

## **Validation and Accreditation of courses at St Mary's University College, Belfast**

St Mary's is an autonomous, publicly-funded institution of higher education founded in 1900 with a mission to educate and train teachers in the Catholic tradition. The mission has expanded extensively over time but teacher education remains at the core of College life. The College currently offers three Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes as well as provision for teacher professional learning at Masters level. From 2000 the College has also offered an undergraduate degree programme in the Liberal Arts.

### *Validation of academic provision*

St Mary's does not have degree-granting powers in its own right. Therefore its degree programmes are validated by another higher education institution with degree granting powers. Academic provision at St Mary's exists in collaboration with Queen's University Belfast. That collaboration was first established in 1948 when students could follow a combined course of university study and professional training. In 1968, St Mary's was designated a Recognised College of Queen's University Belfast. In 1998 St Mary's entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) whereby the College has a special relationship with the University for collaborative provision, while remaining autonomous in governance and finance. This resulted in the Privy Council re-designating the College as a University College. The agreement has been revised on a number of occasions since 1998. The two institutions have agreed a new MoA for collaborative provision which covers the period 2018 – 2023.

Arising from the MoA, the College follows all the University quality assurance regulations and procedures of the University to ensure that its programmes meet the requirements of the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), specifically the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and [Expectation B10](#) (Managing Higher Education Provision with Others). Academic programmes are proposed and designed by the College, and approved and periodically reviewed by the University. The resultant programme specifications are owned by the [University](#) and shared by the [College](#) with students. Academic staff of the College are Recognised Teachers of the University with access to University facilities consonant with that position. Students of the College enrolled on University programmes are registered as students of the University for the purposes of achieving an academic award. Students therefore have access to University facilities and come under the authority and discipline of the University in academic matters. As it is autonomous in governance and finance, St Mary's is responsible for the recruitment of its academic staff, subject to ensuring they meet the criteria for recognition by the University. It is also responsible for establishing its own student recruitment and admissions procedures, subject to ensuring that such students meet the requirements of the University for Matriculation. Students of the College come under the authority and discipline of the College in non-academic matters.

### *Accreditation of professional programmes*

The initial teacher education (ITE) programmes of St Mary's lead not only to academic qualification but also to professional status as teachers qualified to teach in state-funded schools. Accreditation of ITE programmes offered in Northern Ireland is carried out by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) on behalf of the Department of Education for Northern Ireland. The BEd and the PGCE programmes are designed to prepare students for the teaching profession, so the learning outcomes have a firm foundation within the GTCNI Competence Framework. This enables students to develop the Core Values, set out by the GTCNI, and the critical, professional reflection which is concordant with the GTCNI's concept of the Reflective and Activist Practitioner.