

UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER

STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS POLICY

CONTENTS	Page
INTRODUCTION	
Overall Aims of the Policy	3
Widening Participation	3
University Regulations	3
1. PRINCIPLES OF SELECTION	
Aims of Selection	4
Selection Criteria	4
2. GENERAL ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS	
Undergraduate Programmes	5
Postgraduate Taught Programmes	5
Research Degree Programmes	5
International Qualifications	5
Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)	5
3. DISABLED APPLICANTS	
3.1 Selection and Entry Criteria	6
3.2 Professional Bodies and Health and Safety Issues	6
3.3 Communication during the Application Process	7
3.4 Administration of the Admissions Process	7
4. ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES	
UCAS Procedure	7
Applications made directly to the University	8
Acknowledgement of receipt of Application	8
Assessment of Tuition Fees	8
Fraudulent Statements/Omissions	8
Applicants seeking Deferred Entry	8
Procedures for Making Offers	8
Feedback to Unsuccessful Applicants	9
Use of Applicant Data	9
5. STUDENT FINANCE	11
6. ADMISSIONS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES	11

APPENDICES	Page
Appendix 1 - Regulatory Framework of Policy	12
Appendix 2 - General Entrance Requirements for Undergraduate Programmes	15
Appendix 3 - Entrance Requirements for Taught Postgraduate Programmes	18
Appendix 4 - Entrance Requirements for Research Degree Programmes	19
Appendix 5 - International Qualifications	21
Appendix 6 - Accreditation of Prior Certificated or Experiential Learning	22
Appendix 7 - Procedures for dealing with applicants or students with criminal convictions	23
Appendix 8 - Admissions Complaints Procedure	29

INTRODUCTION

Overall Aims of the Policy

The aims of the Student Recruitment and Admissions Policy are to ensure that:

1. a wide range of flexible educational and training opportunities are available, designed to meet the needs of the community in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.
2. opportunities to access and progress to higher-level study are developed in line with market demand and higher education guidelines
3. selection is based primarily on academic criteria and therefore no candidate should be excluded from entry to a programme by reason of religious belief, political opinion, racial group, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or responsibility for dependants
4. adult learners have equitable and equal access to higher education
5. a suitable learning environment is provided for all students

Widening Participation

The University is committed to widening participation and encourages applications from groups of people who are known to be disadvantaged by traditional selection mechanisms. It is proactive in engaging with community groups in order to encourage participation and raise aspirations. It is keen to identify alternative methods for demonstrating an ability to meet selection criteria.

University Regulations

The University's Student Recruitment and Admissions Policy is compliant with all appropriate national legislation and University Regulations. It also takes account of national guidelines governing the recruitment and admission of students, for example, the Quality Assurance Agency's Code of Practice. Further details may be found in Appendix 1.

1. PRINCIPLES OF SELECTION

1.1 Aims of Selection

- 1.1.1 To attract and retain students, from a wide and diverse community, who have the potential to complete their programme of study successfully and benefit from the experience. Where places are limited, available places are offered to those applicants who are best able to contribute to and benefit from an education in their chosen programme.
- 1.1.2 The University is committed to transparency in its admissions procedures. All applicable selection criteria are published in relevant recruitment literature (e.g. Prospectus, School brochures) and on relevant websites (e.g. the University website, and the Entry Profiles on the UCAS website).
- 1.1.3 Selection is primarily based on academic criteria; and therefore no candidate should be excluded from entry to a programme by reason of religious belief, political opinion, racial group, gender, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability or responsibility for dependants.

1.2 Selection Criteria

- 1.2.1 The admissions criteria will take into account institutional policy, national guidelines, and relevant legislation.
- 1.2.2 Selection criteria are measured using appropriate and effective methods. Criteria are only used where appropriate methods are available.
- 1.2.3 Selection criteria are considered carefully in order to ensure that the assessment of applicants is fair and transparent.
- 1.2.4 Selection criteria must be reviewed regularly in order to ensure their ongoing relevance to developing curricula and teaching and learning practice, and in the light of changes in the applicant pool.
- 1.2.5 Equivalent criteria should be considered for all applicants. For applicants where standard procedures do not produce equivalent evidence, the University may seek and take into account additional information. Such additional information can include alternative evidence of an ability to meet the selection criteria and evidence regarding the reasons why it was not possible to demonstrate meeting the criteria by standard procedures
- 1.2.6 Evidence may be gathered through a variety of means including interview, tests, reference, or the assessment of previous employment experience or academic work.

2. GENERAL ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

2.1 Undergraduate Programmes

The University applies General Entrance Requirements to all of its undergraduate programmes. General Entrance Requirements represent the minimum qualifications which applicants are normally expected to present for entry. Further details of these are provided in Appendix 2. However, all programmes will specify additional entrance requirements and these appear against *individual programme entries* in the University's printed prospectuses and on-line prospectuses for taught programmes at: <http://prospectus.ulster.ac.uk/> .

2.2 Postgraduate Taught Programmes

The University normally requires applicants to its taught postgraduate programmes to possess a degree or equivalent qualification from a recognised institution. Further information may be found in Appendix 3. Where a taught postgraduate programme has specific entry requirements, these will be detailed against the individual programme entry in the University's printed prospectuses and on-line prospectuses for taught programmes at: <http://prospectus.ulster.ac.uk/>

2.3 Research Degree Programmes

Applicants to any of the University's research degree programmes should possess a first or upper second class honours degree or equivalent qualification in a relevant subject of study. Further information may be found in Appendix 4 and on the following website: <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/rps/prospects/index.phtml>

2.4 International Qualifications

The University accepts a broad range of international qualifications. Further information may be found in Appendix 5. General information and contact details for more specific advice may also be accessed on the International Office website at: <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/international/>

2.5 Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL)

The University recognises both certificated and experiential learning irrespective of the context in which it is achieved. Accordingly, the University will accredit alternative forms of learning, provided these can be evidenced in writing and authenticated at the appropriate level. A summary of the guiding principles underpinning the University's policy on Accreditation of Prior Certificated or Experiential Learning may be found in Appendix 6. The full policy is available on the following website:

<http://www.ulster.ac.uk/academicoffice/download/Policies/APELPolicy.doc>

3. DISABLED APPLICANTS

The University strives to be an inclusive learning environment and welcomes and encourages applications from persons with a disability.

3.1 Selection and Entry Criteria

3.1.1 The University recognises that standard selection measures and procedures may not enable disabled applicants to demonstrate fully their competence for their chosen programme and so will seek to take into account alternative evidence, such as examples of previous work, additional references or evidence gained during interview in order to ensure equivalent consideration (see also section 1.2.6)

3.1.2 The University will also consider making reasonable adjustments to those general entrance requirements which are essential to a programme but not attainable for a disability related reason.

3.1.3 The University will work with professional and qualification bodies to try and ensure that disabled applicants are not discriminated against.

3.2 Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies and Health and Safety Issues

3.2.1 The requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies will be made clear in programme publications and applications will be considered in the context of any reasonable adjustments that might be made to programme delivery or assessment processes.

3.2.2 Where an application is made to a programme which is subject to professional standards of fitness, consideration of reasonable adjustments will be offered as part of the process of Occupational Health screening procedures.

3.2.3 The University is committed to ensuring that an individual assessment is carried out relating to genuine Health and Safety risks. In cases where it appears that a genuine risk to the Health and Safety of students and staff cannot be managed adequately, concerns will be discussed openly with the applicant in order that the decision making process is fully transparent and all alternative solutions are fully explored.

3.3 Communication During the Application Process

- 3.3.1 All applicants are encouraged to inform the University about disabilities, long term medical conditions or mental ill health at an early stage in order to discuss the support which may be required
- 3.3.2 Applicants who disclose a disability are assured that the information provided will be treated sensitively and in accordance with the University's Data Protection policy.
- 3.3.3 Disability Services will take the initiative in contacting all students who disclose a disability or medical condition (including mental ill-health) during the application process, so that the student is aware of the support available whilst studying at the University and is informed about the programme content during the application process.
- 3.3.4 Applicants are encouraged to contact Disability Services at any time during the application process to discuss matters related to the support the University may put in place for them and to discuss their chosen programme of study.

3.4 Administration of the Admissions Process

- 3.4.1 All University staff involved in the admissions process will be careful to note the potential need to make reasonable adjustments to procedures for disabled applicants.
- 3.4.2 In order to facilitate applications, admissions staff may seek further information from the candidate and/or colleagues as appropriate.

The University provides information specifically for disabled applicants. This is maintained by Disability Services and Student Recruitment Services. Further information may be accessed at: <http://www.studentsupport.ulster.ac.uk/disability/>

4. ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES

4.1 UCAS Procedure

The University will observe the procedures and deadlines for the handling of applications as set out by UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service). All applications for admission to full-time undergraduate degree programmes must normally be made

through UCAS except for applicants who are already in higher education and are transferring to a different programme.

4.2 Applications made directly to the University

Applications to part-time, postgraduate, research, exchange and study abroad programmes are made directly to the University. Deadlines by which applications must be submitted will vary, and will be publicised by the University.

4.3 Acknowledgement of receipt of application

Applicants will receive an acknowledgement of their application from UCAS or directly from the University.

4.4 Assessment of tuition fees

Where the fees status of an applicant is unclear, applicants may be asked to provide further information. This information will be used solely to determine home or overseas status for the purpose of tuition fees.

4.5 Fraudulent Statements/Omissions

Admission to the University is subject to applicants disclosing all facts and information relevant to their application. If, during the course of the consideration of an application, an applicant is discovered to have omitted any information requested in the instructions or the application form, or has made any misrepresentation therein or given false information, the University reserves the right to withdraw an offer of a place and/or dismiss their application.

4.6 Applicants seeking deferred entry

The University will consider requests from applicants for deferred entry for a maximum of one year. Applicants should be aware that deferred entry may not always be granted. The decision whether or not to offer a place to applicants for deferred entry rests with the selectors of the programme.

4.7 Procedures for Making Offers

4.7.1 When making offers to full-time undergraduate programmes which are conditional upon subsequent achievement in examination the University normally uses the UCAS tariff points system. However, where appropriate the University may also specify specific subjects and grades or alternative means of demonstrating competence

- 4.7.2 Applicants to full-time undergraduate programmes should note that the formal notification of decisions is conveyed through UCAS. This will include details of the conditions which may be attached to an offer of a place. Applicants who are unclear about the conditions of any offer are advised to contact the Faculty offering the programme.
- 4.7.3 Applicants to part-time, postgraduate and research programmes are notified directly by the University of decisions on their applications.
- 4.7.4 All successful applicants must demonstrate that they have met the University's criteria to the required level. Offers may be conditional upon subsequent achievement in academic examination or other methods of assessment, as specified during the application process.
- 4.7.5 It is the responsibility of the faculties to communicate with applicants who have been made and accepted an offer to ensure that they have the key information. All applicants whose offer of a place is confirmed will receive details of fees, any bursaries and scholarships which may be available and of procedures for registration.

4.8 Feedback to Unsuccessful Applicants

- 4.8.1 The University of Ulster will provide feedback, on request, to unsuccessful applicants. This will not constitute a reconsideration of an application.
- 4.8.2 Feedback given will be in reference to the selection criteria employed by the programme. Staff may not engage in comparisons of the relative merits of individual applications.
- 4.8.3 The form and depth in which feedback is provided may vary between different programmes. Faculties determine the amount and extent of feedback which they are able to offer.
- 4.8.4 Feedback will only be provided to applicants themselves and at the applicant's own request, when they have contacted the Faculty offering the programme for which they have applied.

4.9 Use of Applicant Data

4.9.1 University use of applicant data

A declaration of consent on the UCAS form and direct entry form/on-line application gives permission to the University to process personal and sensitive data (ethnic origin, disability,

criminal conviction). This enables those involved with the selection and admissions process to respond to identified additional needs, to follow University policy relating to criminal convictions and enables the University to compile its internal student records. This information will be managed in accordance with the University's Data Protection policy

4.9.2 Statistical monitoring

Anonymised and aggregated applicant data are analysed at institutional and Faculty level for purposes including monitoring, market research, planning and teaching and learning, and in order to ensure that the University's processes are fair.

4.9.3 Procedure for applicants disclosing a criminal record

- a) The University has a duty to ensure the safety of its student and staff community. Where an applicant indicates a criminal record, the selector(s) should firstly consider the application against the academic and other criteria specified for the programme. If the application meets these criteria, the application will be assessed in order to ensure that neither the applicant nor the University community will be put at risk if the applicant becomes a member of the University. The applicant's information will only be shared with those who are involved in the consideration of the application and the applicant will be kept informed throughout the process.
- b) Entrants to a number of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes involving work with children and vulnerable adults are required to undergo a police check prior to being admitted.

Details of the procedures for the disclosure of, and consideration of, criminal convictions are provided in Appendix 7

4.9.4 Use of enquiry data

The University may use contact details acquired during enquiry or application to provide enquirers or applicants with details of programmes it believes may be of interest, particularly where an offer of a place on the chosen programme may not be possible.

4.9.5 Freedom of information requests

The University is aware of its responsibilities to respond to requests for aggregated data under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Staff receiving such requests will seek the guidance of Governance Services.

4.9.6 Data Protection

All staff will ensure that data use, retention and storage comply fully with the Data Protection Act 1998. The University's Governance Services department will make staff aware of their responsibilities in relation to data protection regulations.

5. STUDENT FINANCE

5.1 Full-time undergraduate programmes

The University of Ulster charges variable tuition fees for its full-time undergraduate programmes. Students may choose to defer the payment of all or part of these fees, along with costs associated with living expenses, until after they complete their programmes of study. This is possible through the availability of a range of loans and grants from the government, as well as bursaries and scholarships from the University.

5.2 Taught Postgraduate, part-time and research programmes

The arrangements for the charging and payment of tuition fees for taught postgraduate, part-time and research programmes of study, as well as any financial support available, are different from those applicable to full time undergraduate programmes.

5.3 Further Information

Further information about fees, financial support and payment policy for all categories of programmes offered by the University of Ulster may be accessed at the following website:
<http://www.prospectus.ulster.ac.uk>

Students who may have special needs, or who find themselves in financial difficulties (which could not have been predicted), may also have access to additional sources of funding. Further information may be found at: <http://www.studentsupport.ulster.ac.uk/finance/>

6. ADMISSIONS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The University operates an Admissions Complaints Procedure which allows for an informal stage, a formal appeal/complaint handled at Faculty level, and finally an appeal to a Provost. It covers all applicants to University credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing programmes.

Full details of the Admissions Complaints Procedure are contained within Appendix 8.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1 - REGULATORY FRAMEWORK OF POLICY

1. National Legislation

The University's Student Recruitment and Admissions Policy (The Policy) operates within the context of the following legislation:

- 1.1 Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976
- 1.2 Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- 1.3 Special Educational Needs and Disability (Northern Ireland) Order 2005 (SENDO)
- 1.4 Race Relations (Northern Ireland) Order 1997
- 1.5 Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998
- 1.6 Northern Ireland Act 1998
- 1.7 Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003
- 1.8 Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006
- 1.9 Human Rights Act 1998
- 1.10 Data Protection Act 1998
- 1.11 Freedom of Information Act 2000

2. National Regulation

The University's Student Recruitment and Admissions Policy takes account of the Quality Assurance Agency's *Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, with particular reference to *Section 10: Admissions to Higher Education* (September 2006).

The Policy is also informed by the findings of Professor Steven Schwarz's Admissions to Higher Education Review (2004) in the context of higher education in England. In addition, The Policy will be advised by developments within the Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) Programme - a national, joint UCAS/UUK initiative.

With respect to the equivalence of entrance qualifications, The Policy makes reference to the proposed national Qualifications and Credit Framework (currently the National Qualifications Framework) and the national UCAS Tariff Points framework. The University's Standing Group on Entrance Qualifications (which reports to the Academic Development and Student Services Committee) also makes detailed recommendations with regard to the suitability of nationally-accredited qualifications on a programme-by-programme basis.

3. University Regulations

The Policy also operates under the University's **Regulations for the Enrolment of Students** which states:

- 3.1 Subject to the Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations of the University, intending students shall apply for initial enrolment at the commencement of their programmes of study or research. Thereafter students shall enrol annually as required, normally at the commencement of the academic session.
- 3.2 Enrolment is effected by the completion and endorsement by the Dean of the appropriate faculty or his or her nominee, acting on the authority of the Senate, of the appropriate enrolment form.
- 3.3 The Senate shall prescribe the procedures to be followed at enrolment. Enrolment is conditional upon the fulfilment by students of the following requirements:
 - (a) the provision to the University of information required by the University that is accurate, complete and up-to-date; and the granting of consent to the University to process this information, for such purposes as are necessary for the University to perform its objectives pursuant to its Charter and for the efficient and smooth running of the University in accordance with legislation in force;
 - (b) the payment of fees and debts as determined by the Council; and
 - (c) the granting of consent to the submission of their work to any electronic system for the detection of plagiarism as may be necessary.
- 3.4 At initial enrolment all students shall sign or give by electronic means an undertaking to comply with the Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations of the University as are from time to time in force.
- 3.5 Persons who are unable to satisfy the conditions for enrolment at the appropriate time, being the time laid down by the Senate under section 3, may at the discretion of the Senate be provisionally enrolled for such period not exceeding three months as may be authorised by or on behalf of the Senate. Students who are provisionally enrolled are subject to the Charter, Statutes, Ordinances and Regulations of the University as are from time to time in force. The provisional enrolment of a person shall become null and void if he or she has not fulfilled the conditions for enrolment by the end of the period allowed for provisional enrolment.
- 3.6 If a registered or occasional student fails to meet such requirements in relation to enrolment as Council and Senate may prescribe (for example in relation to the payment of debts or the disclosure of criminal convictions), his or her enrolment may be revoked at any time by the

Vice-Chancellor or his or her nominee acting under the authority of the Senate.

- 3.7 A registered or occasional student who has been granted an intermission in his or her studies or leave of absence from his or her studies shall not be required to enrol for the period of intermission or leave.
- 3.8 A registered student may be excused enrolment for part of his or her programme of study or research following his or her election or appointment to office in any representative student body approved for the purposes of this paragraph by the Senate, and a student so excused shall remain a registered student for as long as may be approved by the Senate.

APPENDIX 2 - GENERAL ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

1. Minimum General Entrance Requirements for Undergraduate Degree, HND and DipHE Programmes

Applicants for entry to a programme leading to an Honours Degree, Degree, Foundation Degree, HND and DipHE must:

- 1.1. Satisfy the University's minimum General Entrance Requirements as specified below; and
- 1.2 Satisfy such additional requirements as shall be prescribed in programme regulations.

2. Honours Degree and Degree Programmes

Applicants must **either**

- 2.1 Have attained passes in five different subjects, of which two should be at GCE A level, and three at GCSE level (grades A, B or C) and/or AS level **or**
- 2.2 Have attained passes in four different subjects, of which three should be at GCE A level, and one at GCSE level (grades A, B or C) and/or AS level **or**
- 2.3 Have alternative approved qualifications **or**
- 2.4 Provide evidence of their ability to undertake the programme through the accreditation of prior experiential learning

and

- 2.5 Provide evidence of competence in written and spoken English (GCSE grade C or equivalent) and, where specified within individual programme entry requirements, the required level of numeracy (GCSE grade C or equivalent).

For the purpose of fulfilling the General Entry Requirements and in terms of attracting UCAS Tariff Points, two Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level subjects are regarded as the equivalent of one GCE A level, provided that the applicant's profile also contains two GCE A levels.

3. Foundation Degree, Associate Bachelors Degree, HND and DipHE Programmes

Applicants must **either**

- 3.1 Have attained passes in four different subjects, of which one should be at GCE A level, and three at GCSE level (grades A, B or C) and/or AS level, or alternative approved qualifications or have alternative approved qualifications **or**
 - 3.2 Have alternative approved qualifications **or**
 - 3.3 Provide evidence of their ability to undertake the programme through the accreditation of prior experiential learning
- and**
- 3.4 Provide evidence of competence in written and spoken English (GCSE grade C or equivalent) and, where specified within individual programme entry requirements, the required level of numeracy (GCSE grade C or equivalent);
 - 3.5 Additionally, applicants for entry to an HND must be aged at least 18 years at the date of entry.

For the purpose of fulfilling the General Entrance Requirements and in terms of attracting UCAS Tariff Points, two Advanced Subsidiary (AS) level subjects are regarded as the equivalent of one GCE A level, provided that the applicant's profile also contains one GCE A level.

4. All Undergraduate Programmes

The University will accept as alternative qualifications:

- 4.1 GCE A levels and either three passes at GCSE (grade C or above) or an Intermediate GNVQ or two Double Award Vocational GCSEs;
- 4.2 BTEC National qualifications awarded by the Edexcel Foundation;
- 4.3 OCR National qualifications;
- 4.4 Highers or Advanced Highers of the Scottish Qualifications Authority;
- 4.5 The European, International or Welsh Baccalaureate; or
- 4.6 An Irish Leaving Certificate with passes in four approved subjects at grade D Higher level;
- 4.7 Satisfactory completion of an approved Access programme;

- 4.8 For entry to Art and Design degree programmes, satisfactory completion of a full-time foundation programme in Art and Design of not less than one academic year in duration.

No subject may be counted at more than one level except in the case of the GCE or Applied A level combined with the Intermediate GNVQ.

Applicants from persons who hold qualifications not included in this list will be considered on their merit.

5. International Qualifications

5.1 The University accepts a broad range of international qualifications. These are assessed individually in terms of their content and level, with reference, where appropriate, to relevant guidelines eg the British Council, the National Academic Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (NARIC UK).

5.2 The University also requires overseas applicants to satisfy the English Language entry requirements for admission and a number of examinations are acceptable eg IELTS, TOEFL. For specific advice on the acceptability and equivalence of international qualifications please contact the University's International Office.

6. Confidentiality

All information provided by the applicant will remain strictly confidential (subject to statutory requirements) and will be used by the University for statistical analysis and planning purposes only.

APPENDIX 3 – ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMMES

1. Applicants for entry must:
 - (a) have gained:
 - (i) an Honours or non-Honours degree from a university of the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland, from the Council for National Academic Awards, the National Council for Educational Awards, the Higher Education and Training Awards Council, or from another institution which has been recognised by the Senate for this purpose;
 - or
 - (ii) an equivalent standard in a Graduate Diploma, Graduate Certificate or Postgraduate Certificate or an approved alternative qualification; and
 - (b) provide evidence of competence in written and spoken English (GCSE grade C or equivalent); and
 - (c) satisfy such additional requirements as shall be prescribed in programme regulations;
 - or
 - (d) in exceptional circumstances, where an individual has substantial and significant experiential learning, a portfolio of written evidence demonstrating the meeting of graduate qualities (including subject specific outcomes, as determined by the Course Committee) may be considered as an alternative entrance route. Evidence used to demonstrate graduate qualities may not be used for exemption against modules within the programme.
2. The Senate may accept studies pursued and examinations passed in respect of other qualifications awarded by the University or by another University or other educational institution, or evidence from the accreditation of prior experiential learning, as exempting applicants from part of an approved programme, provided that applicants shall register as students of the University for modules amounting to at least the final 50% of the credit value of the award at the highest level and meet such other conditions as shall be specified in programme regulations. For applicants registered on approved programmes at recognised institutions, the same regulation shall apply in respect of the institution.

APPENDIX 4 - ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR RESEARCH DEGREE PROGRAMMES

1. Research Degrees - Requirements for Admission

The regulations for each of the University's Research Degree Programmes clearly state the entry requirements and admissions policy. For PhD study, the regulations state that graduates holding a first or upper second class honours degree in a relevant subject of study or applicants deemed by the Senate to hold equivalent qualifications are eligible for admission. A range of overseas qualifications are considered as equivalent and details of these can be found on the NARIC web site at: <http://www.internationalcomparisons.org.uk/newusers/index.html>

Applicants who do not meet these requirements may be admitted after successful completion of a preliminary examination in accordance with rules approved by the Senate.

Applicants are encouraged to apply to specific project areas to ensure that supervision and resources are available. Designated projects together with any available funding are widely advertised on the University web site <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/rps/prospects/index.phtml> in the Press and on subject specific websites, each with a clearly defined closing date for receipt of completed applications. Further details of all projects can be found on faculty web pages prior to the application deadline to ensure equal access for all prospective students.

In cases where an applicant has written a research proposal rather than chosen a designated project, the Faculty is responsible for ensuring the viability of the project including the availability of resources e.g. expertise and equipment. Where there are insufficient resources to meet the needs of a project, the applicant will be informed and invited to choose another area of research. Students are not admitted to a programme where it is known that sufficient resources to ensure successful completion are not available. The selection and admissions procedures are fully described within the Research Studies Handbook : <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/rps/handbook/>

All admissions decisions are documented and an appeals process has been established.

2. Interview Process

All research students undergo an interview as part of the admission process to ensure each applicant's suitability for research study in the specific subject area. The interview panel comprises trained senior academic staff members from the relevant faculty. Each applicant is assessed against the same set of interview criteria for each research project. These criteria are drawn up and agreed beforehand by the

interview panel. Where necessary, the interview panel is provided with information on equivalency of degree (NARIC comparison) and evidence of English language proficiency (TOEFL/IELTS scores) by the Research Office prior to the interview. As part of the admissions process and prior to an offer being made, the proposed supervisors are required to sign off an admissions form to confirm they are happy with both the student and the project.

APPENDIX 5 - INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

The University accepts a broad range of international qualifications. These are assessed individually in terms of their content and level, with reference, where appropriate, to relevant guidelines eg the British Council, the National Academic Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (NARIC UK).

The University also requires overseas applicants to satisfy the English Language entry requirements for admission and a number of examinations are acceptable eg IELTS, TOEFL. For specific advice on the acceptability and equivalence of international qualifications please contact the University's International Office.

APPENDIX 6 - ACCREDITATION OF PRIOR CERTIFICATED OR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

GUIDING PRINCIPLES UNDERPINNING APC/EL POLICY

The following principles are fundamental to the achievement of awards that meet nationally recognised standards of achievement.

- 1 Learning should be recognised irrespective of the context in which it is achieved.
- 2 It is the achievement of learning, or the outcomes of that learning, and not just the experience of the activities alone that should be accredited.
- 3 Learning must be evidenced in writing and authenticated at the appropriate level.
- 4 Claims for APC/EL should be open to the same rigour and be comparable in terms of evidence and effort.
- 5 Decisions regarding the accreditation of prior learning are a matter of academic judgement, informed by professional bodies and other stakeholders.
- 6 The entire APC/EL process should be transparent to all stakeholders and demonstrably rigorous and fair.
- 7 All staff associated with the accreditation of prior learning should have their roles clearly and explicitly defined, and underpinned by appropriate staff development.
- 8 Policy and procedures for the accreditation of prior learning should be subject to regular monitoring and review.
- 9 Limitations to APC/EL shall be clearly defined.

APPENDIX 7 - Procedures for Dealing with Applicants or Students with Criminal Convictions.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Applicants are required to declare on the application form if they have a criminal conviction.
- 1.2 The requirements to disclose criminal convictions vary depending on the course to which applicants are applying and are more stringent for applicants applying to courses which include placement or lead to employment which involves contact with children or vulnerable adults.
- 1.3 If the University discovers that an applicant has failed to disclose a criminal offence as required under its procedures it reserves the right to withdraw an offer of a place or, if the applicant has registered as a student, terminate the registration and dismiss the student.

2 Courses not involving work with children or vulnerable adults: disclosure of criminal convictions

- 2.1 Applicants are only required to disclose relevant criminal convictions.
- 2.2 Relevant criminal convictions are only those convictions for offences against the person, whether of a violent or sexual nature, and convictions for offences involving unlawfully supplying controlled drugs or substances where the conviction concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking. Convictions that are spent as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 (or the Rehabilitation of Offenders Order (NI) 1978) are not considered relevant and applicants need not disclose these.

3 Courses involving work with children or vulnerable adults: disclosure of criminal convictions

- 3.1 Applicants to courses such as those in teaching, health, social work etc which involve work with children or vulnerable adults must disclose any criminal convictions, including sentences and cautions (including verbal cautions), reprimands, final warnings and bind- over orders whether or not these are spent.

4 Offences after submission of application form

- 4.1 An applicant who is convicted after applying and before the date of admission to the University, or a student who is convicted after admission to the University must inform the Director of Student Administration without delay.

5 Procedures for dealing with disclosures

- 5.1 Where an applicant discloses a conviction the Faculty will refer the application to the office of the Director of Student Administration unless the faculty decides that the applicant does not meet the academic criteria for entry to the course.
- 5.2 That office will write to applicants who disclose that they have a criminal conviction requesting that they obtain from AccessNI (or relevant authority where they live outside Northern Ireland) a statement of their convictions (a Basic Disclosure in the case of AccessNI) together with the name of a referee who is willing to provide a character reference.
- 5.3 When details of the conviction and reference are obtained these will be sent to the Faculty.
- 5.4 If the course does not involve access to children and vulnerable adults the following procedures will apply otherwise the procedures in section 6 will apply.
- 5.5 The Head of Faculty Administration will forward the copy of the applicant's criminal record, the letter from the referee and the application form to the Dean/relevant Head of School¹ who will decide whether or not an interview is necessary.
- 5.6 If the Dean/Head of School decides that the offence should not prevent the applicant being offered a place then an interview will not be necessary. The Head of Faculty Administration will write to inform the applicant of the Faculty's decision.
- 5.7 If the Dean/Head of School considers the matter to be more serious then the Head of Faculty Administration will arrange for a Panel comprising the Dean (or nominee) as chair, the Head of School, the Course Director and another member of the University to meet. Where the applicant has applied to more than one faculty, the first faculty that decides to interview the applicant should notify the other faculty (or faculties) to invite each to nominate a representative to sit on the panel.
- 5.8 The Panel will consider the information received and will invite the applicant to attend the meeting to discuss the nature of the information disclosed.
- 5.9 Following the interview and consideration of the information the Panel will decide whether or not to continue to the next stage of the selection process. If the applicant is deemed by the Panel to be unsuitable his/her application will not be processed any further. A record of the

¹ Where the applicant is applying for admission to research studies the relevant Head of Research Graduate School will act in place of the Head of School.

meeting will be taken and a decision conveyed to the applicant in writing within 5 working days of the meeting of the Panel.

- 5.10 An applicant will have a right to appeal under the University's Admissions Complaints Procedure.

6 Additional procedures relating to the protection of children and vulnerable adults

- 6.1 In relation to courses which include periods of placement involving substantial access to children or vulnerable adults, the University is responsible under the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003 for requesting an Enhanced Disclosure from AccessNI (or relevant authority outside Northern Ireland). For applicants who declare a criminal conviction the Enhanced Disclosure check will be carried out after their application has been received in the faculty and prior to any offer of a place being made. For applicants who do not declare a criminal conviction the check will be carried out after the applicant has accepted a confirmed offer of a place. Applicants who do not consent to such a check will not be permitted to register on the course. All offers of admission to relevant courses will be accompanied by a letter indicating that a criminal records check will be carried out.
- 6.2 It may not be possible to complete an Enhanced Disclosure check prior to registration. In such cases students should be permitted to enrol provisionally on the understanding that their continuing registration is dependant on receipt of a satisfactory disclosure. Faculties should ensure that students are aware of this and sign a disclaimer to the effect that in the event of an unsatisfactory disclosure the Faculty has the right to terminate the student's registration. Where the Enhanced Disclosure reveals no relevant information in relation to criminal convictions the applicant's offer/registration will be confirmed. Where a criminal conviction is revealed the procedures in section 6.5 below will apply.
- 6.3 Where an applicant has declared a criminal conviction the following procedures will apply:
- a) For UK/ROI applicants, the authorised Faculty officer will make arrangements to obtain an Enhanced Disclosure from AccessNI.
 - b) For non-UK/ROI applicants, an Enhanced Disclosure check cannot be carried out and the applicant must provide details of any criminal convictions or evidence of no convictions from their national Police force.
- 6.4 Where an applicant has applied to more than one faculty a single Faculty Office should co-ordinate the arrangements for obtaining the Enhanced Disclosure. The first course listed on the application form for

which an Enhanced Disclosure is required will determine which Faculty Office will be responsible for co-ordinating arrangements.

6.5 Where the check reveals relevant information:

- a) The Head of Faculty Administration will forward a copy of the applicant's course application form and the Enhanced Disclosure to the Dean/relevant Head of School who will decide whether or not to interview the applicant/student.
- b) If the Dean/Head of School decides an interview is not necessary, the Head of Faculty Administration will write to the applicant and obtain written confirmation that the applicant understands the implications of their criminal record for future registration and employment and, in particular, that continuation on the course does not guarantee professional recognition or inclusion on the relevant state register. Only when this written confirmation is received from the applicant will the offer/registration be confirmed.
- c) If the Dean/Head of School decides an interview is necessary, the Head of Faculty Administration will arrange for a Panel comprising the Dean (or nominee), the Head of School, the Course Director and at least one other member of the University, to conduct the interview and decide whether the applicant's provisional offer/student's provisional enrolment should be extended or annulled.
- d) If the applicant/student is determined by the Panel to be unsuitable, his/her offer of admission/provisional enrolment will become invalid. The applicant/student may, if he/she wishes, apply for admission to an alternative course.
- e) If there is not a prima facie case for deeming the applicant/student unsuitable for the course, the Head of Faculty Administration will write to the applicant/student immediately following the interview and obtain written confirmation that the applicant/student understands the implications of their criminal record for future registration and employment and, in particular, that continuation on the course does not guarantee professional recognition or inclusion on the relevant state register. Only when this written confirmation is received from the applicant/student, will the offer/registration be confirmed.

6.6 Where an applicant has applied to more than one faculty the lead Faculty Office as determined in section 6.4 above will circulate the Enhanced Disclosures to the other faculties. In such cases the Deans of the faculties (or their nominees) will determine whether or not an interview is required. If it is, a joint interview will normally be held. The Dean (or nominee) of the lead faculty will chair the interview panel which will comprise the Head of School and Course Director from the

lead faculty and either a Head of School or Course Director from each of the other faculties. The applicant will be informed that an interview covering applications to more than one course is being held.

- 6.7 Where an applicant has been made an offer of a place, and that offer is subsequently confirmed by the University and accepted by the applicant, the applicant will be required to sign a self-declaration form, which must be completed within two weeks of the commencement for the course, indicating whether or not there have been any convictions or cautions since the date of the Enhanced Disclosure. Where a criminal conviction is revealed the procedures in section 6.5 above will apply.
- 6.8 Where an applicant's choices include courses requiring an Enhanced Disclosure as well as courses requiring a Standard Disclosure the procedures for the Enhanced Disclosure will be followed.
- 6.9 An applicant will have a right of appeal under the University's Admissions Complaints Procedure.

7 Failure to disclose a criminal conviction

- 7.1 Where the University has been given reason to suspect that an applicant or student has failed to disclose a criminal conviction the Director of Student Administration will record the reason.
- 7.2 In the case of applicants to courses not involving contact with children or vulnerable adults the Director of Student Administration will write to the applicant requesting that he/she obtain a Standard Disclosure from AccessNI (or relevant authority where the applicant lives outside Northern Ireland) together with the name of a referee who is willing to provide a character reference. When this is obtained the procedures in Section 5 will apply.
- 7.3 In the case of applicants to courses involving contact with children or vulnerable adults the Head of Faculty Administration will write to the applicant requesting permission to seek an Enhanced Disclosure check from AccessNI (or relevant authority where the applicant lives outside Northern Ireland). When this is obtained the procedures in Section 6 will apply.
- 7.4 In addition, however, should an offer of a place have already been made the Panel may decide that the offer should be withdrawn.
- 7.5 If the applicant declines to obtain details as required in 7.2 or refuses to permit an Enhanced Disclosure check to be made as required in 7.3 the application will not be considered or the offer, if one has been made, will be withdrawn. Should the criminal conviction check reveal no convictions the University will refund the applicant the fee payable.

- 7.6 In the case of students who are already registered on a course not involving contact with children or vulnerable adults the Director of Student Administration will write to the student requesting that he/she obtain a Standard Disclosure from AccessNI (or relevant authority where the student lives outside Northern Ireland) together with the name of a referee who is willing to provide a character reference.
- 7.7 In the case of students on courses involving contact with children or vulnerable adults the Head of Faculty Administration will write to the applicant requesting permission to seek an Enhanced Disclosure check from AccessNI (or relevant authority where the applicant lives outside Northern Ireland).
- 7.8 If the student declines to obtain details as required in 7.6 or 7.7 the matter will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee. In the light of the information that gave the University reason to suspect that the student had a criminal conviction the Vice-Chancellor may suspend the student immediately pending consideration by the Disciplinary Committee.
- 7.9 When details of the conviction and reference are received these will be considered by the faculty. Should the criminal conviction check reveal no convictions the University will refund the student the fee payable.
- 7.10 The Head of Faculty Administration will forward the copy of the student's criminal record and the letter from the referee to the Dean/relevant Head of School who will decide whether or not an interview is necessary.
- 7.11 If the Dean/Head of School decides that the offence should not prevent the student continuing on the course then an interview will not be necessary. The Head of Faculty Administration will write to inform the student of the Faculty's decision. The Dean/Head of School may, acting under Section 4 of the Ordinance 2006/1: Student Discipline, impose a penalty on the student for failing to disclose criminal convictions as required in these procedures.
- 7.12 If the Dean/Head of School considers the matter to be more serious then the Head of Faculty Administration will arrange for a Panel comprising the Dean (or nominee) as Chair, the Head of School, the Course Director and another member of the University to meet.
- 7.13 The Panel will consider the information received and invite the student to attend the meeting to discuss the nature of the information disclosed.
- 7.14 If the Panel decides that the offence should not prevent the student continuing on the course then the Head of Faculty Administration will write to inform the student of the Panel's decision. The Dean/Head of School may, acting under Section 4 of the Ordinance 2006/1: Student

Discipline, impose a penalty on the student for failure to disclose criminal convictions as required in these procedures.

- 7.15 If the Panel decides that, owing to the nature or requirements of the course, the offence prevents the student continuing on the course the student's enrolment on that course will become invalid. The student may, if he/she wishes, apply for admission to an alternative course. The student may appeal to the Disciplinary Committee against the decision of the Panel.
- 7.16 If the Panel decides that the offence prevents the student continuing as a student of the University the Vice-Chancellor will be asked to suspend the student immediately and the matter will be referred to the Disciplinary Committee.

APPENDIX 8 - ADMISSIONS COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

1. Scope of the Procedure

This procedure is based on the principles underlying the University-wide Student Complaints Procedure, in that it allows for an informal stage, a formal appeal/complaint handled at Faculty level, and finally an appeal to a Provost. It covers all applicants to University credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing programmes, and thus can be invoked by persons who are not currently University of Ulster students.

The procedure covers the following types of appeal/complaint:

- 1.1 complaints about the University's handling of a query or an application for admission;
- 1.2 allegations that admissions criteria were not applied correctly or even-handedly, or that the criteria applied were different from those previously notified to applicants;
- 1.3 complaints that admissions criteria were not sufficiently transparent;
- 1.4 complaints relating to transfer requests from another programme, or another institution.

The procedure does not cover:

- 1.5 strategic decisions relating to the overall size and shape of schools and faculties;
- 1.6 the existence of caps on student numbers in particular programmes, whether imposed by the University, government or professional bodies;
- 1.7 recruitment to research programmes (MPhil/PhD) – a separate procedure exists for these cases (see <http://www.ulster.ac.uk/research/prospectus/pdf/roffice.pdf>).

Any correspondence on 1.5 and 1.6 should be directed to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development & Student Services), who has overall responsibility for admissions.

In cases of collaborative provision, i.e. where a University programme is offered in partnership with another institution, responsibility for admissions decisions may vary according to the terms of the collaborative arrangement. However, in general when the admissions query relates to a UU-validated programme taught at a partner institution, or to a programme designed as an entry route to the

University (e.g. an Access programme for mature students), enquiries should be directed to the partner institution (e.g. a college or institute of further and higher education, in the case of Access students).

2. Submission and Investigation of Enquiries/Complaints/ Appeals

2.1 First Stage: Informal Resolution

Enquiries about admissions decisions should normally be made by the applicant in question, and should be directed to the relevant Faculty Office in the first instance. If necessary, Faculty Office staff will consult with relevant academic staff before responding to the query. A written response will be made to every written enquiry (i.e. by letter or email), normally within 10 working days, and this written response will mark the completion of the informal stage. If the complaint is submitted by an international student and the International Office has been involved in the decision, then the Faculty Office will liaise with the International Office at each stage in preparing a response.

2.2 Second Stage: Formal Letter to Dean

An applicant who is dissatisfied with the explanation offered should put his/her concerns in writing to the Dean of the Faculty. The formal letter to the Dean should set out the grounds for dissatisfaction with the initial response from the Faculty Office, and include any previous correspondence. The Dean, or his/her nominee (normally the Head of Faculty Administration) shall then undertake such further enquiries as are deemed necessary before providing a written response, normally within 15 working days of receipt of the complaint. When a complaint is made about specific members of staff, those staff shall have the right to see copies of relevant documentation, to present evidence to the Dean or his/her nominee, and to be informed of the outcome of the complaint/appeal.

2.3 Third Stage: Appeal

Any applicant still dissatisfied after the second stage may appeal to the Provost, normally at the campus in question and normally within 10 working days of receiving the Dean's decision. The appellant should forward copies of previous correspondence and any supporting documentation to the Provost. The appellant shall normally have the right to meet the Provost to present his/her appeal, and to be accompanied by a

member of teaching staff from his/her present or former school or college. However, there will be no appeal hearing when, in the judgement of the Provost, the admissions decision has resulted from the correct and impartial application of written criteria -e.g. when the appellant has clearly failed to achieve the required grades for entry. In such cases, the Provost shall communicate this decision in writing to the appellant, normally within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal.

3. Timescales

The timescales set out in this procedure relate to investigations carried out in semester-time only, and may not prove possible to meet at particularly busy periods for Faculty admissions staff (e.g. August-September). However, the University will at all times strive to respond to enquiries as quickly as circumstances allow.

4. Confidentiality and Enquiries from Third Parties

All parties to a complaint are expected to maintain strict confidentiality, both during and after any enquiry/appeal/complaint. Enquiries about admissions decisions should normally be made by the applicant in question. When an admissions decision is queried by a third party (e.g. a parent, or a school enquiring on behalf of a former pupil), the Faculty Office will normally be able to supply a generalised answer on admissions policy, but may be precluded from discussing individual cases by the terms of the Data Protection Act. However, a more detailed response may be given when the applicant expressly states that the third party is acting on his/her behalf.

5. Central Monitoring of Admissions Complaints/Appeals

Each Faculty will prepare an annual summary of the nature and outcome of any formal admissions appeals/complaints for the second cycle Academic Development & Student Services Committee meeting each year.