



**Queen's University Belfast International Study Centre**

**Policy and Guidelines for Students under the age of 18**

## **1.0 Context**

Students under the age of 18 are considered to be a child under the law in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Queen's University Belfast (QUB ISC) therefore has a duty to safeguard and promote their welfare. We wish to ensure that such students are provided with a safe and secure environment in which to study and thrive. The following rules and procedures have been put in place to safeguard students under the age of 18 and to encourage them to take responsibility for their own conduct and behaviour.

QUB ISC is an adult environment and all students will be treated as adults; however, we recognise that we have an additional duty of care to students under the age of 18. QUB ISC understands that under 18s from overseas may not have the same knowledge or experience of the UK as students originally from the UK so they may be more vulnerable to harm than UK students of the same age. All children and young people have the right to protection from abuse, freedom from injury and a safe and healthy environment while under the care of QUB ISC.

### **1.1. Guardianship**

A guardian is someone who can act in place of parents if there are any problems or emergencies. They provide an added level of care although parents continue to have a legal responsibility for their child even if they are not living in the UK. Whilst QUB ISC will aim to do everything possible to care for students under the age of 18, we cannot take full parental responsibility. We strongly recommend that a guardian who resides in the UK be appointed by parents before arrival. The role of the guardian needs to be agreed between the parents and the appointed person. Details of the guardian or evidence of an alternative arrangement should be provided to QUB ISC. We request all guardians to be members of [AEGIS](#), an organisation responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of children in the UK. If no guardian is appointed, the QUB ISC Senior Management Team reserve the right to act in cases of emergency where the parents cannot be contacted and/or where the Senior Management Team feel that the situation warrants immediate action.



## **2.0 Support Available**

All QUB ISC staff have police checks to make sure that they have not committed any offence which would make them unfit to supervise children. For QUB ISC staff, this is known as an Access NI check. All staff who have direct responsibilities for students under the age of 18 are required to attend appropriate training. The QUB ISC Senior Management Team, which consists of the Centre Director, Academic Director, Director of Support Services and Assistant Recruitment Director, oversee this.

QUB ISC and Queen's University Belfast also have a separate **Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults Policy** to safeguard its students from abuse, which includes physical, emotional, and sexual abuse or bullying. This policy must be read and understood by all staff. Parents should contact the **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or one of the **Designated Safeguarding Staff (DSS)** if there is any concern that their child is suffering abuse from any other student or member of staff. At QUB ISC, the DSL is the Centre Director. The policy also includes procedures to prevent underage drinking, substance abuse and the possession of obscene material.

### **2.1. Student Support Staff / Welfare Officer**

QUB ISC has several Student Support staff, whose role is to look after the wellbeing of all our students. Within the team, there is a dedicated member of staff, the Student Welfare Officer, whose principle role is the welfare and pastoral care of students. Their role includes helping students deal with personal problems (emotional, academic, family, financial) and crisis management involving, for example, accommodation issues. Where possible, Student Support staff will offer out-of-hours emergency support, such as attending the hospital or the police station, or acting as an appropriate adult if guardians or parents cannot be contacted. The Student Welfare Officer also has responsibility for daily attendance monitoring for students under the age of 18 and will meet informally with each student on a regular basis during term time to monitor their progress.

### **2.2. Additional Needs and Disability**

In the United Kingdom, every person has the same right to education, regardless of medical conditions or disabilities. If a student has any medical conditions, disabilities, or if they are neurodivergent, they must let QUB ISC know, so that we can make sure that we support them fully during their studies.



If a student requires additional support services due to a disability or chronic illness, QUB ISC has a **Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO)** to ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to enable full access to study. The SENCO will work with the academic team and Student Support team to ensure that students are not at a disadvantage because of their illness or disability.

### **2.3 Personal Tutor**

All QUB ISC students are assigned a personal tutor at the beginning of the academic year. Personal tutors are usually the student's main English teacher and they are available to discuss and deal with any issues which might arise, including managing workload and exam preparation.

### **2.4. 24-Hour Emergency Support**

QUB ISC has a 24-hour emergency support line, which means students can contact someone from QUB ISC day and night, in case of emergency. The emergency number is +44 (0) 79716 09572. **Please note that this number should only be used for emergencies and not for general enquiries.** Students will also be provided with contact numbers for local emergency services, police, fire and ambulance services during induction, as well as QUB Security. **In an emergency situation, students should call the appropriate emergency service as a priority.**

### **3.0. Social Programme and Activities**

QUB ISC will run a number of social activities, during evening and weekends, throughout the academic year, including both free and paid events. The Queen's University Students Union and Queen's University Accommodation also has a range of social clubs and activities which students will be encouraged to join.

A risk assessment of each social event will be undertaken. QUB ISC will not organise any activities considered to be high risk (e.g. airborne or water-based activities, rifle range/archery, mountaineering, horse riding, motor sports, team sports such as rugby or American football). However, if an event organised by QUB ISC is considered a moderate risk (i.e. Go Karting) parental consent will be required. Although QUB ISC will do our utmost to ensure that a student under the age of 18 is protected from harm, if the student chooses to engage in high risk activities as part of a university club/society or external organization, against the advice or without the knowledge or consent of QUB ISC, we cannot be held liable for any injury which may occur as a result of this activity. These organisations should complete their own risk assessment in conjunction with their own Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.



Students under the age of 18 will not be permitted to join overnight trips unless it is a required component of the syllabus of their Programme of Study and parental consent is provided. This includes trips organised by Queen's University Clubs and Societies.

QUB ISC will use coach companies whose drivers are Access NI checked. QUB ISC Student Assistants will also be Access NI checked. The level of supervision at events will be as follows:

- ❖ During excursions, there will be **1 adult for every 10 students aged under 18**. There will be a staff member assigned to be the contact for students under the age of 18 during the event. This is in addition to the normal ratio of staff to students. There should never be just one staff member on a trip/excursion.
- ❖ Students under the age of 18 will be identified to all staff involved in the event.
- ❖ Emergency procedures will be communicated to all QUB ISC Student Assistants. Accidents involving students under the age of 18 will be reported to the Student Welfare Officer and an Accident Report Form completed on return to QUB ISC.
- ❖ Students will be collected and brought back to their University accommodation. Where a student under the age of 18 is living in private accommodation with family, as previously approved, or Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA), the assigned member of staff will ensure that the student is transported to their address safely by means of private transport.
- ❖ Students will not be permitted to consume alcohol or to purchase age restricted products.
- ❖ All students on a day trip will be provided with the following information:
  - a. programme for the day, including times, maps and details of meeting points;
  - b. mobile numbers in case of emergency;
  - c. reminder of the behaviour that is expected.

Furthermore, students under the age of 18 will not be permitted to hold a supervisory position for any event or excursion.



## **4.0. Living Arrangements**

Students under the age of 18 have three options for accommodation whilst studying at QUB ISC:

1. Appointed QUB ISC residential accommodation.
2. Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)
3. Live with a close family relative in the Belfast area

Information on each option and set requirements are set out below.

### **1. ISC-Arranged Accommodation**

It is QUB ISC's recommendation that all students under 18 should live in appointed ISC residential accommodation, located at Elms BT9, which is within short walking distance to the ISC. There are Residential Life Coordinators and Assistants, who are DBS/Access NI checked, available during out of office hours to respond to any queries and support students' safety onsite.

The Residential Life Team are employees of Queen's University Belfast and work with the QUB ISC Accommodation Officer to maximise the wellbeing of students residing at Elms Village, as well as ensuring that all statutory health and safety and fire precaution requirements are met or exceeded. During fire alarm activation, Residential Life Assistants will be responsible for checking a register. Immediate first aid is available on site from staff who have been trained appropriately. All QUB ISC accommodation includes either electronic control of access and/or 24/7 staffed security.

Please be aware ISC residential accommodation is an adult environment. Students should expect to be independent, used to cooking and cleaning for themselves. Laundry facilities are provided at the accommodation.

Please note that we are unable to segregate students by age, gender, religion or ethnic group.

### **2. Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)**

Under-18 students may live in professionally managed Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA). A guidance document which provides recommended minimum requirements can be accessed via the following link:

[Under 18 Accommodation Information](#)

Important: Not all PBSAs permit under-18 occupancy. Students must ensure the chosen provider accepts under-18 residents.

#### **Guardianship Requirement (PBSA)**

All under-18 students living in PBSA must have an AEGIS-accredited UK-based guardianship service in place for the full duration that they are under the age of 18.



### **3. Living with a Close Family Relative in the UK**

Under-18 students may live with a close family relative in the UK, provided that the relative:

- Is over the age of 21
- Has immigration permission which permits them to be based in the UK for the period the student is under-18
- Lives within a reasonable distance of the study location
- Meets the UKVI definition of a “close family relative”:
  - Grandparent
  - Step-parent
  - Aunt or uncle (parent’s sibling)
  - Brother or sister

The relative must be formally nominated by the student’s parent/guardian as the student’s UK guardian. The parent/legal guardian will be asked to complete a form as part of the student’s application process that will nominate the relative as the UK guardian.

A guidance document with more information is available via the following link:

<https://www.intostudy.com/en/under18s>

Students living with a close family relative do not need to additionally have an AEGIS-approved UK based guardianship service in place.

The under-18 student and the close family relative over the age of 21 must be living together for the period that the student is under 18.

### **5.0 Contact with Parents/Guardian**

Due to General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), the ISC is not always able to share student information with parents or guardians without the explicit consent from the student. This includes students under the age of 18.

We strongly advise students to contact parents regularly and share information regarding their wellbeing and studies.

### **6.0 Complaints**

QUB ISC has a written **Complaints Policy and Procedure** which is available to all students.



## **7.0 QUB ISC expectations of students**

### **71. Conduct and Behaviour of Students**

All students are expected to treat other students, staff and visitors of QUB ISC and Queen's University with respect, dignity and fairness. Students under the age of 18 are treated in the same way as other students and are expected to take responsibility for their own behaviour. The **Student Code of Conduct** is in the Student Handbook, which is provided to all students at registration and is taken from the Queen's University **Conduct Regulations**. Other Queen's University policies relating to student conduct are the **Student Bullying and Harassment Policy** and the **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy**. These policies are available on request but are also available via the following links:

[Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)

[Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy \(2020\)](#)

### **7.2. Registration**

Class registers will be completed within the first ten minutes of class and the Student Welfare Officer will check under-18 attendance on an hourly basis. If a student is missing from class, the Welfare Officer or a member of the Student Support team will try to contact the student. If contact cannot be made, a search will be instigated which may involve a check at the student's residence, and the **Missing Student Procedure** carried out if the need arises. If a student feels that they are unable to attend class for any reason, QUB ISC ask that the student make contact with the Welfare Officer as soon as possible to confirm their whereabouts and to allow QUB ISC to provide advice.

### **7.3. Attendance**

All students are expected to attend 100 per cent of classes and to attend all classes on time, unless they are ill or have been granted authorised absence. If a student persistently misses class, they will receive a warning and follow the stages of the **Attendance Monitoring Process**. QUB ISC reserves the right to permanently exclude a student from the course for poor attendance. In addition to the standard attendance monitoring procedures, the following will also apply:

- 1) If a class is missed, the tutor will mark the student as absent, which will automatically notify the Welfare Officer, who will then make contact with the student.



- 2) If contact cannot be made, a search will be instigated and the **Missing Student Procedure** implemented if the need arises.
- 3) If a student feels that they are unable to attend class for any reason, QUB ISC ask that the student make contact with the Welfare Officer as soon as possible to confirm their whereabouts and to allow QUB ISC to provide advice.

## **7.4. Conditions of Study**

Students will be expected to sign a joint QUB ISC and Queen's University Conditions of Occupancy document which will be considered binding by both parties. The same disciplinary process will apply to students under the age of 18 as to all other residential students. We will ask the parent/guardian of the under 18 to sign this document. However, additional regulations are in place in order to safeguard students under the age of 18:

### **7.4.1. Under-18 contact points**

During regular term time, if an under-18 student has no class scheduled before 12.00pm, as a safeguarding measure they are required to contact the Student Welfare Officer via Microsoft Teams video call. If the Welfare Officer is unavailable, the student should contact another member of the Student Support Team as soon as possible.

If a student is marked absent from class the Student Welfare Officer will attempt to contact them via phone or Microsoft Teams. If the student does not respond, a welfare check will be requested from the Residential Life team (if in QUB accommodation) or, if living in alternative accommodation, the Student Welfare Officer will contact the guardian, family member or PBSA (as applicable). If contact cannot be made, a search will be instigated and the **Missing Student Procedure** implemented.

### **7.4.2. Nights or weekends away**

If a student under the age of 18 wishes to be away from QUB ISC accommodation overnight or for a weekend, **they must get permission in advance by at least one week (i.e. 5 working days). Late requests will not be considered except in the case of exceptional circumstances.** The student must inform the Welfare Officer of their intended plans. The parents or appointed guardian must provide written permission to the Welfare Officer and



complete the [Under 18 Travel Form](#), which will include providing details of an adult who the student will be travelling and/or staying with. This is **non-negotiable**. QUB ISC reserves the right to request proof of identity for the nominated adult. Copies of their flight/transport details must also be provided. If it is not possible to contact the parents and there is no guardian, or if the student will not be accompanied by an adult, permission will not be granted.

In all cases, QUB ISC will need to know where the student is going and who they are going to see and reserve the right to refuse travel even where parental permission has been obtained. A contact telephone number and address must be given for where the student will be staying/who they are staying with. QUB ISC Senior Management will have the final say on whether travel can be approved.

### **7.4.3. Compulsory under-18 student welfare meetings**

- 1) Each under-18 student will agree to meet with the Student Welfare Officer on a regular basis. The Student Welfare Officer will contact each student in advance to confirm a convenient date and time.
- 2) During reading week, when there are no classes to attend, the Student Welfare Officer will schedule a face-to-face meeting with each under-18 student.
- 3) A meeting will be arranged with each under-18 student prior to the beginning of the two major holiday periods (Christmas/New Year and Easter).

### **7.5. Finance**

Students are expected to manage their own expenses and monthly budget. Members of the Student Support team will be able to assist students in opening a bank account in the UK and can provide informal advice on money management. Opening a UK bank account for a student under the age of 18 differs from adults, however the Student Support team at QUB ISC will help support the application.

### **7.6. Alcohol and Cigarettes/vapes**

In the UK, it is illegal for alcohol or cigarettes/vapes to be sold to anyone under the age of 18. It is also illegal for such students to buy or use alcohol or cigarettes. It is a criminal offence for anyone aged over 18 to buy, or to attempt to buy, alcohol for any person who is aged under 18. There are also age restrictions for a number of other goods and services in the UK. Students under the age of 18 are not able to buy solvents, gas lighter refills and some DVDs and computer games. There is also restricted entrance to films with an 18 certificate, and to nightclubs and bars.



## **7.7. Contact Details**

Students must inform the Student Support team when their contact telephone number or email address has changed so that records can be updated in accordance with UK Visa and Immigration guidelines. All students must provide QUB ISC with a working UK mobile number during registration and must be contactable on this number. We strongly recommend our students **DO NOT** bring a UK sim card with them; QUB ISC or Queen's accommodation will provide this. This is to best protect our students from fraud.

## **7.8. Internet and Email**

QUB ISC expect students to access email and internet services as set out by the University Regulations and **Acceptable Use Guide**. Failure to do so can result in disciplinary action. A copy of the **Acceptable Use Guide** is available on request and is also available via the following link:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/InformationServices/Services/Security/#Policies>

## **8.0. Disciplinary Action**

Any student who fails to meet QUB ISC's expectations for attendance or behaviour and conduct is likely to face disciplinary action. For major offences, for example where the student's behaviour puts others at significant risk, or where the student has persistently failed to attend classes as required by UK Visa and Immigration, the student will be withdrawn from QUB ISC.

If, for any reason, disciplinary action is taken against a student under the age of 18, the parents or appointed guardian will be informed depending on the nature of the issue; we will also look at the consents we have. They will be told why the student was disciplined, what is expected of the student in the future and what will happen if the student fails to meet these expectations.

In the unlikely event of a student under 18 years of age being withdrawn from QUB ISC, the student will not be asked to leave QUB ISC before parents have been informed and have had the chance to make arrangements for the student to return home.

A copy of the Queen's University Belfast **Conduct Regulations** is available on request and is also available via the following link:

<http://www.qub.ac.uk/directorates/AcademicStudentAffairs/AcademicAffairs/GeneralRegulations/ConductRegulations/>



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