

**COLLABORATIVE PROVISION & PARTNERSHIPS STRATEGY**

**2018 – 2023**

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**Introduction**

This document articulates the St Mary’s University Strategy for Collaborative Provision and Partnerships activity. It applies to the management of all learning opportunities leading or contributing to the award of academic credit or substantive award from St Mary’s University that are delivered, assessed or supported through an arrangement with a partner organisation. It aligns with the core practices relating specifically to partnerships, as stated in the revised [UK Quality Code (2018)](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/revised-uk-quality-code-for-higher-education.pdf?sfvrsn=4c19f781_6):

***Expectations for Standards:***

*Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.*

***Expectations for Quality:***

*Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.*

This strategy aims to set out the principles upon which the initial partnership arrangements are agreed by the Senior Management Team (SMT) and to ensure that collaborative partnership activities are clearly aligned to the University’s strategic goals, mission and ethos. In particular, this Strategy aligns to the following strategic aims from Vision 2025:

* Increase the diversity of our students and staff without undermining the powerful sense of community that characterises St Mary’s;
* Expand our national and international reach including through the development of new partnerships with overseas universities;
* Build on our high level of student satisfaction to be the most welcoming learning community in the UK as we climb the national university league tables.

Alignment to the strategic aims from Vision 2025 will ensure that the University engages in appropriate collaborations that harness our expertise, enhance our reputation and establish new routes to income and sustainability. The University aims to offer a transformative learning experience for a broad student group, including those may not normally be able to access educational opportunities. This aligns with the University’s Mission statement:

* We are an inclusive Catholic University seeking to develop the whole person and we empower our community to have a positive impact on the world.

**Management Considerations**

Any collaborative arrangements will be aligned to the University’s normal quality assurance systems and processes, as articulated in the Quality & Standards Handbook. Academic revalidation will be due every five years, but the collaborative partnership arrangement itself will be subject to review by the Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee (CPSC) in the year prior to the end of the contract (ie, every four years). This will enable contractual arrangements to be prepared in advance of the academic re-approval. The completion and approval of an agreed legal contract will form a standard condition for all collaborative provision approvals.

**Types of Collaborative Provision**

The list below is a non-exhaustive list of the types of collaborative provision arrangements that an awarding institution may engage in. Those currently undertaken by St Mary’s University have been shaded in grey:

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| Franchised programmes delivered by delivery organisations through a variety of models. |
| Validated programmes delivered by delivery organisations. |
| Joint, dual/double or multiple awards granted by one or more other awarding bodies. |
| Provision by 'embedded colleges' of study preparatory to undergraduate or postgraduate higher education programmes. |
| Articulation arrangements, whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled on academic grounds to be admitted with advanced standing to a subsequent stage of a programme of a degree-awarding body. |
| A range of work-based learning that may involve delivering full programmes, individual modules or elements of programmes for a specific employer, or otherwise using the workplace as a site of learning. |
| Placements, including those in industry, those required for teacher education, experience necessary for qualifications in the health professions (including for a Primary Medical Qualification) and continuing professional development. |
| Study abroad, including exchanges and student mobility programmes such as ERASMUS. |
| Provision of learning support, resources or specialist facilities. |
| Branch campuses, educational villages and 'flying faculty' arrangements, which include aspects of collaboration (such as provision of resources or employment of local administrative/clerical staff through arrangements with another organisation). |
| Joint supervision of research degrees or provision for doctoral research to be conducted at another academic or industrial organisation (applicable either to individuals or cohorts of students). |
| Doctoral Training Centres involving more than one organisation. |
| Credit-rating of learning/training/continuing professional development provided by employers/other organisations. |
| Distance learning and online delivery/massive open online courses (MOOCs) involving work with delivery organisations or support providers. |
| Collaboration between higher education providers on the delivery of Gaelic and Welsh-language provision (such as sharing resources, common curricula). |

*[QAA UK Quality Code chapter B10, 2011]*

**Roles and Responsibilities**

Collaborative provision is an institutional responsibility, although aspects are delegated to specific departments, services and role-holders across the University.

**Senior Management Team (SMT) –** the SMT are responsible for scrutinising and approving the initial Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This document is an agreement to work with a specified partner in some form, the details of which are detailed more fully at the point of CPSC approval. Consideration of the MoU must be undertaken in line with the principles of this Collaborative Provision and Partnerships Strategy.

**Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee (CPSC)** – CPSC are responsible for scrutinising and approving all collaborative partnership proposals, including the assessment of documentation required for due diligence purposes. CPSC is chaired by the Dean of Learning and Teaching, is a sub-committee of Academic Development Committee and reports into ADC accordingly.

**Faculty Academic Development Committees (FADCs)** – FADCs should have a standing item on their agendas to encourage and enable ongoing, robust monitoring of collaborative and partnership activity. FADCs should receive Programme Board (or equivalent meeting) minutes from their partners, and scrutinise Moderator reports and Collaborative Partnership Proposals, prior to their submission to CPSC. FADCs will also monitor the receipt of Annual Programme Review reports from collaborative partners; this will continue to be monitored at University level via the Academic Development Committee (ADC).

**Quality & Standards Office** – the QS Office are responsible for the maintenance of accurate records (including the Collaborative Provision Register, collaborative provision section of the QS Handbook and the Register of Approved Moderators).

**Legal Services** – the Legal Services team will liaise with QS and academic teams to produce legal contracts for all partnership arrangements. The status of these contracts will be monitored through CPSC and escalated to ADC as required.

**Proposals for Collaborative Provision**

All initial collaborative provision proposals should take into account the capacity of resource and staff within the University to support the development of the programme to a successful conclusion. This should include the capacity of Faculties and associated academic staff, the Quality and Standards Office, the Legal Services team and Faculty Finance partners. The following criteria are specific to the strategic consideration of the proposal at Senior Management Team, and are incorporated into the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) proforma. All collaborative provision proposals will be subject to the same level of risk assessment and due diligence, regardless of the type of partner. This is to ensure that the University does not enter into a partnership based on reputational acumen, rather than fiscal authority.

The following principles should apply to all collaborative arrangements undertaken by St Mary’s University.

**Principles**

1. The University will only approve collaborative provision and partnership activities that fall within its own subject expertise.
2. All collaborative provision arrangements must either (the proposal may align to more than one of these aspects):

* Be of financial benefit to the University
* Enhance the national and international reputation and standing of St Mary’s University
* Offer learning opportunities to students that otherwise would not be available to them

1. A risk assessment must be performed at the outset and reviewed periodically.
2. All collaborative provision and partnership activity arrangements must be supported by a written statement (legal contract) setting out the rights and responsibilities of each party, including what happens to students and students’ records in the event of termination by one or both parties, and signed by each stakeholder.
3. All staff involved in the delivery of provision resulting in a St Mary’s award or academic credit must be appropriately qualified and have been approved by the University through its quality assurance procedures.
4. Approval for all collaborative provision or partnership activities must be made on the understanding that the agreement is between the University and specified partner organisation for a named programme only. The sub-contracting of teaching and/or delivery is not permitted.
5. All students enrolled on approved collaborative provision programmes will be subject to the regulations and policies of the University, unless otherwise approved at the point of validation.

The University recognises the requirements of partners to develop programmes in a timely manner and will ensure that processes are in place to support academic approval. However, the assurance of quality and maintenance of academic standards have the highest priority and will not be compromised under any circumstances.