



QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST

# INTERNATIONAL STAFF GUIDE

SHAPING  
A BETTER  
WORLD  
SINCE 1845

# Welcome

On behalf of the University, and as Vice-President and Chief People Officer, it is my pleasure to welcome you to Queen's University Belfast. We are delighted that you have chosen to pursue the next chapter of your career with us at Queen's, and we genuinely look forward to supporting you on your journey.

At Queen's, our people are at the heart of everything we do. We are proud to have a global community here, welcoming students and staff from all over the world to join us in our ambition to "shape a better world through life-changing education and research". We are committed to fostering a vibrant organisational culture, based on our core values of excellence, connectivity, ambition, respect, and integrity, which enables all our people to thrive; and to providing an inclusive, welcoming environment to work and study in.

I hope that this guide will help you as you prepare to embark on your new journey at Queen's. Our teams are here to assist you with everything you might need help with, from the immigration and visa process, to working and living in Northern Ireland. When you arrive, there will also be plenty of opportunities for you to meet your new colleagues, socialise, network, and discover the world-class facilities available to you on campus.

Once again, welcome to Queen's. We are delighted to have you as part of the team and look forward to welcoming you to Belfast.



Gillian Magee

Vice-President and  
Chief People Officer



# Meet the Team - International Staff Support

The University employs staff of many nationalities in its mission to conduct internationally acclaimed research on global themes and to provide world class teaching to its students. The contribution of international staff is highly valued, and it is recognised that the move to Belfast is a significant step in both professional and personal terms. In order to support staff in that transition, the International Staff Support team is dedicated to offering expertise and assistance with UK visa applications to employees and visitors of the University.

The International Staff Support team is located within HR Services in the People & Culture Directorate. If you have general queries on HR related topics such as terms and conditions, pay, policies or diversity and inclusion, please contact the HR Hub in the first instance via [hrhub@qub.ac.uk](mailto:hrhub@qub.ac.uk). For specific questions on visa related matters, please contact International Staff Support directly:



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**We wish you success in your work with Queen's University Belfast and hope that this guide will help you find your time here rewarding and enjoyable.**

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# Getting to Belfast

**Accessible from three airports, getting to Belfast could not be easier. All major UK cities are within an hour's flying time, and you can also fly direct to Belfast from over 20 European cities and a number of North American locations.**

## From Belfast International Airport

Belfast International Airport (Aldergrove) is situated just 18 miles (29 km) north-west of Belfast and is easily accessed via the major road and motorway network:

Regular bus services are available from the front of the terminal building to Belfast, Lisburn, and Derry/Londonderry. The Airport Express 300 stops at the Europa Buscentre in Belfast city centre and operates 7 days/week, running every 15 minutes at peak times. The approximate journey time is 40 minutes. Tickets can be bought from the tourist information desk in arrivals, at ticket machines (at the bus stop), onboard the bus, or online.

Belfast Airport Taxis are the official taxi operator for Belfast International Airport. Taxis are available 24 hours a day 7 days/week outside the right-hand door of the airport exit lobby. If you have not pre-booked your taxi, you may need to wait at busy times. A taxi share scheme to Belfast is available for those who wish to use it.

## From Belfast City Airport

Belfast City Airport (George Best) is just 10 minutes from Belfast city centre and has excellent links to public transport and all major routes in and out of Belfast city centre:

The airport has a designated bus service, the Airport Express 600, which runs to the Europa Buscentre from the front of the terminal building every 30 minutes during peak times. Tickets are available from the Visit Belfast desk located on the main concourse, from the ticket machines in the bus shelter area, from the driver onboard or online.

Train services operate from Sydenham train station regularly during peak times along the Bangor-Belfast line. You can board the train at Sydenham and travel to either Belfast Lanyon Place station or Great Victoria Street station. Passengers should note there is a footbridge present at the train station, so this option is not advisable for passengers carrying a lot of luggage or with reduced mobility. You can make the short journey from the terminal building to Sydenham either by foot or by requesting a shuttle bus free of charge using the call point located in the taxi shelter at the front of the terminal building.

Value Cabs is the official taxi partner of Belfast City Airport. The taxi rank and a booking office is located outside the front of the terminal and this area is reserved for Value Cabs customers. Passengers using other taxi companies can be picked up or dropped off in any of the other car parks.

BEFORE  
YOU ARRIVE

## From Dublin Airport

**Dublin Airport** is approximately a two-hour journey from Belfast city centre with buses departing every hour from Zone 13 in the Dublin Airport bus park. Tickets are available to purchase **online** up to 60 minutes prior to the bus leaving the originating departure point (i.e., Dublin city centre). In case of flight delays, travel on another service other than the departure time and date booked is subject to availability. Children under 5 can travel free of charge but are not allocated a seat on the coach. Please visit **Translink** for more information about the bus services from Dublin Airport. Other **operators** are available.

**Enterprise** is the flagship train service that links Belfast Lanyon Place Train Station and Dublin Connolly. Jointly operated by NI Railways and Iarnród Éireann, the service provides eight journeys in each direction, Monday to Saturday, and five journeys in each direction on Sundays. Journeys originating in Dublin (the Republic of Ireland) must be booked using the **Iarnród Éireann website**. Customers with a valid rail ticket can travel between Lanyon Place Station and Belfast city centre free of charge on any **Metro Bus, Ulster Bus 500 and Glider G1 services**. Customers can also avail of free travel to Titanic Quarter Station by train.

## From Great Britain

Belfast is a harbour city and can also be reached by sea with regular crossings from both Scotland (Cairnryan to Belfast or Larne) and England (Liverpool to Belfast). Operators and travel times vary. Please see **Stena Line** and **P&O Irish Sea** for more information.



# Accessing accommodation

## Queen's accommodation

Queen's Accommodation manage a range of self-contained apartments and houses within easy walking distance of the University campus.

The properties are let, subject to availability, for up to 12 months to support new Queen's staff settling into Belfast. Rents include some utilities and 24/7 maintenance support, which makes them competitively priced compared to the private sector.

As it is difficult to secure accommodation before you come to Belfast, it can be useful to take University accommodation initially and seek accommodation from there. This also allows the University to provide a tenant reference for you, which may ease other elements of your relocation process, such as setting up a bank account.

If you wish to avail of staff accommodation you should contact Accommodation immediately following your offer of employment to check availability. If Queen's accommodation is not available to suit your requirements or arrival date, staff may be able to help you find accommodation in the private sector in the University area.



## Buying or renting property

If you are unable to secure Queen's accommodation or if you would prefer to buy or rent your own property in Belfast, prices are competitive when compared to the rest of the UK. Reputable estate agents in Northern Ireland include Templeton Robinson, Simon Brien, GOC and Pinpoint among others. The following websites can also help you find properties to rent, or for sale, in your preferred area:



When completing your property search, understanding the types of property on offer will be useful. Housing Rights provide advice on things to consider before moving into a rented home. Information on tenancy agreements and the Tenancy Deposit Scheme (protection of your rental deposit) can also be found on the NI Direct website. If you are relocating with a pet, please be advised that the majority of landlords will not allow pets in rental properties. While there are exceptions, your range of choice will be limited, and you may need to allow additional time for your search.

Although it can be an expensive option, it may be advisable for new arrivals to stay in a holiday rental, such as an Airbnb, for a short time while familiarising themselves with Belfast and surrounding areas in order not to commit to a longer term lease in the private sector without being able to view properties in person.

If you have recently arrived in Belfast, or are planning your travel and require further information regarding rented accommodation, you may wish to contact Queen's Accommodation by phone on +44 (0) 28 9097 4323 or by email. Staff are available Monday to Friday, 9.00am – 5.00pm (GMT). Queen's accommodation also holds information on Queen's staff privately letting properties or rooms.

Buying a home is a complex process and may not be practicably possible on first arrival to the UK. If you are considering purchasing a property, Queen's Wellbeing Team are engaged with local partners who can provide financial wellbeing advice to include buying your own home and applying for mortgages. The Money Helper website also provides both a First-time home buyer guide and a Home-buying process guide, while the Money Saving Expert website provides a First-time buyers' mortgage guide that may be helpful.

The Times annually lists the Best Places to Live in the UK, including regional winners in Northern Ireland.

## Furnishings

A fully furnished rental home is ready to live in, with all the main furniture and white goods you will need, while an unfurnished property will be largely empty. The landlord/letting agent should clearly define what is included in the inventory. If your home comes unfurnished or if you are missing some essentials there are a lot of places to pick up affordable homeware such as [IKEA](#), [B&M](#), [Home Bargains](#) and [Primark](#). You could also make use of web communities such as [Freecycle](#), [Gumtree](#), [Facebook Marketplace](#) or [eBay](#).



## Rates

[Rates](#) are a property tax based on the valuation of your home (equivalent to council tax in Great Britain). This income pays for services at local (your council) and regional (NI Assembly) levels. Land & Property Services assess and collect rates. If a rental property's value is over £150,000, the tenant is responsible for rates unless their landlord has agreed to pay the rates. If you are renting a property, make sure to check the terms of your tenancy agreement.

## Insurance

There are three main home insurance policies: buildings insurance, contents insurance and combined building and contents cover. Buildings insurance cover protects the structure (the fixtures and fittings in your home), while contents insurance covers your belongings.

Combined buildings and contents cover is only suitable for people who own the [freehold](#) of their homes. If you rent or own the lease only, buildings cover should be handled by your freeholder or managing agent. Contents insurance, however, is your responsibility and should be considered by everyone. See the [Money Helper](#) website or [Citizens Advice](#) for more information.



## Guarantor

Many landlords will ask tenants to supply a tenant reference. If the tenant cannot provide a reference, landlords will usually ask for a guarantor. A guarantor is a person who agrees to pay any rent that the tenant owes to the landlord and to cover any financial loss that the landlord may experience as a result of the tenant's failures to abide by the terms of the tenancy agreement. A guarantor for a private tenancy agreement must normally be an individual resident in Northern Ireland, typically a family member or friend, who is able to pass a credit check.

If you are new to Belfast and the UK and do not have anyone to act as a guarantor, [Housing Hand](#) offer a pay monthly guarantor service that is accepted by the majority of letting agents and accommodation providers.

Please note that the University is unable to act as a guarantor.

## Waste

The council in your area collects [recycling](#) and household waste from outside your home and provide different bins for [food waste](#), household waste and recycling. To check collection days in your area, you should contact your [local council](#).



## Storage

If you will need to put some of your belongings into storage until you are settled for the long term, there are several providers available in the Belfast area with both long- and short-term storage facilities. To ensure the provider you choose meets your needs, the Self Storage Association advises on what to consider when [selecting a storage provider](#).

# Childcare and Schooling

**If you are bringing family with you, we recommend that you organise childcare or schooling before you arrive in the UK as it can be difficult to find a place on short notice.**

It is your responsibility as the parent to find childcare or a school for your child/children. Unfortunately, this is not something that the University can arrange on your behalf. However, the University does operate a quality childcare service, including a crèche, out of school club and summer club, that allows you to pursue your employment. Summer schemes are also on offer through Queen's Sport.

## Childcare

If you want to place your children in the Queen's crèche, you should contact the crèche as far in advance of your arrival as possible. The crèche provides age-appropriate care in three different categories: Nursery (0-12 months), Tots and Toddlers (1-3 years) and Pre-school (3-4 years). You can also choose to use other childcare facilities. In either case, you will have to pay a monthly charge to the provider.

As a member of staff at Queen's you are eligible to join the Childcare+ salary sacrifice scheme. Information on the scheme is available from Childcare Services. The UK government also operate a Tax-Free Childcare scheme which you may be able to avail of as a fee payment method. Please note: You will not be eligible for Tax-Free Childcare if you hold a visa that indicates you cannot access public funds.

## Pre-schools

Pre-school education is available to every child but is not essential. The Pre-School Education Programme is funded by the government and funds education for children in the year before they start primary school. Places are provided in nursery schools, primary schools with nursery units and voluntary and private pre-school education settings.

## Primary and Secondary Schools

Education in the UK is compulsory for all children between 5 and 16 years of age and is normally free of charge. Most schools follow the revised curriculum and are regularly inspected by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI).

While the school year in Northern Ireland starts in September, it is the child's age after 1 July that will determine what school year they are entered into (in other words, most children start school at age 4 and turn 5 during their first school year). Primary education runs until pupils are 11 years of age. Children then move to secondary school where they stay until they reach 16-18 years of age. These are normally state funded schools which are free to all children up to the age of 16. At age 16 students sit their GCSE examination which also marks the end of compulsory education. Most students then either transfer to sixth form at a secondary school or a grammar school to study A-levels, or a Further Education College for vocational qualifications. You could choose to send your child to an independent school (private school) but would then pay for their education.



## Finance

Upon starting school, you will be expected to make sure that your child has basic stationery (pencils, etc.), but the cost of more specialised equipment and books are covered by the school. You will be expected to pay for your child's school uniform and items of sportswear. Charges may also occur for school dinners (unless you are providing a packed lunch), as well as music lessons and board/lodging on any school trips.

When you have found a school you would like your child to attend, you should make an appointment with the Head Teacher (Principal) to obtain more information about the school and discuss whether they have places available. You can search schools and apply for a school place through the [Education Authority \(EA\)](#) and find more information on the school system through the [NI Direct website](#).

[The Times Parent Power School Guide](#) lists the UK's highest achieving schools annually and names the [top 20 schools in Northern Ireland](#).



### Special Educational Needs

A child has [special educational needs](#) if they have a learning problem or disability that makes it more difficult for them to learn than most children their age. Your child's needs will usually be met in a mainstream nursery or school, sometimes with the help of outside specialists. If your child has [special educational needs](#), all those involved in their education will take a step-by-step approach to meeting their needs. If your child's school setting cannot provide all the help they need, the [EA](#) in your region may carry out a more detailed assessment which aims to find out exactly what your child's needs are and what special help they need. Once the EA has assessed your child, they can record the information in a statement of special educational needs. This statement is a legal document which describes your child's needs and any special help they should receive.



**Moving to a new country can be expensive and setting up financial arrangements complex. The following information covers the financial essentials that you will need to consider.**

[Queen's Wellbeing Team](#) are engaged with local partners who can provide financial wellness advice and one-to-one financial health clinics. You may also search for an [independent financial adviser](#).

### First Month

You should ensure that you have sufficient funds at your disposal when you arrive in the UK. Opening a bank account in the UK is not straightforward if you move from overseas and it may take a couple of weeks before you are able to access this and before you receive your first salary payment. In addition to your regular personal expenses like food and transport, you will usually need to pay a deposit in advance of moving into rented accommodation and cover any relocation expenses you are entitled to claim before these can be refunded.

Most shops in the UK accept debit/credit cards. You should check the terms and conditions of your card agreement, as you may incur fees for using your card abroad.

Staff moving to work at Queen's may wish to check with their existing bank to see if they have a presence in Northern Ireland and whether they can help you with setting up an account. Your bank in your home country may also be able to advise you on how to transfer funds to the UK if you have not yet opened a UK bank account.

# ON ARRIVAL

## Banking

### Opening a Bank Account

Your salary will be transferred into a UK bank account monthly in arrears. To open an account, make an appointment with your preferred bank as soon as you arrive, and check which documents you will need to take with you. Your chosen bank can advise you on the range of accounts available to you. Your main account will usually be a **current account**.

A number of banks are available in Northern Ireland. Due to their international presence, many new arrivals opt to bank with **HSBC** and **Santander** located in Belfast city centre. However, if you will not be resident in Belfast, it may be advisable to consider which banks operate branches in your local area. Digital banks without a branch network such as **First Direct**, **Starling**, **Chase** and **Monzo** are also available if you prefer using an app for all, or most, of your banking.

It is likely that your bank will ask you to provide the following documents:

- Photographic identification (e.g., passport and/or visa/**share code**)
- Evidence of your UK address (e.g., recent utility bills showing your name and address or a reference from Queen's accommodation)
- A letter from the University confirming your employment (this can be requested from International Staff Support once you know where you wish to bank)

We have arrangements in place with certain banks to ease the process of setting up a bank account. To avail of these, please contact the International Staff Support team directly.

If you are arriving with a partner, you may wish to consider opening a **joint account** in both your names. This may allow your partner to more easily establish their own **credit history** in the UK. Banks will generally require both you and your partner to show proof of identification and address.

Once you have opened your account, the **current account switch service** can be used to switch current accounts from and to any of the participating banks and building societies should you wish to change provider. Banks will sometimes offer switch bonuses for your custom. **This guide** explains the process and helps you compare current accounts.

As you settle in, you may also wish to look into **savings accounts** and **credit card** facilities.



# Tax and National Insurance

Employees earning above a certain threshold amount (the “personal allowance”) will pay “Pay As You Earn” (PAYE) income tax and National Insurance contributions (NICs) whilst working in the UK. This is collected by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) through the University’s payroll system. Payroll use a tax code to work out how much income tax to take from your pay per HMRC guidelines. The information you provide on the “New Staff Appointment” form (enclosed with your offer pack) will determine which tax code is applied. Only in certain circumstances will you have to submit a tax return.

A National Insurance number is a unique identifier that enables the HMRC to track the NIC payments made for all individuals. An employee from overseas, coming to work in the UK, will have to obtain a National Insurance (NI) number and notify Payroll as soon as they have it. You may have an NI number printed on the back of your Biometric Residence Permit (BRP). You do not need to apply for an NI number if you already have one, or one is printed on your BRP.

Your move to the UK may have implications for your tax status in your home country. The onus will be on the employee to ensure that any such (foreign) obligations are being met, as applicable. For taxation and social security purposes, working for the University from abroad is not supported unless you are engaged on a contract permitting work elsewhere (e.g., China Queen’s College).



# Healthcare

The UK offers access to the National Health Service (NHS), a publicly funded healthcare system, for UK citizens and legal immigrants. If you are a visa holder, you may have paid a healthcare surcharge (called the ‘Immigration Health Surcharge’ or IHS) as part of your immigration application, which enables you to use the NHS once your visa application is granted. The NHS in Northern Ireland is called Health and Social Care (HSC).

On arrival to Northern Ireland you should register with your nearest health centre. Your practice (or “surgery”) will then assign a doctor, known as a General Practitioner (GP), who will oversee your routine medical care. There is no charge for basic healthcare, e.g., general consultations at a GP practice or at any NHS hospital (your GP will refer you if you need non-urgent hospital care). If your health centre is closed, you should be able to obtain the out of hours contact number for alternative healthcare during the closed period.

International staff can also register with the University Health Centre at Queen’s if they have a passport and a visa valid for a minimum of 6 months. If the visa validity is less than 6 months, International Staff Support can issue a reference to confirm employment. Registrations are from 10 am – 3 pm Tuesday to Friday (closed for lunch 12.30 to 1.30 pm) and the processing time is approximately 2 weeks.

If you are involved in an accident or suddenly take ill, you may need to go to Accident and Emergency (A&E).

The number to call for an ambulance is 999. The ambulance will take you to the A&E at the nearest hospital. The nearest hospitals to the University are:

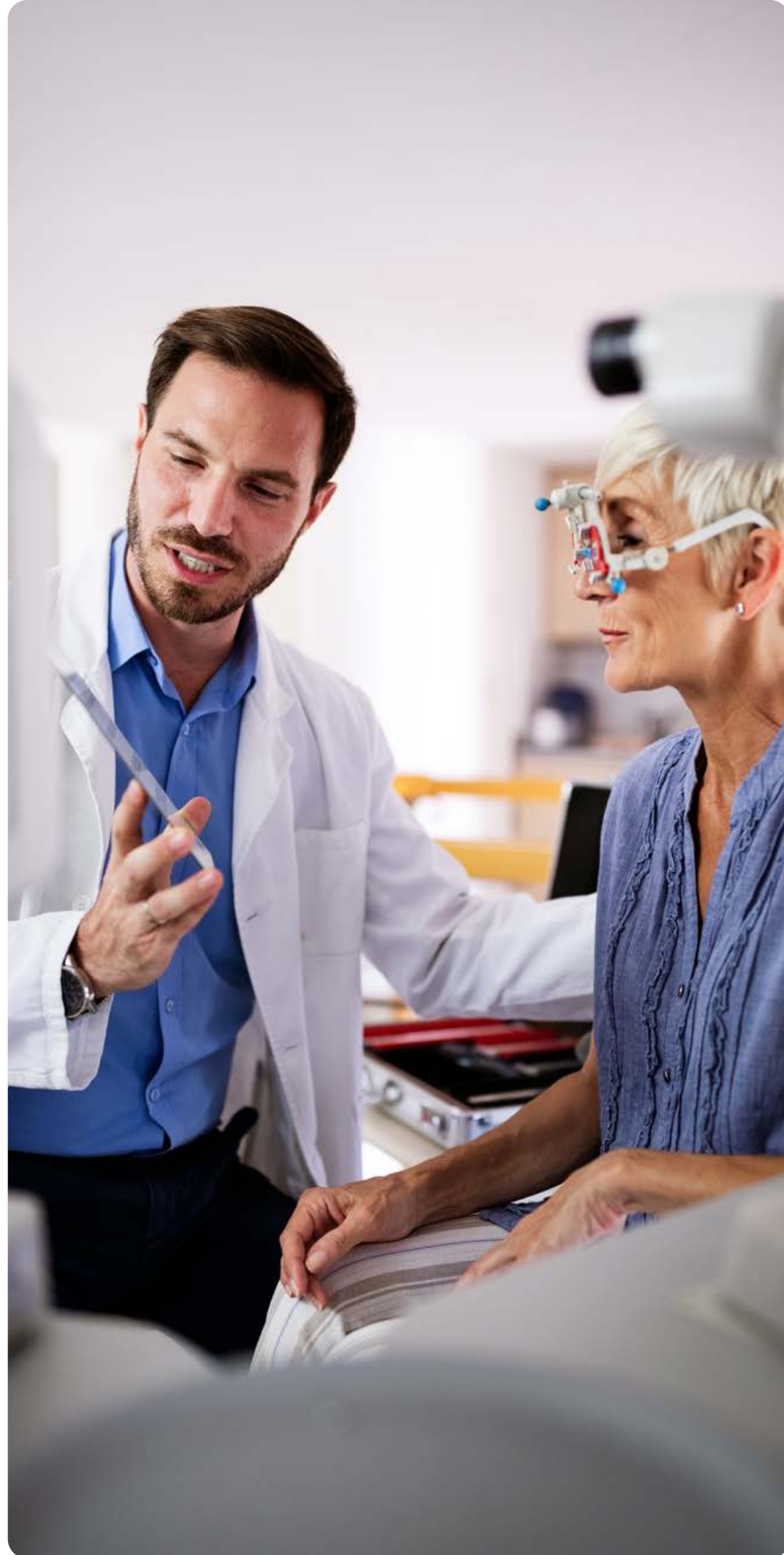
- Belfast City Hospital
- Royal Victoria Hospital

Please note that NHS care does not cover you for healthcare outside the UK and separate travel insurance should be arranged for this. If you are from the European Economic Area (EEA), you should apply for a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), which will entitle you to some medical coverage while you are travelling within EEA countries. The EHIC gives valuable protection, but it should never be seen as a substitute for travel insurance.

## Pharmacies

Community pharmacists, or “chemists”, dispense prescriptions and sell over-the-counter medicines (which do not need a prescription from your doctor). All prescriptions dispensed in Northern Ireland are free of charge for everyone. All community pharmacies have a licensed pharmacist who is registered with the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland and qualified to advise on treating minor ailments and certain health conditions. They are trained to advise you whether your symptoms can be treated without the need to see a doctor, or whether you should seek further advice from your GP.

# Utilities



## Dental Care

The NHS offers subsidised [dental services](#). Children receive free treatment, as do people who meet certain other [criteria](#). Some dental practices work in the private sector (i.e., not funded by the NHS), or offer a combination of NHS and private services. It can be difficult to find a good dental practice which has spaces for NHS patients, so it may be worthwhile to ask colleagues or neighbours for recommendations. If you have private healthcare insurance, you should check whether this includes dental cover.

## Optical Care

There are no special arrangements with opticians so, as required, you should register with an optician of your choice. [Specsavers](#) and [Vision Express](#) are among the largest opticians with branches available across Northern Ireland. You will have to bear the cost of any glasses or contact lenses you might need, however, University employees who use display screen equipment (DSE) may be able to [claim back the cost of sight tests](#).

## Electricity and Heating

[Northern Ireland Electricity \(NIE\) Networks](#) own and maintain the electricity networks and meters for all households, no matter who bills you for your energy usage. There are [five different companies](#) that supply electricity in Northern Ireland. How much you pay for electricity will depend on factors such as your usage and whether you are on a credit meter (where you pay for your energy after you have used it, for example by Direct Debit) or prepay (where you purchase credit to top up your electricity meter in advance).

To set up an account or switch supplier, you may need to provide a Meter Point Reference Number (MPRN) for your property. The first two digits are always 81. Your landlord or the previous owner should be able to provide you with the MPRN if you do not have access to a previous electricity bill. Alternatively, you can call [NIE](#).

As gas is not available everywhere in Northern Ireland, oil is the most used heating fuel with more than two-thirds of households using oil rather than gas. Prices are typically quoted per litre and will be cheaper per litre the more you buy. When buying heating oil, it is worth approaching different suppliers and haggling to find the best available price. The Consumer Council has a [home heating oil price checker](#) to enable you to compare fuel prices across Northern Ireland.

This [guide](#) can also help explain the options available in Northern Ireland.

If your property is connected to an electricity and/or gas credit meter, you should read your meter(s) on the day you move in and give the readings to the current supplier to ensure you only pay for your own usage. Periodically, you will need to submit [meter readings](#) to your supplier so that you are billed correctly. Official meter readers will also call approximately every three months to take a reading. If your meter is inside your property or behind closed gates, the meter reader will contact you to ask for access. The meter reader will only need access to your meter for a couple of minutes to take the reading.

Prepayment meters typically have a slot or keyhole on the front, which takes a prepaid card or key. If you are on a prepayment meter there are several locations where you can top up including local shops that are [PayPoint](#) outlets and [Post Offices](#). Depending on your supplier, you may also be able to top up by phone or online. Try not to use the prepayment key or card, or put money on the meter, until you have contacted the supplier in case any debt is owed by the people who lived there before you.

## Water

Domestic water is paid through rates and households in Northern Ireland are therefore not billed separately for water.

## TV

In the UK you need to be covered by a [TV Licence](#) to:

- Watch or record TV on any channel via any TV service
- Watch live on streaming services
- Use [BBC iPlayer](#)

This applies to any device, including a TV, computer, laptop, phone, tablet, games console or digital box. All (UK) TVs since 2010 have [Freeview](#) built in, so only require a working aerial to be connected. If your TV is older than this, or purchased outside the UK, you may need a separate (Freeview) box. Alternatively, subscribing to your telephone/internet services in combination as a “bundle” may also include a TV package.

## Landline Telephones and Internet

There are many different providers of telephone and internet services. The four biggest are [BT](#), [Sky](#), [Virgin Media](#) and [TalkTalk](#). Even if you do not use it for a landline phone, your home may need to be connected to a physical phone line as most broadband is connected via these lines. You can find quotes on comparison websites. For broadband, use a website accredited by [Ofcom](#), such as [MoneySuperMarket](#).

Think about your household usage to determine the speed(s) you will need – the faster the speed, generally the more expensive. You may also benefit from getting telephone and internet services in combination with a TV subscription as a “bundle”. Be aware that most firms have yearly price rises written into their contracts. To make sure you are getting the best connection, speeds and customer service for your money, you may wish to read the guides on [Money Saving Expert](#) or [Money Helper](#).

## Mobile phones

There are four main mobile networks in the UK: [Vodafone](#), [Three](#), [EE](#) and [O2](#). There are also smaller networks that are separate from the big providers but who have agreements in place to use their networks, for instance [Giffgaff](#) and [Tesco Mobile](#) (use O2), [Voxi](#) and [Virgin Mobile](#) (use Vodafone), and [Smarty](#) (uses Three).

If you already have a mobile phone or can afford to buy a new one upfront, there are two main types of deals: SIM only (usually involving a [credit check](#)) or Pay-as-you-go (without a credit check). SIM only deals generally work out better for heavy data users and come in either 30-day rolling contracts which you can leave with a month’s notice, or fixed-term contracts, usually for 12 months. Using pay-as-you-go, you will not be tied into any contract but simply pay in advance for what you use via top-ups, online or over the phone. Pay-as-you-go packs auto-renew.

If you are bringing a phone to the UK from abroad, you may need to get your phone unlocked to be able to use a UK network.

If you are not able to buy a new mobile upfront, the networks also offer contracts (usually for a minimum of two years) where the cost of the phone is spread out over the term of the contract, and you pay for it monthly in a bundle with your minutes/texts/data allowance. Similar to broadband, be aware that most networks have yearly price rises written into their contracts. Contracts are also subject to credit checks which may be difficult to pass if you are new to the UK and do not have a credit history.

Some contracts include international calls, but you might prefer to use services such as [Skype](#), [FaceTime](#), [WhatsApp](#) or [Marco Polo](#) to stay connected with your family and friends abroad.

## Direct Debit and Standing Orders

[Direct Debits and standing orders](#) are two facilities available to ensure your bills are paid automatically and on time. They are commonly used to pay utility bills and providers will often give you a discount when paying by Direct Debit.

## Cashback

It may be possible to benefit from extra cashback when you buy something or sign up to a product online. To get it, you sign up via a specialist cashback website rather than directly with the provider. Cashback websites use affiliate links to generate revenue, so if they get paid when you sign up, you will get paid.

Cashback is not guaranteed so it is generally best to pick the right package first and view any cashback as an added extra. To find out more about how these sites work, and how you can make the most of them, you can read this [Top Cashback Sites](#) guide.



# Groceries

## Local supermarkets

There are several local supermarkets (grocery stores) available throughout Belfast and Northern Ireland, to include [Tesco](#), [Sainsbury's](#), [Asda](#) and [Iceland](#). These also offer home delivery which you can avail of by registering an account via their website. You will have to be able to pay using a credit/debit card. The delivery driver will ring your doorbell at the selected slot time, and someone will need to be available to receive the shopping.

[Lidl](#), [Marks and Spencer's](#) Foodhall, [SPAR](#) (including the Union shop at [One Elmwood Student Centre](#)) and [SuperValu](#) also operate throughout Northern Ireland. Other food retailers are available.

Overall, for branded items, all of the main supermarkets have similar prices. Supermarkets will also have their own branded goods, which can be significantly cheaper than main brand items. Most supermarkets will also operate a loyalty scheme which may earn you points and/or access to special offers.

Retailers in Northern Ireland must by law charge a levy for all new carrier bags dispensed so if you are shopping in store you may wish to bring your own bags. The minimum amount retailers can charge is currently 25 pence (p) per bag.

On Sundays, large shops in Northern Ireland can only open between 1.00 pm and 6.00 pm.

Local supermarkets will often feature an international section and cater to vegetarians and vegans, but if you come to miss your home comforts you may be able to find more specialty items on [Amazon](#) or from the range of international options available in the vicinity of the University:

### [Bangla Bazar](#)

175-177 Ormeau Rd, Belfast BT7 1SQ

### [Polita](#)

29 Ravenhill Road, Belfast BT6 8DP

### [Istanbul Market](#)

1 Botanic Ave, Belfast BT7 1JG

### [Hui Bai Jia Oriental Mart](#)

23-29 Donegall Pass, Belfast BT7 1DQ

### [Lee Foods Oriental Supermarket](#)

98-108 Donegall Pass, Belfast BT7 1BX

### [E Kou Xian](#)

80-82 Donegall Pass, Belfast BT7 1BX

### [Asia Supermarket](#)

40 Ormeau Embankment, Belfast BT6 8LU

### [Yambo's Food](#)

158 Ormeau Rd, Belfast BT7 2ED


# Transport

**There are various methods of transport around Belfast that are cheap and easily accessed. As part of the University's [commitment to sustainable travel](#), [salaried employees can avail of an interest-free loan of up to £2,500 to purchase an annual public transport travel card.](#)**

## Public transport

[Translink](#) is Northern Ireland's public transport company and operate a comprehensive [network of bus and rail services](#) throughout Northern Ireland and on cross border routes.

The University is well served by [public transport](#), particularly Metro bus services (i.e., Belfast city bus services), and the City Hospital and Botanic Avenue train stations that are also within walking distance of the campus.

The easiest and quickest way to purchase tickets is to download the free [mLink mobile ticketing app](#). You can also pay as you go by paying on board bus services and at train stations. [Contactless payment](#) has been introduced across all Metro bus services – simply tap with your contactless credit/debit card, or smart device, where you see the  on the driver's ticket machine reader. Children aged 4 and under travel for free on all services. Children aged 5 - 16 qualify for child fare concession which is usually 50% of the standard adult single fare.

Translink offers an annual travel card, [aLink](#), which includes 20% discount on your specified bus or train journey and free weekend travel.

## ECIT/RVH Shuttle Bus

A shuttle bus, provided by the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences, operates between Belfast City Hospital (bus stop at the side of the Tower Block) and Royal Victoria Hospital (bus stop at Royal Maternity). This service is free to staff and students on presentation of a staff/student card. Timetable details can be found [here](#).

Translink provide a scheduled service between Elmwood Avenue (adjacent to the One Elmwood Student Centre) and the Institute of Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (ECIT), located in the Northern Ireland Science Park. Timetable details on this service can be found [here](#).

## Cycle+

The University's cycle to work scheme, [Cycle+](#), offers staff the opportunity to obtain a bicycle and safety equipment for less than normal cost. A cycle map of Belfast can be found [here](#). If you are cycling, be sure to keep safe. Some tips can be found at [NHS Cycling Tips](#).

## Bike hub

The [Big Loop Bike Hub](#) is located on Level 1 of the Administration Building, opposite the McClay Library. The Hub offers lease bikes, refurbished second-hand bikes, puncture repair, safety equipment and much more.

## Belfast Bikes

Belfast Bikes are available 365 days a year from 6am - midnight from 40 docking stations dotted around Belfast, providing a low cost, convenient way to travel about. Pick up a Belfast Bike around Queen's at the McClay Library, near the One Elmwood Student Centre, at Elms BT9 or near the Medical Biology Centre on the Belfast City Hospital site.

## Parking at Queen's

Parking space for vehicles within the University and its car parks is limited and, unfortunately, it is not possible to meet all the parking needs of staff and visitors. Staff wishing to apply for a parking permit and to pay by salary deductions can do so via the online parking permit system, available at [Queen's Online](#). Further information can be found [here](#).

## Park and Ride

If you are commuting from nearby towns, an easy way to travel into Belfast city centre is by using [Translink's Park and Ride](#) facilities. Simply park your car at the designated car park and get the bus into Belfast city centre.

## Taxis

Value Cabs is the approved taxi provider of the University. For more information or to book a taxi, call (028) 90 809080 or visit the Value Cabs website. Other [taxi](#) providers are available.



# Driving

**Driving rules and regulations vary from country to country. Therefore, it is important to take some time to read the Northern Ireland regulations on driving licences, car tax and registration and insurance responsibilities.**

The [Highway Code](#) is essential reading for everyone who drives in Northern Ireland. The Highway Code is based on the [Great Britain version](#). It is also recommended that anyone intending to visit the Republic of Ireland should be familiar with the [Rules of the Road](#) and note particularly that all speed limit signs in the Republic of Ireland relate to kilometres per hour as opposed to miles per hour as in Northern Ireland/Great Britain.

Both as a driver and a pedestrian, be mindful that in the UK and Ireland, drivers drive on the left side of the road. It is also compulsory for all occupants of a car to wear seat belts. Alternatively, you must use the right [car seat](#) when travelling with a child. It is illegal to drive a vehicle or ride a motorbike while using a hand-held mobile phone or a similar device. You must also never drive under the influence of alcohol.

## Driving Licence

A licence is required to drive in Northern Ireland. Before you learn to drive and start taking [driving lessons](#), you must [apply for a provisional driving licence](#). To become a qualified driver, you must pass a [theory test](#) and a [practical driving test](#).

Depending on the country you come from, there are different driving licence requirements for [driving in Northern Ireland on a foreign licence](#).

## Registration and Car Tax

If you are bringing a vehicle with you from abroad, you will need to [register your vehicle](#) in the UK. [Car tax](#) must be paid on all vehicles registered in the UK that are driven or kept on a public road. If you buy a car in the UK that someone else has previously taxed, you will still need to tax the vehicle before you can drive it, even if the tax was not due to run out.

## Insurance

You have to have [motor insurance](#) before you can drive your vehicle in a public place. It protects you, your vehicle, and other motorists against liability in case there is an accident. It provides financial compensation to cover any injuries caused to people or their property. You must have at least Third-Party Insurance if you wish to drive in the UK.

## MOT

MOT tests check that your vehicle meets road safety and environmental standards. If the vehicle is more than three years old, you will need an [MOT](#) certificate showing that the vehicle is roadworthy.



# Your Employment

## Right to work (RTW) check

All prospective employees of the University must provide evidence to confirm their right to work in the UK before commencing employment (e.g., a [share code](#)). Please ensure that you contact International Staff Support ahead of your first day so that we may schedule a video or in-person appointment as appropriate.

During your employment, you must continue to hold the right to work in the UK and cooperate with the University on any request to view such confirmation. If you move to another immigration category, you must advise People and Culture immediately so that your status can be updated.

If you are collecting a Biometric Residence Permit (BRP) at Queen's, International Staff Support will contact you by email once your BRP has been delivered to the Student Information Point (located in the [One Elmwood Student Centre](#)) and advise you on how to collect your BRP.

## Staff card and Logon

Your Staff Smart Card (SSC) is your staff ID and should be carried at all times when on campus. Provided you have previously completed the right to work check, presented your qualifications and submitted your photograph, the staff card will be available to collect from the People and Culture reception (level 4 of the Administration Building) on your first day. Your staff card will allow standard building access. If needed, additional access may be granted by your department's Building Liaison Officer (BLO). Your logon credentials will be sent to your personal email address by Information Services three days prior to your start date.



## Relocation

New staff moving to Queen's from outside Northern Ireland may be eligible for Relocation Expenses depending on their contract and will in such cases have this detailed in their offer letter. Eligibility requirements and amounts of assistance available are outlined in the [Relocation Expenses Policy](#).

## Salary and Reward

Salaries will be paid into your bank account on the last banking day of the month. The University operates salary scales which provide incremental progression and the possibility of earning additional rewards for exceptional contribution. Salary sacrifice schemes are also in place for pensions, childcare, car parking, and cycle to work payments. As the member of a scheme, the amount of earnings on which you pay tax and national insurance is reduced by the value of salary sacrificed for these benefits, increasing your take home pay. Visit the [Pay, Reward and Benefits website](#) for further information.



## Pensions

All staff have access to a contributory pension scheme. In addition to the employee's contribution, the University as the employer, also makes a considerable contribution. The pension scheme which you are eligible for depends on your grade and will be outlined in your employment contract. New employees are automatically enrolled into the relevant pension scheme. Visit the [Pensions website](#) or contact the [Pensions Office](#) for more details. Information about the schemes is readily available from the team and appointments may be made for personal meetings.

## Induction

As you join this large organisation it will take time to settle in, find your way around and find out what you need to know. In all cases your manager and other experienced staff should be on hand to help you with any immediate questions you may have.

As well as the induction provided locally by your new department you will also be invited to attend a [New Staff Welcome event](#) within your first few months of employment. [Learning and Development](#) will contact you directly with an invitation to confirm the dates. The main aim of this event is to provide participants with an overview of the University's objectives as well as an understanding of how the University functions. There are also further job specific induction sessions for new clerical, research, and academic staff. You will receive an invitation to the most appropriate event for your role, but the events are also available by visiting [Queen's Online](#).

There is a selection of online learning courses that are mandatory for all staff to complete within their first days/weeks. These are available to all staff via [Queen's Online](#). Some just need to be completed once, while others have fixed-term validity and need to be renewed.

## Probation

The probation procedure applies to all new staff and provides a mechanism whereby managers meet with new staff, set expectations, and establish specific objectives. The procedure also provides a means of performance review and feedback. Visit [the Probation Webpage](#) for full details and to access the probation regulation relevant to your grade.

## Employee Benefits

Employees at Queen's University have generous terms and conditions of employment underpinned by excellent salary and pension benefits. It also provides attractive wellbeing, family friendly and other [lifestyle benefits](#), as well as a generous annual [leave](#) allowance and flexible approach.

The Employee Discounts Scheme can be accessed via [www.mylifestylehub.co.uk](http://www.mylifestylehub.co.uk) and offers discounts at hundreds of high street retailers including supermarkets, high street stores, restaurants and many more. New staff will receive a welcome email from Edenred within one month of their start date. For more information, please refer to the [User Guide](#) and/or [FAQs](#).

## Learning and Development and Career Progression

[Learning and Development](#) is responsible for enhancing the quality of leadership and management, supporting development of our research staff, and ensuring that employees have the tools to support their career and personal development. A full programme of training events is run each year. You can view the current schedule of courses and register to attend via [iTrent Self-Service](#).

Whichever role you are in, Queen's is committed to empowering and enabling you to learn, grow and get involved. There are multiple [processes and initiatives](#) in place to support staff in fulfilling this commitment.

## Academic life

Queen's University can trace its roots back to [1845](#) when it was established as one of three Queen's Colleges in Ireland. It is the second oldest university in Ireland, and the ninth oldest in the UK. Queen's became a university in its own right under the terms of the Irish Universities Act 1908 following the signing of a Royal Charter in the same year. Today, Queen's University is respected across the world as a centre of teaching excellence and innovative research, part of the prestigious [Russell Group](#) among other [awards and accreditations](#).

The University is an autonomous body and a registered charity led by [academic leadership](#) and academic support directors working together to deliver its [Strategy](#). Guided by five core values, our aim is to foster a supportive, inclusive, and collaborative working environment to ensure the best possible experience at work:



## Excellence

We strive for excellence within ourselves and others, providing solutions to new and existing challenges.



## Connected

We work best when we are collaborative, working together to contribute to the Queen's community.



## Ambition

We strive together for improvement and innovation, looking ahead to see the bigger picture.



## Respect

We treat everyone in our community equally and how we would want to be treated ourselves.



## Integrity

We are open, honest, and fair. We take ownership of the way we work and how we treat each other.

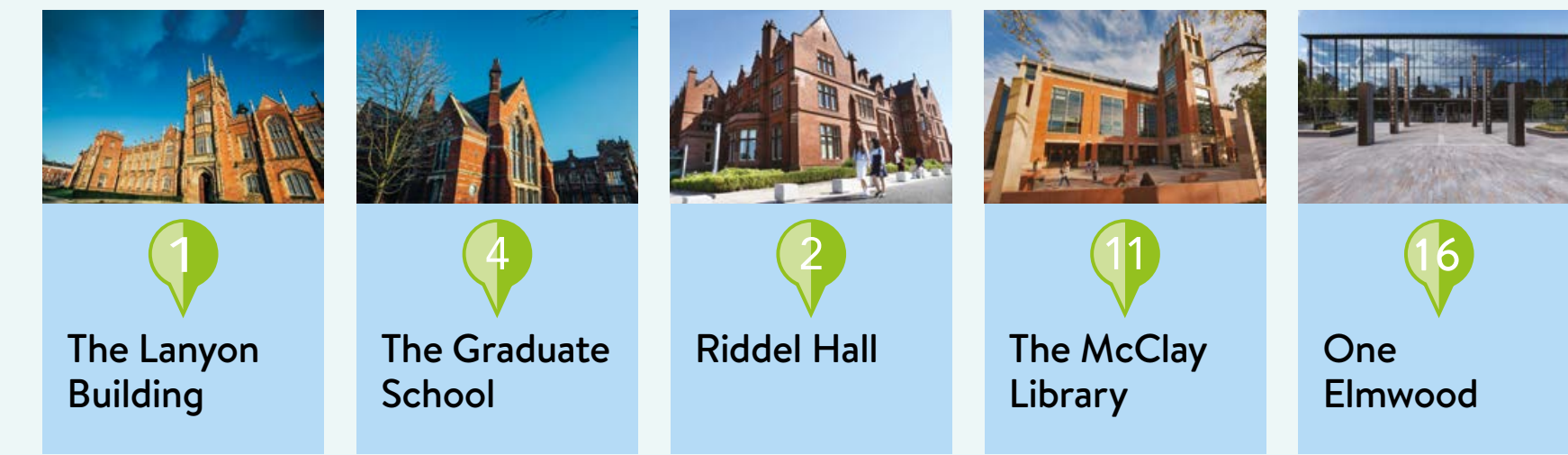
Queen's has some of the best **campus** facilities in the UK and Ireland, investing £700m over a 20 year capital development programme.

The academic year at Queen's University Belfast is divided into two semesters, rather than three terms. Semester dates, holiday dates, news, blogs, events and information for Queen's staff can all be accessed through the **Staff Gateway**.

To maintain Queen's long history of conducting innovative and world-leading research and to further enhance our impact and strengthening our research position, **The Research and Enterprise Directorate** supports our researchers in a number of ways, providing guidance on ethics and governance, funding projects, working with partners, and commercial developments.

For graduation ceremonies and other formal occasions, academic gowns may be worn by some members of staff. The **Eventus, Culture and Arts Office** runs Queen's own academic costume hire service which can be accessed by both students and staff for ceremonial use.

In business and academic life, keeping to a schedule is important. You should always be on time for lectures, classes, and meetings with academic and administrative staff. If you are going to be late for a meeting, do try to give advance notice.



**FACULTY OFFICES**

- Art, Humanities and Social Sciences
- Engineering and Physical Sciences
- Medicine, Health and Life Sciences

- X1** The Institute of Electronics, Communications and Information Technology (Titanic Quarter, not shown)
- X2** The Institute of Health Sciences
- X3**

**SCHOOL OFFICES**

- Arts, English and Languages
- Biological Sciences
- Chemistry and Chemical Engineering
- Electronics, Electrical Engineering Computer Sciences
- History, Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics
- Law
- Mathematics and Physics
- Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering
- Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences
- Natural and Built Environment
- Nursing and Midwifery
- Pharmacy
- Psychology
- Queen's Business School
- Social Sciences, Education and Social Work

**LOCATION**

- Education and Student Services
- Administration Building
- Ashby Building
- Canada Room/Council Chamber
- Careers, Employability and Skills
- Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology (CCRCB)
- Chrono Centre
- Clinical Research Facility
- Computer Science
- Counselling Service
- David Bates Building
- David Keir Building
- Development and Alumni Relations
- Disability Services
- Drama and Film Centre at Queen's
- Dunluce Health Centre
- Elms BT9
- Elms BT1 and Elms BT2 (not shown)
- Elmwood Building
- Elmwood Hall
- Estates
- Finance
- Graduate School
- Great Hall
- Harty Room
- Health Sciences Building
- People and Culture

**GLOBAL RESEARCH INSTITUTES**

- The Senator George J Mitchell Institute for Global Peace, Security and Justice
- The William J Clinton Leadership Institute
- The Institute for Global Food Security

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Information Services                                 | 11 |
| Institute of Professional Legal Studies (IPLS)       | 33 |
| International Office                                 | 1  |
| INTO Queen's   | 32 |
| Jobshop  | 14 |
| Lanyon Building                                      | 1  |
| Main Site Tower                                      | 2  |
| Global Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions         | 1  |
| McClay Research Centre                               | 24 |
| Medical Biology Centre (MBC)                         | 21 |
| Naughton Gallery at Queen's                          | 1  |
| New Physics Building                                 | 8  |
| Northern Ireland Technology Centre (NITC)            | 30 |
| Occupational Health and Safety Services              | 34 |
| Old Physics Building                                 | 9  |
| One Elmwood  | 16 |
| Peter Froggatt Centre (PFC)                          | 2  |
| Pharmacy Building                                    | 24 |
| Physical Education Centre (PEC)                      | 36 |
| Queen's Film Theatre (QFT)                           | 10 |
| University Secretary                                 | 1  |
| Research and Enterprise                              | 17 |
| Riddell Hall   | 37 |
| Sonic Arts Research Centre (SARC)                    | 29 |
| South Dining Hall                                    | 6  |
| Student Centre at One Elmwood                        | 14 |
| Student Plus   | 1  |
| The McClay Library                                   | 11 |
| University Health Centre                             | 13 |
| Vice-Chancellor's Office                             | 1  |
| Welcome Centre                                       | 1  |
| Whitla Hall  | 7  |
| Whitla Medical Building                              | 22 |
| Wellcome-Wolfson Institute for Experimental Medicine | 23 |

# Campus Facilities

## Queen's Welcome Centre

Queen's Welcome Centre is a Northern Ireland Tourist Board Local Information Office for South Belfast. It serves as an information point for visitors and tourists, as well as offering a varied selection of souvenirs and gifts. Staff can avail of 10% discount in the Welcome Centre upon production of a staff ID card.

## Queen's Sport

Queen's Sport is on the doorstep of the main campus and offers sporting facilities that are second to none, which staff can avail of at reduced membership rates. Queen's Sport also run an Active Campus which offers staff the opportunity to get active with their colleagues, and an Active Children's Programme and Summer scheme.

## Queen's Film Theatre

A hidden gem, the QFT is nestled behind the Georgian façade of 20 University Square. Presenting the best in classic and new world cinema, in an intimate space, it is a unique cultural venue.

## The Naughton Gallery

With free admission and open six days per week, the Naughton Gallery welcomes visitors from around the world and has been recognised as one of the leading university galleries in the UK and Ireland.

The gallery presents a rolling programme of contemporary exhibitions but also runs an extensive programme of talks, screenings, and special events including a book club and coffee mornings in association with the Belfast Coffee Map.

## The Brian Friel Theatre

Located in the Drama & Film Centre which opened in 2004, the Brian Friel Theatre is one of the best equipped theatres in Belfast with a 120 seat studio theatre, rehearsal room, dressing rooms, green room and workshop. It hosts both student and professional performances and events such as the Belfast International Arts Festival.

## Food and drink

Nine cafes across campus offer a variety of quality products for students, staff and visitors. Queen's Campus Food & Drink also host markets that bring together a fantastic selection of hot food stalls, showcasing Northern Irish produce and foods from around the world.

## A bite of Queen's

The A Bite of Queen's lunchtime campus tours series is a staff initiative that gives you the opportunity to go behind the scenes of some of the University's great buildings and hear about the amazing work being carried out by our colleagues. Read the Staff Round Up or follow @QUBstaff for information on upcoming tours.

## Wellbeing programmes

Queen's recognises the importance of staff wellbeing inside the workplace. The University offers numerous wellbeing programmes to create awareness and improve the health of staff, including planned and regular health promotion events tied in with national campaigns. Occupational Health provides a wide range of services to the University for the prevention of work-related injury or ill-health.



# SETTLING IN

## Diversity

Queen's is proud to play a key role in the internationalisation of Northern Ireland and is committed to promote equality and respect for diversity and inclusion, including greater awareness for LGBT+, racial and linguistic diversity. Please browse the [Diversity and Inclusion webpages](#) to find out more about workplace policies, news, details of staff training, outreach events, activities and campaigns.

Queen's University's Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic (BAME) and International Staff Network, [iRise](#), provides a forum for networking and a means of peer support between BAME and international staff. iRise also run an international buddy scheme with the aim of providing a friendly welcome for new international staff, helping them to settle into life in Belfast and at Queen's University. If you would like to request a buddy, please contact iRise directly.

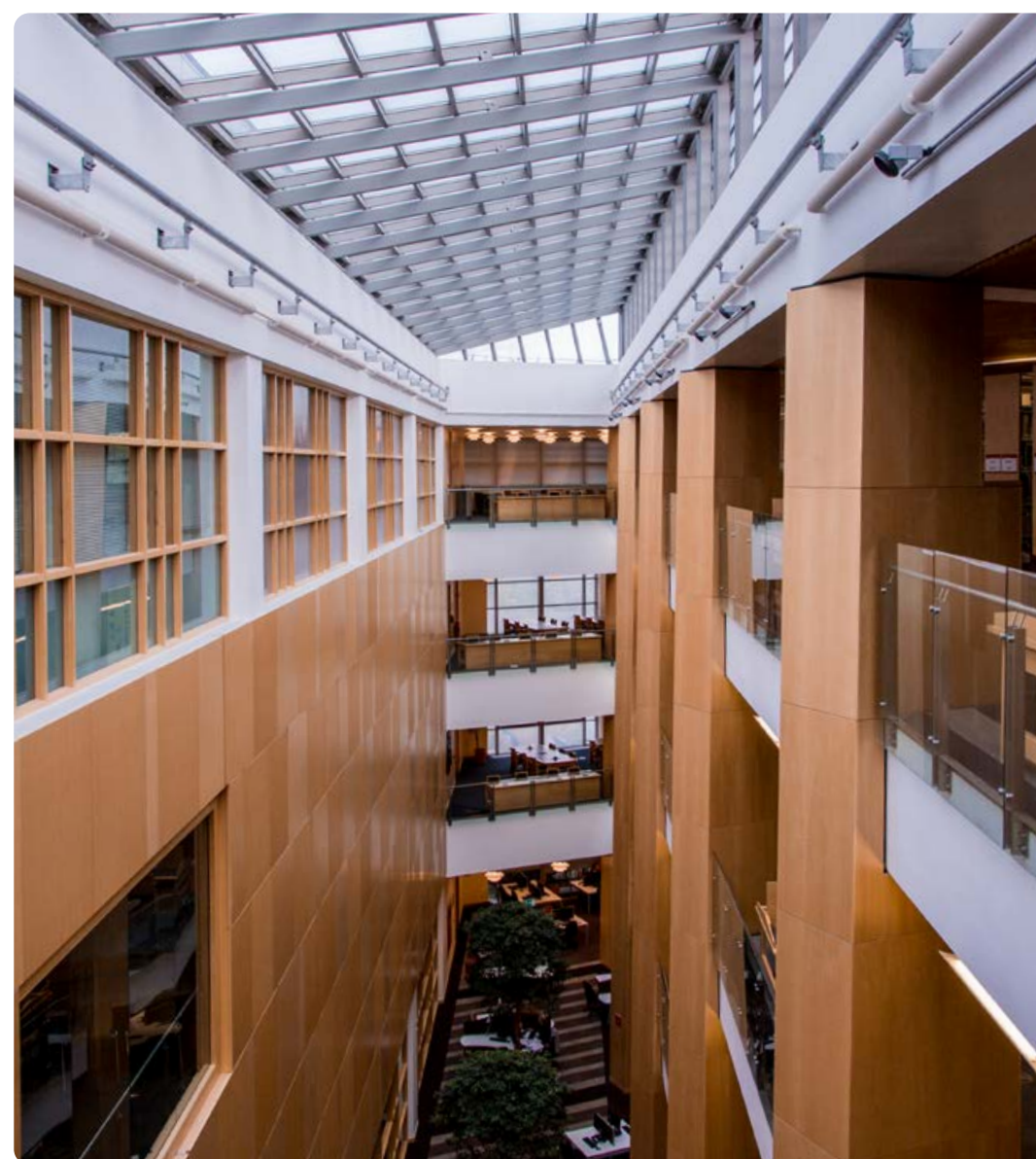
[PRISM LGBT Staff Network](#) is a friendly, informal way to meet with LGBT+ colleagues at the University and discuss ideas to get involved in workplace activities - both formal and informal.

The [Gender Initiative](#) provides a channel for women's views on priority issues. In support of the University's commitment to promoting leadership development and career progression for women, Queen's also supports female staff to attend the [Advance HE Aurora leadership development programme](#).

## Open Learning

Queen's University has been offering short courses to the local community since the 1850s. The School of Social Sciences, Education and

Social Work (SSESW) continues to offer a program of [Open Learning](#) short courses for a fee, from creative writing to photography and Italian. For many courses, a concessionary fee is available to members of staff.



## The Language Centre

The [Language Centre](#) exists to support all Queen's staff and students with opportunities to develop their language skills and cultural awareness. Classes range from beginners to post A-level and are available in 14 different languages.

## INTO

[INTO](#) at Queen's offers a programme of language support for students which also extends to staff whose native language is not English.

## McClay Library

The award-winning [McClay Library](#), which opened in 2009, blends the best features of a traditional library with the latest technology and all staff can enjoy access to its many [resources](#). The library's collections support teaching and research in the arts and humanities, science and engineering, the social sciences and law. The iconic CS Lewis Reading Room is a serene reading space, decorated with glass-engraved inscriptions from the Belfast author's works as well as a hand-carved replica of the famous wardrobe door from *The Chronicles of Narnia*.



## Religious Services

[Chaplains and other religious representatives](#) are appointed by the University to represent and serve students and staff. The chaplaincy centres provide a focus for weekday or Sabbath worship, a range of social events and activities, groups for prayer and study, in addition to pastoral care and counselling.

## Staying Safe

The University Security Service is committed to ensuring a safe and secure environment for all persons working, studying, and visiting the University campus. Security staff are always on duty and may be contacted on internal extension 5099 or external 028 9097 5099. In an emergency, the appropriate emergency services should be called. From a University telephone, dial extension 2222 to contact the University Control Room operator or 9-999 to contact Police, Fire and Ambulance services (dial 999 to access emergency services if outside the University). You may wish to keep a copy of the University's [personal safety pocket guide](#) for reference.

## Sustainability at Queen's

Queen's University Belfast is committed to social and civic responsibility and to supporting economic growth in an environmentally sustainable way. More information on our net-zero journey and how you can get involved can be found on our [sustainability pages](#).

## Wi-Fi

There are a number of ways to [connect to Wi-Fi at Queen's](#).

# Discovering Northern Ireland

## Things to see and do

Northern Ireland is a vibrant country with plenty of things to see and experience. The quality and value on offer put most other regions to shame, and it offers access to both [spectacular coast and rolling countryside](#). Belfast is developing an exceptional [food and drinks scene](#) and showing off its lovely waterfront and unique neighbourhoods (quarters), each with its own focus. [Belfast's city centre](#) is the heart of the action and a great base to explore the city and the rest of [Northern Ireland](#). For ideas of activities that you can get involved with, please visit [Visit Belfast](#) and [Discover Northern Ireland](#).

## Accessibility guide

The [AccessAble](#) website provides a great resource on accessible venues in Belfast including hotels, visitor attractions, shops, restaurants and bars. [Queen's](#) are also partnered with AccessAble.

## Northern Irish society

“Great Britain” refers to the countries (home nations) of England, Wales, and Scotland which, along with Northern Ireland, form part of the “United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland” (commonly referred to as the United Kingdom or the UK). The official nationality of the UK is “British”. Some people may, however, prefer to identify as English, Welsh, Scottish or Northern Irish/Irish. “Ulster” refers to one of four Irish provinces which encompasses the six counties that form Northern Ireland.

In April 2023, Queen's hosted [Agreement 25](#), a three-day conference to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Belfast Agreement, also known as the Good Friday Agreement, which underpins Northern Ireland's peace, its constitutional settlement, and its institutions. The three different levels of government in Northern Ireland includes your local council (providing local services), the Northern Ireland Assembly (the devolved government), and the UK Parliament at Westminster. Devolution means that the UK government has transferred a range of powers to the Northern Ireland Assembly. This means that Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs), instead of Members of Parliament (MPs) in Westminster, make key decisions on how Northern Ireland is governed, while some powers (including foreign affairs, immigration, and defence) still lie with the UK government. To [register to vote](#) you must be a British, Irish, Commonwealth or EU citizen and be ordinarily resident in the UK.

Northern Irish people are friendly and warm, and many visitors will remark on their good-nature and wit. It is not unusual to greet people with jovial humour at the expense of yourself or others and do not be surprised by people striking up conversation. Some international staff may experience difficulties understanding the Northern Irish accent so becoming familiar with [Northern Irish slang](#) may help in everyday conversation. People speak quickly but do not feel embarrassed to ask them to repeat what they said.



## Culture shock

Leaving home and moving to a new country can be a stressful experience even if it is something you have planned and prepared for. “Culture shock” describes the impact of moving from a familiar culture to one that is unfamiliar. It includes the shock of a new environment, meeting lots of new people and learning the ways of a new country. It also includes the shock of being separated from the important people in your life, who you would talk to at times of uncertainty, and who give you support and guidance. Factors that may contribute to culture shock are climate, language, social roles and norms, values, and relationship stress.

Culture shock generally moves through four different stages: honeymoon (feeling excited by your new surroundings), frustration (you may feel homesick and frustrated or angry with the way things work in your new country), adjustment (you begin to accept your new life and enjoy it, while feelings of loneliness or isolation start to lift) and acceptance (you feel happy and settled).

Culture shock may affect your mood, so it is important to realise that what you are going through is normal, to keep in touch with your home country, and look after yourself. If you have dependants that have accompanied you, remember that the transition to a new culture may be difficult for them as well. If you are struggling with the stress of cultural adjustment you may wish to make use of the University’s [Employee Assistance Programme](#) or reach out to [iRise](#).



## Travel to the Republic of Ireland

Northern Ireland forms part of the UK. While there is no physical border between the two, the Republic of Ireland is a sovereign state and separate [visa requirements](#) may apply depending on your nationality. The currency in the Republic of Ireland is the Euro (EUR). If travelling by car, note that road signs in the Republic of Ireland relate to kilometres (and kilometres per hour) and are written in both English and Irish. If driving in the Republic of Ireland, you may come across [toll roads](#) (roads that drivers must pay to use). The M1 toll road is approximately 18 miles north of Dublin airport on the Dublin to Belfast route. Generally, toll charges are paid in cash at the barrier to the toll road. [Translink](#) also operate cross-border coach and Enterprise rail services.

# Networks

## Building social network

[Belfast Friendship Club](#) is a safe space for people from all over the world to meet, get information, get involved in activities and events, make friends, and help each other.

The Chinese Resource Centre, managed by [Chinese Welfare Association](#), sits on the Ormeau Embankment and aims to enhance diversity and develop the participation of Chinese people in all aspects of social, cultural, economic and public life across Northern Ireland.

[Cooltura Polish Community Centre](#) promotes Polish language, culture, and heritage in Northern Ireland. Separately, there is also a [Polish Saturday school](#).

[ACSONI](#) was established to provide support and representation to people from the African and Caribbean communities in Northern Ireland.

The [Belfast Islamic Centre](#) operates for the benefit of all Muslims, irrespective of their ethnic background, gender, country of origin or age. Belfast also has a [synagogue](#) and a Hindu temple, located in the city’s [Indian Community Centre](#).

[Belfast Asian Women’s Academy \(BAWA\)](#) is a non-profit voluntary grassroots organisation aimed at inspiring and empowering women to make a positive difference in people’s lives and encompasses a social and recreational hub, support services and charity and community services.

[Girl Gone International \(GGI\)](#) is a fun, friendly local and global community offering friendship,

connection, support, belonging, empowerment and happiness to women and non-binary people living overseas or far from home. GGI hosts meetups every month for the members of their community to get together and meet each other in person.

[Parent and toddler groups](#) often meet in church halls, community centres or health centres and cater for children from 0-5 years. These services are not required to register but all children must be accompanied by a parent or carer. The groups provide a place for adults and children to mix socially and play together safely. A small charge will apply to cover running costs and refreshments.

Whatever your interests, from hiking and reading to networking and skill sharing, there are thousands of people who share it on [Meetup](#). Discover or create local Meetups for all the things you love.



# Support for partners and families

## Careers

Belfast has a number of [key sectors](#) driving economic growth and job creation including business and professional services, financial services and fintech, creative and digital sector, clean tech, cyber security and tourism.

The city is currently Europe's leading destination city for new software development projects and is the number one destination globally for financial technology investment. Indigenous businesses are growing up around global brands and the city now has the second fastest growing digital cluster in the UK. Opportunities throughout Northern Ireland can be found on various websites including:

[nijobfinder](#)

[NIJOBS](#)

The University is one of the largest employers in the local area, employing over 4,000 staff. You can search for current vacancies [here](#). Partners who are interested in applying for opportunities with Queen's should submit an application for each relevant role and structure each application to clearly state how they meet the listed criteria and briefly explain how their skills and experience match the requirements.

If you need careers guidance, advice, or support, the [Careers Service's](#) qualified careers advisers provide impartial careers information throughout Northern Ireland.



## Learning

For partners interested in enrolling with Queen's, please explore the [Study at Queen's](#) pages. The School of Social Sciences, Education and Social Work (SSESW) also offer a program of [Open Learning](#) short courses for a fee.

The [Open University](#) offers distance learning and adult education courses, as well as some free online courses.

In collaboration with their 149 partners, [Future Learn](#) carefully design online courses so that you can learn new skills, pursue your interests, and advance your career no matter where you are. Partners are top universities and specialist organisations. Other online courses are also available from well-known universities on [EDX](#) and [Coursera](#) (fees payable).

[TED Talks](#), a large online library of previously broadcasted lectures, cover a wide array of topics including careers advice, as well as [TEDxQueensUniversityBelfast](#).

## English language resources

There are [English for Speakers of other Languages \(ESOL\)](#) courses available throughout Northern Ireland. Courses focus on language skills but also include cultural orientation, employability and citizenship skills and are aimed at learners who are 18 years of age and over.

INTO at Queen's offers a programme of language support for students which also extends to staff whose native language is not English. They are one of five providers in Northern Ireland that have been accredited by the [British Council](#) through Accreditation UK.

Staff dependants would also be welcome to join the courses, however, should note that focus is primarily on academic English.

Some other useful resources can be found below:



[Learning English \(BBC\)](#)

[LearnEnglish online \(British Council\)](#)

[LearnEnglish Kids \(British Council\)](#)

[Apps \(British Council\)](#)



## Important Links

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Use the checklists at the links below as a 'to do list' of everything you need to consider before you arrive, on arrival, and throughout your employment.

- ✓ [Global Talent visa checklist](#)
- ✓ [Skilled Worker visa checklist](#)
- ✓ [Government Authorised Exchange \(Temporary Work\) visa checklist](#)



CHECKLISTS





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[QUB.AC.UK/DIRECTORATES/HUMANRESOURCES/](https://qub.ac.uk/directorates/humanresources/)

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[QUB.AC.UK/DIRECTORATES/HUMANRESOURCES/WORK-AT-QUEENS/INTERNATIONAL-STAFF-SUPPORT/](https://qub.ac.uk/directorates/humanresources/work-at-queens/international-staff-support/)

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[QUB.AC.UK/SITES/STAFFGATEWAY/](https://qub.ac.uk/sites/staffgateway/)

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