

Supporting Students Under the Age of 18

Policy Statement

Queen's University is committed to equal opportunities in its admissions process and welcomes applications from prospective students of all ages, including those under 18 years of age. However, it should be noted that the University is an adult environment, and all students are treated as independent, mature individuals regardless of age.

All students are expected to have the necessary skills to study and live independently alongside people of a wide variety of ages and backgrounds. Although the University acknowledges that anyone Under the age of 18 living in Northern Ireland is legally a child, and as a result may have different needs in relation to their support and wellbeing. In addition, there are some legal restrictions that apply to this cohort.

Therefore in recognition, staff in Student Support services, Accommodation and Academic departments work together to ensure the wellbeing of students under the age of 18 is maintained accordingly.

Scope of Policy and Procedure

This procedure is applied to all prospective and current students with Queen's University Belfast. This does not apply to visitors or young people on non-credit bearing courses, summer schools or other activities, which should be considered and risk assessed under the University's Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy. INTO Queen's have separate procedures relating to the safeguarding of Under 18s.

1. Approach to Supporting Students Under the Age of 18

Parental Responsibility

The University is not able to take on the usual rights, responsibilities and authority that parents have in relation to a child and it will not act in *loco parentis* for students who are under the age of 18 years.

A letter will be issued to parents and guardians providing them with information on the policies and procedures for Supporting Students under the Age of 18. A [Consent Form](#) (Annex 1) will be included with this letter, which should be signed and returned to Student Wellbeing in advance of enrolment and registration.

Next of Kin and Emergency Contact

In addition to details of a Next of Kin, parents / guardians of all students under the age of 18 must provide contact information (including a Telephone Number) of a nominated Emergency contact who is:

- Living in the United Kingdom
- Over the age of 21
- E.g. a Family member, friend or Educational Guardian

This information must be detailed on the Consent form (Annex 1) and provided prior to their enrolment and registration at the University as noted above.

Educational Guardianship

A student who will be Under the age of 18, but above the age of 16, for more than 1 semester of studies, and who does not have a parent or legal guardian within Northern Ireland, is strongly encouraged to obtain an 'educational guardian' while they are under the age of 18.

Information on Educational Guardianships and providers can be found on the AEGIS (Association for the Education and Guardianship for International Students) website <http://www.aegistuk.net>. Please ensure the agency you engage with will operate in Northern Ireland.

Please note: For students Under 16 on their first day of studies, please refer to **Section 5** of this procedure for further guidance and information on living arrangements.

2. Welcome and Induction

Students under the age of 18 are required to meet with the University's Student Wellbeing Service for a Welcome and Induction Event. This will provide students with an opportunity to meet with members of the Student Wellbeing Team and to hear more about the supports available to them at Queen's including:

- University supports (academic, personal, accommodation, social)
- Legislation in NI (safeguarding, alcohol, holding office, contracts)

Prior to enrolment and registration with the University, students under the age of 18 will receive a letter with a range of available dates to meet with Student Wellbeing staff

In addition, there are a range of supports available for all students to enable a successful transition to university life. This includes:

- ["Meet and Greet" facility](#) through International Student Support (ISS).
- School induction programmes
- Nominated contact in School (Personal Tutor/Advisor of Studies/Safeguarding Lead)
- Accommodation check in
- Students Union Fresher's week

3. Enrolment and Registration

On completion of the University's Enrolment and Registration wizard, Student Wellbeing service will review the Queen's Student Information System (QSIS) to ensure the following information has been provided by students who are under the age of 18:

- Parental consent
- Next of kin (parent / guardian) details
- Emergency contact
- Registered with a local General Practitioner (i.e. doctor)
- Term time address within Northern Ireland

4. Under 18 Student Support Risk Assessment Process

Student Support and Risk Assessment Overview

Queen's Student Wellbeing Service aim to meet with all students under the age of 18 to complete a **Student Support and Risk Assessment Overview (Annex 2)**. This meeting will discuss the range of possible supports available to students, including:

- Academic (Persona Tutor support, professional requirement, etc.)
- Accommodation (where a student is living in Queens's Accommodation)
- Disability and Wellbeing (registration and recommended reasonable adjustments)
- Social (social network, including Clubs and Societies)
- Legal (restrictions)

A copy of the **Student Support and Risk Assessment Overview** will be given to the student at the meeting and retained by the Student Wellbeing Service and the School. This will be destroyed at the end of Semester 2, Year 1, unless the student will still be under 18 at the start of Semester 1, Year 2.

Risk Assessment Meeting

In certain cases, a student may benefit from an additional **Risk Assessment Meeting (Annex 3)** with a representative from the student's Faculty or Accommodation Services as appropriate.

This process will usually only be enacted if the student remains under 18 for longer than one semester in their first year of study **and** one or more of the following conditions apply:

- course includes the handling of materials which are prohibited to those who are under the age of 18. For example, exposure to harmful levels of radiation or involvement in work where there is harmful exposure to toxic, carcinogenic, mutagenic or teratogenic substances
- course includes an overnight field trip or placement during the time the student is under the age of 18
- professional requirements that stipulate that the student must be over the age of 18 to carry out certain duties, in particular clinical activity
- other concerns which require follow-up

Failure of the student to attend a Risk Assessment meeting without appropriate explanation, will result in the Head of School being notified, and may result in suspension of registration until this meeting has taken place. The Head of Disability and Wellbeing may authorise consent to contact emergency contacts in the interest of student welfare and safety prior to the Risk Assessment meeting.

Please note: The parent of a student under the age of 18 may attend these meetings and/or see a copy of completed documentation on written request to the Head of Student Disability and Wellbeing.

If you wish to attend these meeting, or have any queries please contact:
studentwellbeing@qub.ac.uk or 028 9097 2893.

5. Students Under the age of 16 or Under the Age of 18

Students who will be under the age of 16 when they arrive in Northern Ireland (NI) (aged 17 for students who have a disability) are required to live with a parent or legal guardian. If a student is unable to live with a parent or legal guardian, Social Services (NI) must be advised of the student's proposed living arrangements by their parent or legal guardian to allow an assessment to be undertaken by Social Services (NI) as to the suitability of the proposed living arrangements.

Please note: as it is a predominantly adult environment, a student under the age of 16 will not be permitted to live in University-managed accommodation.

Upon completion of Social Services (NI) assessment the University's Student Wellbeing Service must be advised of the outcome of the assessment. Ideally this process should be completed and confirmed with the University within 4 weeks of the student commencing their studies.

Please note: If the University was to become aware of a student's living arrangements not being assessed and approved by Social Services (NI), it would be obliged to report this to Social Services for investigation. A young person under the age of 16 would not be permitted by Social Services (NI) to live independently.

Before allowing the enrolment of a student under the age of 16, the University requires evidence that the student:

a) is living with their parent or legal guardian during their studies, or a suitable fostering arrangement which has been approved by Social Services (NI)

b) has appropriate leave to remain in the United Kingdom and/or visa for studying at Queen's.

The measures outlined in sections 1 - 4 above also apply to a student under the age of 16 on their first day of studies.

Please note: The University is not permitted to issue a Confirmation of Acceptance of Studies to sponsor a Tier 4 visa for an applicant who is under the age of 16 on their first day of studies.

6. On-going Support

All students will be informed of the range of supports available through Student Wellbeing Services including the daily drop-in and on-line support/self-help.

A review meeting will be arranged with students who remain under the age of 18 during Semester 2, to update their **Student Support and Risk Assessment Overview** and discuss their transition to University.

Actions previously agreed will be reviewed at this meeting and any additional actions or requirements will be recorded with a timeline for completion.