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**ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP PROPOSAL**

*Stage 1* *Initial Viability & Risk Assessment*

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| **Proposing Faculty:** | Choose an item. |
| **Name of Subject Lead Partnerships:** |  |
| **Partner organisation name and address** |  |
| **Website address** |  |
| **Name and Title of Partner’s Lead Contact:** |  |
| **Location of Delivery (Address/es):** |  |
| **Nature of Proposed Collaboration:** | Choose an item. |
| **Programme Title/s and Award/s:** |  |
| **The Programme will be taught and assessed by:** | Choose an item. |
| **Language of delivery** |  |

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| **SIGNATURES:** | | |
| **SPONSOR** *(Dean of Faculty where the partnership will be managed)****:***  **Name** | **Signature** | Click or tap to enter a date. |
| **HEAD OF ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS**  **Name** | **Signature** | Click or tap to enter a date. |
| **CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**  **Richard Solomon** | **Signature** | Click or tap to enter a date. |

# Summary and Strategic Alignment

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| **SUMMARY OVERVIEW** | | |
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| **STRATEGIC BENEFITS TO ST MARY’S FROM UNDERTAKING THE COLLABORATION** | | |
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| **DESCRIBE HOW THE MISSION/VALUES OF THE PROPOSED PARTNER ACCORD WITH THOSE OF ST MARY’S** | | |
|  | | |
| **PLEASE DETAIL ANY ISSUES THAT MAY CAUSE ST MARY’S MISSION, VALUES OR REPUTATION TO BE COMPROMISED AS RESULT OF THIS PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP** | | |
|  | | |
| **DOES THE PROPOSED PARTNER HAVE THE LEGAL CAPACITY TO ENTER INTO AN ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP?** | | |
| **YES / NO** | | |
| **FINANCIAL & RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS** (including net income) | | |
|  | | |
| **OTHER COLLABORATIVE PROVISION MANAGED BY THE FACULTY**  Please provide a list below of current collaborative arrangements, including student numbers, managed by the Faculty which will be responsible for the academic management of the proposed new partnership. The QS Office can provide you with an up to date list of current academic partners, if necessary. | | |
| **Programme** | **Partner and country** | **Student numbers** |
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| **SUMMARY OF INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF LEVEL OF RISK:** | | **Choose an item.** |
| In this section provide an explanation here for the initial risk assessment outcome based on completion of the Risk Assessment Tool (Section 3). *(Please note that the level of risk will be further explored and reported on as part of the due diligence process undertaken after initial approval.)* | | |
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# Approval

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| 1. **RECOMMENDATION FOR APPROVAL**   **by FACULTY QUALITY, CURRICULUM AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE (QCSE)** | |
| **DATE PRESENTED TO QCSE MEETING**:  Click or tap to enter a date. | **QCSE DECISION:**  Choose an item. |
| Paste in relevant minute (incl completion of any actions): |  |

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| 1. **APPROVAL BY ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE (APC)** | |
| **DATE PRESENTED TO APC MEETING**:  Click or tap to enter a date. | **APC DECISION:**  **Choose an item.** |
| Paste in relevant minute(incl any required actions): |  |

# Risk Assessment

**RISK ASSESSMENT TOOL (RAT)**

**FOR NEW ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS**

To be completed by Quality and Standards Manager (Collaborative Provision), in liaison with the Partnership Subject Lead, the Director of International Engagement and/or the Business Development Director.

This Risk Assessment Tool is intended to provide a measure of the risks involved in the establishment of a new collaborative partnership. The score and the level of risk indicated will be used to inform decisions about whether a partnership arrangement should be explored further and managed to completion. In some cases, a High Risk or Very High Risk rating may cause partnership work to be terminated.

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| **Name of Proposed Partner:** |  |
| **Nature of Proposed Academic Partnership** | Choose an item. |
| **Programme Title/s and Award/s:** |  |
| **Risk Assessment Tool Completed by:**  **Quality and Standards Manager** |  |
| **Partnership Subject Lead:** |  |
| **Global Engagement / Business Development Director** |  |

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| **TOTAL RISK SCORE** |  | **OVERALL RISK RATING** | Choose an item. |

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| **Risk Rating descriptors** |  | **Lowest/Highest scores possible** | |
| Very Low Risk = **< 22** | Lowest risk score possible | Highest risk score possible |
| Low Risk = **23-30** | **17** | **85** |
| Medium Risk = **31-55** |  |  |
| High Risk = **56-68** |  |  |
| Very High Risk = **>69** |  |  |

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| 1. **TYPE OF ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP** | | |
|  | **Risk rating** | **Enter applicable risk rating** |
| Formal Overseas Staff Exchange Agreements | 1 |  |
| Study Abroad Agreements | 1 |  |
| Flying Faculty Arrangement | 2 |  |
| Articulation arrangement | 2 |  |
| International Student Exchange Agreement | 1 |  |
| Co-supervision of research degree(s) | 3 |  |
| Dual Award (two separate certificates, awards are independent of each other) | 2 |  |
| Double Award (two separate certificates, awards are interdependent) | 3 |  |
| Joint Award (jointly designed, one certificate) | 3 |  |
| Franchise of a St Mary’s Programme (Publicly funded provider) | 4 |  |
| Franchise of a St Mary’s Programme (Private provider)[[1]](#footnote-1) | 4 |  |
| Validation of a partner’s award (Publicly funded provider) | 3 |  |
| Validation of a partner’s award (Private provider) | 3 |  |
| 1. **CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Partner is based in the UK | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| Partner is overseas but HE system similar to UK | 2 |
| Partner is overseas and HE system is very different to UK | 3 |
| 1. **LANGUAGE OF DELIVERY AND ASSESSMENT** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| English, with English as students’ first language | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| English, with English as students’ second language | 2 |
| Programme will be delivered in a language other than English | 3 |
| 1. **ENGLISH language proficiency of ACADEMIC team at partner institution** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Fluent (likely to ensure partnership progresses smoothly) | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| Intermediate (may cause some difficulties in communication) | 2 |
| Elementary (likely to cause serious difficulties/delay in communication) | 3 |
| 1. **LANGUAGE proficiency of aDMINISTRATIVE team at partner institution** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Fluent (likely to ensure partnership progresses smoothly) | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| Intermediate (may cause some difficulties in communication) | 2 |
| Elementary (likely to cause serious difficulties/delay in communication) | 3 |
| 1. **PARTNER’S STATUS** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| University (UG & PG) | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| HE College/Institute (UG only) | 2 |
| Publicly funded FE College with HE provision | 2 |
| Private college / or any institution less than 5 years old[[2]](#footnote-2) | 4 |
| 1. **PARTNER’S STRENGTH** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Large, generally well-resourced | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| Small, generally well-resourced | 2 |
| Any size, with generally limited resources | 4 |
| 1. **PARTNER’S EXPERTISE IN THIS FIELD** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| The partner already provides programmes at this HE level | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| The partner already provides HE programmes but at a lower level than that proposed in the partnership. | 2 |
| The partner has little or no experience in the subject, or the level concerned | 4 |

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| 1. **PARTNER’S PREVIOUS COLLABORATION WITH OTHER HEIs OR ST MARY’S UNIVERSITY** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| At this level | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| At lower level | 2 |
| None | 3 |
| 1. **PROGRAMME(S)** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Established programme | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| New programme in established curriculum area | 2 |
| New programme in new curriculum area | 4 |
| 1. **CREDIT LEVEL** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Solely FHEQ Level 3 (Foundation Year)[[3]](#footnote-3), [[4]](#footnote-4) | 3 | **Select risk rating** |
| Solely FHEQ Level 4 | 2 |
| Includes FHEQ Levels 4/5 | 2 |
| Solely at FHEQ Level 6 or Masters | 1 |
| 1. **ReputationAL STATUS** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Established institution in THE World Rankings | 0 | **Select risk rating** |
| UK Institution ranked higher than 30th in any mainstream UK League Table | 0 |
| UK or international institution not included in THE World Rankings | 1 |
| UK Institution ranked lower than 90 in any mainstream UK League Table | 2 |
| 1. **Resources** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Partner has in place all the necessary resources to deliver programme effectively | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| Partner will need to build/provide new resources/facilities to deliver the programme effectively | 2 |
| Same as above, but tight timeframe for recruitment exacerbates the risk of these resources not being in place in time for the start of the programme | 4 |
| 1. **Resources risks – Staffing** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Partner has large and well-resourced staff base to support the subject area | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| Partner has small but well-resourced staff base to support the subject area | 2 |
| Partner has limited staff and/or resources to support the subject area | 4 |
| 1. **REGULATORY OVERSIGHT** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Partner is registered with the Office for Students | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| Partner is registered with HE regulator in country concerned | 2 |
| Partner is not registered with or over overseen by OfS or any other HE regulator | 4 |
| 1. **quality systems** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| The partner’s quality assurance and enhancement systems are very robust, and indeed perhaps even better than our own. | 0 | **Select risk rating** |
| The partner’s quality assurance and enhancements are adequate and present no cause for concern. | 1 |
| The partner’s quality assurance and enhancements are weak, or have been the subject of concerns in audits carried out by the QAA, or published by the OfS. | 5 |
| 1. **quality CONCERNS** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Partner has a clean bill of health from QAA/Ofsted or national regulator in country concerned over the past 3 years | 0 | **Select risk rating** |
| Partner has experienced quality issues which have been highlighted by QAA/Ofsted or national regulator in country concerned in past 3 years, but robustly addressed. | 2 |
| Partner has been subject to a ‘Concerns’ report by any UK or overseas regulator within last 3 years, where there is insufficient evidence that these have been robustly addressed. | 5 |
| 1. **REPUTATIONAL BENEFIT** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Partnership likely to bring significant reputational value to St Mary’s | 0 | **Select risk rating** |
| Partner may bring some reputational benefit | 1 |
| Partner unlikely to bring any real reputational benefits | 2 |
| Partnership could risk damaging St Mary’s reputation (e.g. due to UKVI risks, or risk of severe underperformance against B3 or TEF metrics). | 5 |
| 1. **St Mary’s ability to ‘teach-out’ students should the partner withdraw**   The University must ensure that adequate contingency plans are in place. The following aspects should be considered: | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| There is no requirement for St Mary’s to teach-out the students, and this is likely to be explicitly articulated in the contract. | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| St Mary’s staff will be able to teach-out the students at the partner institution, should this be necessary, without too much cost or difficulty. | 3 |
| St Mary’s staff would need to teach-out the students on SMU Campus (space capacity issues could be a serious factor) and this could involve significant cost implications and difficulty. | 4 |
| Teach-out by St Mary’s staff unlikely to be possible, and alternative arrangements would need to be explored (e.g. transferring students by agreement to other HE providers). SMU staff should be extremely cautious here since OfS could place a requirement upon SMU to teach-out regardless. This could bring enormous cost risks. | 5 |
| 1. **LIKELIHOOD OF FAILURE/MARKET EXIT** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Failure/Market exit in next 3 years extremely unlikely | 0 | **Select risk rating** |
| Failure/Market exit unlikely but reliance on income from student fees (recruitment) could result in rapid changes in financial sustainability. | 1 |
| Failure market exit more likely on basis of financial sustainability, with extreme reliance on income streams that are inherently unpredictable. | 2 |
| Previous financial difficulties, a lack of dissolvable assets (property etc) and/or serious risks to sustainability | 5 |
| 1. **REQUIREMENT FOR TRANSLATION OF KEY DOCUMENTATION** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| All pertinent documents required are already available in English | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| A limited range of documents will need to be translated into English | 2 |
| An extensive range of documents will need to be translated into English | 4 |
| 1. **EASE OF ONGOING GOVERNANCE** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Ongoing governance will be very straightforward and can be managed within existing resources | 1 | **Select risk rating** |
| Ongoing governance will be moderately straightforward but will require close attention at certain points during the year with potential resource implications | 2 |
| Ongoing governance will be complex and will require additional resources in terms of staff time throughout the year (e.g. quality control of teaching and assessments, international travel required) | 4 |
| 1. **ST MARY’S KPIs[[5]](#footnote-5) (including student progression, access and participation plan, retention and graduate outcomes)** | **Risk levels** | Risk rating |
| Students will feed into our KPIs and will be wholly taught by the partner e.g. domestic franchises. Student numbers large (over 100 students in first year of partnership). | 4 |  |
| Students will feed into our KPIs and will be wholly taught by the partner e.g. domestic franchises. Student numbers small (i.e. 0-100 students in first year of partnership) | 3 | **Select risk rating** |
| Students will feed into our KPIs but will spend part of their studies being taught at St Mary’s e.g. UG articulations | 3 |
| Students will not feed into our KPIs (e.g. validated programmes, offshore franchises, PG partnerships) | 1 |
| **TOTAL RISK SCORE** *Total of 1-22 above:* | |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | *(transfer the Total Risk Score to RAT page 1)* |

1. Franchise arrangements are inherently high risk because B3 student outcomes metrics required by the OfS will result in metrics from domestic franchise programmes feeding into St Mary University’s own metrics, thereby raising the level of risk accordingly. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Private providers may not, in themselves be a higher risk proposition, but in general experience suggests that a greater range of risks are likely to be involved, and especially in relation to new ‘start-ups’ or providers who lack a track record in delivery (and therefore lack any auditable student outcomes metrics. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. It could be argued that this should be rated as higher risk because it requires the integration/articulation of prior study at levels 4 and 5, which requires extensive mapping to ensure robust quality checks are in place to facilitate direct entry at level 6. However, this risk is off-set by the fact that the programmes in question are more likely to be only 1 year in duration. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The Foundation Year requires an extremely high level of pastoral and academic support to ensure positive outcomes, and students enter with generally much lower Tariff. Non-traditional entry is more common, that makes assessing the preparedness of students for study at this level inherently challenging. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. NB In general all franchise partnerships relating to full time first degree (UG) students will feed into our institutional KPIs.  Franchises need to be given detailed consideration since these students are included in our main HESA student return, unless they are taught entirely offshore. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)