

SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT HANDBOOK 2024-25





Welcome Message/Overview

Welcome to the School of Biological Sciences – we are delighted that you are joining, or returning to us at QUB and hope that you have a really enjoyable time as a student with us.

The School is large with over 200 staff, and nearly 1500 students at undergraduate, postgraduate and PhD level. Biological Sciences has a long history at QUB which you will see in our specimen collection, some of which was donated as long ago as 1850!

The School, along with the Institute for Global Food Security with which we share space, tackles some of the most fundamental global challenges and maps closely to many of the UN Sustainability Goals! Our School is concerned with human, animal, plant and environmental health, sustainable exploitation of living resources, food security and rural development. Our degree disciplines encompass Agriculture, Biological Sciences, Biochemistry, Food Science and Nutrition, Environmental Management, Microbiology, Marine Biology and Zoology, and these have direct relevance to meeting the current and future needs of society, locally and globally.

As well as our wonderful £38million purpose built Biological Sciences building, many of you will visit the Queen's Marine Laboratory in Portaferry that supports field work for a number of our programmes. We are committed to supporting gender equality and diversity at all levels and we are one of two Schools within QUB to hold an Athena Swan Gold Award.

This student handbook is designed to help you understand some of the processes around your studies and who does what within the School. You should familiarise yourself with this handbook as many of the processes particularly the Regulations are important for your studies.

Best wishes for your studies

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. McMullan', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Professor Geoff McMullan, Head of School, School of Biological Sciences

Key Contacts and School Information

Academic Staff in the School of Biological Science and IGFS are as follows;

Surname	Forename	Title	Current Site	Email
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Professor Irene Grant	Food Science and Nutrition
Prof Bobby Graham	Biochemistry
Dr Louise Atkinson	Biological Sciences
Dr Sarah Helyar	Biological Sciences
Dr Natasha McGowan	Environmental Management
Dr Jason Chin	Microbiology
Dr Michael Scantlebury	Zoology
Dr Gemma Beatty	Biological Sciences
Dr Jonathan Houghton	Marine Biology

School Office Details

The School Office is located at the front of the School of Biological Sciences and can be accessed from reception, you will find our Education Team, Finance Team, Careers Team and PGR Team all located here. Reception is open Monday to Thursday from 09.00-5.00pm and on Fridays from 09.00am to



4.00pm. The office is open 09:00am to 5:00pm Monday to Friday except in exceptional circumstances or holidays.

Information regarding all our Programmes, Staff, Events etc can be found on our Sharepoint site - [School of Biological Sciences - Home \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

Organisation Structure

As part of the School we have the Institute for Global Food Security (IGFS). IGFS is one of the interdisciplinary Global Research Institutes established to address key international challenges and in this case the integrity of our food systems. Its ASSET Technology Centre hosts the Centre for Excellence in Agriculture and Food Integrity, in partnership with the UK National Measurement Laboratory. It is also listed at a Centre of Expertise by the Food Authenticity Network, a UK DEFRA initiative. Most staff in the School are members of IGFS and some staff from across the University. We also house the Gibson Institute for Land, Food and Environment which was founded in 1999.

Most of our Academics contribute to research as well as teaching. Their research falls into the following thematic areas:

- Sustaining Ecosystems and Biodiversity
- Understanding Health and Disease
- Transforming Agri-Food Systems and Human Nutrition

Our School governance is led by various Committees which include School Board, School Management Board (SMB) and Operations Group amongst others.

Canvas

Canvas is where you access the virtual learning environment (VLE) at QUB. It contains information that will both deliver and assist your learning, education and studies. This includes assignments, module resources, feedback on your work, notifications and most importantly where to get help if you need it. More information is listed in section 8(ii).



Health and Safety

As part of your Welcome activity, you will have an introduction to Health and Safety on the Wednesday afternoon of Week 1, Semester 1. We have also saved all the paperwork and policies that will affect your studies here: <https://qubstudentcloud.sharepoint.com/sites/int-sbio/SitePages/Health-%26-Safety.aspx>. Please note that you must adhere to the guidance to keep yourself and other students safe.

Communicating with Students

We will communicate you with by email and on Canvas. It is your responsibility to monitor your QUB accounts on a regular basis to see if there are any notifications around your studies.

Semester Dates

University Semester dates for academic year 2024-25 can be found at:
[Semester dates | About | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](#)

Student Charter

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. Students should be aware of their duties and responsibilities towards fellow students, University staff, visitors to the University and the local community. The Student Charter can be found at:

[Student Charter | Academic & Student Affairs | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](#)

General Regulations

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, degree classification and postgraduate awards 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/>

Students are expected to treat other people equally and with respect, and to behave responsibly, both on and off campus, and on social media and other forms of communication. Students should be aware of the impact of their behaviour on the University's reputation.

Breaches of University regulations may be dealt with under:

Conduct Regulations

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/ConductRegulations/> or, where appropriate.

Fitness to Practise Procedure

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/Procedures/FitnessToPractiseProcedure/>.

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 Advice SU in the Students' Union.

Programme Information

The general structure of our Degree Programme is as follows and the definitive information is listed in the Programme Specification (listed here). All the Programme Specifications can be found here:

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

Degree Pathway	Programme Specification
BSc Agricultural Technology	BSc Agricultural Technology Programme Specification Queen's University Belfast (qub.ac.uk)
BSc Biochemistry	BSc Biochemistry Programme Specification Queen's University Belfast (qub.ac.uk)
BSc Biology	BSc Biological Sciences Programme Specification Queen's University Belfast (qub.ac.uk)
BSc Environmental Management	BSc Environmental Management Programme Specification Queen's University Belfast (qub.ac.uk)
BSc Food Science and Nutrition	BSc Food Science and Nutrition Programme Specification Queen's University Belfast (qub.ac.uk)
BSc Marine Biology	BSc Marine Biology Programme Specification Queen's University Belfast (qub.ac.uk)
BSc Zoology	BSc Zoology Programme Specification Queen's University Belfast (qub.ac.uk)
BSc Microbiology	BSc BSc Microbiology Programme Specification Queen's University Belfast (qub.ac.uk)

You will see that most of our Programmes are also offered with Professional Studies or a placement option. They also mostly come with MSci options which offer a further year of research **for students achieving over an overall mark of 60 (and 60% or above in BIO3308: Research Project)**.

Changes to Programmes

Queen's is committed to keeping our programmes up to date to ensure that our students receive a current and engaging educational experience within an innovative learning and assessment environment. This commitment means that changes to programmes can occur as part of our normal academic cycle of programme development and review. These changes, which we believe will enhance your degree, are based on many factors, including ensuring each programme remains contemporary and viable; improving the quality of educational services; responding to student and/or external feedback; or meeting the requirements of an accrediting body.

The University will consult with students enrolled on a programme of study before any major programme change is made. The definitions of major programme changes are available within the Programme Management Framework

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/dasa/AcademicAffairs/ProgrammeApprovalandReviewIncludingHEReview/ProgrammeManagement/MajorChangestoExistingProgrammes/>.

This consultation will be managed through Student Voice Committees and student representatives on School and/or Faculty Education Committees. In all cases where a major change to a programme is made, we will communicate to students affected by the change at the earliest possible opportunity. In most cases, this will be in the academic year before the change happens.

The range and content of optional modules may change over time. Your programme information sets out the optional modules currently available for the programme, but the options listed may not run in any given year. Delivery of optional modules may depend on student demand, staff availability and developments in the subject.

Teaching and Learning

Our programmes are delivered though face to face teaching where possible in a combination with digital learning as outlined below.

Canvas

Canvas is the University-wide Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for students at Queen's which is used to support learning and teaching activities. The login to Canvas is at <https://canvas.qub.ac.uk/>

The self-paced "Canvas Student Orientation Course" online course provides key information to help students get started with Canvas. Students can familiarise themselves with the Key Topics in the online course before beginning to use Canvas. Information on the Student App is also contained in the course.

Link to Canvas Student Orientation Course:

<https://canvas.qub.ac.uk/courses/145>

The 'Canvas Orientation Video – A Guided Tour For Students' provides key information for getting started and demonstrates how to navigate Canvas.



Canvas Orientation Video: https://youtu.be/6_UjPDA0_I0

The Digital Learning@Queen's site contains key guidance, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), and Support information relevant to students at Queen's <http://go.qub.ac.uk/CanvasForStudents>

Canvas Tier 1 Support is available 24x7x365 for all students. The team supports technical queries as well as providing advice on how Canvas can be used, and the 'how do I' type questions. The Support Team can be reached via the 'Help' menu in Canvas. There are a number of contact methods available including <https://blogs.qub.ac.uk/digitallearning/need-help/>

Beyond Canvas, students should be aware of any broader pedagogic approaches to support their learning and teaching experiences. These may include any details around:

Modules

Tutorials

Placements

Practicals, laboratory work and fieldwork

Contact hours

Attendance – including how and why you monitor attendance i.e. student wellbeing / UKVI / indicators of academic risk

Assessment and Feedback

This section should provide clear information on:

As many of our degree pathways are accredited by the Royal Society of Biology, IFST and RICS we assess using a range of techniques to ensure the development of technical and transferable skills. This involves written examinations and Canvas/online assessments. Learning outcomes will be mapped against the module/and or programme and the learning outcomes of the module will be assessed.

Exceptional Circumstances/Fit to Sit Rule

If anything happens to impact your academic progress such as illness etc you must let the School know. You do this by following the guidance and completing Exceptional Circumstances application on the portal linked below:

[Sign in · Queen's Portal \(qub.ac.uk\)](http://qub.ac.uk)

[Exceptional Circumstances Procedure | Academic & Student Affairs | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](#) Please note that if you are completing the form you do not need the signature of your Advisor of Studies. The School follows the University deadlines for Exceptional Circumstances and you will be notified of these throughout the year.

Please be aware that QUB operates under a *Fit to Sit* principle - if you complete an examination or submit an assessment, you are deeming yourself fit to be assessed and therefore any ECs cannot be considered. The decision on whether to attempt the examination or submit the assessed work, and the consequences of that decision, are your responsibility.



Assessment Support Hub

The University's Assessment Support Hub provides you with a range of information to support you with your assessment at Queen's. This includes sources of support to help you prepare for assessment the relevant procedures if you require adjustments or mitigations for assessments, such as the Exceptional Circumstances Procedure.

<http://go.qub.ac.uk/ASF-Toolkit>

Continuous Assessment/Coursework

Referencing

Guidance Centralised guidance for undergraduate students is provided by the Learning Development Service:

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/lds>

Guidance for postgraduate students is provided by the Graduate

School: <https://www.qub.ac.uk/graduate-school/>

Online resources are available for both undergraduate and postgraduate students at:

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/learning/LearningResources/> [Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](http://Belfast.qub.ac.uk) -

Submission procedures

Word limits

Late submission of continuous assessment/coursework (Study Regulation 3.2)

Use of Turnitin (if applicable)

Examinations

The type of examinations used within the degree programmes in-person examinations/practicals and class tests as outlined on Canvas.

Academic Misconduct

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.

The Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences can be found at:

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

A Student Guide on the Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences can be found at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/AppealsComplaintsandMiscellaneous/AcademicOffences/Student-Guide/>

Marking and moderation procedures including a calendar of assessment dates including submission, moderation and return of results to students.

Release of assessment results.

Delivery methods and timing of feedback.

Importance of feedback.



Progression and Degree Classifications/Postgraduate Awards

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

The number of credits required to progress to each level of study.

Mark scales and pass marks for Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes. (iii) How your final degree classification or postgraduate award is calculated.

The University's Study Regulations can be found at:

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

To progress from one Stage to the next, students must have passed a minimum of five modules (100 credit points) in the current stage of study ([Study Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes | Academic & Student Affairs | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](#)) Please note that each full year module is worth 40 CATS points.

Student Feedback

This section should provide clear information on:

Overview of opportunities

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/LearningTeachingandAssessment/Assessment/AssessmentandFeedback/StudentFeedback/StudentRepresentation/>

Mechanisms for providing feedback about programmes, including:

Teaching and module evaluations

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/LearningTeachingandAssessment/LearningandTeaching/ReflectivePracticeforStaff/StudentEvaluationofTeaching/>

Internal student surveys and NSS

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/LearningTeachingandAssessment/Assessment/AssessmentandFeedback/StudentFeedback/>

Course Representative(s)

Student Voice Committees

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/LearningTeachingandAssessment/Assessment/AssessmentandFeedback/StudentFeedback/StudentRepresentation/>

The Queen's Student Partnership Framework and how to get involved in School-level activities:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/studentpartnership/>

Working On-campus 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, in alignment with sector wide best practice, the University strongly recommends that students on full-time programmes devote **NO MORE THAN 15 hours per week** with a weekly cap on working on campus at 20 hours per week. There is strong evidence to show that significant levels of part-time work can compromise your academic progress and affect degree outcomes.

If you wish to work for the University, you should register on QWork, the university's management system for casual workers. Click here to register - [Queens University QWORK Registration](#)

As a student, you will have a restriction on the number of hours that you can be assigned casual work each week and this is managed by QWork. You, therefore, **must not** undertake any casual work within the university unless you have been offered and accepted an assignment on QWork. It is your responsibility to submit a weekly timesheet through QWork for approval.

Please note that International Students (Tier 4/Student Visa Holders) will have prohibitions or restrictions in regards to 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, as stated on your visa. If you work in excess of these restrictions, the University must report this as a breach of your visa conditions to UKVI.

Queen's University has put measures in place to ensure that all Visa Holders can only be commissioned work within their working hours limits. If you are a Visa Holder, it is your responsibility to ensure that you only undertake hours of work that have been commissioned by your Hiring Manager and accepted by you through QWork. Failure to comply with this process may result in the University withdrawing sponsorship of your visa (which means that you will no longer be permitted to study at the University) and UKVI curtailing your leave to remain. Further information can be found at: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/International/International-students/Visa-and-Immigration/>.

To view the OnCampus Jobs code of practice and access Student Assistant vacancies currently advertised On campus please access the following page
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/careers/>

The advertising and recruitment of casual work opportunities will be carried out via QWork during this academic year. Ensure that you logon to Qwork regularly to view any opportunities.



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.

School Student Support Arrangements

If you require pastoral support, please speak to your Personal Tutor. If you are considering taking a break from your studies you need to speak with your Advisor of Studies. If for whatever reason that you do not know who your Advisor of Studies is please contact biosciences-ug@qub.ac.uk and the Education Team can tell you who this is.

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. Students are strongly encouraged to contact their School and/or seek support as soon as possible. Support for students is available through the Student Wellbeing Service and can be found at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/wellbeing/>

Advice and guidance on the following issues are available from the [Students' Union](#) and [Advice SU](#):

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

Students may also obtain academic advice and wellbeing support from their School. There is a School Wellbeing Team who will be planning School specific events, of which you will be notified, throughout the course of the year. Advice on University regulations and procedures is available from the Appeals and Complaints Team (appeals@qub.ac.uk).



Student Support and Development

Please note that for the most up to date information you should check MyQueen's here

<https://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/my-queens/>

You may wish to consider the range of supports such as:

Accommodation

Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy

Canvas

Careers and Employability

Change of address/details

Chaplaincy

Childcare

Counselling

Degree Plus/ Future Ready Award

Finance

Health Centre

Health and Safety

International students

Languages for Non-Specialists

Learning Development Service

Library

Mature and part-time students

Personal Development Planning (PDP)

Postgraduate Centre

Postgraduate Funding

Queen's Sport (PEC)

Qsis and Queen's Online (QOL)

Scholarships and Prizes

School support mechanisms

Starting University

LDS has developed a Transition Skills for University module to support level 1 students. Delivered online through Canvas, the self-paced module covers the areas of orientation, developing as a student, critical thinking, assessment and support.

Student Computing Centres

Student Guidance Centre

Student Wellbeing

Students Intervention Protocol

Students with disabilities

Students with Experience of Care

Study Abroad/ERASMUS

Study support

Students' Union