



## Undergraduate Admissions Policy



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## 1. Context, Governance and Responsibilities

### 1.1 Introduction

St Mary's University College is a college of Queen's University Belfast. The College enjoys a special relationship of collaborative academic provision with the University but remains legally and financially autonomous with its own governance arrangements. The system for admissions to St Mary's is independent to that of the University. However, the College has the status of a University School or Institute and the College accepts the quality assurance regulations and procedures of the University, as they apply to Schools of the University. Its admissions policy has been drawn up to reflect this and is congruent with the University admissions policy.

### 1.2 Scope of the Policy

This policy applies to the admission of undergraduate students to St Mary's University College, Belfast. It provides information on procedures and related matters together with details of the responsibilities of those involved in the process. It is kept under review and updated periodically to reflect progress in implementing the College's Strategic plan.

The number of full-time undergraduate students which the College can admit is controlled directly by the Department of Employment and Learning and is independent of the number of students which Queen's University can admit. 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 College Institutional Plan for 2020-2023, *Strategy 21*, sets out the vision and mission of St Mary's University College as well as strategic actions and activities within a framework of continuous improvement for the future.

### 1.4 Widening Participation

A further strategic priority relates to the widening participation strategy. The strategy builds on current developments with the aim to meet the commitments made in the College Widening Access Plan, including to increase the numbers of students with disabilities and of students from lower socio-economic groups.

## 1.5 Achieving the Aims of the College Strategic Priorities and Widening Participation

To achieve these aims the College:

- encourages applications from suitably qualified applicants, particularly from groups which are currently under-represented 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.

## 1.6 Equality and Diversity

The policy of the College 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 dependants.

## 1.7 Quality Assurance

The admissions policy complies with relevant legislation affecting the admission of students and is consistent with the QAA Code of Practice on Recruitment and Admissions. It is also guided by the principles outlined in the Report of the Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group 2004 (the Schwartz Report).

## 1.8 Careers, Employability and Skills

The College is committed to ensuring that its graduates gain detailed knowledge of their area of study and, through the delivery of a comprehensive employability and skills programme, students are enabled to develop a range of personal and professional skills and experiences to equip them for high quality, challenging (graduate level) employment.

## 1.9 Roles and Responsibilities

The College Strategic Management Team has overall responsibility for institutional policy relating to Admissions. In an emergency situation, this responsibility can be transferred to an Incident Management Team (see appendix 6).

The Academic Registry Office will implement admissions policies and procedures. The Academic Registrar 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 Admissions Group.

The Admissions Group 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 Strategic Management Team of any changes felt necessary. Membership of the Admissions Group consists of the following role holders:

- Senior Tutor Staff and Resources (Chair)
- Student Services Coordinator
- Undergraduate Programme Co-ordinators
- Widening Access and Participation Co-ordinator
- Academic Registrar

The Admissions Group 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 Liberal Arts courses each year is normally determined in the spring term prior to the year of entry by the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Education (Northern Ireland). The allocation of places within each course is agreed by the Senior Management Team.

### 1.10 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

St Mary's 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 programme(s) to be made appropriate to their needs, interests, academic qualifications and potential.

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

- Online prospectus
- College brochures and leaflets
- College websites
- UNISTATS (<http://unistats.direct.gov.uk/>)

The College makes every effort to ensure that the information we provide is accurate when it is published. We provide printed materials such as the prospectus and entry grade brochure more than 12 months before a course begins. Applicants should therefore refer to the College website to check 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 St Mary's University College 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 ([www.smucb.ac.uk](http://www.smucb.ac.uk)) or direct from the Academic Registry.

## 2.3 Statement on Qualifications Reform across the UK

The 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. In terms of the new 9 to 1 grading arrangements, grade 4 will be considered to be equivalent to GCSE grade C.

## 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  
St Mary's University College  
191 Fall's Road  
Belfast  
BT12 6FE

Email: [admissions@smucb.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@smucb.ac.uk)  
Telephone: +44(0)28 90268304

### **3. The Application Process**

#### **3.1. Direct Application**

All applications for admission to full-time undergraduate courses must be submitted directly to the College.

#### **3.2 Closing Dates for Applications**

Applicants are encouraged to apply as early as possible. This normally enables decisions relating to eligibility to be made more quickly, though all applications received by the normal closing date will be given equal consideration. The initial closing date will be published on the College web site each year. Late applications may be considered depending on competition for places on individual programmes.

International applicants may apply up to 30 June of the year of entry.

#### **3.3 Deferred Entry**

Applications for deferred entry will be considered on an individual basis.

#### **3.4 Data Protection**

St Mary's University College is required by law to comply with the Data Protection Act, 1998 and, from 25 May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The College is committed to ensuring that all employees, registered students, agents and data processors comply with the legislation, regarding the processing and confidentiality of any personal data held by the College. Applicants have the right to either request a copy of their personal data held by the College, to have it corrected, deleted, or to ask the College to stop using it. Any person who wishes to exercise these rights should submit their request, in writing, in writing, to the Academic Registrar's Office.

Applicants applying for undergraduate programmes should note:

By signing the application form, applicants give permission to the College to process their personal data for the purposes of managing the College's selection and admissions procedures and for maintaining its student records. The information will also be used to make statutory returns to bodies such as the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA).

The College Data Protection policy is available at:



[http://www.smucb.ac.uk/data\\_protection/default.asp](http://www.smucb.ac.uk/data_protection/default.asp)

### 3.5 Fraudulent Statements/Omissions

Offers of a place are based on the information provided by the applicant and are made in good faith by the College. False statements or omissions of relevant information may lead to the withdrawal of an offer or a place.

#### Online Interviews

If an online interview forms part of the normal selection process e.g. Microsoft Teams/ Skype an applicant will be required to provide photographic identification e.g. passport to satisfy visual identity. It will be the responsibility of the applicant to arrange a suitable location and computer equipment. Applicants are not permitted to engage with a third party during the interview process and any breach will result in the application being withdrawn.

### 3.6 Recognition of Prior Learning

RPL includes experiential learning or prior certificated learning for academic purposes.

These are discussed below:

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

Under exceptional circumstances, RPEL may be approved for admission to specific programmes. In these cases the process is administered in conjunction with the subject area on a case-by-case basis. Candidates with inappropriate qualifications, but with extensive relevant experience, may be considered for admission to a particular programme, at the discretion of the Academic Registry. In such circumstances, applicants should provide evidence for the accreditation of prior experiential learning through, for example, a portfolio, or other task determined by the Academic Registry.

## **4. Admissions Process**

### **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 considered.

### **4.2 Selection Criteria**

In the interests of consistency and transparency, it is essential that the College's selection criteria are objective. Academic qualifications are therefore the first consideration and previous academic background (including, for example, performance at GCSE and AS 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 an 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.

### **4.3 Additional Methods of Selection**

The College endeavours to ensure that any assessment methods used are reliable and valid and give an accurate indication of potential to successfully complete the chosen programme of study. Additional methods of selection are used for initial teacher education degree programmes and include interviews and written work. For the Physical Education option, a practical test is set for applicants.

Any significant change proposed to the methods of selection is referred to the College Admissions Group for consideration and approval, prior to implementation.

### **4.4 Unconditional Offers**

The College may make unconditional offers of admission to targeted cohorts of applicants on a selective basis in accordance with the institutional direction. Specific criteria shall be drawn up to support the use of unconditional offers.

### **4.5 Widening Access**

The College is committed to widening access to higher education and admitting the very best students, who demonstrate the potential to benefit from, and contribute to, the academic experience we offer. The College may make offers of admission to targeted cohorts of applicants on a selective basis during the

decision-making period based on contextual information pertaining to an individual applicant. Specific criteria shall be drawn up to support the use of contextual indicators. Where an adjusted offer is made, the College is seeking to EQUALISE admissions for all applicants recognising the context of their background and the efforts that they have made to prepare for entry to Higher Education

#### 4.6 Experience, Motivation and Commitment

Experience, motivation and commitment to the chosen course may be considered.

#### 4.7 Medical Assessments

All offers made for initial teacher education courses are conditional on a satisfactory medical assessment.

#### 4.8 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 Co-ordinator of Student 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.

#### 4.9 Applicants Returning to Education

St Mary's 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. They are designed for adults who left formal education without the qualifications needed for entry to higher education, who did not progress beyond Level 3 qualifications e.g. A-levels, and who are returning to study after a significant break from full-time education (normally a minimum of two years). Applications from such students offering Access Courses are welcomed and each is considered individually on its merits. Where offers are made these are based on completion of the full qualification which is normally available on a one year full-time or two years part-time basis.

#### 4.10 Turnaround Time for Applications

Admissions decisions regarding an applicant's eligibility will be made quickly and efficiently and, for undergraduate programmes, normally within two weeks of initial processing. In some instances, it is necessary to clarify information with the applicant and response times will inevitably take longer, though every effort is made to keep delays to a minimum.

#### 4.11 Applicants with a Criminal Record

The College acknowledges the key role of education in the rehabilitative process and a criminal record will not preclude an applicant from being offered a place at the College. However, as part of its duty of care to its staff and students, the College will ask for information about any relevant items on a criminal record (see Appendix 1 for further details).

All applicants to courses where their studies will involve interaction with vulnerable groups will be required to give permission for an enhanced AccessNI (ANI) check to be carried out. AccessNI is part of central government and operates under the provisions of Part V of the Police Act 1997.

#### 4.12 Conditional offers.

4.12.1 Conditional offers will not be made for initial teacher education degree programmes. For applications received for the Liberal Arts degree by the advertised deadline, conditional offers will normally be made. The level of offer reflects the competition for places available and the achievement which it is considered is required to do well on the course. The College accepts a wide range of qualifications. In the case of GCE, other non-academic conditions may also form part of the offer.

4.12.2 Performance in individual units at AS/A-level will not be included as part of conditional offers. However, where available, the College

may take this information into account in borderline cases in August.

- 4.12.3 The A\* grade at A-level will not be used in conditional offers but it may be taken into account in tie-break situations after the release of results in August.
- 4.12.4 The College recognises the value of skills developed in the Extended Project, which is an integral part of the new Diploma qualification.
- 4.12.5 Offers (if made) to applicants repeating examinations, or who take them over a longer period than is the norm, may differ.
- 4.12.6 Applicants who are unsuccessful in gaining admission to their original choice may be considered for alternative courses.

#### 4.13 Notifying Applicants

In considering an application, the College may make one of three decisions: a conditional offer, an unconditional offer or an application is processed as unsuccessful. Once the decision has been made it will be entered on the College Application System. Applicants will be advised that they can access the decision via the College web site.

#### 4.14 Terms and Conditions

Applicants in receipt of an offer will receive confirmation from the Academic Registry Office and this communication will also include Terms and Conditions. Applicants should read the Terms and Conditions carefully in advance of replying to their offer(s).

#### 4.15 Applicants with Disability or Long Term Conditions

The College is committed to ensuring 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 those of other candidates and there is no disability assessment prior to an offer being made. Applicants will be asked to meet with appropriate staff so that support can be put in place prior to enrolment. In certain cases a risk assessment may be deemed necessary. In the extremely unlikely event that there are fitness to practice concerns where reasonable adjustments cannot be made the College reserves the right to withdraw an

offer. In addition, a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan (PEEP) may be required for students with particular disabilities.

The 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. If a disability or long term condition is not disclosed until a later stage, the College will endeavour to make any adjustments required before the start of the course, but it may not be possible to have everything in place before this.

Applicants who wish to appeal a decision not to implement adjustments requested which may prevent the applicant from taking up their offer of a place on a programme may write to the Student Guidance and Support in the first instance to request a review of the decision.

## **5 Post-Decision Procedures**

### **5.1 Deferred Entry**

Applications for deferred entry should be made to the Academic Registrar. They will be considered under the conditions which apply in their year of application and applicants must satisfy the conditions for entry by 31 August of that year.

### **5.2 Applicants with Mitigating Circumstances**

The 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 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.

### **5.3 Significant Changes to Programmes**

Changes to any of the 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.

### **5.4 Feedback**

5.4.1 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 3 for details on how request for feedback is dealt with.

5.4.2 Feedback can be requested by email or letter. 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 letter or email. Following this feedback, if applicants believe that they have grounds for a formal review of the admissions decision, they should consult the College's Admissions Appeals and Complaints procedure (Appendix 6).

## 5.5 Appeals and Complaints

5.5.1 The College aims to consider all applicants fairly and in line with principles outlined in the Admissions Policy. However, it is recognised that there may be occasions where applicants wish to request an appeal (review of the admissions decision), or make a complaint about the handling of their application or enquiry.

5.5.2 The Appeals and Complaints procedure (attached as Appendix 4) is based on the Queen's University-wide Student Complaints Procedure. It covers all applicants to credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing courses, and thus can be used by persons who are not currently College students.

The procedure covers the following types of appeal/complaint:

- complaints about the 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 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 College, government or professional bodies. Any correspondence on these matters should be directed to the Academic Registrar who has overall responsibility for admissions.

## 5.6 Verification of Qualifications

For applicants who undertake CCEA examinations, results are provided directly to the College. Other applicants will be required to produce original certificates relating to their qualifications prior to registration.

## **6 International Applications**

International applications are welcomed and should be submitted in the normal way by direct application to the College.

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

The College charges different levels of tuition fee: the 'home' fee rates (Northern Ireland (NI), EU or Great Britain) and the higher 'overseas' fee rate. 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).

The College Academic Registrar 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 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 validating University is available at:

[www.qub.ac.uk/home/International/International-students/Your-Country/](http://www.qub.ac.uk/home/International/International-students/Your-Country/)

The National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (UK NARIC – [www.naric.org.uk](http://www.naric.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 e.g. English for University Study or Pre-sessional English ([www.intohigher.com/qub](http://www.intohigher.com/qub)). A full list of acceptable English language qualifications and appropriate scores is available on request.

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 [www.gov.uk/visas-immigration](http://www.gov.uk/visas-immigration).

### 6.4 Immigration Procedures

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, which may assist in the visa application process.

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. 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 ATAS clearance where applicable.

An ATAS Certificate is valid for 6 months from the date of issue by the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. 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 [www.fco.gov.uk/atas](http://www.fco.gov.uk/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 £150 per year of study. More information is available from the Home Office website at [www.gov.uk/healthcareimmigration-application](http://www.gov.uk/healthcareimmigration-application) .

At the time of enrolment and registration, all new and returning Non EU/EEA students are required to provide evidence (passport and visa) that they have the correct immigration permission to undertake the specified degree programme at the College.

## Acceptability of Qualifications/Entrance Requirements

### 1 General Entrance Requirement

The General Entrance Requirement can be satisfied in a number of ways as shown below. In all cases GCSE English Language at Grade C/4 or an equivalent qualification, acceptable to the College, must be offered.

Please note that the same subject cannot be counted at different levels in satisfying the General Entrance Requirement.

- 1.1 Passes in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (minimum grade C) and the General Certificate of Education (Advanced Level) as follows:

Either

- a) Passes in at least five subjects, two of which should be at A-level or
- b) Passes in at least four subjects, three of which should be at A-level. A-level (Double Award) will be acceptable in place of two A-levels.

Two AS-levels will not be acceptable in place of one A-level in fulfilment of the General Entrance Requirement.

More detailed information is available from the Admissions web site: [www.smucb.ac.uk/admissions](http://www.smucb.ac.uk/admissions)

- 1.2 Passes in the Scottish Qualifications Certificate (Standard Grade (Grades 1-3), Intermediate 2, National 5, Highers and Advanced Highers) as follows:

Either

- a) Passes in at least five subjects, three of which should be at Higher level or
- b) Passes in at least four subjects, all of which should be at Higher level.

- 1.3 A BTEC Diploma/ National Diploma/ Extended Diploma/ National Extended Diploma or Higher National Certificate or Diploma

Educational background, including subjects studied at GCSE/GCE, may be taken into account.

- 1.4 An OCR Cambridge Technical Diploma or Extended Diploma.

Educational background, including subjects studied at GCSE/GCE, may be taken into account.

- 1.5 The Welsh Baccalaureate Advanced Skills Challenge Certificate
- 1.6 The International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme (DP)
- 1.8 The Cambridge International Pre-U Diploma
- 1.9 The Irish Leaving Certificate

In terms of the Irish Leaving Certificate, the General Requirement can be satisfied by passes in five subjects to include English, four of which should be at the Higher Level at grade H5 or better.

- 1.10 The European Baccalaureate
- 1.11 Other qualifications deemed equivalent by the College.

## **2 English Language Requirements for International Students**

One of the under-noted approved tests in English may be offered in place of GCSE English Language:

- i) IGCSE English Language or a recognised overseas O-level English Language.
- ii) Cambridge Proficiency (CPE).
- iii) Cambridge Advanced (CAE)
- iv) The University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) GCE O Level English Language Syllabus number 1119/ 1129 (with pass in Oral test/ 1123/1125/1127/1128.
- v) IELTS Academic Test.
- vi) TOEFL IBT (Internet-Based).
- vii) INTO English for University Study Test
- viii) INTO English Language Assessment (IELA).
- ix) Pearson Test of English (PTE) Academic.
- x) HKDSE – Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education.
- xi) Trinity ISE III or IV Integrated Skills in English Examinations (with at least a Pass in all test components).

Other English Language qualifications may be acceptable (contact the Academic Registry Office for advice).

## **3 Home-educated Applicants**

The College considers home education as a valid alternative to an exam-centred school education and welcomes applications from such students. Applicants should note that they will be considered against the standard admission criteria of the course for which they are applying and will need to demonstrate that they meet the specified academic requirements of the course.

#### **4 Recognised Subjects**

All subjects set by recognised examination boards are, in principle, acceptable for fulfilling the General Entrance Requirement. The College will take account of restrictions imposed by the examination boards and possible overlap between subjects. In considering applications from candidates, individual departments reserve the right to take account of the range, content and number of subjects being offered. Applicants who require advice about acceptability should contact the Academic Registry. It should be noted that A/AS-level General Studies is not normally included as part of conditional offers.

#### **5 Course Requirements**

In addition to the General Entrance Requirement, applicants must fulfill course requirements. These are expressed in terms of both grades and (where applicable) subjects required at A-level, AS-level and GCSE or equivalent. Information is given in the College prospectus course finder section and on the College website.

The College accepts a wide range of qualifications and a guide to the equivalences in terms of those most commonly offered is given in Table 2.

Prospective students offering other qualifications should contact the Academic Registry for advice.

#### **6 Offers for International Students**

The College welcomes applications from international students and further details about the acceptability of qualifications from individual countries are available on request from Academic Registry.

International students taking non ITE courses do not contribute to the Government imposed MASN (Maximum Aggregate Student Number) and are therefore not in competition for places with Home and EU students. For some courses the grades required by students from outside the European Union may therefore be lower than those listed in the undergraduate prospectus. Details may be obtained from the Academic Registry office.

#### **7 GCE A-Levels in Applied Subjects (formerly known as AVCE or Vocational A-levels)**

As noted above, all subjects set by recognised examination boards are, in principle, acceptable. GCE A-levels in Applied subjects are treated by the College in the same way as all other subjects and there is generally no restriction on the number which can be offered. Specific course and subject requirements must be fulfilled and attention is drawn to the following:

- i) BEd Primary Science/ BEd Post-Primary Mathematics and Science

Applicants who have chosen Science as an option and who have not taken the Science GCE A levels normally requested, are required to have undertaken relevant units within Applied A level or BTEC qualifications.

- ii) The College prospectus gives details of the specific GCE subjects which are required/ acceptable for individual degree courses. In some cases there may not be a suitable A/AS-level in an Applied subject. In others, an A-level (Double Award) in an Applied subject may be required and this will be clearly stated.

## **8 BTEC Higher National Diploma (Level 5)**

Applications from candidates offering this qualification are welcomed and are considered individually on their merits for admission to either Stage 1 or Stage 2 depending on how closely the syllabus correlates to Stage 1 and on their performance in first year of the HND qualification.

## **9 BTEC Higher National Certificate (Level 4)**

Applicants offering BTEC Higher National Certificates are considered on the same basis as applicants offering Higher National Diplomas, however, entry would be to Stage 1.

## **10 Foundation Degrees**

Applicants offering Foundation Degree are considered individually on their merits and academic background. Where offers are made these are based on completion of the full qualification and for Stage 1 or Stage 2 depending on compatibility and performance.

## **11 AQA Level 3 Extended Certificate and BTEC Subsidiary Diplomas/National Extended Certificate and OCR Cambridge Technical Introductory Diplomas/ Extended Certificate at Level 3.**

These qualifications are acceptable although a maximum of one of the awards in the AQA Extended Certificate or BTEC Subsidiary Diploma/ National Extended Certificate or OCR Cambridge Technical Introductory Diplomas/ Extended Certificate will normally be counted as part of an applicant's portfolio of qualifications.

## **12 Cache Level 3 Qualifications**

Applicants offering this qualification are considered individually on their merits. Overall academic background is taken into account plus the nature of the course applied for.

## **13 Key Skills, Certificate of Personal Effectiveness and the Open University's Young Applicants for Schools and Colleges Scheme (YASS)**

The College acknowledges that the development of transferable skills are an important aspect of both school and university education and students are encouraged to develop these whether or not it is through a formal qualification. While the College does not require them for any programme and they will not normally form part of the conditions of any offer, they may however be used in a tiebreak situation.

## **14 Essential Skills, Level 2**

Essential Skills Level 2 qualifications in Communication and Application of Number are not accepted in place of grade C/4 in GCSE in English Language and Mathematics respectively with

regard to the BEd (Hons) Primary and Post-Primary degree. However, credit will be considered for the GCSE English and Mathematics requirement for the Liberal Arts degree, taking into account the applicant's overall academic profile.

#### **15 National Vocational Qualifications**

NVQs are not acceptable on their own for admissions purposes.

#### **16 Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) FET/ FETAC**

These qualifications are not acceptable on their own for admission to undergraduate degrees.

#### **17 Certificate and Diploma in Financial Studies**

Applications from candidates will be considered on an individual basis and a final decision taken in light of the full portfolio of qualifications, previous academic performance, relevant experience and the nature of the course applied for. The Diploma in Financial Studies will only be considered alongside two GCE A levels for the BEd (Hons) Primary and Post-Primary degree.

#### **18 BTEC/OCR qualifications at Level 2**

- The College will accept a maximum of one Level 2 BTEC Extended Certificate/OCR National Award/Cambridge Technical Extended Certificate or one Level 2 BTEC Diploma/OCR National Certificate/Cambridge Technical Diploma in fulfilment of the General Entrance Requirement or where performance at GCSE Level is used in the selection process for individual programmes.
- Normally a maximum of the equivalent of four GCSEs in acceptable vocational qualifications will be counted where performance at this level is used in the selection process.

#### **19 Other qualifications**

The Cambridge Pre-U Diploma and Principal Subjects are acceptable, on their own or in combination with A-levels in meeting course requirements.

Applicants offering Open University qualifications are considered individually on their merits and on the basis of level of performance. Applicants are normally expected to offer 120 CATS points and previous academic background may be taken into account. For high demand courses, 60 of the 120 CATS points may be required at Level 2 and a specified grade may be stipulated.

#### **20 Other qualifications deemed equivalent by the College**

Applicants who are taking qualifications which differ from those listed here, please contact the Academic Registry for advice.

Email: [admissions@smucb.ac.uk](mailto:admissions@smucb.ac.uk)

Telephone: +44 (0) 28 9026 8320

**APPENDIX 2 Table 1**

**Target Entry Grades**

Liberal Arts/ Main Subject	Target Grades
Business Studies	BCC
English	BCC
History	BCC
Irish	BCC
Physical Education	BBC
Religious Studies	BBC
<b>B.ED (Primary) / Main Subject</b>	
English	AAB
History	AAB
Irish	AAB
Mathematics	AAB
Music	AAB
Physical Education	AAB
Religious Studies	AAB
Science	AAB
<b>B.ED (Post-Primary) / Main Subject</b>	
Business Studies	ABB
Mathematics & Science	BBB
Religious Studies	AAB
Technology & Design	BBC

**Notes**

The grades stated above should be treated as a guide only. Final entry requirements will be based upon the number of places available for each subject and the A level grades (or equivalent) achieved by applicants.

In addition, to A level or equivalent grades, all Initial Teacher Education applicants must satisfy the requirements of an interview. In the case of Physical Education courses, applicants must also meet the requirements of a practical assessment.



**APPENDIX 2 Table 2a**

**Qualification Equivalence Table**

(This should be treated as a guide only)

A-level grades	A-level + 4th AS <sup>1</sup>	Access to HE <sup>2</sup>	BTEC Extended Diploma <sup>3</sup> (180 credits/ 1080 GLH at Level 3)	Irish Highers	Scottish Highers (SH) <sup>4</sup>	Scottish Advanced Highers (AH) <sup>4</sup>	International Baccalaureate Diploma	European Baccalaureate
AAA	AAB + a	75%	160D + 20M	2 H2 + 4 H3	AAAAB	AAA	36/37 points overall + 6,6,6	85%
AAB	ABB + a/b	70-75%	140D + 40M	1 H2 + 5 H3	AAABB	AAB	34/35 points overall + 6,6,5	80%
ABB	BBB + a/b	70%	120D + 60M	6 H3 or 1 H2 + 4 H3	ABBBB	ABB	33/34 points + 6,5,5	77%
BBB	BBC + b	65-70%	100D + 80M	4 H3 + 2 H4 or 5 H3	BBBBB	BBB	32 points + 6,5,5	75%
BBC	BCC + b	65%	80D + 100M	4 H3 + 1 H4	BBBBC	BBC	30 points + 5,5,5	73%
BCC	CCC + b/c	65%	50D + 130M	3 H3 + 2 H4	BBBCC	BCC	29 points + 5,5,5	70%

**Notes**

1. Combinations of A-levels and AS-levels in place of A-level grades are not normally acceptable for BEd courses.
2. For BEd programmes, where offers are being made for high demand courses, an average of over 75% is normally specified.
3. Offers are based on performance in individual units rather than the overall grades awarded. BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma (first teaching September 2016) (RQF) offers are based on performance in Guided Learning Hours (GLHs) as presented in Table 2b.
4. Offers relating to Scottish Highers and Advanced Highers are normally made on the basis of a combination of the two.
5. In all cases, specific grades in individual subjects/units may be required to fulfil course requirements.

## APPENDIX 2 Table 2 (b)

### New BTEC Equivalence Table

(This should be treated as a guide only)

<b>A-level Grades</b>	<b>BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma (first teaching September 2016) (RQF)</b> <b>1080 Guided Learning Hours (GLH) - Extended Diploma</b> <b>Based on successful completion of 1080 GLHs</b>
AAA	At least 900 GLHs at Distinction (a minimum of 240 GLHs in externally assessed units) and 180 GLHs at Merit
AAB	At least 780 GLHs at Distinction (a minimum of 240 GLHs in externally assessed units) and 300 GLHs at Merit
ABB	At least 660 GLHs at Distinction (a minimum of 240 GLHs in externally assessed units) and 420 GLHs at Merit
BBB	At least 540 GLHs at Distinction (a minimum of 240 GLHs in externally assessed units) and 540 GLHs at Merit
BBC	At least 420 GLHs at Distinction (a minimum of 210 GLHs in externally assessed units) and 660 GLHs at Merit
BCC	At least 300 GLHs at Distinction (a minimum of 210 GLHs in externally assessed units) and 780 GLHs at Merit

#### Notes

1. BTEC Level 3 National Extended Diploma (first teaching September 2016) (RQF) offers are based on performance in Guided Learning Hours (GLHs).
2. In all cases, specific grades in individual units may be required to fulfil course requirements.

### **Admission of Applicants with a Criminal Record**

It is the policy of the College to consider applications for admission on their individual merit in the light of all available information. The primary selection criteria are those related to the qualifications, skills, abilities and personal qualities of an applicant.

The College will investigate the criminal record of a new applicant only if the primary selection criteria for a course have been met. The College acknowledges the key role of education in the rehabilitative process and a criminal record will not debar an applicant unless the nature and seriousness of the offence in question is incompatible with:

- (i) the course applied for;
- (ii) the ultimate professional or vocational goal;
- (iii) participation in an academic and social setting and the College's responsibility to ensure a safe and neutral environment.

The following regulations are therefore intended to establish appropriate procedures so that applications from candidates who have a criminal record are handled in an open and non-discriminatory manner. All information will be treated in strictest confidence.

### **Regulations Concerning Admission of Applicants who have a Criminal Record**

1. To help the College reduce the risk of harm or injury to its students, staff, visitors or other users of its facilities, it must know about any relevant items on a criminal record that an applicant may have. In addition, the College must also meet its obligations under Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults legislation. Applicants seeking further information on the following regulations should contact the Academic Registry at the College and, where appropriate, refer to the College's Child Protection Policy.
2. Applicants to courses in teacher education and Liberal Arts courses covered by the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults legislation.

Applicants must declare any criminal convictions that are not 'protected' as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exceptions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1979, as amended in 2014. Prior to admission to these courses, the College will request that the appropriate authority carries out the required checks on applicants under the College's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. In Northern Ireland this organisation is called AccessNI. Applicants should be aware that the Enhanced Disclosure Certificate (EDC) which is issued contains details of any spent and unspent convictions, as well as any cautions, informed warnings and diversionary youth conferences that are not protected. It may also contain non-conviction information (for example attempted prosecutions which were unsuccessful) that are held in police records which a Chief Police Officer thinks may be relevant to the post applied for (i.e. "soft police intelligence"). The police may also include information that is protected and has been filtered by AccessNI on the basis that "it might be

relevant and ought to be disclosed.” EDCs also contain the results of checks of The Children’s Barred List and/or The Adults’ Barred List as appropriate.

**Failure to provide permission for an appropriate check will prevent further consideration of the application.**

An applicant who acquires a criminal record or is informed of a prosecution pending after applying and before the date of admission to the College should inform the Academic Registrar of this matter in writing without delay.

3. Applicants to all other courses

(a) Applicants must declare on their applications any relevant items on a criminal record, i.e. for offences against the person, whether of a violent or sexual nature, and convictions for offences involving unlawfully supplying controlled drugs or substances where the relevant item concerns commercial drug dealing or trafficking. Items that are spent (as defined by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Order (NI) 1978) are not considered to be relevant and you should not reveal them.

(b) If the College discovers that an applicant has failed to disclose information about relevant items on a criminal record, as outlined in paragraph 3(a) above, it may withdraw or amend any offer(s) of admission or terminate the applicant’s subsequent enrolment at the College.

An applicant who acquires a relevant item on a criminal record after applying and before the date of admission to the College should inform the Academic Registrar in writing without delay.

4. In line with the procedures used for all applicants and following the requirements of its Statutes, the College may, subject to the applicant’s permission, seek further information, including a character reference, from any individual or body where it is considered appropriate.

5. Consideration of cases

Cases will initially be considered by the Academic Registrar and Co-ordinator of Student Guidance and Support. The College may decide to invite the applicant for interview, if considered to be appropriate. If an offer is not made at this stage, or if the case requires further consideration, it will be referred to the Co-ordinator of Student Guidance and Support. If it is thought that the application should be turned down, this will be referred to the Admissions Group. The latter will appoint a sub-group to consider the matter. A meeting of the Sub Group will be held and will normally be serviced by the Academic Registry. Neither applicants nor their representatives will have the right to appear before the Admissions Group. Minutes shall be taken as a formal record of the meeting and retained.

6. If an applicant is rejected on the basis of the information obtained under the above regulations, the applicant will be informed of the decision in writing by recorded delivery. The letter will also state whether he or she can re-apply for that course and the minimum amount of time that must elapse before any re-application will be considered. Potential applicants who were rejected on a previous occasion should contact the Academic Registry for further details.

## 7. Appeals

The applicant may appeal in writing to the Principal of the College on any of the following grounds:

- (i) new evidence has become available which could not have been made available to the Admissions Group (evidence withheld from the Admissions Group will not normally constitute new evidence); or
- (ii) the decision was too severe or inappropriate.

The appeal, stating with reasons the grounds for appeal, must be made in writing within ten working days of the date of the letter stating the decision. Copies of previous correspondence and any supporting documentation must be attached to the letter of appeal.

8. The Principal will convene the Admissions Review Appeal Panel (ARAP) to consider the grounds for appeal (see below).

The Panel normally will comprise:

- the Principal (in the chair);
- a Programme Chair from a programme other than the one(s) applied to;
- a member of staff from the programme applied to; and
- the Human Resources Manager or nominee.

The meeting will normally be serviced by the Academic Registry. Panel members will not have had any prior direct involvement in the case. The Panel membership will be chosen as far as possible to reflect the diversity of the Northern Ireland community. Minutes shall be taken as a formal record of the meeting and retained.

9. If it is decided that there are no grounds for appeal, the applicant will be informed of the decision in writing, with reasons, within five working days of its having been made. The decision of the ARAP is final.
10. Where the ARAP decides that there are grounds for appeal it will normally meet within 15 working days of the date of that decision. The Academic Registry shall write to the applicant notifying him or her of the date and venue of the meeting. The appellant will have the right to appear before the ARAP accompanied by a member of teaching staff from his or her present or former school or college or a friend. No legal representation will be permitted at any stage during the procedure. Minutes shall be taken as a formal record of the meeting and retained.
11. The ARAP may seek written evidence from any witness or person who in the ARAP's judgement may have relevant information to contribute. Any such person will have the right to see relevant documentation to be considered by the ARAP in advance of the hearing and shall have the right to appear in front of the ARAP if he or she wishes, accompanied by a student or staff member of the College. However, neither the appellant nor any witness will be required to appear in front of the ARAP if they do not wish to appear.

12. Should the appellant fail to appear before the ARAP at an appointed time and without valid reason, the ARAP will have the right to reach a decision in the appellant's absence.
13. The ARAP's findings and recommendations will be communicated to the appellant in writing by recorded delivery within 5 working days of the ARAP's meeting. The letter will also state whether he or she can re-apply for that course and the minimum amount of time that must elapse before any re-application will be considered.
14. The ARAP will also send a report to the Senior Tutor and Academic Registrar, summarising the ARAP's conclusions and recommendations. The decision of the ARAP is final.

## **Procedures on Feedback to Unsuccessful Applicants**

The 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 normally be made within six weeks of the decision to the Academic Registry by letter, email or telephone:

Academic Registry  
St Mary's College  
191 Falls Road  
Belfast  
BT12 6FE  
admis@smucb.ac.uk  
Tel: 028 9026 8320

Applicants who would like to receive feedback in person should contact the Academic Registry to arrange an appointment, although it may not be possible to facilitate this at certain stages of the admission cycle. Where possible, responses to requests made in writing (email or letter) 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 4 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/Complaints Procedure

### 1. Introduction

St Mary's University College receives approximately 2,000 applications for admission to undergraduate programmes, and a further 200 applications for admission to postgraduate programmes. However, the undergraduate intake and Post Graduate Certificate in Education each year is dictated by a government-imposed cap, which means that not all suitably-qualified candidates can be accommodated. There is no government cap on in-service places, but the number allocated can be determined by the availability of funding, which is limited and awarded on a competitive basis.

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 the Academic Registry in consultation with relevant academic staff for the purposes of implementing the strategic plan, within the overall constraints placed on student numbers by both government and professional bodies.

Most undergraduate admissions decisions are based on transparent academic criteria – e.g. GCSE and A Level performance. The Academic Registry website (<http://www.smucb.ac.uk/admissions>) contains a detailed description 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 a candidate's suitability – e.g. interviews are sometimes used to identify whether candidates have the desired attributes, but in all such cases selectors are required to use clearly stated selection criteria.

Academic Registry staff are able to satisfy most queries about admissions decisions on a daily basis, and the vast majority of applicants are satisfied with the explanation given. The following procedure has been drawn up to cover cases where unsuccessful candidates do not accept the explanation offered.

### 2. Scope of the Procedure

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

The procedure covers the following types of appeal/complaint:

- complaints about the College's handling of a query or an application for admission;
- allegations that admissions criteria were not applied correctly or even-handedly.

The procedure does not cover strategic decisions relating to the overall size and shape of faculties or departments, or to caps on student numbers in particular courses whether imposed by the



University, government or professional bodies. Any correspondence on these matters should be directed to the Senior Tutor who has overall responsibility for admissions.

In cases of collaborative provision, i.e. where a College programme is taught 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 St Mary's University College. Where the admissions query relates to a programme designed as an entry route to St Mary's (e.g. an Access course for mature students), enquiries should be directed to the institution offering the entrance qualification (e.g. a college or institute of further and higher education, in the case of Access students).

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

#### **3.1 First Stage: Informal Resolution**

Enquiries about admissions decisions should normally be made by the applicant in question and should be directed to the Academic Registry in the first instance (telephone 02890 268320, email [admis@smucb.ac.uk](mailto:admis@smucb.ac.uk) or write to the Academic Registry, St Mary's University College, 191 Fall's Road, Belfast BT12 6FE). If necessary, the Academic Registry will consult with relevant faculty staff before responding to the query. A written response will be made to every written enquiry (i.e. by letter or email), normally within 10 working days, and this written response will mark the completion of the informal stage.

#### **3.2 Second Stage: Formal Letter to Senior Tutor**

An applicant who is dissatisfied with the written explanation should put his/her concerns in writing to a Senior Tutor within 10 working days of the date of the Academic Registry letter (3.1 above). The formal letter to a Senior Tutor should set out the grounds for dissatisfaction with the response from the Academic Registry, and include any previous correspondence.

A Senior Tutor (or nominee) shall then consult with the Academic Registry and relevant members of staff 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 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 a Senior Tutor or his/her nominee, and to be informed of the outcome of the complaint/appeal.

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

- (i) Any student still dissatisfied after the second stage may appeal to the Principal within 10 working days of receiving a Senior Tutor's decision. A Review Panel shall then be convened, to meet normally within 15 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.

Where a Review Panel is deemed necessary, the Panel shall normally comprise:

The Principal (in the chair);

- a Senior Tutor;
  - Human Resources Manager or Nominee;
  - the President or other sabbatical officer from the Students' Union;
  - Coordinator Student Services.
- (ii) 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 Senior Tutor and the Academic Registrar, 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 (e.g. August-September). The College will at all times strive to respond to enquiries as quickly as circumstances allow.

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

All parties to a complaint are expected to maintain strict confidentiality, both during and after any enquiry/appeal/complaint. Enquiries about admissions decisions should normally be made by the applicant in question. When an admissions decision is queried by a third party (e.g. a school enquiring on behalf of a former 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 when the applicant expressly states that the third party is acting on his/her behalf.

**6. Central Monitoring of Admissions Complaints/Appeals**

The Academic Registrar shall prepare an annual summary of the nature and outcome of any formal admissions appeals/complaints for the Learning & Teaching Committee each year.

### Emergency Procedures

#### 1 Introduction

In the event of an emergency, St Mary's University College may establish an Incident Management Team (IMT) to deal with business continuity issues and consider adjustments to procedures. The scope of the IMT incorporates all College operations including admissions, recruitment and selection of students to College programmes. Decisions made by IMT will supplement or supersede standard procedures where necessary to ensure that student numbers are recruited as closely as possible to quotas issued by the relevant government authorities.

The Admission Policy incorporates changes to procedures under section 1.9: Roles and Responsibilities, taking into consideration any necessary in-year review at each stage of admission. The premise for all reviews will remain consistent with the aims and objectives of the Admission Policy. In considering adjustments, particular attention will be given to the overarching principles of a fair admissions system to ensure that no one or group of candidates is disadvantaged in the decision-making process. St Mary's complies with the QAA Code of Practice and procedures are guided by the principles of the Report of the Admissions to Higher Education Steering Group 2004 (the Schwartz Report). The College is therefore committed to the principle of consistency, equal opportunity and fairness for all applicants.

#### 2 Emergency Response

In instances where a public health or other incident determines the closure of the College to students and visitors, standard face to face processes, such as the interview required by the Department of Education for Initial Teacher Education places must be reviewed. Additional internal selection methods, including the practical assessment for Physical Education options within the BEd and Liberal Arts programmes and writing task for the PGCE programme must also be re-assessed in terms of alternative delivery or removal.

The College should also consider the impact of emergency procedures in the final decision-making stage of admission in order not to disadvantage applicants. Such measures may include a review of deadlines for notification of results following revised release dates of entry qualifications.

#### 3 Annual Review of Emergency Procedures

A rolling review of admission procedures will be conducted by Academic Registry for the relevant stages of admission as required. Consideration will be given by members of the College Admissions Working Group with recommendations made to SMT or IMT.