

## Optional provider submission template for TEF 2023

### 1. Provider context

St Mellitus College has experienced remarkable life and growth since its establishment in 2007 and is one of the most innovative and exciting places to study theology, ministry and mission in the UK. The College offers non-residential part-time and full-time context-based training in theology and ministry, preparing students for ordained, Reader (LLM) and lay ministries in the Church of England and for leadership positions in other churches. The College has over 500 students studying across its four teaching centres. This includes more than 250 Church of England ordinands in training, approximately 150 independent undergraduate and postgraduate students (those not on a Church of England training pathway) undertaking accredited programmes, and a number of people engaging with non-accredited courses in theology. St Mellitus College is dedicated to providing innovative theological education and training for those called to serve Christ in the church and the world.

St Mellitus has pioneered a context-based model of ordination training. Rather than attending a residential College, full-time ordinands complete a placement at the same time as their academic studies. Supported by its training centres across the country, this approach allows ordinands who do not wish to move away from their current context to access market-leading theological training. For ordinands studying part-time and independent students, the course is structured to allow full access to training, alongside paid employment. Whilst the demands of balancing work and study can be challenging, the College monitors academic attainment by such students and is pleased to note that both the 2022 Ordinand and Independent student cohorts have over 60% of students gaining higher classifications, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels.<sup>(1)</sup>

This approach to theological training is proving popular with students and is well regarded in its sector. Students report high levels of satisfaction as seen in the results of the most recent National Student Survey where the College scored 93.4% in overall student satisfaction as an institution.<sup>(2)</sup> Further, the College scored over 90% across 8 of the questions, with 24 out of the 26 questions/subject areas coming in above the national average.

St Mellitus does not have degree awarding powers and works with the University of Durham and Middlesex University who validate programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level.

The College is committed to widening access and participation in theological education for previously underrepresented demographics. This has resulted in the launch of the Peter Stream, which is a pre-degree access programme that assists students who lack previous engagement or confidence with formal education. Students on this programme come from global majority heritage, economically disadvantaged or educationally underrepresented backgrounds, and most transition from this programme to the College's accredited programmes. Similarly, the Caleb Stream is a professional development programme aimed at those who are underrepresented in higher education due to their age, allowing them to draw on their existing skills to transition into priesthood. The Caleb Stream has started to draw some attention from the national press, with the Peter Stream being mentioned in the House of Commons.<sup>(3)</sup>

### 2. Student experience

#### Teaching Quality

St Mellitus helped inspire a change in the UK theological education environment through its model of context-based training. Because full-time ordinands have the opportunity to apply learning directly to placement experience and vice versa, this has created a dynamic learning environment

Name of Provider: [St Mellitus College Trust]  
UKPRN: [10030776]

where theology and practice are in constant dialogue. In recent years, a number of other theological colleges have adopted this model and adapted it to their specific contexts.

The placements offer an opportunity to develop career-focussed skills, gain relevant practical experience, and embed theoretical knowledge in up-to-date praxis, helping full-time ordinands develop as reflective practitioners. Intentional links are made between the academic and practical sides of study in the form of assessments based on placement activities and assignments requiring students to reflect on their practice theologically.

The College's TEF Core Metric (Full Time) score of 94.2% for "the teaching on my course" indicates its teaching is highly regarded by the student body. The College's teaching faculty is also committed to improving its pedagogical practice to enhance the student experience. The 93.46% NSS score for "staff are good at explaining things" indicates an outcome of this commitment to staff development. Teaching staff are also engaged in church ministry (of various types and in various contexts) alongside their lecturing and are able to draw on their professional practice and direct first-hand experience to support their teaching methods.

Academic staff are also committed to research-led teaching, and many are active in publishing, conferences, and public speaking. A list of books recently published by current faculty can be found here: <https://stmellitus.ac.uk/staff-publications>. Staff publications have ranged from devotional theology (including a book chosen as the Archbishop of Canterbury's Lent book) to cutting-edge original research in the area of embodied trauma and healing. Further, since 2016, the College has had a McDonald Professor in Christian Theology. The first holder of the post was The Right Reverend and Right Honourable Rowan Williams. The professorship is now held by Dr Jane Williams. Since 2022, Prof Luke Bretherton, Duke University's Robert E. Cushman Distinguished Professor of Moral & Political Theology, has been a visiting scholar and has taught on the College's core curriculum. In addition to the already first-rate teaching faculty, the students have access to teaching from some of the most prominent and respected theologians in the Anglican Communion.

The College has recently completed a research project on the theological underpinnings of one of its core values: 'Generous Orthodoxy'. This multi-year funded project comprised a number of public lectures, a colloquium bringing together theologians from across the world to share their ideas on the topic, and two published books <sup>(4)</sup>.

### **Staff Development**

The College is committed to development of its academic faculty. Lecturers have regular research leave to ensure engagement with current research in their field as well as access to book and conference allowances. Further, teaching staff are peer-reviewed annually with best practice shared across the College. This process ensures consistency is maintained in learning outcomes and expectations, whilst still allowing staff freedom to develop their own personal style and approach. Finally, staff development is offered through the Durham University Learning and Teaching Award (DELTA), a professional development course accredited by Advance HE. Successful completion of the course confers the right to apply to gain Associateship of Advance HE and the post-nominal letters AHEA, which some of our teaching staff hold.

### **Assessment and Feedback**

The Assessment and Feedback metric is slightly under the benchmark, for both Full time and Part time students. The College's internal student feedback mechanisms have previously shown concerns over the time taken to provide assessment feedback. In response, the College sought to address this through a restructuring of assessment deadlines and how marking is allocated amongst staff. This has resulted in an 11.62 percentage point improvement from the 2021 NSS to the 2022 survey.

Name of Provider: [St Mellitus College Trust]  
UKPRN: [10030776]

The College has also provided staff training in assessment and feedback at its National Academic Meetings. The intention has been to build a culture of shared practice across all markers with the goal of ensuring consistency in the feedback students receive. The Head of Teaching and Learning has undertaken work to determine why some students are not engaging with the feedback provided and what steps can be taken by markers and tutors to improve student engagement.<sup>(5)</sup>

Whilst the College continues to rank slightly under the benchmark in this area, for each of the NSS questions relating to this area, St Mellitus has scored between 5 and 20 percentage points above the national average.

### **Academic Skills Support**

The College has committed significant resources to the provision of Academic Skills Support, increasing staff resource from one dedicated Academic Skills tutor (0.5 FTE) at the time of its last TEF submission to three tutors (totalling 2.0 FTE) in 2022. The College has also introduced a roadmap to ensure students are supported through their learning experience. This involves proactively contacting students who have been identified in the Admissions process as potentially requiring additional support. Students who have been out of education for some time, who have previous SPLD diagnoses, or who are not fluent English speakers are contacted to see if they might benefit from one-to-one support in developing academic skills and techniques. By ensuring this support is in place at the start of the programme, the College seeks to ensure that students from disadvantaged and non-traditional backgrounds are able to navigate successfully the transition to academic study. This support is considered to be one of the factors that allows the College's Full Time Progression Rate to be 11 percentage points higher than the expected benchmark.

### **Learning Resources**

With regards to Learning Resources, the College notes that its performance is a few percentage points below the benchmark and is addressing this through its 2022 Learning Resource Strategy.<sup>(6)</sup> The College has identified two challenges it faces due to its size. Firstly, the purchase of online learning resources and aggregator platforms requires a significant upfront cost, which is easier for larger institutions to bear, especially since they benefit from economies of scale that are not available to smaller HEIs. Secondly, the College has relatively small physical libraries at each of its teaching centres. Depending on the centre, the College either does not have space in its existing buildings to expand the physical library or the cost of building or renting additional spaces would be prohibitive. In 2019, the College shifted its learning resource procurement so that a majority was digital rather than physical. This not only better served the dispersed learning community but also proved to be a remarkably prescient decision when the pandemic forced the closure of physical libraries. This strategic shift meant that the College was able to have sufficient learning resources available for students.

St Mellitus plans to improve its learning resource provision over the next year through the following actions:

- Conduct review of the primary online learning resource platform (Summon) to determine if it remains the best fit for the College.
- Expand the physical library at the East Midlands Centre.
- Create a dedicated sub-group to monitor and implement agreed improvements to the College's provision.
- Review and develop resources to support student induction and training on how to use the platforms, so that students are empowered and envisioned to use the full capacity of these resources.

### **Student Voice**

The College's attainment of 94.2% in the metric for "The teaching on my course" is indicative of strong student support for the construction and delivery of our curriculum. Students are invited to partner with the College in the delivery and development of its programmes. Every student at St Mellitus is consulted as part of the module evaluation process, providing feedback on teaching, learning, assessment, and resources available. This provides the raw data that helps shape discussions at Management Committee,<sup>(7)</sup> the College's student-staff consultative committee.

Student Representatives are appointed to represent each centre and programme. They represent their cohort at the Management Committee by bringing student feedback for consideration in decision-making. Separate to this, the Dean also appoints Senior Students, who meet with the Executive on a termly basis as well as having regular contact with their local Centre Director and/or course lead tutor. Selected students also meet with the College's Board annually, providing an opportunity for first-hand engagement and dialogue with its' members, as well as sharing updates and feedback on the student experience. This helps to inform trustees in their consideration of strategic College decisions. The College is proud of the formal and informal links that these Student Representatives and Senior Students build with staff and the student body. The extent to which all students feel included within a learning community of staff and students is evidenced by the NSS question relating to this with 90% of the students agreeing with the statement "I feel part of a community of staff and students." This is a remarkable 29 percentage points above the national average.

In addition to module evaluations, student feedback is gathered through the First Term Survey (a survey of all the College's accredited and unaccredited students, undertaken at the end of the first term), the Common Awards Student Survey (a national survey across theological education institutions who form part of the Common Awards programme),<sup>(8)</sup> and the National Student Survey. Data and trends from each of these survey are reviewed at the Management Committee with student representatives, as well as by the Academic, Ministry, and Operations Working Groups. Actions are agreed during this process and reported back to the wider student body through the College's VLE. Students are also consulted about new modules before they are added to accredited programmes. This ensures the curriculum remains relevant to the situations students are encountering. The effectiveness of these feedback mechanisms is demonstrated by the College's NSS results. 88.7% of surveyed students agreed that "I have had the right opportunities to provide feedback on my course". This strong performance is reflected in the College's TEF Metric for Student Voice, which is 84.1% for the Full Time students and 83.3% for those who are Part Time. The College is pleased that these results are both consistent and significantly above the benchmarks.

### **3. Student Outcomes**

St Mellitus is pleased to note that all three of the Student Outcome metrics are between 6 and 10 percentage points above benchmark for Full Time students. The performance for Part Time students shows an impressive result, with both Continuation and Completion being around 25 percentage points above the benchmark. The College monitors rates of continuation, progression, and completion for different demographics of students. The intent is to notice if any variance is occurring so that steps can be taken quickly to help correct this. However, due to the small size of the institution and the resultant size of many minority cohorts impacting on statistical reliability, a decision has been made not to directly reference this material as part of the TEF Submission evidence.

#### **Continuation and Progression**

One of the reasons why the College is able to have such a high percentage of its students continuing study throughout their course, and eventually leaving with a valuable award, is due to the remarkable college community. This is not something that is easy to provide empirical evidence

Name of Provider: [St Mellitus College Trust]  
UKPRN: [10030776]

for, but it is notable that 89.62% of students responding to the NSS survey believed themselves to be part of a community. Staff are contactable and engaged with the students in their care, with 94.39% of students being confident that they can contact staff when they need to, and 88.68% believing staff value students' views and opinions (NSS).

One of the distinctives of the St Mellitus learning community is its commitment not only to academic progress but also to character formation and personal development, which the QAA described as "comprehensive arrangements for personal, academic and professional support provided to students through the Formation Group system, which is integral to the College's ethos... alongside the tiered approach to the provision of study skills, which supports effective student transition and development".<sup>(9)</sup> Students also have access to pastoral support through chaplains and a counselling service with costs met by the student's Diocese and the College. The College's Student Support Services were described as "excellent" in our most recent review by the Church of England.<sup>(10)</sup> The high standards in this area have been maintained across the intervening years, with all questions relating to formational provision scoring at least a 4.0 out of 5 in the College's annual End of Year Survey across the years 2019-21.<sup>(11)</sup> The recently conducted First Term Survey 22-23 also shows strong performance in this area, with students rating the contribution of the Formation Group system to their personal development at 7.30 out of 10 and a similar question relating to Chaplaincy and Counselling services scoring 7.77 out of 10.<sup>(12)</sup>

## **Completion**

The College is pleased to note its Completion metric is 92.4% (7.9% above benchmark) for Full Time Students and 82.7% (25.9% above benchmark) for Part Time Students. High completion statistics evidence the College's ability to foster a learning community that ensures all students are supported both academically and personally.

It is highly likely that the significant reduction in Part Time Student non-completion compared to the national average is due to the College's efforts to ensure that part time students feel fully included, represented, and part of the wider body (as evidenced by the responses recorded across our internal End of Year Surveys 2019-21).<sup>(13)</sup> The College tracks student satisfaction by reviewing the data gathered through annual internal surveys. The data is analysed by mode, cohort, and course, which ensures any problems are identified quickly and appropriate actions set to enhance provision.

Across its BA programmes, the College's commitment to academic attainment of all students is demonstrated through its 2022 graduating cohort, with 69.3% of students gaining a 2:1 or first-class degree. This has been broadly consistent in the years since the College's last TEF submission, with previous years ranging from 63.5% to 77.6% of students gaining these higher-level awards from 2019-22.<sup>(14)</sup> It is notable that the year with lowest level outcomes was in 2020, when many students' lives were unavoidably disrupted by the pandemic.

Average attainment has been broadly equivalent for male and female students and consistent across age groups,<sup>(15)</sup> which speaks to the College's success in ensuring equality of opportunity through the design and delivery of its programmes. Whilst not directly in scope for the TEF, attainment across the MA programme was also consistently high,

## **Educational Gains**

St Mellitus College is dedicated to providing innovative theological education and training for those called to serve Christ in the church and the world. With this mission statement in mind, the College offers a range of unaccredited programmes to help Christians explore their faith. The College's primary focus is its academic programmes, which strive for two aims:<sup>(16)</sup>



Name of Provider: [St Mellitus College Trust]  
UKPRN: [10030776]

1. Preparing people for professional ministry and mission within churches.
2. Preparing people for lay ministry and mission in the world.

With that in mind, the College's Employability metrics are consistent with a programme that is effectively preparing people to move into a productive career in professional or lay ministry. The Discover Uni website shows that students' outcomes post-graduation are ahead of the curve for the sector. For Full Time BA students, 95% of students recorded in employment or further study and 95% were in highly skilled employment or further study.<sup>(17)</sup> 100% of graduates of this course told the Graduate Outcomes survey that they find the work they do meaningful. The data for average earnings is incomplete, but for the one comparable metric, graduates are earning a higher average salary than those finishing comparable courses. The College is aware that its graduates predominantly move into work within the church or the charitable sector. As a result, the College is satisfied that its graduates are earning above average starting salaries in this sector.

A key part of the College's success in helping students develop into effective ministers is its formational programme. Full-time Ordinands benefit from a targeted programme of personal and ministerial development. Known as "The Forge",<sup>(18)</sup> this programme is designed to help ordinands develop habits of spiritual formation as well as equip them to emerge as effective church leaders. This is accomplished through exploring a range of job-specific skills, such as church planting, preaching, and pioneering ministry, alongside input from experienced professionals operating in the contexts the students will soon be employed in. As previously discussed, the College's context-based learning model provides extensive opportunities for students to develop experience and skills directly related to full time church ministry or charitable work.

The College recognises that part time Ordinands are often headed for different contexts and roles than full-time ordinands. In response, it has created a tailored formation programme to address these specific needs. "Refine" offers seminar sessions guided by a tutor on a range of topics such as self-care and well-being, inclusion, pastoral practice, and the clergy code of conduct. This programme is designed to further both personal development and professional ministerial formation. Taking a holistic approach and covering key development areas, "Refine" affords students transferable skills gains, and those undertaking it will benefit from growth in self-confidence and theoretical knowledge, which maps positively onto employability.

The College also provides additional support for independent students. This has included additional employability support, including: how to write CVs, good interview practice, and a careers panel.

After graduating, College alumni are supported through the alumni support network, which focuses on improving long term student outcomes through building networks and signposting alumni towards opportunities for continuing professional development and future employment opportunities. This ensures they remain equipped for mission and ministry within their various contexts.

#### 4. References

1. Ordinands vs Independents Academic Attainment (held on the College's SharePoint system)
2. NSS 2022 Data - <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/student-information-and-data/national-student-survey-nss/nss-data-provider-level/>
3. Times article on the Caleb Stream - [#https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/fast-track-into-priesthood-for-retired-city-workers-head-teachers-and-police-plvjzr5jh #](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/fast-track-into-priesthood-for-retired-city-workers-head-teachers-and-police-plvjzr5jh)

It's fantastic that the Peter Stream was mentioned at the House of Commons. The Peter Stream is a discernment pathway offered by @stmellitus towards... | By St Mellitus College | Facebook

Name of Provider: [St Mellitus College Trust]  
UKPRN: [10030776]

4. Graham Tomlin and Nathan Eddy, eds. *The Bond of Peace: Exploring Generous Orthodoxy*, (London: SPCK Publishing, 2021); Graham Tomlin, *Navigating a World of Grace: The Promise of Generous Orthodoxy*, (London: SPCK Publishing, 2022).
5. Assessment Training (held on the College's SharePoint system)
6. St Mellitus Learning Resource Strategy 2022 (held on the College's SharePoint system)
7. Sample Management Committee Minutes (held on the College's SharePoint system)
8. Common Awards Student Survey - <https://www.durham.ac.uk/departments/academic/common-awards/students/student-survey/>
9. QAA Report 2017 - <https://stmellitus.ac.uk/policies-reports/qaa-review>
10. Church of England Periodic External Review 2017 (held on the College's SharePoint system)
11. End of Year Student Survey Summary Reports 2019, 2020, 2021 (held on the College's SharePoint system)
12. First Term Student Survey Summary Report 2023 (held on the College's SharePoint system)
13. NSS2022 Full time/Part Time Splits (held on the College's SharePoint system)
14. Student Academic Outcomes 2019-22 (held on the College's SharePoint system)
15. St Mellitus Transparency Return 2022 - [https://assets.stmellitus.ac.uk/production/uploads/pdf/SMC-TransparencyTables22\\_10030776.xlsx#asset:37206@1:url](https://assets.stmellitus.ac.uk/production/uploads/pdf/SMC-TransparencyTables22_10030776.xlsx#asset:37206@1:url)
16. BA Programme Specification - [https://www.durham.ac.uk/media/durham-university/departments-/common-awards/documents/curriculum-programme-specifications/Prog\\_Spec\\_BA.pdf](https://www.durham.ac.uk/media/durham-university/departments-/common-awards/documents/curriculum-programme-specifications/Prog_Spec_BA.pdf)
17. Discover Uni Course Comparisons <https://discoveruni.gov.uk/course-details/10030776/BATMM/Full-time/>
18. The Forge Programme (held on the College's SharePoint system)