



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
A College of Queen's University Belfast

# ADMISSIONS POLICY

Version No:	Reason for Update	Date of Update	Updated By
1	To update current arrangements	October 2015	Registry
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## 1. Scope

In compliance with Chapter B2 of the QAA *Quality Code*, this policy applies to all admissions to Stranmillis University College undergraduate and postgraduate, full-time and part-time courses in the 2016/17 Academic Year. Stranmillis University College is responsible for setting the admissions criteria to all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Teacher Education admissions criteria demonstrate compliance with those of [the Department of Education](#). Registration and Enrolment is processed using the Queen's Student Information System (QSI).

## 2. Context

The admissions policy complies with relevant legislation affecting the admission of students and is consistent with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Chapter B2: Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education. The policy demonstrates the College's commitment to the principles of fair admissions as outlined in Chapter B2 of the QAA quality code (2013). It is also guided by the principles outlined in the Report of Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group 2004 (the Schwartz Report).

The University College's mission statement, as stated in its Corporate Plan is: *'To sustain a vibrant, inclusive learning community, educating, shaping and enriching society through excellence in teaching, scholarship and research.'* We aim to attract and retain high calibre students, improving accessibility, including for those currently under-represented in Higher Education.

Stranmillis is a professionally oriented University College, with core undergraduate, postgraduate and scholarship/research activity in the areas of Teacher Education, Early Childhood Education and Health, Physical Activity and Sport.

## 3. Priorities

- a. Recruitment and selection of an appropriately qualified, and professionally motivated student body, which has the potential to excel in a challenging and rewarding environment; to contribute to the quality of the student experience; and ultimately to graduate with the knowledge, skills and competences which have high currency in an increasingly competitive marketplace.
- b. Within the context of the Widening Participation Strategy, the University College is committed to build on current developments and to reach the milestones articulated in the Access Agreement. The Agreement contains qualitative insights into the University College Access Projects, including various measures to support current students from under-represented target groups and also community outreach programmes that aim to raise the educational aspirations and attainment of participants. In addition, quantitative information is also provided on key areas such as financial support and the target numbers of [Access projects](#) (pgs 17-36).

- c. In particular, the Corporate Plan has identified the key objectives as follows:
- i. Increasing student entrants from lower socio-economic groups and low participating neighbourhoods (specifically MDM Quintiles 1&2), mature students and care experienced entrants.
  - ii. Attracting more males into teaching, including those from MDM Quintiles 1&2.

Details of these students are monitored and recorded in the annual [Selection Report](#).

To achieve these aims the University College:

- i. encourages applications from suitably qualified applicants, regardless of their background and
- ii. promotes equality of opportunity for all applicants regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, marital status or whether or not they have dependents.

The Principles and Procedures through which the University College assesses applicants and offers places is designed to be:

- easily understood;
- transparent;
- fair; and
- based on principles that are applied consistently across the University College.

#### **4. Monitoring**

The Senior Management Group has overall responsibility for strategic policy in relation to admissions. The University College Selection Committee is chaired by the Director of Community Engagement and External Affairs (Registrar) and includes the Vice-Principal, the Head of Student Support, the Head of Widening Participation, Programme Coordinators, the Admissions Officer and Careers Officer. The Committee regularly reviews the admission and selection process and receives an annual report on selection which is then presented by the Director of Community Engagement and External Affairs (Registrar) and the Admissions Officer to the Governing Body.

The selection committee meet regularly to discuss admissions systems and to ensure measures outlined in the admissions policy are being understood and adhered to.

The Widening Access Group is responsible for:

- negotiating milestones with the Department for Employment and Learning, Widening Participation Branch on behalf of the University College;
- monitoring performance against milestones.

## **5. Intake Numbers**

The number of full-time undergraduate students which the University College can admit is currently controlled by government imposed overall limits. In the case of initial teacher education intake quotas are controlled by the Department of Education, whilst for the non-ITE courses, controls are imposed by the MASN (maximum student number) cap. There are no limits imposed on the number of part-time students admitted since these are recruited on a 'fees only' basis and with no government funding.

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

Heads of Academic Areas (or their nominees) are responsible for working with the Director of Community Engagement and External Affairs (Registrar) in the selection of students. The following duties are undertaken jointly:

- Setting entrance requirements and asking grades for programmes within the Academic Area and deciding on selection procedures including interviews, presentation, etc.
- Liaising with the Director of Community Engagement and External Affairs (Registrar) in relation to the contextual factors of individual applications eg negotiating suitable arrangements for applicants who work at a distance, are based overseas or have a disability, special needs or medical conditions;
- Arranging for staff in the Academic Area to participate in selection interviews;
- Arranging for staff to contribute to Open Days, Careers Events, talks to targeted groups, etc.

## **7. Academic Registry**

The Admissions Function is part of the responsibility of Academic Registry. The University College operates a centralised admissions service for all programmes. The responsibilities within the Admissions Function include:

- Ensuring sound practice in recruitment, selection and admissions on all applicants that come through the undergraduate UCAS admissions service.
- Ensuring sound practice in recruitment, selection and admissions on all non-UCAS admission services for undergraduate, postgraduate, full-time and part-time programmes;
- Liaising with Academic Areas to review and update entry criteria annually;
- Making decisions on applications in line with agreed criteria;
- Working closely with Academic Areas in the decision-making process including consultation and provision of advice on non-routine cases;
- Providing acknowledgment letters/emails to all applicants and distributing June Information and Welcome packs;
- Providing advice and guidance in response to specific admissions enquiries from prospective students, parents, schools, colleges and the careers service of the Department of Employment and Learning;
- Providing statistical information and reports to senior management;
- Ensuring that the admissions policy and procedures comply with the College Mission Statement and are applied fairly and consistently across the University College.
- Ensuring that the College adheres to the good practice outlined by the QAA quality

code in chapter B2 and the good admissions practice guidelines outlined by [SPA](#) (Supporting Professionalism in Admissions)

- Monitoring, reviewing and updating admissions processes regularly;
- Taking the lead role in advising on and developing the University College's response/policy on new qualifications, changes in the 14-19 curriculum and to the application system.

## 8. Information for Prospective Students and Other Stakeholders

The University College aims to provide comprehensive, accurate, user-friendly and accessible information and advice to applicants and other stakeholders in the admissions process. This is to enable an informed choice of programmes(s) to be made appropriate to their needs, interests, academic qualifications and potential.

Detailed information on entrance qualifications, asking grades and other entrance criteria for individual programmes is provided.

The main sources of information are as follows:

- Printed undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses;
- Online prospectuses;  
<http://www.stran.ac.uk/informationfor/prospectivestudents/prospectus/>
- Individual programme brochures and leaflets;  
<http://www.stran.ac.uk/informationabout/courses/>
- University College website;  
[www.stran.ac.uk](http://www.stran.ac.uk)
- National publications, eg UCAS website  
[www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com)
- Queen's University Belfast General Entrance Requirements  
[QUB Entrance Requirements](#)

Work has been undertaken in relation to the development of Entry Profiles for individual programmes. The Entry Profiles are published on the [UCAS website](#) and [Stranmillis website](#) and considerably enhance the information available to prospective students.

## 9. Admissions Process

All applications for the full-time undergraduate courses at the University College must be submitted through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS). The closing date for UCAS applications can be found by visiting the [Key dates](#) page on the UCAS website

Applications for part-time courses, both undergraduate and postgraduate must be made directly to the University College by contacting Academic registry on 02890384263

or [registry@stran.ac.uk](mailto:registry@stran.ac.uk) to request an application pack.

All applications received by the agreed closing date will be given equal consideration. Late applications may be considered depending on competition for places on individual programmes. Details on the closing dates for applications can be obtained by contacting the Academic Registry office or by checking the relevant section of the college website.

International (non EU) applicants for courses may apply up to the 30 June of year of entry.

If additional details are required about any of the information on an application form, the Admissions Office may contact the applicant or her/his referee. This may have an impact on the time taken for a decision to be made.

Admissions decisions will be made by the end of March for most UCAS applications. Delays may occur while the college awaits the annual intake quotas from the Department of Education. Some decisions may also be delayed where it is necessary to receive all applications, conduct interviews, etc. before decisions are made (in order to give all interviewed candidates equal consideration). Every effort is made, however, to keep delays to a minimum. If candidates are concerned about delays to a decision they should email the admissions team at [registry@stran.ac.uk](mailto:registry@stran.ac.uk) who will respond in a timely manner.

## **10. Selection Principles/Assessment of Applications**

All applications are considered individually on their merits and the full information on the application form, including the personal statement and the reference, is considered.

In the interests of consistency and transparency, it is essential that the University College's selection criteria are objective. For undergraduate courses, academic qualifications are a key criterion and previous academic background (including, for example, performance at GCSE or in the first year of a BTEC National Diploma or Access Course) may be taken into account in deciding whether or not to make a conditional offer. Since the demand for full-time undergraduate places greatly outweighs the supply, particularly for the Primary BEd and Early Childhood Studies, entry is competitive.

## **11. Additional Methods of Selection**

The University endeavors to ensure that any assessment methods used are reliable and valid and give an accurate indication of potential to successfully complete the chosen program of study.

Additional methods of selection are used for a number of degree programmes and may include interviews, GCSE performance, Reference and personal statements. Stranmillis University College will also consider suitable arrangements for applicants who are based overseas or have a disability, special needs or medical conditions.

The Personal Statement and Reference provide important supplementary indications of ability, motivation and potential, as well as information about personal circumstances and social and cultural context. They are read carefully and taken into account in reaching a decision. Criteria for assessing the Personal Statement may include, for example:

- Demonstrates interest in and commitment to the subject/area of specialism;
- Evidence of clear thinking and understanding in relation to particular skills/competences and experience critical to the course;
- Appropriateness of the Stranmillis course in relation to the candidate's declared interests and aspirations;
- Non-academic achievement and/or experience, or extra-curricular interests, that indicate the likely contribution a candidate will make to the life of the University;
- Other relevant skills – eg foreign languages.

All the undergraduate programmes offered by the University College are professionally oriented with distinctive career opportunities. Both Initial Teacher Education and Early Childhood Studies require graduates who possess aptitudes, qualities and skills for working with children and young people. For this reason an interview/presentation also contributes to the selection process for these courses. UCAS applicants who are not called for interview will be notified that they have been made unsuccessful through UCAS Track. Candidates who apply directly to the college will be notified that they are unsuccessful through the mail.

Those candidates who remain in the process following initial screening of applications in terms of qualifications, reference and personal statement, are called for interview. The interview is designed to assess professional and personal qualities in terms of suitability for the course. It is not designed to assess academic levels. Suitable arrangements can be made for applicants who work at a distance, are based overseas or have a disability, special needs or medical conditions. All candidates who are invited to interview will be notified by mail and will receive appropriate guidance notes to help them prepare,

Decisions are made on the basis of all criteria, ie academic qualifications, interview score, personal statement and reference.

## **12. Applicants with a Criminal Record**

The University College acknowledges the key role which education plays in the rehabilitative process and a criminal record will not automatically preclude an applicant from being offered a place at the University College. However, as part of its duty of care to its staff, its students, and taking into account the needs of the relevant professions, the University College will seek further information about any relevant disclosures which result from an Access NI check.

Offers are conditional upon the applicant consenting to an Access Northern Ireland Enhanced Disclosure check to be carried out. This is a criminal record check which must be carried out on all students when they first join the college. In the event that the results of the Access NI check are unsatisfactory, the offer may be withdrawn.

Further information on Access Northern Ireland can be found on the NI Direct website at the link below.

[Access Northern Ireland](#)

### **13. Interview**

Some of the courses offered by the University College require an interview and presentation which contributes to the selection process. Further details of which courses require an interview and presentation can be found on the individual course pages on the college website at the following link - [Information about courses](#). In preparation for the interview, candidates should reflect on their own educational experience, the school/college they attend, the styles of teaching they have experienced and the broader aspects of school/college life. In addition to reflecting on the relevance of their personal skills and capabilities/competences, candidates should also familiarise themselves with current debates about issues in the field of education/childcare.

The interview will be conducted by a panel of two, normally comprising one University College lecturer and one teacher or other professional from the field of education. Each interview will begin with a 5-minute presentation based on a predetermined topic and this will contribute 50% of the overall interview mark. No audio/visual support is permitted, however, candidates may bring brief notes to support the presentation.

The presentation will be followed by a short interview (50% of the total mark) during which the panel will ask a number of set questions. Candidates will be given the opportunity at the end to ask questions or to expand on points they made earlier.

Both the interview and presentation are scored against criteria which has been agreed by the Selection Committee in consultation with practising professionals. The combined interview and presentation will last approximately 20 minutes.

The interview and consequent decision-making will be consistent with the [University College's policy on Equal Opportunities](#).

A standard format interview report is produced for each candidate who has been interviewed and submitted to the Admissions Office.

All candidates are only interviewed once during an application cycle. If a candidate has applied for multiple courses that require an interview as part of the selection criteria then this interview score is applied to all applications. After all the applicants who have made the interview stage have been interviewed the admissions team will be able to determine what the required standard is for each course. Some applicants may achieve the required interview standard for all their applications while some may meet the interview standard for one course but not another.

Decisions are made on the basis of all criteria, ie academic qualifications, interview score, personal statement and reference.

### **14. Applicants with Disability/special Needs or Medical Conditions**

The University College is committed to achieving equal opportunities for all of its students and actively encourages potential students who may be disabled or have additional needs/support requirements. Applications are considered on the same



academic grounds as all other candidates. Any applicant who states on their application form that they have a disability or additional support needs will be invited to complete a questionnaire by the Student Support Officer. A decision may need to take into account any overriding health and safety concerns, barriers relating to professional requirements, or the University College's ability to make any reasonable adjustments.

### **15. Applicants Returning to Education**

The University College welcomes applications from students who have interrupted their studies for several years or did not make the transition to higher education directly from school. Applications are considered on an individual basis but evidence of successful recent academic study at a suitably high level is normally required.

### **16. Applicants with Mitigating Circumstances**

The University College is not best placed to fairly and consistently take account of any mitigating circumstance/s affecting an applicant's performance in pre-entry qualifications. Examples of mitigating circumstances include personal or family illness. The University College expects applicants to have taken appropriate action via their institution to ensure that the relevant examination bodies have allowed for such circumstances prior to the publication of results or following an appeal.

### **17. Acceptability of Qualifications/Entrance Requirements**

Applicants are required to fulfil the [QUB General Entrance Requirements](#) and also course requirements. The latter are expressed in terms of both grades and (where applicable) subjects and UCAS Tariff points. Further details regarding the range of qualifications which are normally acceptable can be found in the undergraduate prospectus and on the University College website [www.stran.ac.uk](http://www.stran.ac.uk) or directly from Academic Registry or by clicking the following link on the college website [Course details](#).

### **18. Recognition for RPL, APEL and APCL**

RPL includes experiential learning or prior certificated learning for academic purposes. These are discussed below:

- APEL (Accredited for prior experiential learning) is a process by which a student's learning through experience is assessed, and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.
- APCL (Accreditation of prior certificated learning) is a process through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes.

RPL credit cannot be awarded where professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements are not met.

The University College has encouraged APEL/APCL applicants since the introduction of

its non-teacher education degrees. It is applied in both Early Childhood Studies and Health, Physical Activity and Sport for module exemption or advanced entry to a programme, eg an applicant holding an HND in Early Years may gain entry to year 2 of the degree programme.

The use of APEL, in the context of admissions, can be applied to specific programmes. For example, such applicants may present lower level qualifications but have extensive, appropriate work experience from which significant learning has taken place. Statements of experience must be provided by the applicants and within this statement they must display a clear desire to study the course for which they have applied. The presentation/interview is used to determine potential for the degree.

## 19. Offer making

Conditional offers are made in terms of grades. The level of offers reflects the competition for places available and the achievement which it is considered is required to complete the course successfully. Offers are generally made in terms of three A-levels plus any other academic requirement which is needed to fulfil matriculation or course requirements. Where candidates present academic/professional qualifications which are equivalent to A-levels, conditional offers will be made in accordance with the structure and grading of these qualifications.

Applicants who are unsuccessful in gaining admission to their original choice may be considered for alternative courses. Applicants should email [registry@stran.ac.uk](mailto:registry@stran.ac.uk) to check if there are any vacancies for alternative courses.

Changes to any of the University College's courses involving significant restructuring or discontinuation will be communicated to applicants affected by such changes by the Admissions Office. Applicants will be contacted via email to inform them of any such changes at the earliest opportunity.

## 20. Feedback, Complaints and Appeals

Students who are not offered a place on a course, may, upon request, receive feedback on their performance.

The Academic Registry staff are able to respond to most queries about decisions to the satisfaction of the vast majority of applicants. For details on how a request for feedback is dealt with please refer to the [Feedback to Unsuccessful Applicants](#) document on the college website.

A formal [Appeals Procedure](#) exists which may be used if a student continues to be dissatisfied with the informal feedback.

The formal [Complaints procedure](#) also exists to provide applicants with a mechanism to allow Stranmillis University College to deal with any complaint in a timely and open way.

## 21. Data Protection

By agreeing to the declaration in UCAS Apply online, applicants give permission to the University College to process their personal data for the purposes of managing the University College's selection and admission procedures and for maintaining its student records. The information will also be used to make statutory returns to bodies such as the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA).

All applicants both UCAS and non-UCAS are also under the protection of the University College's data protection policy. [Data Protection Policy](#)

## **22. Fraudulent Statements/Omissions**

Offers of a place are based on the information provided by the applicant and are made in good faith by the University College. It is the applicant's responsibility to provide all necessary and relevant information. False statements or omissions of relevant information may lead to the withdrawal of an offer or a place. If appropriate, UCAS will be notified in such cases.

## **23. Verification of Qualifications**

For the majority of UCAS applicants, results are provided directly to the University College. Other applicants will be required to produce original certificates of their qualifications prior to registration. These qualifications include GCSEs, Access courses, CACHE diplomas and Foundation degrees.

## **24. Review**

Policies and procedures relating to admissions are reviewed annually by the University College Selection Committee in the light of analysis of the annual Selection Report against the mission and strategic objectives of the University College and changes to qualifications frameworks. The University College Selection Committee is chaired by the Director of Community Engagement and External Affairs (Registrar) and includes the Vice-Principal, the Head of Student Support, the Head of Widening Participation, Programme Coordinators, the Admissions Officer and Careers Officer. Outside the Selection Committee, ongoing consultation takes place with Heads of Academic Areas, Programme Leaders, Principals of schools/colleges and careers teachers, the Department for Employment and Learning, EGSA and representatives of government and the relevant professions.

## **25. Staff Training**

A high degree of professionalism is needed by admissions staff who are required to offer advice and guidance to potential students, careers teachers and parents. Given the diversity of backgrounds from which applications are received, ongoing 'on-the-job' training takes place with periods set aside during which the Admissions Officer briefs staff on changes to qualifications and procedures.

Opportunities are taken for staff to attend conferences organised by CCEA, UCAS, etc.

Opportunities are also provided for Admissions staff to attend in-house training sessions which are held for academic staff of the University College and for teachers and others who participate on selection interview panels. Whilst Admissions staff do not participate in selection interviews, they are familiar with the procedures and types of issue which may arise. Admission Staff are also provided with in-house training in relation to the provision of constructive feedback to unsuccessful applicants and in general the whole area of customer care.

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