



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**

SCHOOL OF
SOCIAL SCIENCES,
EDUCATION AND
SOCIAL WORK

INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN EDUCATION (PGCE)

OFFER HOLDER GUIDE 2025/26

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Congratulations on your offer of a place on the Postgraduate Certificate of Education at Queen's University Belfast.

We invite you to read the following information carefully and hope that you find it helpful.

The information in this Guide relates to the PGCE course only. If you have not already done so, you should read the Admissions and Access Service's [‘Your Applications – What Next’ web page](#), particularly the **‘Before accepting your offer of a place’** obligation. The PGCE course has special arrangements for deadline dates (see below).

Contact Details

School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work
PGCE Admissions
20 College Green
Queen's University Belfast
Belfast
BT7 1LN

+44(0)28 9097 5940/3222

Email: sseswpgceadmissions@gub.ac.uk

1. Accept or Decline your Offer

Please reply to your offer as soon as possible and **no more than 14 days** from the date of your offer letter. To accept or decline an offer of a place, you should reply online through the [Queen's Portal](#). Admission to the PGCE is competitive and waiting lists are in operation. Therefore, an early response would enable us to offer the place to another applicant.

2. Return of Additional Documentation

The following documents must be completed and returned by email. Please note the different deadlines and email accounts for return.

2.1. Enhanced Disclosure (AccessNI)

The Department of Education for Northern Ireland requires that all PGCE students working with children/vulnerable groups are subject to criminal history checks. You are required to complete the online Disclosure Form for an '**Enhanced with Barred List Disclosure**' conducted by AccessNI. An **Enhanced Disclosure** must be carried out **before you commence your course** and your full criminal record, including spent cautions and convictions, will be disclosed. The disclosure of a criminal conviction or 'soft intelligence' may not necessarily prevent you from obtaining a place on the course, however, **if you appear on the barred lists it is an offence for you to engage in, or seek to engage in, regulated activity.**

The organisation that processes these checks is called [AccessNI](#). After the check is completed an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (EDC) is issued.

The process for applying and paying for an Enhanced Disclosure is under review. We will update you by email and update this guide as soon as possible.

IMPORTANT: If you attract a criminal record after submitting the application for an Enhanced Disclosure Check and before the date of admission to the University you must inform the PGCE Programme Director (Dr Ian Collen) in writing, **immediately**.

If you fail to disclose such information, you may have your offer withdrawn. **In addition, you are required to inform the PGCE Programme Director of any cautions or convictions incurred during the PGCE course.**

See the [AccessNI website](#) for additional information on the checks.

2.2. Confirmation of Understanding and Consent to Share

In some situations, the University is required to share information with placement providers, regulatory bodies, the Disclosure and Barring Service or another third party. We require your consent for this information to be retained and shared as required, according with data protection principles.

You must complete and return a signed copy (photo or scan) of the [Confirmation of Understanding and Consent to Share](#) form (PDF, 450KB) within **one month* of the date** of your offer. Please email your completed form to sseswpgceadmissions@qub.ac.uk.

* If you have received a late offer, a member of the PGCE Admissions team will contact you with the appropriate deadlines for the return of your documentation.

2.3. Health Declaration

The University's Occupational Health Service (OH) will contact you (via email) asking you to complete a Declaration of Health form and to obtain a full list of your vaccination records. You should respond to them promptly as any delay to your health screening could delay your course start date.

The dates of your most recent vaccinations must be given to OH to avoid a delay in processing your medical information. You may need to contact your GP or University Health Department for this information. However, you should complete this form yourself, rather than asking your GP.

University Occupational Health will process your form and contact you in due course, if required.

3. PGCE Calendar 2025/26

The 2025/26 course structure is currently under review. We will contact you with an updated calendar as soon as possible.

Week	Date	Activity
	Week commencing 25 August	Online Registration opens (exact date tbc)
1	1 September	Enrolment and induction week
2	8 September	Primary School Experience (placement)
3 – 8	15 September – 24 October	Teaching Block 1 (QUB-based tuition)

9	27– 31 October	Mid-term break
10 - 20	3 November – 30 January	School Experience 1 (placement)
14	Week commencing 1 December	QUB-based tuition (one day)
<i>Christmas holiday dates will be the same as those of the school in which you are based.</i>		
21 - 24	2 February – 27 February	Teaching Block 2 (QUB-based tuition)
25 - 36	2 March – 29 May	School Experience 2 (placement)
<i>Easter holiday dates will be the same as those of the school in which you are based.</i>		
37	1 June	QUB-based tuition

Please note that dates may be subject to change or amendment and you will be informed in advance of any changes.

FULL-TIME NATURE OF THE COURSE

You are reminded that the course is **full-time** and you may not be enrolled concurrently for any other course leading to a degree or certificate. Students enrolled as research students must apply to their supervisor(s) and Head of School for permission to suspend their research before enrolling for the PGCE course or proof that submission pre-dates the commencement of the course.

The Department of Education requires PGCE courses to be of 36 weeks minimum length. The PGCE in the School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work commences on 1 September 2025 and ends on 5 June 2026 (please note that dates may be subject to change).

Except for short vacations at Christmas and Easter, students must be available during that entire period. School placements straddle both the Christmas and Easter vacation periods, and holidays will be the same as for staff in the school in which you are placed.

All students are required to attend an enrolment and induction week beginning on the 1 September 2025. Further details about Enrolment and Registration and Induction will be emailed to all place holders towards the end of August. Classes in the University will be timetabled from 8 September 2025.

4. School Placements

New students typically arrange their primary school placement before the summer break. The PGCE Placement Coordinator arranges the two post-primary school placements based on the location details provided by applicants.

4.1. Primary School Experience

Many students find it convenient to arrange attendance at a primary school convenient to their home address. If possible, you should organise your primary school experience at the time of offer.

When you have arranged your primary school experience, please complete the online [Primary School Experience Notification form](#) (MS Forms).

The primary placement has several specific purposes:

- To gain insights into the professional work of teachers
- To provide a practical experience of the Northern Ireland Curriculum
- To understand issues of transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3

It is most appropriate, therefore, if you can organise to spend most of your time in upper primary school (KS2) classes although this is dependent on what the primary school can offer.

The period of Primary School Experience will begin on **Monday 8 September** and end on **Friday 12 September**. This experience is an integral part of the teaching practice requirements for the PGCE and is **compulsory for all students**.

You should download the following and forward them to the Principal of the primary school:

[Letter to Principal](#) (PDF, 167KB)

[Primary School Experience Guidance Notes](#) (PDF, 149KB)

During Induction week, you will be given further guidance on the tasks to be carried out during the primary placement.

Please note that you will not be able to attend Primary School Experience unless you are fully enrolled and registered with the University, you have Access NI clearance, have completed your health screening and have received your mandatory Child Protection and Safeguarding training delivered by our PGCE staff, as part of the Induction week activities. Please contact the PGCE Office should you require further advice.

4.2. Post-Primary School Experience

During the PGCE you will normally spend 24 of the 36 weeks based in schools on professional placement. The PGCE Placement Coordinator arranges the two post-primary school placements based on the location details you provided when applying, so if you need to check what address you provided, or if this information has changed, contact us **immediately**, by email at sseswpgceplacements@qub.ac.uk.

Placement Entitlement Framework

The [Placement Entitlement Framework](#) talks you through what you can expect of your placement and you should read it carefully.

4.3. Alternative Optional Placements

Eligible students have an opportunity to take part in a two-week 'alternative experience' at the end of the second School Experience (in May). The 'alternative experiences' are under review for 2025/26 but in 2024/25 they included experience in an Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) setting, an Environmental Education provider (for PGCE Science only) or in an international setting. Further, eligible students have the opportunity to complete six weeks of their placement in a Special School or Specialist Setting (e.g., in Specialist Provision in Mainstream); further details will be available during Induction Week.

5. Offer Holder Checklist

- Apply for your Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (see Section 2.1 checklist) – ***this is under review and we will update you as soon as possible.***
- Complete and return your Consent to Share form (see Section 2.2)
- Complete and return your Health Declaration form when contacted by the Occupational Health Service (see Section 2.3)
- Arrange your Primary School placement (see Section 4.1) and complete the [Primary School Experience Notification form](#).
- Has the address information for your post-primary school experiences (placements) changed since you submitted your PGCE application? We use this information to arrange your placements, so please email us at sseswpgceplacements@qub.ac.uk so that we have your up-to-date address information.

- If you are a Northern Ireland student, visit the [NI Direct](#) and [Student Finance NI](#) (undergraduate finance) websites for financial help and advice. If you normally live outside Northern Ireland, further information is available on the [Financial Support for Students from outside Northern Ireland](#) web page on the NI Direct website.
- Provide evidence that you have satisfied any condition(s) of your offer. If your offer is conditional upon the completion of a degree and/or other academic qualification, you are required to upload evidence to the [Queen's Portal](#) to confirm that you have satisfied the condition(s) of your offer.
- You will receive information regarding Enrolment and Registration in late August. Please ensure that you read this information carefully and attend at the appointed date and time.

Appendix 1

AccessNI Vetting Information

School of Social Sciences Education and Social Work – PGCE Students

The course you have applied for involves working with children and/or adults in ‘regulated activity’ as defined by the Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Groups (NI) Order, as amended by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012. The current legislative framework requires the University to conduct criminal history checks (Enhanced Disclosure Checks) on anyone engaging in regulated activity.

Enhanced Disclosure Checks are only requested for the preferred applicant when the place is offered and all offers are subject to a satisfactory check.

The organisation that processes these checks is called Access NI and the target time for processing such checks is 4 weeks. After the check is completed an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (EDC) is issued. This certificate contains details of any spent and unspent convictions, as well as any cautions, informed warnings and diversionary youth conferences that are not ‘protected’ or ‘filtered’ as per the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1979, as amended in 2014. It will also indicate if there are no such matters on record. EDCs may also contain non-conviction information (for example attempted prosecutions which were unsuccessful) that are held on police records which a Chief Police Officer thinks may be relevant to the post applied for (i.e. “soft/police intelligence”). The police may also include information that is protected or has been filtered by Access NI on the basis that it “might be relevant and ought to be disclosed”. The EDC will confirm whether you are on the Children’s Barred List or the Adult’s Barred List.

To enable the University to obtain an Enhanced Disclosure Certificate you should complete the online Application form by following the instructions on the PIN Notification and ID Validation Form. Your application will be progressed when your identification has been checked as specified. We will only request a check of the barred lists for the workforce you will be engaging in regulated activity with e.g. the children’s workforce or the vulnerable adults’ workforce.

Any information received will be treated confidentially, in compliance with ANI’s Code of Practice, in line with the University’s Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy and in line with Data Protection principles.

The disclosure of a criminal conviction or 'soft intelligence' may not necessarily prevent you from obtaining a position with the University, however, if you appear on the barred lists it is an offence for you to engage in, or seek to engage in, regulated activity.

Please note all AccessNI queries should be directed to:

AccessNI

Email: ani@accessni.gov.uk

Tel: 0300 200 7888