



University Reading List Policy

Executive summary

This policy aims to ensure that students can access the correct learning resources in a timely and consistent manner. It sets out the responsibilities of the different staff groups and requires academic staff to use the University's Online Reading List system embedded into MyModules. It also requires staff to provide guidance within lists on the relative importance of individual resources. Students should have consistent reading lists across modules which should be constrained in length. Reading lists should be prepared in sufficient time to allow items to be made available in the Library. **All items on reading lists should be available in the University Library collection with appropriate access arrangements for the number of enrolled students.**

1. Purpose

The aims and purposes of this Reading List Policy are to:

- Ensure that all St Mary's University students have ready access to essential learning resources and are clearly aware of which resources are recommended for every module on which they are registered
- Ensure that purchasing and provision of resources is cost-effective and that resources are available in the right format, at the right time and in sufficient numbers to meet the learning and teaching objectives of the programme of study
- To ensure that reading and self-directed study is a positive experience for students, and that they do not regard the University as having failed in its obligation to provide necessary resources for the successful completion of a programme of study
- To ensure effective use is made of the University's Online Reading List system and its capacity to reduce the administrative burden associated with reading list administration
- To ensure compliance with Copyright law and the terms of the Copyright Licensing Agency agreement in the re-use of published material
- To clearly articulate the roles and responsibilities of Library staff, Programme Directors/Module Convenors and module teams regarding the use of reading lists as teaching tools

2. Scope and definitions

A 'reading list' constitutes the list of learning resources students should use during self-directed study to help them achieve the learning outcomes of a module. It should be used to compliment in-person teaching sessions, online learning, assignments and other learning tools. As a general rule, every module of study should be supported by a clearly defined reading list. The University should provide convenient access to all resources on reading lists for students via its Library collection.

In the context of this policy, 'reading list' should be taken to mean the actual list circulated to students registered on each module rather than any provisional list included in validation documents or similar.

The policy applies to reading lists at module level and outline reading for students on that module, including core reading and further reading, digitised chapters, journal articles and other digital objects.

3. Staff responsibilities

Programme Teams, Module Convenors and Library Services staff must work in close collaboration in the planning and development of resource requirements for both new and existing modules and programmes. Staff responsibilities fall as follows:

- **Academic Directors for TLQE** are responsible for implementing the Reading List Policy within their Academic Schools and ensuring the requirements of this policy are adhered to by academic staff.
- **Module Convenors and/or Programme Directors** are responsible for creating, editing and updating the definitive reading list for each module and making this available in a timely manner, using the University's Online Reading List system. They do this based on their desired learning outcomes for each module, their disciplinary expertise and their awareness of current literature and resources in their disciplines. Module Convenors and/or Programme Directors have a responsibility to ensure that the reading lists provided to students reflect current scholarship, professional practice and legal requirements, as pertinent to the needs of each module.
- **The Library Academic Liaison Team** is responsible for acting as the Library's primary contacts with Module Convenors and/or Programme Directors with regard to reading lists. The team is also responsible for training academic staff in using the Online Reading List System and working with academic staff to ensure the format of reading list is appropriate and sustainable for Library resourcing purposes. This team also manages a Library Resource Development Fund for each Academic School, enabling purchase of Library resources which are not currently required on any formal reading list, but are deemed to be worthwhile additions to the library's collections.
- **The Library Information Resources & Content Team** is responsible for systematically reviewing reading lists using the online system and making purchasing decisions for Library resources based on the guidelines set out in this policy. The team is also responsible for managing the Library budget for reading list provision, ensuring access to the resources for students and overseeing the specialist systems involved.

4. Format and distribution of reading lists

In order to ensure a consistent and high quality experience for students, it is highly desirable for all reading lists used within the University to follow a standardised format. This standardised approach minimises confusion regarding the expectations of students and their access to learning resources. The following guidelines should be followed by academic staff when constructing reading lists:

4.1. Location of reading lists and change control

Module reading lists should be created, maintained and published to students **using the University's Online Reading List system**. This system is simple to use and greatly reduces the administrative workload across the University versus maintenance of traditional static word-processed lists. It also allows reading lists to easily be embedded in the MyModules VLE as required. Support is available in its use from the Academic Liaison Librarian team.

Once a module reading list has been converted for use on the Online Reading List system, all learning resources for the module should be listed via this method. Minor changes to lists can be made at any time during the academic year, but large-scale additions or changes must be made well in advance of each semester (see Section 7 below). In order to avoid confusion as to the location of required readings, additional readings should be added solely by editing the Online Reading List and not added in an ad hoc manner within the MyModules VLE.

4.2. Types of resource suitable for reading lists

Resources on reading lists can be in a wide variety of formats and are not limited to traditional printed books. All reading list resources should be carefully chosen to be suitable for the level of the module, as well as the mode of study. Common resource formats suitable for reading list use include:

- Printed books and e-books
- Chapters within books
- E-journal articles
- Whole journals and other periodicals (for background reading)
- Online reports and official publications (either within Library databases or on open access)
- Websites and webpages (including news and current affairs)
- Online video content
- Other digital learning objects

4.3. Length of lists and relative importance of items

In general, reading lists should be kept as concise as possible for the given level of study. This is to ensure students can make effective use of the resources and also to ensure the University can provide the resources to students in a financially sustainable manner.

Undergraduate reading lists should not normally include more than 40 unique books per module. Longer lists may be appropriate for Masters-level reading lists. However academic staff must bear in mind the financial and resourcing implications for the University of excessively long book lists. The distinction between a focused 'reading list' and a subject bibliography should also be considered in this context.

Each reading list item should be **clearly classified into one of the following importance categories** (which can easily be achieved using the 'Importance' feature on the Online Reading List system). These categories help students organise their workload and also facilitate planning of Library resources. Purchase ratios relating to these categories can be found in the table at 6.1

The following definitions may be useful:

Category	Description
'Recommended for Purchase'	Resources (normally textbooks) which will be used continuously throughout the module teaching period, and which students are strongly encouraged to purchase for guaranteed access.
'Essential'	Resources which must be read by students to ensure understanding of the topic at hand. These should be limited to around 3-4 items per topic.
'Recommended'	Resources that students are strongly recommended to read in order to ensure complete understanding of the topic at hand.
'Background'	Resources that will assist the student in building comprehensive background knowledge of the topic and maximising their attainment.

	The student does not necessarily have to read every resource listed to gain knowledge of the subject area.
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4.4. Description of resources within reading lists

Accurate resource description is crucial in reading lists to ensure that students can locate the resources and that Library staff can rapidly ascertain requirements and costs for resourcing purposes.

The Online Reading List system assists staff with this process by enabling items to be 'bookmarked' using descriptions already available online. Resources can be bookmarked not only from the St Mary's Summon Library Search tool, but also from publisher websites, Amazon, WorldCat and many more online locations. Once bookmarked in this way, the online system will automatically link students to resources where available online, or (for printed resources) inform them of available Library copies.

For published books, the **latest edition of any given text** should be specified unless there is a specific pedagogical reason to recommend an older edition. This is to ensure that students are always directed to the most current information and research. The Library will automatically purchase the latest editions of books added to reading lists unless specific reasons are given for alternative action. Any pedagogical reasons should be given in the 'Library Note' field on the Online Reading List system.

4.5. Sub-sections within reading lists

Reading lists should preferably be broken down into logical sub-sections in order to improve their usability for students. This can be achieved using the 'Section' functionality in the Online Reading List system. The types of sub-heading or structure used within lists will vary by discipline and preference of the academic staff teaching on the programme/module. However common methods for sub-dividing reading lists include:

- **By topic within the overall module remit**
- **By time period** (week 1, week 2, etc)
- **By resource format** (books, journal articles, websites, videos etc)

If topics or time periods are used for sub-headings, these should generally match the formal structure of the module for consistency.

4.6. Explanatory notes

Reading lists can be significantly improved as pedagogical tools through the provision of explanatory notes using the 'Student Note' feature on the Online Reading List system. Such notes can be used as a brief summary of why an item has been recommended, as well as for providing further detail on which aspects of the resource the student should focus their attention on.

4.7. Academic years and annual reading list rollovers

Each online reading list must be assigned to an academic year on the Online Reading List system – for example, '2016-17' or '2017-18'. Each summer all existing reading lists will be automatically copied from the current academic year to the upcoming year by Library staff. This is called 'rollover' and results in a copy of the current list being created for the new academic year.

After the rollover process **all copied lists for the new academic year will be left in 'Draft' status** and will not be visible to students until they are 'Published'. Each Module Convenor must review the list for their module well in advance of the semester start date (see deadlines in Section 7) and

publish the list themselves after making any changes. After publishing the list they must also reset the reading list link in the MyModules VLE to point to the new version of the list.

4.8. Number of students on each module

The number of students expected to be enrolled on the module in the current academic year should always be stated within the online reading list. This information is essential in planning Library resources for each module and can easily be added using the 'Expected Number of Students' function on the Online Reading List system. The expected number of students on the module directly influences the number of copies of an item which are purchased (see 6.1).

4.9. Making reading lists accessible to students via the MyModules VLE

The online reading list for each module should be embedded in the MyModules VLE so that students can use the list effectively. A special plugin available in on MyModules to enable this; this can be found under the 'Add an activity or resource' menu within that system and is labelled 'Course Resource List'.

5. Support for academic staff in using the Online Reading List system

The Library Services department provides a training and support service for academic staff to ensure they are able to take ownership of their reading lists on the online system. This is provided by the Academic Liaison Librarian team. The Liaison Librarians can provide either one-to-one or group training sessions by appointment with academic staff as necessary. They also serve as the first point of contact for academic staff for any matters relating to Library reading list provision. The Liaison Librarians maintain a record of training provided, which can be made available to Academic and Programme Directors for planning purposes.

6. Library provision of reading list resources to students

Students now expect convenient, cost-free access to all recommended reading list resources as a basic element of University provision. Any failures in this area are likely to have a significant negative impact on student perceptions of the University and on ratings given in feedback exercises such as the National Student Survey. Given the strong emphasis on learning support in the Teaching Excellence Framework, shortcomings in this area will also have an impact to the University's broader league table position in future. It is therefore crucial that students have dependable University-provided access to all reading list items and are not expected to make their own arrangements to obtain these key learning resources.

6.1. Library resource policy for reading list items

A key function of the University's Library service Library is to ensure that reading list resources are available to students in sufficient numbers. In line with its Library Resource Management Policy, the Library service operates the following resource management policy for published reading list items (NB. 'book' is taken to mean any non-open access published resource with an ISBN):

Resource Type / Importance Category as specified on Reading List	General Library Resource Policy
'Recommended for Purchase' books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High priority • E-book version purchased wherever available and funds permit.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One print copy purchased per 20 students (a maximum may apply for very large cohorts) if ebook is not available. •
'Essential' books and book chapters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High priority • E-book version purchased wherever available and funds permit. • One print copy purchased per 20 students (a maximum may apply for very large cohorts) if ebook is not available. • For chapters, scanned/digitised copies created wherever possible under Copyright law
'Essential' journal articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High priority • Subscription to journal considered where articles from title are frequently recommended across multiple modules/programmes • Scanned/digitised copy of article purchased where a subscription is not possible
'Recommended' books and book chapters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium priority • E-book version purchased where available and funds permit • One print copy purchased per 40 students • For chapters, scanned/digitised copies created wherever possible under Copyright law
'Recommended' journal articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium priority • Online access where the Library already subscribes to the journal • Subscription to journal considered where articles from title are frequently recommended across multiple modules/programmes • Scanned/digitised copy of article generally purchased wherever the item is not already available in the Library collection
'Background' books	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low priority • At least one print or e-book copy purchased
'Background' journal articles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low priority • Online access where the Library already subscribes to the journal • Scanned/digitised copy of article considered where funds permit. Otherwise academic staff should consider alternative resources already available in the Library collection

The above policy is applied by the Library service by means of the controlled 'Reading List Review' functionality within the Online Reading List system. This review process is automatically triggered when any changes are published on a reading list by academic staff. Library purchasing policy may be varied in certain situations based on the needs of particular disciplines, modes of study and the limits of available funding.

6.2. Budgetary arrangements for Library resources

Provision of University Library resources takes place within the constraints of the institutional **Library Resources Budget** as administered by the Library Services Department. This budget is allocated to Library Services as part of the University's annual financial planning process, and the service aims to match the average spend per student FTE of competitor institutions when making annual budget bids. The Library Resources Budget is divided between the Academic Schools based on student numbers and average resource prices across different disciplines.

In some situations the allocated budget amount for a given discipline may not be sufficient to ensure resource provision in line with the policy listed in section 5.1. In this situation, Library staff will discuss the situation with academic staff and agree a compromise in the best interest of students.

The **following categories** of material will be subjected to **additional consideration** before purchasing:

- Books published more than ten years ago (depending on the discipline).
- Out of print items.
- Individual items costing in excess of £150.
- Titles with a total cost in excess of £500.

6.3. Resourcing for excessively long reading lists

Lengthy reading lists – particularly those incorporating very long lists of books – cause many problems with Library resourcing and, ultimately, knock-on problems with student satisfaction with the University's learning support.

The Library service defines an 'excessively long reading list' as one containing more than 100 entries. In most cases Library staff will be unable to systematically review lists of this length and they will be referred back to the relevant Academic Liaison Librarian to discuss with the Module Convenor.

In most cases the Library service will require the Module Convenor to reduce the length of the reading list to within the guidelines laid out in Section 4.3. In some cases it may be appropriate for non-essential background reading to be relocated to a separate subject bibliography with clear disclaimers about the need for students to source the books (at their expense) from outside the University.

6.4. Resourcing new modules and programmes

Where new modules are created that require many new Library resources, there may be a period of several years while resources are built up to match the required ratios per student. In this scenario (assuming no dedicated funding is available), resources marked as 'Essential' or 'Recommended' will be prioritised.

Where new programmes or modules are being considered for validation, proposed reading lists must be provided during the validation process so that resource costs can be considered. In some cases

additional central funding may be required by Library Services as a pre-condition of validation in order to ensure adequate provision.

7. Deadlines for confirmation of reading lists

In order to ensure sufficient time for new Library resources to be made available in advance of each semester, all new reading lists(or substantive revisions of existing lists) must be completed **by late-July for Semester 1 and late November for Semester 2.**

8. Monitoring and enforcement

Effectiveness of the Reading List Policy will be monitored and evaluated through reporting to Teaching, Learning and Quality Enhancement Committee.

9. Complementary documentation

The following policies should be read in conjunction with this Reading List Policy:

- Library Resource Management Policy
- CLA Scanning Service Policy

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