



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

# QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT HANDBOOK 2021-22

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Note: Where this Handbook refers to 'students' it is taken to mean all those students who come under the regulation of the Office for Students or a designated quality body, including apprentices.

"Courses" and "Programme" has been referred interchangeably throughout the document to denote programme of study.

## **PART 1 - RESPONSIBILITY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY**

### **1. The roles of University staff in Quality and Standards**

#### **1.1 Overall responsibility for Quality and Standards**

Overall responsibility for Quality and Standards is vested in the Academic Board, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor. Strategic responsibility for Quality and Standards resides with the Provost, The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee ([QAEC](#)) recommends to the Academic Development Committee ([ADC](#)) decisions relating to quality standards and enhancement. The Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee ([CPSC](#)) reports to the QAEC. Operational management of Quality and Standards is the responsibility of the Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships, and the Dean of Learning and Teaching, who are supported by the staff of the Quality and Standards Office in the Centre for Teaching Excellence and Student Success.

The Quality and Standards Managers are responsible for quality assurance and enhancement activities such as programme validation and revalidation, programme modification and module modification processes, programme monitoring, and external examiner administration, although each Manager has areas of particular expertise.

Collaborative Provision and Partnership activities, such as approval and development of new partnerships and programmes, modifications and annual review and monitoring is undertaken by a dedicated Collaborative Provision Quality and Standards Manager.

#### **1.2 The role of the Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships, and the Quality and Standards Office**

The Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships oversees the operation of the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement policies and procedures. The Quality and Standards team is represented on the Academic Development Committee by the Dean of Learning and Teaching, which is the Senior Committee responsible to the Academic Board for the implementation of Quality Assurance and Enhancement policies and procedures.

The Quality and Standards Managers supports academic and professional services staff in the implementation of Quality Assurance and Enhancement processes, and is responsible for co-ordinating of the following:

- New and existing programme development and approval;
- New module development and modifications to existing modules;
- Programme modifications;
- Programme monitoring evaluation;
- Recruiting and appointing external validation panel members;

- Recruiting, managing and appointing external examiners;
- Oversight of new and existing collaborative partnerships and programmes delivered collaboratively.

1.2.1 To help ensure effective oversight of the above, Quality and Standards Managers fulfil several Committee responsibilities, including membership of the Faculty and Institute Academic Development Committees (FADC/IADC). Quality and Standards Managers also act as Secretaries to programme approval Panels.

1.2.2 All academic and professional services staff contribute to the delivery of a high-quality student experience. All staff are responsible for contributing to academic quality and standards by ensuring that their professional knowledge and skills are up to date. For academic staff, this encompasses current developments with their subject, pedagogy, the requirements of relevant professional statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and subject benchmark statements. It may also extend to support for research and professional practice. The Centre for Teaching Excellence and Student Success (CTESS) supports academic and professional services staff to maintain and develop the currency of their knowledge and skills through a range of professional development opportunities, such as through achieving fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

More information at the University's staff development framework can be found here: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/ctess/academic-development/overview.aspx>

### **1.3 Quality Assurance and Enhancement is distributed across different levels within each Faculty and Institute.**

- **Module Convenors** are responsible for the administration of their individual modules and for Quality Assurance and Enhancement of the module.
- **Subject Leads and Course Leads** are responsible for the administration of an academic programme, and for its monitoring and evaluation, to ensure a cohesive learning experience for students as they progress through a programme of study.
- **Heads of Department** are responsible for a suite of programmes, to manage the strategic direction of a portfolio of programmes and the staff who deliver teaching across the portfolio.
- **Faculty Dean / Directors of Institutes** are responsible for the quality and standards of programmes within their Faculty/Institutes and for ensuring that there are appropriate structures to consider quality issues within them. They also maintain oversight of financial and staff resources to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities.
- **Associate Deans for Student Experience** have strategic responsibility for Quality Assurance and Enhancement across a portfolio of programmes and provide advice and guidance to the Dean of Faculty or Head of Institute for the strategic development of Quality Assurance and Enhancement activities.

1.4 Heads of Professional Services and their staff, including the Library, Technology Enhanced Learning, Research Services, Marketing, Finance and Estates, make a key contribution to Quality Assurance and Enhancement, such as supporting new programme developments and programme modifications.

## **2 The roles of University Committees in Quality Assurance and Enhancement**

Together with student representatives, staff at all levels of the University are represented on University Committees.

2.1 **Academic Board** is ultimately responsible for academic programmes including their development, approval and the oversight of their Quality and Standards. To aid the Board in this responsibility, standing Committees deal with academic programmes and related issues.

2.2 **Academic Development Committee (ADC)** is responsible to the Academic Board for the implementation of Quality and Standards policies and procedures, and to advise the Board on action which should be taken in response to issues raised. It delegates decision making on issues of Quality and Standards to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC). The ADC is responsible for the ongoing enhancement of teaching and learning through the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and works with Faculties and Institutes to promote systematic enhancement activities. The committee receives recommendations on all proposals for validation and review, the appointment of external examiners; and documentation relating to Quality and Standards processes via QAEC.

2.3 The **Ethics Sub-Committee** is responsible for promoting ethical behaviour in all aspects of the curriculum and associated activities. It facilitates research and teaching activities while protecting voluntary participants from possible harm and protecting their rights. The Committee will also consider and approve specific representations and research protocols submitted to it by any member of staff or student, or representative of certain approved external bodies.

2.4 **Faculty and Institute Academic Development Committees (FADC /IADCs)** consider issues relating to Quality and Standards at local level, and are the initial approving bodies for new modules, module modifications, new programmes and revalidations prior to their formal overview and approval by the QAEC, ADC and Academic Board. The membership of each FADC / IADC includes representation from the Quality and Standards Managers, who participates as a full member of the Committee. All programme staff must ensure they are aware of their FADC /IADC, its procedures and meeting dates. FADC /IADC are Chaired by the Associate Dean for Student Experience with support from a Secretary from the relevant Faculty/Institute.

2.5 **The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC)** considers, advises, develops and reports on all aspects of quality assurance and enhancement in line with the Quality and Standards Handbook, UK Quality Code, guidance and advice provided by the Quality Assurance Agency, University policy and procedure and other sector-wide guidance and requirements. In line with the University's Governance structure, and prior to wider dissemination, QAEC is

responsible for considering feedback from students, and academic and professional services colleagues. Working within a culture of continuous improvement, the sub-Committee makes recommendations to ADC about the development of Quality Assurance and Enhancement initiatives, policy and practice. QAEC serves to develop for ADC approval, and in respect of the University's taught and collaborative programme provision, a strategic approach to enhancing the quality of teaching provision and student learning experience.

**2.6 Collaborative Provision and Enhancement Committee (CPSC)** oversees and monitors all institutional collaborative arrangements at St Mary's that fall within the scope of the UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance: Partnerships. The Committee considers, scrutinises and evaluates all proposals for the delivery of collaborative provision, following the approval of an Initial Proposal to the Senior Management Team. The Committee provides an Institutional report containing a review of St Mary's institutional partnership activities to QAEC, to ensure that St Mary's may have confidence in the arrangements for the assurance of Academic Quality and Standards for St Mary's awards delivered by Institutional partners. The Committee works to identify ways in which the St Mary's Collaborative Partnerships Strategy and associated processes can be enhanced and made more efficient, and to identify enhancements that will help the University to extract maximum value from new and existing partnerships, whilst also ensuring that Partnerships which are providing declining value are terminated in a timely and efficient manner.

**2.7 The Student Experience and Enhancement Committees (SEEC)** primary focus is to consider, advise, develop and report on all aspects of teaching and learning that contribute to the enhancement of the student experience, retention and satisfaction. The Committee is responsible for considering feedback from students, and academic and professional services colleagues. Working within a culture of continuous improvement, the sub-Committee makes recommendations to the University's Academic Development Committee about the development of good practice activities, policies and initiatives which enhance the student experience.

### **3 Postgraduate Research degrees**

**3.1** Overall management of Quality and Standards, relating to the programmes, lies with the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), which is Chaired by the Provost and includes Postgraduate Research Leads for each Faculty/Institute. RDC reports to the University Research Committee, which is Chaired by the Provost and has representatives from the postgraduate research student community, research leads from the Faculty and Institutes, the Head of Research Services and other Professional Services leads.

**3.2** Coordination of Quality and Standards for programmes at the Faculty/Institute level, is undertaken by Postgraduate Research Leads who work with research supervisors to ensure the required standards of each programme are satisfied. Student admission, progression and

completion is overseen by Faculty/Institute Research Committees who feed into the University Research Degrees Committee.

3.3 The Code of Practice for Research Degrees programmes sets out St Mary's policy and procedural framework relating to doctoral study provision undertaken at St Mary's University. The aims of this Code are:

- to ensure that research students at St Mary's are effectively supervised so that the full potential of their research ability may be achieved and their research completed within an appropriate period;
- to ensure that students and staff have a common understanding of their respective roles and responsibilities;
- to promote policies and procedures which protect the academic standards of the University.

Further information detailing the academic supervision, administration, and assessment of research degrees within St Mary's University is provided here:

<https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/research/degree-students/overview.aspx>

## **PART 1 INTERNAL REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

### **4. Key documents and governing procedures**

4.1 Programmes are governed by the University's Internal Regulatory Framework for the assurance of Quality and Standards, which is set out by the following core documents:

- Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook (this document)
- Academic Regulations
- Assessment Policy
- Programme Specifications
- Module outlines
- Learning and Teaching Strategy 2021-2026
- Admissions Policy
- Appeals and Complaints Policies and Procedures

4.2 The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook defines the processes governing the design, approval, evaluation and review of academic programmes, and outlines the University's framework for Collaborative Provision arrangements.

4.3 The Academic Regulations sets out the University's modular framework and the regulations and procedures for admissions, modes of study, registration, progression, and the determination of awards. Any specific undergraduate and taught postgraduate programme-level requirements (concerning, for example, pre-requisite modules, pathway structures, core/option areas, credit and progression, and the content/structure of undergraduate Joint Honours routes) are set out in the Programme Specifications which are reviewed and updated each academic year and are available on the university website publicly.

4.4 The Assessment Policy provides information on the ways in which St Mary's undertakes to assess its students, and the principles which underpin these. This policy also provides an outline of the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in the assessment of students and provides an agreed Tariff on assignments of different types at each FHEQ level.

4.5 All of the components of the University's Internal Regulatory Framework for the assurance of Quality and Standards have been mapped to the expectations of the UK Quality Code and are subject to regular review and updating.



## **5. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Office for Students (OfS)**

5.1 Quality and Standards in English Higher Education is governed by the Office for Students (OfS), England's Regulator for Higher Education. This Regulatory Body sets and consults on initial and ongoing conditions of Registration that universities require to maintain access to Student Finance and University status. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has been assigned as the Designated Quality Body (DQB) by the OfS, who engage in quality review activities as requested by the OfS. The QAA developed the UK Quality Code for Higher Education in partnership with the UK academic community, which provides advice and guidance for monitoring quality standards across the English Higher Education sector. The following is adapted from the QAA, and the pages on the UK Quality Code.

5.2 The revised Quality code was developed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) on behalf of the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) in consultation with the higher education (HE) sector. "The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is the UK's designated quality body, appointed by the Office for Students (OfS) following governmental reformation of Higher Education regulation. The QAA are entrusted with monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education. Central to the QAA's work of assuring standards and quality is the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which sets out the expectations all providers of UK higher education are required to meet. It gives all higher education providers a shared starting point for setting, describing and assuring the academic standards of their higher education awards and programmes and the quality of the learning opportunities they provide. The UK Quality Code is the core reference point used in all QAA review activity".

5.3 The UK Quality Code has been revised following sector changes to Higher Education regulation, and the QAA has worked with stakeholders from across Higher Education providers to develop each aspect in line with sector defined standards. The Quality Code Framework consists of Expectations, Core practices and Common practices supported by Advice and Guidance across the following areas:

- Admissions, Recruitment and Widening Access
- Assessment
- Concerns, Complaints and Appeals
- Course Design and Development
- Enabling Student Achievement
- External Expertise
- Learning and Teaching
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Partnerships
- Research Degrees
- Student Engagement
- Work-Based Learning

The Quality Code also includes the Qualifications and Credit Frameworks, and the Subject Benchmark Statements. Higher education providers apply the UK Quality Code in designing and delivering programmes of study and use it to design their respective policies for maintaining academic standards and quality. QAA reviewers use it as the main reference point for their review work.

5.4 Key sections of the Quality Code are used by the University in the setting and maintaining of academic standards (in particular, through programme development, validation and review), are as follows:

- **The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)** describes the knowledge and skills expected of students on successful completion of each level of HE study;
- **Qualification Characteristics Statements** define the requirements for HE qualifications at each level;
- **The Higher Education Credit Framework for England** describes the credit requirements for awards at each level of HE study;
- **Subject Benchmark Statements** inform the aims, learning outcomes and content of modules and programmes. They describe the knowledge and skills expected of a graduate in the relevant subject.

5.5 Course Design and Development Advice and Guidance includes Guiding Principle 6 - Course design, development and approval processes result in definitive course documents:

- The awarding body designs and approves its own course specifications. A common approach and format is typical across a provider. These documents constitute the approved definition of a course and module, which should contain sufficient information for stakeholders about intended aims and learning outcomes and about the approach to teaching, learning and assessment. Related documentation, such as prospectuses, institutional websites and other marketing information should be derived and updated with respect to this definitive documentation and adhere to the legal requirements around provision of information.
- Awarding body procedures may state that definitive course documentation cannot be changed following final approval, and prior to the course commencing. Changes after approval should require modification through the formal process. An awarding body 'owns' the definitive documentation, making it accessible for stakeholders and ensuring version control.
- At St Mary's University, definitive records are referred to as Programme Specifications. The University's requirements for approval documents includes the preparation of a programme specification.

5.6 The University has progressively considered the expectations of the UK Quality Code, as new Advice and Guidance has been published, ensuring that its policies and procedures meet the relevant expectations. The QAEC continues to monitor changes and developments relating to

the UK Quality Code, and sector wide good practice, to inform an approach of continuous reflection and enhancement.

## **6. Programme Development, Validation and Re-Validation**

Guidance and relevant templates referred to below are available on the following Quality and Standards webpage:

<https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/ctess/Q&S/validations-and-re-validations.aspx>

### **6 Pre-validation**

6.1 A proposal, whether for a new programme or revalidation of an existing one, should be discussed within the Faculty or Institute, with minutes kept of such discussions, and must be congruent with the Faculty or Institute overall strategic plan. General matters of quality assurance and procedure regarding the proposal should also be discussed with the Quality and Standards Office.

6.2 Each Institute/Faculty, Collaborative Provision and Academic Partnerships has a designated Quality and Standards Manager who can advise academic staff on the guidelines and procedures for programme development, validation and revalidation. It is vital that you keep in close contact with your designated Quality and Standards Manager from the start of the development. Ideally, you should provide the Quality and Standards Office with sections of your draft proposal as they are written. This approach enables the Quality and Standards Office to provide ongoing advice as the proposal is developed.

### **6.3 Timescales for recruitment purposes**

It is important to bear in mind that programmes must be planned in good time for them to be advertised and for the minimum cohort to be recruited. For undergraduate programmes, it is good practice if this is two years ahead of the start date to ensure enough students can be recruited. Recent shifts in the Higher Education landscape and strategic priorities of the University have meant that a more agile response is required. The process guidance on the [Quality and Standards re/validation webpage](#) indicates that proposals should be received by the Faculty/Institute Academic Development sub-Committees by the end of the previous academic year.<sup>1</sup>

6.4 For a new undergraduate programme to be included in the University's prospectus, the proposal must normally have been approved by the relevant Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee two years before the intended start date. While Foundation

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<sup>1</sup> The recruitment cycle can be considerably shorter in relation to apprenticeships if the employer/sector has apprentices ready to start, and so the lead time from approval to delivery can shorter.

degree and Level 7 programmes are not subject to the same strict cycle as UCAS-coded undergraduate programmes, it is still advisable to plan and gain approval for them as far as possible in advance. Please note that it can be very problematic for programme teams and the professional support teams involved in validations if the proposals are submitted late in the cycle and/or close to their intended start dates. It can also adversely affect marketing and recruitment, and therefore should be avoided as far as possible.

- 6.5 Any proposals which are advertised in the prospectus or in other recruitment literature prior to validation may only be included with the flag 'subject to validation'. No offers of places may be made until the proposed programme has been validated. In order to ensure that the validation event is carried out in a timely fashion, it will normally occur no later than May for commencement of a new programme the following September. Please ensure your proposal is timed in order to meet the schedules outlined above. Please check with the Quality and Standards Office if you are unsure.

## **7 Issues to consider when designing a new programme or reviewing and existing programme**

- 7.1 Several documents providing guidance on issues that you should consider when designing or undertaking a programme re/validation are available on [Quality and Standards re/validation webpage](#).
- 7.2 Important considerations include the following:
- Strategic and portfolio alignment: How does the programme reflect the University Mission and Corporate Plan, and relevant Faculty/Institute plans?
  - Quality Assurance: Levels of study, programme content and learning outcomes must be appropriate for the discipline and congruent with relevant sections of the UK Quality Code.
  - Retention and progression: Programme design, curriculum content and structure enabling student engagement and progression throughout years of study (Foundation degree proposals must demonstrate how students will progress to BA/BSc level)
  - Programme coherency: Overall balance, coherence of content and structure.
  - Programme viability: Feasibility of intake/delivery and resources required such as staffing.
  - Mode of delivery: Where flexible forms of online, distance or blended learning are to feature significantly, these must achieve the same quality of learning opportunities as face to face and or on-campus delivery.
  - Overall assessment rationale and strategy for the programme aligned to relevant standards, policies and regulations.

- Inclusive Curriculum: Equality and diversity, in terms of practices, procedures and demographic but also in terms of programme content – how do modules address the relevant issues?
- Ethical considerations: in terms of practices and procedures but also in terms of programme content – how do modules cover ethics?

### 7.3 Mapping to external reference points

7.3.1 The UK Quality Code: Programmes should consider the expectations of the UK Quality Code, including the FHEQ qualification descriptors and Subject Benchmark Statements. A programme specification and accompanying curriculum map are required.

7.3.2 SEEC Credit Level Descriptors: Programme design and development at St Mary's also draws on the SEEC Credit Level Descriptors, which provide guidance on setting learning outcomes at each level of study. These enable programme proposers to consider outcomes in terms of areas such as knowledge and understanding, cognitive skills, performance and practice and personal/enabling skills.

As well as supporting and guiding programme designers, these descriptors (when clearly set out in information given to learners) provide explicit statements about intended skills development and other learning outcomes. Please note that the university no longer requires alignment to the SEEC descriptors within programme documentation, but programme development teams may use them if they find them helpful. The SEEC descriptors can be accessed at <https://seec.org.uk/>

### 7.3.3 Mapping to the requirements of PSRBs and other accrediting bodies

The proposal must also be mapped to the requirements of other relevant external organisations, such as Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies or other accrediting bodies. This should be explicit in the proposal. For guidance on whether this is relevant to your programme, please contact the Quality and Standards Office who maintains a PSRB register for each programme.

7.3.4 Further guidance on mapping to external reference points can be found in the Validation Document template found here: [Quality and Standards re/validation webpage.](#)

## 8 Validation of a new programme

8.1 Proposals for new programmes must be made using the appropriate form, which is available on [Quality and Standards re/validation webpage.](#)

8.2 Please note that the **introduction of a single honours programme** in subjects previously offered as a Joint Honours combination constitutes a new programme validation and must therefore follow the normal validation procedures.

## **9 Revalidation of an existing programme**

- 9.1 The normal validation period for a programme is five years, therefore the programme must normally be revalidated during its fifth year of delivery. The Head of Q&S maintains the University's schedule of validations and revalidations and will advise on whether early revalidation, or postponement of revalidation, may be possible.
- 9.2 Proposals for programme revalidations must be made using the appropriate form, which is available on [Quality and Standards re/validation webpage](#).
- 9.3 Where a revalidation proposal concerns the replacement of an existing Joint Honours programme by a new single honours programme, please see 8.2 above.

## **10 Resources for new programmes and modules**

As outlined in the forms referred to in 8.1 and 9.2, it is a requirement that programme proposers discuss programme resource requirements fully with their Head of Department and the following Professional Services teams:

- Library
- Technology Enhanced Learning
- Information Technology
- Estates
- Finance

## **11 University Committee Procedures**

The forms referred to in 8.1 and 9.2 include guidance on the committee approval stages, the steps which follow each of these, and the arrangements for the External validation or revalidation Event which will be made by your designated Quality and Standards Manager.

## **12 Draft validation or revalidation document**

- 12.1 The validation or revalidation document provides full details of the programme, setting out its aims, outcomes, structure, assessment profile and constituent modules. Detailed guidance on the information that should be included in the document and the required format is available on [Quality and Standards re/validation webpage](#).

## **13 The validation and revalidation process**

- 13.1 All programmes, whether validations or revalidations, are subject to external scrutiny as part of the approval process. The validation and revalidation procedures are managed by the Quality and Standards Manager. A Panel is established to consider each proposal<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> In cases where new apprenticeship programmes are being proposed, additional contextual information will be provided to the Panel by the QSM, drawn from the [Governments 'Apprenticeships' website](#).

In certain circumstances, a single panel may consider joint or related validations or revalidations of cognate programmes, usually where there are a significant number of common modules shared by the programmes. In such cases, the Quality and Standards Office may recruit a larger number of external Panel members.

- 13.2 Revalidation of a programme is normally required at least once every five years. The process is similar to that for initial validation in that a one-day event is held, unless otherwise approved by the University's Academic Development Committee, in which case an alternative process determined by the Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships may be substituted. This may, for example, involve review of the proposal and the draft validation or revalidation document by at least two external advisors who will scrutinise and report back on the document using an agreed template.
- 13.3 The revalidation process is informed by data<sup>3</sup> on student progression and achievement, external examiners' reports, programme monitoring reports and the input of students and, where possible, recent graduates. The revalidation process also considers changes to the programme since the initial validation or the last revalidation, whichever is the most recent. It must be clearly stated from the outset whether the revalidated programme will be phased in starting with the new intake in the next academic year (the more usual system), or if it will be applied across all levels for undergraduate programmes (in exceptional cases according to the individual programme's circumstances).
- 13.4 In certain circumstances, a revalidation may be deemed necessary due to accumulation of programme modifications (see modifications section of Quality Handbook). This may occur when a programme is judged to have made serial modifications that amount to a significant change to the content and structure approved since the initial validation or the last revalidation, whichever is the most recent. There is no set formula for what constitutes a significant change; each case will be considered individually by Institutes/Faculty and, if necessary, the relevant Faculty/Institute Academic Development sub-Committees. The Quality and Standards Office maintains a record of all approved programme modifications, and this will be taken into consideration if necessary.
- 13.5 **Membership of validation and revalidation Panels and recruitment of External Advisors**

The composition of validation and revalidation panels is as follows:

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<sup>3</sup> Including QAR data in the case of apprenticeships.

- Panel Chair: A Senior member of University staff such as Director or Dean of Faculty/Institute, Head of Department or, Associate Dean of Student Experience. The Chair should be from a different discipline area to the proposing team.
- Internal Panel member: This can be either a member of staff from the proposing Faculty/Institute, but not from the same discipline area as the proposing team, or from another Faculty/Institute. Ideally, they will have previous experience of being part of an approval Panel.
- External Advisor: This should be an academic subject expert from outside the Institution. If the proposal has a large vocational element (for example, foundation degrees), a second external adviser should be obtained who is able to provide industry or employment relevant expertise.<sup>4</sup> This will be essential – for example – when approving new Apprenticeship programmes, which are closely aligned with employer training needs, and agreed Apprenticeship ‘Standards’.
- Student Advisor: This will normally be a student programme representative, taken from a discipline area which is not the same as the proposing team (although the student may be from the same Faculty/Institute).
- If the proposal is accredited by a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB), a member of the PSRB may need to be present on the Panel. Advice should be sought from the link Quality and Standards Manager.
- Quality and Standards Manager for the relevant Faculty, Institute, Collaborative and Academic Partnership programme.

### 13.6 Nomination and appointment of External Advisors

The proposing programme team will be invited to nominate external advisors, using their knowledge of the discipline and its practitioners. Nominees’ details must be submitted to the Quality and Standards Office ([gateam@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:gateam@stmarys.ac.uk)) and or Manager.

There are some restrictions on who can be nominated; candidates must not have had a connection with the University (such as being an employee, student or external examiner) for at least five years. Re-using former panellists should be avoided as far as possible. The Quality and Standards Office maintains a list of previous advisors and their institutions and may advise that certain Institutions should be avoided if they have frequently been drawn on in recent years.

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<sup>4</sup> Being mindful of any conflict of interest – “client” employers (i.e. those who have been involved in co-designing the apprenticeship) would normally be championing the proposal, rather than being a member of the decision-making panel itself.



When new Apprenticeship programmes are being considered by a panel, representation from professionals from industry or key employers able to comment on the relevance and currency of the proposed training programme is essential.

Completed panel nomination forms must be signed by the Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships and the Provost. This process for the nomination and appointment of External Advisors also applies when validations or revalidations are undertaken via remote review of the proposal and the draft validation or revalidation document, as described above.

13.7 For guidance and briefing notes on the following, please refer to the

[Quality and Standards re/validation webpage.](#)

- Validation/Revalidation Documents
- Validation/Revalidation Event Procedures and outcomes

#### **14 Programme and module modifications, including new modules**

14.1 Procedures for the development and approval of programme and module modifications, including the introduction of new modules, can be found on the [Quality and Standards modification webpage.](#)

For all types of modification, you are encouraged to seek advice and guidance in the first instance from the Quality and Standards Office ([gateam@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:gateam@stmarys.ac.uk)).

14.2 Modifications are usually made in response to feedback from key stakeholders, changes within professional body requirements, or as a result of developments within the academic discipline.

Modifications can either be at programme level or at module level. Programme level modifications result in changes to the programme specification published to key stakeholders such as current and prospective students. Module level modifications mainly result in changes to module learning outcomes and assessments detailed in a module outline.

14.3 Examples of programme and module modifications are as follows:

Programme modifications

- Programme learning outcomes and associated curriculum content
- Programme mode of study (e.g. full-time or part-time)
- Change or introduction of programme start dates (e.g. introduction of January start)
- Programme mode of delivery (e.g. online or blended learning)

- Programme specific regulations (normally as a result of PSRB requirements)
- Status of module from core to optional or vice versa
- The introduction, withdrawal, or replacement of core and or optional modules. This includes new, existing and cross-validated/ shared modules.
- The credit value or level of modules
- Module titles
- Semester of delivery

#### Module modifications

- Module learning outcomes and associate curriculum content
- Module assessment methods, assessment weightings, assessment type(s) or assessment criteria
- Module mode of delivery (e.g. from face to face to distance learning mode)
- Module pre and or co-requisites

14.4 A new module is defined as one that introduces new and previously unvalidated curriculum content to the programme or award, whether core or optional, and at any level of study.

### **15 Approval of short courses and summer schools**

15.1 The procedures described above for the development and approval of new modules should also be followed in the development and approval of short courses including summer schools. For further guidance, please contact the Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships.

## **PART 2 MEMBERSHIP AND OPERATION OF PANEL EVENTS**

16. The Programme Approval and Re-approval process both require an External Advisor to be appointed for the Panel Event.
- 16.1 The proposing programme team is normally the academic team responsible for the development of the programme. In some cases, the team may include staff from different departments who have collaborated to bring new course proposals forward for approval.
- 16.2 In the case of new apprenticeship programmes, the proposing programme team will include a representative<sup>5</sup> from the employer organisation who has assisted or collaborated in the design of the apprenticeship and ensuring that it is aligned with the relevant apprenticeship standard. Apprenticeships rely on a process of co-creation and partnerships with employers and input from the partner employer is therefore central to the process.
- 16.3 The proposing programme team will be invited to nominate external advisors, using their knowledge of the discipline and its practitioners. Nominees will typically have a strong working knowledge of UK higher education, and experience in the delivery and design of programmes in higher education. In cases where the panel is considering a highly vocational programme – for example an apprenticeship programme – it is essential that an experienced professional from industry or an employer with experience of similar types of programmes is also appointed.
- 16.4 Nominees' details must be submitted to the Quality and Standards Office on the external advisor nomination form. There are some restrictions on who can be nominated; candidates must not have had a connection with the University (such as being an employee, student or external examiner) for at least five years. Re-using former panellists should be avoided as far as possible. Any queries about the suitability of potential candidates should be discussed with the relevant Quality and Standards Manager.
- 16.5 The Quality and Standards Office maintains a list of previous advisors and their Institutions and may advise that certain institutions should be avoided if they have frequently been drawn on in recent years.
- 16.6 Completed panel nomination forms must be signed by the Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships and the Provost.
- 16.7 Panel members scrutinise the documentation developed during the programme approval of re-validation processes. Their role is to ensure that new programmes or those undergoing re-validation will ensure a high standard of student experience, at

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<sup>5</sup> More than 1 employer may be included at a panel event if more than one has been involved, for example, in designing the programme for an apprenticeship. It is also permissible to have more than 1 employer on the decision-making panel itself where this might be helpful.

least commensurate with that of other UK higher education institutions, and that the curriculum, assessment, learning and teaching strategies, staff development opportunities and resourcing are appropriate for the programme. They also ensure that the programme is designed in accordance with internal policy and practice, and considers appropriate sector-wide guidance (e.g. OfS, FHEQ&S, UK Quality Code, Subject Benchmark Statements). Members of the Panel may have specific area of expertise (for example, as experienced members of St Mary's staff, or external professional expertise) to guide their approach and focus of scrutiny.

16.8 The composition of validation and revalidation panels is as follows:

- Chair – A senior member of University staff such as a Dean of Faculty, Associate Dean, Head of Institute, or Department Head. The Chair should be from a different discipline area to the proposing team.
- Internal Panel member - This can be either a member of staff from the proposing Faculty or Institute, but not from the same discipline area as the proposing team, or from another Faculty or Institute. Ideally, they will have previous experience of being part of an approval Panel.
- External adviser – This should be an academic subject expert from outside the institution. If the proposal has a large vocational element (for example, foundation degrees), a second external adviser should be obtained who is able to provide industry-relevant expertise, and experience of similar types of programmes. In the case of Apprenticeship programmes it is essential that the external adviser has experience of supporting apprenticeships and apprentices within their organisation.
- Student Panel member – This will normally be a student programme representative, taken from a discipline area which is not the same as the proposing team (although the student may be from the same Faculty or Institute).
- If the proposal is accredited by a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB), a member of the PSRB may need to be present on the Panel. Advice should be sought from the relevant Quality and Standards Manager.
- Panel Officer and Secretary – This will normally be the relevant Quality and Standards Manager.

16.9 Internal Panel Members, External Advisors, Student Reviewers and PSRB members are provided with a feedback template to complete to provide feedback. The external and student panel members may be asked to sign a Confidentiality Statement, where necessary. The relevant Quality and Standards Manager will agree a deadline by which this must be returned, to ensure that the Chair can manage the Panel event in a timely and professional manner.

16.10 The outcomes of the Panel Meeting for Programme Approval/Re-approval are articulated as conditions, recommendations and commendations, defined as follows:

- Conditions are aspects of the programme design, resourcing etc. which must be altered before a programme is approved or re-approved in case of re-validations.
  - Recommendations are aspects of the programme design, resourcing etc. which if altered would further enhance the quality of the overall programme. They do not have to be altered before final approval, although it is good practice for them to be considered seriously by the programme team.
  - Commendations are acknowledgements of good practice relating to the programme design that the Panel wish to highlight to the programme proposer.
- 16.11 The outcome of the Panel event is agreed between the Quality and Standards Manager and the Panel Chair, and then formally communicated in writing to the lead programme proposer after the Panel event.
- 16.12 The Quality and Standards Manager co-ordinates the receipt of evidence and responses to the Panel event outcome from the programme proposer and programme team. They liaise with the Chair to ensure that all conditions have been addressed. The Chair will confirm when this has happened to their satisfaction.
- 16.13 A report of the event is written by the Quality and Standards Manager, and presented via the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) to Academic Development Committee (ADC) and then noted by Academic Board. This process must be complete prior to the delivery of the programme commencing.
- 16.14 A record of the event, panel outcomes and the finalised, approved programme documentation is stored by the Quality and Standards Office.

## PART 3: MODIFICATIONS PROCESS

### 17 Programme and module modifications

- 17.1 A modification is defined as the process by which changes can be made to existing programmes or modules associated with that programme. Programmes can be modified on a yearly basis within its revalidation cycle. Programmes are revalidated for a period of up to 5 years.
- 17.2 Modifications are proposed by the programme lead who keeps oversight of the changes. Proposed changes are usually made in response to feedback from key stakeholders, changes within professional body requirements or as a result of developments within the academic discipline.<sup>6</sup>
- 17.3 All proposed changes involve a process of consultation and clear communication with all key stakeholders such as students, external examiners, professional bodies and collaborative partners. Stakeholders involvement should be appropriate to the scope of change(s) being proposed.
- 17.4 The modifications process and timescales for proposals apply to all undergraduate, postgraduate, collaborative, credit bearing short courses and summer school provision.
- 17.5 Examples of **programme** modifications may include changes to:
- Programme learning outcomes and associated curriculum content
  - Programme mode of study (e.g. full-time or part-time)
  - Change or introduction of programme start dates (e.g. introduction of January start)
  - Programme mode of delivery (e.g. online or blended learning)
  - Programme specific regulations (normally as a result of PSRB requirements)
  - Status of a module from core to optional or vice versa
  - The introduction, withdrawal or replacement of core and or optional module(s). This includes new, existing and cross-validated/ shared module(s).
  - The credit value or level of modules
  - Module titles
  - Semester of delivery

Examples of **module** modifications may include changes to:

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<sup>6</sup> Apprenticeship 'standards' are reviewed and revised on a periodic basis, and this could be another reason to adapt a module.

- Module learning outcomes and associate curriculum content
- Module assessment methods, assessment weightings, assessment type(s) or assessment criteria
- Module primary mode of delivery (e.g. from face to face to distance learning mode)
- Module pre and or co-requisites

Cumulative and or significant changes may indicate that the programme may instead require a formal revalidation. Staff are encouraged to consult with the relevant Quality and Standards Manager for advice and guidance on this and any aspect of the modifications process.

In the case of apprenticeship programmes, it is important that programme teams consult with Quality and Standards, and with the employer who has advised or collaborated in the design of the apprenticeship to ensure that any changes are supported by them, and are aligned with the relevant apprenticeship standard.<sup>7</sup>

17.6 The modifications process excludes [programme interruptions or programme closures, changes to or introduction of a new programme award title](#), changes being proposed which are not in line with key University Quality Assurance policies, Regulations and Frameworks.

17.7 There is an external requirement for HE Providers to be transparent in our communication about a programme’s content, additional costs or anything essential for deciding about where to study. Essential information must be accurate, timely and consistent across all communication channels. This means that modifications must be proposed, approved and communicated in line with the requirements of the Consumer Marketing Authority (CMA):

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers>

The CMA realises that some of these “essential” information previously communicated might need to change during the course of study; allowing for this we must provide clear and upfront information about changes that might occur and when changes do occur communicate this promptly. (For example, the circumstances in which an advertised module might not be available to them during their studies). Please contact the Quality and Standards team for further advice and guidance on CMA requirements.

## 18. Preparing for and submitting a modification

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<sup>7</sup> It is possible that in the future non-apprenticeship courses may be converted to apprenticeships. E.g. the BA Business Management could become the degree element of the Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship. This type of change could also go through the programme modification process.

- 18.1 Initial discussions - Proposals must first be discussed and agreed in consultation with relevant programme team(s), including the programme leads where module(s) are shared or have been cross-validated for delivery on another programme. The changes must then be described by completing a [modifications proposal form](#).
- 18.2 Completion of modification paperwork – A completed modification proposal form must be completed and submitted together with supporting documents showing consultation, where applicable, with key stakeholders such as students, external examiners, collaborative partners, and professional bodies (PSRBs). In the cases of modifications to modules or a programme of study relating to an apprenticeship, it is also important to ensure that the module team consult and secure the support of the employer who has advised or collaborated in the design of the apprenticeship (where this is possible). It is also essential that the programme team check that any modifications are compliant with and aligned with the relevant apprenticeship ‘Standard’.

An updated version of the **programme specification and/or module outline(s) must be submitted** indicating the proposed modification on these documents using tracked changes. To maintain version control, please ensure that the tracked changes are incorporated into the last approved version of the programme specification and or module outline documents:

Copies of the last approved programme specification are available on the St Mary’s webpages in the following location:

<https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/ctess/qs/programme-specifications.aspx>

- 18.3 Obtaining signatures – As part of the modification’s approvals process, signatures from internal key stakeholders (Finance, Library Services, TEL, Information Technology (IT), Estates and Facilities/ Timetabling) are required.

To assist with obtaining these signatures in a timely way, the Quality and Standards will organise two key stakeholders meeting in December and January. The purpose of these meetings is for programme leads to discuss proposed modifications with key stakeholders and to assist with obtaining the required signatures ahead of submission to the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC) for Committee approval.

If you would like assistance with obtaining the required signatures from these internal key stakeholders, programme leads are advised to upload all completed modification paperwork (noted in section 2.3 above) in good time and, prior to the key stakeholders meeting to the following Quality and Standards OneDrive modifications folder. Details are available from [gateam@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:gateam@stmarys.ac.uk). Please notify the relevant Quality and Standards Manager once the upload has been completed.



Colleagues from Professional Services teams (Finance, Library Services, TEL, Information Technology (IT), Estates and Facilities/ Timetabling) will be invited to attend the meeting and can view the proposal ahead of the meeting. Colleagues from the SITS team and Registry will also be invited to attend, as required.

Programme leads are advised to prioritise programme level modifications (examples listed above) for the December's key stakeholders meeting so that changes of a more structural nature can be promptly communicated to prospective applicants in the newly approved programme specifications document and aligned to key recruitment dates and deadlines. Please see CMA guidance below.

If you are not able to submit the modification paperwork to the December or January key stakeholders meetings, then please instead submit directly to the Chair and Secretary of the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (IADC) with the signatures you have sought to obtain from the required key stakeholders. Please note that this must be done no later than by the paper deadline for February IADC meeting.

- 18.4 Key deadlines - The University modifications deadline for F/IADC approved modifications is **28 February**. These will be for implementation in the next academic year. Please be mindful that the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC) paper deadline may be set before this date. The Secretary to F/IADC can advise you of the February F/IADC paper deadline or alternatively please see the [University's online combined calendar](#).

Completed modification proposals and supporting documents should be sent to the Secretary of the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC) for Committee approval by the February paper deadline.

- 18.5 Submission to F/IADC - On obtaining the relevant signatures at the modification meeting, the programme lead is responsible for submission of the finalised proposed modification paperwork and supporting documents to the Secretary and Chair of Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC).

Please be advised that proposals may not be considered in the following circumstances:

- Incomplete/ missing modification form;
- The IADC deadline has passed;
- Incomplete /missing supporting documents and or information. This includes revised programme specifications for all programmes affected by the proposed change(s), revised module outline(s), appropriate signatures and evidence of

consultation with relevant key stakeholders. In the case of apprenticeships, it is important that modifications include consultation with employer partners.

- 18.6 Committee approved proposals will be effective from the start of the **next** academic session (for example, a modification submitted and approved by the end of February 2022 will come into effect from the 2022-23 academic year).
- 18.7 In exceptional cases, module modifications made in response to feedback from external examiners or as a result of changes within professional body requirements or apprenticeship 'Standards' can be considered by the Chair of the relevant Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC).
- 18.8 Retrospective/ in-year modifications (i.e. seeking for approval for the last or current academic year) will not normally be considered unless it is in response to a professional body requirement. An academic rationale must be clearly evidenced and submitted to the relevant Quality and Standards Manager and the Chair of the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC).

## **19. Considering and Approving modifications**

- 19.1 The programme lead is responsible for preparation and submission of the proposed modification paperwork to the relevant Secretary and Chair of the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC).
- 19.2 Members of the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC) are asked to consider the following:
- Overall academic coherency and relevance;
  - Compliance with, or alignment with [QAA subject benchmarks](#);
  - Learning outcomes are of an appropriate standard;
  - Teaching and learning methods are appropriate;
  - Assessment methods and weightings for modules are appropriate and comply with the requirements set out in relevant [Assessment Policy](#) and [Academic Regulations](#);
  - Assessment design, materials and support are appropriately resourced;
  - The student experience which encompasses approaches and enhancements to ensure a cohesive and inclusive academic experience.
  - Issues of Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and [Widening Participation](#)
  - Resources
  - In the case of apprenticeships - Alignment with the relevant [Apprenticeship 'Standard'](#)
- 19.2.1 In considering the proposal, members of the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC) can make the following decisions:

- Approve the proposal;
- Reject the proposal and require that it be revised and resubmitted for further consideration at a future meeting or via Chair's action;
- Approve subject to minor amendments and require this to be checked and approved via Chair's action.

19.3 The minutes from the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC) formally records the discussion, recommendations and outcome of proposed modifications.

Quality and Standards Managers are responsible for keeping oversight of all approved modifications and communicating the Committee's decision to the wider Academic and Professional Services community to include where applicable, Collaborative partners. Quality and Standards Managers are also responsible publication of the approved programme specification and or module outline(s) to all key stakeholders.

The SITS Data Officer is responsible for updates to relevant SITS programme, module and assessment records liaising with relevant Professional Services teams as needed to ensure ongoing integrity and accuracy of systems records.

The relevant programme lead is responsible for liaising with all Institute and Professional Services teams to ensure that resources are in place in good time prior to implementation of the approved modification. The relevant programme lead is also responsible for ensuring students have access to clear, accurate and timely information at all stages of their educational experience.

19.4 To ensure that a programme is not significantly modified between re/validations, an oversight of cumulative changes will be monitored by the relevant Quality and Standards Manager. Please contact the [Quality and Standards team](#) for further advice and guidance (details below).

## 20. **Consumer Marketing Authority (CMA) guidance for Higher Education Providers**

20.1 On registration with the Office for Students, all Higher Education Institutions completed a self-assessment showing how they've given due regard to guidance about how to comply with consumer law. Advice for helping Higher Education providers understand the responsibilities under consumer protection law when dealing with students is published on [Gov.uk](#) in the following location:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/higher-education-consumer-law-advice-for-providers>

20.2 The modifications process had been revised and informed by CMA requirements, specifically in relation to access of accurately published information about a programme's content and structure to enable key stakeholders such as prospective and current students to make a well-informed choice about their programme of study.

## **21. Key contacts**

21.1 The Associate Deans of Student Experience (ADSEs) are Chair to Faculty/ Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC).

21.2 Quality and Standards Managers can be contacted to provide advice on key aspects of the modifications process [gateam@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:gateam@stmarys.ac.uk).

## PART 4 COLLABORATIVE PROVISION

### 22. Collaboration with other institutions or organisations

22.1 This section sets out the quality and standards framework for collaborative provision at St Mary's University. It is designed for use by staff of the University and collaborative institutions with students registered for St Mary's awards. It also applies to placement learning, apprenticeships, study abroad and any other learning opportunities where these are a requirement for students' fulfilment of programme and/or module Learning Outcomes. The University's procedures for collaborative provision have been aligned with UK Quality Code.

22.2 The University's Collaborative Partnerships Strategy sets out the scope for collaborative activity and outlines criteria for maintaining and developing partnerships. It should be read by any individual or organisation external to St Mary's who is seeking to develop partnership working with the University. It should also be consulted by St Mary's staff, Faculties and Departments who may be considering the development of new partnerships.<sup>8</sup>

22.3 The University's Quality and Standards procedures apply to both on-campus and collaborative provision. Collaborative institutions are required to co-operate with the University's requirements in respect of the Quality and Standards procedures outlined in the Quality and Standards Handbook. For collaborative provision, these include the scrupulous use of Moderators, who will act as a conduit between the University and partner institution. The University has the right to require the collaborative institution to implement decisions made in relation to the operation and monitoring of collaborative provision, in order to ensure that the quality and standards of collaborative provision meet the University's requirements. The Dean of Faculty and/or the Faculty/Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC) or Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee (CSPC) may also require the collaborating institution to make modifications or improvements to its reporting and these will be communicated to the Course Lead by the Quality and Standards Office.

22.4 The University's approach to quality and standards in the context of managing HE provision with others is the same as that for all wholly internal programmes; that is, setting and maintaining appropriate academic standards and ensuring the quality of students' learning opportunities. Neither academic curriculum, nor the experience students have as learners, can be compromised by the programme being wholly or partly delivered by another provider, or wholly/partly located somewhere other than the University campus. The procedures set out in this section seek to ensure that this is the case. If collaborative partners have any queries regarding policies and procedures of the University they should contact the Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships in the first instance. 'Collaborative Partnerships' includes the

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<sup>8</sup> Please note that the University does not encourage the use of any sub-contracted 'third parties' in the delivery of apprenticeship programmes – e.g. another college/provider delivering the academic component of an apprenticeship training programme. The University expects that apprenticeship training will be delivered by our own staff, whether these be full-time or part-time or on HPA contracts.

collaboration between the University and employers in the design and development of apprenticeships.

22.5 Whilst apprenticeships are considered collaborative provision in the sense that they involve close working partnership with the employer concerned, it is important to emphasise that the employer is NOT involved in the training of apprentice – i.e. they are NOT involved in delivery of the academic programme. This is restricted to staff employed by the University. For this reason, Apprenticeships do NOT have to follow the procedures set out in this section and **can follow normal internal approval processes.**

## **23 Roles and Responsibilities in Collaborative Provision**

### **23.1 Individuals**

23.1.1 **Provost** is responsible for the Collaborative Partnerships Strategy and reports formally to Academic Board on all matters relating to the development and operation of collaborative provision. Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee is a sub-committee of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee with designated responsibility for collaborative provision and as such, reports business upwards to the QAEC and subsequently the Academic Development Committee (ADC).

23.1.2 **Dean of Learning and Teaching** is Chair of the Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee ([CPSC](#)) from 2018-19, and is also Head of the [Centre for Teaching Excellence and Student Success \(CTESS\)](#). The [Quality and Standards team](#) forms part of CTESS, therefore the Dean of Learning & Teaching has a direct link to the management and co-ordination of collaborative provision, through the Quality and Standards team.

23.1.3 **Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships** in liaison with the Collaborative Provision Quality and Standards Manager and reporting to the Dean of Learning and Teaching, maintains operational oversight of all collaborative provision, to ensure consistency of approach and in the application of University procedures by the Faculties, the International Office and Employability Services and Institute of Theology.

The Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships supports Faculties, the Institute of Theology, the International Office, Employability Services and partner institutions with advice on regulations and Quality and Standards procedures and the supply of relevant collaborative provision forms, guidelines and handbooks. He/she also provides reports on Collaborative developments to the Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee ([CPSC](#)) and other committees, including Academic Board. Through the Head of Quality, the Quality and Standards Office supports the collaborative provision development and approval processes, including programme validation, monitoring and review. The Quality and Standards Office maintains a register of current collaborative arrangements, and all documents relating to the specifics of a

particular collaborative provision. Staff who are considering the development of proposals for collaborative arrangements are required to seek the advice of the Chair of CPSC or the Head of Quality and Standards and Academic Partnerships in the first instance.

**23.1.4 Deans of Faculties and Heads of Institutes, Employability Services and International Office:** Proposals for new collaborative provision are normally developed by the following:

- I. Faculties (including the Institute of Theology)
- II. Employability Services (ES)
- III. The International Office (IO)

Once approved (post-validation) by Academic Board, a collaborative partnership is the academic and contractual responsibility of the sponsoring Faculty, Employability Services or the International Office. Working to the University's published Q&S requirements, the Dean of Faculty, Head of ES, IO or Institute has overall responsibility for the oversight of Q&S arrangements and academic standards, liaising with the Head of Q&S as appropriate.

**23.1.5: Subject/Course Lead:** All programmes delivered through collaborative partnerships shall have a Subject/Course Lead. The Subject/Course Lead may be an employee of the University or the partner institution and shall be responsible for the overall management of the Programme. The Subject/Course Lead shall report to the University on programme operation and delivery, Q&S issues, and matters related to the collaboration. Where the Subject/Course Lead is not employed by the University, he/she will be required to liaise with the Moderator and the Dean of Faculty / Head of Institute/ES/IO to resolve identified issues as appropriate. The Subject/Course Lead shall ensure that Programme Boards and Programme Examination Boards are constituted according to University Policies and Regulations and that any recommendations arising from Q&S processes are implemented.

**23.1.6: Moderator:** Each collaborative arrangement of whatever category must have an independent Moderator. The Moderator will not simultaneously be the Course Lead; however, they can be selected from within the sponsoring Faculty or department. Nominations for the role of Moderator must be made to the Dean of Faculty or Head of Institute, who will sign the nomination and submit it to Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee (CPSC) for approval. The Moderator's role is: to act as an institutional link; to provide advice and guidance on St Mary's procedures and regulations; to maintain academic oversight of the programme; and to ensure that quality and standards are maintained. The Moderator carries out his/her role partly through visiting the partner site at least once in each academic year, and through completing an annual report on the health of the collaborative programme. The CPSC receives annual reports from Moderators to ensure that all aspects of the quality and standards of any collaborative Provision are being considered. Moderators and Course Leads new to the management of Quality and Standards will receive support and induction for their new role. All

parties will hold a planning meeting early in the academic year and agree a schedule of Moderator's visits.

## 23.2 Committees

23.2.1 [Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee](#) (CPSC) - CPSC meets at least twice a semester and is a sub-committee of the Academic Development Committee. It has designated authority from Academic Board, via the ADC and QAEC, for oversight of collaborative provision. Its purpose is to:

- Oversee and monitor all institutional collaborations that fall within the scope of the UK Quality Code.
- Consider, scrutinise and evaluate all proposals for new institutional collaborations, following the approval of a Memorandum of Understanding by the Senior Management Team.
- Produce an annual report on St Mary's institutional partnership activities to the Academic Development Committee.

23.2.2 **Apprenticeships Steering Group (ASG)** - Although not a formal part of the University's governance structure, the ASG (which has senior membership from across Institutes/Faculties and central services) provides robust oversight of the development, operational delivery, quality and performance of apprenticeships at St Mary's, and the development of relationships with key employers. It reports to and provides advice/recommendations to [CPSC](#) (see above).

23.2.3 **Academic Development Committee (ADC)** - ADC is responsible for the implementation of Q&S policies and procedures for both on-campus and collaborative provision (via CPSC and QAEC) and advises the Academic Board on action which should be taken in response to issues raised.

23.2.4 **Faculty / Institute Academic Development Committee (F/IADC)** - F/IADC considers and evaluates all proposals for validation and portfolio review; approves the appointment of external examiners; and approves all documentation relating to Q&S. F/IADCs should receive the minutes from Programme Boards (or equivalent partner institutions' meetings), and provide initial scrutiny of Moderator reports, prior to their receipt by CPSC. F/IADCs should check Moderator reports for completeness (including the number of complaints received by the partner) and grammatical sense; the decision regarding any actions required rests with CPSC.

23.2.5 **Academic Board**, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, is responsible for all academic programmes of the University, both on-campus and collaborative provision, including their development, approval and the oversight of their quality and standards. As the University's ultimate academic authority, Academic Board is responsible for final approval of all on-campus and collaborative provision.



## 24 Definitions of Collaborative Activity

24.1 Collaborative provision is defined as “learning opportunities leading or contributing to the award of academic credit or a qualification that are delivered, assessed or supported through an arrangement with one or more organisations other than the degree-awarding body.” The University monitors all such arrangements and ensures that the quality and standards of awards and the student experience are maintained.

24.2 It is also just as important to understand what collaborative provision does not cover: In determining which provision falls within the scope of this Chapter, the critical factor is whether the achievement of the learning outcomes for the module or programme are dependent on the arrangement made with the other delivery organisation or support providers). It follows that voluntary placements or work experience do not fall within the scope of this Chapter, but placement learning or work-based learning necessary to achieve the relevant learning outcomes would.

This means that apprenticeships are included as collaborative provision because they rely on a strong and ongoing relationship with key employers who work closely with our programme teams to design new apprenticeship pathways and play a key role in supporting apprentices in the work place, including allowing them 20% of their time for Off the job learning’ (i.e. study on their academic programme). However, as has already been explained earlier in this Handbook, apprenticeships do not entail employers contributing to the delivery of the academic programme. This means that whilst partnership is important in programme design, it does not extend to delivery of apprenticeships. **For this reason, Apprenticeship programmes are approved following the University’s standard internal course approval processes.**

Hiring general rooms from another organisation are not deemed to fall within this Chapter, but arrangements to use specialist facilities or equipment on which students were dependent to demonstrate specific learning outcomes are regarded as falling within its scope.

24.3 Collaborations can take place in a number of forms including: The University validating a programme created by, and taught at, another institution; the franchising of a University programme to another institution; or the teaching (by St Mary’s staff) of a University programme at an off-site location, in which case the collaborating institution or organisation may provide the venue and teaching facilities. Activities such as Study Abroad and placement learning are also categorised as collaborative provision, according to the UK Quality Code.

24.4 St Mary’s has identified the following types of possible activity with collaborative partners. The time in parentheses shows an indicative timescale for development.

**24.4.1 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU):** An MoU is used to show intent of collaboration without yet committing to specific activities. It does not, technically, represent a binding agreement but often signals the intention of working towards one. It is often the first stage in exploring a collaborative relationship between two or more providers (2 – 6 weeks).

**24.4.2 Articulation Arrangement:** An articulation arrangement establishes a legal relationship with another partner education institution where students begin their studies at the partner institution and upon successful completion of certain academic requirements are guaranteed a transfer into a St Mary's programme. For example, this can be following the successful completion of a L3 programme into a L4 programme at St Mary's or from a L4 into a SMU L5 programme. Recognition of this prior learning for the approved study at the first provider is transferred to contribute to the programme and award completed at St Mary's as the degree-awarding body.

The two separate components are the responsibility of the respective organisations delivering them but, together, contribute to a single award of St Mary's as the degree-awarding body. Students normally have a contractual relationship with the organisation which delivers the first component and subsequently with the degree-awarding body (5 – 10 months).

**24.4.3 Progression Agreement:** This is similar in one respect to an Articulation Agreement in that students start their programme of study at a partner institution and then hope to transfer to the University. However, the key distinction here is that the applicant has no guarantee of admission and their application may or may not be accepted by the University; whereas in an Articulation Agreement the applicant who has successfully completed a programme articulated onto a SMU programme is guaranteed acceptance.

Students wishing to be admitted under a Progression Agreement will need to apply individually for transfer to the University (through UCAS for undergraduate entry) and normal admissions criteria will apply (3 – 5 months).

**24.4.4 Dual/Double/Joint Awards:** These are a partnership arrangement between two or more awarding bodies collaborating in the delivery of a single jointly delivered programme (or programmes) leading to separate awards (and separate certification) being granted by both, or all, of them. In the arrangement each partner is responsible for the content, delivery, quality and standards of its own provision and makes its own award. Students must be registered at each participating institution either concurrently or sequentially for the duration of the jointly delivered programme (5 – 8 months).

**24.4.5 Validation:** A programme designed, developed and delivered by a non-degree-awarding body at their own institution (8 – 12 months):

- The University approves the programme as appropriate for a St Mary's University award.

- Students normally have a direct contractual relationship with the partner and are enrolled at St Mary's University.
- St Mary's University must assure itself that programme quality and standards are appropriate for a St Mary's award.
- The External Examiners are appointed by St Mary's and a senior member of staff from the University chairs the Programme Examination Board.
- A Moderator is appointed by St Mary's to provide a source of advice and help to the external Subject/Course Lead and the programme team in regards to academic standards, Q&S, academic practice and assessment procedures and the Academic Regulations of the University.
- The Subject/Course Lead is a staff member of the collaborative partner.
- Each Validation is covered by a formal contract.

**24.4.6 Franchise (or part-franchise):** A St Mary's programme, delivered in whole or part by a non-degree-awarding body at their own institution (8 – 12 months):

- St Mary's has overall responsibility for the quality of the programme and the assessment of students; the programme operates under the St Mary's University Q&S framework and University Academic Regulations.
- Students are normally enrolled with and have a direct contractual relationship with St Mary's University.
- The Subject/Course Lead of the programme offered at St Mary's University oversees the arrangements at the franchised institution.
- The External Examiners are appointed by St Mary's and a senior member of staff from the University chairs the Programme Examination Board.
- If the University has a programme that is taught in-house but also as a franchise the same External Examiner(s) will be appointed.
- Where the programme is bespoke and written by St Mary's University for the franchising institution, appropriate arrangements will be made to ensure the oversight of quality and standards.
- A Moderator is appointed by St Mary's to provide a source of advice and help to the external Subject/Course Lead and the programme team in regards to academic standards; Q&S; academic practice and assessment procedures; and the Academic Regulations of the University.
- Each franchise is covered by a formal contract.

**24.4.7 'Flying faculty' arrangements:** A St Mary's programme is delivered by St Mary's staff at another location (2 – 3 months):

- St Mary's University makes arrangements with another organisation to access resources or to employ local administrative/clerical staff.

- The External Examiners are appointed by St Mary's University and a senior member of staff from the University chairs the Programme Examination Board.
- Students are enrolled at St Mary's University.
- 'Flying Faculty' arrangements are covered by a formal contract.

**24.4.8 Study Abroad and international exchange:** Study Abroad and international exchange programmes (including Erasmus+) are co-ordinated by the St Mary's International Office, which oversees the approval process of new partner institutions. Where these contribute to students' fulfilment of programme and/or module Learning Outcomes, they fall within the scope of the collaborative provision procedures. The timescales vary, depending on the nature of the partner and arrangement.

**24.4.9 Placement learning & work-based learning:** Normally, this will be developed as part of the programme design and approval process:

- Teacher education placements are managed and quality assured by the Institute of Education; partnership agreements are in place with participating schools.
- Other work placements which are a requirement for students' fulfilment of programme and/or module Learning Outcomes are managed and quality assured by Employability Services (ES). Agreements are in place between the students, the workplace and St Mary's University.
- Placements which are NOT a requirement for students' fulfilment of programme and/or module Learning Outcomes do not fall within the scope of these procedures. However, Schools are expected to ensure that they operate appropriate internal procedures to ensure the quality of the placement and how it enhances the student experience. This will include students' health, safety and well-being while on placement, and procedures to clarify a shared understanding of expectations and responsibilities between the student and placement host.
- Apprenticeships are by nature highly vocational and the apprentice spends up to 80% of their time in their work/employment setting. Apprenticeships are managed by a dedicated Apprenticeship Team and the academic department or institute concerned. Whilst apprenticeship programmes are designed in tandem with an employer(s), the latter are NOT involved in the delivery of the academic programme of training. For this reason, whilst it is expected that CPSC receives information on new employer partners who will be involved in designing new apprenticeship programmes, formal course approval **will follow the standard internal course approval process.**

**24.4.10 Provision of learning support, resources or specialist facilities:** These types of arrangements must be approved by the University through the normal Q&S procedures. Normally, this would be at the point of approval, but if an additional facility is introduced, a site visit should be performed (where appropriate) or details of the additional resources noted and reported to CPSC.

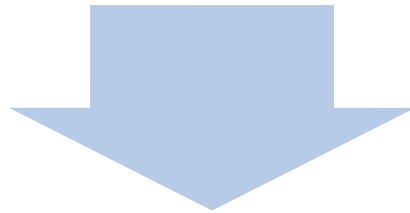
- St Mary's makes arrangements to use specialist facilities or equipment on which students are dependent to demonstrate specific learning outcomes. Where these contribute to students' fulfilment of programme and/or module Learning Outcomes, they fall within the scope of the collaborative provision procedures.
- The External Examiners are appointed by St Mary's University and a senior member of staff from the University chairs the Programme Examination Board.
- Students are enrolled at St Mary's.
- The specific provisions are covered by a formal contract.

24.5 St Mary's University has adopted a risk-based approach to developing and managing collaborative arrangements, although all arrangements are required to undergo due diligence checks, in accordance with chapter B10 of the UK Quality Code. Following initial approval by SMT to develop the partnership, the completion of the Collaborative Partnership Proposal Form for CPSC ensures that appropriate consideration of due diligence and a risk assessment are made. Accompanying documents for due diligence are approved by Finance and Legal Services as appropriate, with outcomes reported into [CPSC](#) as part of the discussion regarding the proposed partnership.

24.6 Where a collaborative arrangement leads to a substantive St Mary's award, or the achievement of academic credit, the partnership MUST be approved prior to the development of the academic programme. For example, a validation arrangement with a new partner should first follow the route through to CPSC for partnership approval before the QAEC / ADC route is followed for programme development. Normally, the legal contract will be drafted during the period of partnership approval and finalised during the period of programme development; it must be finalised as part of the programme approval. The partnership and legal contract arrangements (including a review of the due diligence requirements) will be reviewed in the academic year prior to the revalidation being due. The following flow chart shows the collaborative provision approval process:

## **INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

**INITIAL PROPOSAL TO SMT** - Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) is approved by SMT - this is an institutional partnership agreement. The proposal can be initiated by either a member of SMT or Deans of Faculty. Approval gives the green light for further exploration of a collaborative partnership leading to the award of credit by St Mary's University.



## **COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT**

**COLLABORATIVE PROPOSAL TO CPSC** - CPSC will receive full details of the type of collaborative arrangement and all paperwork required by the due diligence process. If the proposal requires any element of the programme to be delivered off-site, a site visit will be required at this point and the report received as part of the approvals process.



## **VALIDATION**

**PROPOSAL IS SUBJECT TO THE UNIVERSITY APPROVALS PROCESS** - Any new provision will undergo the approvals process in place at the University (proposal to FADC, programme development phase, academic validation, report to Academic Board).

24.7 Institutional Partnership Approval is required for a new institutional partner before consideration can be given to programme delivery. The decision whether or not to proceed with a proposed partnership is based upon strategic fit, an assessment of risk, potential benefits and financial viability.

24.8 The [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) should be completed by a senior member of the Faculty or Institute within which the collaborative arrangement will reside. The MoU contains a list of principles which the proposed arrangement should align to – the MoU should be submitted to University Executive Committee for approval. Approval of the MoU indicates that the partnership aligns to the Collaborative Provision and Partnerships Strategy. This process applies for all new proposals, regardless of category. Any collaborative agreement which requires renewal should also be presented to SMT, regardless of category.

24.9 The [Collaborative Partnership Proposal \(CPP\)](#) form is to be used to propose a new programme of study leading to a St Mary's award or credit to be delivered at, with or by a partner organisation. It should be used to submit proposals for CPSC approval in respect of:

- The establishment of a new partnership. This may include, in the case of a new apprenticeship programme, a new employer who will be closely involved in both the design and effective delivery of the apprenticeship programme of study.
- The extension of arrangements with an existing partner to include new collaborative programme(s) (or new mode or language of delivery of a current collaborative programme).

24.9.1 The form provides [CPSC](#) with the results of due diligence enquiries about potential new partners, as well as giving outline details of the proposed collaborative arrangements with the partner organisation. A site visit must be carried out where the location of delivery is not St Mary's; the outcomes from this will assist with the completion of the CPP form. Evidence of the partner's financial standing must be provided; normally this would be in the form of three years' worth of accounts. This information will be submitted separately to the Director of Finance for approval and the outcomes reported back to CPSC via the CPP form. The CPP form submission to CPSC will be accompanied by a completed Library Due Diligence checklist and evidence of the financial arrangements of the specific arrangement.

24.9.2 The CPP form should be completed by the Lead Programme Proposer in liaison with the Q&S Manager: Collaborative Provision and other key stakeholders, as named on the different sections of the form. To guard against real or perceived conflicts of interest the University must assure itself that St Mary's University staff engaged in the preparation or formal approval/validation of the collaboration have no link with the prospective partner.

24.10 Following the scrutiny and approval by [CPSC](#) of the CPP form and accompanying evidence, a recommendation would be made by the Chair of the Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee to the QAEC/Academic Development Committee for a decision and recommendation to Academic Board. If the Institutional partner is approved by Academic Board then Programme Approval can commence and a contract be agreed with the partner.

## **25 Academic Programme Approval**

25.1 All programmes are subject to a quality assurance process prior to their initial delivery, and on a cyclical basis, according to St Mary's institutional Q&S procedures. Its most important functions are to assess the quality and standards of the proposed programme, particularly in terms of the appropriateness of the curriculum and the academic level of the learning outcomes, and to test whether the programme developed by the University or another institution is of appropriate quality and standard to lead to a St Mary's University award. **The programme should be developed, considered and approved as set out in the programme approval and review procedures.**

25.2 The programme proposal should be submitted to I/FADC, as for on-campus provision. The fuller programme documentation should be submitted to the I/FADC, following a period of programme development in consultation with the partner institution. It must be confirmed and minuted at the I/FADC that no St Mary's University staff are involved with the proposed partnership or have any links with the proposed partner.

25.3 A programme approval event for collaborative provision must be held at the site of delivery, with a tour of site resources included in the event. This practice ensures that the Approval Panel receive reassurances that the partner has the required resources and facilities to deliver the programme in a robust and academically sound manner.

25.4 A full report of the programme approval event will be submitted to ADC, a decision made and a recommendation made to Academic Board. All collaborative provision approvals will contain a condition relating to the finalisation of the legal contract to ensure that delivery does not commence without a contract being agreed. This contract must comply with the requirements of Indicator 7 of [Chapter B10 of the UK Quality Code](#).

## **26. Criteria for considering proposals for collaborative provision**

26.1 When considering proposals, the relevant Committees will need to be satisfied that:

- The proposal fits with the University Mission.
- The proposal will contribute to delivery of the Collaborative Partnerships Strategy.



- The institution with which collaboration is proposed is of good standing and financially sound.
- The proposal is viable in terms of resources and is fully costed.
- The proposed arrangements will protect the quality of student experience and standards of the awards.
- The collaborative institution has appropriate equality and diversity policies.
- A proper assessment of the benefits and risks attached to the collaboration has been made and that there are actions/procedures in place to mitigate the risks.
- Appropriate institutional arrangements have been made.
- Consideration is given to any cultural, regulatory or regional specific requirements affecting the proposed partner which may impact on the content or delivery of the collaborative arrangement.
- There are no conflicts of interest between the collaborative institution and St Mary's University.

## **27. Use of non-University staff for off-site teaching of St Mary's programmes**

27.1 For off-site teaching where staff from the venue or other staff are involved in the teaching, they will have the status of Visiting Lecturers of St Mary's University. Even where they are not paid directly by the University, they must be accountable to the Subject/Course Lead for the standards and quality of teaching and assessment. The latter will form part of the Contract for the provision. All non-University staff teaching on St Mary's awards must be approved through the Faculty Academic Development Committee, prior to them teaching on the programme.

27.2 It may be necessary for staff of the collaborating institution to undertake the University's [Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice \(Higher Education\)](#), in line with the University's requirements for teaching staff. Please contact [adf@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:adf@stmarys.ac.uk) if this is part of the requirements for a new collaborative proposal.

27.3 Proposals for collaborative partnerships should include a clear statement about whether the staff at the partner institution are eligible to achieve Fellowship of the HEA via the [Continuing Professional Development Route \(CPDR\)](#). Please consult the Academic Development Team ([adf@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:adf@stmarys.ac.uk)) to confirm. The eligibility criteria published by Advance HE are available at <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/eligibility-hea-fellowship>

## **28. Quality assurance and maintaining parity of standards and Programme Management**

28.1 The Collaborative Partnership Proposal Form contains a section dedicated to information relating to the development and management of proposed arrangements. During the academic approval event for the programme itself, the approval Panel will provide detailed

scrutiny regarding the team's plans for maintaining parity of academic standards and the quality of the student experience. For example, all partner institutions will be asked to complete an annual monitoring report and a Moderator will be appointed by the University to have ongoing oversight of the programme delivery. It is expected that an external examiner will be appointed to cover the collaborative programme following the academic programme approval.

## **29. Quality Assurance and Enhancement procedures for Collaborative Provision**

29.1 The University's quality assurance and enhancement procedures apply to both on-campus and collaborative provision as per the requirements listed below. Please refer to relevant sections on the Quality and Standards webpages or seek guidance from the Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships for more detail.

29.2 **Staff Student Liaison Forum** - All programmes must have a Programme Board (staff-student liaison forum) which meets at least once per semester. The requirements of the Programme Board are outlined in the Academic Regulations.

29.3 **Student feedback and evaluation** - The collaborative institution must provide opportunities for students to evaluate modules in line with the procedures. Student representatives are chosen from students registered for the programme. Programmes should provide a clear description of the duties and responsibilities of student representatives (available from the [Students' Union \(SU\) Programme Reps Guide](#)). Where possible, students should be given time in teaching sessions prior to the Programme Board to discuss issues to be raised at the Board with their colleagues. Student representatives will also be issued with guidance and undertake training. Details are available from the SU.

29.4 **Module evaluation forms** - Programmes are responsible for constructing a questionnaire to obtain anonymised feedback from students at the end of each module. The format of the questionnaire should be customised to take account of the nature of the subject. The approach agreed links the questions to the important issues in quality assurance and enhancement from a student perspective. For advice and guidance on the areas questions should be on as well as mid-module evaluation and the use of questionnaire responses please see the Q&S Handbook.

29.5 **Assessment** - Section H in the Academic Regulations is the regulatory framework for all assessment. Collaborative institutions should also ensure that they follow the guidance on assessment in the CTESS pages on Assessment: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/ctess/Learning-and-Teaching/assessment-and-feedback/overview.aspx>

29.6 **External Examining** - At least one External Examiner is appointed by the University for every programme. The appointment is for four years. There may be more than one External Examiner for a programme depending on the subject area(s). The rights, duties and obligations

of External Examiners shall be as specified in University Academic Regulations and the Guidelines for Examiners, and are the same as those for other University External Examiners. See: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/ctess/Q&S/external-examiners/overview.aspx>

Nominations for the appointment as an External Examiner should be made by the collaborative institution in discussion with the Moderator. The nomination should be approved by the Dean of Faculty. The External Examiner nomination will be considered by FADC according to the criteria outlined in the Quality and Standards Handbook. In addition to these criteria, the External Examiner must not have been a student or member of staff of the collaborative institution or the University for at least five years and must have no previous links with the collaborative institution which may cause a conflict of interest.

The nomination will be considered for approval by the University ADC. The External Examiner will receive a contract setting out the roles and responsibilities to and from the Q&S Office. They will be invited to the University induction for External Examiners, for which the University will pay expenses.

Once approved, communications with the External Examiner, for example approval of examination questions or the arrangement of visits, will be co-ordinated by the Course Lead. The Course Lead must also ensure that the External Examiner has received the validated document together with other materials required to enable him/her to undertake the role. A schedule of visits for the year, e.g. for exam boards and any other interactions, must be provided at the start of the External Examiner's tenure so they can plan their travel.

External Examiners are required to make an annual written report and submit it to the Q&S Office who will highlight issues which the programme must address as part of its annual statement. It will then be forwarded to the Subject/Course Lead who must respond to the issues raised within a set timescale and copy the response to the Q&S Office. No fees or expenses will be paid until the annual report has been received.

External Examiner resources are available: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/ctess/Q&S/external-examiners/overview.aspx>

**29.7 Programme Board of Examiners** - There will be a Programme Board of Examiners established according to St Mary's University Policies and Regulations. It will be chaired by an appropriate member of University staff, designated by the Faculty/Institute and recruited from a different Faculty. The Programme Board of Examiners will be responsible for approving marks for modules and for making recommendations to the appropriate University Examination Board for awards and programme terminations.

Awards will be approved by the appropriate University Examinations Board according to the Academic Regulations. Collaborative institutions must ensure that appropriate arrangements

have been made to input marks and amend them following the Programme Board of Examiners with the sponsoring school.

Students may be given indicative marks prior to their approval by the programme examination board provided that it is made clear that these are subject to ratification and also moderation by the University and the External Examiner. Once the Programme Examination Board has met, marks may be released; however, no indication of degree class or merits or distinctions should be given until these have been approved by the appropriate University Examination Board.

**29.8 University Boards of Examiners** - Decisions on awards; compensation credits for Undergraduate and Masters students and programme termination shall be the responsibility of the University Undergraduate Examinations Board for Undergraduate and Foundation degree programmes; the University Postgraduate Examinations Board for Postgraduate programmes and the University PGCE Board of Examiners as appropriate. The Board will also receive recommendations on programme progression; Extenuating Circumstances and academic misconduct panels. Please refer to the [Academic Regulations](#).

**29.9 Modifications to modules** - Any modifications to modules in the programme such as assessment changes are approved through the Faculty's Quality and Standards procedures with the completion of a module modification form and approval from the External Examiner. Once the modifications have been approved by the Faculty/Institute they will be forwarded to and recorded by the Quality and Standards Office. For further details relating to the Module Modification process please see the Quality and Standards webpages.

**29.10 Modifications to programmes** - Modifications to programmes include changes which affect the overall structure of the programme such as the introduction of new modules, changes of programme title and removal of modules. Any modification to the Programme should be discussed with the Moderator and approved by both the Faculty and External Examiner. For further details relating to the Programme Modification process please refer to the relevant section of the St Mary's Staff webpages. Once changes are approved, the Course Lead will be responsible for providing and maintaining an updated programme specification which is lodged with the Quality and Standards Office.

**29.11 Annual Monitoring (Programme reviews)** - The annual monitoring process is the means by which the University ensures that programmes are being managed appropriately in order to maintain standards and the quality and enhancement of the learning opportunities. The Subject/Course Lead shall provide an Annual Programme Review report to the Dean of Faculty by the date specified. The report should be submitted on the required pro-forma which is circulated annually by the Quality and Standards Office.

Moderators of validated and franchised programmes are also required to submit an Annual Moderator's Report to the CPSC. The report should include an indication of their involvement

and any general comments they may have on the programme in areas such as Quality and Standards procedures, assessment, student feedback and modification of curriculum content.

**29.12 Revalidation** - Collaborative provision arrangements will be reviewed as part of the programme revalidation.

Programme re-validations will be carried out on behalf of F/IADCs and will consider all arrangements. All St Mary's University programmes require revalidation at least every five years from the date of the first validation. The revalidation will include a re-assessment of the risks, the financial arrangements, the venue and a statement of success or otherwise from the programme(s). The continued approval of the programme and the collaboration is dependent upon a successful outcome of the revalidation.

The revalidation will take place as outlined in the [QAE Handbook](#). The Quality and Standards Office will provide advice and guidance to the Course/Subject lead(s) and the collaborative institution on the revalidation requirements.

**29.13 Withdrawal or interruption of programmes** - *If* a collaborative institution wishes to suspend recruitment to a programme it should discuss this with the Faculty/Institute in the first instance who will in turn consult the Provost. The reasons for the interruption will be considered and the University will aim to support the collaborative institution if quality and standards are not put at risk and that any students who remain on the programme are protected. Any recommendations must be made according to the procedure outlined in the [Quality and Standards web pages](#), and Quality and Standards colleagues should be contacted for advice and guidance regarding the withdrawal or interruption of programmes in the first instance.

**29.14 Termination of collaborative arrangements** - If the University and/or the collaborative institution wishes to bring the relationship to an end, discussions must take place in advance between representatives of senior management from both institutions in consultation with the affected Faculty and in accordance with the terms set out in the Memorandum of Understanding.

The final recommendation will be submitted to the [ADC](#), via [CPSC](#) which will formally take the decision to terminate if appropriate. The University's primary concern will be to ensure that all existing students are given every possible opportunity to complete their studies in a suitable environment to enable them to qualify for the University's award. The termination of a collaborative arrangement should cover:

- The reasons for the termination of the arrangement.
- The date from which the termination will commence, and projected period necessary to fulfil obligations to students in accordance with clauses set out in agreement.

- The plan for the communication of the decision and subsequent activities to all parties concerned such as the relevant people at both institutions, External Examiners, current and prospective students.
- The financial arrangements during the exit period including possible charges for the additional administration arising out of the decision to terminate the relationship.
- The responsibilities and expectations of both parties during the exit phase. It is expected that the relationship will continue as set out in the agreement unless otherwise specified. In some instances, students might complete their studies outside the expected exiting phase – for example students who have deferred their studies – and agreement must be obtained to ensure the effective management of these particular students. Where a termination is agreed, a formal agreement must be drawn up to cover the period when students are still registered for an award. The specific contract will set out details of how an agreement may be terminated.

### **30 Contractual agreements**

30.1 All collaborative arrangements should have an appropriate contract that sets out the exact nature of the arrangements, liabilities, intellectual property and data protection issues together with arrangements for ending any relationship. Anyone who is considering entering a collaboration should ensure that the time and costs for the drawing up of such a contract is considered during the negotiations. Such contracts should be agreed prior to any activity taking place and should be approved by the St Mary's University Legal Services team.

30.2 Delivery of the programme cannot commence and students should not be registered with St Mary's University until the Contract is signed.

30.3 The purposes of the Contract are to:

- Define the means by which the academic standards of the programme(s) will be maintained.
- Ensure that collaborative arrangements are clearly set out, and that clear channels of authority, accountability and executive action are identified.

They will refer to:

- The parties and programmes(s) covered.
- Duration and date of review.
- Financial terms.
- Copyright and intellectual issues.
- Arrangements for resolution of disputes and termination.

There will also be statements to clarify the responsibilities of collaborative relationships and may include some or all the following as appropriate:

- Marketing and recruitment of students.
- Enrolment and registration of students.
- Programme management.
- Programme review and monitoring.
- Resources including staffing.
- Arrangements for assessment.
- Student support.
- Student discipline, complaints and appeals.
- Continuing Professional Development opportunities for the partner's academic and professional services staff.

30.4 Once the Contract has been signed each party will hold a copy. The University's master copy will be held by Legal Services, with a copy kept in the Quality and Standards Office.

### **31 Public information, publicity and promotional activity**

31.1 Once the collaborative provision arrangement has been approved in principle and the schedule for validation has been approved, publicity can be drawn up for the programme. The publicity must be approved by the University and checked with the Marketing Department to ensure that it is appropriate. Any publicity and marketing of the programme prior to the validation or approval of the collaboration must be marked 'subject to validation/approval'. All collaborative institutions must liaise with the Head of Quality and Standards and Academic Partnerships and Marketing to discuss the publicly available content (e.g. website information or publicity fliers).

31.2 The University is responsible for the accuracy of all public information relating to its awards including marketing and promotional materials e.g. prospectuses, web pages and press releases and material distributed at open days and career fairs. Collaborative institutions should adhere to the following principles:

- All material should be a true representation of the relationship with the University and should not be misleading to the reader.
- Material must be of a quality comparable with that produced by the University.
- For all collaborative arrangements, advertising material must not be published in any format until the proposed party has been approved in principle by CPSC. All use of St Mary's University's name or visual identity must be approved by the University in advance of publication.

31.3 The Marketing and Reprographics department will be happy to offer advice on general marketing matters and advice on design and University publications and collaborative institutions should the University's Head of Marketing.

31.4 Once a year a review of publicly available information for all collaborations is undertaken with the Quality and Standards Office. The review will include:

- Use of visual identity.
- Accurate use of language used to describe the provision.
- That content relating to St Mary's University accurately reflects the Mission.
- Confirmation that hyperlinks to and from our website work.
- Confirmation that contact details are correct.
- Confirmation that any photographs are appropriate for the text they accompany.
- Confirmation that any description of the nature of the relationship between St Mary's University and the collaborative institution/organisation is accurate.
- Confirmation that all the academic content is accurate.

Collaborative parties will be contacted by the Q&S Office for copies of the following information/documentation:

- Website links
- Links for any social networking sites
- Leaflets
- Brochures
- Prospectuses
- Programme handbooks
- One module guide (per programme).

The Head of Marketing and the Quality and Standards Office will review the publicly available information together, after which the Moderator for the programme will be asked to review the academic content for accuracy. A pro-forma will be signed by all three parties confirming that the information has been received and reviewed.

Any actions/recommendations will be sent to the Course Lead and Moderator for taking forward by the Quality and Standards Office.

Any significant and/or outstanding concerns should be reported to the Provost.

## **32 Finance and resources**

### **32.1 Financial arrangements**

While it wishes to enter into mutually beneficial collaborations, St Mary's University must ensure that it covers the necessary costs of any collaborative provision in order to be able to maintain quality and standards. Costs will be discussed with collaborators at the negotiating



stage and will be reviewed at the CPSC approval process with the [Collaborative Partnership Proposal Form](#), which should be accompanied by the appropriate costings template.

### 32.2 Learning resources

The proposed arrangements for the provision of library resources and a virtual learning environment for validation and franchise collaborations should be discussed with the Director of Library during the approval process. The Director of Library (or nominee) will be involved in assessing the partner's provision with recommendations as appropriate. St Mary's online library resources and VLE are licenced from commercial providers and there are tight restrictions on who can be given access to them. Any arrangements that are made must be clearly written into the contract with the partner.

### 32.3 Access to St Mary's learning resources & Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

Students on collaborative programmes will normally have access to the University's Library. However, the University is unable to provide access to electronic resources for students unless they are registered as St Mary's students, due to licence restrictions. Where there is access to University learning resources to students at a collaborative institution including the purchasing of additional resources, there will be a cost involved and this will be negotiated with the collaborative institution.

### 32.4 Validated programmes

For validation only, collaborations we are unable to offer access to our VLE or online library resources due to licence restrictions. Students on such programmes do not have a contractual relationship with St Mary's. However, as part of the due diligence process we will assess the appropriateness of the partner's resources and make recommendations as appropriate. The partner is directly responsible for providing learning resources to the students at its own expense. The exact arrangements should be made clear in the contract with the partner.

### 32.5 Franchised programmes

Arrangements for franchised programmes may vary and will depend upon the contractual nature of the franchise. The Director of Library (or nominee) must be involved in any discussions about the proposed provision of learning resources. As part of the due diligence process we will assess the appropriateness of the partner's resources and make recommendations as appropriate. In some circumstances it may be possible to include access to St Mary's online library resources and VLE. If staff teaching on the franchised programme are not contracted to St Mary's, it will not be possible to give them access to online resources or the VLE. Consideration must also be given to the relevance of St Mary's provision to the collaboration being proposed.

## **33 Student-related administration**

### 33.1 Applications and admissions

The responsibility for administering applications to the programme and for Admissions arrangements will be agreed when the Contract is drawn up as set out below. The institution responsible for Admissions will be responsible for making formal offers and any correspondence with candidates.

Although expressions of interest may be made, no applications or offers can be made until the collaborative programme is validated. Where a franchise of an existing programme is made, no offers can be made until the Contract has been duly signed.

### 33.2 Off-site provision

The responsibility for Admissions for off-site provision will reside with St Mary's University and this will be handled by the Admissions department.

### 33.3 Validated programmes

The responsibility for applications and admissions for validated programmes will be the sole responsibility of the collaborative party.

### 33.4 Franchised programmes

For franchised and joint programmes which are for full-time undergraduate programmes applied for through UCAS on Office for Students (OfS) funded numbers of the University, St Mary's University will be responsible for Admissions. For independently funded programmes or those on OfS numbers elsewhere, the collaborative institution will be responsible for Admissions.

### 33.5 Student ID cards

Once registered with St Mary's University, students on off-site or franchised programmes who require access to the facilities or proof of their student status will be provided with a University Student ID card once registration has been completed. Students on validated programmes will not be entitled to a University ID card and the collaborative party must make arrangements to provide them with a student card as appropriate.

### 33.6 Home Office requirements

For collaborations with non-EU/EEA students it is normally the collaborative institution's responsibility to sponsor international students with UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI). The responsibility for sponsorship will be outlined in the Contract.

If it is sponsoring students, it should ensure that it follows the UKVI regulations. The collaborative party must ensure that staff receive adequate training to provide guidance on issues relating to visas and students must be made aware of whom to contact if they have this type of query.

For general queries about [Tier 4 Compliance and Student Visas](#) please contact the St Mary's University UKVI Compliance Manager in the first instance.

### 33.7 Maintenance of student records

#### *Franchised programmes*

For students on franchised programmes, records will be maintained by the Registry on the University student records system and reported through HESES and HESA (if appropriate). The sponsoring Faculty will be responsible for marks entry.

#### *Validated programmes*

Collaborative institutions will be expected to take responsibility for maintaining a full record of the students' academic progress, including module marks and periods of study, as well as personal data. Collaborative parties should complete all statutory returns required for higher education students, including HESES and HESA where appropriate.

Records will also be maintained on the University's student record system to ensure that awards can be made and transcripts and diploma supplements provided.

### 33.8 Changes to student details

It is vital that any changes in student details are notified to St Mary's University as they occur. The recording of accurate data on the student records ensures that any documentation is issued correctly.

### 33.9 Student withdrawal and Leave of Absence

Collaborative institutions or the Course Lead should inform the Registry promptly of any student withdrawals or students who take leave of absence. The student should complete the appropriate form and it should be forwarded to the [Head of Registry Services](#).

## **34 Collaborative institutions' responsibilities for student records and Data Protection**

34.1 Collaborative parties are expected to take responsibility for maintaining a full student record. They must also ensure that all records must be maintained in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.

## **35 Graduation ceremonies and certificates**

35.1 Students will normally be invited to attend St Mary's University Graduation Ceremonies upon successful completion of the Programme. The timing of the Ceremony will be notified to the collaborative party in advance.

35.2 Where an institution undertakes its own ceremony, the University will provide an appropriate officer to present awards.

### **36 Transcripts and Diploma Supplements**

36.1 St Mary' University will in most cases produce all certificates and Diploma Supplements in accordance with the University Policies and Procedures. Details regarding the issuing of transcripts and diploma supplements will be outlined in the Contract.

36.2 The Diploma Supplements will record the student's place of study. All students made an award will be provided with a Diploma Supplement. Transcripts can be provided at other times on payment of the appropriate fee.

36.3 The Registry will provide the award certificates and Diploma Supplements and will forward these to the collaborative institution for distribution.

### **37 Information and support for students**

#### **37.1 Student induction**

Induction is based on the premise that retention can be increased by enhancing the speed and effectiveness with which students settle into all aspects of institutional life. Induction should recognise the diversity of students' experience, needs and expectations.

The University will make appropriate induction arrangements for students on programmes delivered jointly. Students on programmes which are validated or are taught off-site should be provided with an appropriate induction programme. This should as a minimum cover all of the following:

- The academic requirements of the programme.
- Expectations of the programme.
- Student support (both academic and pastoral).
- Health and safety issues.
- Departmental arrangement.
- Student representation.
- Learning resources.
- Regulations, and key policies and procedures (including the Student Complaints Procedure, Academic Misconduct and the Academic Appeals Procedure).

In addition to the standard information given, the University and/or collaborative party should take the opportunity to inform students of the relationship between the two institutions and clarify the role that St Mary's University plays.

### 37.2 Provision of information to students

All students should be provided with programme and module guides, together with information on being a student and what their rights and responsibilities are.

Where the students are entitled to access learning resources or other facilities at the University, this should be clearly outlined in writing, together with reference to St Mary's University policies which students must observe. Information may be provided either in hardcopy or electronically.

### 37.3 Dyslexia and disability support

The University will provide advice to staff of collaborative programmes to ensure that any students declaring a disability are provided with appropriate support. However, the responsibility for the support for individual students depends upon the nature of the collaboration – please contact the Q&S Office for further details and advice.

For off-site teaching and franchised programmes which are publicly-funded and for which the student numbers are included in [Office for Students OfS](#) statistics, the students will be entitled to access dyslexia and disability support from St Mary's University – please contact the Q&S Office for further details and advice.

For validated programmes and franchised programmes which do not receive public funding the collaborative institution is wholly responsible for providing dyslexia and disability student support.

## 38 Academic conduct

38.1 Collaborative parties must have appropriate measures in place to inform students what constitutes proper academic conduct and also for detecting and dealing with incidents of academic misconduct.

38.2 Academic misconduct occurs when any student commits an act whereby he/she seeks to obtain for himself/herself or another student, an unfair advantage. For details of what constitutes academic misconduct, including plagiarism, processes and penalties please refer to the University's [Academic Regulations](#). If the programme is not taught at St Mary's University the Academic Misconduct Hearing will normally will take place at the collaborative institution.

All Hearings must conform to the University Academic Regulations, and the Student Conduct & Complaints Manager at St Mary's will advise on appropriate arrangements. [Academic Misconduct](#) hearings for collaborative programmes taught at the University will take place at and be organised by the University.

38.3 Collaborative institutions are advised to contact the Student Conduct & Complaints Manager regarding how to proceed regarding the management of academic misconduct.

## **39 Appeals**

39.1 Under certain circumstances students may make an Academic Appeal against decisions of the Programme and University Examination Boards. In order to be considered, such appeals must be on one or more of the grounds listed in the Academic Appeals Procedure. Appeals will only be considered as outlined in the Academic Appeals Procedure, and students may not appeal against academic judgement.

## **40 Complaints relating to the delivery of the academic programme**

40.1 All collaborative parties must have their Complaints Procedure approved by St Mary's University at the time of the due diligence check. Complaints procedures must comply with the [UK Quality Code](#) and follow the University's [Academic Regulations](#). Partner organisations/institutions that do not have a Complaints Procedure must adopt the procedure set by St Mary's University. Where the complaint affects the delivery of the academic programme, the University will consider the complaint according to the University approved Complaints Procedure which must be made readily available to students.

40.2 In the first instance, the complaint should be addressed to the collaborative party, and the St Mary's Provost will require a copy of the initial complaint from the student/collaborative party. The complaint should be copied to the Head of Registry Services who will then notify the Course Lead, Moderator and Dean of Faculty/Director of Institute, and must thereon be kept up to date at every level on its processing and the outcome. It is imperative that the St Mary's Provost must be consulted prior to any response being made to the student.

40.3 If students are not satisfied with the outcome of the complaint, they should contact St Mary's Student Conduct & Complaints Manager for advice as to how to progress their complaint. All complaints should be reported to St Mary's University via the annual report to ensure that any overall issues are effectively and conclusively addressed.

40.4 A dedicated Complaints Procedure can be used by employer partners involved in the delivery of Apprenticeships.

## **41 Complaints about admissions**

41.1 Where the collaborative party is solely in charge of Admissions, complaints regarding the admissions process should be dealt with by the collaborative party. Otherwise, such complaints should be addressed to the Provost who will deal with them in accordance with the [University Admissions Policy](#).

## **42 Student disciplinary processes**

42.1 Collaborative institutions must have [Student Disciplinary Procedures](#) in place to deal with any serious breaches of the Regulations or inappropriate behaviour. Students may make appeals against decisions of the collaborative institution in relation to disciplinary matters. If a student wishes to appeal, they should write to the Provost of the University.

## **43 Equality and Diversity**

43.1 Collaborative institutions are required to have in place policies for equality and diversity which are in line with those of St Mary's University. All such policies should be in accordance with the Equality Act, and should treat all students equally and should monitor progress according to age, ethnicity, gender and disability to ensure that there is no discrimination.

43.2 The collaborative party should outline how it addresses issues of equality and diversity in the validation proposals.

43.3 Where responsible for Admissions, the collaborative institution should ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for the admission of disabled students. Applicants should be encouraged to disclose their disability through the Admissions process and to discuss any support needs in order to ensure they are not disadvantaged during the course of their studies and that reasonable adjustments are made.

43.4 The collaborative party should have an appropriate protocol in line with the Protocol for the Admission of Disabled Students. The collaborative institution must make appropriate adjustments to ensure that disabled students are not disadvantaged and that they can fully access their programme of study. Arrangements must be made for students with disabilities (with an appropriate professional diagnosis) in the assessment process.

## **PART 5: MONITORING AND EVALUATION**

### **44. The purpose of monitoring and evaluation**

44.1 The purpose of monitoring and evaluation is to enable reflection on the operation of programmes, and self-evaluation which leads, where possible, to enhancement of the student learning experience.

44.2 Monitoring and evaluation are intrinsic to the quality enhancement culture at the University. They enable programme teams to reflect on the academic year, utilising input from sources such as external examiner reports, module evaluations, student feedback and programme statistics. This provides opportunities to consider what has worked well and areas

that may need to be addressed in the future. Primarily, monitoring and evaluation are processes that should be future-focussed, providing enhancement benefits for the individual programmes where appropriate and programmes, that materialise through the implementation of the programme enhancement plan (PEP).

44.3 Overall, monitoring and evaluation help the University to identify and document issues, good practice and relevant actions at programme, Institute and Faculty, and University level. The monitoring and evaluation procedures meet the expectations outlined by the QAA UK Quality Code <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/advice-and-guidance/monitoring-and-evaluation>

## **45 Programme-level monitoring**

### **45.1 Module evaluation**

Programmes are required to use the University's template for module evaluation, which contains 19 core questions and two free text sections. Programmes are able to add additional questions to the template, which may likely be discipline-related, but must retain the core questions agreed by the University. Use of the University's module evaluation template promotes consistency of approach across programmes. This particularly benefits joint honours students on programmes based in three Institutes and one faculty. The University template also aids data comparison within and across programmes, including collaborative provision. The template and further information can be accessed from: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/ctess/Learning-and-Teaching/module-evaluation/overview.aspx>

*For further advice and guidance on module evaluation, please contact the Centre for Teaching Excellence and Student Success (CTESS).*

### **45.2 Programme Review**

From June 2019, the previous Programme review process was replaced with a revised approach that combines key aspects of annual and continuous monitoring. The new process aims to be intuitive, dynamic, allows sharing of best practices and facilitates ownerships. The development of Programme Reviews is undertaken by Subject Leads (formerly known as Course Leads) and teams. The majority of Foundation degree and undergraduate Programme Reviews will typically be drafted by Subject Leads and teams between August and November. The majority of taught and research postgraduate, PGCE and Collaborative Programme Reviews will typically be drafted between November and January due to different timetables for delivery of these programmes.

45.3 The Programme Review process should be owned by programme teams collectively, through staff meetings, FADCs and Staff-Student liaison Forums (formerly Programme Boards); fostering the notion that quality assurance and enhancement are done *by* staff, rather than to, or for, them. Subject Leads and teams should discuss and progress their programme enhancement plan (PEP) with students and representatives at programme team meetings & Staff-Student Forums throughout the academic year. The process supports engagement with



students, External Examiners, support staff and academic staff across Faculty and Institutes, via Staff Student liaison forums.

## **46 The key principles of monitoring and evaluation**

46.1 Monitoring and evaluation are embedded at programme, Faculty / Institute and University levels, within the context of business planning and self-assessment. These processes should inform and complement each other, at the same time not duplicate workloads for staff.

46.2 Monitoring and evaluation is ongoing and continues throughout the year. They are not self-contained annual exercises; rather, they are continuing processes which keep the effectiveness of programmes and Faculties / Institutes under ongoing review.

46.3 Monitoring provides the opportunity for reflection and critical evaluation in a blame-free environment, with outcomes shared across the University through reporting at [Academic Development Committee \(ADC\)](#). Sharing within Faculty/ Institutes is facilitated through the series of meeting among academics, Heads of Departments and the Associate Deans.

46.4 Critical evaluation does not stop at programme, department or Institute/Faculty level, but continues with the development of an institutional overview of monitoring for reporting to Academic Board. This is prepared annually by the Quality and Standards team.

46.5 Effective monitoring and evaluation draw on a variety of sources of information about the operation and performance of programmes, Institutes / Faculties and the University as a whole. This includes feedback from students ([NSS](#), [PTES](#), [UK Engagement Survey](#), module evaluation, Staff-Student Forums), [Graduate Outcome data](#), comments from external examiners and analysis of key performance indicators at programme, department, and institutional level. The process may consider engagements from beyond the academic modules, for example the Progress Reviews and apprenticeship achievement rates for Apprenticeships.

## **47 Procedures for programme-level monitoring**

47.1 End of module evaluation. Programmes are required to use the University's template for module evaluation, which contains 19 core questions and two free text sections.<sup>9</sup> Programmes are able to add additional questions to the template, which may likely be discipline-related, but must retain the core questions agreed by the University. Use of the University's module evaluation template promotes consistency of approach across programmes. This particularly benefits joint honours students on programmes based in three Institutes and one faculty. The University template also aids data comparison within and across programmes, including

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<sup>9</sup> The unique nature of apprenticeship programmes and the less traditional pattern and format of study means that programme teams are encouraged to make appropriate adaptations to existing module evaluation approaches so that these are better aligned with the progress of student learning, key milestone, and are more meaningful at the point of completion.

collaborative provision. The template and further information can be accessed from: <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/ctess/Learning-and-Teaching/module-evaluation/overview.aspx>

47.2 Programmes may choose to distribute the template questions online or using a paper-based format

47.3 The outcomes should be incorporated into [Programme Review](#) in a spirit of critical self-reflection. Programme teams are strongly encouraged to reflect on good practice that they have implemented and the evidence they have that this has enhanced the student experience, improved learning opportunities and / or contributed to a more inclusive learning experience. Areas for future development should be identified and these used to inform the Programme Enhancement Plan.

47.4 Mid-Module Evaluations. Programme Teams are strongly encouraged to use the mid-module evaluation process to gather more immediate feedback from their cohorts. This does not require formal reporting or explicitly including in Programme Review; however, where it forms the basis of enhancements or developmental plans it may be beneficial to include. Mid-module evaluation enables rapid responses to student feedback over key issues and demonstrates a commitment to closing the feedback loop and using student feedback to make meaningful enhancements to the learning experience. Moodle page and can be found here: <https://mymodules.stmarys.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=24486#section-15>

47.5 Programme Review. The development of Programme Reviews is undertaken by Subject Leads (formerly known as Course Leads) and teams. Most Foundation degrees and undergraduate programme reviews will typically be drafted by Subject Leads and teams between August and November. The majority of taught and research postgraduate, PGCE and Collaborative Programme Reviews will typically be drafted between November and January due to different timetables for delivery of these programmes.

47.6 The process is designed to bring together sources of information to enable the Faculty to monitor and implement necessary improvements to programme delivery and the student learning experience. The intention is to ensure the monitoring process is ongoing by having periodic meetings at different stages during the year.

## **48. Programme Monitoring Meetings**

48.1 This process will be comprised of several stages as follows Programme Monitoring Meeting

Each Programme will have one Programme Monitoring Meeting each year with the following present:

- Dean (Chair)
- Associate Dean Student Experience (Co-Chair)
- Faculty/Institute Quality & Standards Manager

- Head of Department
- Subject Leads
- Course Leads
- Student Reps
- Administrator (Note-taker)

Purpose of the meetings is to review all aspects of the Programmes, principally using the following sources of information.

- [Annual Programme Review Template](#)
- Biannual Staff-Student Forums (formerly Programme Board) - Student feedback and module/ programme evaluation forms
- Team minutes – outlining student issues
- [External Examiners Report](#)

There are two meetings per Department – one Undergraduate and one Postgraduate programmes. The Programme Monitoring grid at the end of this document will be used to guide the discussion.

#### 48.2 Follow up Meeting

This meeting will normally be held about 4 months after the Programme Monitoring Meeting with the ADSE, HODs and Subject Leads to discuss on going actions and issues.

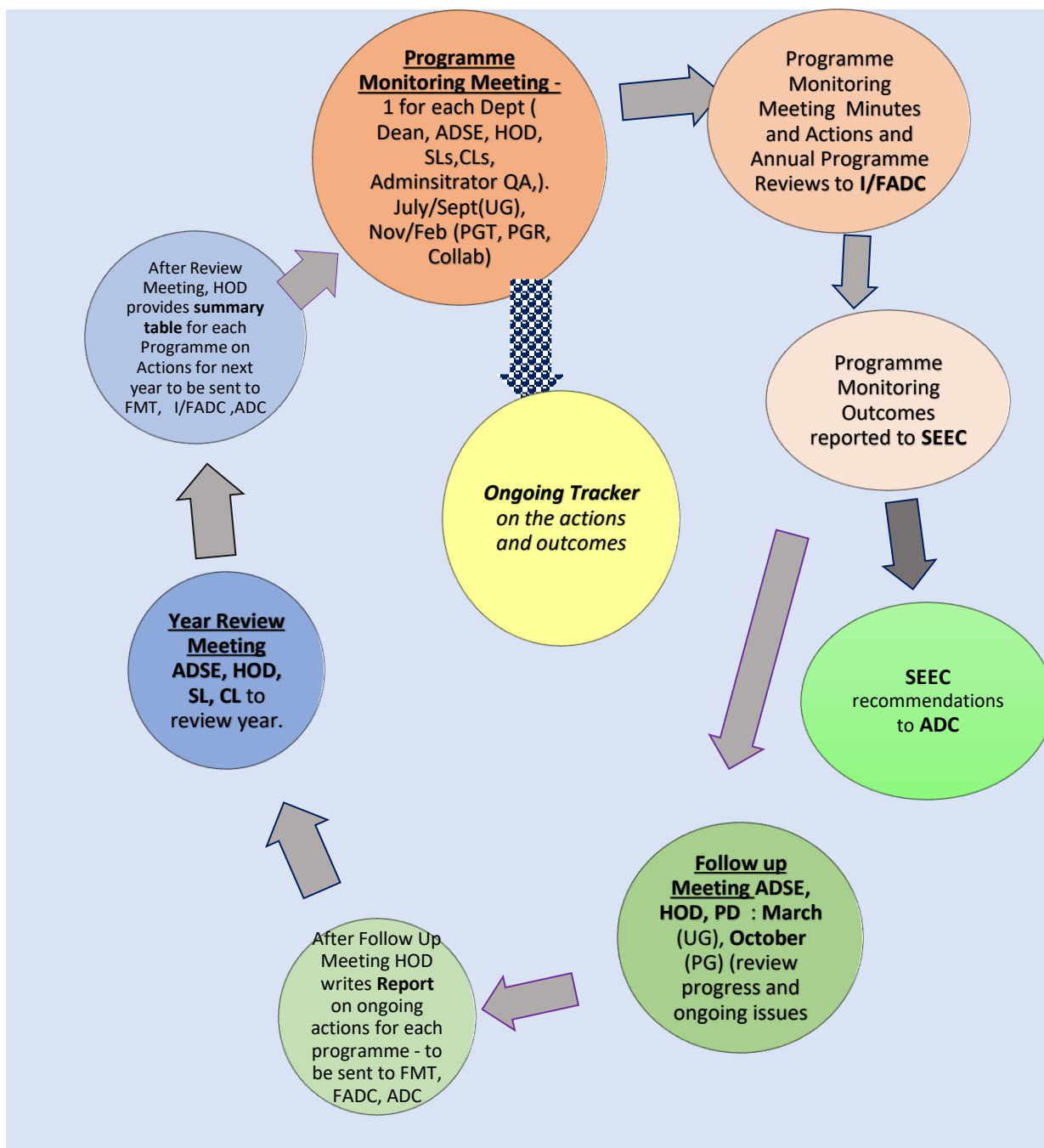
#### 48.3 Year Review Meeting

This meeting will be held to reflect on the past year. It will involve the ADSE, HODs and Subject Leads, Course Leads and teaching staff (as decided by the Subject Leads).

#### 48.4 Ongoing Action Tracker

These will form part of the record arising from the Programme Monitoring Meeting and will be updated on an ongoing basis

[Overleaf: Programme Monitoring Process Diagram](#)



Programme Monitoring timeline

	UG Programmes	PG Programmes
SLs supplied with data for writing Programme Reviews by Strategic Planning	September	September
Subject Leads submit Annual Programme Reviews to ADSE and Q&S	October / November	January
<b>Programme Monitoring Meeting</b> (see details below)	November/December	March
Programme Monitoring Meeting minutes and actions to	January / February	March/April

I/FADC and ADC		
HODs & SLs, CLs meet with ADSE for progress and support. <b>Follow up Meeting</b>	March	May
<b>HOD report</b> Action tracker to I/FMT,I/FADC,ADC	March	May
HODs use action tracker in planning round	March	March
HODs, PDs meet with ADSE for <b>Year Review Meeting</b>	June/July	June/July
<b>HOD Review Table</b> to I/FMT,I/FADC,ADC	Sept (following year)	Sept (following year)

<b>Guidance Points for discussion at the Programme Monitoring Meeting</b>		
<b>Programme and SL:</b>		
Source(s)	KPI/ Measure	Action
Annual Programme Review 21/22	<p><b>Student Progress:</b>  Module marks and pass rates – Student support needed/ Staff CPD/ Any outliers? What arrangements for early resits?  Progress towards any other professional requirements (e.g. the Standard for Apprenticeships)  Good honours- reflective of above. Project supervision and management</p>	
Annual Programme Review 21-22/NSS/Programme Boards/ individual feedback to staff and Personal Tutors	<p><b>Student Feedback:</b>  Assessment – clear guidelines on Moodle/feedback timely and sufficient/ staff and modules needing development?  Academic support- staff able to provide good support, available to students? Module convenors - Moodle pages, attendance monitoring, organisation of module  Other support structures outside the module (e.g. support from employers, support towards professional accreditation or Apprenticeship Standard)</p>	
Employer Survey Informal feedback	<p><b>Employer:</b>  Employer feedback, for Apprentices and sponsored students</p>	
Annual Programme Review 21-22/Graduate Outcomes Data	<p><b>Employability:</b>  What are we able to improve. Are there opportunities to exploit? What engagement has the programme got with employability</p>	
Annual Programme Review 21/22	<p><b>Retention:</b>  What are the factors for your programme?  Entry tariffs – are they satisfactory?</p>	
External Examiners Report	<p>Discuss and issues raised – what support do you need to improve. Any commendations – to share?</p>	
Team meetings	<p>Students of concern – what actions have been taken/ responses?</p>	

Other Issues Raised		
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**Example SHAS Programme Monitoring Action Tracker 2019/2020**

<b><u>Source of Action ( Programme Monitoring meeting)</u></b>	<b><u>Action</u></b>	<b><u>Date of action</u></b>	<b><u>Notes</u></b>
BSc Nutrition	<b>Action: JC (ADSE)</b> to ask PDs to roll out talking about NSS to L4 and L5 students.		
BSc Nutrition	<p><b>Sharing Good Practice:</b> PD Nutrition has shown videos of previous students with good experience to new students, and is working on social media. She is running an event this week for all students to meet alumni.</p> <p><b>Action JC(ADSE)</b> to share good employability practices with Faculty .</p>		
BSc Nutrition	<p>Association for Nutrition (AfN) – rep is coming to talk to L4 re accreditation. Staff training may be required in order to offer CPD short courses accredited by AfN. These could be stand- alone modules run as intensive courses, and thought should be given re staffing – can we use alumni? Or staff could be paid as consultants.</p> <p><b>Action: MC and GH</b> to develop proposals and costings, after discussion with AfN re priority areas.</p>		



#### 48.5 The Programme Review process

This should be owned by programme teams collectively, through staff meetings, I/FADCs and Staff-Student Forums; fostering the notion that quality assurance and enhancement are done *by* staff, rather than *to*, or *for*, them. Subject Leads and teams should discuss and progress their programme enhancement plan (PEP) with students and representatives at programme team meetings & Staff Student Forums throughout the academic year. The process supports engagement with students, External Examiners, support staff and academic staff across programmes, departments and University, via Staff Student Liaison forums.

## PART 6 EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

All information and templates referred to below can be found on Quality and Standards pages:

<https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/ctess/Q&S/external-examiners/overview.aspx>

### 49 Programme requirements

- 49.1 Each programme must have at least one external examiner. This includes programmes which are of a more vocational nature, such as apprenticeships. External examiners of the University are nominated by the Programme and appointed by the Chair of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC). External examining at the University is maintained in accordance with the QAA Quality Code under External Expertise.
- 49.2 In considering **who to nominate**, the Programme must be assured the candidate has the appropriate experience. This does not only refer to the subject / discipline knowledge but also the *nature* of the programme in question. For instance, nominees for a foundation degree would be expected to have knowledge and experience that relates to the workplace and practice elements that are relevant to FDs. Similarly, nominees for postgraduate programmes should have the relevant background enabling them to moderate and comment on programmes incorporating the greater critical and analytical content expected in postgraduate study. Any other distinctive aspects of the programme should be considered when choosing a nominee. In the case of apprenticeships, for example, the role of the external examiner focuses on the academic assessment and progress towards the apprentices' university award, rather than oversight of the apprentice's progress towards the Knowledge, Skills and Behaviours set out in the relevant apprenticeship 'Standard'. So the external may be an academic from another University, rather than based in a commercial organisation/company which supports apprentices, but would need to have expertise and experience in the delivery of similar apprenticeship programmes to those delivered by the University.
- 49.3 Course Leads/Subject Leads should ensure that prior to attendance at a programme Examination Board, the external examiner is invited where possible to the University to meet the programme team. External examiners should be sent a copy of the **University Guidelines for Examiners** together with all relevant programme documentation, including a copy of the validation document and detailed assessment and marking criteria.

### 50 Role of the external examiner

- 50.1 External examiners play a key role in maintaining the standards of programmes within the University. The role of the external examiner is to:

- i) ensure the comparability of the University's standards with those in peer institutions and as set out by national benchmarks;
- ii) provide assurance for the University that its assessments and marking practices are fair and operated equitably and consistently;
- iii) provide assurance that the assessment process appropriately measures student achievement against the intended learning outcomes for the programme/module;
- iv) provide advice on the content, balance and structure of programmes and modules of study and on assessment processes, including the conduct of examination boards (which they attend) at Programme and institutional level.

50.2 External examiners may also attend other assessment-related activities such as performances and workplace practice where relevant. Note: external examiners are *not* intended to act as additional markers.

50.3 External examiners are required to submit an annual report. The template for this is issued by the Q&S Office.

## **51 External examiners' reports**

51.1 External examiner reports are scrutinised within the Q&S Office and circulated to the Heads of Department in the Faculty / Institutes, with a request by the Q&S Office to the programme team for a response to the external (to be copied to the Q&S Office) which should also feature within its Programme Review (see section F), particularly to address any specific issues outlined in the report.

51.2 The Course Lead is required to draft the ***Programme Response to External Examiner's Report*** required to discuss the external examiner report with students and it must form a standing item at the programme board meetings through the year. Student feedback and engagement with the external examiner report should be captured through completion of the ***Programme Representative Feedback Form***. Both forms must be made available to all students (not just Programme Reps) by appropriate means such as VLE and programme boards.

51.3 The comments of the external examiners and the programme responses are monitored by Faculty / Institute Academic Development Committees via the Programme Review process. Any points for action at University level are also noted and acted on as necessary.

51.4 Where an external examiner raises a serious concern requiring urgent attention, an immediate response will be made by the Head of Quality Assurance and Academic Partnerships who will normally inform the external examiner of any action or resolution of the issue.

51.5 The payment of annual fees and expenses is conditional on receipt of the examiner's written annual report.

## **52 Appointment of external examiners**

52.1 When a new external examiner is required, or an existing one is coming to the end of his/her appointment, programmes should secure a suitable nomination as early as possible in the academic year. Candidates may initially be approached informally to ensure that they are willing to serve but all appointments are subject to approval by the [Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee \(QAEC\)](#) and then noted at Faculty / Institute Academic Development Committees.

52.2 All nominations for initial appointment must be made on the required forms and submitted to the Q&S Office, together with a completed application and statement of eligibility signed by the proposed examiner (this can be accompanied by an up-to-date curriculum vitae if the candidate wishes, but CVs alone will not be accepted). The latter must clearly show the candidate's experience in the UK higher education system **with particular reference to curriculum design and leadership**.

52.3 Prior to approval by the Chair of the QAEC, the Q&S Office checks the database of External Examiners to ensure that there are no reciprocity issues. This includes a check against the database of St Mary's staff who are External Examiners at other institutions.

## **53 Criteria for the appointment of external examiners**

53.1 The following criteria are applied to the nominated examiners:

- they must be impartial;
- they must have appropriate expertise and experience of teaching and assessing at higher education level, which would normally include experience at the level of Course Lead or at least five years in a substantive teaching post comprising experience such as that of curriculum design (with the exception of ITE external examiners from schools, who should have appropriate professional experience);
- they have sufficient time (and should not hold more than one other appointment as external examiner);
- they are in current employment in the UK higher education sector or are a practitioner in a relevant area\* (retired nominees will not normally be considered);
- there are no reciprocal appointments;
- they do not teach within the institution;

- they have not held a post either within the University or an institution with which the University has a collaborative relationship for at least the last 5 years (appointment of former St Mary's staff is to be avoided where possible);
- they are not related to a member of the relevant programme or department or Institute/Faculty or a student at St Mary's University;
- there are not already two or more examiners from that institution across all programmes of the University (the Q&S Office can offer advice on this matter)

**\*If a practitioner is to be appointed, they must be working in conjunction with an academic examiner for the programme in question.**

53.2 The University does not normally invite external members of validation or revalidation panels to become external examiners. However, it reserves the right to do so (a) for subjects where there is a limited pool of potential candidates, and/or (b) when the discipline concerned is highly specialised.

#### **54 Eligibility criteria**

54.1 No person shall be eligible to hold an appointment as External Examiner if:

- he/she teaches on the programme of study to which he/she is being considered for appointment;
- he/she holds a teaching or other appointment of St Mary's University or its collaborative partners, or has held such an appointment within four years prior to the date of commencement of the proposed appointment as External Examiner;
- he/she is a close relative of a member of the nominating Faculty/Institute or programme team or of a candidate, or has an association with the nominating Faculty/Institute which could compromise his/her role and independence as External Examiner;
- he/she has previously served as External Examiner at St Mary's University at any time within the previous four years or has an association with the University and/or the nominating Faculty/Institute or the University's collaborative partners;
- he/she already holds two concurrent appointments as External Examiner at first degree and/or higher degree level(s);
- he/she is a current student of St Mary's University or its collaborative partners;
- he/she holds a teaching or other appointment from non-UK institutions;
- he/she has retired from full-time work in higher education;
- he/she is employed at an institution where more than one current St Mary's External Examiner is already in post, and/or is employed at the same department at the same institution as any current St Mary's External Examiner already in post.

## **55 Length of appointment**

External examiners are appointed to a term of office of up to four years. Extension beyond four years will only be approved in specific circumstances.

## **56 Early termination of appointments**

56.1 Academic Board has the authority to terminate the appointment of an external examiner if they fail to fulfil their obligations; for example, through negligence or misconduct, failure to attend the University on the agreed dates, failure to submit a written annual report by the due date, or false declaration in their application form/CV or on their eligibility form. Course Leads should discuss possible early terminations with the Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships in the first instance. A proposal for early termination of an external examiner's appointment must be supported by a written rationale, which will be considered by QAEC.

56.2 Non-submission of an annual report: if an external examiner's written annual report has not been received within a reasonable time, the Head of Quality and Academic Partnerships shall formally write to the examiner, drawing attention to this matter and advising them that, if the report is not received within a further month, their appointment shall be terminated with immediate effect by the University.

## **57 Interaction with students**

57.1 External examiners should be provided with opportunities to meet with groups of students in order to discuss relevant aspects of the student experience. Such meetings should be scheduled during at least one visit per year.

57.2 The external examiner's full report must be made available to all students on the programme. While the external examiner's work address may be made known to students via programme documentation, students are not permitted to make direct contact with external examiners.

## **PART 7: EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT POLICY: APPRENTICESHIPS**

### **Introduction**

Our mission: The University is committed to providing high quality apprenticeships that draw on our strengths as a higher education provider in the provision of flexible work-based learning and is focused on ensuring an excellent experience for apprentices that achieves the highest levels of student satisfaction in keeping with those achieved on our other undergraduate programmes.

St Mary's University is dedicated to ensuring that its practices in relation to employer engagement are informed by best practice in the HE sector and maximise the effectiveness of our relationships with employers as key stakeholders. Our work with employers embraces and encompasses many different types of educational provision, from partnerships in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) provision with over 650 primary and secondary schools, to work with employers who provide short and long-term placements and internships across many of our UG and PG programmes, but the development of apprenticeships requires a dedicated Policy that ensures that employer engagement informs all aspects of our work in relation to apprenticeships.

### **Governance and oversight – employer involvement**

- St Mary's University's apprenticeship activity is overseen by the **Apprenticeship Steering Group (ASG)**, which is chaired by the University's Dean of Learning & Teaching, who is also Head of our Centre for Teaching Excellence and Student Success (CTESS).
- Key employer partners will be invited to attend ASG meetings where this supports ongoing developments and improvements.
- The ASG will report into our Collaborative Partnerships Sub-Committee ([CPSC](#)), which in turn reports to the Academic Development Committee (ADC) which is chaired by the University's Provost.
- ASG will bring key employer contacts together for an annual apprenticeship progress review meeting to ensure that their insights inform our approach to apprenticeship design, delivery and future enhancements.

### **Marketing**

- We will promote our apprenticeship provision through targeted marketing activities and bespoke business development approaches that are informed by discussions with and input from key employer partners involved in apprenticeship delivery. We believe that working in partnership with key employer contacts and engaging them in our

approach to marketing apprenticeships will ensure that the information, approach and materials employed are aligned with employer priorities and perspectives.

- The University will put in place a dedicated **Apprenticeship Website** that lists all programmes available to employers and provides detailed information on the services we offer as well as the ESFA guidance on apprenticeship funding.
- Our apprenticeship website will link to the **Find Apprenticeships Training (FAT)** pages to allow prospective apprentices to view current vacancies related to the programmes we offer. This also enables employers to reach a wider range of applicants to their vacancies.
- To ensure our programmes reach wider range of employers and prospective apprentices we will develop and regularly update our Search Engine optimisation and Social Media Campaign strategies with a view to attracting a wide range of enquiries to our website.
- We will adjust our communication and promotion methods to ensure they are relevant and sector specific, and will consult key employers in this process.
- The University will also develop and produce apprenticeship-focused marketing materials to support our business development activities, including stands for events, information leaflets and brochures to aid initial, face-to-face discussions with the employers. Input from our employer partners will be sought in order to refine materials and ensure they are employer-friendly.
- We will take a consultative approach to business development and we will adjust our method according to the requirements of the sector and individual employer partners. We engage with employers to identify their apprenticeship needs and aim to find suitable solutions. This includes managing the client's journey through the development of new programmes or contextualisation of our existing programmes where appropriate.
- Our employer-focused Business Development activities will be managed by a dedicated team of staff in CTESS which will proactively reach out to employers, promote apprenticeship opportunities and build relationships with employers who wish to explore the benefits of providing apprenticeships within their organisation.
- We work with each employer to develop a bespoke strategy to promote their apprenticeships according to their needs. This might involve:
  - Promoting and running open days and recruitment events on the employer's site, both to provide information (to internal staff and/or potential recruits) and to present specific guidance on entry requirements, preparation, application processes and references.
  - Creation of bespoke landing pages on our Apprenticeship website and marketing materials to promote the Apprenticeship opportunities as a partnership between the employer and the University.



- Advertisements on the Government’s Digital Recruitment service: ‘Find Apprenticeship Training’ and links from our Apprenticeships web pages to those recruitment pages, supported by social media promotion.
  - Development of job descriptions with our academics, and in line with the Apprenticeship Standard.
  - Support with assessment centres and screening activities, for example guidance in designing activities to ensure that recruitment to the employer is aligned to the requirements of the apprenticeship.
  - Management of inbound inquiries to CTESS from interested applicants seeking employer support directly to employer colleagues.
  - Providing a dedicated e mail address/account to all apprenticeship enquiries: [Apprenticeships@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:Apprenticeships@stmarys.ac.uk)
- In order to maximise the recruitment opportunities for our employers, our Outreach and Recruitment team focus on engaging with schools, pupils and their parents and promoting Apprenticeship opportunities to school leavers.
  - All inbound communications (including e mails) will be responded to within 48 hours; typically phone calls are picked up immediately. CTESS has a generic apprenticeship email address and phone number for employers or apprentices that are not yet engaging with us: [Apprenticeships@stmarys.ac.uk](mailto:Apprenticeships@stmarys.ac.uk)
  - The central St Mary’s switchboard will forward all calls about apprenticeships to the CTESS Apprenticeships Team. All CTESS apprenticeship staff will have access to current information relating to apprenticeships, funding rules and St Mary’s portfolio of programmes.

### **Training design and approval**

- The University will consult employer partners in the design of all aspects of our apprenticeship training programmes, including content (practice, theory, skills, behaviours etc), assessment and access to learning resources.
- We will also ensure that employer partners are involved in the training programme approval process, with employers represented on approval Panels.
- We produce a guide (Handbook) for each apprenticeship training programme, offering crucial information to help the Apprentice and their line manager understand what they will be learning, how the Apprenticeship works, what is expected from them and how they will be supported.
- For public sector engagements, we will respond to procurement and tendering opportunities, drawing on our extensive experience of working with many public sector employers.
- Co-creation will be at the heart of our programme approval process and will involve capturing and responding to the views of employer partners and apprentices.

### **Tendering processes**

- ASG will lead/coordinate the bid writing process and establish a methodology for working with colleagues in teaching teams and support services to ensure the information provided through tendering processes is accurate and compelling.
- ASG will invite participation of potential employer partners in the bid-writing process, in order to ensure an alignment with their needs and training priorities for apprentices.

### **Sector engagement**

- Key staff involved in apprenticeships will attend sector and industry-based events and engage in networking to strengthen our understanding of sectors and organisations' needs; this provides us the opportunity to talk constructively with potential clients and employers and engage them in discussions about potential new apprenticeship programmes.
- On a more individual level, our website, social media and other marketing activities generate inbound enquiries from employers, which we respond to via the appropriate medium – typically phone or email in the first instance. We have a customer relationship management (CRM) system which enables us to keep records of queries, spot trends, and understand our customers ensuring we provide a joined up and customer focused service.

### **Support for employers**

- Each employer will be allocated an Apprenticeship Partnership Account Manager (APAM) to manage a consistent customer journey. The employer will have an individual phone number and email address for their APAM.
- Employers will also be assigned a Partnership Co-ordinator (PC) at the start of their relationship with us. The Partnership Co-ordinator (normally a member of our academic staff) will guide them through the onboarding process including contracting and the apprentice's admission to the programme.
- The APAM and Partnership Co-ordinator can answer all questions regarding apprenticeships through their own knowledge or through consultation with colleagues within the team or elsewhere in the University. They guide employers through the formal engagement process, negotiating and creating the contractual agreements Written Agreement and Commitment Statement required by the Apprenticeship Funding Rules.
- The Apprenticeships Partnerships Account Manager (APAM) ensures any issues are responded to efficiently and appropriately. They will have working relationships with key post holders within the university, including Admissions, Faculties/Institutes and

other central support services. If needed, they can escalate to their line manager or to the Head of CTESS, who will address issues at a higher level and escalate to Faculty/Institute heads/ faculty leadership as necessary for swift resolution.

- The APAM will develop an account management plan dependent upon the needs of each employer. For example, for larger employers who wish to increase their engagement with apprenticeships, the APAM may attend group meetings involving apprenticeship and training leads to get an in-depth knowledge of the employer's needs and plans, assess opportunities for apprenticeships across the organisation, respond to questions and address any issues that arise.
- CTESS's dedicated Apprenticeship Team will manage and coordinate the contracting, administration and reporting to ESFA and ensures compliance with the Funding Rules
- In leading employer relationships, APAMs and Partnership Coordinators in the Faculties/Institutes will ensure there is a seamless approach to meeting the needs of employers across all aspects of their journey; business, operational, compliance issues and the apprentice experience.
- If required, we support employer-based mentors and coaches e.g. we offer a dedicated training session for mentors of apprentices and provide ongoing guidance on their roles.

### **Programme development and apprentice journey**

St Mary's Apprenticeships Steering Group will identify the 'Standards' we intend to offer through a rigorous proposal and approval process, within our usual University programme approval and quality assurance processes. These processes require us to consider key factors including:

- Resources and expertise we have available,
- How employers and professional bodies have been consulted,
- Delivery strategies and their match with employer demand,
- Financial viability and sustainability,
- Risk,
- Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) approval/recognition; and
- Start up plans.

### **A flexible delivery approach to delivery to meet Employer needs and those of apprentices**

- Our programmes are employer demand-led; where there is a demand for a wide geographical coverage we can meet this through a blended delivery approach with a mix of face-to-face (on or off campus) and online learning.

- In the development of our Apprenticeships, we will align the learning outcomes of our HE qualification to the Apprenticeship's knowledge, skills and behaviours to ensure the learner can achieve the Standard and prepare for the End Point Assessment.
- This flexible approach to creation of our apprenticeship programmes; they can be co-created with sectors, groups of employers, individual employers, or designed for flexible and contextualised delivery.

## Admissions

- Entry requirements for our apprenticeships are formalised through the approval process both internally and with the relevant PSRB, if appropriate. They are also reflective of the criteria outlined in the relevant Apprenticeship Standard. We share them with employers to ensure consistency and transparency in their own recruitment processes for Apprenticeship engagement.
- Apprentices will apply through our online application process and complete an **Initial Needs Assessment (INA)** as part of this process. The Apprenticeship Coordinator in the relevant Faculty/Institute who leads delivery will assess the application to check it meets both the course entry requirements and the Apprenticeship eligibility rules as set out by the ESFA.
- The **Initial Needs Assessment (INA) form** will constitute a mandatory part of the University's admissions process. Our approach begins with the apprentice's self-assessment which also enables the employer to contribute to it. This allows us to capture their skills, knowledge and behaviours from the outset and therefore help determine whether the apprenticeship is right for them. The initial needs assessment (INA) process also aligns with our processes for accrediting prior learning to ensure that prior learning is considered when designing the apprentice's learning plan.

## Progress monitoring

- Each apprentice has an ePortfolio Form to record their training and track progress towards the Knowledge Skills and Behaviours. The ePortfolios are developed by each programme team, and are used to inform discussion and the review of progress in three-yearly Three-way progress reviews (See below).
- Partner meetings - The APAM and Partnership Coordinator (leading the apprenticeship delivery) will meet with the Partner employer three times in each academic/calendar year (whichever is most appropriate) to review the operational aspects of the partnership and the progress of the apprentices (as a cohort) to ensure that any issues arising from delivery of training and the apprentices work in the work setting are identified and addressed through a process of ongoing quality improvement.

- Three-way progress reviews – The PAM and the Partnerships Coordinator in the Faculty/Institute concerned will convene three-way meetings with the partner and each apprentice. These will be scheduled to occur within the first 4 weeks of the apprentice starting their training, in weeks 10-14, and in the final 3 weeks of the scheduled programme of training. The final three-way meeting will be a ‘Gateway’ meeting where the progress of the apprentice is reviewed for a final time prior to them being put forwards to undertake their End Point Assessment(EPA). The purpose of the Gateway meeting is to ensure that the apprentice has demonstrated all the required skills, knowledge and behaviour as set out in the apprenticeship ‘standard’ and is thoroughly prepared to undertake the EPA.

### **Contextualisation**

- We will adapt our existing programmes to meet the needs of individual employers, either for delivery through closed cohorts or open cohorts. Closed cohorts relate to an apprenticeship with a single employer partner. Our open programmes are designed for contextualised learning – the learning can be applied in the apprentice’s own work environment rather than more prescriptive approaches to teaching, and enable apprentices from different employers to work together as part of a single cohort.

### **Quality assurance**

- Our Quality Evaluation processes ensure the voice of employers and apprentices continues to shape the programmes beyond the initial engagement – for example through our employer engagement, module evaluation, learner representatives, twice-yearly staff-student liaison forum meetings, apprentice surveys, employer surveys and other forms of feedback.
- The Partner meetings referred to above, along with the Three-way, three-yearly meetings with employers and apprentices will ensure that multiple opportunities are embedded in our processes for employer and apprentices to provide regular feedback to the University to inform ongoing improvements to the apprenticeship experience and to maximise alignment with employer priorities.

### **Account management**

- The CTESS APAM will be responsible for maintaining a close direct relationship with a key apprenticeship lead in each employer. An account management plan will be agreed at the outset of the engagement, including a schedule for reviews focusing on the needs of the employer.
- The APAM will ensure review outcomes and actions are shared within St Mary’s (e.g. via the Apprenticeships Steering Group), and where required agree timelines and reports to the employer.
- We will analyse feedback on our employer engagements through an annual employer survey, our employer complaints process, informal feedback and feedback gathered

through teaching engagements (e.g. via the tripartite reviews or staff-student liaison meetings).

### **Complaints**

- Our Student Complaints Policy will enable apprentices to submit a complaint via the Student Complaints Policy, whilst our dedicated Employer Complaints Procedure will enable employers to raise concerns and submit complaints where necessary. Both provide points of reference to the ESFA.
- Employer feedback and complaints data from apprentices and employers will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Apprenticeship Steering Group with action plans developed to address any issues. Actions are agreed at the appropriate level, e.g. by the Account Manager, Head of CTESS, or the Apprenticeship Steering Group

END

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