Merger with City, University of London

City, University of London and St George's, University of London have signed an agreement to merge. Subject to the necessary regulatory approvals, the merged institution will be called City St George's, University of London and will begin operating from 1 August 2024.

For students joining in 2024, there will be no change to the delivery, content and structure of the course. St George's will be going through the process to enable it to offer students the choice to still graduate with a St George's Hospital Medical School degree certificate or choose to graduate with a degree certificate from City St George's.

Further information, including frequently asked questions and contact details to submit further questions, are available on our website: https://www.sgul.ac.uk/study/prospective-students/merger

Programme Specification

St George's
University of London

A	NATURE OF THE AWARD	
1	Programme Title	Healthcare Research Skills and Methods
2	Final award	Postgraduate Certificate
3	Intermediate awards	not applicable
4	Awarding institution/body	St George's Hospital Medical School, a constituent college of the University of London
5	Teaching institution	St George's University of London
6	Programme accredited by	not applicable
7	UCAS/JACS code	not applicable
8	QAA benchmark statements	not applicable
9	Date specification produced	March 2019 Updated March 2023

B	FEATURES OF THE PROGRAMME	
1	Mode of study	Part-time
2	Usual length of programme	1 year (September to June, with award in July)

3	Other features of the programme	One entry per year – September

C	EDUCATIONAL AIMS OF THE PROGRAMME

The educational aims of this flexible, modular programme are:

1. To provide an excellent foundation for critical understanding and evaluation of the design, conduct, dissemination and funding of research (from pre-clinical to healthcare);

2. To equip participants with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to enable them to commission or undertake their own original research and become effective healthcare researchers.

This will be achieved by focusing on knowledge, behaviours and attributes required to become a successful healthcare researcher, using the Researcher Development Framework(1) as a foundation:

> Knowledge & Techniques   > Personal Effectiveness

> Engagement, Influence & Impact   > Research Governance & Organisation

(1) https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework.

D	LEARNING OUTCOMES OF THE PROGRAMME	
1	Carry out careful and critically focused evaluation of health and social care interventions, taking into consideration feasibility, implementation issues and costs, including the MRC framework for evaluation of complex interventions.	***Related teaching and learning methods*** Lectures Seminars Workshops Distant learning
2	Demonstrate systematic understanding of a wide range of quantitative and qualitative research study designs and approaches, along with their advantages and disadvantages.	Directed self-learning Small-group teaching Tutorials Discussions Independent learning
3	Evaluate and reflect critically on the design, planning and reporting of a range of healthcare research activities.	***Assessments***

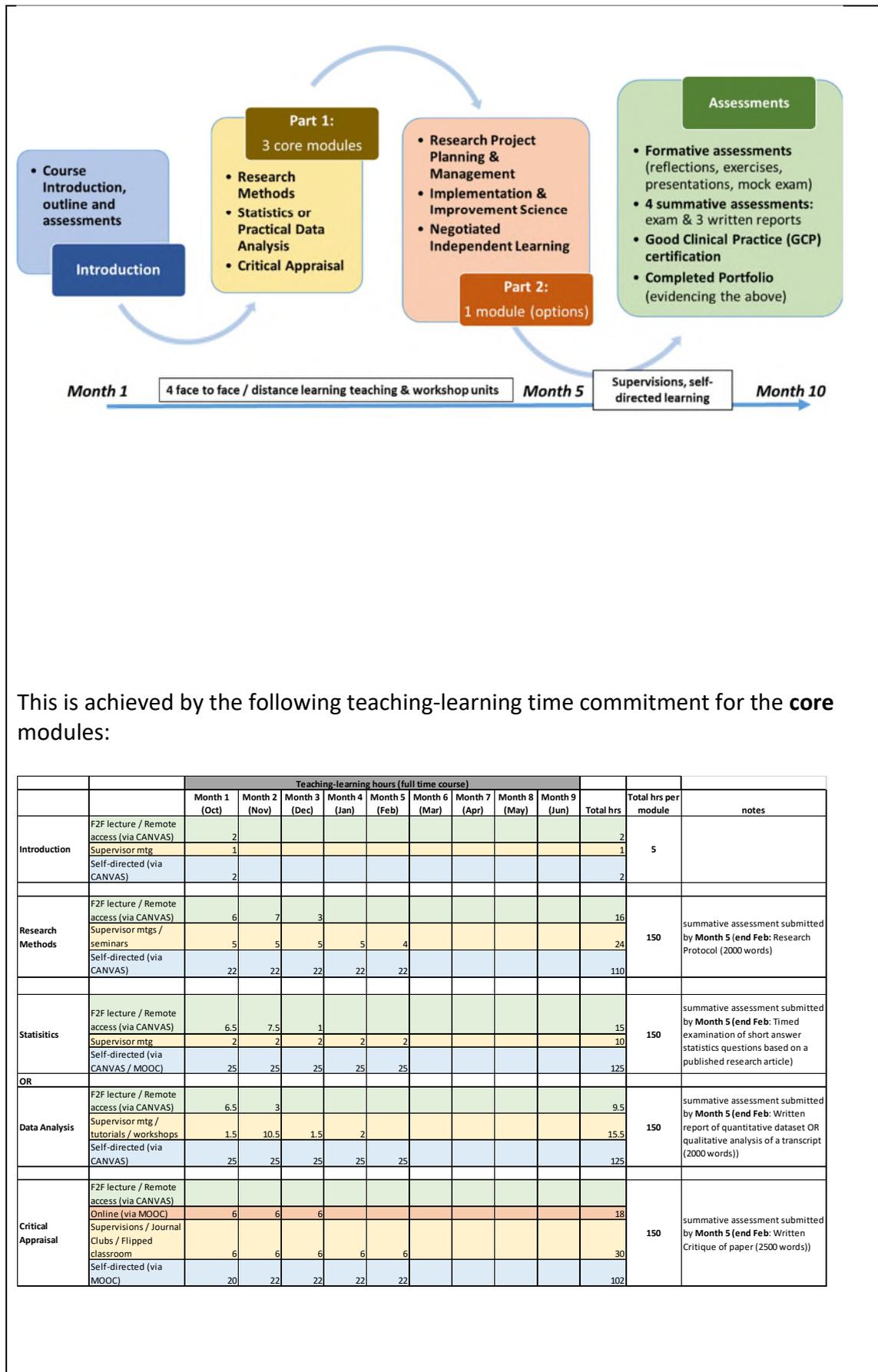| 4	Apply their knowledge to carry out literature searches and original reviews efficiently.	In-course oral and written formative assessments
5	Depict the role of patient and public involvement in research design and practice	Portfolio
6	Gain a practical understanding of the underlying principles and structure of statistical thinking, including up to date methods to analyse data collected using quantitative study designs	Written summative examinations
7	Apply different statistical approaches, including practical experience of sample size calculations	
8	Demonstrate systematic understanding of a range of different approaches to qualitative data analysis used in primary studies, and in qualitative evidence syntheses.	
9	Employ appropriate methods in conducting one's own ethical research.	
10	Identify the appropriate 'knowledge resources' and employ the appropriate 'interpersonal skills' to enable the student to write a research proposal with an understanding of the associated research governance requirements, including valid informed patient consent.	
11	Demonstrate time management and research collaboration skills and communicating results with impact, both orally and in writing, to plan and execute research projects successfully.	
12	Identify and reflect critically on own personal development needs, own role in the wider contexts of own institution and clinical research in general.	
13	Compile a portfolio of evidence demonstrating personal and professional development as a healthcare researcher during this course.	

E	Programme structure and features

This is a flexible, modular, part-time Level 7 postgraduate course, which can be completed over a minimum of 10 months (3 terms from September through to June, with award in July) and a maximum of 3 years (9 terms from September to June for 3 years, with award in July of the third year), to allow for extensions/interruptions etc.

The programme consists of 3 core and 1 optional module (each at 15 credits, total 60 credits at level 7):

	Module Name	Level	Credit Value
Core	MRDM101X Research Methods	7	15
Core	MRDM102X Statistics Or MRDM105X Practical Data Analysis: qualitative and quantitative approaches	7	15
Core	MRDM103X Critical Appraisal	7	15
option	MRDM104X Research Project Planning and Management	7	15
option	MCP7103X Implementation and Improvement Science: Principles for Practice	7	15
option	MCP7104X Negotiated Independent Learning	7	15

The proposed course structure is as follows, with the 3 core teaching modules in the first term and core summative assessments completed by the end of month 5:

Introduction
- Course Introduction, outline and assessments

Part 1: 3 core modules
- Research Methods
- Statistics or Practical Data Analysis
- Critical Appraisal

Part 2: 1 module (options)
- Research Project Planning & Management
- Implementation & Improvement Science
- Negotiated Independent Learning

Assessments
- Formative assessments (reflections, exercises, presentations, mock exam)
- 4 summative assessments: exam & 3 written reports
- Good Clinical Practice (GCP) certification
- Completed Portfolio (evidencing the above)

Month 1 → 4 face to face / distance learning teaching & workshop units → Month 5 → Supervisions, self-directed learning → Month 10

This is achieved by the following teaching-learning time commitment for the **core** modules:

		Teaching-learning hours (full time course)										Total hrs per module	notes
		Month 1 (Oct)	Month 2 (Nov)	Month 3 (Dec)	Month 4 (Jan)	Month 5 (Feb)	Month 6 (Mar)	Month 7 (Apr)	Month 8 (May)	Month 9 (Jun)	Total hrs		
Introduction	F2F lecture / Remote access (via CANVAS)	2									2	5	
	Supervisor mtg	1									1		
	Self-directed (via CANVAS)	2									2		
Research Methods	F2F lecture / Remote access (via CANVAS)	6	7	3							16	150	summative assessment submitted by **Month 5 (end Feb**: Research Protocol (2000 words)
	Supervisor mtgs / seminars	5	5	5	5	4					24		
	Self-directed (via CANVAS)	22	22	22	22	22					110		
Statisitics	F2F lecture / Remote access (via CANVAS)	6.5	7.5	1							15	150	summative assessment submitted by **Month 5 (end Feb**: Timed examination of short answer statistics questions based on a published research article)
	Supervisor mtg	2	2	2	2	2					10		
	Self-directed (via CANVAS / MOOC)	25	25	25	25	25					125		
OR													
Data Analysis	F2F lecture / Remote access (via CANVAS)	6.5	3								9.5	150	summative assessment submitted by **Month 5 (end Feb**: Written report of quantitative dataset OR qualitative analysis of a transcript (2000 words))
	Supervisor mtg / tutorials / workshops	1.5	10.5	1.5	2						15.5		
	Self-directed (via CANVAS)	25	25	25	25	25					125		
Critical Appraisal	F2F lecture / Remote access (via CANVAS)											150	summative assessment submitted by **Month 5 (end Feb**: Written Critique of paper (2500 words))
	Online (via MOOC)	6	6	6							18		
	Supervisions / Journal Clubs / Flipped classroom	6	6	6	6	6					30		
	Self-directed (via MOOC)	20	22	22	22	22					102		

Dependent on the **optional module** chosen, teaching and student time commitment will be as follows:

		Teaching-learning hours (full time course)									Total hrs	Total hrs per module	notes
		Month 1 (Oct)	Month 2 (Nov)	Month 3 (Dec)	Month 4 (Jan)	Month 5 (Feb)	Month 6 (Mar)	Month 7 (Apr)	Month 8 (May)	Month 9 (Jun)			
Research Project Planning & Management	F2F lecture / Remote access (via CANVAS)	3	4	4							11	150	summative assessment submitted by **Month 7 (April:** - Legal, ethical, governance, health & safety issues written report (2500 words & 2 appendices)
	Supervisor mtg / workshop / seminars			8	4	4					16		
	Self-directed (via CANVAS)		25	25	24	24	25				123		
Implementation & Improvement Science: Principles for Practice	F2F lecture / Remote access (via CANVAS)				13.5	11.5					25	150	summative assessment submitted by **Month 7 (April:** - Written individual account of development of group based analysis, in context of current IS literature & changed or reinforced ideas & perspectives (2500 words)
	Small group workshops / student-led seminars / Sup. mtg				10	10	11				31		
	Self-directed (via CANVAS)				23.5	23.5	23.5	23.5			94		
Negotiated Independent Learning	F2F lecture / Remote access (via CANVAS)				3						3	150	summative assessment sumbitted by **Month 9 (end Jun:** Structured annotated record evidencing breath of learning in relation to specified topic + written critical reflection on learning that will enhance research activity quality (2000 words)
	Supervisor mtg				1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	9		
	Self-directed (via identified specific project)				23	23	23	23	23	23	138		
GCP training*	F2F lecture / Remote access (via CANVAS)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	*can be completed at any time within the 9 mths - required to pass for final Pgcert award
	External (via NIHR; free F2F and online options)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	8		
	Supervisor support	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1		
	Self-directed (via CANVAS)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		

'The description of the structure of the programme, including the lists of modules, is indicative and should not be regarded as full and definitive. For up-to-date information, see the 'Student handbook'.

Programme reference points – the following reference points were used in the preparation of this specification:

- QAA's qualifications framework for England Wales and Northern Ireland

- Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF) https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework

F	General teaching and learning strategies

The Postgraduate Certificate comprises a flexible, modular approach to cater for the heterogeneous, time-poor, target group, by using blended learning strategies, involving face to face lectures and supervisions being interspersed with flipped classrooms, webinars (utilising the CANVAS features to develop a supportive learning community), and online teaching (MOOC format).

The knowledge, qualities and skills typical graduates of this course will develop are as per the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF), which will underpin the teaching content of their studies (https://www.vitae.ac.uk/researchers-professional-development/about-the-vitae-researcher-development-framework).

Feedback will be provided through supervisions and formative assessments, which are already set up on CANVAS for the individual stand-alone Common Postgraduate Framework modules.

G	Assessment

Formative and summative assessments will be as per the individual Common Postgraduate Framework and MRes modules, on which this postgraduate certificate is built. The summative assessments are as follows:

1. Research Protocol (2000 words; **Research Methods; MRDM101X**)
2. Timed examination of short answer statistics questions based on a published research article (**Statistics MRD7102X**) OR Written report of quantitative dataset OR qualitative analysis of a transcript (2000 words; **Data Analysis MRDM105X**)
3. Written critique of a paper (2500 words; **Critical Appraisal MRD7103X**)
4. Plus one from:
     I. Legal, ethical, governance, health & safety issues written report (2500 words & 2 appendices; **Research Project Planning and Management; MRDM 104X**) OR
    II. Written individual account of the development of the group based analysis, in context of current implementation science literature, and changed or reinforced ideas, and perspectives (2500 words; **Implementation and Improvement Science: Principles for Practice; MCP7103x**) OR
   III. Structured annotated record evidencing breath of learning in relation specified topic + written critical reflection on learning that will enhance research activity quality (2000 words: **Negotiated Independent Learning; MCP 7104X**).
5. Additionally, the Postgraduate Certificate will require completion of a valid specific Good Clinical Practice (GCP) certification, appropriate to field of research (completed electronically through the NIHR CRN Learn platform https://learn.nihr.ac.uk/).

6. Portfolio: The course will include a mandatory portfolio in which students must document on CANVAS all of their in-course assessment work (formative as well as summative), the feedback they received, their GCP certification, plus a completed formative reflective pro-forma for each module. It's aim is to help students:
   ❖ to form the habit of continuous self-reflection practice
   ❖ to appreciate their own progress,
   ❖ assess their individual learning gaps,
   ❖ and therefore ultimately to build their self-confidence and personal effectiveness as a successful healthcare researcher.

   The portfolio must be completed in order for the student to be considered for the award of the Postgraduate Certificate.

H	Support for students and their learning

We appreciate that the target group for this course represents a heterogeneous group of postgraduate trainees at different stages in their careers, with different time-pressures to juggle their work and this training, different needs, career goals and teaching approach requirements (face to face, distant learning, flexible modules etc).

Two key elements to ensure this programme is a cohesive, clear and supportive learning experience for students will be:

1) the individual discussions with students prior to the start of the course, to advise regarding option selection. This will be provided by the Course Co-Directors. **The Course Co- Directors**, Dr Mathew Paul and Professor Nidhi Sofat, will provide leadership and oversight of the set up and running of this course, to ensure it remains fit for purpose for the allied health professional academic trainees and the clinical academic trainees across the Faculty and St George's. The Course Co-Directors will be responsible for advising their respective cohorts of medical and allied health professionals on the pathway they should take i.e.

• **Mathew Paul (0.5 FTE)**, Course co-director PGCert HRSM and course director NIHR MRes (Clinical Research): to act as 'course leader' responsible for day-to-day running of the course, and advising non-medical trainees.

• **Nidhi Sofat (0.05 FTE)**, NIHR Integrated Academic Training (IAT) Lead: to advise medical academic trainees regarding their module options to match their research career aspirations.

The Course Co-Directors will also make decisions on requests for extensions, mitigating circumstances considerations, and interruption of studies.

2) and to ensure the students have a good experience from the start, beginning with a clear introductory session at the start of the course to include course orientation, contact details, expectations and guidance on time and assessment requirements depending on module selections. **The Course Leader** will be responsible for ensuring

the welcome and introductory session is delivered clearly and that each student is set up expediently on CANVAS before the start of the course. The Course Leader will provide the ongoing direct point of contact for student and lecturer questions, queries and signposting of resources across the various different elements of the distant learning and face-to-face modules.

Course administration: Administrative and examination support is provided by the Postgraduate Taught Programmes team under the leadership of the Head of Postgraduate Administration.

For any students experiencing personal or academic difficulties, additional academic and pastoral support will be offered by an **allocated personal tutor**, who can direct students to further support services available within SGUL if required.

Academic support will be provided by **Module Leaders** and **Academic Supervisors**, and all of the course team members are able to direct students to sources of further academic help and pastoral support.

Student peer support: Peer-to-peer student learning is encouraged within the structure of the course. Group work and other class and online activities will provide opportunities for students to share knowledge and experiences, and provide a platform to offer each other support and advice.

SGUL Support Services: A comprehensive range of support is provided to all SGUL students, including the confidential and independent Student Counselling Service, the multi-faith Chaplaincy, advice on financial issues through the Registry, the Occupational Health service, the Careers Advisor, the Disabilities Advisor, the International Students Advisor, and the Students' Union. Two members of academic staff are employed specifically to provide study skills support and English language support, respectively. Students also have on and off site access to library services and IT facilities, with access to a dedicated postgraduate librarian for the course who can facilitate additional one-to-one or group study support sessions if required.

The Student Handbook will be available to students and staff at the start of the course and contains information on the full range of student support offered.

SGUL Graduate School: The SGUL Graduate School provides students with a space to meet and the opportunity to mix with postgraduate students from other courses, and to broaden their social and academic support network.

Resources
In addition to its staff resources, SGUL has a wealth of teaching and research laboratories, a dense Wi-Fi network, a large library and well equipped computer classroom, specialized workshops and efficient academic service facilities. Students have access to a substantial collection of web-based learning resources. This incorporates web links to specific useful sites, as well as key learning topic materials developed by SGUL staff to support student learning.

The library holds a specialist medicine and health sciences collection of over 40,000 books, and audio-visual items, subscribes to over 10,000 print and electronic journals, and provides more than 250 reader seats (divided into quiet study, silent study and group study areas).

The library area has Wi-Fi throughout as well as some desks with fixed data points (Ethernet cables to connect laptop directly to the network rather than using Wi-Fi). Power sockets are available at over 100 desks, and a number of laptops are available for use.

Upon enrolment, students take part in an induction programme to help their orientation. This includes introductions to the programme, health and safety on campus, library and computing resources.

I	Criteria for admissions

Entry Requirements:
Entry requirements for the programme are a first degree in an appropriate subject or an equivalent overseas qualification.

Applicants with entry qualifications other than above may be considered for entry at the discretion of the Course Co-Directors.

Prior training in quantitative or qualitative research methods is not required.

Recognition of prior learning and credit transfer is permitted as per the programme regulations (see Appendix B).

Dual registration: applications from those who are currently registered for a diploma or degree at St George's, Kingston University or any other university or other institution of equivalent standing will not be eligible for this course.

Applicants to the Postgraduate Certificate programme will need to submit the following directly to the Admissions team at SGUL:
1. Their CV
2. A statement (no more than 250 words) to outline their reasons for applying for the course and what they envisage the benefits will be to them by engaging in this course.
3. A statement (no more than 250 words) to outline how the applicant intends to achieve the required study and assessment time, the applicant's intended completion date of the course and what factors, if any, may impact on their ability to achieve this.
4. A declaration signature by the applicant that they understand and agree to the time and activity commitments of the programme
5. If employed, a signed letter of support to undertake this programme from the applicant's line manager / lead clinician / academic supervisor

6. Two reference letters. One of these should be a recent academic reference and the other should be either a second academic reference or a professional/employer reference. For those unable to provide an academic referee a second professional/employer reference will be permitted.

The course team and admissions team will make offers based on the information obtained from the application form and reference letters.

International applicants must satisfy the requirements of the UK Visas and Immigration department in relation to St George's responsibilities as a Tier 4 sponsor.

Proficiency in English language:
Evidence of English language testing will be required from all applicants for whom English is not their first language and who have not previously undertaken studies in English. The required minimum level of proficiency for postgraduate study at SGUL is an IELTS overall score of 7, with no less than 6.5 in each of the sub-test components, or equivalent in another recognised test. Evidence of proficiency must be dated within the last two years, and applicants who have taken the test more than twice in one year will not be considered.

J	Career opportunities

The aim of the Postgraduate Certificate in Healthcare Research Skills and Methods is to provide core research training to a cohort of pre-doctoral research trainees, to prepare and support them to be successful healthcare researchers and to better equip them to be competitive for advanced research funding. This qualification provides a stepping stone for graduates to transition to a PhD-level programme.

K	Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

A range of methods are employed:
- The Course Committee meetings have standing agenda items on course progress where student representatives can raise any issues.
- Module reports of Student Evaluation Questionnaires and staff reports are reviewed by the Course Committee.
- Annual programme monitoring reports – prepared by course co-directors and approved by monitoring committees
- External Examiners' reports are reviewed by the Course Committee and Board of Examiners. Points requiring action are sent to the relevant members of academic or administrative or the Course Committee.
- The Taught Postgraduate Courses Committee (TPCC) is responsible for quality monitoring of all postgraduate programmes. The TPCC receives the minutes of Course Committee meetings, and the Annual Programme Monitoring

Report. There is robust debate at TPCC meetings, attended by course directors of all postgraduate courses, where good practice is shared and areas for improvement are reviewed.

Other methods:
- Periodic review
- Teaching observation
- Staff appraisal against St George's criteria
- Staff development, including teaching skills courses for staff
- Review of research activities of teaching staff
- Employer feedback

L	Regulation of assessment

Please refer to the programme regulations (see Appendix B) and the scheme of assessment (see Appendix C).
The course complies with the General Regulations for Students and Programmes of Study as devised by St George's.

Assessments are regulated through:
- Scheme of Assessment, which is reviewed and revised as necessary every year
- The Board of Examiners, which meets at least once annually, and identifies strengths and weakness of assessments
- External Examiner who reviews specific assignment and examination questions and a sample of student coursework and exam scripts. The External Examiner provides an annual report on practices and processes, which is considered at Course Committee.

M	Indicators of quality and standards

Internal review:
- Positive evaluations by students and by external examiners
- Annual incremental improvements in evaluation scores given by students, the Annual Programme Monitoring Report and within external examiners reports.
- Regular analysis of student performance in assessments
- Annual analysis of student progression and outcomes with respect to success in research
- Periodic review every 5 years

Publication: This specification is available in the following locations:
- SGUL website

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if he/she takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in the student handbook and, where they are produced, separate module guides.

Key sources of information are:
- Course documents
- Student Handbook
- The SGUL prospectus
- Course leaflets
- The SGUL internet site
- General Regulations for students and programmes of study
- QAA subject review reports