



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**

2022/23

STUDENT HANDBOOK
POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT STUDENTS
SCHOOL OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

Welcome Message/Overview

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

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

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

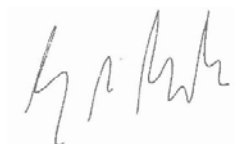
As well as our wonderful £38million purpose built Biological Sciences building many of you will visit the Queen's Marine Laboratory in Portaferry that supports field work for a number of our programmes. We are committed to supporting gender equality and diversity at all levels and we are one of two Schools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

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

studies.

Best wishes for your studies

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



Professor Geoff McMullan
Head of School, School of Biological Sciences

Professor Alberto Longo
Director of Education, Postgraduate

IMPORTANT

We have made all reasonable efforts to ensure that the information contained in this Handbook is accurate and up- to-date when compiled. The School reserves the right to revise, alter or discontinue courses of study and to amend the regulations at any time without notice. In particular this Handbook should not be regarded as a substitute for the University Calendar, which can be accessed at <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/> and contains definitive information and regulations. Any changes to the information contained in this Handbook that significantly affects students in relation to matters such as timetabling and assessment will be notified by email.

Preface

The purpose of this Student Handbook is to provide all taught post-graduates registered for degrees through the School with up-to-date, accurate and readily accessible information regarding the School, its courses and how it conducts its teaching. The Handbook is not a substitute for the University Calendar but contains additional important material relating to, for example, degree objectives, assessment methods and regulations, the Student Voice Committee.

Introduction

The School is in the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences. The School currently has over 80 academic staff members with diverse teaching and research interests ranging from Agriculture to Zoology, the complete A-Z! There is considerable interdisciplinary interaction within the School in both teaching and research as well as collaboration with other parts of the University.

The School is a purpose built £40 million facility and you will be among the first students to study here. We also have units housed in the Northern Ireland Technology Centre (Malone Road), and for Marine Biology at the Marine Laboratory at Portaferry, near the southern end of Strangford Lough. The Institute of Global Food Security is Northern Ireland's primary provider of Research in Agri-Food.

School Management

The School is managed by the **Head of School**, who reports to the Pro-Vice Chancellor of the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences. The key committees within the School related to

Postgraduate issues are:

The **School Board** which comprises academic and professional support staff and student representatives: The School Board discusses all issues to do with the School.

The **School Management Board** comprises specific post holders and has a key decision-making role within the School.

The **School Education Committee** is a sub-committee of School Board which discusses all aspects of education within the School and reports to the School board.

The **Student Voice Committee** discusses key student issues and reports to Education Committee and school Board.

Each degree has its own Programme Board dealing with specific academic matters. The School is represented in the Faculty of Medicine, Health and Life Sciences and at the Directorate of Academic and Student Affairs, both of which deal with strategic areas of academic and managerial interest.

Key Contacts and School Information

Head of School	Professor Geoff McMullan
Deputy Head of School	Dr C Graham
Directors of Education	Dr S Doherty (UG) Prof A Longo (PGT)

Programme Directors

Degree Pathway	Programme Director
Advanced Food Safety	Professor Mark Mooney
Animal Behaviour and Welfare	Dr Gareth Arnott Dr Hansjoerg Kunc
Ecological Management and Conservation Biology	Dr Neil Reid
Leadership for Sustainable (Rural) Development	Dr Kieran Higgins
Molecular Biology and Biotechnology	Dr Kostya Panov
Parasitology and Pathogen Biology	Professor Nikki Marks

SCHOOL/INSTITUTE CONTACTS

You can find contact details of all our staff at this link:

[Connect | School of Biological Sciences | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](https://www.qub.ac.uk/biosciences)

Useful Contacts

Education Postgraduate Taught Queries biosciences-pgt@qub.ac.uk

School Voice Officer

Dr Chen Situ

School Disability Officer

Dr Colin McClure

School Manager

Mrs Jenny Williamson

Education Administrator

Mrs Michelle Harris

Useful Websites

University website:

[Queen's University Belfast: Shaping a Better World since 1845 \(qub.ac.uk\)](https://www.qub.ac.uk)

School Website:

[School of Biological Sciences | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](https://www.qub.ac.uk/biosciences)

University regulations:

[General Regulations | Academic & Student Affairs | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](https://www.qub.ac.uk/regulations)

The Education Team are available Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 5.00pm.

Technical Support

The Laboratory Preparation Room is open Monday to Friday, 8.30 am to 4.30 pm, except 10.35 to 11.00 am and 3.35 to 4.00 pm (3.00 to 3.25 pm Friday).

Student–Staff Communication

Written and verbal information should be provided for each module taken as part of a program. In addition, written information is provided on Canvas.

It is your responsibility to read information relating to the modules you are studying. Email is the main form of communication between the School and students – students should therefore ensure that they check for email messages on a regular basis.

We will always use the Queen’s email addresses allocated to students on the student mail server by the University - we cannot undertake to contact students at any other email address.

The University’s mail servers can be accessed within the University through the Student Computing Centres. If you need to see a member of staff, it is advisable to email and request an appointment.

You should appreciate that staff have many matters other than your particular course to attend to and so may be away from their office or Queen’s at times. If your concern is urgent, speak to another member of staff involved in the course or your Adviser. Alternatively, call in at the School Office.

Semester Dates

University Semester dates for academic year 2022-23 can be found at:

[Semester dates | About | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](#)

Student Charter and General Regulations

The University's Student Charter sets out how the University will work in partnership with you to support your learning and help you to realise your ambitions, as well as the standards of behaviour and personal responsibility that we expect from our students. The Student Charter can be found at:

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

By enrolling at Queen's University Belfast, you undertake to abide by all our regulations, policies and procedures so **it is important that you familiarise yourself with them.**

The University's Study Regulations contain important information about the rules governing progression, assessment and degree classification on all programmes. They assure the University's academic standards and ensure all students are treated consistently and equitably. They are also part of the formal contract between you and the University. The University's Study Regulations can be found at:

[Study Regulations for Postgraduate Taught Programmes | Academic & Student Affairs | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](#)

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

Breaches of University regulations may be dealt with under;

- Conduct Regulations;

[Conduct Regulations – A Student Guide | Academic & Student Affairs | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](#)

- Fitness to Practise Procedure;

[Fitness to Practise - A Student Guide | Academic & Student Affairs | Queen's University Belfast \(qub.ac.uk\)](#)

If you have any problems understanding any of these regulations, policies and procedures, or if you have any questions, it is important that you discuss them with your Personal Tutor or the Students' Union Advice Centre.

Programme Regulations

Queen's is committed to keeping our programmes up to date to ensure that our students receive a current and engaging educational experience within an innovative learning and assessment environment. This commitment means that changes to programmes can occur as part of our normal academic cycle of programme development and review.

These changes, which we believe will enhance your degree, are based on many factors, including ensuring each programme remains contemporary and viable; improving the quality of educational services; responding to student and/or external feedback; or meeting the requirements of an accrediting body.

The University will consult with students enrolled on a programme of study before any major programme change is made. The definitions of major programme changes are available at:

Degree programmes are defined by their Programme specification. Copies of these can be found at:

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

There are 8 taught post-graduate programmes within the School.

These are within:

Institute of Global Food Security
MSc in Advanced Food Safety

School of Biological Sciences:
MSc in Animal Behaviour and Welfare
MSc in Ecological Management and Conservation Biology
MSc in Molecular Biology and Biotechnology
MSc in Parasitology and Pathogen Biology

Gibson Institute:
MSc in Leadership for Sustainable Development
MSc in Leadership for Sustainable Rural Development.

At Loughry Campus of College of Agriculture Food and Rural Enterprise:
MSc in Business for Agri-Food and Rural Enterprise.

Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning methods

Within the School a wide range of different Teaching and Learning methods are used. These include lectures, tutorials, seminars, practical

classes, computer sessions, field trips/visits and demonstrations. Many of these will be compulsory and you must attend these sessions.

Modules and learning

Queen's has a system of modular degrees. A module is a unit of teaching and assessment which has a defined size as indicated by the number of CATS [Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme]. Modules can be different sizes from 10 to 60CATS. Each 10CATS is deemed to be equivalent to 100 hours of student learning. This learning usually takes several forms within each module. There will be some contact hours where you are in class – such as lectures, practical classes, tutorials, seminars and field visits. The number of contact hours will vary between modules - you can expect to spend up to 20-25 hours per week in classes, however the learning hours does not. In first year, modules tend to have more contact hours than in final year with a progression through the degree of reducing contact hours. The non-contact hours learning expected by students makes up the remaining hours – this can be related to assignments such as practical reports, presentation preparation, essay writing and review and reading around the subjects you are studying in class.

You are expected to attend lectures and are required to attend any compulsory elements [examples of these include practical classes, field courses, and presentations]. The module information you receive at the start of each module will give details of these which can also be found in the module proforma.

A full-time student is expected to study for 40 hours per week

As you progress through the degree you will be required to complete more independent work of an increasing complexity – hence the reduction in contact hours and increase in independent learning hours.

Modules are coded according to their difficulty at a specific Level. Post-graduate Masters level modules are normally coded 7 or 8.

General

Each module is coordinated by a named member of academic staff. If you have queries concerning *a particular module* (its *assessment, exam content*, etc.) you should talk to the module coordinator or in the case of an assignment, the member of staff responsible for setting the assignment. Further help can be obtained from your Adviser of Studies.

If, after talking about your problem with those mentioned above, you are still not happy, you should see either the Director of Education.

Mobile phones

Students are requested to keep mobile phones switched to silent during lectures, practicals, seminars and tutorials.

Litter

Students are requested to make every effort to keep the school of Biological Sciences building clean and tidy.

School Safety Policy

It is the policy of the University that structures should be set up to ensure that the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work Order (N.I.) 1978 are met. To this end the School has instituted a **Safety Committee** to oversee the implementation of policy and advise on local issues.

School H&S Coordinator
Dr Mark Robinson

Dr. Kostya Panov
Ms Katrina O'Connor

Dr Julie-Anne Hanna
Biohazards, Genetically Modified
Organisms
Radiation
COSSH

During your time as a student in the School you may encounter potentially hazardous situations in both laboratory work and in the field.

Courses (see the **Practicals, laboratory work and fieldwork** section of this Handbook for further important safety information). You will be advised by members of staff as to the procedures to be followed in these circumstances. It is your responsibility to follow these procedures in order to minimise the risk to yourself and others.

Should you have any concerns or queries regarding safety matters these should be addressed in the first instance to the member of staff supervising the module. Further advice may be sought from the appropriate Committee member (see above) either directly or through a SSCC representative.

Smoking is not permitted in the Medical Biology Centre or other University premises.

Changing Modules

At the start of each Academic year, students enrol onto the required modules for the whole year i.e. normally to the value of 180 CATS. If you are undecided between two optional modules, enrol for the one you think you prefer and attend the teaching sessions for both modules for the first week. If, having attended these sessions, you decide that you have made a mistake and wish to change your module enrolment, you may do so *but only in consultation with your Adviser of Studies or tutor* and then **only within the first two weeks of a semester**.

You should also, as a matter of courtesy, inform the co-ordinator of the module you are leaving as well as the co-ordinator of the 'new' module as soon as possible. The latter is so that (i) they know you are officially enrolled for that module and (ii) they can give you all the relevant information, inform you of deadlines for assignments, etc. *Do not* rely on colleagues/friends for this information as they may, in all good faith, give you

wrong information or forget to tell you something vital! Failure to enrol correctly or make a change of enrolment correctly may mean that you will receive an incorrect exam card and rectifying the mistake may involve considerable difficulties.

Lecture times

Lecture sessions begin at 5 minutes past the hour and end at 5 minutes to the hour. It is essential that students are punctual to ensure a smooth transition between sessions. Students are expected NOT to arrive late for lectures and lecturers should be aware that they must finish a lecture on time to allow the students to proceed to their next session.

Work/Research Placements

Dr Sarah Heylar and Dr Simon Doherty are the Module Co-ordinators for the Postgraduate Work Placement programmes, currently offered to students on the MSc Animal Behaviour and Welfare and MSc Ecological Management and Conservation Biology, and can be contacted at s.helyar@qub.ac.uk and simon.doherty@qub.ac.uk respectively.

The School of Biological Sciences has a dedicated Work Placement and Careers Adviser (see **Careers and Employability** for further details) – **Dionne Alexander** who is based within **Careers Employability and Skills, Student Guidance Centre** and can be contacted at:

Email: D.Alexander@qub.ac.uk Telephone: 028 9097 5301

Biological Sciences Careers homepage:
www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofBiologicalSciences/Careers

School Careers Facebook page:
www.facebook.com/QUB.Biological.Sciences.Careers

Careers and Employability

The Careers Advisers for the School of Biological Sciences is **Mark Gallagher** m.gallagher@qub.ac.uk and **Dionne Alexander** D.Alexander@qub.ac.uk. Mark and Dionne works with all undergraduate and postgraduate students

within the School, and in particular with students on the Work Placement and Professional Studies modules.

The Careers area on the Biological Sciences School website is a good starting point when seeking Careers information:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/SchoolofBiologicalSciences/BusinessCareers/>

and in particular the Careers area section.

The service offered aims to help you with:

- Decisions about life after graduation and options with your degree
- Preparation for work experience - support for students in finding suitable work experience – all students have the option of undertaking work experience as part of their degree programme. Mark runs information sessions in first year for students to explain these options.
- Information on vacancy, volunteering and international opportunities within your area of interest
- Preparing a CV, applying for jobs, and preparing for job interviews
- Preparing for a transition to year-out placements, graduate employment or postgraduate study
- Helping you to develop your employability and skills through tailored workshops and programmes.
- Appointments - One-to-one career guidance sessions via bookable guidance interviews. Appointments are available throughout the week bookable through MY FUTURE.
- Drop-in quick query sessions (appointed times weekly)

Email any queries to Mark directly at m.gallagher@qub.ac.uk or Dionne at D.Alexander@qub.ac.uk

Queen's Myfuture Careers Management system

All Queen's students are offered a Myfuture account as part of the enrolment and registration process. Log in at www.qub.ac.uk/myfuture using your Queen's email address as normal Queen's password. Included in your Myfuture account are the following features:

- A Careers, Employability & Skills (**CES**) and Learning Development Service (**LDS**) **Appointments** booking tool (to book individual or

group time with Mark Gallagher the School Careers and Work Placement Adviser)

- A **Careers Events** listing and booking tool (career workshops, employer presentations and careers fairs)
- **Job Advertisements** with both advanced and intelligent job search systems. These match opportunities to your Degree, Year group and previous job search history (graduate jobs, placements, Queen's Jobshop, internships, summer work and other jobs). Make use of the Advanced and Saved Search tools to create a personalised list of jobs from the sectors that interest you (these can also be emailed to you on a daily or weekly basis). This can also be useful to identify jobs for students on the Queen's campus and part time work to support yourself during your studies.

Practicals, laboratory work and fieldwork

Practical schedules

For many of our modules which have a practical component you will be issued with a Handbook either in hard copy or via Queen's On Line (QOL). This will contain the basic information about the various practical exercises you will undertake in the laboratory classes. A charge may be made to cover the cost of production of a hard copy of the Handbook together with the production of supplementary lecture handouts, etc. during the term.

It is important that students read the specific practical information given in the handbook BEFORE entering the lab as this will save time when carrying out the practical.

Laboratory practice – Health and safety

During practical classes students normally work in groups, however in some module individual work is required. **Equipment and laboratory assistance are at such a premium that it is imperative that you clean and put away all your equipment (e.g. slides, test tubes, watch glasses, etc.) as directed and clean up your work area at the end of each practical by discarding waste paper, specimens and parts of specimens for which there is no further use. Only dispose of wastes as directed and do not mix up different waste types. Waste organic materials, plastics, solvents, broken glassware and sharps (blades, needles, etc.) must**

be disposed of in specific ways. Sharps and broken glass must NEVER be disposed of in an ordinary waste bin. IF IN DOUBT- ASK!

It is imperative for two reasons that you follow instructions in the laboratory and maintain orderliness and cleanliness. Firstly, good practical science CANNOT be conducted in a messy working situation. Secondly, and more importantly, the health and safety of YOU AND OTHER PEOPLE IN THE LAB WITH YOU can only be maintained with good laboratory practice. This is largely common sense but you should make yourself aware of the location of:

- Fire exits
- Eyewash bottles
- Taps – for washing off spills
- Fume cupboards
- First aid boxes

It is essential that you report the occurrence of any incident or accident to the member of academic staff in charge of the practical.

COSSH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) Risk assessments will have been carried out on the practicals in the module and details of safety procedures to be adhered to will be given in the schedule.

ALLERGENS

If you have any allergies which may be relevant to any elements of your studies, these must be disclosed to the member of academic staff in charge of the practical.

School Policy on Use of Animals in Laboratory and Field Classes

A number of modules require students to handle, manipulate and, in a limited number of cases, dissect specially preserved or recently dead invertebrates and vertebrates. This will normally be indicated clearly in the module information. Preserved material is purchased from reputable dealers. Live animals for dissection are specially bred and killed humanely under Home Office License. In field classes, invertebrates required for investigations are killed using humane methods under the direction of a responsible member of staff.

We believe that aspects of the structure and function of animals can only be taught effectively through handling appropriate material. Further, the manipulative skills which some students might be required to apply during

their final year research projects are only acquired through familiarity and practice. Animals are used where there is no practical alternative and we never enter into their use lightly. We attach a high level of importance to restricting animal use to those situations where it is absolutely necessary. We also expect students to behave responsibly and ethically in the use of both living and dead animals

Code of Conduct of Postgraduates in Practical Classes

This protocol is for the benefit of the health and safety of all present in practical student education, and for the assistance of demonstrators, academic and technical staff.

- It is the responsibility of each student to know the attendance requirement for the practical classes in their modules. Failure to meet this requirement may lead to failure in the module.
- Advanced notice of legitimate absences must be given to the member of staff in charge of the practical or to the School Office.
- Students unable to attend a practical must submit an exceptional circumstances form, with evidence to the School Office within three days of the class otherwise they will be marked as ABSENT.
- Students must attend punctually – students arriving late may be denied access on grounds of being absent during health and safety information and/or instructions about their own or others work.
- Mobile phones must be switched off at all times.

White lab coats and safety glasses, as required, must be worn at all times by students. Failure to bring your lab coat to a practical session will result in students not being able to complete the practical and being recorded as ABSENT.

- No food or drink must be taken into or consumed in the laboratory.
- All students must observe the safety advice given by staff or in the Practical Class schedule.
- All students must attend to instructions regarding the practical class given by staff at any time prior to or during the practical class or included in the Practical Class schedule.
- Students must not leave the class without first consulting the member of staff in charge, unless in an emergency.

- Attendance sheets must be signed if provided – this is the responsibility of each student. Students not recorded as present may fail the module by non-attendance.
- Students should make themselves familiar with the location of all the equipment and consumables that they need before starting the practical.
- Materials and small items of equipment related to practical classes generally will not be set out individually but should be collected from elsewhere in the lab, i.e. the end of benches.
- Students should use larger items of equipment as required, only after they have been trained in their use.
- Accidents must be drawn to the attention of a demonstrator or member of staff responsible for the practical class immediately.
- Breakages must be reported immediately to a demonstrator or member of staff responsible for the practical class.
- All waste materials should be disposed of as directed, i.e. using the appropriate bins for paper, organic material and sharp items such as needles and glass slides.
- At the end of practical classes students must clean small items of equipment, return them to the end of the bench or other location as directed by the staff and clean their bench surfaces.
- Students must check with demonstrators/staff that the practical is complete and their benches are cleared and cleaned before leaving the class.
- Untidy, dirty bench spaces will be noted and students will lose attendance credit for the class, possibly resulting in failure of the module.
- It is the responsibility of each student to record all information required to complete a practical, including the write-up (if any).
- It is the responsibility of each student to know what is required to complete a practical write-up and when it has to be submitted.

In all cases, students uncertain about any of these procedures must ask the demonstrators or staff.

Failure to comply with this Code of Conduct may result in students losing module/course credit.

Demonstrators

Postgraduate student demonstrators will be allocated to assist students with their work in the laboratory or in field classes. Their job is to assist you with the practical work by answering your questions and helping you to master the various techniques. Do not hesitate to ask your demonstrators for assistance - *they are there to help you.*

Guide to practical reports/write-ups

Assignments associated with practical classes vary between and within modules. It is your responsibility to understand what is required of you in any specific report. In some cases you will complete and submit a template form within the practical class, in other cases you will be required to complete a full report with a specified submission date up to 2 weeks after the practical class.

You will learn more about the structure of these reports and how to write up an experimental report.

Within the resources folder for this module on QOL there is a report writing guide which should be consulted if you are unsure.

Attendance

As stated above you must attend compulsory classes and it is your responsibility to ensure you have signed in for these classes on any attendance sheet issued during the session. There may also be attendance records taken in other classes. Attendance may be used as an indicator of a student who is 'at risk' and as a consequence be called to the **School Student Support Committee**.

International students are required to confirm attendance following the School Procedure which can be found in the School student share site on QoL.

1. Assessment and Feedback

A wide range of different types of assessment are used throughout the degree pathways within the School. It is your responsibility to ensure you are clear of the assessment within your modules and what is required of you.

Many modules include coursework and an examination as forms of assessment, whilst others may be coursework or exam only.

The weighting of the marks between coursework and examination will vary depending on the module and can be found in the module information available to students registered on a module and the module proforma.

Coursework

Details of the coursework requirements for each module are provided in the module information available to students registered on a module.

Students should ensure they:

- Read the instruction for the coursework carefully and do what is asked.
- Review the assessment criteria – where provided.
- Reference correctly:
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/learning/Resources/Referencing/>
- Consult with the Learning Development service for advice on structure where needed:
<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sgc/learning/WritingSkillsResources/Referencing/>
- Ensure work is submitted in the correct format with any cover sheet attached and completed.
- Ensure work is submitted in the correct way either electronically to QOL or via the assignment post box in the School Office.
- Late submission of assessed work will be penalised according to the University Regulations. If you are unable to submit an assignment due to extenuation circumstances, you must submit a completed exceptional circumstances form and associated evidence of exceptional circumstances to the School office **BEFORE** the assignment deadline.
- **Use of Turnitin**
In some modules you will be required to submit your work to Turnitin which is a 'similarity' software. This is used as a tool to judge whether you have plagiarised your work. In some cases it is used as a training tool for you and you will be able to see the report, in other cases you will not be able to see the report.

Examinations

If you enrol on a module which includes an examination as part of the assessment, you will obtain your examination card – giving details of when and where the exam takes place through your QGIS/QOL account.

University regulations state that - **Any student who presents themselves for an examination is deemed fit to take the examination. This means you cannot later claim you were ill when you took an examination.**

If you are ill at the time of an examination you should not attend the exam and MUST submit an exceptional circumstances form with evidence to the School Office within 3 days of the examination. See the University Exceptional Circumstances Procedure at (<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/StudentGuidance/ExceptionalCircumstances-AStudentGuide/>), the further guidance on Exceptional Circumstances given below and the School Exceptional Circumstances Procedures in the School of Biological Science student shared site on QOL.

Detection of Plagiarism and Collusion

Similarity detection tools such as [Turnitin.com](http://www.turnitin.com) compare the material in student assignments against databases of millions of manuscripts, books, journals and more than a billion web sites and are used in the School of Biological Sciences.

As stated earlier – **YOU MUST UNDERSTAND HOW TO REFERENCE EXTERNAL MATERIALS CORRECTLY.** Be warned: Signs of collusion and plagiarism are easily spotted by assessors and they will be obliged to take disciplinary action.

Academic Misconduct

In order to safeguard our academic standards and the integrity of our awards the University has procedures in place for dealing with suspected academic misconduct. The procedure details types of academic misconduct, such as cheating in an examination, plagiarism, collusion and fabrication, how suspected offences are investigated and the penalties that can be imposed. The procedure also details students' rights of appeal in cases relating to academic misconduct.

A Student Guide on the Academic Offences Procedure can be found at: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/AppealsComplaintsandMisconduct/AcademicOffences/Student-Guide/>

The full Procedures for Dealing with Academic Offences can be found at: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/Procedures/ProceduresforDealingwithAcademicOffences/>

Compulsory elements

Most modules have a number of compulsory elements associated with them.

There may be a requirement for a student to attain a minimum percentage in an element of the assessment (e.g. 35% in the written examination; 50% in continuous assessment), to attend all of the practical classes, to attend special elements of the module (e.g. a field course or class test), to submit essays or reports.

To obtain modular credit a student has to obtain an overall pass mark (50%) in the assessment (written examination(s), continuous assessment, etc.) AND satisfy all of the stipulated compulsory elements for that module.

It is vitally important that students are clearly aware of and ensure they complete the compulsory elements of each of their modules. Compulsory elements for all of the School's modules are given in the information provided at the start of each module and the module proforma.

If a student completes a module, but has not satisfied all the compulsory elements then the mark returned will be:

- 1) For an overall failed mark [$<50\%$], the mark and F with the failed elements identified e.g. 35Fe for failed exam or 35Feca where both exam and coursework are failed.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that he/she is fully aware of all of the requirements in the assessment of each module.

Marking and moderation procedures

Prior to the examinations, examination questions are scrutinized by the 'Internal Examiners' (Academic Staff) and then are seen by one or more External Examiners (appointed by the University) for their approval.

The university has guidelines for the assessment of assignments. This ensures equity of marking across modules and subjects.

The Conceptual Equivalents scale is used for all marking except where it is unsuitable as indicated in the guidelines.

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/media/Media.464089.en.pdf>

Following marking and collation of marks, these are reviewed by an External examiner and confirmed by the School Module/Subject Examination Board.

Prior to the Examination board meeting, the Exceptional Circumstances Committee will meet to consider exceptional circumstances forms submitted

by students and make recommendations to the Examinations Boards. The School Examination Board may accept or reject these recommendations.

Marks are entered onto official mark sheets together with a lettered coding to indicate the outcome of the module i.e. PASS, FAIL MNA, Ph etc. In most instances there will also be an indication of which elements are failed i.e. 'e' for exam, 'ca' for coursework. .

Release of results

All results will be available through QSIS and accessed by using your Student Number and password. You may also obtain results from your Adviser of Studies once they have been approved and released by the Examinations Office.

The marks of any students who are either under suspension for whatever reason or who have not paid their fees (especially for resits) will not be released until the suspension is lifted and/or fees are paid.

The results for modules will be posted in Qsis as soon as possible. The results of resit exams should be available during the first week in September

Delivery methods and timing of feedback

All school staff aim to return marked coursework within 3 weeks of submission. Any exceptions to this will be notified at the start of a module. Feedback can be given in many forms not just the written word on assignments. Examples include: general comments in class, peer review, specific oral feedback in class. In some cases feedback sheets with specific criteria will be used, in other cases free form written comment will be used. Feedback can be to individual students or to group/s of students. Often students make common mistakes or have similar areas where they have excelled or need to improve and in these cases group feedback is most effective.

Importance of feedback

FEEDBACK IS NOT JUST YOUR MARK. Whilst the mark indicates how you have done in an assignment, it does to indicate where what you did well or where you could improve. It is vital that students read carefully any feedback comments or listen to any oral feedback. If you do not, then you will make the same mistakes in your next submission and your marks will not improve.

Feedback is key to improving your marks it is imperative that you use

feedback as a learning tool. If you do not understand some of your feedback – you should consult the assignment marker.

2. Student Feedback

Student feedback on their academic and other experiences whilst at Queen's is an essential part of the review processes within the university.

The School places great value on the feedback from students and does act on this feedback where it can. There are formal mechanisms to provide feedback as described below, however any student or group of students who feels they need to provide feedback urgently should do so to the appropriate member of staff.

Written mechanisms for providing feedback about programmes, include:

- Teaching and module evaluations which take place for each module after it has been delivered.
(<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/UsefullInformation/ReflectivePracticeforStaff/StudentEvaluationofTeaching/>)
- The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) is conducted online, normally between March – June
(<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/CentreforEducationalDevelopment/UsefullInformation/AssessmentandFeedback/StudentFeedback/StudentSurveys/ThePostgraduateTaughtExperienceSurvey/>)

Within the School there are other mechanisms to provide feedback: **Course Representative(s)**

“**Course Reps**” as they are called, are elected by their peers and are members of the Staff/Student Consultative Committee. Student members will serve for one year after which they are eligible for re-election. Elections for membership are normally held at the start of the first semester, preferably not later than the second week of October.

Student Voice Committee

Chair: Dr Chen Situ (c.situ@qub.ac.uk)

It is a University requirement that every School and Institute must establish at least one **Student Voice Committee**. The purpose is:

1. To ensure that Schools and Institutes receive evaluation and feedback from students on the quality of their academic provision and associated activities.
2. To provide a mechanism whereby Heads of Schools and Institutes can seek the views of students on matters of policy related to course development and review.
3. To enable discussion of areas of concern for students in terms of academic provision and related activities.

The committee will be made up of equal numbers of the academic staff and students of the School. The students of each School shall also elect a **School Representative**, who shall act as the student chair or co-chair. The Students' Union President will make a summary report to each meeting of Academic Board on the operation of, and matters arising from, the committee.

Meetings

The committee meets at least four times a year, normally twice in each semester. Additional meetings may be called if requested in writing to the Chairperson and agenda items can be proposed at least two weeks in advance by any member of the Committee via e-mail to the Chair. Notices of meetings, with the agenda, will be distributed at least one week in advance of the meeting. There are reports to each meeting on any relevant matters which have arisen since the previous meeting. Minutes of all meetings of the Committee are emailed to members, posted on the School QOL site and reported to School Board.

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

3. Employment during the Academic Year

We recognise that some students may have to work part-time whilst completing their degree. There are a number of good reasons for doing this, as part-time work can help you to:

- Develop valuable employability skills that will impress future employers;
- Gain experience and a greater understanding of the workplace;
- Access and develop networking opportunities;
- Support yourself financially during your studies.

However, the University strongly recommends that students on full-time programmes devote **NO MORE THAN 15 HOURS PER WEEK TO PAID EMPLOYMENT**. There is strong evidence to show that significant levels of part-time work can compromise your academic progress and affect degree outcomes.

Please note that International Students may have prohibitions or restrictions on working in the UK. It is very important that you confirm you have a legal right to work and if you do have the right to work, that you don't exceed the permitted hours, as stated on your visa. If you work in excess of these restrictions, the University must report this as a breach of your visa conditions to UKVI. This may result in the University withdrawing sponsorship of your visa (which means that you will no longer be permitted to study at the University) and UKVI curtailing your leave. If you will be working for the University, you will be provided with a Weekly Work Log by Oncampus Jobs to help you to keep track of your hours worked. Further information can be found at: <http://www.qub.ac.uk/sites/iss/>

We do urge you to be sensible about how you manage your study, work and social time to get the best result you can from your degree. If you do have financial pressures that mean you have to work more hours than is advisable, please come and talk to us. Both the Student Income and Finance Department in the Student Guidance Centre and the Students' Union can give you advice on funds that are available to help students in your position. The Learning Development Service <http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sqc/learning/> can also offer advice on time management.

Register with Oncampus Jobs to access a range of opportunities and fairly paid part-time jobs at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/sqc/careers/>

4. International Student Support – English Language Support

The Graduate School organise events aimed at PG students. In particular the following events may be relevant:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/graduate-school/events/ShutUpWriteOngoing.html>

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/graduate-school/events/PeerProofreading.html>

In regards to English language support at the University, unfortunately, there is no central service for postgraduate students similar to the undergraduate Learning Development Service. INTO Queen's organise in-session English classes at a reduced cost for Queen's students but these classes will not take place again until October.

Generally students who contact International Student Support are requesting help with their understanding of English or a proof-readers list. We, therefore, refer them to the following online sources or provide them with a list of people who have registered their interest in proof-reading:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/learningenglish/english/>

<https://www.britishcouncil.org/english>

A private organisation – International House – offer one-to-one or two-to-one classes with a trained English tutor, however, this is costly and the students should be made aware that the University is not responsible for the service:

<https://www.ihbelfast.com/en/courses/>

5. Department Student Support Arrangements

Students' Expectations and Problems

Students should have high expectations of higher education in general, and the School in particular. We are subject to external review, but students also have an important role in raising standards and maintaining the relevance of our degree programmes. We have written generic and specific objectives for each degree programme, contained in the Programme Specification and this Handbook. By raising concerns and making constructive criticisms, students assist in the development of what we aim to do and how we realise stated objectives. This input is taken seriously and is highly valued.

The quality of the degree obtained by each student, however, is substantially determined by the efforts of that individual. While students rightly expect much of us, we expect considerable efforts from students regarding attendance at classes and engagement in their learning. The University regulations state that 'students are expected to attend lectures and other classes for the modules for which they are enrolled.'

Failure to attend will inhibit your learning and therefore have a negative effect on assessment results. Attendance at lectures and classes may be monitored, and poor attendance could result in a requirement to appear before the School Student Support Committee. Attention to seminar, tutorial and project work is essential to take advantage of academic staff expertise. Most students who fail have poor attendance records. Students who do not submit continuous assessment invariably fail. Staff expect students to read around their courses using the course textbook(s) or given references. Staff expect students to maintain a good set of notes, and employ good revision and examination techniques. Students should be aware that the University defines the time involvement of a student as equivalent to 40 hours per week, and a substantial proportion of this time commitment involves unsupervised and undirected private study on the part of the student.

Within your university studies you are responsible for your own learning, you will not be chased regarding attendance, and assignments etc. as you were at school.

Problems

Many students progress through their studies with little difficulty. However, when problems arise, students should contact their Personal Tutor or Adviser of Studies. Often the **Adviser of Studies** is the first point of contact for

students facing all kinds of academic problems. Other problems should be referred to the Personal Tutor. Problems will be dealt with in confidence, other staff being involved only where absolutely necessary and with the permission of the student. In addition, Dr John Hallsworth chairs the School Student Support Committee which meets with students who have been identified as being a cause for concern regarding their progress.

See also '**What to do if things aren't going well**' below.

Role of Adviser of Studies

Upon admission, each postgraduate student is assigned to an Adviser of Studies. The duties of the Adviser are there:

- To discuss with a student any changes he or she may wish to make to the chosen course of study i.e.:
 - With respect to changes in modules within the first two weeks of a semester and to implement these changes on QGIS if agreed.
 - Degree programme changes and transfers,
 - Academic problems
- To discuss students' marks in past examinations.
- To write references for students.
- To be in attendance at School Student Support Committee meetings and to brief the Committee members on any of the Adviser's students appearing before the Committee.
- To attend meetings of the School Education Committee and Staff-Student Consultative Committee.

These duties are currently under review and will be advised accordingly.

6. What to do if things aren't going well

At Queen's we understand that students may encounter times when things are not going well for one reason or another and this can have an impact on their studies. Support and advice for students on the following issues can be found at:

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

Absence from Study

If you are absent from your studies for medical reasons you must complete an exceptional circumstances form **and** submit this along with independent

evidence to the School Office – refer to Exceptional Circumstances below. .If you are having other issue which mean you are unable to or are not attending classes, you should discuss these with your Advisor of Studies. There are many reasons why students do not attend classes, however it is much better to discuss these with your Advisor who can help to give you options which may mean you can continue on your course.

If you are considering taking a break from your studies you can also discuss this with your Personal Tutor.

Changing your Course

If you decide you would like to change your course to another one *within* Queen's, you should contact the School for your proposed course and discuss your eligibility with them. You will need to complete a Transfer form available from the School office and also on QOL.

If you wish to transfer to a course *outside* Queen's, you should consult the new institution and then complete a withdrawal form, permanently withdrawing you from your studies at Queen's. Withdrawal forms are available from the School Office and also QOL.

Temporary Withdrawal

Any student wishing to take a break/temporary withdrawal from their studies should discuss this with their Advisor of Studies in the first instance. If you wish to withdraw temporarily with the intention of returning to your studies, you should complete a withdrawal form and submit it to the School Office. Normally students can only withdraw for a maximum of one year and after 2 successive one year withdrawals will automatically be permanently withdrawn if they do not return to their studies. Withdrawal forms are available from the School Office and also QOL. It is your best interests to follow these procedures as you may be charged for fees unnecessarily it may affect your ability to return to your studies in the future.

Withdrawal from the University

If you decide you wish to withdraw from you studies, you should discuss this with your Advisor of Studies and then complete a withdrawal form. Withdrawal forms are available from the School Office and also QOL.

Exceptional Circumstances

Things may not always go to plan during your time at University; something may happen that has an impact on you personally or on your academic progress. You must also indicate how you have been affected by the

circumstances in relation to your studies. Ideally your supporting evidence i.e. a doctor's note should support this. If any such factors have a significant effect on you and your studies (especially around the time of assessment deadlines or exams), you should always let your tutor or Advisor of studies know at the earliest opportunity.

The university has a list of acceptable Exceptional Circumstances which are:

- Death of a close relative or friend.
- Serious illness of student.
- Serious illness of a close relative.
- Hospitalisation.
- Acute Personal/Emotional Circumstances.
- Victim of Crime.
- Significant Financial Problems.
- Serious personal disruption.
- Pregnancy.

And definitions can be found at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/StudentGuidance/ExceptionalCircumstances-AStudentGuide/>

The exceptional circumstances form must cover the appropriate time period for which exceptional circumstances is being sought along with independent evidence to support your application. Evidence must be of a sufficient quality and detail to convince the panel that it would have been impossible for you to sit the examinations or submit the coursework. The process is confidential so you should not feel inhibited about submitting any relevant documents. (Note that a letter from a family member or friend will not be considered). The school rules regarding exceptional circumstances can be found on the School of Biological Sciences students shared drive on QOL. See also '**Absence from classes or examination due to ill health**' below.

Student Support Meetings

The School Programme Examination Board makes all decisions regarding progression of students from one Stage of their degree to the next. Where students have not met the requirements to progress, or are required to withdraw, the Examination Board will inform the students in writing of their situation.

Students who:

- 1) Have failed two or more modules.
- 2) Have failed to meet an agreed academic target.

- 3) Are ineligible to proceed to the next stage of study.
- 4) Are ineligible for the award of a degree or other qualification on completion of the final stage of your studies.

will be called to a Student Support Meeting within 10 working days of the deadline for the publication of results. The School may also call students about whom they have a general concern following the publication of results.

The purpose of the meeting is to explain the academic progress decision made by the Examination board, to the student and ensure that appropriate support is in place.

Schools are required to have processes in place to ensure that the School Support Meetings include at least two members of senior School staff who are appropriately qualified to advise students on their progress. Where possible Schools should ensure a gender balance in the membership of the meeting.

School Student Support Meetings have no decision-making authority regarding a student's progress and cannot consider evidence of exceptional circumstances which students present at the meeting. Students presenting evidence of exceptional circumstances at this point should only be advised by the Support Meeting to appeal to Central Student Appeals Committee if the evidence is new and could not have been presented to the Board of Examiners through the SECC. All advice given to the student at the meeting should be recorded in the minutes by the meeting secretary.

A guide for students is available at:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/StudentGuidance/StudentSupportMeetings-AStudentGuide/>

School Student Support Committee

The School Student Support Committee is responsible for monitoring student attendance, performance and progress at all Stages. The Committee normally consists of a Chair and at least one senior member of staff/advisor of studies. The student's Advisor of Studies is also usually in attendance. The Committee meets regularly throughout the year to consider poor performance of students and offer support.

The Committee will consider evidence of engagement through attendance, academic performance and other indicators and will contact relevant staff for information. The Committee expect students to attend and students should consult with their Advisors of Studies before attending a meeting (please see information on SharePoint).

Academic Appeals

Academic appeals are for students seeking the amendment or reversal of a decision taken by an Examination Board as a consequence of their academic performance. Prior to submitting a formal written appeal to Academic Affairs, students are advised to discuss the matter with an Adviser of Studies or Personal Tutor in the School, and to contact the Students' Union for advice and information on the Academic Appeals Procedure.

To initiate the appeals process, a student must complete all sections of the Central Students Appeal Committee Appeal Form and submit it to Academic Affairs within fifteen working days of the date of the publication of your examination results. If you miss this deadline the Committee will not be able to hear your appeal.

See:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicAffairs/AppealsComplaintsandMisconduct/AcademicAppeals/CentralStudentAppealsCommittee/CentralStudentAppealsCommitteeCSAC-AStudentGuide/>

Student Complaints Procedure

Queen's University is dedicated to the highest scholarship and research in an environment of equality, tolerance and mutual respect for all its staff and students. The following student complaints procedure is one of a range of quality assurance mechanisms designed to help achieve and maintain these highest standards.

This procedure is restricted to circumstances not covered by other regulations or procedures, (e.g. academic appeals, admission, fees or discipline). **It cannot be used to challenge academic judgement or any academic matter or procedure, including the outcome of an academic appeal or decision making process.**

The procedure can be used for both individual and collective concerns and complaints relating to;

- Services or facilities provided by the University including teaching and academic facilities and services
- Complaints against staff of harassment or discrimination
- Student Support Services
- Administrative Services
- An alleged action or inaction by the University.

See:

7. Student Support and Development

The University has a wide range of support services and opportunities open to students. Information on these is available on-line through Student Gateway website: www.qub.ac.uk/studentinfo

The range of support includes:

- PDP
- Accommodation
- Careers and Employability
- Degree Plus
- Chaplaincy
- Counselling
- Students with disabilities
- Finance
- Health Centre
- Learning Development Service
- Library
- Queen's sport (PEC)
- Scholarships and Prizes
- Study Abroad/ERASMUS
- Study Support
- Student Guidance Centre
- Students' Union
- Student Computing Centres
- International Students
- Postgraduate Centre
- Postgraduate Funding
- Languages for Non-Specialists
- Health and Safety
- School support mechanisms
- QSIS and QOL
- Mature and part-time students
- Childcare
- Students Intervention Protocol
- Change of address/details

- Anti-bullying and Harassment Policy
- Starting University
- Students with Experience of Care