



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London

## **SECTION 3**

# **A St Mary's Learning & Teaching Strategy 2020/21-2025/26:**

## **The wider purpose and context of the Learning and Teaching Strategy**

### **1. Introduction**

The *Learning and Teaching Strategy* provides a vision for how we will re-shape our vision and approach to learning & teaching at St Mary's over the next 5 years with three objectives:

1. To support the achievement of the objectives contained within the 5 'pillars' of Vision 2030
2. To ensure further enhancements to the learning and teaching experience for our students which takes into consideration our collective learning experiences during the COVID pandemic and that is aligned with developments in learning technology
3. To drive improved metrics that will impact positively on St Mary's in terms of its reputation, league table position, the TEF and future student recruitment.

### **2. A student-centred focus**

The *Learning & Teaching Strategy* sets out key changes to the way that staff will be supported to teach differently and the systems, structures, and tools that will facilitate them. But its primary focus, and the ultimate measure of its success will be an improved student experience and improved student learning and student outcomes. Students are at the heart of the Strategy, and this is reflected in the way that we will work with them (and the Students Union) as collaborative partners and co-creators.

### **3. Our Values**

The Learning & Teaching Strategy is aligned with the Values of St Mary's. This has been explicitly articulated via the [Curriculum Framework](#) which sets out the '[Graduate Qualities](#)' that we expect students to have opportunities to develop and demonstrate during their studies with us.

#### 4. The quality and regulatory context

The *Learning & Teaching Strategy* reflects key principles and requirements within the [UK Quality Code](#), the [FHEQ](#) and the [Credit Frameworks](#) within the HE sector. The Strategy is also mindful of the [QAA Subject Benchmark Statements](#), and allows academics the freedom and flexibility to ensure that their programmes meet the requirements and reflect the principals contained therein. The University has an obligation to ensure that it conforms to standards set out in [Section B of the OfS Conditions of Registration](#). The L&T Strategy will enable the University to demonstrate – in a very concrete manner – how it intends to continue to meet these expectations over the next 5 years.

#### 5. Building on our strengths

The *Learning & Teaching Strategy* builds upon our strengths:

- Face-to-face, in-person teaching – this is arguably the secret of St Mary’s success as an educational institution, and something we wish to preserve and place at the centre of the student experience over the next 5 years.
- Our campus as a supportive learning environment - the village-style atmosphere, strong support services, nurturing relationships between academics and students.
- Small group teaching – even in large cohorts, students learn together in small seminar and tutorial groups.
- Applied learning – not only via vocational programmes such as Acting, ITT, Sport etc, but also through the strategic use of placement modules (CWL modules), internships etc.
- Our values - the 4 St Mary's values, plus those set out as '[Graduate Qualities](#)' in the Curriculum Framework.
- Adding value – as evidenced by the [Guardian League Table](#) 'Value Added' measure, our student outcomes often exceed those that might normally be associated with their tariff or prior experience on entry.
- Short courses and summer schools – the Director of Enterprise & Innovation will lead a cross-University project focused on building on the University’s Short Courses 'offer', and developing a Continuing Education programme that provides enhanced opportunities to address the Government’s workforce development agenda.

#### 6. Understanding areas where we can do better or do things differently

Whilst it is important that we recognise and build on those strengths highlighted above, the Strategy also addresses a number of areas where we believe there is scope for development:

- Building staff expertise in the designing and teaching programmes that combine a strong face-to-face focus, with online components, tools and resources that enable students to engage with learning in more flexible ways.
- Enhanced use of existing Digital 'edtech' tools and [TEL platforms](#) to support more flexible modes of teaching and student learning, and use of new tools to support technology enhanced learning.
- Building greater consistency in our approach, with innovation and ongoing enhancement embedded more explicitly within our institutional culture and processes.
- The role of the Institute of Education as a catalyst for pedagogical enhancement and innovation.

- Opportunities for students to study outside of their programme 'cohort' and to study alongside students from other disciplines.
- Opportunities for students to engage with multi-disciplinary modules – addressed via the three new 'optional' modules within the UG Curriculum Framework.
- Diversification of programme curriculum/content, e.g. case studies, themes, reading lists etc.
- The proportion of students who engage with short-term placements and a 'Year in Placement' as part of their education at St Mary's.
- Proportion of students engage with Study Abroad opportunities – with a better balance between outward in inward mobility required.
- Flexing the academic year by introducing a January (J) and Summer (S) semester (each of 4 weeks duration) that enable more flexible modes of study for students.
- Re-thinking and updating teaching spaces to support progressive teaching practices (e.g. hyflex teaching) that allow students to make choices about how they wish to engage with certain elements of their curriculum.
- Improving training and support for PhD supervisors, and enhanced opportunities for PGR students to gain practical and transferrable skills for employment.
- Building a 'one stop shop' advice & guidance Reception facility for students.
- Developing improved systems that enable ready access to high quality data for both academic and professional services staff that enable better provision of support for students, more effective monitoring of the student experience and student outcomes and that facilitate targeted enhancements in the delivery of programmes.

## 7. The COVID factor

The COVID pandemic has been a challenging experience for staff and students, but it has, in the views of many, also been a driver of unprecedented rapid change in the adoption of online and blended pedagogies and the tools that support both. The draft Strategy draws on the experience of the last 15 months but also looks beyond COVID. The emphasis is on a longer-term 5 year vision that reflects our values, and builds on our strengths, whilst emphasising the role of the 'digital' as a key means of 'adding value' and enhancing the richness and flexibility of the learning environment we provide for our students. Although much has been learned about the use of digital tools and resources, the Strategy places a continued emphasis on face-to-face forms of teaching, and the campus experience, with digital elements adding flexibility where this benefits students and is valued by them.

## 8. An integrative approach

A Strategy that addresses teaching and learning also needs to take account of and respect key elements of pre-existing strategies. The *Learning & Teaching Strategy* has been designed in such a way that it is aligned with:

1. The principles of excellent teaching set out in the [UG Curriculum Framework](#) (approved in June 2019)
2. The University's *People Strategy*
3. The *Employability Strategy*,
4. The *Digital Learning Strategy*
5. Our *Access & Participation Plan (APP)*

6. The *Partnerships Strategy*
7. The University's *Retention Strategy*.
8. Research on learning and teaching in the higher education sector.

### 9. An all-encompassing approach

The draft Learning & Teaching Strategy encompasses all categories of students (full-time, part-time, WP, campus-based, commuters etc) and all levels of study (from FHEQ level 3, to level 8).

This means that the Strategy applies to:

- Foundation Year students (FHEQ Level 3)
- Foundation degree students (FHEQ Levels 4 & 5)
- Bachelors Students (BSc, BA; FHEQ Levels 4, 5 and 6))
- Top-Up students (UG Level 6)
- PGCE students
- Masters level students (including PgCert, PgDip awards)
- MPhil, PHD and EdD students
- Students studying with collaborative partners who study under St Mary's regulations.

### 10. A metric-informed approach

The Learning and Teaching Strategy is informed by, but not led by concerns about metrics. Metrics are important, since they will enable the University to monitor the ongoing impact of the Strategy, and because certain metrics feed into League Tables, and of course the TEF. But their primary function is to ensure that there are tangible benefits to students (i.e. in terms of their continuation, completion, progression into graduate employment etc) which the University can 'measure' with some degree of reliability/confidence. In Section 2 (above) emphasis is placed on a student-centred approach, and improved student learning and outcomes. Drawing on metrics like those set-out in the table below provides a means of determining whether the experience and outcomes of students are improving and doing so to the timeframe envisaged.

The following table (see **Table 1** below) will provide the means by which the impact of the Learning & Teaching Strategy can be monitored during its lifetime and beyond.

| Measure/Metric                       | 20/21  | 21/22  | 22/23  | 23/24  | 24/25 | 25/26 |
|--------------------------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-------|
| Retention (% progressing to Year 2)  | 89%    | 90%    | 91%    | 92%    | 93%   | 94%   |
| Good Honours                         | 79%    | 74%    | 75%    | 76%    | 76%   | 77%   |
| Overseas students                    | 12%    | 15%    | 18%    | 20%    | 23%   | 25%   |
| TEF                                  | Silver | Silver | Silver | Silver | Gold  | Gold  |
| Satisfaction Overall (NSS)           | 90%    | 91%    | 91%    | 92%    | 93%   | 94%   |
| Graduate prospects (% employed)      | 95%    | 95%    | 95%    | 95%    | 95%   | 95%   |
| Graduate prospects (% graduate jobs) | 80%    | 81%    | 82%    | 83%    | 84%   | 85%   |
| Postgraduate students                | 15%    | 18%    | 20%    | 22%    | 24%   | 25%   |

|  |       |                            |                          |                      |              |              |
|--|-------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| PGR completion rate (within the maximum period of registration)                                      | 94%   | 95%                        | 95%                      | 95%                  | 96%          | 96%          |
| PGR student withdrawal rate  | 6%    | 5%                         | 5%                       | 5%                   | 4%           | 4%           |
| Number of qualified and trained PGR supervisors  | 90    | 97                         | 105                      | 113                  | 122          | 132          |
| Number of programmes in 10 <sup>th</sup> NSS Decile (Currently 5 in 2020)                            | 2     | 1                          | 0                        | 0                    | 0            | 0            |
| Number of programmes in 9 <sup>th</sup> NSS Decile (Currently ? in 2020)                             | 5     | 3                          | 2                        | 1                    | 0            | 0            |
| Proportion of St Mary's Staff with a HE teaching qualification (including AFHEA, FHEA, SFHEA, PFHEA) | 50%   | 60%                        | 70%                      | 80%                  | 85%          | 90%          |
| Student mentoring. All students to have the opportunity to be mentored by a higher level student     | Mixed | All level 3 and 4 students | All level 5 & 6 students | All level 7 students | All students | All students |
| Percentage of PGR students who take-up mentoring or digital assistant opportunities                  | 0%    | 10%                        | 15%                      | 20%                  | 25%          | 30%          |
| Attainment gap between white & black students (APP) (17% in 2017/18)                                 | 14    | 10                         | 5                        | 3                    | 0%           | 0%           |
| Attainment gaps between white & Asian students (APP) (11% in 2017/18)                                | 6     | 4                          | 3                        | 2                    | 0%           | 0%           |
| Continuation Asian students (83% in 2016/17)   | 84%   | 85%                        | 86%                      | 87%                  | 88%          | 90%          |
| Continuation gap between white & BAME students (6% in 2016/17)                                       | 5%    | 4%                         | 3%                       | 2%                   | 1%           | 0%           |
| Progression gap between white & black students (Highly skilled) (28% in 2016/17)                     | 24%   | 20%                        | 18%                      | 16%                  | 14%          | 10%          |
| Progression gap between white & BAME students (highly skilled) (14% in 2016/17)                      | 13%   | 12%                        | 11%                      | 10%                  | 9%           | 8%           |
| Continuation gap between disabled & non-disabled students (5% in 2016/17)                            | 4.5%  | 4%                         | 3.5%                     | 3%                   | 2.5%         | 2%           |
| Progression gap between disabled and non-disabled students (11% in 2016/17)                          | 9%    | 8%                         | 7%                       | 6%                   | 5%           | 4%           |
| Continuation gap between Polar 1 & 2 males and Polar 3, 4, & 5. (5% in 2016/17)                      | 4.5%  | 4%                         | 3.5%                     | 3%                   | 2.5%         | 2%           |

**Table 1: Measures of Success Metrics**

## 11. Other indicators of success

Whilst the metrics set out above in Table 1 will provide a means of monitoring progress, there are other indicators of whether the Strategy has met its objectives:

1. The [Effective teaching approaches](#), [Fundamental literacies](#), [Soft skills](#) and [Practical skills](#) contained within the [UG Curriculum Framework](#) are embedded in the delivery of all UG programmes.
2. An enhanced staff skill-set in the integration of face-to-face and online components, an enhanced balance between these in terms of programme delivery and improved staff feedback on the CPD opportunities made available to them.
3. Enhanced choice for students in terms of how they can engage with the learning opportunities and resources available to them, with more flexible, personalised modes of learning, and the seamless integration of online, independent and in-class learning.
4. A more flexible and diverse 'offer' which includes enhanced opportunities for part-time study via Continuing Education provision which attracts mature students seeking CPD (for career development purposes) or personal development.
5. An increasingly inclusive learning and teaching environment, and an increasingly diverse student body, with increasingly consistent levels of performance and outcomes.
6. An increasing number of teaching spaces that embody enhanced integration of learning technologies and that enable more flexible modes of study (e.g. this might include Hyflex teaching).
7. Students have enhanced opportunities to demonstrate and evidence achievement of the ['Graduate Attributes'](#) set-out in the [Curriculum Framework](#), via the [St Mary's Skills Award](#).
8. Students have access to an enriched array of online tools, learning resources and learning opportunities (e.g. simulation-based and virtual reality-based learning).