



Department for the

Economy

An Roinn

Geilleagair

www.economy-ni.gov.uk

ST MARY'S UNIVERSITY COLLEGE – APPOINTMENT OF BOARD MEMBERS - INFORMATION PACK

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The Department for the Economy (DfE) is committed to the principles of public appointments based on merit with independent assessment, openness, and transparency of process. The Department is also committed to equality of opportunity and welcomes application forms from all suitably qualified applicants irrespective of religious belief, gender, race, political opinion, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or whether or not they have dependants.

People with a disability and those from minority ethnic communities are currently under-represented on the DfE Boards and applications from members of these groups would be particularly welcome.

We are operating the Guaranteed Interview Scheme in this competition for applicants with a disability. Applicants with a disability who meet all of the criteria at the sift stage will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will not be subjected to any short-listing which may take place.

An electronic version of the application pack is available from pau@economy-ni.gov.uk This material will also be made available on request in other formats such as braille, large print, audio etc. All reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the needs of applicants/candidates with a disability.



SECTION 1 - BACKGROUND

1. The Department for the Economy is seeking to appoint 4 new Members to the Governing Body of St Mary's University College. St Mary's University College has its origins in a training college established in 1900 by the Dominican Sisters on the present Falls Road site for the education of women students and their preparation for teaching in primary schools. The college has developed and evolved to also include training for male students (for some years on a separate site) and preparation for teaching in secondary schools. **Additional background information can be found at Annex B.**
2. The College has had an academic relationship with Queen's University Belfast since 1948 and has been providing taught courses leading to degrees and other awards of the University since it became a Recognised College of the University in 1968. In 1999, with Privy Council approval, the College adopted a new title, St Mary's University College: A College of Queen's University Belfast when it integrated academically with Queen's.

The College is nevertheless an autonomous institution in ethos, governance and in finance. The new title represents a significant landmark in the College's distinguished history and recognises its academic maturity. Students have an assurance that College courses are equivalent to those of comparable programmes offered in the University and compatible with the relevant benchmarks recognised within the United Kingdom. Students of St Mary's are registered students of Queen's University Belfast and as such have access to the University's learning resources including the Library and computing facilities. They are also entitled to use the University's sports facilities and the Students' Union and can apply to Student Accommodation Services.

3. St Mary's University College is a small Higher Education institution specialising in Teacher Education and Liberal Arts. The historic focus in St Mary's has been on initial teacher education (ITE). The two ITE routes offered by the College are the BEd degree (either Primary or Post-primary Education) and the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). The PGCE route in St Mary's is for students wishing to enter Irish Medium Education. Students taking a BEd in Primary Education choose a subject option from a choice of eight academic subjects (for entrants in September 2023), while those taking a BEd in Post-primary Education choose one main subject from a choice of four areas, along with a subsidiary subject, from a choice of four (for entrants in September 2023).

Following its award of the status of University College in 1998, St Mary's developed a BA Liberal Arts Programme, which has been offered since September 2000. Liberal Arts students can at present choose a subject option from a choice of six academic subjects (for entrants in September 2023).

The College also offers part-time Masters-level programmes and a full-time MSc in Physical Education and Sport for Young People.

The Governing Body

4. St Mary's University College is governed under a Scheme of Management agreed between the College and the Department for the Economy. The College, originally established as a college of education, is a higher education institution as defined by Article 30(3) of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 1993.

St Mary's was granted the University College title by the Privy Council in 1998. The College is funded by, and accountable to, the Department for the Economy under the terms of a financial memorandum agreed between the College and the Department and according to the provisions of the 1993 Order. The College is a recognised provider of higher education. St. Mary's operates under the direction of a Board of Governors and the College property is owned by its Trustees. Operational control is in the hands of the Principal supported by the Senior Management Team.

The current college Governing Body is made up of 18 members comprising:

- **4 Ex-Officio Governors** - The Bishop of Down and Connor (Chairman), a Vicar General of the Diocese of Down and Connor, the Dominican Regional Vicar (or Deputy) and the Principal of the College;
 - **6 Nominated Governors** appointed by the Trustees in consultation with the Bishops of Armagh, Clogher & Kilmore, Derry and Dromore;
 - **1 Nominated Governor** appointed by the Academic Board of the College;
 - **1 Nominated Governor** elected by the Student's Union of the College;
 - **2 Representative Governors** appointed by the Senate of Queen's University Belfast; and
 - **4 Representative Governors** appointed by the Department for the Economy.
5. The appointment will be effective from 8th February 2025 for a term of 5 years.
 6. These appointments are regulated by the Commissioner for Public Appointments, Northern Ireland (CPANI) and the competition may be examined by CPANI for compliance with the Commissioners' Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies.

SECTION 2 – ELIGIBILITY, INTEGRITY & CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

7. DfE must ensure that the individuals appointed are committed to the principles and values of public service. These principles are **Selflessness, Integrity, Objectivity, Accountability, Openness, Honesty, and Leadership**.
8. The Department must take account of actual, or perceived, conflicts of interest. Therefore, applicants, in their application form, must disclose information or personal connections, which, if they were to be appointed, could lead to a conflict of interest, or be perceived as such. Conflicts of interest may not be a barrier to appointment but both real and perceived conflicts must be discussed with all candidates by the Selection Panel. This is to ensure that the public can have confidence in the board's independence and impartiality and the integrity of the potential appointees. Further information on Integrity and Conflicts of Interest can be found at **Annex A**.

Disqualifications

9. In accordance with the College's Scheme of Management, any person who is adjudicated bankrupt, or who is convicted of a criminal offence or who has been disqualified as a company director, cannot serve as a member of the Governing Body.

Applications from Civil Servants/former Civil Servants

10. It is possible that conflicts of interest could arise in relation to government policy, strategy, or the fair administration of public services and justice during the course of St Mary's University College business. Civil servants, or former civil servants, are welcome to apply for the post of Member. However, they should be aware that a judgement will be made by the interviewing panel, taking account of the Cabinet Office guidance on Making and Managing Public Appointments, as to whether the nature of his/her employment could lead to a perceived or real split of loyalties of a sufficiently serious nature to render appointment as Member an unmanageable conflict of interest. A copy of this guidance is available at: [About appointments](#)
11. Former Civil Servants are subject to rules on the acceptance of outside business appointments, employment, or self-employment for a period of up to two years after leaving the NI Civil Service. Individuals in this category, who wish to apply, should check their eligibility to do so with NICS HR Employee Relations. You can contact HRConnect using the contact details below:

Email: NICS@HRConnect.nigov.net or External Dial: **0800 1 300 400**

12. Candidates who are current employees of the Northern Ireland Civil Service are advised, should you be offered an appointment, you will be asked to confirm that you have obtained the necessary approval to undertake private work with another public sector body (including another Government Department) from NICSHR Employee Relations. Further information on this can be found in the **NICS HR Handbook, Section 6.01: Standards of Conduct, Sub Section 6: Private Occupations.**

Current and Former Civil Servants are advised to seek the required authorisation at the start of their application process.

Nationality

13. DfE has no public appointments which are restricted to UK nationals only. However, there is a mandatory requirement to ensure that those appointed do not contravene immigration legislation.
- Republic of Ireland (RoI) citizens may be appointed to any post.
 - Commonwealth citizens who have immigration status allowing them to work in the UK may be appointed to any post.
 - There is an onus on non-UK and non-RoI citizens to provide proof of their right to work in the UK and an onus on the appointer to check that.
14. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the individual to provide evidence that they have the appropriate permission if being offered a post. The Department will check the individual's passport, share code or other documents to confirm if they can legally work in the UK.

SECTION 3 - ROLE PROFILE

Responsibilities of the Governing Body

15. The principal powers of the Governing Body are to:-
- approve the mission and strategic vision of the College, long-term academic and business plans and key performance indicators, and to ensure that these meet the interests of stakeholders;
 - ensure processes are in place to monitor and evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the College against the plans and approved key performance indicators, which are, where possible and appropriate, benchmarked against other comparable institutions;
 - safeguard the good name and values of the College;
 - be the employing authority for all staff in the College and to be responsible for establishing a human resources strategy;

- make such provision as it thinks fit for the general welfare of students, in consultation with the Academic Board;
- ensure that income from the Department is applied for the purposes for which it was received;
- be responsible for the proper stewardship of public funds;
- ensure that the College has a sound system of internal financial and management control;
- ensure that the College plans and conducts its financial and academic affairs so that it remains solvent;
- ensure that the College delivers value for money from public funds;
- ensure compliance with legislative requirements;
- ensure that the College has an effective policy of risk management.

The powers in relation to charging fees, formation of companies and investment must be exercised in accordance with any arrangements approved or determined by the Department for the Economy.

Governing Body Members: Role and Responsibilities

16. Governing Body members are responsible collectively for the conduct, management and financial administration of the College and are expected to show commitment to its Mission. In general, the responsibilities of Governors are to:

- take part in the strategic planning of the College and to set specific priorities and policies;
- manage the College's annual budget and to determine the allocation of resources;
- ensure that the Governing Body receives and reviews regular financial information concerning the management of the College; is informed in a timely manner of any concerns about the activities of the College; and provides positive assurances to the Department for the Economy (as the College's principal funder) that appropriate action has been taken on such concerns;
- demonstrate high standards of corporate governance at all times, including using the independent audit committee to help the Governing Body to address any key financial and other risks facing the College;

- ensure that satisfactory systems are in place for the effective delivery and monitoring of the College's performance in carrying out its statutory duties;
- serve on Committees (e.g. the Audit Committee) and working groups of the College from time to time.

Further information on the College, the Governing Body its role and responsibilities, can be found at www.stmarys-belfast.ac.uk

Time Commitment and Remuneration

17. The Governing Body meets at least four times a year. Successful applicants are expected to attend all meetings and will also be invited to sit on sub committees during their period of appointment. Similarly, they may be required to attend external functions as representatives of the Governing Body and/or College.
18. Members of the Governing Body do not receive any remuneration. However, they are eligible to claim allowances, for travel and subsistence costs necessarily incurred on official business.
19. St Mary's University College is located on the Falls Road, Belfast BT12 6FE. Meetings of the Governing Body are normally held on the campus.

Double Paying

20. Applicants who already work in the public sector need to be aware that if appointed, they will be asked to obtain confirmation from their employer that any remuneration due and time worked for this position are truly additional to their existing job role and not a duplication with salaried employment (unless allowed under the terms and condition of employment).

In the interests of minimising the potential for double paying to occur the Department reserves the right to contact your employer regarding your candidature.

Training

21. Governing Body members are required to attend relevant training courses organised by the College or other organisations.

Reappointment

22. Reappointment for a 2nd term may be considered subject to satisfactory performance during the initial term of appointment and continued adherence to the principles of public life. Appointments for the same position are restricted to 2 terms.

SECTION 4 - PERSON SPECIFICATION

23. The person specification addresses the qualities, experience, background, and competences sought. A criteria-based selection process is employed by DfE. This process requires applicants to provide evidence which demonstrates that they can meet the requirements in their application form and at interview. The mere mentions of a skill or attribute is insufficient. Neither can selection panel members make assumptions from the title of a post or the nature of an organisations as to the experience, qualities and skills gained.

Make sure that you take full advantage to provide practical evidence and examples of how you feel you are suitable for this appointment. **It is strongly recommended that you read the enclosed booklet entitled 'Public Appointments Guide' which contains guidance on the completion of criteria-based application forms.**

24. The Department wishes to recognise less traditional career patterns and experiences such as community involvement or voluntary work, as well as those experiences found within the employment field. Therefore, in your application form, you may use examples from your working or personal life, e.g., part-time activities or leisure activities, including any voluntary or community work you are or have been involved in.

Qualifications

25. No specific academic qualifications are required for this appointment.

Selection Criteria

26. Applicants are required to submit evidence of competency against **three** essential criteria in total. To be eligible for interview candidates must meet the agreed pass mark of 2 out of 5 marks. Applications not meeting the minimum requirement in all of the selection criteria will be sifted out.

Criterion A – Communication and Collaboration

Developing and maintaining good working relationships to achieve results. Effective communication and strong interpersonal skills. Influencing others and developing effective collaborative relationships with internal and external stakeholders.

Please provide a practical example(s) which demonstrates **how you personally** have communicated effectively and worked collaboratively with others, developing and maintaining co-operative relationships to achieve results.

Examples of the type of evidence the selection panel will be looking for are listed below.

- Communicates orally and in writing using a range of communication tools and methods;
- Develops and maintains constructive and collaborative working relationships and networks with both internal and external stakeholders/partners;
- Uses persuasive and compelling arguments to influence others to understand and accept different approaches and perspectives;
- Ability to provide direction and guidance, as well as support individuals as part of an effective team, manage conflicts or disagreements between team members, positively influence the behaviour of others and engender trust;
- Builds on relationships to deliver shared objectives and outcomes;
- Experience of working across organisations to gain commitment and achieve consensus.

Criterion B – Strategy and Analytical Skills

Ability to understand strategic issues and analyse information to solve problems or make informed decisions.

Please provide a practical example(s) which demonstrates **how you personally** have contributed to the strategic direction of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation and **how you** used your analysis information to inform that contribution.

Examples of the type of evidence the selection panel will be looking for are listed below.

- Ability to recognise and successfully respond to competing and changing priorities in developing and implementing the strategic direction of a business/voluntary, community or public sector organisation;
- Contributes to and influences the preparation, monitoring and review of the strategic plans of an organisation;
- Constructively challenges existing practices and develops innovative new approaches;
- Assimilates and analyses complex facts, arguments and information from a range of sources;
- Makes effective decisions on the basis of analysis, experience and judgement and showing ability to effectively convey own views and positively influence others;
- Makes informed decisions quickly;
- Analyses issues in the face of problems, generates options, displays a broad knowledge and perspective to see potential future scenarios that will impact on the organisation.

Criterion C – Good Governance

In this context, good governance is about the direction and supervision of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation. It means making sure that the organisation is well run (or governed) complies with the governance framework associated with its legal status and carries out the

work it was set up to do. This involves planning for the future, guarding the organisation's values and reputation, looking after the resources and being accountable for the organisation's actions and decisions.

Please provide a practical example(s) which demonstrates **how you personally** effectively applied good governance principles within a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation.

Examples of the type of evidence the selection panel will be looking for are listed below.

- Understands own role and collective responsibilities in the promotion of effective governance within an organisation;
- Sets clear, realistic objectives defining roles, responsibilities and expectations;
- Ability to deliver results in line with organisational values and purpose, on an individual basis and through the organisation's people;
- Ability to identify, understand, evaluate and manage risks which may have an adverse impact on the performance of a business, voluntary, community or public sector organisation;
- Ability to ensure systems of internal control are in place to support the achievement of policies, aims and objectives;
- Builds an enabling culture and inspiring excellence;
- Reflects effectively to ensure continuous improvement in actions

SECTION 5 - HOW TO APPLY AND CONTACT DETAILS

Application Form

27. The application form is designed to ensure applicants provide the necessary information to determine how they meet the competition requirements. You will be assessed against the criteria detailed in paragraph 26. You can use examples from your working life, including any voluntary or community work you are, or have been, engaged in or, if preferred, you can use examples from your personal life.
28. To ensure equality of opportunity for all applicants:
- CVs, letters, or any other supplementary material in place of, or in addition to, completed application forms will not be accepted;
 - applicants should complete the application form in a legible format (e.g. font size 12) or legible block capitals using black ink;
 - applicants should not use more than 400 words per criterion. Any information over and above the word count will be redacted by the administration team and not seen by the selection panel; and
 - applications will not be examined until after the closing deadline.
29. Braille, large print, and audio formats are available on request.
30. You can complete an online application using the following link:
- <https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/dfe/application-st-marys-members-application-form>
31. Alternatively, you can request a hardcopy pack from the DfE Public Appointments Unit at: pau@economy-ni.gov.uk or by telephoning Janet McCrum on 028 9052 9492 (Textrelay: 18001 028 9052 9492).
32. Written applications should be posted to:-
- Department for the Economy
Public Appointments Unit
Adelaide House
39-49 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8FD
33. **The closing date for the receipt of all applications is Noon (BST) on Thursday 17th October 2024.** Applications will be receipted, and the time of receipt formally recorded. It is the responsibility of the applicant, taking into account their chosen method of delivery, to ensure that sufficient time is allowed for their application to arrive with the Department on or before the deadline. **Late applications will not be accepted**

(except in exceptional circumstances). Please ensure that posted applications bear the correct amount of postage as any shortfall may lead to a delay in delivery, causing you to miss the deadline.

Data Protection

34. As much of the information involved in the appointment process will be of a personal nature, the provisions of Data Protection legislation will be followed. To ensure that you are aware of how and why your personal information is to be used, and with whom it may be shared, a DfE Public Appointments 'privacy notice', is available on the following link for your information and reference:

[Privacy Notice - Public Appointments | Department for the Economy \(economy-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.economy-ni.gov.uk/privacy-notice-public-appointments)

Equal Opportunities Monitoring and Purpose

35. You are asked to complete the Equal Opportunities Monitoring Information section of the application form. The information is not made available to the Panel members and does not play a role in the decision-making process. It will be detached from your application form by the admin Administration Team and sent to the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency for analysis and will be treated in strict confidence.
36. The Department is required to monitor the gender, ethnic origin, community background and disability of applicants to ensure that equal opportunities measures are effective. Moreover the Department encourages applicants to complete the monitoring form as this enables us to understand if we are effective in our efforts to reach all areas of the community with opportunities, to identify where the gaps are and to improve our outreach in recruitment processes.
37. In relation to disability, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines a person with a disability as someone who has, or has had in the past, a physical or mental impairment which has had a substantial long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. This includes sensory impairments, people who have had a disability in the past even though they are no longer disabled, people whose disability is likely to last for twelve months or the rest of their life, and people whose condition is likely to progress or recur. Severe disfigurement is also acknowledged as a disability.
38. It would be preferable if completed application forms could be emailed to the address below. However, if this is not possible hard copy completed application forms can be posted to DfE, Public Appointments Unit, Adelaide House, 39-49 Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT2 8FD or may be delivered by hand into reception. The email address is pau@economy-ni.gov.uk.

Enquiries and Feedback

39. Enquiries and feedback can be directed to the above addresses or alternatively via telephone or text relay as follows:
- a. further details about the appointment process in general or advice on the progress of an application:

Tel: 028 9052 9492 (Janet McCrum)
TextRelay: 18001 028 9052 9492
 - b. Information on the expectations of the role or if you require any clarification on a particular aspect of the role or the criteria being assessed.

Email: he.qualityandgovernance@economy-ni.gov.uk

Sift and Shortlisting Process

40. An anonymised sift and short-listing process will be employed. When assessing each application against the selection criteria, panel members will use a Marking Frame to determine how an applicant's skills, knowledge and experience meets each of the criteria. Applicants will be awarded a score out of 5 for each criterion. Applicants must achieve the agreed pass mark of 2 or above. Applications which do not meet all of the selection criteria will be sifted out.
41. If shortlisting is required, the selection panel has agreed that the initial pass mark to be invited for interview will be an overall score of 12 out of a possible score of 15. The panel may consider reducing the required overall pass mark by one mark each time until a sufficient pool of candidates eligible for interview is in place.
42. All those sifted out or not short-listed will be provided with feedback on request based on the agreed Panel's assessment of their application. If an applicant wishes to contest the decision of the Panel, they should do so within five working days of receipt of their feedback letter. Further details about the process will be provided in the feedback letter.

Interviews

43. The interview will be competency based on criteria A to C (detailed in paragraph 26).
44. Candidates will also be required to answer questions on the standards of behaviour required of public appointees and any real, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest between their circumstances and the appointment applied for. **See Annex A.**

45. **To be deemed suitable for selection candidates must achieve a pass mark of 2 or above for criteria A to C.**
46. **It is anticipated that interviews will take place on 2/12/2024 (PM), 4/12/2024 and 5/12/2024.** Interviews will take place in DfE Headquarters, Adelaide House, 39-49 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8FD. Candidates invited for interview are eligible for reimbursement of reasonable travelling expenses incurred within the UK and the Republic of Ireland only.

Competence-Based Interviews

47. Competence-based interviewing tests candidates against the specific selection criteria for a particular appointment. The application form gives you an opportunity to provide examples relevant to the specific criteria. These, in turn, provide the interview panel with information and evidence about you, and a deeper understanding of your abilities.
48. The interview is a crucial part of the appointment process and thorough preparation is essential. You can prepare for the interview by:
 - reading and thoroughly understanding the selection criteria;
 - reminding yourself of the examples you used in your application form and being prepared to expand on these at interview, if asked;
 - rehearsing how you might relate your experiences to the interview panel, emphasising your own role and responsibilities; and
 - not assuming that your qualities and experience will speak for themselves.

Guaranteed Interview Scheme

49. The aim of the GIS is to provide applicants with a disability the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities beyond the initial application stage. Applicants with a disability who meet or exceed the pass-marks set for the criteria at the sift stage will automatically be offered an interview. Their application will not be subjected to any short-listing which may take place.

Pre-appointment Checks

50. Before the names of suitable candidates are presented to the Minister a Company Director's disqualification check and a bankruptcy check will be carried out. In addition, a cross-departmental check will be carried out on the probity and performance of those candidates who currently hold or have held public appointment roles.

Presentation of Results to the DfE Minister.

51. Ministerial choice is a key element of public appointment policy that enables the Minister to indicate if they wish to have the names of

candidates suitable for appointment presented in a ranked (strict merit order) or unranked (alphabetical) list.

52. The DfE Minister has made it known that his preference is an unranked list.

Publicising Appointments

53. A press release will be published to announce the appointment. Consequently, upon appointment, the candidate will be required to complete a political activity form and provide a short biography for publication. The press release will include, the candidate's name, a short description of the body to which they have been appointed, a brief summary of the skills and knowledge the candidate brings to the role, the length of the appointment term and details of the candidate's response to the political activity question.

Complaints Procedure

54. If at any stage, you feel you have reason to complain you should refer to the Public Appointments Unit complaints procedure which is set out at: [Department for the Economy - Public Appointments](#)

Integrity and Conflicts of Interest – Guide for Candidates

This guidance should be read in conjunction with the information contained in the leaflet ‘Guidance on Conflict of Interest, Integrity and How to raise a Complaint’ produced by the Office of the Commissioner for Public Appointments, Northern Ireland, which provides examples of the types of issues that may give rise to conflicts of interests.

1. In 1995, the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles, which should underpin the actions of all who serve the public in any way. These are:

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity

Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity

Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness

Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty

Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership

Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour and treat others with respect. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

2. All candidates who put themselves forward for a public appointment must be able to demonstrate their commitment to the principles and values of public service. One of the issues which might arise in relation to this is that of conflict of interest.

What is a conflict of interest?

3. Public Appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity, and objectivity, in relation to the stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable, or political interest which might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared. There is always the possibility for real or perceived conflicts of interest to arise. Both are a problem, as the perceived inference of a conflict may, on occasions, be as damaging as the existence of a real conflict.

4. No-one should use, or give the appearance of using, their public position to further their private interests. This is an area of particular importance, as it is of considerable concern to the public and receives a lot of media attention. It is important, therefore, that you consider your circumstances when applying for a public appointment and identify any potential conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived.

Surely a perceived conflict is not a problem, as long as I act impartially at all times?

5. The integrity of the individual is not in question here. However, it is necessary for the standing of the individual and the board that members of the public have confidence in their independence and impartiality. Even a perceived conflict of interest on the part of a board member can be extremely damaging to the body's reputation and it is therefore essential that these are declared and explored, in the same way as an actual conflict would be. The fact that a member acted impartially may be no defence against accusations of potential bias.

What should I do if I think I have a conflict of interest?

6. You will find a section on conflicts of interest in the application form for you to complete. This asks you to consider and declare whether or not you have a real, or perceived, conflict. If you are unsure if your circumstances constitute a possible conflict, you should still complete this section, in order to give the Selection Panel as much information as possible.

If I declare a conflict, does this mean I will not be considered for appointment?

7. No - each case is considered individually. If you are shortlisted for interview, the Panel will explore with you how far the conflict might affect your ability to contribute effectively and impartially on the Board and how this might be handled, if you were to be appointed. For example, it may be possible to arrange for you to step out of meetings where an issue is discussed, in which you have an interest. However, if, following the discussion with you, the Panel believes that the conflict is too great and would call into question the probity of the Board or the appointment, they can withdraw your application from the competition.

8. The report on the outcome of the interview process which is put to the Minister will include clear written reference to any perceived or actual conflicts of interest or integrity issues connected to any candidate put forward as suitable for appointment. It will include sufficient information to ensure that the Minister is fully aware of any of these matters and can make an informed decision.

What happens if I do not declare a known conflict, which is then discovered by the Department after my appointment?

9. Again, each case would be considered on its merits, but the Department may take the view that by concealing a conflict of interest, you would be deemed to have breached the Seven Principles of Conduct Underpinning Public Life and may terminate your appointment.

What happens if I do not realise a potential conflict exists?

10. This situation may arise where the candidate is not familiar with the broad range of work which a body covers and therefore does not realise that a conflict might exist. In some cases, the Panel, with their wider knowledge of the body, might deduce that there is a potential conflict issue, based on the information on employment and experience provided by the candidate in the application form. They will then explore this at interview with the candidate.

What happens if a conflict of interest arises after an appointment is made?

11. This could arise for two main reasons. The first is that the member's circumstances may change, for example, they may change jobs and in doing so, a conflict with their work on the board becomes apparent. The second is where a member is unfamiliar with the range of the work of the body, but after appointment, it becomes clear that a conflict exists where none had been envisaged during the appointment process.

12. In both cases, the issue should be discussed with the Chair of the board and the Minister, in consultation with the Sponsoring Department, to decide whether or not the member can continue to carry out their role in an appropriate manner and each case is considered individually.

13. It may be that the conflict is such that it would be impractical for the member to continue on the board if they would have to withdraw from a considerable amount of the body's routine business. In such cases, the member may be asked to stand down from the body.

Background:

College Vision, Ethos and Mission

St Mary's is an independent institution of higher education in its own right. The College works within the framework of a Financial Memorandum with DfE and a Memorandum of Agreement with the University. It has its own Strategic Plan, *Strategy 21. An Institutional Plan for St Mary's University College 2021-2024*. Trustees, governors, staff and students strive to work together to build an institution:

- of excellence;
- focused on ethical and intellectual development;
- based on respect and concern for values: Christian, academic, professional and civic.

St Mary's has a vision, in the tradition of all Catholic colleges and universities, which brings coherence and interconnection to all its work. The College is part of a worldwide community which has a specific philosophical and educational view of the world. The Christian ideal of education is based on love, solidarity, the common good, truth and justice. It sees education as a moral activity which seeks a synthesis of competence and conscience; the pursuit of academic excellence is a vital component, but so too is the affirmation of human dignity, the liberation of humankind from ignorance and the empowerment of the marginalised.

In its teaching and broader life, the College pursues the education of the whole person, promoting personal, intellectual, social, cultural, moral and religious well-being. The College strives to nurture confident, well-integrated individuals, who are thereby better equipped to fulfil key roles in an increasingly diverse Northern Ireland and an integrated global society. This work is all the more important in the face of strong currents today in the wider society which favour a "learn to earn" approach to education. In addition, by upholding a clear space for religious education, and promoting a balanced and well-informed approach to the Christian faith, we endeavour to foster a spirit of mutual respect and understanding among our students which will equip them to be active promoters of reconciliation in our society.

We believe that developing an ethos to implement our vision of a values-based education is helped by the collegial nature of St Mary's, whereby staff and students at all levels interact and exchange views on a regular basis, as well as by the relatively small size of the institution. There is a strong sense of community and mutual respect arising from the College's ethos, which means that staff are very focused on ensuring that students receive the highest possible quality of learning experiences.

Arising from our vision of Catholic Education and our distinctive ethos, St Mary's has a very clear mission statement. To further our mission, we work

with a wide range of partners and seek to build fruitful and enduring relationships.

The primary focus of the College will continue to be teacher education, both initial and continuing. It aims to meet the needs of schools and institutions particularly in the Catholic as well as the Irish-medium sectors. It does this in the context of the continuing developments in education and significant adaptations have been made to the teacher education programmes in recent years. We believe that teacher education is most effective when students participate actively in their own learning and engage in critical reflection on their competence. Our approach is grounded in the Reflective Practitioner Model of Teacher Education as outlined by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI), and more recently, the principles outlined in the Learning Leaders Strategy (DE, 2016)

The College has a strong commitment to social justice. Thus, when it was given the opportunity to diversify its educational provision in 2000, it did so by offering a programme—BA (Hons) Liberal Arts—that would have an innovative skills-based curriculum and also help students to access further studies and find gainful and meaningful employment.

Furthermore, the College strives to promote widening access to higher education and has a well-established Widening Access and Participation Plan (WAPP), approved by DfE, that has been very successful in attracting students from lower socio-economic groups. This success is reflected in the numbers of first-degree entrants from the low socio-economic groups (multiple deprivation measures quintiles 1 and 2). In the undergraduate intake of September 2023, this group amounted to 40% of entrants.

St Mary's is located in West Belfast, an area which, along with the adjacent area of North Belfast, has suffered disproportionately during the Troubles and which continues to have major social and economic problems. The College actively engages with this community and has developed a range of partnerships with local bodies. It contributes to this community in many ways. It hosts various agencies such as Catholic Schools Trustee Service, Full Service Community Network, An tAisaonaid/Irish Medium Resource Unit and Gaelfast (Antrim GAA). It also has a close partnership with Feile an Phobail as a venue as a venue for cultural events and facilitating community groups. It hosts an annual Easter school for local school pupils in association with the West Belfast Partnership Board.

The College has a strong commitment to the promotion of the Irish Language and Irish-medium Education. As well as hosting An tAisaonad, the College has developed successful Irish-medium ITE primary routes (the BEd Primary and PGCE) and works in partnership with other PGCE providers at Queen's and Ulster University on an ITE Irish-medium BEd Post-primary programme.

The College also contributes to the continuing professional development of teachers with its portfolio of MEd programmes which is continually revised and refreshed to meet the contemporary needs of the profession. Recently it has

added to its module catalogue in response to the DfE call for new training opportunities within its Skill-Up initiative as part of the Department's 10X strategy.

St Mary's educational programmes at the undergraduate level pay particular attention to the international dimension. The College encourages all undergraduates to participate in some form of international study experience and past participation rates for Erasmus student mobility were very high. Following the COVID pandemic and the impact of Brexit, the College is enthusiastic to re-engage with international opportunities through Erasmus Ireland, the Turing Scheme, and SEMP. Other programmes include Study USA, the Washington Ireland Programme, Saphara (India), Beyond Borders (EU) and Study China.