following an appeal.

#### 13. Discontinued Courses

Changes to any of the University's courses, involving significant restructuring or discontinuation, will be communicated to applicants affected by such changes by the School or by the Admissions and Access Service, when this responsibility has been delegated to the Service by the School. This will be done at the earliest possible opportunity.

## 14. Feedback

- 14.1 The Admissions and Access Service will provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants on request. Admissions and Access Service staff are able to respond to most queries about decisions to the satisfaction of the vast majority of applicants.
- 14.2 Feedback can be requested by email or letter. The Admissions and Access Service aims to respond to requests for feedback within 10 working days of receipt of the request. The Admissions and Access Service will provide feedback in writing by email or letter. Following this feedback, if applicants believe that they have grounds for a formal review of the admissions decision, they should consult the University's Admissions Appeals and Complaints procedure.

## 15. Appeals and Complaints

- 15.1 The University aims to consider all applicants fairly and in line with the principles outlined in the Postgraduate Admissions Policy. However, it is recognised that there may be occasions where applicants wish to request an appeal (review of the admissions decision), or make a complaint about the handling of their application or enquiry.
- 15.2 The University's Appeals and Complaints procedure (attached as Appendix 3) is based on the University-wide Student Complaints Procedure. It covers all applicants to University credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing courses, and can therefore be used by persons who are not currently Queen's students.

The procedure covers the following types of appeal and/or 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.
- Emergence of new material information which may have affected the decision.

## 16. Fraudulent Statements and Omissions

Information provided on an application form for postgraduate study should be true, complete and accurate and no information requested should be omitted. If any information is inaccurate, has been omitted or if a transcript is not provided (if applicable), the University reserves the right to cancel the application and the applicant shall have no claim against the University in relation to this.

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 of a place or the student may be required to withdraw from the University, if registered.

## 17. Data Protection

Queen's University Belfast is required by law to comply with the Data Protection Act, 1998. The University is committed to ensuring that all employees, registered students, agents, contractors and data processors comply with the 1998 Act, regarding the processing and confidentiality of any personal data held by the University. Applicants have the right to access any personal data that is being kept about them, subject to a number of exemptions, either on computer or in manual files. Any person who wishes to exercise this right should make their request in writing, to the Information Compliance Unit, Registrar's Office.

Before a postgraduate application can be submitted to the University, in order to comply with the provisions of the Data Protection Act, the applicant will be asked to confirm that:

- They authorise Queen's University Belfast to process their personal data supplied on the application form for the purposes of assessing their eligibility for admission as a postgraduate student and for funding.
- They authorise Queen's University Belfast to contact their host institution to ascertain exact marks achieved by them in their undergraduate and/or postgraduate degrees for the purposes of ranking their application in the competition(s) for postgraduate funding at Queen's University Belfast.

## 18. Verification of Qualifications

All applicants who have accepted an unconditional offer of a place to undertake either a postgraduate taught course or research programme of study are required to bring their original qualification certificates or a certified copy (and official translations in English if necessary) when they first register as a postgraduate student at the University.

Approved by Education Committee (26 May 2014)

## **Roles and Responsibilities for Implementing the Postgraduate Admissions Policy**

### **1. University Operating Board**

- 1.1 The University Operating Board is responsible for overseeing and managing the implementation of approved strategies, plans, policies and procedures in support of the University's key end goals.

### **2. Research and Postgraduate Committee**

- 2.1 To promote and encourage high quality research throughout the University.
- 2.2 To advise Academic Council on the implementation of the Institutional Research Strategy.
- 2.3 To monitor the University's research performance and progress towards the targets in the Institutional Research Strategy.
- 2.4 To monitor the University's performance in respect of the development of the postgraduate community.
- 2.5 To promote, encourage and monitor internationalisation and international research collaborators.
- 2.6 To consider all aspects of University policy, regulations and training for postgraduate students.
- 2.7 To oversee processes to assure the quality and standards of research degree programmes and other higher degree programmes.
- 2.8 To consider reports from appropriate bodies on research and postgraduate matters.

### **3. Education Committee**

- 3.1 The Education Committee has overall responsibility for institutional policy relating to admissions to taught programmes. The Admissions Policy Review Group reports to the Education Committee.

### **4. Admissions Policy Review Group**

- 4.1 To review annually the operation of the Postgraduate Admissions Policy.
- 4.2 To consider developments (internal and external) that may impact on current admissions policy or procedure.
- 4.3 To consider proposed changes to selection criteria and to review regularly eg admissions test, interviews.
- 4.4 To consider the acceptability of new qualifications or changes to existing qualifications (eg vocational qualifications) and ensure that the University is proactive and its position is up-to-date and clearly communicated.

- 4.5 To keep under review the range of English Language qualifications acceptable to the University.
- 4.6 To consider admissions matters relating to widening participation including the use of contextual data.
- 4.7 To monitor decision turnaround at postgraduate level.
- 4.8 To consider benchmarked practices at other Russell Group universities.

5. University Schools

- 5.1 Responsible for making decisions on applications for admission to postgraduate research programmes, and taught courses within the individual School, where this has not been delegated to the Admissions and Access Service.
- 5.2 Contribute to the setting of target intake numbers as part of the Academic Planning Process for both home/EU and international students.
- 5.3 Setting the entrance criteria for individual postgraduate taught courses and research programmes, including courses run in collaboration with other institutions.
- 5.4 Providing detailed and up-to-date course information for prospective students in the appropriate formats consistent with the University's policy.
- 5.5 Responsible for ensuring that conversion activities and procedures are in place, working within guidelines provided by the Domestic Student Recruitment and the International Office and support provided by Marketing and Creative Services.
- 5.6 Liaising with the Admissions and Access Service on the suitability of alternative comparable qualifications.
- 5.7 The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that appropriate arrangements and selection procedures are in place for considering postgraduate applications.
- 5.8 The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that decisions on completed applications are made within the decision turnaround times set by the University.
- 5.9 The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that at all times throughout the year, academic selectors are available to make decisions on postgraduate applications and, in particular, appropriate cover arrangements are in place during holiday periods and staff absences.
- 5.10 The Head of School is responsible for ensuring that all staff involved in the academic decision making and processing of the applications are fully aware of their role, responsibilities and that staff receive appropriate training.

## 6. Admissions and Access Service

- 6.1 Responsible for managing the postgraduate online application portal (also known as the Direct Applications Portal or DAP).
- 6.2 Administering the admissions process governing the admission of postgraduate students, including the issuing of official admissions letters and guidance notes following receipt of decisions made by Schools and where applicable, Admissions and Access Service administrators.
- 6.3 Providing, if required, a summary document outlining the research proposal or taught modules content to enable application to be made for Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) clearance.
- 6.4 Issuing Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) statements to international students for immigration and student entry visa purposes.
- 6.5 Making decisions on applications for admission to postgraduate taught courses, where this responsibility has been delegated to it by the School.
- 6.6 Providing information, advice and guidance to prospective students, at various stages of the admissions cycle.
- 6.7 Hosting regular briefing meetings and providing academic selectors and other staff in Schools with a good practice guide on the procedures for processing postgraduate applications.
- 6.8 Providing advice and guidance to Schools on the acceptability or otherwise, of alternative qualifications particularly those from outside the UK and the Republic of Ireland, together with advice on the standing of a prospective student's awarding institution(s).
- 6.9 Ensuring University Schools have appropriate information about applicants at various stages of the admissions cycle.
- 6.10 Acting in a quality assurance role to ensure the consistency and accuracy of decisions input by Schools and advising on policies and procedures.
- 6.11 Providing statistical information and reports to senior management and individual Schools to enable review of applications, turnaround times and to monitor trends.
- 6.12 Monitoring, reviewing and updating admissions processes on a regular basis.

## 7. Postgraduate Student Centre

- 7.1 Administering all matters relating to the application and administration of awards for postgraduate research applicants.
- 7.2 Notifying applicants on the outcome of their award application.
- 7.3 Providing key linkages with University Schools and Central Departments on the allocation of postgraduate awards for funding.

- 7.4 Providing postgraduate research student skills training and supervisor training.
8. Academic Affairs
- 8.1 Oversight of the regulatory framework and quality assurance of research degree programmes.
9. Marketing and Creative Services
- 9.1 Responsible for the Coursefinder and the Postgraduate Prospectus.
- 9.2 Supporting the University's recruitment activities by providing marketing support to Schools, gathering and communicating marketing intelligence and delivering a programme of market research.
- 9.3 Providing Schools with support on marketing activities including:
- 9.3.1 Guidance on Schools' own strategic and tactical marketing activity.
- 9.3.2 Guidance on key messages and most appropriate communications tools for each audience.
- 9.3.3 Launching new courses.
- 9.3.4 Providing best practice advice on the production of marketing material such as course leaflets, posters, display materials and School websites.
- 9.3.5 Guidance on advertising activity.
- 9.3.6 Delivering a programme of online communication to prospective students.
10. Domestic Student Recruitment
- 10.1 Providing a leading role in various campus-based events including open days, welcome dinners, campus tours and familiarisation visits.
- 10.2 Representing the University at careers events and exhibitions at postgraduate level.
- 10.3 Working with relevant colleagues within the University to map out the steps in the conversion journey.
- 10.4 Liaising with Marketing and Creative Services regarding key strategic messaging and communications tools appropriate to the audience and the delivery of goals indicated in the Domestic Student Recruitment Strategy.
11. International Office
- 11.1 Student recruitment activity in European and international markets focused on the delivery of approved international recruitment targets.
- 11.2 Providing advice to Schools and relevant Directorates on market-aligned curriculum and opportunities.

- 11.3 Advising Schools on prospective international partnerships.
  - 11.4 Assisting Schools to develop and maintain international partnerships.
  - 11.5 Working closely with relevant colleagues within the University to map out the key steps in the conversion journey and liaising with Marketing and Creative Services regarding key strategic messaging and communications tools appropriate to the audience.
12. International Student Support
- 12.1 Providing a specialised visa and immigration service for international applicants.
  - 12.2 Delivering an induction and orientation programme for new international students upon arrival and providing on-going support for international students.
  - 12.3 Administration of the US Federal Loans programme, which is the main source of funding for US students on postgraduate courses.
13. Careers, Employability and Skills
- 13.1 Management of the University's Study Abroad programme and student exchange programmes including Erasmus.
  - 13.2 Admission of students under these programmes, including the issue of official documents as required, for example offer letters and Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) Statements for visa and immigration purposes.
  - 13.3 Liaison with and provision of guidance to Schools and partner universities about the admission and enrolment of students on these programmes.

### **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 as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. 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, available at:

[www.gub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/LegalServicesUnit/SafeguardingVulnerableGroups/](http://www.gub.ac.uk/directorates/HumanResources/LegalServicesUnit/SafeguardingVulnerableGroups/)

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, as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.**

Applicants must declare any criminal convictions that are not 'protected' as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1979, as amended in 2014. 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. In Northern Ireland this organisation is called AccessNI. Applicants should be aware that the Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (EDC) which is issued contains details of any spent and unspent convictions, as well as any cautions, informed warnings and diversionary youth conferences that are not protected. It may also contain non-conviction information (for example attempted prosecutions which were unsuccessful) that are held in police records which a Chief Police Officer thinks may be relevant to the post applied for (ie "soft police intelligence"). The police may also include information that is protected and has been filtered by AccessNI on the basis that "it might be relevant and ought to be disclosed." EDCs also contain the results of checks of The Children's Barred List and/or The Adults' Barred List as appropriate.

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

An applicant who acquires a criminal conviction 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 criminal convictions. 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 2003 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 should not be revealed.

**(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 criminal conviction 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. The School may decide to invite the applicant for interview, if considered appropriate. 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 or nominee (in the Chair)
- (ii) the Head of Admissions and Access Service or nominee
- (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 the decision date. 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 educational institution 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.

## Admissions Appeals and Complaints Procedure

### 1. Introduction

Each year, this University receives approximately 27,000 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 applicants 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 online Coursefinder 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 an applicant'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 applicants 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. The following procedure covers cases where unsuccessful applicants consider that they have grounds for a review of the admissions decision (appeal) or wish to complain about the handling of their application or enquiry.

### 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 and/or 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;

- 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.

Appeals against fee status and calculation of fees will be considered under the Student Finance Framework Appeals process at [www.qub.ac.uk/tuitionfees](http://www.qub.ac.uk/tuitionfees). Such appeals will normally only be considered prior to admission.

Appeals against a decision not to implement reasonable adjustments which may prevent an applicant with a disability, special needs or medical conditions from taking up their offer of a place on a course will be considered under the Disability Services Appeals process (Annex 1 of the University's Student Disability Policy, available at [www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/Policies/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/disability/Policies/).)

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 Appeals and Complaints

#### 3.1 First Stage: Informal Resolution

Appeals and complaints against admissions decisions or procedures should normally be made by the applicant in question and should be directed to the Admissions and Access Service in the first instance (email [postgrad.admissions@qub.ac.uk](mailto:postgrad.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 complaint/appeal (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 appeal or 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.

### 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 and Student Plus Directorates;
  - 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 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 are expected to maintain strict confidentiality, both during and after any appeal and/or complaint. These should normally be made by the applicant in question.

When an admissions decision is queried by a third party, 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 and/or 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 and/or appeal to be investigated.

6. Central Monitoring of Admissions Appeals and Complaints

The University sees appeals and complaints, 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.