



**QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST**

SCHOOL OF  
SOCIAL SCIENCES,  
EDUCATION AND  
SOCIAL WORK

**INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION  
POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN  
EDUCATION (PGCE)**

**OFFER HOLDER GUIDE 2024/25**

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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 3514/5940

Email: [sseswpgceadmissions@qub.ac.uk](mailto:sseswpgceadmissions@qub.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 [Postgraduate Applications 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.

#### **Vetting Information**

For information on how to apply for an Enhanced Disclosure, please read the Vetting Information (Appendix 1) and follow the instructions on the [Pin Notification and ID Validation Form](#) (Word, 49KB).

**IMPORTANT: So that your AccessNI check is not processed too early, you should delay starting the AccessNI process until after 1 April 2024\*.**

\* If you have received a late offer (i.e. after April 2024), the PGCE staff will contact you with the appropriate deadlines for the return of your documentation.

## AccessNI Checklist

You must:

1. complete [the online application form](#) for an *Enhanced Disclosure Certificate through a Registered Body*. **Do not do this until after 1 April 2024.**
2. make the £32 payment (as detailed in the PIN Notification and ID Validation Form)
3. enter your **Application Reference Number** on the PIN Notification and ID Validation Form and complete your personal details down to the request for your NI number.
4. collate your valid identification documents. Please ensure that you provide documents from Group 1 and Group 2 or we will be unable to process your application.
5. email your completed PIN Notification and ID Validation Form (in Word format) along with scans or photographs of your **original** ID documentation by **2 May 2024\*** to [sseswaccessni@qub.ac.uk](mailto:sseswaccessni@qub.ac.uk).

We will then schedule an in-person check of your original documents.

Please note that any delays to the submission of ID documentation above may delay your course start date. If you are aware that delays are likely, please contact the PGCE Admissions Team at the address above.

**Please answer any enquiries from university staff promptly, as this may affect your offer of a place on the course. You should regularly check the email account that you supplied in your course application.**

**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](mailto:sseswpgceadmissions@qub.ac.uk).

\* If you have received a late offer, the PGCE staff 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 2024/25

The 2024/25 course structure is currently under review. We will contact you with an updated calendar as soon as possible.

Week	Date	Activity
	Week commencing 26 August 2024	Online Registration opens (exact date tbc)
1	2 September	Enrolment and induction week
2	9 September	Primary School Experience (placement)
3 – 8	16 September – 25 October	Teaching Block 1 (QUB-based tuition)
9	28 October – 1 November	Mid-term break
10 - 20	4 November – 31 January	School Experience 1 (placement)
14	Week commencing 2 December	QUB-based tuition (one day)

*(Note: Actual dates of Christmas vacation will be the same as those of the school in which you*

<i>are based.)</i>		
21 - 24	3 February – 28 February	Teaching Block 2 (QUB-based tuition)
25 - 36	3 March – 30 May	School Experience 2 (placement)
<i>(Note: Actual dates of Easter vacation will be the same as those of the school in which you are based.)</i>		
37	2 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 2 September 2024 and ends on 7 June 2025 (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 2 September 2024. 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 9 September 2024.

## **4. School Placements**

### **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 9 September** and end on **Friday 13 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)

Please note that when you correspond with schools on such matters, it is a courtesy to enclose a stamped addressed envelope for a reply.

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 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. When you applied for the PGCE you provided your address for the two school-based placements. We use this information to arrange your placements, so if you need to check what address you provided, or if this information has changed, contact us **immediately**, by email at [sseswpgeplacements@qub.ac.uk](mailto:sseswpgeplacements@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 an 'alternative placement' at the end of the second School Experience (in May). The 'alternative optional placements' are under review for 2024/25 but in 20203/34 they included a placement in a Special Education Needs school, in an Education Other Than at School (EOTAS) setting, an Environmental Education provider (for PGCE Science only) or in an EU setting (for PGCE Modern Languages only).

## 5. Offer Holder Checklist

- Apply for your Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (see Section 2.1 checklist)
- 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](mailto: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 [Postgraduate Applications Portal](#) to confirm that you have satisfied the condition(s) of your offer. Please ensure that you upload scanned copies of your documentation to the My Applications section of the Portal.

- 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](mailto:ani@accessni.gov.uk)

Tel: 0300 200 7888