



STRANMILLIS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE  
A College of Queen's University Belfast

# ADMISSIONS POLICY

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**Undergraduate Admissions Policy  
Entry in the Academic Year 2025-2026**

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## **1. Context, Governance and Responsibilities**

### **1.1. Introduction**

Stranmillis University College was established in 1922 under the Ministries of Northern Ireland Act 1921. The College receives funding from Department for the Economy under Article 66(2) of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1986. As a result of the approval by Parliament of the Colleges of Education (NI) Order 2005, the College became a legally incorporated Higher Education Institution on 1 October 2005 and is integrated academically with Queen's University Belfast through an Agreement dated May 2002. The University College is situated on the Stranmillis Road in Belfast.

### **1.2. Scope of the Policy**

In compliance with Chapter B2 of the *QAA Quality Code*, this policy applies to all admissions to Stranmillis University College. Stranmillis University College is responsible for setting the admissions criteria to all undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

The number of full-time undergraduate students which the College can admit is controlled directly by the Department of the Economy. In addition, the Department of Education determines the number of students who should be admitted each year to Initial Teacher Education courses.

### **1.3. Institutional Context**

The University College's mission statement, as stated in its Corporate Plan is: "To transform the lives of children and young people 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 University College is a professionally oriented University College, with core undergraduate, postgraduate and research activity in the areas of Teacher Education, Early Childhood Education and Physical Education and Sport.

### **1.4 Widening Participation**

Stranmillis University College is committed to Widening Participation and encourages applications from underrepresented groups and aims to raise the educational aspirations and attainment of participants.

In particular, the Corporate Plan has identified the key objectives as follows:

- Increasing student entrants from lower socio-economic groups and low participating neighbourhoods (specifically MDM Quintile 1), disabled students, mature students and care experienced entrants.
- Attracting more males into higher education, including those from MDM Quintile 1.

To achieve these aims the College

- encourages applications from suitably qualified applicants, particularly from groups which are currently underrepresented in Higher Education;

- selects on the basis of fair, transparent, reliable and objective criteria, applied equitably and consistently;
- admits the best qualified applicants to degree courses in line with the College's priorities, and within the overall constraints applied by the government and professional bodies

### 1.5 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The University College values and promotes equality and diversity and will seek to ensure that it treats all individuals fairly and with dignity and respect. It is opposed to all forms of unlawful discrimination. The University College will provide equality of opportunity and treatment to all, regardless of a person's gender identity/expression (this includes Transgender and Non-Binary people); pregnancy or maternity status; marital or civil partnership status; whether or not they have dependants (including caring responsibilities); religious belief or political opinion; race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, including Irish Travellers); disability; sexual orientation and age.

### 1.6 Quality Assurance

The admissions policy complies with relevant legislation affecting the admission of students and meets the expectation of the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the Advice and Guidance Theme on Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access (2018), (<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>).

### 1.7 Roles and Responsibilities

The Academic Registry Office will implement admissions policies and procedures. The Academic Registry Manager will formally review admission policies and procedures at the end of an admissions cycle. Procedures will also be monitored at each stage of admission and improvements identified or adjusted where necessary. The outcome of this review will be reported to the College's Selection Committee. The Selection Committee is a standing working group of the College, comprised of staff across the institution. The remit of the group is to monitor the admissions procedures and advise the Senior Management Team of any recommend changes. Membership of the Selection Committee consists of the following role holders:

- Director of Student and Learning Services
- Director of Teaching and Learning
- Academic Registry Manager
- Admissions Officer
- Heads of Academic Areas
- Academic staff from different programmes

The Selection Committee will meet at least twice per year. All staff involved in the selection process will be informed of the policies and procedures in relation to admission including equality of opportunity. Training and personal development opportunities will be identified to ensure that a professional service is provided to the stakeholders of the College. The allocation of student intake numbers for the BEd, PGCE and BA and BSc courses each year is normally determined in the spring term prior to the year of entry by the Department of the

Economy and the Department of Education (Northern Ireland). The allocation of places within each course is agreed by the Senior Management Team.

### 1.8 Training

Academic Registry staff are provided with regular training on admissions matters to ensure that they have the appropriate level of knowledge and expertise to carry out their duties to a high standard.

## 2. Pre- Application Information

### 2.1 Entrance Qualifications and Admissions Procedures

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 enables an informed choice of programme(s) appropriate to applicant needs, interests, and academic qualifications and potential.

Detailed information on entrance qualifications and associated admissions procedures for individual undergraduate programmes is provided. The main sources of information are as follows:

2.1.1 Online Course Finder at: <https://www.stran.ac.uk/courses/> which under the 'Entry Requirements' for individual courses includes a section entitled 'Admissions Process'.

2.1.2 Undergraduate Prospectus available in a variety of formats including print and online.

The University College makes every effort to ensure that the information it provides is accurate when it is published. Printed materials such as the prospectus and subject-specific literature are provided approximately 18 months before a course begins. Applicants should therefore refer to the online Course Finder for updated information about course content and application criteria.

### 2.2 Acceptability of Qualifications and Entrance Requirements

Applicants are required to fulfil the General Entrance Requirements' of Queen's University Belfast and also Stranmillis University College's course requirements. The latter are expressed in terms of both grades and (where applicable) subjects. Further details can be found in the College prospectus, on the College website (<https://www.stran.ac.uk/courses/>) or direct from the Academic Registry.

### 2.3 Statement on Qualifications Reform across the UK

The University College recognises that qualifications reform across the UK, which will be introduced on a phased basis, will result in applicants presenting with different qualification profiles. As part of the aims of the admissions policy, we will ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and are not disadvantaged by the reforms and decisions made by schools/colleges, as appropriate to their individual circumstances.

## 2.4 Applicant Enquiries

Academic Registry processes all undergraduate applications and provides pre application advice and guidance. This includes responding to enquiries on how to apply, the acceptability of qualifications and entrance requirements. Academic Registry can be contacted by telephone, email or post:

Academic Registry  
Stranmillis University College  
Stranmillis Road  
Belfast  
BT9 5DY

Email: [registry@stran.ac.uk](mailto:registry@stran.ac.uk)

Telephone: +44(0)28 9038 4263

## 3. The Application Process

### 3.1 Criteria for Admission and Application Procedures

All applications for admission to full-time undergraduate courses in the University College should be submitted through the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service ([UCAS website](#)).

Applications for degree courses which may be delivered by part-time study (Part Time BA Early Childhood Studies) should be made direct to the University College.

### 3.2 Closing Dates for Applications

Applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible. This normally enables decisions to be made more quickly, though all applications received by the normal closing date (currently last Wednesday in January at 18:00 hours) will be given equal consideration. Late applications may be considered depending on competition for places on individual programmes, such as the Foundation Degree programmes.

### 3.3 Deferred Entry

The College does not consider deferred applications.

### 3.4 Data Protection

Stranmillis University College is required to comply with the data protection legislation. The University College is committed to ensuring that all staff and students comply with the legislation, regarding the processing and confidentiality of any personal data held by the University College. The University College has a Data Protection Policy and a Student Privacy Notice, which detail how and why we collect your personal data, how we use it and your rights in relation to this data. You can view the Data Protection Policy and Student Privacy Notice [here](#).

### 3.5 Fraudulent Submissions or Statements, Similarity Detection and Omissions

Offers of a place are based on the information provided by the applicant and are made in good faith by the University College. Stranmillis University College is not prepared to admit applicants who provide false statements/certificates/transcripts or who omit relevant information and these circumstances are likely to lead to the withdrawal of an application or, offer of a place. A student's registration may be terminated if he/she is found at a later stage to have submitted a fraudulent application to the University College. The applicant shall have no claim against the University College in relation to this and if appropriate, UCAS will be notified of such cases.

Additionally, in response to the increasing practice of downloading material from commercial and other websites and copying from applications submitted in previous years, UCAS have 'similarity detection' software to detect the use of plagiarism in personal statements. In instances where there is significant similarity both the universities and the applicant are advised.

### 3.6 Recognition of Prior Learning

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

- RPEL (Recognition for prior experiential learning) is a process by which a student's learning through experience is assessed, and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes. 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. Applicants may be required to attend a presentation/interview.
- RPCL (Recognition of prior certificated learning) is a process through which previously assessed and certificated learning is considered and, as appropriate, recognised for academic purposes. The University College has encouraged RPCL applicants since the introduction of its non-teacher education degrees. It is applied in both BA Early Childhood Studies and BSc Physical Education and Sport for module exemption or advanced entry to a programme, e.g. an applicant holding an HND/Foundation Degree in Early Years may gain entry to year 2 of the degree programme.

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

The University College adheres to the QUB procedure. Available [here](#).

### 3.7 Name Change

When providing evidence of qualifications, if the name on that documentation is different from the name of the applicant, then an appropriate form of evidence of the change of name should be provided. Examples of appropriate evidence may include:

- A marriage/civil partnership certificate
- Change of name by deed poll
- Solicitor's letter

- Gender Recognition Certificate

## 4. Selection and Communication of Decisions

### 4.1 Applications

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

### 4.2 Selection Criteria

In the interests of consistency and transparency, it is essential that the University College's selection criteria are objective. For the majority of courses, academic qualifications are therefore the main criterion and previous academic background (including, for example, performance at GCSE and AS-level or in the first year of a BTEC/OCR Level 3 or Access Course) may be taken into account in deciding whether or not to make a conditional offer, particularly in the case of high demand courses. For students who have studied beyond A-level or equivalent, performance at this level may also be taken into account.

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

### 4.3 Interview and Presentation

Applicants to the BEd Primary/Post Primary and BA Early Childhood Studies degree programmes that met the initial shortlisting criteria (as indicated on the University College website and prospectus) are required to undertake an interview and presentation. Applicants will be notified of their interview date at least one week beforehand and will also be provided with the presentation topic at this time.

The interview will be conducted by a panel of two, normally comprising one University College academic staff member and a current/retired education or early years professional. 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 cue cards 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.

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

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, Academic Registry will determine the score required for an offer for each course.

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

#### **4.4 Experience, Motivation and Commitment**

Experience, motivation and commitment to the chosen course is a requirement for all courses offered by Stranmillis University College.

#### **4.5 Medical Assessments**

All offers made are conditional on a satisfactory medical assessment.

#### **4.6 Applicants Under 18 (Minors)**

Students who have not reached the age of 18 on commencing their course are legally considered 'minors' (i.e. not yet adults). The College has a duty of care towards those students who are defined as children. For these students the Director of Student and Learning Services should:-

- inform parents and guardians that the College is not in loco parentis;
- have a list of the student's emergency contact details, in particular those of parents and guardians;
- inform the student that he/she may not enter licensed premises or hold office; and
- advise those dealing with the student of the Code of Conduct

Risk assessments should be completed for all undergraduate students under the age of 18 undertaking work placements during the course of their studies. Assurances should be sought that staff of the business/agency with which the student has been placed have been checked to the appropriate level.

#### **4.7 Applicants Returning to Education**

The University College also welcomes applications from students who are returning to education. Each case will be considered on its individual merits and modified entrance targets may be set. Many such students undertake Access courses as an alternative route into higher education. Applications from such students, offering Access Diplomas who have been away from full-time education for a sustained period of time (minimum two consecutive academic years) immediately prior to commencing the Access Diploma are welcomed, and each is considered individually on its merits. Where offers are made these are based on completion of the full qualification (performance in Level 3 units), which is normally available on a one year full-time or two years' part-time basis. Applicants must be in a position to meet any specific subject requirements.

#### **4.8 Turnaround Time for Applications**

Admissions decisions will be made quickly and efficiently where possible. However, where programmes attract large numbers of applications or where it is necessary to receive all applications before making decisions (in order to consider the gathered field) or where interviews are required, decisions inevitably take longer, though every effort is made to keep delays to a minimum.

#### **4.9 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 AccessNI check.

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

Further information on AccessNI can be found on the NI Direct website [here](#).

#### 4.10 Offers

4.10.1 Conditional offers are made in terms of grades rather than UCAS tariff points. Offers will normally be made on the basis of three A-levels or equivalent qualifications acceptable to the University College. Additional subjects at AS/A-level may be taken into account in August. The level of offers reflects the competition for places available and the achievement which it is considered is required to do well on the course. The University College accepts a wide range of qualifications. In all cases any specific subject requirements must be met.

4.10.2 Performance in individual units at AS/A-level will not be included as part of conditional offers. However, this information is available to the University College and may be taken into account in borderline cases in August.

4.10.3 Where applicants are completing a BTEC/OCR Level 3 qualification offers are made based on the overall grade(s).

4.10.4 Applicants who are unsuccessful in gaining admission to their original choice may be considered for alternative courses.

#### 4.11 Notifying Applicants

In considering an application, the University College may make one of four decisions: a conditional offer, an unconditional offer, placed on a reserve list or an application is processed as unsuccessful. Once the decision has been made it will be transmitted to UCAS and applicants will be advised that they can access the decision via their UCAS Track account.

#### 4.12 Terms and Conditions and Required Information

Applicants in receipt of an offer will receive a link that includes Terms and Conditions. You can view the Term & Conditions [here](#). Applicants should read the Terms and Conditions carefully in advance of replying to their offer(s). Applicants will be asked to upload qualification certificates and AccessNI documents at this link. All offers, including where no conditions have been made on the basis of qualifications, are conditional upon the successful verification of qualification certificates and a successful Enhanced AccessNI check. Foundation degree applicants will have their AccessNI check processed by their Regional College.

#### 4.13 Applicants with a Disability or Long Term Conditions

The University College welcomes and encourages applications from students with disabilities or long term conditions. Applications are considered on the same grounds as non-disabled applicants. An individual's disability or long-term condition will not influence the University College's decision to offer a place. On receipt of an offer from the University College,

applicants who have disclosed a disability or long-term condition will be contacted by the University College's Student Support Service and asked to provide further information on their condition. Please note: If you did not disclose a disability or long-term condition on your application and wish to do so, please contact Student Support directly by emailing: [studentsupport@stran.ac.uk](mailto:studentsupport@stran.ac.uk). The information provided by applicants will be used to assess the individual reasonable adjustments that they should receive if they are accepted and placed on their chosen course. Where it is anticipated from the information provided that the applicant will require significant support or will require modifications to the academic course, they will be invited to meet staff from Student Support Service and relevant members from the relevant academic area to discuss the applicant's individual needs. In a small number of cases where there are fitness to practise concerns or where reasonable adjustments may not be feasible to implement (which may arise as a result of the disclosure of a disability or long-term condition after an offer of a place has been made or after a place has been taken up), advice will be obtained by Student Support Services, the University College's Occupational Health Service and appropriate external agencies to ensure every reasonable effort is made to support the student in taking up their offer on their chosen course at Stranmillis University College. Following these discussions, staff from Student Support Services will offer to meet with the applicant to discuss the support available to enable them to make an informed judgement on the suitability of the course. In the exceptional and unlikely event where fitness to practise issues remain a concern or reasonable adjustments cannot be implemented, the University reserves the right to withdraw an offer or withdraw the student from their course.

The University College recognises that the decision to disclose a disability or long-term condition is a personal one, although it is recommended that applicants do so as early as possible to support the timely implementation of agreed reasonable adjustments. The University College will endeavour to make any adjustments in a timely manner, but if a disability or long term condition is not disclosed until a later stage, there may be a delay in implementation of those adjustments, beyond the start of the programme. Applicants who wish to appeal a decision not to implement adjustments requested which prevent the applicant from taking up their offer of a place on a course may write to the Director of Student and Learning Services to request a review of the decision.

## **5. Post-Decision Procedures**

### **5.1 Applicants with Mitigating or Extenuating Circumstances**

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

### **5.2 Significant Changes to Programmes**

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 Academic Registry. This will be done at the earliest possible opportunity.

### 5.3 Feedback

5.3.1 Academic Registry will provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants on request. Academic Registry staff are able to respond to most queries about decisions to the satisfaction of the vast majority of applicants. See Appendix 1 for details on how a request for feedback is dealt with.

5.3.2 Feedback should be requested by email and should come from the applicant themselves or if received from a school adviser or parent/spouse, must be accompanied by a clear written statement signed by the applicant confirming that s/he is willing for their application to be discussed with another named individual who is acting on their behalf. A request for feedback can be made within six weeks of the decision. Academic Registry aims to respond to requests for feedback within 10 working days of receipt of the request. However, at busy periods this may not be possible. Academic Registry will provide feedback in writing by email. Following this feedback, if applicants believe that they have grounds for a formal review of the admissions decision, they should consult Stranmillis University College's Admissions Appeals and Complaints procedure (Appendix 2)

### 5.4 Appeals and Complaints

5.4.1 Stranmillis University College aims to consider all applicants fairly and in line with the principles outlined in the Undergraduate Admissions Policy. However, it is recognised that there may be occasions where applicants feel they have grounds for appeal (a request for a review of the admissions decision), or make a complaint about the handling of their application or enquiry.

5.4.2 The University College's Appeals and Complaints procedure is attached as Appendix 2. It covers all applicants to University College credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing courses, and can therefore be used by persons who are not currently Stranmillis University College students. The procedure covers the following types of appeal and/or complaint:

- complaints about the University College's handling of a query or an application for admission;
- allegations that admissions criteria were not applied correctly or even-handedly;
- emergence of new material information which may have affected the decision.

The procedure does not cover strategic decisions relating to caps on student numbers, in particular courses whether imposed by the University College, government or professional bodies. Any correspondence on these matters should be directed to the Academic Registry Manager who has overall responsibility for admissions policy.

### 5.5 Verification of Qualifications

For the majority of UCAS applicants, results are provided directly to the University College. Other applicants will be required to present their original certificates or a certified copy (and official translations in English if necessary) before they first register as an undergraduate student at the University College. All applicants holding an offer are required to upload all qualification certificates for verification to the online form contained in their UCAS offer text.

## **6. International Applications**

International applications are welcomed and should be submitted in the normal way through UCAS.

### **6.1 Status for Tuition Fee Purposes**

The University College charges different levels of tuition fee: the 'home' fee rates (Northern Ireland (NI), Republic of Ireland (ROI); the 'middle' fee applies to Great Britain (GB) or those domiciled there and assessed as GB for fees purposes; and the higher 'overseas' fee rate, which would normally be applicable for non-EU nationals and non-Republic of Ireland EU nationals. The amount a student will be required to pay depends on a number of criteria.

Details of these criteria and further guidance can be obtained from UKCISA: The UK Council for International Student Affairs. UKCISA provides advice and information to international students studying (or intending to study) in the UK. Information and advice to students is free. For more information, please visit [www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk).

Academic Registry will decide an applicant's fee status on the basis of the relevant fees regulations. Fee status is determined in accordance with the following regulations: The Student Fees (Qualifying Courses and Persons) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 (as amended). In addition to the information supplied at the time of application, applicants may be asked to provide additional details about themselves and their family to help us assess fee status. If this is necessary, we will ask applicants to complete a Fee Assessment Questionnaire. Applicants should also provide scanned copies of relevant documents (for example copies of passports, official letters, evidence of travel, employment, etc) to support the information provided.

### **6.2 Comparability of International Qualifications**

Qualifications obtained from countries outside the UK and Republic of Ireland should be deemed comparable and meet the equivalent level for entry to the degree programme applied for. The University College will only recognise qualifications that are awarded by suitably quality-assured organisations.

Guidance as to the range of international qualifications most frequently accepted by the University College is available at:

[View International Applicant Guidance - Your Country](#)

The National Agency for International Qualifications and Skills Centre for the United Kingdom (UK ENIC – [www.enic.org.uk](http://www.enic.org.uk)) or the British Council ([www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)) are additional sources of information regarding the comparability of international qualifications.

### **6.3 English Language Requirements**

Applicants whose first language is not English are required to produce evidence of their proficiency through qualifications such as a Secure English language test (SELT) eg IELTS for UKVI purposes, or an acceptable alternative such as IELTS Academic, TOEFL iBT, or an INTO English language test eg English for University Study or Pre-sessional English ([www.intostudy.com/en-gb/universities/queens-university-belfast/courses](http://www.intostudy.com/en-gb/universities/queens-university-belfast/courses)). A full list of acceptable English language qualifications and appropriate scores is available at:

### [View English Language Requirements](#)

For those applicants who are required to obtain an English language qualification prior to taking up their place on a course, the conditional offer will be made in terms of achieving an appropriate score in IELTS (or equivalent qualification acceptable to the University) or an INTO English language test. Please note that the qualifications which are accepted by UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) for visa application purposes can be subject to change, and it is recommended that prospective applicants consult the UKVI website at:

### [View UK Government Visas and Immigration](#)

IELTS and TOEFL tests must have been taken no more than two years prior to the expected start date of the course. Other qualifications may have time limits for acceptability – please see the Queens University's website for further information.

#### 6.4 Immigration Procedures

The International Office is responsible for providing advice and guidance to international applicants and students on study related visa categories, in particular Student Route for entry to the UK, as well as visa renewals from within the UK.

Applicants, who have met all the course entry requirements and have accepted an unconditional offer of a place to study on an undergraduate degree, are eligible to pay a voluntary deposit towards their tuition fees.

Academic Registry will include appropriate information in the offer letters and guidance notes for international applicants, and is responsible for carrying out the appropriate checks, in conjunction with the International Office, to assess immigration history before issuing Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) for applicants where appropriate:

Please note:

- The University will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that offers of admission are only made to applicants who are likely to be eligible for a CAS statement.
- The CAS will only be issued after a full assessment of an applicant's previous UK study, including assessment of progression, previous immigration history and assessment of genuine intention to study. The Admissions team may request an immigration history check from the Home Office in some cases.
- The University will only assign a CAS to eligible applicants.

A CAS is valid for 6 months from the date of issue. Academic Registry will also issue the appropriate documentation required to allow applicants to apply for Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) clearance where applicable.

An ATAS Certificate is valid for 6 months from the date of issue by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. ATAS Clearance is required for all applicants currently in the UK on limited leave to remain visas issued after 6 April 2015 including dependant visas. Applicants may apply for an ATAS Certificate up to 6 months in advance of the beginning of the degree programme. Further information is available at:

### [View Government Guidance on ATAS](#)

If the applicant will be in the UK for more than 6 months, s/he will also be required to pay the Immigration Health Surcharge at the time of application, which is currently charged at £470 per year of the visa. More information is available from the Home Office website at:

[View information on Healthcare Immigration application](#)

At the time of enrolment and registration, all new non-UK/non-Irish students are required to provide evidence (valid passport and visa) that they have the correct immigration permission to undertake the specified degree programme at the University College.

**Procedures on Feedback to Unsuccessful Applicants**

Stranmillis University College will provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants on request. The feedback given will be with reference to the selection criteria for the degree programme. The request for feedback should be made within six weeks of the decision to the Academic Registry by email, by emailing [registry@stran.ac.uk](mailto:registry@stran.ac.uk)

Where possible, responses to requests made in writing (by email) will be provided within ten working days. However, at busy periods, an acknowledgment may be sent outlining the reasons for any delay. The request for feedback should be made by the applicant, or if received from a school adviser or parent/spouse, must be accompanied by a clear written statement signed by the applicant confirming that s/he is willing for their application to be discussed with another named individual who is acting on their behalf. Without this written permission, general advice on selection procedures will be provided to schools/colleges and parents but this will not be based on reference to an individual application or record.

Feedback is distinct from a complaint about how an application has been processed or an appeal (asking for a review of the admissions decision) for which a separate procedure is in place (see Appendix 2 to the Admissions Policy). Feedback is intended to explain the reasons for the decision and may include advice about what additional qualifications or measures might be taken to strengthen an application to the same programme in a future year.

**Admissions Appeals and Complaints Procedure****1. Introduction**

Each year, Stranmillis University College receives approximately 2,000 UCAS applications for admission to undergraduate and foundation degree programmes and approximately 200 applications to the PGCE (Early Years) degree. However, the undergraduate NI/ROI intake each year is dictated by a government-imposed cap (the Maximum Aggregate Student Number, or MASN), which means that not all suitably-qualified applicants can be accommodated. This cap does not apply to students who normally live in England, Scotland and Wales (GB students).

University College policy is formulated in line with the strategic plan. Admissions criteria - i.e. the entry qualifications and grades for individual courses - are determined by Academic Registry in consultation with Senior Management for the purposes of implementing the strategic plan, within the overall constraints placed on student numbers by both government and professional bodies.

Most admissions decisions are based on transparent academic criteria. The University College's website ([www.stran.ac.uk/courses](http://www.stran.ac.uk/courses)) contains detailed descriptions of the various entrance qualifications and grades required for particular courses, but published grades are indicative only and an offer made to an applicant may vary from the published criteria. Some degree courses require additional evidence of an applicant's suitability e.g. interviews are used to identify whether applicants have the desired attributes for BEd and BA undergraduate degrees and the PGCE (Early Years) degree, but in all such cases selectors are required to have clearly stated selection criteria.

Academic Registry staff are able to address most queries about admissions decisions on a daily basis, and the vast majority of applicants are satisfied with the explanation provided. This is regarded as feedback and intended to explain the reasons for the decision and may include advice about what additional qualifications or measures might be taken to strengthen an application to the same programme in a future year (see Appendix 1 of the Admissions Policy). The following procedure covers cases where unsuccessful applicants consider they have grounds for a review of the admissions decision (appeal) or wish to complain about the handling of their application or enquiry.

**2. Scope of the Procedure**

This procedure is based on the University-wide Student Complaints Procedure. It covers all applicants to University credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing courses, and thus can be used by persons who are not currently Stranmillis University College students.

The procedure covers the following types of appeal and/or complaint:

- Complaints about the University's handling of a query or an application for admission for example a procedural error, irregularity or maladministration;
- Allegations that admissions criteria were not applied correctly or even-handedly, resulting in a formal request for a review of the admissions decision;
- Emergence of new material information which may have affected the decision. In such cases the applicant must also provide details of why the new information was not made available at the

time of application. If this information was available or known to the applicant at the time of application but not included for whatever reason, it will not normally be considered.

The procedure does not cover strategic decisions relating to the overall size and shape of schools, or to caps on student numbers in particular courses whether imposed by the University College, government or professional bodies. Any correspondence on these matters should be directed to the Director of Student and Learning Services who has overall responsibility for admissions policy.

In cases of collaborative provision, ie where a University College programme is delivered jointly with another institution, responsibility for admissions decisions may vary according to the terms of the collaborative arrangement, and enquiries should be directed in the first instance to the Academic Registry at Stranmillis University College. Where the admissions query relates to a programme designed as an entry route to Stranmillis University College (eg an Access course for mature students), enquiries should be directed to the institution offering the entrance qualification (eg a college or institute of further and higher education, in the case of Access students).

### **3. Submission and Investigation of Complaints and Appeals**

3.1 First Stage: Informal Resolution Appeals and complaints against admissions decisions or procedures should normally be made by the applicant in question and should be directed in writing to Academic Registry in the first instance (email [registry@stran.ac.uk](mailto:registry@stran.ac.uk) or write to the Academic Registry, Stranmillis University College, Stranmillis Road, Belfast, BT9 5DY) within six weeks of receiving a decision. If necessary, Academic Registry will consult with relevant selectors before responding to the query. A written response will be made to every written complaint/appeal (ie by letter or email), normally within 10 working days, and this written response will mark the completion of the informal stage.

#### **3.3.2 Second Stage: Formal Letter to Director of Student Support**

An applicant who is dissatisfied with the written explanation should put his/her concerns in writing to the Director of Student and Learning Services within 10 working days of the date of the Academic Registry letter or email (3.1 above). The formal letter to the Director of Student and Learning Services should set out the grounds for dissatisfaction with the response from Academic Registry, and include any previous correspondence. The Director of Student and Learning Services (or nominee) shall then consult with the Academic Registry Manager and/or Admissions Officer and staff within the University College as necessary, and shall undertake such further enquiries as are deemed necessary before providing a written response, normally within 15 working days of receipt of the appeal or 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 Director of Student and Learning Services or his/her nominee, and to be informed of the outcome of the complaint.

#### **3.3 Third Stage: Appeal**

(i) Any applicant still dissatisfied after the second stage may appeal in writing to the Principal within 10 working days of the date of the letter stating the decision of the Director of Student and Learning Services. Copies of previous correspondence and any supporting documentation should be included. A Review Panel shall then be convened, to meet normally within 25 working days of receipt of the appeal letter. However, there is no appeal against an admissions decision which, in the judgement

of the Principal, results from the correct and impartial application of written criteria. In such cases, the Principal shall communicate this decision in writing to the appellant, normally within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal.

(ii) Where a Review Panel is deemed necessary, the panel shall normally comprise:

- the Principal (in the chair);
- a Head of Academic Area other than the one(s) applied to;
- a senior administrator from outside the Academic Registry
- the President or other sabbatical officer from the Students' Union;

(iii) Panel members shall not have had any prior involvement in the case. The panel membership shall be chosen as far as possible to reflect the diversity of the Northern Ireland community.

(iv) The appellant should forward copies of previous correspondence and any supporting documentation to the Panel, and shall have the right to appear before the Panel accompanied by a member of teaching staff from the appellant's present or former school or college. No legal representation shall be permitted at any stage during the procedure.

(v) The Panel may seek written evidence from any witness or person who in the Panel's judgement may have relevant information to contribute. Any such person shall have the right to see relevant documentation to be considered by the Panel, in advance of the hearing, and shall have the right to appear in front of the Panel if (s)he wishes, accompanied by a student or staff member of the College. However, neither the appellant nor any witness shall be required to appear in front of the Panel if they do not wish to appear,

(vi) Should the appellant fail to appear before the Panel at an appointed time and without valid reason, the Panel shall have the right to reach a decision in the appellant's absence.

(vii) The Panel's findings and recommendations shall be communicated to the appellant within 10 working days of the Panel's meeting. The Panel shall also send a report to the Director of Student and Learning Services and the Academic Registry Manager, summarising the Panel's conclusions and recommendations.

#### **4. Deadlines**

The deadlines 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 the Academic Registry (eg August-September), or when key staff are on leave, or otherwise indisposed. The University College will at all times strive to respond to enquiries as quickly as circumstances allow and applicants will be advised of the reasons for any delay.

#### **5. Confidentiality and Enquiries from Third Parties**

All parties are expected to maintain strict confidentiality, both during and after any appeal and/or complaint. These should normally be made by the applicant in question. When an admissions decision is queried by a third party (eg a school enquiring on behalf of a pupil), the

Academic Registry may supply a generalised answer on admissions policy but is precluded from discussing individual cases by the terms of the Data Protection Act. However, a more detailed response may be given if the applicant confirms in writing that the third party is acting on his/her behalf.

## **6. Central Monitoring of Admissions Appeals and Complaints**

Stranmillis University College sees appeals and complaints, if substantiated, as opportunities to put things right for the applicant and to learn lessons which might ultimately lead to improved standards. Accordingly, the Academic Registry Manager will prepare a summary report of admissions appeals and complaints, preserving anonymity, for the Selection Committee each year.

Approved by the Education Committee of the Governing Body – 5 June 2024