

Knowledge Exchange Strategy

St Mary's Knowledge Exchange Vision

St Mary's University holds a unique position in the UK's Higher Education landscape. Rooted in our Catholic foundation, with the value of the whole person at its heart, our values set us apart, shape our behaviour and inform all our decisions.

We are a local institution in a global city, with a commitment to play a dynamic role in the educational, cultural, sporting and economic life of south west London and a vision to empower our community to have a positive impact on the world. Knowledge Exchange is fundamental to this vision.

We aim to use our research and scholarship to have a positive impact, contributing to the economy and engaging with our local community, with wide involvement of staff and students in activity across the University. Our contribution will be at a local, national and international level: playing a valuable role in our local community, whilst engaging in and contributing to national and international challenges that span communities.

External Benchmarks

The Government's focus on knowledge exchange (KE) and universities' contribution to their local area has grown significantly in recent years, with funding increasingly tied to universities' KE activity and engagement with their local community.

St Mary's participates fully in a wide range of KE related benchmarks, including the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) and the KE Concordat, as well as submitting the Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey each year. This enables us to compare our performance against other institutions and identify areas of strength and where we could improve.

St Mary's does particularly well compared to similar institutions in our engagement with public and third sector organisations, and the use we make of our facilities. But there are other areas which we aim to improve, including the enterprise and KE opportunities for our students, and our contribution to local regeneration.

Interaction with other strategies

Our Knowledge Exchange strategy supports our Research and Academic strategies, and our ambition is to use the knowledge created within St Mary's to inform and shape public policy and practice in industry, business, and professional organisations, and connect with and support development of the local community and wider economy. We will use our research and teaching excellence to expand our influence beyond academia, working with schools, arts and cultural bodies, faith and volunteer groups, sporting groups, NGOs, businesses and government at both local and national level.

Knowledge Exchange Objectives

A key aim of our Enterprise and KE activity is to help St Mary's diversify our income, to enable us to become more resilient and sustainable. This activity contributes to other crucial institutional priorities as well, including increasing research funding, helping to translate research into impact, contributing to local economic development and helping with student employability.

There are four strands to our Knowledge Exchange strategy:

1. Using our research to have an impact on society, the economy, public policy and professional practice
2. Expanding the reach of our short courses, including through continuing education
3. Making best use of our world class facilities and equipment
4. Increasing staff and student engagement in knowledge exchange and public engagement

Overall our focus will be on helping to rebuild the local economy following the pandemic, working in partnership with local councils, employers and other education providers to create opportunities for local residents to retrain and upskill, and opportunities for local businesses to benefit from our expertise and facilities to drive growth and create more employment.

1. Using our research to create impact

St Mary's, alongside all universities, will play a critical role in helping the economy and our communities to recover after Covid. We can contribute to recovery through working with businesses to innovate and increase productivity through the application of our research and consultancy, thereby increasing profitability and growth. To do this we will increase the consultancy and contract research carried out within the university, focussing initially on the existing areas of strength before broadening out into other areas of research.

We will map our KE strategy and research strengths against the priorities in the South London Partnership Economic Recovery Action Plan, to support their aim of applying research and creating innovation to stimulate growth.

We will use The Exchange to increase our public engagement, both sharing our research and intellectual output, but also raising the profile of St Mary's in the local area and using it as a base to build relationships with local employers and businesses.

We will continue to extend our influence and engagement in public policy debates. Our areas of expertise, such as health sciences and Education, as well as our Catholic identity give us a unique perspective on many issues and we will leverage our research activity, websites and blogs, public lectures and webinars and various YouTube channels to reach a wide audience and influence debates.

We will introduce Knowledge Transfer Partnerships for the first time at St Mary's, creating graduate employment opportunities, building deeper relationships with local businesses and helping them grow, while evidencing the impact of our research.

We will introduce apprenticeships at St Mary's, with an initial focus on niche areas where we have academic strength and where there is employer demand. We will explore opportunities in future to broaden our apprenticeship offer to include other areas, particularly in subjects allied to medicine, where there is increasing demand. This will enable us to engage with local employers in new ways, contributing to growth and increasing local skills development.

2. Short Courses and Continuing Education

We will participate in the Richmond Skills Taskforce, and support the implementation of the South London Partnership Skills plan, to play our part in enabling our local communities to recover following the pandemic. We will continue to work with local organisations and businesses, building strong partnerships with the Council and others, to help local businesses grow, organisations benefit from our expertise and ensure that individuals are able to access learning beyond a degree, including reskilling and upskilling later in life.

In recent years we have expanded our Short Course provision from the original sports and health remit into new areas, including Education, the creative industries and humanities. In the aftermath of the pandemic, we will focus on introducing new accredited courses to enable those affected to retrain and start new careers, as well as offering appropriate modules as professional CPD to enable more people to upskill. We will also utilise our experience of remote teaching to develop high quality e-learning provision, to make our courses accessible to a wider audience.

We will also introduce a new Continuing Education programme that will allow adults to access many of our undergraduate and postgraduate modules, building to a qualification in bite-sized chunks, or studying for pleasure or professional development. We will create new pathways onto some of our postgraduate programmes and explore creating routes onto undergraduate programmes, to enable students from non-traditional backgrounds to study our degrees.

We will explore the possibility of introducing a programme of short courses at St Mary's new campus in Edinburgh, building on our strengths and expanding our offer in Scotland to complement our postgraduate course offer.

3. Making best use of our world class facilities and equipment

We aim to make use of the University's resources, both physical and intellectual, to contribute to the local community, generating impact and income. We will hire out our facilities to local sporting and community groups, schools and local and international companies, support academic staff who undertake consultancy or contract research, and work with colleagues across the University to support public engagement. We will find new ways to combine our physical and intellectual assets, to create new services, provide opportunities for our students to develop workplace skills, and maximise our impact and the income generated.

We will maximise the use made of our specialist facilities, from the Human Performance Lab and Media Production Suite to The Exchange arts venue, exploring ways to increase their use outside the hours they are required by staff and students, to offer services to local organisations and businesses. We will continue to work with a wide range of organisations to maximise income and increase community engagement.

We will increase the income generated from hire of the campus outside the peak summer period, by working with filming companies, increasing income from hire of the Waldegrave Suite outside teaching time, and by working in partnership with Strawberry Hill House to the benefit of both parties.

4. *Student and staff engagement*

We will increase staff and student engagement in Enterprise and Knowledge Exchange activity across the University to enable students to learn new skills, contributing to their employability, and to increase our contribution to the local economy and engagement with our local community.

We will work with academics to create opportunities for more staff and students to engage in KE, by supporting consultancy and contract research opportunities, identifying and introducing new public facing services, introducing Knowledge Transfer Partnerships, and expanding opportunities for staff to engage in continuing education and short courses.

Through our involvement in the South London Innovation and KE Network, we will participate in the York House Annex hub in Richmond, providing opportunities for students and staff to engage with local small businesses, supporting student-led and community-led entrepreneurship, creating internships and providing consultancy support, which will help local businesses grow, improve student employability and create opportunities to demonstrate research impact.

Conclusion

Engagement with our local community is a fundamental element of Vision 2030, as well as being a key focus of the Government's HE policy. By creating new opportunities for our staff and students to engage with KE, we will help students develop important skills for life after university, and enable our staff to translate their scholarship and research into real-world impact. Through implementation of our KE strategy, we will have a positive impact on the economic and social development of our local community, generate income to improve the resilience and sustainability of St Mary's, and demonstrate our role as an anchor civic institution.

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