

A New Student Retention Strategy for 2023-2025

Student retention continues to pose a significant challenge for the University. A new Student Retention Strategy is required that will articulate how the University will address improved student retention over the next three years and drive improvements in our 'Continuation' and 'Completion' metrics. The latter will inform League Tables and our institutional metrics for TEF 2027.

Following the release of the second iteration of the Student Retention Strategy in Nov 2022, a further round of consultations was conducted with students, academic staff and staff in professional services in December 2022. A third and final Iteration was approved by Academic Board on 24 April 2023. This is set-out in the pages that follow. The Retention Strategy now moves to implementation phase, and is accompanied by a detailed Implementation Action Plan.

Student Retention Strategy 2022/23 - 2024/25

An Executive Summary

St Mary's Student Retention Strategy 2022/23 – 2024/25

Why is student retention so important?

It is important for students that they complete their studies. Student continuation and completion inform League Table position and TEF metrics. Retention is critical to our financial sustainability and ability to invest in further enhancements. Strong retention ensures we can meet OfS B3 thresholds.

What retention levels are we aiming to achieve?

Year	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25
Undergraduate	83	85	86
Postgraduate	91	92	93

How will we know when our Strategy has succeeded?

- We will see year-on-year improvements in student retention at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in keeping with our Retention KPIs.
- Our learning environment is an inclusive one and enables all students to succeed.
- Continuation and completion rates of widening participation (WP) students will compare favourably with the wider student population.
- Students are able to prepare in advance of the start of their course and 'hit the ground running'.
- There is strong student engagement, strong levels of wellbeing and students feel a sense of belonging.
- Students adopt and employ strategies that build their resilience.
- We are able to identify 'students at risk' early and intervene effectively to support them.
- New technologies promote engagement and provide students with the information they need to succeed.

Pillar 6

Retention targets linked to OfS B3 Thresholds built into all contracts
Enhanced and standardised metrics monitoring
Joint Management Boards for each new partnership
Establishment of clear mutual expectations via contracts and 'Schedule of Responsibilities'
Improved guidance on partner access to SMU resources, services, and academic content.

Pillar 1

Introduction of new Student 'App'
Easier recording of attendance
Improved access to high quality data
Enhanced Study Skills Moodle site
Academic Integrity training modules
Increased use of Lecture Capture

Pillar 2

Improved staff development
Enhanced training for Personal Tutors
Increased staff engagement with Academic Integrity training modules
Enhanced leadership of retention via new leadership roles associated with the senior management restructure.

Pillar 3

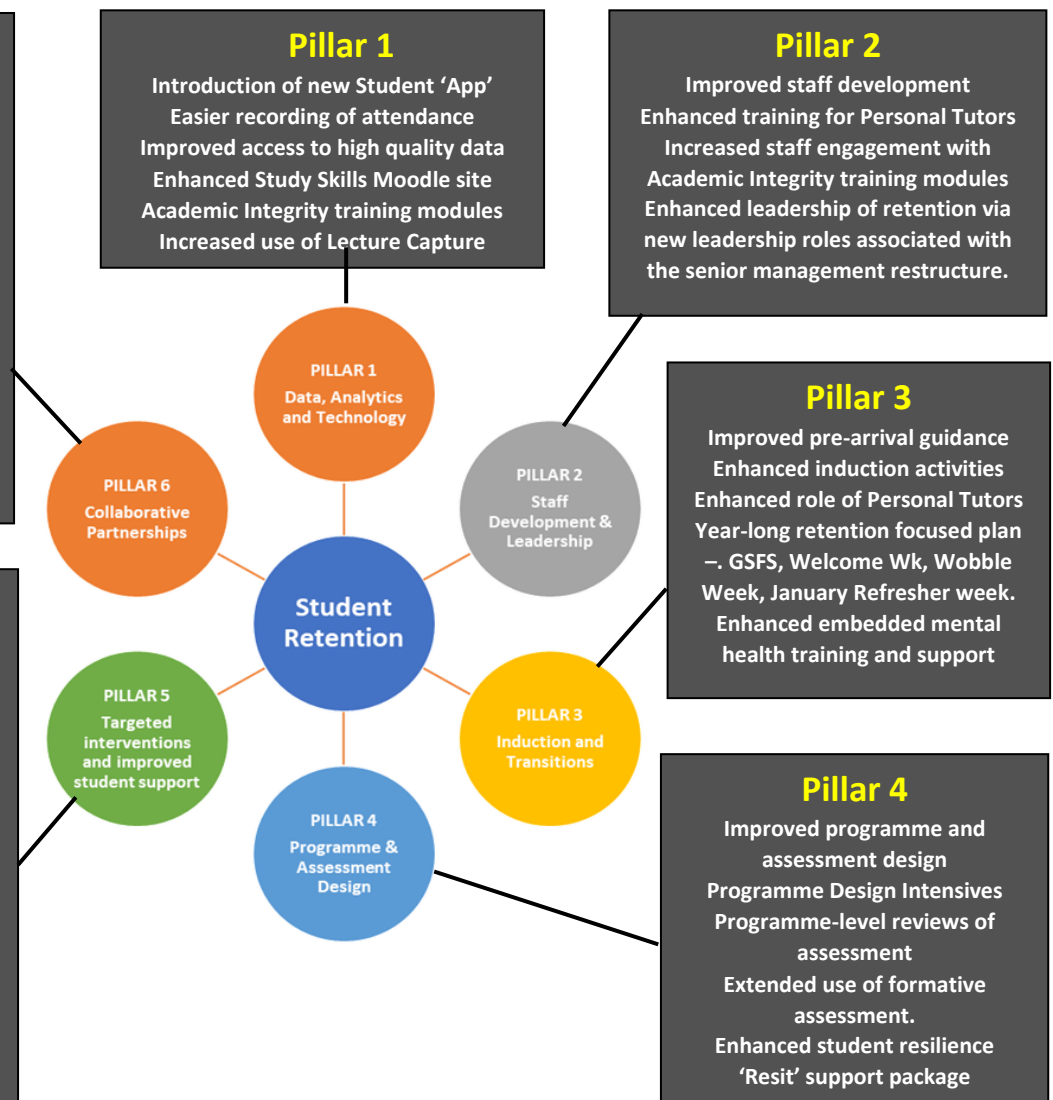
Improved pre-arrival guidance
Enhanced induction activities
Enhanced role of Personal Tutors
Year-long retention focused plan – GSFS, Welcome Wk, Wobble Week, January Refresher week.
Enhanced embedded mental health training and support

Pillar 5

Targeted review of programmes with high numbers of withdrawals
Improved guidance for staff and students on steps they can take to improve retention
Improved support for international, LOA and Late Arriving students
Wider use of 'in-year reassessment'
Research into causes of student withdrawal
New Student buddy scheme
'Its Ok to knock' campaign

Pillar 4

Improved programme and assessment design
Programme Design Intensives
Programme-level reviews of assessment
Extended use of formative assessment.
Enhanced student resilience
'Resit' support package



Retention Strategy - Implementation Action Plan

Key actions	Leadership
Action 1: SITEB to bring proposals to drive continued enhancements to Welcome Week to reduce early withdrawals during the first few weeks.	SITEB Co-Chairs
Action 2: Academic Regulations Review Group be tasked with identifying changes that need to be made to the undergraduate regulations to accommodate 'in-year' reassessment. Action 2(a): Review of all student-facing Registry 'comms' to students to improve content, clarity, brevity and effectiveness	Head of Registry Services
Action 3: SMRS project 'Causes of student withdrawal) to be completed and outputs/finding and recommendations informed by them to be brought forward to ADC in June/July 2023. Funding already agreed.	Chief Information Officer (COO)
Action 4: All programmes to review their Level 4 assessments in 2022/23 to identify those that have a disproportionate impact on Stage 1 (level 4) failure. Programmes to consider changes that might reduce the fail rate <u>without</u> undermining rigour and academic standards. During 2023/24 and 2024/25 to extend this review to levels 5 and 6 respectively.	Subject Leads/HoDs
Action 5: The eight programmes contributing the largest number of withdrawals will be required to develop a 3-year action plan during 2022/23. These will encompass critical reflections on the design of the programme (e.g. module content, pedagogical strategies, assessment strategies) and will set-out steps that will be taken to reduce attrition at programme level. The L&T Team in CTESS will support programme teams as they develop their plans.	Subject Leads/HoDs
Action 6: Release of all grades and feedback at level 4 to coincide with a timetabled session devoted to feedback/Q&As etc so that students can ask questions, seek guidance, and so academics can identify some of the characteristics of submissions that gained higher marks.	Subject Leads/HoDs
Action 7: Guidance document titled ' <i>Student Retention – How You Can Make a Difference</i> ' to be circulated by Heads of Department/Heads of Service to all staff in their areas at the start of each year, and added to CTESS L&T webpages. Internal communication team to ensure that it features in staff newsfeeds and Newsletters.	Heads of Dept/Service Head of Academic Professional Development Head of WP Internal comms teams
Action 8: The student guidance document titled ' <i>Things you can do to maximise your own success</i> ' to be sent to applicants by Admissions, included in Induction pages, added to all programme/module Moodle sites & CTESS L&T webpages, SMSU pages and flagged in student newsfeed and the University newsletter. Each tip can be used to populate flat screen messages during the year.	Students SITEB Co-Chairs SMU Students Union Internal comms teams
Action 9: Personal tutor/Tutee allocations to be finalised earlier so that by Wk 1, Personal Tutors are able to set a short (c.300-word) exercise for their tutees, which they can mark and then provide feedback on in Wk2.	Senior Personal Tutors in each Dept
Action 10: Convene a Task & Finish group in 2022/23 that reflects on the findings of the Wonkhe Report on 'Building Student Belonging' and brings forward recommendations to SITEB.	Dean of Learning & Teaching
Action 11: Convene a task and finish group during 2022/23 that identifies whether the University should retain or abandon the existing SeATS Personal Tutor Dashboard (PTD).	Chief Information Officer (CIO)
Action 12: The Study Skills Moodle site to be championed/promoted by all UG programme teams at St Mary's and a link to it to built into all programme/module Moodle sites.	Subject Leads/Module Convenors
Action 13: All programme teams to review and maximise use of Panopto (Lecture Capture)	Subject Leads/Module Convenors
Action 14: Academic Integrity Leads (AILs) to monitor completion of mandatory academic integrity training modules within their academic teams. Data will be provided by TEL that enables them to do so.	AILs Head of TEL
Action 15: Academic Integrity Leads (AILs) to monitor completion of mandatory academic integrity training modules by students in their respective departments. Data will be provided by TEL that enables them to do so.	AILs Head of TEL

Action 16: Increase % of academic staff completion of Academic Integrity Training Modules	Head of Academic Professional Development
Action 17: Provision of LDLs, Learning Tutors and Pastoral Support Tutors posts will increase over the lifetime of the Retention Strategy so they are commensurate with the growth in numbers of international students.	Provost
Action 18: All academic staff and staff in student-facing student support roles to proactively encourage all students (and international students especially) to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ audit other programme modules in areas of individual interest (subject to Programme Lead or Registry approval); ○ participate in student societies/clubs, and to attend talks given by external or internal speakers that are open to all; ○ develop friendships outside their own programmes. Programme tutors might team up with tutors from other programmes to create collaborative social events or knowledge exchange. 	All staff
Action 19: The University will continue to keep the guidance/support available to students under review during the cost of living crisis and will amend these as felt necessary to support student continuation and completion.	Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
Action 20: Implement second phase of 'Hyflex' pilots which include Masters and PGR students employed to fulfil the 'Classroom Assistant' role. TEL will lead the pilots.	Head of TEL
Action 21: Implement student buddy system, and increased adoption of peer mentoring	Head of WP
Action 22: Implement 'Its Ok to knock' campaign	Heads of Department
Action 23: Increase number of student academic societies	SMSU (working with specific subject leads)
Action 24: Seek to expand the SU student advice service into a permanent, in-house provision based within the SU	SMSU
Action 25: Enhanced focus on student retention in PGCAP and Staff Induction	Head of Academic Professional Development
Action 26: Implement new online system for recording/booking Personal Tutor meetings/tutorials.	Chief Information Officer (CIO)
Action 27: Increase staff usage of Lecture Capture (Panopto)	Head of TEL & Head of Academic Professional Development
Action 28: Enhanced focus on student retention in L&T Festival and in ADF staff development programme	Head of Academic Professional Development
Action 29: Ensure appointment of new leadership roles focused on retention in Faculties (e.g. subject leads)	Deans of Faculty
Action 30: Implement 'themed' student engagement pathways focused on effective induction for students at levels 3, 4, 5 and 6	Subject Leads: Student Experience & Enhancement
Action 31: Implement Resit Support package in each programme to support students doing resits	Faculty Subject Leads: Student Experience & Enhancement
Action 32: Develop improved guidance and training for students on 'resilience'	TBC – a staff member from IoE will be appointed on a 0.2fte secondment for 1 year
Action 33: Annual updating and re-launch of 'Students at Risk Policy' & associated processes, training etc.	Dean of Learning & Teaching
Action 34: Increased student active engagement with SMSU clubs and societies. Increase number of academic societies.	SMSU Sport St Mary's
Action 35: Run BeSMART/Employability Confident with larger cohorts	Head of Employability Services
Action 36: Ensure ongoing funding for student engagement via Student Engagement Fund	Head of WP
Action 37: Ensure improved support for LOA students	Head of WP
Action 38: Refine operation of Student Experts Panel in collaboration with SMSU	Head of WP & SMSU

St Mary's Student Retention Strategy 2023 – 2025

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3. Ten strategic goals of the Retention Strategy.
4. The six 'Pillars' of the Student Retention Strategy.

1. Introduction

- 1.1** The University's previous Retention Strategy, which was developed in 2018 and approved early in 2019 has now expired and it was formally 'closed' by the Academic Development Committee (ADC) in January 2022. However, student retention continues to pose a challenge for St Mary's and the University has been unable to achieve the retention target for 2020/21 – the target was 92% and our actual figure was 86.3% (see **Table 1**).
- 1.2** The University's continuation figures on the B3 Conditions Data Dashboard shows that St Mary's comfortably exceeds the B3 continuation thresholds for undergraduate programmes. Our continuation metric (effectively this means 'retention') for 'First degree' programmes is 84.8% compared to a B3 threshold of 80%. The continuation metric for 'Other UG' programmes (this includes foundation degrees) of 76.6% exceeds the B3 threshold of 75%.
- 1.3** However, the OfS TEF Data Dashboard shows that our 'overall indicator' on continuation (retention) is 84.1% compared to benchmark (i.e. the average figure achieved by our closest competitor group) of 89.1% - a 5 percentage point gap. The University's metric on this measure has been declining rather than improving against benchmark over a four-year period. A negative gap of 1.4% points in the earliest recorded year in the dashboard has grown to 12.7% in the most recent year.
- 1.4** If one looks at the continuation metric in relation to ethnicity of students, there are negative gaps between the University's performance and our benchmark group of competitors for all ethnic groups. The smallest negative gap is for white students – the figure of 88.3% is 1.7 percentage points below benchmark of 90%. The largest negative gap relates to 'Other' (6.8 percentage points) and then 'Asian' students (6.2 percentage points) and 'Black' students (5.7 percentage points). This suggests that the University is close to achieving benchmark in relation to the continuation of White students but is struggling to reach the continuation benchmark for BAME students.
- 1.5** The most notable difference in continuation is between Home students and International students. In the case of the former, the University's continuation figure of 85.8% is 3.2 percentage points below the average for our benchmark competitor group, but the OfS Dashboard figure for the latter of 68.8% falls 21 percentage points below that of our benchmark group.
- 1.6** SPO estimate that attrition will be reduced from 19.2% in 2021/22 to 17% in 2022/23 (unfortunately the end of March retention numbers have deteriorated, suggesting that this year's attrition will to be very similar to last year), but without a focused Strategy we are unlikely to achieve the retention target of 86% by the end of the 3 years of the Strategy in 2024/25, and we will also be very unlikely to meet the long-term attrition goal of 90% for full-time first degree students in 2030 (see **Table 1**).

KPI	Description	Reporting	2019/20 actual	2020/21 actual	2021/22 actual	2022/23 target	2023/24 target	2024/25 target	2025/26 target	2026/27 target	2030 target
Retention (UG) Proposed Targets	Percentage of full-time first degree students with Current or Completed status at end of Year 1 of study.	Monthly projection towards end-of-year figure (December)	83.3%	86.3%	80.8%	83% (current end-of-year estimate)	85.0%	86.0%	86.5%	87.0%	90.0%
Retention (PGT) Proposed Targets	Percentage of full-time PGT students with Current or Completed status at end of Year 1 of study.	Monthly projection towards end-of-year figure (December)	92.5%	86.5%	88.3%	91% (current end-of-year estimate)	92.0%	93.0%	94.0%	95.0%	95.0%

Table 1

DRAFT Attrition KPIs for full-time First Degree students and full-time PGT students who withdraw within the first year of study.

Note: In the University's KPIs Retention is expressed in terms of an 'attrition' figure, whereas for the purposes of this Strategy the KPI is expressed in terms of the percentage of students who remain 'on programme'. For reasons of clarity across measures we have decided we will always express the retention KPI as the percentage of students who remain on the programme, not those who have left. So 84% retention, not 16% attrition.

- 1.7** It is important, therefore, that the University develops a new Strategy for the next three years (2022/23- 2024/25) that sets out how we will improve student retention, but also how our approach will be aligned with our Values as an institution, with our corporate mission statement (Vision 2030) and with our Curriculum Framework and associated university Strategies (e.g. our Learning & Teaching Strategy).^[1]
- 1.8** St Mary's Students Union (SMSU) has been consulted during the development of this Strategy as a key partner and, as the official voice for the student body, should continue to play a central role as a collaborative partner during the implementation of this Strategy. The University will ensure that, during the lifetime of this Strategy, that it continues to work with the SMSU and elected students representatives, to identify further refinements that can be integrated into the Strategy.

2. Why is student retention important?

Student retention is important for a number of reasons:

- 2.1 Students** – We are passionate about the success of our students and want to see as many as possible complete their chosen degrees.
- 2.2 Teaching Excellence Framework** – Student retention (continuation and completion) are likely to be key metrics in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) scheduled for 2026/27.
- 2.3 Financial stability** – Student retention, and consequent retention of student fee income, is critical to the financial sustainability of the University.
- 2.4 Sector Regulation** – Student success is a key priority of the Office for Students and we are now subject to B3 baseline thresholds on continuation and completion.¹
- 2.5 League tables** – Student retention (continuation) and completion will continue to feed into university league tables and we know students' decisions are influenced by them.²

3. Ten strategic goals of the Student Retention Strategy

- 3.1 Year on year improvements** - To drive year-on-year improvements in student retention, at all levels of study, and across all types of programmes.
- 3.2 Closing gaps** - To ensure that continuation and completion rates of widening participation (WP) students compares favourably with the wider student population.
- 3.3 Pre-arrival preparation** – To ensure students have clearer expectations of HE study that enable them to prepare in advance of the start of their programme(s).
- 3.4 Effective induction** - To provide an effective induction and welcome experience so students can 'hit the ground running'.
- 3.5 Promoting engagement** - To enhance students' engagement with their learning.
- 3.6 Building belonging** - To build a sense of belonging within an inclusive learning community.
- 3.7 Supporting wellbeing** - To promote student health and wellbeing and personal resilience.
- 3.8 Supporting students at risk** - To enhance processes for the early detection and intervention of students at risk of academic failure or premature withdrawal.
- 3.9 Enhancing regulations** – To make them more accessible, easy to understand, and fairer (e.g. by facilitating 'in-year' reassessment).
- 3.10 Data informed practices** - To ensure robust data informs ongoing improvement of retention.

4. The Key Pillars of our Strategy

The Retention Strategy can be summarised as follows, with six key 'pillars' all feeding into the core, central objective, which is to improve student retention.

^[1] Details of our Curriculum Framework can be found here: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/ctess/Learning-and-Teaching/curriculum-framework/overview.aspx> Details of our Learning & Teaching Strategy can be found here: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/ctess/Learning-and-Teaching/learning-and-teaching-strategy/overview.aspx>

¹ OfS B3 Metric Thresholds. See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/media/bc30a153-8c13-49b8-89f8-26ab0276d09d/setting-numerical-thresholds-for-condition-b3-corrected.pdf>

² HEFCE (2006) *Needs of employers and related organisations for information about quality and standards of higher education*, report by University of Sussex School of Education. See: <http://sro.sussex.ac.uk/24523/>

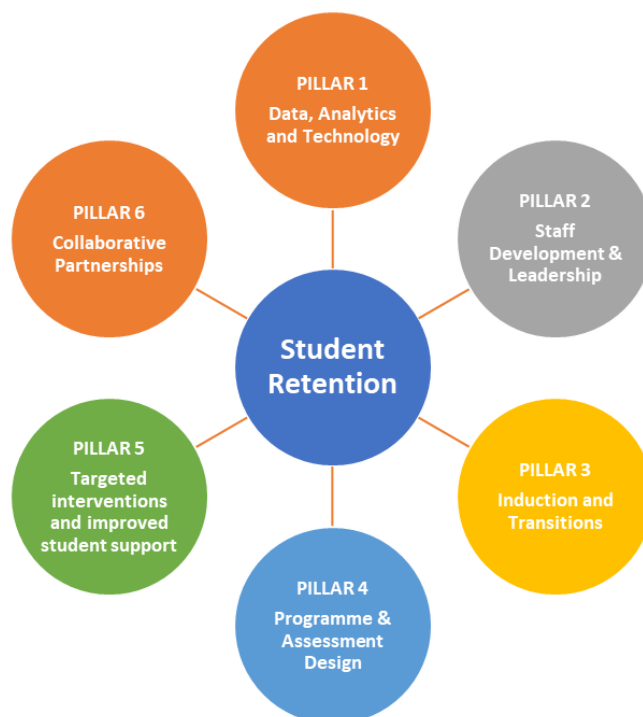


Figure 1

A diagrammatic summary of the six key 'Pillars' of the Retention Strategy

Key Pillars of our Retention Strategy	
Pillar 1 Data, Analytics and Technology	Introduction of new Student 'App', improved recording of attendance (including online sessions), improved access to data via PowerBI, improved visibility and quality of Study Skills Moodle site, Academic Integrity training modules etc. Increased use of Lecture Capture to support an inclusive learning environment.
Pillar 2 Staff Development & Leadership	Improved programme of staff development for all academic staff; enhanced support, guidance and training for Personal Tutors; and greater focus on retention in both new staff induction, and AdvanceHE-accredited CPDR and PgCAP. Increased staff engagement with Academic Integrity training modules; and enhanced leadership of retention via new leadership roles associated with the senior management restructure.
Pillar 3 Induction and Transitions	Improved pre-arrival guidance and induction activities; enhanced role of Personal Tutors in the first few weeks of semester; improved induction and transitions support into the next stage of study (e.g. levels 5 and 6). Themed engagement pathways that integrate key activities into a seamless year-long retention focused plan – e.g. GSFS, Welcome Fortnight, Wobble Week, January Reconnect/Refresher week etc. Mental health training and support.
Pillar 4 Programme & Assessment Design	Improved programme and assessment design; roll-out of Programme Design Intensives (PDIs); programme-level reviews of assessment at levels 4, 5 and 6; extended use of formative assessment during 1 st semester. All programmes conform to the UG Curriculum Framework and to the priorities set-out in the SMU Learning & Teaching Strategy. Improved clarity of regulations, enhanced support for student resilience, and introduction of 'Resit' support packages at programme level to support students undertaking reassessment.
Pillar 5 Targeted interventions and improved student support	Targeted review of programmes with high numbers of withdrawals; improved guidance for staff and students on steps they can take to improve retention; provision of improved support for international students. Targeted regulatory changes around 'in-year reassessment'. New research into causes of student withdrawal, introduction of a student buddy scheme, improved support for late arriving students and LOA students, and an 'Its Ok to knock' campaign to increase accessible of staff to students seeking advice/guidance etc.

Pillar 6 Collaborative Partnerships	How retention will be maximised on franchise partnership programmes, and monitored for compliance with agreed contracts and OfS's B3 Threshold Benchmarks. Enhanced and standardised metrics monitoring, creation of Joint Management Boards for each new partnership, establishment of clear mutual expectations via contracts and 'Schedule of Responsibilities' and improved guidance to staff around partner access to SMU resources/services, and academic content/teaching materials.
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Pillar 1 Data, Analytics and Technology	
1.Introduction of a new Student APP	<p>Development of a New Student 'App' – A new 'App' is now being implemented. This will drive significant improvements in the student experience and – based on experiences in other Universities which have implemented similar 'Apps' – it is likely to produce a 1-2% improvement in student retention. The main benefits of the new Student App fall into three main areas:</p> <p>i) Student Experience The App will provide a single dashboard (via PCs, Tablets and Mobile Phones) to access all of SMU platforms and provide the student with key data like timetabling, assessment dates and calendar of events. For new SMU students, simplifying how they accesses our systems and get key information should reduce stress and thus improve their likely hood of completing their studies.</p> <p>ii) Engagement The student App will provide a method for pushing targeted notifications to student phones/tablets informing them of key actions they need to complete; key events/dates they need to be aware of or just information to help the student feel supported or to support a call for help.</p> <p>iii) Attendance Monitoring A new system of event-specific, unique 6-digit codes will enable all students to check in to any scheduled class session, practical or lecture, regardless of whether it is online, hybrid or in-person. Academics will be able to see in real-time who's registered at the start of the class and can check-in anyone present who's forgotten to register. In order to drive better engagement, Students will also be able to see their own attendance scores on the App and how these compares to their cohort.</p>
2.Personal Tutor Dashboard & Personal Tutoring	<p>Personal Tutor Dashboard - The development of new internal 'digital super highways' at St Mary's, the new Student 'App', and PowerBI will together provide a new form of Student Engagement Dashboard, with enhanced data that makes identifying 'Students at Risk' easier and quicker for staff.</p> <p>Personal Tutor Booking system – A new system to book appointments is now in place that will enable much easier booking of sessions with Personal Tutors.</p>
3.Improved visibility of the Study Skills Moodle Site	<p>The Study Skills Moodle site - Developed by LDLs and EAP Tutors, the site provides an excellent resource for all students but more strategic value needs to be gained by ensuring that it is proactively promoted by all academic staff and staff in support services.</p> <p>The Study Skills Moodle site will be championed/promoted by <u>all</u> UG programme teams at St Mary's and a link to it to built into all programme/module Moodle sites.</p> <p>Support Services staff (e.g. in Student Services, CTESS, Employability Services) will also promote the Study Skills Moodle site.</p>
4.Automated registers for online sessions	<p>Development of a new Student 'App' – The new 'Student App' will facilitate rapid and automated completion of attendance records, and will make identification of 'at risk' students much easier and quicker for academic staff. All sessions in Celcat will have a unique 6 digit code. Students simply input the code to check in to their scheduled sessions.</p>

5. Use of Power BI to enhance access to student retention and engagement data	Power BI – provides a valuable new tool for student retention. It will also be the main reporting platform for student attendance data, and staff will be able to self-service, pulling off data reports that best meet their needs. The functionality and reporting capabilities of PowerBI will continue to be developed during the lifetime of the Retention Strategy. Access to PowerBI will be extended to all staff who need access.
6. Increased use of Lecture Capture	Improved usage of Panopto/Lecture Capture - to aid retention of late arriving students and students with learning disabilities. The University has invested considerable financial resource in Panopto but usage by staff has decline rapidly following the removal of COVID restrictions and the return to in-person teaching. Students have identified access to recorded lectures as an issue and it is a key campaign theme for the SMSU Education President. Research shows that use of Lecture Capture has profound benefits for all students, but particularly those with disabilities and international students. It must be seen in the future as one of the key ways in which programme teams ensure/maintain an ‘inclusive’ pedagogical approach. It is crucial, therefore that: All programme teams will be expected to review and maximise use of Panopto (Lecture Capture), and identify how and where (ie in each module) they will be making increased use of this platform to aid inclusivity and to benefit students.
7. Academic Integrity	Student-facing Academic Integrity Training Modules – Findings of academic misconduct can also have a negative impact on the student experience and on student academic outcomes. All programme teams will proactively encourage their students to complete the student-facing mandatory academic integrity training modules so students can develop positive and ethical study practices and behaviours. It is crucial therefore that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Academic Integrity Leads will monitor completion of mandatory academic integrity training modules by School staff. ○ Academic Integrity Leads will monitor completion of mandatory academic integrity training modules by students in their School. Data will be provided by TEL that enables them to do so.
8. Hyflex teaching	Extend pilots of Hyflex teaching – The initial phase 1 pilots of Hyflex were a limited success and highlighted the fact that effectiveness is reduced if there is no classroom assistance supporting the academic in the hyflex teaching space to integrate the students on screen (connecting remotely via Zoom/Teams) and the students in the classroom. This will be addressed in a series of phase 2 pilots that include Masters and PGR students employed to fulfil the ‘Classroom Assistant’ role. TEL will lead the pilots.

Pillar 2 Staff Development & Leadership	
1. Improved staff development focused on student retention	Festival of Learning & Teaching - The L&T Festival in 2023, 2024 and 2025 will include a focus on aspects of practice that build high levels of retention. Improved staff development on student retention - Enhanced staff development led by L&T Team in CTESS on inclusive teaching and assessment will be rolled-out for all academic staff from 2022/23 and in each subsequent year of the Strategy.
2. Improved guidance for staff on student retention	Improved guidance for academic staff on actions they can take personally to improve student retention Every member of academic staff can ‘make a difference’ to student retention by doing certain things or adopting certain behaviours. These are summarised in Appendix 1 . It is also important to empower Programme teams to experiment and do what they feel is necessary to improve inductions and transitions support in their programmes. Teams do not need ‘approval’ to experiment – they are free to build their own induction programmes that best reflect the needs of their

	incoming students. If it needs resource, they would be expected to seek this from their Head of Department.
3.Alignment of ADF with retention priorities.	Academic Development Framework (ADF) priority themes will include personal tutoring and student engagement – including interactive teaching and inclusive classrooms which underpin student retention and success. The L&T Team in CTESS will offer tailored support upon request, focused on retention.
4.Improved support for Personal Tutors	The Personal Tutoring policy – This was re-launched in Sept 2022 and included additional staff development activities, enhanced Personal Tutoring Hub, and enhanced CPD support for Personal Tutors, including Personal Tutor Forums. Further changes will stem from the outcomes of the Review of Personal Tutoring scheduled to be approved by Academic Board at its meeting in May 2023.
5.Mandatory training on EDI and Unconscious Bias (OD)	Mandatory training modules - OD Essential Skills mandatory training modules on Equality & Diversity and Unconscious Bias are now available to all staff.
6.Epigeum Modules	Completion of Staff Academic Integrity Training Modules – Completion/Compliance data for academic staff and students will be monitored by each AIL with a goal of 100% engagement by the end of (i.e. July 2024/25).
7.Enhanced Leadership	The University will be creating new roles that enhance leadership of student retention - The proposals set out in the University senior management structure, highlight the establishment of important new roles which will reinforce both accountability for and leadership of student retention. The changes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Each Faculty Dean will have a specific cross-University leadership role, with a) One of the Deans (IoE) being allocated leadership of International Student Support b) One of the Deans allocated leadership of Student Experience (SAHPS) and c) One of the Deans allocated leadership of Partnerships (FoBL). ii) Within each Faculty, there will be a number of Subject Leads. Each subject lead will be responsible for specific areas/priorities within the Faculty. Subject Leads will be required to lead on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Partnerships – with student retention as an aspect of the role o Student Experience - with student retention as an aspect of the role o Research <p>These changes in academic roles within the 3 proposed Faculties will drive a ‘step-change’ in accountability, and also strategic and operational leadership of efforts to improve retention, and clearer lines of liaison between Faculties and Services in terms of ensuring a joined-up approach.</p>

Pillar 3	
Student Induction and Transitions	
1.Improvements to student induction	Continued improvements to student induction – From 2023 a number of enhancements will be rolled-out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Online enrolment will continue – this has had significant benefits to the student experience and reduces costs significantly. o Single moving-in day for UG/PG students will ensure a smoother moving in experience. o Learning lessons will be drawn from the successful January Reconnect Week to inform Welcome Week Planning. o A block planning’ approach will be adopted to avoid clashes between events, with – for example, all academic programme level induction sessions being run in pre-determined ‘blocks’ where no other events will be scheduled. o There will be greater emphasis on drop-in sessions with LDLs, Careers, Library staff etc, and continued refinement of ‘Student Essentials’ and ‘Student Life’ briefing sessions.

<p>2.A ‘themed’ student engagement and induction approach</p>	<p>Themed student engagement pathways – A series of ‘Themed’ student engagement pathways have been identified with the different needs of students studying at UG levels 3, 4, 5 & 6 in mind. It will provide a consistent/coordinated approach to linking Induction, Wobble Week, January Reconnect Week and other retention-focused activities. These themed student engagement pathways will inform all student engagement and induction/transitions activities during the lifetime of the Retention Strategy, and pathway content will be continually enhanced/developed/updated.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="440 409 1402 1160"> <tr> <td data-bbox="440 409 922 824"> <p>Level 3 Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transitioning onto UG programmes ○ Sense of Belonging </td> <td data-bbox="930 409 1402 824"> <p>Level 4 Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Place of Belonging ○ Developing friendships/connections with peers and programme ○ Finding somewhere to live in L5 ○ Academic Study Skills/IT skills/ Numeracy ○ Planning and Managing your University studies ○ Preparing for Assessments and Exams ○ Finance Planning </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="440 835 922 1160"> <p>Level 5 Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Academic Study Skills ○ Improving Grades Preparing for Assessments & Exams ○ Working with others (Group work / Assessments) ○ Early Career Readiness ○ Finance Planning ○ Time Management </td> <td data-bbox="930 835 1402 1160"> <p>Level 6 themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Career Readiness – Life after Undergraduate Degree / Transferable Skills – Being Ready for Life ○ Post Graduate Study ○ Dissertation - planning to submission ○ Finance Planning ○ Time Management </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Level 3 Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transitioning onto UG programmes ○ Sense of Belonging 	<p>Level 4 Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Place of Belonging ○ Developing friendships/connections with peers and programme ○ Finding somewhere to live in L5 ○ Academic Study Skills/IT skills/ Numeracy ○ Planning and Managing your University studies ○ Preparing for Assessments and Exams ○ Finance Planning 	<p>Level 5 Themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Academic Study Skills ○ Improving Grades Preparing for Assessments & Exams ○ Working with others (Group work / Assessments) ○ Early Career Readiness ○ Finance Planning ○ Time Management 	<p>Level 6 themes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Career Readiness – Life after Undergraduate Degree / Transferable Skills – Being Ready for Life ○ Post Graduate Study ○ Dissertation - planning to submission ○ Finance Planning ○ Time Management
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<p>3.Reconnect Week (Jan 2023)</p>	<p>January Reconnect/Refresher Week – Planning for Reconnect Week was led by ADSE in SAHPS and involved a huge ‘team’ effort with crucial input from Sport St Marys, SMSU and central services. It should now be seen as part of a year-long focus on retention, and coordinated with Get Set for Success, Induction, Wobble Week etc. January Reconnect/Refresher Week and Welcome Week will continue to combine social, academic, sport and wellbeing focused activities aimed at building community, ‘sense of belonging’ and wellbeing.</p>				
<p>4.Developing a Sense of ‘Belonging’</p>	<p>The Four Foundations of Belonging at University – This key sector report published in Nov 2022 will inform our future approach to supporting retention. https://wonkhe.com/wp-content/wonkhe-uploads/2022/10/Building-Belonging-October-2022.pdf</p>				
<p>5.Mental Health support training for students</p>	<p>The University has made significant progress in providing mental health support – It will build on the progress made over the lifetime of this Retention Strategy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Initial phase – 8 staff trained to deliver Student Minds MH & wellbeing training to student leaders in 2020/21 pilot. It was also piloted with Ambassadors & SU sabbatical officers. ○ Further roll-out – In 2022/23 training was rolled out to all student leaders, SU club and society committees, senior residents, student experts panel, course reps etc. ○ The University will roll-out learning lessons from both the ‘Embedding mental health in the Curriculum’ project and the OfS-funded Mental Health project which involves a number of other HEIs and sector partners. ○ The University will improve the mental health training provided to Personal Tutors so they are better-placed to advise/support and refer students in need of additional mental health support. 				

Pillar 4 Programme & Assessment Design	
1. Inclusive teaching and assessment	<p>Apply existing policies effectively - All staff will champion and integrate into the delivery of their programmes the 'Effective Teaching Practices' set out in the SMU Curriculum Framework. These are informed by extensive research and are proven to maximise active engagement, effective learning and achievement whilst ensuring an inclusive approach.</p> <p>Align programme approvals with existing policies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All Validations and Re-Validations will require explicit mapping against the Curriculum Framework & key strands of the L&T Strategy ○ Programme Reviews will be informed by retention data and APP-related data on 'gaps', OfS regulatory B3 thresholds and will highlight instances of good retention-focused practice(s).
2. In-Year Reassessment	<p>Introduce in-Year Reassessment - Forced withdrawal due to academic failure is a major factor in attrition. One significant change to the regulations is proposed to address this – to introduce changes to the regulations on assessment that enable 'in-year' reassessments and resits.</p> <p>The Head of Registry will bring forward revisions to the Regulations for approval by Academic Board in May 2023.</p>
3. Assessment design and guidance	<p>All assessments will be aligned with Assessment Policy – The principles set out in the Policy are there to ensure consistent standards and inclusive assessment design. All programmes should align their assessment practices/strategies with the Policy accordingly. This will be given particular emphasis in Validation/Re-Validation processes.</p> <p>High quality assessment briefs – All Programme teams will focus on how Assessment Briefs (guidance provided to students on each assessment) can be improved for clarity for level 4, with clear guidance etc, criteria, and 'tips for success' – e.g. "A 1st class response to this assignment will typically include....." Also, guidance on next steps in case of a fail mark. Similar work will be required for level 5 (2023/24) and level 6 (2024/25).</p> <p>Systematic deployment of formative assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All level 4 modules to set formative assessment and provide feedback on it by week 6 of Sem 1. ○ All Personal Tutors to set short (c.200-300-word) exercise in Wk1 and return with feedback in Wk 2. These very short scripts should be used to provide constructive feedback, build confidence, etc whilst also identifying skills gaps, and the need for additional support with writing, citation etc. They should NOT require a heavy workload for markers.
4. Resit Support	<p>Resit support package – all programmes will be required to develop and publish to students a 'Resit Support Package' that will set-out clearly for all students the support that will be made available to them to support them to succeed in their resits and reassessments. The support provided should be aligned with the practice of 'In-Year Reassessment' referred to above in Point 2.</p>
5. Releasing marks during class sessions	<p>Release of grades and feedback to be in a timetabled sessions – this ensures that students can ask questions etc whilst also giving staff an opportunity to share with students the characteristics/strengths of pieces that were awarded high marks. Time should be factored-in accordingly by Module Convenors.</p>
6. Building student resilience	<p>Building Student Resilience</p> <p>Research within the Institute of Education identified that resilience for trainee teachers should be an essential part of their initial teacher education programme. The focus on resilience acknowledges the need for perseverance and commitment, but also recognises that vulnerability and the need for support are integral to building resilience over time. Education colleagues have embedded a focus on resilience and wellbeing into programmes, particularly for trainee teachers on undergraduate and PGCE courses. This has been a gradual</p>

	<p>process over many years is now evident in discrete lectures, bespoke activities within sessions across the curriculum and reflective activities for tutorials.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is recommended that this integrated model for building resilience be adapted as part of the Retention Strategy for use across the University. ○ Building resilience among students will become a distinctive ‘thread’ throughout all our UG programmes, with a particular emphasis on levels 3 & 4 where it is arguably most important for students to develop resilience in order to more effectively cope with their first year studying at the University, ○ Education colleagues are well placed (resource permitting) to lead professional development workshops with academic and professional service colleagues in this area. ○ Funding for a ‘Buy-out’ for staff in IoE will be provided for a project lead who will coordinate this work over the lifetime of the Strategy.
7.OfS-funded ‘Mind the Gap’ project – Mental health & wellbeing project	<p>Support initiative for UG students studying without family support or without family HE experience.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Workshops, online resources, peer support and specialist psychoeducation activities will be provided to support students at key times associated with successful continuation eg transition points to and through degree programmes. ○ Complete the OfS project in collaboration with sector bodies & partner HEIs, disseminate project outcomes and embed good practice(s) across St Mary’s.
8.Clearer regulations	<p>Comprehensive ‘inclusivity review’ of all student facing regulations - Registry will carry-out a comprehensive review of all student-facing regulations to improved clarity, accessibility and precision. A greater emphasis on use of ‘plain English’.</p>

Pillar 5	
Targeted interventions and improved student support	
1.Increased support for international students	<p>Learning support posts grow in line with growth in international students - SMU will increase its investment in learning support roles, including Learning Development Lectures, Learning Tutors and Pastoral Support Tutors, such that the number of these posts keeps pace with the growth in the number of students. Cases for additional posts will be made within the annual Planning Round process.</p> <p>Encouraging strong student engagement – It is important that the engagement of international students is maximised to encourage a sense of belonging, strong social/personal networks, and strong engagement with their studies. All academic staff and staff in student-facing roles to proactively encourage all students (and international students especially) to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ audit other programme modules in areas of individual interest (subject to Programme Lead or Registry approval); ○ participate in student societies/clubs, and to attend talks given by external or internal speakers that are open to all; ○ develop friendships outside their own programmes. Programme tutors might team up with tutors from other programmes to create collaborative social events or knowledge exchange.
2.Targeted enhancements within programmes	<p>Targeted interventions where attrition is highest. Attrition is not uniformly spread across UG programmes – there are particular programmes that ‘skew’ the overall pattern. There are often complex reasons for these differences. It is important that programmes with higher attrition rates reflect critically on aspects of programme structure, assessment and programme pedagogies to consider whether there are ways in which attrition levels can be managed downwards. It is important therefore that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programmes contributing the largest number of withdrawals develop a 3-year action plan. These will encompass critical reflections on the design of the programme (e.g. module content, pedagogical strategies, assessment

	<p>strategies) and will set-out steps that will be taken to reduce attrition at programme level. The L&T Team in CTESS will support programme teams as they develop their plans.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All programmes to review their Level 4 assessment strategies during Programme Review in 2023/24 to identify assessments that have particularly high fail rates, and to consider changes that might reduce the fail rate without undermining academic standards. During 2024/25 extend review to levels 5 and 6. ○ It is proposed that each <u>module</u> in Sem 1 (level 4) should include a <u>formative</u> assessment that is set within the first 3-4 weeks, with feedback provided no later than Week 6. The focus should be on building confidence, constructive criticism, and feed-forwards – i.e. simple steps a student can take to maximise their performance in heavily-weighted end of module summative assessments.
3.Guidance for student success	<p>Supporting students to take actions that maximise their own success – Students can make a huge difference to their success by taking deliberate steps to maximise their engagement. These are set-out in a simple crib sheet in Appendix 2. This can be simplified/edited-down even further to create a simple 1-page document if required.</p> <p>The student guidance document titled <i>‘Things you can do to maximise your own success’</i> to be sent to applicants by Admissions, included in Induction pages, added to all programme/module Moodle sites & CTESS L&T webpages, and flagged in student newsfeed and the University newsletter. Each tip will be used to populate flat screen messages during the year.</p>
4.Monitoring engagement & ensuring timely support/interventions	<p>Overhaul and re-launch of Students at Risk Policy and resources – The Procedure was overhauled in 2022/23 and will continue to be review each year during the lifetime of the Retention Strategy. A key focus moving forwards will be on ensuring that improved data sets available via PowerBI inform improved processes and impact of the Policy on retention.</p>
5.Review of personal Tutoring	<p>Review of Personal Tutoring System - A wider and more ‘root & branch’ review of Personal Tutoring and the infrastructure associated with it (including Personal Tutoring Hub, training provision etc) will be completed by May 2023.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The outputs from this wider review will be considered by ADC in summer 2023, in time for outputs to be implemented fully for the academic year 2023/24. ○ The impact of the changes will be subject to an Impact evaluation in 2024/25 coordinated by CTESS. ○ Personal Tutors will be supported to make more timely and effective interventions to support students at risk of withdrawal.
6.Clearer Registry communication and guidance for students	<p>Review all Registry communications – Head of Registry to ensure that all communications with students are reviewed during the lifetime of the Strategy to ensure that they are clear, accessible and integrate explicit guidance on ‘Next steps’ e.g. guidance provided to students required to Repeat a year, Repeat a module or undertake Reassessment.</p>
7.Increase student engagement with clubs and societies	<p>Support the SMSU to maximise student engagement with Student Clubs and Societies (research shows that active engagement and participation in clubs/societies builds ‘belonging’ and has a significant impact on effective retention):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ University to implement Sport St Mary’s ‘Moving Together’ strategy in collaboration with SMSU. ○ Programme teams to consult with SMSU about how they can best encourage active engagement with <u>SMSU sports clubs & Societies</u>. ○ Costs of engaging in Sport/Clubs to be supported (in case of students from disadvantaged backgrounds/facing financial disadvantage) by the <u>Student Engagement Fund</u> coordinated by CTESS.

<p>8. Get Set for Success</p>	<p>Ensure that Get Set for Success is delivered to largest possible cohort of WP students - GSFS programme is designed to improve sense of belong, rapid integration and ultimately improved student retention.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Repeat GSFS over next 3 years, with sustained level of funding/resourcing. ○ Recruit increasingly large cohorts and maximise attendance/engagement - aim to recruit 80+ attendees (i.e. actual attendees as opposed to applicants) in Sept 2023, and 100+ in Sept 2024. ○ Conduct full impact evaluations – drawing on existing methodologies and practice in WP impact evaluations in CTESS.
<p>9. Be Smart & Employability Confident</p>	<p>Ensure that both BeSMART and Employability Confident are delivered to largest possible cohorts of WP students – Impact analysis of BeSMART shows that it has significant impact on both the engagement and career-readiness of participants, thereby supporting improved completion and progression.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Repeat both programmes over the lifetime of the Strategy, with sustained funding/resourcing. ○ Increase participation – aim to recruit larger cohorts for both programmes each year. ○ Conduct full impact evaluations – drawing on existing methodologies and practice in WP impact evaluations in CTESS.
<p>10. Wobble Week/January Reconnect/ Refresher Week</p>	<p>Student engagement pathways - Wobble Week (ran for first time in Nov 2021) and January Reconnect/Refresher Week (ran for first time in Jan 2023) should be seen in the future as part of an integrated ‘student engagement pathway’, which includes the following: GSFS, Welcome Fortnight, Wobble Week, January Reconnect/Refresher Week plus any summer interventions during Exam Revision Week that the University puts in place during the 1st week of May.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Repeat both interventions during the lifetime of the Strategy, with sustained funding/resourcing. ○ Continue to invest in both to ensure sufficiently wide collaboration and impact. ○ Conduct full impact evaluations – drawing on existing methodologies and practice in WP impact evaluations in CTESS.
<p>11. Improved Leave of Absence (LOA) information, support and practices</p>	<p>Improved support for Leave of Absence Students – Outcomes for LOA students lags behind those of other students. This needs to be addressed to ensure LOA does not subsequently result in withdrawal. A working group is already identifying future enhancements as to how we support for students before, during and after their LOA. It will conclude its work in spring/summer 2023. Implement outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conduct full impact evaluation – drawing on existing methodologies and practice in WP impact evaluations in CTESS.
<p>12. Changed shape of the academic year</p>	<p>Change the shape of the academic year to facilitate improved retention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Earlier start to Semester 2 – already in place for Jan 2023. Repeat during lifetime of the Strategy ○ January Reconnect Week ran for first time in January 2023. Repeat during lifetime of the Strategy. ○ A dedicated Exam Revision week will be built into the calendar in early May 2023 to enable improved performance in summer exams (thereby reducing withdrawal due to academic failure). Repeat during lifetime of the Strategy.
<p>13. Extended use of peer mentoring schemes</p>	<p>Improve and widen adoption of peer mentoring schemes within UG programmes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New peer mentoring ‘Hub’ – A new Peer Mentoring Hub went live for academic staff in March 2022. The Hub provides guidance for staff on how to set-up and run peer mentoring schemes. Peer mentoring information, minimum expectations, set up guides and materials etc. ○ CTESS WP Team will coordinate a series of pilot ‘drop-ins’ from 2023 for academic staff to promote the Hub and provide additional support for academic teams to use the Hub resources effectively.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Future development – The Peer Mentoring Hub will continue to be developed and will provide resources to support dedicated staff development sessions in 2022/23. ○ Student-facing peer mentoring webpages will be developed in 2023/24 to support students who want to see peer mentoring introduced in their own programmes, or who want to develop approaches outside of their programme. The SMSU will be a full partner in developing these webpages.
14.WP Innovation Initiative grants	The WP innovation grants provide funding for department/programme level initiatives addressing APP targets – Focus on retention –Priority for 22/23 on projects addressing retention of WP students.
15.Creation of Student Experts Panel	Student Experts Panel - The objective is to create a deliberately diverse, vibrant, and sustainable panel of Student Experts dedicated to supporting, informing, and productively challenging the University’s work in equality, diversity, and inclusion, in line with the overall success targets of the Access and Participation Plan. This will involve collaboration between CTESS and SMSU.
16.Support during cost of living crisis	Cost of Living Crisis – The University has now published <u>enhanced information</u> to support students during the cost of living crisis. This includes highlighting to students the sources of guidance and advice available to them, including the <u>Student Funding Service</u> and the University’s external financial advice provider <u>Blackbullion</u> . The University will provide groups that would not normally be able to access Hardship Funds increased access/support via the Fund, such as Level 3 students, and international students. Levels of support will remain under constant review and may be amended during the lifetime of this Strategy.
17.Late arriving students	<p>Enhance support for late arriving students – Each year there is a relatively small group of students who arrive late (i.e. in weeks 2-4). This is almost always due to factors beyond the control of the student (e.g. funding complications, visa delays). The same phenomenon exists in other universities. Whilst it is recognised that this automatically places the student in the ‘at risk’ category, this should not - of itself – prevent their successful engagement with their programme. What is crucial, is that where programmes are made aware that some student will be arriving late, that the programme teams ensure that all content, lectures, study materials are available to these students via the VLE (Moodle) for the first 4 weeks in advance of their arrival so they can engage with their modules ‘online’ until they arrive.</p> <p>This means that it is important for all programme teams who KNOW that there are likely to be late arriving students on their programme(s) to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ All class handouts, or class study materials should be available via the VLE. ○ Personal tutor meetings should be offered in an online Zoom/Teams format. ○ Late arriving students should be able to engage with their peers in groupwork etc, especially where associated with assessments. ○ Taught sessions should (where practical) be recorded via Zoom, Teams or Panopto, and uploaded to the VLE. ○ Where possible, and practically achievable, class sessions should be run in a ‘hyflex’ format (advice on how to do so is available from TEL).
18.Improved insights into the causes of withdrawal via targeted research	Targeted research into the reasons for withdrawal – Current data on the reasons for student withdrawal is not sufficiently nuanced to enable sound insights. To address this, the University has entered into a contract with an external research company (SMRS) to undertake more detailed research on students’ decision-making and the factors that influence them to withdraw. A research project has been agreed, with a clear, standardised set of questions that the researchers will discuss with students either via Zoom or via phone calls. The research sample will comprise students who withdrew from the University either in Sem 1/2 in 2021/22 or Sem 1 in 2022/23. The data derived from this research project will aid the development of useful insights that will help to drive targeted or focused interventions, support or initiatives around student

	retention during the lifetime of this Student Retention Strategy. Once the research project is completed it is important that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Its recommendations are brought forward to ADC in June/July 2023.
19. Introduce student ‘buddy’ system	Introduce a new Student Buddy system for all 1st year UG students (Home and International) – This should be rolled-out for Sept 2023, with each new student linked to a ‘buddy’. The SMSU is leading on enabling this scheme.
20. Increase number of academic societies	Targeted support to increase number of academic societies – Academic societies play a pivotal role in student belonging, retention and success. From research across the sector we know that students who connect with others on their course are 56% more likely to feel settled at University (WonkHE, 2022). Given these trends, SMSU aims to further develop academic societies at St Mary’s University, creating course communities that provide peer-support, co-curricular learning and enhance employability – fostering a sense of belonging and enabling students to reach their full potential. This will be achieved by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Correlating course-level Q21 NSS trends related to learning community with pre-existing academic societies to develop a priority list of courses to target with the introduction of an academic society. o Developing resources for academic staff to support them in fostering academic societies.
21. ‘Its OK to knock’ campaign	Roll-out an ‘Its OK to knock’ campaign across all Faculties/Institutes. St Mary’s needs to ensure that positive messages are communicated about the accessibility of our staff. The campaign would involve a simple sign being added to staff office doors. This will be accompanied by staff sending out online reminders to students of their office hours and that they are happy to arrange online sessions with students who find it difficult to come to campus.
22. Enhance profile of Chaplaincy	Increase profile of Chaplaincy during Welcome Week and other major events like January Reconnect/Refresher Week. The teams involved in planning these major annual retention-focused events/activities to liaise more closely with the Chaplaincy Team and to build-in more activities/information relating to Chaplaincy and the services/support it offers.

Pillar 6	
Collaborative Partnerships	
1. Retention targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All franchise collaborative partnerships will include both a Continuation target and a Completion target - these will be built into the formal, legal contract signed by both parties prior to programme launch.
2. OfS B3 Threshold Metrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All franchise collaborative partnerships will give proper attention to the new OfS B3 Benchmark thresholds – including those for Continuation and Completion. Targets set for franchise partners will be informed by these thresholds since failure to meet them will have possible implications for the University’s own compliance with the conditions of registration.
3. Monitoring partner performance against targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deploy a standard monitoring approach so partners’ performance against Continuation/Completion targets can be tracked - a standard ‘Partnerships Metrics Monitoring Log’ has been developed via extensive consultation with the University’s Strategic Partnerships Steering Group (USPSG). This will be deployed to monitor all partnerships in the future. Partner Performance will be monitored closely by the Collaborative Partnership Committee (CPC) and reported upwards to ADC and Academic Board.
4. Academic Integrity Modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion of Academic Integrity Training Modules – It is expected that on franchise partnerships that all students and all staff involved in programme delivery will have access to a version of the online training modules. It is expected that levels of completion of the Modules will be monitored by the relevant Joint Management Board (JMB) for each partnership.
5. Comparability of support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All franchise partners to provide a ‘comparable’ level of student support – All contracts with franchise partners will include an expectation that the partner is

	<p>able to provide 'comparable' levels of student support for students to aid student retention. The way in which this support is delivered may differ from that at SMU, but there should be comparable opportunities for students to access support via their own institution, and the provision of support should be of a comparable quality. This should be given considerable scrutiny during negotiations, during due diligence, during Panel approval events, and during any site visits.</p>
<p>6.Partner access to SMU resources and content</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All contracts will clarify partner rights of access to SMU resources and academic programme content/teaching materials – Contracts will set-out explicitly the level of access that staff and students in partner organisations will enjoy to SMU systems, platforms, services and academic content. Guidance has already been circulated regarding partner access rights to programme content/teaching materials on franchise partnerships. The operational effectiveness of all collaborative partnerships will be monitored via Joint Management Boards, reporting into Collaborative Partnerships Committee. The new Partnerships AIM Framework and the new Operations Manual (both approved in April 2023) will be regularly updated to ensure that access to SMU resources is clearly/accurately articulated.

Appendix 1

What can individual academic staff do to improve student retention?

Student Retention – How You Can Make a Difference

Objective	Your Impact Enabling students' preparedness
Prepare students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure recruitment information for your programme tells students what to expect on your course. Unrealistic or inaccurate expectations can result in de-motivation and disengagement. • Provide pre-arrival programme information that helps to build confidence and prepares your students for study at university (including information that informs Open Days, Visit Days and induction webpages). • Provide short introductory videos that introduce students to key topics, content, disputed ideas or other aspects of the subject curriculum, and that give students a 'flavour' of the programme.
Provide an effective induction and welcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will arrive with varying levels of preparedness, confidence and previous knowledge of the subject. Avoid making too many assumptions. • Provide a range of academically-focused activities that help induct students into the subject or discipline • Include social activities that create a sense of belonging and help students make friends and build social networks • Extend induction activities throughout the 1st semester, with activities timed to reflect where students are at their studies (e.g. academic integrity activities in class or on VLE timed to coincide first substantive assignment, or first submission deadline). • Promote centrally coordinated induction activities and briefings so they are seen as more relevant.
Engage students in learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote Personal Tutoring and emphasise the value of engaging with personal tutors. Ensure students know who their personal tutor is and encourage attendance at all tutoring sessions. • Promote the online training for students (e.g. Induction, EDI & Epiqeum Academic Integrity Modules) and value-added opportunities (e.g. Linked-In Learning) to develop their skills, knowledge and behaviours. • Promote the student voice – find out about draw attention to the different student representation systems in place, including the Students' Union, Course reps, EDI network, Student Experts Panel. • Use module evaluation data to drive continual enhancement and always tell students how their feedback has been acted upon.
Build belonging and an inclusive community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat students as partners in a collective learning journey. Check-in regularly in class to ensure your approach is inclusive. Use quick evaluation exercises to seek feedback mid-semester (e.g. 'Stop, Change, Keep'). • Utilise the 'Effective Teaching Approaches' set out in the Curriculum Framework. Take an inclusive pedagogical approach that respects diversity, and enables all students to learn effectively and achieve their potential. • Encourage students to engage with events, activities, clubs and societies and other SMSU opportunities. Students who actively engage with clubs and societies are much less likely to experience the social isolation that too often results in withdrawal. • Encourage students to join the EDI (student issues) network and engage with the Student Voices Panel. • Use the Student Mentoring Resources to set-up a peer-mentoring scheme in your programme. These enhance learning and employability skills. • Familiarise yourself with our Access and Participation Plan and our Widening Participation Team to understand our regulatory targets and the initiatives we design to address them • Promote the Report and Support webpages to address incidences of poor behaviour

<p>Promote student health and wellbeing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop your awareness of student wellbeing by engaging with staff guidance and training. • Signpost students to support and services. Use the webpages and/or invite Student Services staff promote the wellbeing, financial and other support services available to your students. • Build ‘social’ activities into the programme at each stage of study to support a sense of belonging throughout their studies, maintain crucial social networks and avoid social isolation that might contribute to poor mental health. • Respect students’ varying levels of mental wellbeing. Find out about their other commitments, pressures and responsibilities to understand their behaviours. Direct them to the wellbeing service when necessary.
<p>Engage with the University’s ‘Students at Risk Procedure’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the University’s ‘Students at Risk Procedure’. Ensure that your programme meets regularly to discuss students and update the Students at Risk Monitoring Log. Monitor the effectiveness of interventions and their impact. Upload Monitoring Logs to the central ‘Students at Risk’ MS Teams Site for your programme. • Understand the early indicators that students may not be engaging and/or may need more advice, support or guidance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of engagement with Moodle: Use the reporting metrics function in Moodle to monitor student engagement on programme or modules. Moodle data is a powerful tool for understanding how, when and for how long students engage with key content/resources. ○ Poor attendance or use of library resources. Use the Personal Tutor Dashboard to understand these aspects of student engagement. ○ Requests for Extenuating Circumstances at either programme or university level (held by Faculty/Institute admin or registry) ○ Non-submission of assignments. Take direct action immediately when students do not engage in assessment.
<p>Facilitate transitions along the student journey</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take a strategic approach to transition between levels of study, including re-induction activities at each new level or transition milestone. The challenges students face change as they progress and some student may start ‘out of sequence’. • Encourage students to engage with peer mentoring, placement activities, WBL modules, Linked-In Learning and other opportunities appropriate at each level. • Champion the opportunities available through the Employability Service, especially at level 5 and 6 to prepare for graduate careers. • Ensure that your UG students are well equipped to successfully apply and succeed in PG study and research. Make progression pathways explicit and encourage students individually. • Make use of inspirational external experts from relevant industry, research, PG study or employer links throughout the student lifecycle. These can be highly motivational, and reinforce the ‘relevance’ of what students are learning in class. • Review the level of reassessment in your programme regularly and explore any indications that the assessment approach might need adjustment. • Ensure that students fully understand the format and requirements of reassessments and are supported to engage effectively. Consider additional tutorials and/or ‘mock’ opportunities to prepare students to be successful.
<p>Staff development and continuous evidence-based improvement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share practice amongst and across programme teams to develop approaches to good retention. • Experiment – don’t be afraid to try new things or different approaches. Some will work, some may not. Use Innovation Initiative Grants for retention initiatives with a widening participation focus. • Fully evaluate all initiatives designed to improve retention. Focus time and resources on the basis of the evaluation outcomes. • Access training available via the Academic Development Framework. • Use the Programme Review process to feed into programme level action plans and enhancements.

Appendix 2

Things You Can do to Maximise Your Own Success

Things You Can do to Maximise Your Own Success

Objective	Your Impact
<p>PRE-ARRIVAL</p> <p>Be as prepared as you can be before you start your studies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand your programme - Make sure you read the information about your preferred programme very carefully before applying. Attend open days and visit days on campus to find out more. This is the best way of ensuring that your expectations of the programme are accurate and properly informed. • Ensure you have the right technology/equipment - Ensure that you know what electronic equipment (e.g. laptop) you will need to engage effectively with your studies. The Technology Requirements for laptops etc are available on the University webpages. • Read the information sent to you prior to arrival - Engage with pre-arrival and induction information provided by the University and your programme team. Some programmes require students to engage with a short exercise or task prior to arrival. • Complete the free study skills Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) called 'Preparing for Uni'. Its free and will help you to develop and refine your understanding of higher education and the skills you will need to succeed. • Get key induction dates into your Calendar - Read the Induction pages for your programme and make sure dates of key activities, sessions, events are in your diary/calendar prior to arrival.
<p>INDUCTION</p> <p>Engage with induction and welcome events for students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student Essentials - Attend one of the 'Student Essentials' briefing session – these provide a really good, accessible introduction to the key things you need to be aware of. • Student Life - Attend one of the Student Life briefing sessions – led by members of the Student Union, these are a really helpful way of quickly understanding what its like to be a student and the things you need to know. Details are available on the Induction webpages for your programme. • Academic induction - Attend the academic induction activities and sessions organised for you by your programme team, and any central briefing sessions like 'Student Essentials'. • Access the Skills for Success Moodle site – Developed by our Learning Development Lecturers and English for Academic Purposes tutors, the Skills for Success Moodle site is there to help you build the skills to enable you to study with confidence and succeed at St Mary's. • Familiarise yourself with the support services available – this includes Student fees, Funding support, Registry, Student Services, the Library, Careers & Employability, Wellbeing and the Learning Development webpages. • Establish contact with your Personal Tutor – all students are allocated a Personal Tutor and they will be in touch with you during the first couple of weeks of your studies. Liaise with them and attend the first meeting at the time agreed. Get in touch with them if you experience any difficulties or need pastoral/academic support.
<p>1ST SEMESTER</p> <p>During your 1st semester at St Mary's</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access Moodle - Access your Programme and Module Moodle sites daily (or at least several times a week). • Keep in touch with your Personal Tutor – attend the 1 to 1, and any small group tutoring sessions they provide. Get to know your Personal Tutor – they will be there to guide and support you through your studies. • Check your St Mary's email account on a daily basis – this will be used to send important information and updates to you, by the University (e.g. the University Newsletter), by your Personal Tutor and by your programme team. • Check the University webpages regularly – i.e. for any important news items or updates. There is a 'News and announcements' feed on the home page available to all student. • Manage your time - so that you allow sufficient time to engage with taught sessions, undertake reading & research for assignments, and the drafting of assessments. Block out time to engage with your programme of study effectively. Access the time management guidance available on the Skills for Success Moodle site. • Exercise your voice as a student – complete module evaluations at the end of the semester, engage with the elected student representatives on your programme, and give feedback to your tutors on your experience – they will always welcome this. • Complete mandatory training modules - Engage with the mandatory training opportunities available to students (e.g. Epigeum Academic Integrity Modules), and value-

	<p>added opportunities like Linked-In learning that enable you to develop your skills, knowledge and behaviours online.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access careers and employability advice and guidance - touch base with the Careers Service. Its never too early to pop in for a chat with our careers advisers.
<p>DURING YOUR STUDIES</p> <p>Throughout your studies at St Mary's thing about the following tips.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend all timetabled teaching sessions – students who attend programme teaching sessions do better than those who do not. Check your timetable regularly. • Make time to engage with key learning resources – this will ensure you are well prepared for class sessions, and maximise your performance in assessments. • Take steps to manage your health and wellbeing – try to eat healthily and access the Wellbeing Service if you feel you need some extra support to maintain your mental health. Use the Self-care Checklist available to manage your wellbeing. • Access counselling support when necessary. • Check your module Moodle sites and St Mary's email account daily – don't miss out on important information. Check out the student News & Announcements feed too. • Look upon your fellow students as partners in a collective learning journey - you have a great deal to learn from each other as well as from your studies and from your tutors. • Use the Extenuating Circumstances policy – if you experience difficulties (e.g. illness, caring commitments, etc) that are likely to impact on your ability to meet assessment deadlines, apply to your Programme Lead for an extension, and check-out the Extenuating Circumstances Policy. • Embrace opportunities for group work and collaborative learning – Building effective working relationships is a crucial and transferable skill for your future career. • Engage with mid-semester and end of semester module evaluations – your feedback will help your tutors to refine and enhance modules and they will tell you afterwards how your feedback has been acted upon. • Engage with your elected programme student representatives – they will be able to communicate additional feedback to the Students Union and/or your programme team. • Play an active part in a Student Union- supported sports club or society – there are dozens to choose from and they are a great way of building your social networks and friendship circle. Check out information on clubs and societies on the Student Union webpages. • Continue to keep in touch with your Personal Tutor – they will always be pleased to hear from you, to learn about your experiences and achievements etc. They are also there to help-out and support you when things occasionally get tough. • Become a peer mentor - If your programme has a peer mentoring scheme, think about applying to become a student mentor – it will help you to develop a range of employability skills, and help you to get to know a wider range of students. • Think about becoming a Student Ambassador – you will be paid whilst gaining valuable work experience and a chance to get to know other students. Or consider volunteering or work placement opportunities. • Other ways of making a contribution to our community - Consider joining EDI (student issues) network and engaging with the Student Voices Panel. • Access the Student Engagement Fund – if you are experiencing financial pressures and think that these are impacting on your ability to engage with extra-curricular activities (e.g. Sports) you can apply to the Student Engagement Fund for financial assistance. • Familiarise yourself with student funding support – any student experiencing severe financial difficulties can apply for support. Check out the Student Financial Support pages. • Access online Study Support Resources provided by Student Services – Student Services provide a Handbook which will be helpful during a period of remote study. • Access Student Study Support when you need to – a range of support is provided, including EAP support for students with English as a second language. The Library also provides a range of study support resources. • If you experience technical difficulties - check out the Student Self-Help pages, pop into the Student Hub, or e mail the Helpdesk: helpdesk@stmarys.ac.uk • Remember to have fun! – Uni isn't all about study; its also a great opportunity to have fun, try new things, do sport, etc.