



St Mary's  
University  
Twickenham  
London



St Mary's University  
**PEOPLE STRATEGY**  
**2023 - 2030**

# “Inspiring Excellence – an employer of choice for exceptional people”

## Introduction

St Mary’s University only achieves what it does because of our exceptional people. Our University remains a unique place because of the talent and dedication of our people working together for a common purpose.

This document is a refresh of our first ever People Strategy published in 2020 which preceded our University Strategy Vision 2030. Since then, we have encountered the disruptive effect of the pandemic and the changing nature of work and workforce expectations as a result. Our strategic refresh was developed in this wider context. We continue to build an international reputation for excellence in teaching and research. **We were ranked in the UK's top 5 for teaching quality and top 10 for student experience (the Sunday Times Good University Guide 2024).** We are also striving to become an employer of choice and attract global talent to support our ambition. We strongly believe that real diversity delivers greater impact in all we do and enhances the experience of our students.

We want our staff to embrace their unique talents and grow in confidence and capability to enhance their part in growing and developing the University. Our 2023 Staff Engagement Survey shows that our staff are engaged, have a strong sense of purpose and community and care about the future of the University.

This year we launched our staff apprenticeship scheme to provide professional qualifications and opportunities for career development. We will develop our staff to be authentic, ambitious, imaginative and confident. We will in turn provide inspirational leadership, guidance, support and recognition. A programme of tailored leadership development and line management support is being rolled out this academic year.

The efficiency and effectiveness of our resources continue to be crucial, both to the success of the University and achieving strategic growth to protect our long-term future. As the higher education sector becomes increasingly competitive both in terms of attracting students and talented staff, it is more important than ever that we have the very best staff to drive St Mary’s forward in a challenging political and economic climate.

We are committed to continuing to build a University community that shapes the lives and prospects of everyone who comes here and our refreshed People Strategy updates on how we will support this.

**Ruth Thompson**  
**Director of HR**  
**November 2023**

## **Mission and purpose, values and vision**

### **Mission and Purpose**

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.

### **Our vision**

Our vision for St Mary's University is built around creating a transformational experience for our students as our staff support them to succeed.

Our students and staff are at the heart of everything we do. We are an inclusive university, open to those of all faiths and none, and a local institution in a global city, serving a growing and richly diverse student community in locations both real and virtual.

### **Our values**

Rooted in our Catholic Foundation, with the value of the human person at its heart, our values set us apart, shape our behaviour and inform all our decisions in a university that responds to the demands of today.

### **Generosity of spirit**

Across the University there's a strong sense of encouragement, collegiality, empathy, helpfulness and service to others.

### **Inclusiveness**

We celebrate differences and welcome diversity, recognising that everyone is born with a unique identity. St Mary's is a place where all students and staff can reach their full potential and make a positive contribution to society.

### **Respect**

We respect all and treat everyone as we ourselves would want to be treated.

## Excellence

We strive to be the best at everything we do. We set high standards and seek continuous improvement in all our practices and work.

## Vision 2030 <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/about/vision-2030/about.aspx>

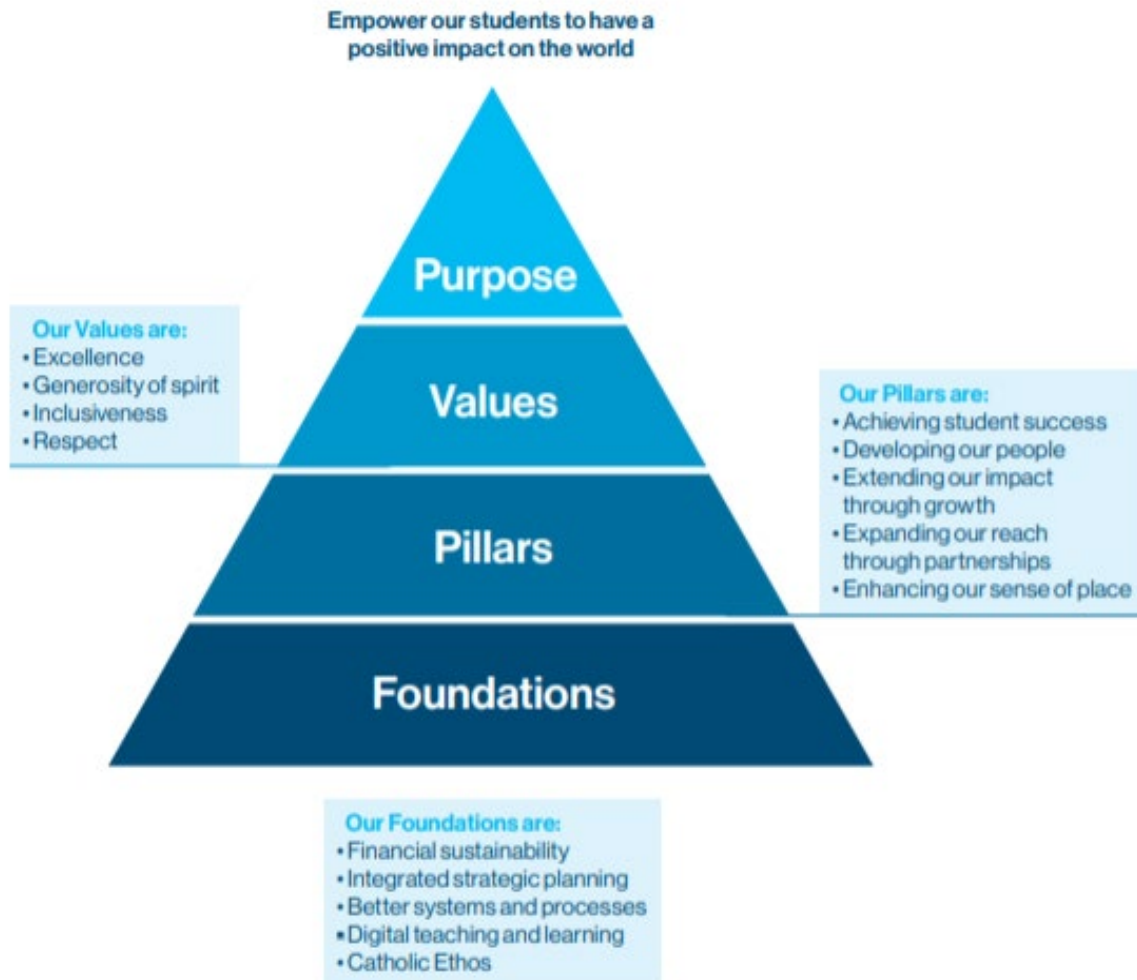
outlines our approach and forms the guiding structure for our supporting strategies, operating plans, and team and individual targets. To achieve our vision, we have identified five pillars that will support our strategy. One of those pillars and its objectives, sets the strategic direction for this People Strategy, it is:

### Developing our people

We seek to empower our staff to reach their full potential by developing a supportive, inclusive, collaborative and inspiring working environment. We want our staff and leadership to reflect an encompass the diversity of our student body and the wider community.

Our People Strategy will underpin the continued realisation of the University Vision 2030 and will be a key contributor to our continued growth and ambition.





## Delivery

Our first People Strategy in 2020 set out our strategic people aim and key objectives. It preceded Vision 2030, so has been refreshed this year to ensure alignment with Vision 2030; the development of business five-year plans to 2027/28; and to reflect the changing workforce environment post Covid.

Recent successes include:

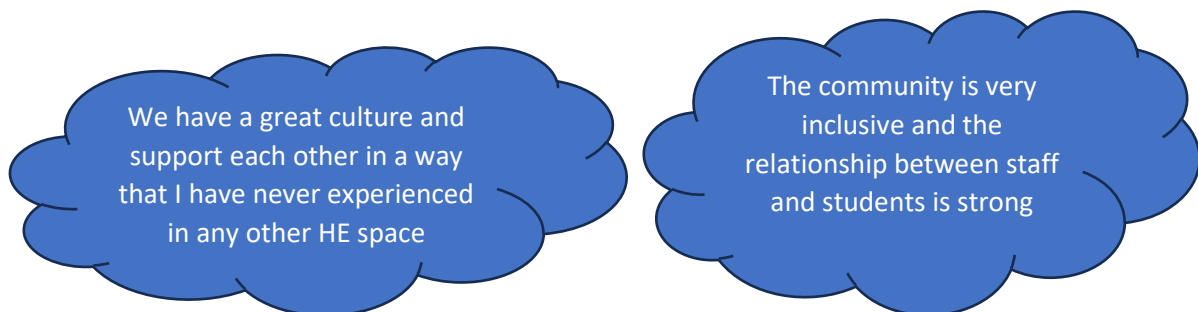
- Delivery of a new Senior Academic Management Structure
- Development of new Academic career pathway practitioner route
- Launch of a Staff Engagement Survey and engagement survey platform
- Developing and implementing an active Womens Leadership Forum
- Athena Swan Bronze award
- Development of Race Equality Charter submission and Action Plan
- Developments in Race and Gender Pay gap reporting including intersectional analysis

- Level 2 Disability Confident Award to improve the recruitment of candidates with disabilities and support of existing staff with disabilities
- Launch of Embedding Inclusive Hiring Initiative, including internally-led training, extensive resources for hiring managers, and creation of the Inclusive Hiring Advisors group
- Development of Transgender and Non-Binary Equality Policy, Menopause Policy and Secondment Policy in line with best practice
- Launch of new Induction programme bringing together Professional Service and Academic Staff
- Operational improvements and enhancements in onboarding module, appraisal module, digital signatures and online right to work checks.

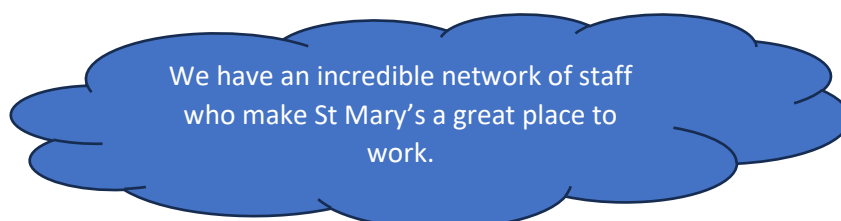


Building on this success, as well as meeting Vision 2030 objectives, the refreshed strategy has been informed by the results and feedback of the Staff Engagement Survey 2023. The survey recorded a participation rate 70% and overall engagement score of 72%, which is in line with HEI benchmarks.

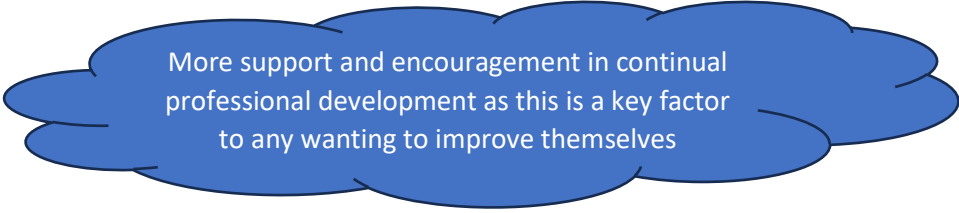
We celebrate from our results, the level of care about the future of St Mary's, clarity on how our work contributes to St Mary's success, that we find our work interesting and challenging and the high levels of support and respect by line managers.



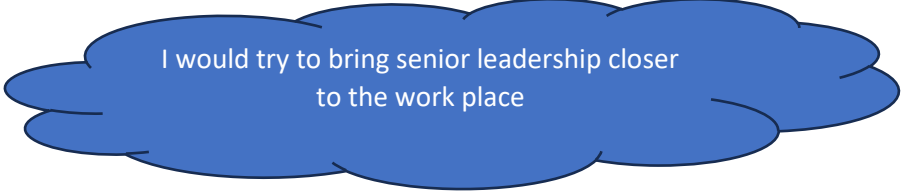
A sense of purpose, culture and values and line management support were among the most favourable aspects of the employee experience.



Reward and recognition and career development, leadership and wellbeing had the highest levels of concern.



More support and encouragement in continual professional development as this is a key factor to any wanting to improve themselves



I would try to bring senior leadership closer to the work place

We are responding at an organisational and local level to the results. Our strategy and operating plan have been updated to reflect the survey outcome and interventions being undertaken as a result.

### **Operational Enhancement Programme Strategic Principles**

The Operational Enhancement Programme determined the following principles to form the basis of our approach to organisational design. The purpose of these principles is to set our intent of how we wish to move our organisation to meet the aspirations set out in Vision 2030.

The core principles are:

- **Responsibility** - Responsibility is clearly defined.
- **Accountability** – Accountability is clearly understood and accepted.
- **Devolution** - Decision making authority is as close to the customer (whether this is a student, staff member or external) as possible.
- **Resilience** - Operational resilience is built into structures to manage single points of expertise.
- **Automation** - Standardise and automate repetitive processes.
- **Flexibility** - Flexibility built into structures and roles to respond to business/customer needs.
- **Recognition** - Our job Evaluation scheme recognises the importance of individual contributor roles alongside managerial ones.
- **Agility** - Internal staff mobility across the University is prioritised and enabled.

### **Future Service Operating Model**

In addition to these principles, in shaping teams for the future we will want them to be the right size and shape and empowered to deliver quickly with devolved decision-making. In considering the optimal future shape of our Services we will also take account of:

**FTE %:** the number of staff in the service department expressed as a % of the overall university staff (based on FTE not headcount)

**Spans of control:** the number of people who report into another person

**Layers:** the number of line management layers between staff in a department up to the Vice Chancellor.

The expectation is that Directors will work with HR to move towards this future model as an when departments are being reviewed, when recruiting new roles, changing any existing role or undergoing any role evaluations.

## The HR Operating Model

The HR Function is a collaborative function that delivers quality HR advice, is regarded as a trusted advisor to the business and provides good and improving transactional support.

- HR Systems and Operations
- Resourcing and Talent Management
- Business Partnering
- Employee Relations
- HR Policy
- Pay and reward
- Learning and Development
- Staff engagement and wellbeing
- Equality Diversity and Inclusion

As demand for HR professional services is business led, operating requirements for the function are in part determined by the business strategic plans. The development of five-year strategic planning will, as it matures, better enable HR to drive a strong culture of planning and performance integrating workforce strategy with business strategy.

Faculty, School and Service strategic priorities include:

- Growth, such as changing the nature of our distribution model with partnerships and St Marys Online initiatives offering more flexible ways to learn and expanding the size of portfolios and programmes leading to a different and larger workforce
- An attractive employee brand and competitive people value proposition, highlighting the strong sense of purpose and community at St Mary's, to ensure a thriving and sustainable future
- Nurturing and empowering leadership and professional development opportunities, career pathways and succession planning to attract and retain talented staff who can play their part in growing and developing the University
- Enhancing equality diversity and inclusion practices to provide a high-quality student experience including for international students and encourage more diverse staffing
- Championing a healthy work life balance to ensure staff wellbeing
- A more agile and empowered workforce to better enable the University to adapt and thrive in the future



This would suggest that our HR operating model of business partners, specialist advisors and HR operations is the right one, but as the University grows so will the demands on the team. Delivery of this strategy will require a sustained focus on excellence delivering the basics consistently every time, using digital solutions and data analysis and we will need to continue to invest in the continuous professional development of the HR team.



## Strategic Themes

The refreshed People Strategy has four inter-connected themes:

- Foster a culture of inclusion, engagement and wellbeing
- Being an employer of choice
- Performance, development and growth
- Excellence in HR delivery

All are achieved through inter connectedness with objectives across our other strategic pillars; links to related strategies; a collaborative University wide commitment and a future focused HR Team.

Delivery of the People Strategy will be tracked through our HR Operating Plan which is a living document that tracks our own performance through clear target setting and individual accountability and ownership within the HR Team. Progress against each

of the strategic themes will be through measures of success and more detailed KPIs are agreed through the University's strategic planning process.

<b>STRATEGIC THEMES</b>	
<b>Foster a culture of inclusion, engagement and wellbeing</b>	<b>Measures of success</b>
<p>Our aim is to: foster a diverse, inclusive and engaged community that enables staff to thrive, embrace their uniqueness and give their best every day, in a great place to work.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate that diversity and inclusion will enhance the core purposes of the University; to create exceptional teaching and research, develop the highest level of student experience, impact positively on student attainment and have a significant impact on the wider University community.</li> <li>• Engage leaders and managers to challenge the status quo and embrace transformational ideas around how we recruit and promote diversity; enabling them to set ambitious goals that have resonance with the contexts within which their staff work.</li> <li>• Encourage our leaders' commitment to supporting and championing our six Diversity and Inclusion Staff Networks and to ensure behaviours and language are inclusive and positive.</li> <li>• Continue to implement the Athena Swan Bronze Award and Disability Confident Scheme and commit to submission of the Advance HE Race Equality Charter and delivery of the LGBTQ+ inclusion project to improve representation, belonging and enhance outcomes for staff.</li> <li>• Equip an organisational and local response to the Staff Engagement Survey 2023 results, working with staff, networks and trade unions to contribute their experience, expertise and ideas to take action to improve the lived experience for all staff.</li> <li>• Build on activities already in place to create a safe and supportive environment for all staff and develop a rolling offer of health and wellbeing advice, training and activities that inspire staff and contribute towards a Mentally Healthy University.</li> <li>• Keep current working practices under review to ensure that flexible and hybrid working is supported across the University while ensuring the needs of the business are met.</li> </ul>	<p><i>EDI metrics:</i> Diversity Declarations Senior Leadership representation Pay gaps</p> <p><i>Staff survey questions:</i> EDI and Wellbeing</p> <p>EAP/OH referrals</p> <p>Blue Flag recruitments</p> <p>Exit survey data</p>

This strand underpins the following Vision 2030 pillars				
Achieving our student success Developing our	People	Extending our impact through growth	Expanding our reach through partnerships	Enhancing our sense of place
<b>Being an employer of choice</b>			<b>Measures of success</b>	
<p>Our aim is to: be an employer of choice, where the best and brightest want to be; for attracting diverse talent; and rewarding and recognising excellent contribution which reflects our values and contributes to achieving our ambition.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop our employer brand, promoting the employee experience, acknowledging the needs of our different audiences and celebrating what makes us unique.</li> <li>• Continue to develop, introduce and test attraction, sourcing and selection techniques which help us attract and engage high quality staff and build diverse teams of people.</li> <li>• Increase the number of Apprenticeship roles to offer a non-traditional route into academia and a funded learning offer targeting hard to fill roles.</li> <li>• Introduce a Graduate Associate Programme to grow our own talent.</li> <li>• Review our people value proposition, offering greater flexibility and choice to suit changing needs and enable the University to be agile and competitive in a competitive external market.</li> <li>• Continue our commitment to the London Living Wage and building a pay-scale that is fair and fit for the future to enable us to operate a transparent reward and recognition process.</li> <li>• Continue to develop Race and Gender gap reporting and intersectional analysis to inform areas for action.</li> <li>• Make sure that success at both individual and team levels is celebrated outside of formal recognition frameworks, to remind ourselves about the importance of acknowledging great behaviours and performance.</li> </ul>			<p><i>Staff survey questions:</i></p> <p>Reward and recognition</p> <p>Benefits take up</p> <p>Staff turnover</p> <p>Recruitment metrics such as time to hire</p> <p>Exit survey data</p>	
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<b>Performance, development, and growth</b>				<b>Measures of success</b>	
<p>Our aim is to: Create the capability needed for future success by motivating and engaging our people to take responsibility for their own performance and development and to adapt to continuous change.</p> <p>We will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a University wide training needs analysis to identify the training required to enable staff to thrive and address knowledge and skills gaps and future workforce requirements.</li> <li>• Introduce a learning management system to act as a foundation for internal and external learning interventions that is used by staff and managers.</li> <li>• Develop an apprenticeship strategy integrated with workforce planning and skills and capability plans to develop, retain, and attract staff with the skills required for the future.</li> <li>• Equip our leaders and line managers with the necessary skills and behaviours to lead others, role model our values to deliver excellence throughout the University.</li> <li>• Provide expert business partner support to enable managers and staff to undertake transformational change, considering their own contexts and circumstances and to ensure future ways of working are in place to support both staff and the operation of the University.</li> <li>• Create clear succession plans to demonstrate our commitment to increasing clarity in career development and talent management.</li> <li>• Encourage and enable staff development through a range of opportunities including formal development programmes, secondments, coaching, mentoring.</li> </ul>				<p>% staff completing appraisal</p> <p>Essential learning completion</p> <p>Number of staff accessing L&amp;D</p> <p>Apprenticeship completions</p> <p><i>Staff survey questions:</i></p> <p>line manager, developing our people</p>	
<b>This strand underpins the following Vision 2030 pillars</b>					
<b>Achieving our student success</b>	<b>Developing our people</b>	<b>Extending our impact through growth</b>	<b>Expanding our reach through partnerships</b>	<b>Enhancing our sense of space</b>	
<b>Excellence in HR Team Delivery</b>				<b>Measures of success</b>	
<p>Our aim is for the People Strategy to make a positive impact on all who work at the University and the HR team to be bold, and influence transformational change, role-modelling the core values and behaviours of the University.</p> <p>We will achieve this by:</p>				<p>HR to staff ratio</p> <p>Top desk data</p> <p>Business feedback</p>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working in close partnership with leaders, managers and staff in Academic and Professional Services and building on our external networks to ensure we continue to bring best practice to all we do.</li> <li>• Being customer led and mindful of the University's academic mission, underpinned by the needs of the operational business.</li> <li>• Continuously reviewing and improving our people management policies, processes and experiences and responding to constructive feedback.</li> <li>• Put in place the building blocks to enable a more strategic approach to workforce planning.</li> <li>• Underpinning our practice with evaluation and a desire to learn and improve supported through a functional skills and capability plan.</li> <li>• Developing a HR Data Strategy with the aim of following the employee lifecycle and producing accurate, timely, meaningful data and insight to the highest quality to not only meet our statutory reporting obligations but to enable data driven conversations to take place.</li> <li>• Continuing operational enhancements to improve service delivery, the efficiency and automation of HR administrative processes.</li> <li>• Communicating regularly and proactively in a coordinated way using a variety of channels to ensure consistent and timely communications to staff that explain, inform and engage. Contributing to the work of digital engagement and internal communications experts to create an engaging digital staff platform.</li> </ul>		
<p><b>This strand underpins the following Vision 2030 pillars</b></p>		
<p><b>Achieving our student success</b></p>	<p><b>Developing our people</b></p>	<p><b>Extending our impact through growth</b></p>

## People Strategy 2023 - 2030

