

Institution: St Mary's University, Twickenham

1. Context and mission

St Mary's University, Twickenham (hereafter 'St Mary's/the University') is a small campus university in South West London, comprised of 3,356 undergraduate students, 1,955 postgraduate taught students, 151 postgraduate research students (PGRs) and 272 staff. Founded in 1850, its mission was to train teachers to work in "poor Catholic Schools". Since then, St Mary's has evolved, becoming first a College of Surrey University, and then achieving teaching degree awarding powers in 2006. St Mary's secured independent university status in 2014, and since then we have seen a rise in our PGR numbers.

Since 2014 St Mary's has been developing a research environment focussed on applied research, with a longer-term strategic goal of fostering greater interdisciplinary research. Our aim is to nurture programmes that tangibly enhance research practice in areas where real-world needs coincide with our research expertise and our institutional ethos as an inclusive Catholic university dedicated to serving the needs of society and developing the whole person. Our research, therefore, reflects our core values of excellence, inclusivity, respect for others, and generosity of spirit.

To fulfil our mission St Mary's has further developed the strongest elements of its research portfolio. This includes the areas of Theology, Sport, Health & Applied Science, and the Liberal Arts, taking in English, Communications, and History. St. Mary's has also developed its expertise in Social Policy and Education. We strive to develop meaningful interdisciplinary collaboration between these disciplines. Such collaboration lies at the heart of our research strategy and structures, and our objective of developing such cooperation has informed the structure of St Mary's research activity, which is housed in one Faculty – Sport, Allied Health and Performance Science (SAHPS) – and three institutes: the Institute of Theology and Liberal Arts, the Institute of Education, and the Institute of Business, Law and Society.

St Mary's is an active member of GuildHE and of the Cathedrals Universities Group. Such affiliations have enabled us to work collaboratively on several research grants, contribute to sector challenges and feed into debates at national policy level.

2. Strategy

After REF 2014, the aim of obtaining Research Degree Awarding Powers dominated our planning, creating the strategy which we have followed. This was based around:

1. The creation of a sustainable institutional research environment to grow PGR numbers and develop ECRs.
2. Prioritising the growth of research communities in existing areas of strength: Theology and Health/Applied Science.
3. Consolidating small units into interdisciplinary groups to maximise synchronicities and create good impact case studies.
4. Focusing on applied research in professional areas.

The Unit statements, and the Impact Case Studies, evidence the implementation of this strategy. The support and development of our research centres has allowed a controlled, sustainable growth, which feeds into our research strategy going forward.

Achievements

The University's development of these strategic priorities over the past five years has ensured achievements relating to research and resourcing for research have been on a sharp upward trajectory. Strategic decisions first set out in 2016 in the University Corporate Plan - Vision 2025 – have provided the environment in which Senior Leadership and Faculty/Institute research committees develop and implement plans to embed the strategy across the University.

Award of Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP)

An application from St Mary's for RDAP was approved on 16 March 2021, and we will be able to award research degrees from 1 April 2021 (previously this was done by Liverpool Hope University). This award is a quality marker in terms of our research provision, recognising that the supervision of our research students, and any teaching we undertake at doctoral level, is informed by a high level of professional knowledge of current research and advanced scholarly activity in its subjects of study.

Other achievements include:

1. Staff

- a) Appointing senior staff in strategic roles relating to research across the institution.
- b) Recruiting research-active staff at all levels and across all disciplines.
- c) Recruiting externally funded postdoctoral researchers.

2. Enabling strategies

- a) Providing explicit research objectives in career progression, set within an overall career structure that allows academics to focus on a combination of research, enterprise, and leadership.
- b) Allocating research time to academics using a transparent workload model.
- c) Enhancing our framework for mentoring and developing academic staff.
- d) Reviewing existing research centres and developing new research centres, alongside the creation of research clusters.
- e) A research sabbatical scheme.
- f) An increase in the numbers of research papers in refereed journals, books, and book chapters submitted by our staff and research students; from 653 in 2014 to 1630 in 2019/20.
- g) A growth in funded research between 2013 and 2020; from over £70,000 to over £300,000.

3. Doctoral Community

- a) Enhancing the PhD Researcher Development Programme and investing in PhD studentships to develop and sustain a successful PGR programme.
- b) Developing a Professional Doctorate in Education and planning further Level Eight qualifications.
- c) The growth in PGR students from 29 in 2014 to 151 in 2019/20.

4. Public Engagement

- a) Significantly increasing income generation from external funding such as research councils, charitable sources, and industry.
- b) Expanding the programme of lectures, conferences, seminars, and public engagement events with local communities and beyond.
- c) An increase in research funded by professional organisations, charities, and private sector bodies, where the focus is creating impact on professional practice, communities, and lives (as exemplified in our impact case studies).

The Next Five-Year Period

St Mary's is committed to the academic wellbeing of its staff and students. This commitment is reinforced by central systems of support that protect the health, safety, rights, and academic freedom of our researchers. This has earned the University the reputation as a centre for properly conducted, high quality research.

St Mary's is characterised by a desire to have a positive impact on people's lives and benefit society, which we will continue to realise by:

- a) Engaging with complex issues of ethics, health, social wellbeing, and justice.
- b) Informing professional practice.
- c) Supporting the development of the educational sector.

The University's Research Strategy is currently being refreshed, with the intention of achieving the following objectives:

- a) To create a flourishing and sustainable institutional research environment with a focus on growing and supporting our PGR community and cultivating our early career researchers.
- b) To deploy our resources to strengthen our established research communities and support those that are developing.
- c) To develop interdisciplinary research by creating groupings of academics from across the institution and beyond.
- d) To focus on research which will inform professional practice and address contemporary social issues as well as areas that have clear applied value.

We have identified five research pillars to structure the implementation of St Mary's research strategy. We will invest in and develop these five research pillars, recognising existing areas of research strength and excellence, as well as new targeted areas of strategic priority. Our five pillars are:

- a) Health and Social Wellbeing.
- b) Creative Industries.
- c) Professional Practice and Social Impact.
- d) Human Dignity and Social Justice.
- e) Catholic Values and Common Good.

To realise these five pillars, St Mary's has set out the following strategic aims:

- a) Support and encourage excellent and impactful research, with central University resourcing and support.
- b) Ensure that decision-making processes for the allocation of resources are transparent.

- c) Clearly define Key Performance Indicators that contribute to the University's overall performance in delivering the research strategy.
- d) Provide strong institutional support for heightening and deriving impact and demonstrable outcomes from research.
- e) Communicate our research to the academic community and the wider public.
- f) Enhance our support for our postgraduate research students and early career researchers.
- g) Increase our income from research grants and build on our portfolio of income from industry, along with that from public and private sources.
- h) Analyse and monitor staff Personal Research Plans to evaluate research performance and activity.
- i) Build upon our long-term national and international partnerships.

Open Access

St Mary's is committed to maximising the visibility, citation, usage, and impact of research by ensuring that the outputs of its researchers are available openly, wherever possible, as per the University's corporate objective to enhance the quality and quantity of its research, knowledge exchange and enterprise. The University supports Open Access through self-archiving in the University's Open Research Archive Repository – the 'Green' route to Open Access. The University also supports the principle that the findings of publicly funded research should be made available as widely as possible, in line with Open Access policies as stipulated by the government and research funding bodies.

Research Integrity

The University ensures that the research undertaken by its staff and students adheres to the highest levels of integrity and ethics. As members of the UKRIO we are committed to ensuring that we are compliant to the principles of the *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*, re-published in October 2019.

A working group of the University Research Ethics Committee was set up in 2015 to produce guidance and processes on good practice in research and dealing with research misconduct. These processes are embedded in our University HR framework and Academic Regulations. We have robust ethical approval processes in place that apply to all research involving human participants that is undertaken by both staff and students.

3. People

The research environment at St Mary's benefits from a strong culture of academic integrity, which is grounded in good governance, best practice, and the development of researchers through:

1. Transparent policies, practices, and processes.
2. Appropriate learning, training, and mentoring opportunities.
3. Provision of support networks that identify potential issues quickly and provide appropriate support.

Working within the overall University People Strategy, the Faculty and Institutes ensure that the right conditions for the nurturing of researchers exist from the beginning of the recruitment

process. Policies and practices have been revised in the period since 2014 as part of the University's determination to develop its research culture.

Researchers

The University takes a positive approach to supporting research staff at all stages of the employment cycle. In adherence to the principles of the *Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers*, contracts of employment offered to researchers are on comparable terms and conditions to those employed on either academic or professional service contracts, as appropriate. Fixed-term contracts are only used when appropriate and are implemented in compliance with fixed-term worker regulations.

All research staff are subject to fair and transparent recruitment processes, unless an individual is named in a bid, and they receive a full induction process including access to both University and local induction programmes. The University ensures all research staff have access to relevant training and development opportunities, and the University recently joined LinkedIn Learning, which is offered to all staff, including researchers. All researchers are expected to receive an annual appraisal.

Research and the requirement for a doctorate are included amongst the recruitment criteria for all except the most practice-based academic posts. The University recognises the importance of different career paths as well as the importance of practical experience for teaching in many areas and, subsequently, not all academics who are recruited have PhDs or research experience. However, for those existing members of staff without a doctorate – and who seek to register for such a programme at St Mary's – the University is committed to giving substantial financial support through a 75% fee waiver. In addition, the University intends to create a path to doctoral status via published works.

Allocating research time

The University has a transparent workload model, which allocates time for research based on the extent to which members of staff are producing research and impact or have credible plans to do so. It is a time allocation model and is designed to ensure that academics undertaking research have the time and resources to do so; and also that the University makes the best use of the different talents of the academic faculty. In addition, a specific time allowance of 80 hours per annum is given in the workload model to PhD supervisory teams.

Every member of academic staff is placed on one of three research bands: Scholarship – 4%; Developing Researchers (early career researchers) – 10% and Significant Responsibility for Research – 20%. These bands are conceived as follows:

1. *Scholarship band*. Academics on this band of the workload model receive sufficient time to undertake the necessary scholarship to embed pre-existing research within teaching. There are no expectations of publication from academics on this band and it will include, for example, practitioner and enterprise-focused academics.
2. *Developing Researcher (ECR) band*. Academics on this band must publish or have credible plans to publish regularly or achieve equivalent impact. Support to enable these colleagues is provided through QR funding, the use of the mentoring system and the appraisal process.

3. *Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR) band*. Academics on this band are publishing or have credible plans to publish or achieve impact at the highest levels. In consequence, they receive the highest time allocation.

These academic career pathways and the workload model are designed with ladders which ensure that nobody who wishes to develop a research career is prevented from doing so. Academics can move from the scholarship to the developing researcher band through mentoring, appraisal, and the development of a publication and an impact record which can be, at first, modest. From this point, they have the time to develop a publication or impact record and/or credible plans, so that they can be given Significant Responsibility for Research. Academics from St. Mary's have moved up the bands since the model was introduced.

Mentoring and appraisals

An academic mentoring policy was formally launched in June 2018 to offer guidance, support, and advice to developing researchers (also open to others, on request). An academic mentor would normally be a colleague who had significant responsibility for research and would use their experience to assist the developing researcher in achieving their research goals.

As well as the mentoring system for developing researchers, the appraisal process involves an explicit discussion of research, ensuring that no academic with research ambitions at St. Mary's will slip through the career development net. The objective of the University is to ensure that our available career paths reflect the different skills, aptitudes, and specialisations of academic staff, and the needs of St Mary's. Our career and promotion paths reflect this potential for specialisation. The promotion criteria for Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor and Professor allow academics to obtain promotion by meeting criteria from a range of groups, including research.

Postgraduate Research Students

Over the last six years, the numbers on the PGR programme have grown rapidly. There has been substantial investment in bursaries across the Faculty and Institutes including the further development of match-funded PhD studentships with external organisations. For example in Sport, Allied Health and Performances Sciences we have received funding for research into strength and conditioning research with the Royal Ballet; research into sport psychology using elite athletes in collaboration with the English Institute of Sport; and NHS funding for applied research with practitioners working with amputees.

The successful development of our PGR community has been enabled by three important strategic outcomes;

1. Creating a Doctoral College, in 2017, as a hub for our thriving PGR community.
2. Investing £750,000 in research studentships.
3. Developing a professional doctorate in education, which continues to be effective at building links between practitioners and the research community and between research and teaching.

Postgraduate Training

St Mary's is actively enhancing our programme of postgraduate research skills training. As part of the existing system, research students undertake a skills audit and identify their training

needs in consultation with their supervisory team and Research Services. Research students also have access to a Researcher Development Programme mapped to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, to the GuildHE Research training and seminars, as well as to the University of East Anglia online training programme (which includes interactive webinars).

Doctoral Programme Leads

Complementing our central Research Services office, the University has dedicated Faculty/Institute Academic Doctoral Programme Leads (DPLs) who are responsible for ensuring that PGR students are integrated into the research culture of the University and are available to offer independent and strictly confidential progression, supervision, and training advice. DPLs work closely with Research Services to ensure the quality of PhD and MPhil applications and acceptances is maintained and that the correct processes and regulations are adhered to.

DPLs also nurture the development of PGR supervisors by ensuring that students have a broad supervisory team with academics at different levels of experience. Developing/Early Career Researchers are encouraged to act as research advisers to gain experience, and they are expected to engage with appropriate Research Supervisor training.

Equality and Diversity

Our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, is channeled through our values of 'Inclusiveness'; 'Generosity of Spirit'; 'Respect' and 'Excellence'. These values underpin our people management processes, our staff support networks and our recruitment processes, and have been a key component of the University's approach to development and training.

St Mary's is currently collating an application for the Athena SWAN Small and Specialist Institution Bronze award, which we plan to submit in November 2022. As part of this process, we have convened a Self-Assessment Team of staff and students from across the institution to lead our efforts to analyze the status of gender equality at St Mary's. The team will also create a three-year action plan focused on advancing gender equality at all levels of the university.

To further our commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion, with a particular focus on racial equality, St Mary's has commenced its preparations to apply for the Race Equality Charter (REC) Bronze award, which we plan to submit in February 2023. As we assemble our team for this project, we are striving to center the voices of our staff and students from minority ethnic backgrounds, so that the process can serve as a framework to create meaningful, long-term changes in racial equality at St Mary's. In a similar fashion to our Athena SWAN project, the team will conduct a thorough self-assessment of the current state of racial equality at the institution and create an evidence-based action plan based on that assessment. Both applications are sponsored by the Deputy Provost, signaling a commitment to these efforts from the highest levels of leadership at St Mary's.

Equality and Diversity in the REF submission process

The Equality and Inclusion Analysis (EIA) for REF 2021 has been reviewed and updated at key stages of the REF process, starting at the time of the issuance of the draft REF code of Practice in December 2018. This EIA underlined the need to address some gender imbalances across staff eligible for submission. The most recent EIA, undertaken in January 2021,

demonstrated that the gap between male and female REF eligible staff has reduced and there has also been a marked increase in participation of female, part-time staff.

Gender	% REF SRR 2021	% REF SRR 2020	% REF SRR 2021	% REF SRR 2020
			Part-Time	
Female	47.1%	41.2%	21.4%	11.8%
Male	52.9%	58.8%	7.0%	15.9%

4. Income, infrastructure and facilities

University Management of Research

Research at St Mary’s is now directed by the Provost, while the Deputy Provost is responsible for overseeing and developing the University’s Research Strategy, leading on major research initiatives, and developing our research culture. The Provost is supported by a dedicated Research Services team, the University Research Committee, and by Associate Deans for Research in the Faculty and the Institutes.

University Research Services

Doctoral Leads and Associate Deans for Research & Enterprise provide Faculty/Institute level support, while the Research Services Office has oversight of University research activity and administration. The Research Services team supports the Faculty/Institutes to deliver research through the following functions:

1. Servicing the committees connected with the oversight of research.
2. Reviewing proposals for membership of supervisory teams against the Supervisor Register.
3. Monitoring doctoral student progression.
4. Providing research data, in relation to both staff and students.
5. Facilitating research workshops for both staff and students.
6. Supporting external research funding applications and projects.
7. Providing support in developing impact strategies.
8. Supplying guidance on research integrity and ethics.

Research Income

As a result of its performance in 2014, St Mary’s University increased its QR income from c.£300,000 to over £500,000. During 2020/21 the University was also in receipt of c.£23,000 from GCRF, £50,000 from SPF and c.£4,000 from UKRI World Class Laboratories funding.

The table below indicates our increased and diversified research income over the REF period:

Funding Source	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
UKRI & Academies	0	£33,000	£4,000	£13,000	£14,000	£14,000	0
UK Charities	£2,000	0	0	£7,000	£228,000	£27,000	£104,600
UK Govt	0	0	£5,000	£33,000	£130,000	£24,000	£11,000
UK Industry	0	0	0	0	£20,000	£211,000	£116,500
EU	£69,000	0	0	£12,000	0	£11,000	0
Other	0	0	0	£7,000	£69,000	£128,000	£80,000
TOTAL	£71,000	£33,000	£9,000	£72,000	£461,000	£415,000	£312,100

This increase in QR funding has enabled the University to invest in the following areas:

1. £750,000 in PGR studentships.
2. Support for (alongside GCRF and philanthropic funding), the establishment of two new interdisciplinary University Research Centres; The Bakhita Centre (formerly the Centre for the Study of Modern Slavery) and the Centre for Research into the Education of Marginalised Children and Young Adults.
3. Furthering its newly established collaboration with South London and Maudsley NHS Trust in developing a Teacher Mental Health Award framework.
4. Sustained allocations to Faculty/Institutes for supporting research activity such as conference presentations and impact delivery.
5. Increased ring-fenced financial assistance for PGR students to support their research programmes.

Clearly articulated processes are in place to ensure that, in addition to support from the Research Services team, academic staff can access dedicated bid-writing, project management and pre-award guidance from the Enterprise and Innovation team.

Knowledge Exchange and Research Facilities

St Mary’s contributes to debates about the development of education through practical skills and curriculum development within schools. We provide CPD and INSET training in subjects such as the teaching of science in primary schools, RE and PE. We work with schools across London, the South East and North East of England, and an area of deprivation in North Wales.

The Social Work and Social Policy Unit Statement describes our work on resilience and wellbeing in education with partners such as South London and Maudsley NHS Trust. The Bakhita Centre, the Centre for Research on the Education of [Marginalised Children](#) and Young Adults, and the Centre for the Art of Dying Well are heavily involved in developing expertise, community

engagement and policy work alongside practical programmes such as the [First Star Academy](#), summer school and education programmes for survivors of slavery.

St Mary's campus, location and [facilities](#) play a significant role in shaping our KE, as we use onsite halls of residence to host academic and community conferences outside term time, such as the Prison [Chaplains](#) Conference and the Women in Sport and Exercise ([WISE](#)) Conference. Our Olympic quality sports [facilities](#), described in the Sport & Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism Unit Statement, enable us to engage with a wide range of community sports clubs and professional sporting organisations, who use our [Performance Education Centre](#) and Lab. Extensive links with local sports clubs allow our academics to share their knowledge and expertise, including promoting inclusive sport, working with organisations such as the [FA](#).

Our Centre for [Short Courses](#) and CPD enables us to help adults to retrain, in particular in health and wellbeing subjects, which is particularly important at times of economic pressure, and supports job creation in the local economy. We envisage this Centre playing a key role in St Mary's contribution in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The University manages the Exchange arts venue in central Twickenham, in collaboration with Richmond upon Thames Council who own the site. The venue comprises a theatre/auditorium and several studio spaces for teaching and community events. This provides a location for public engagement activities and regular opportunities for direct impactful exchange between academic researchers and both the local community and business sector.