

## Heythrop Principal resigns as doubts cast on Roehampton partnership

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The Principal of Heythrop College in London has resigned before the completion of negotiations to secure the 400-year-old institution's long-term future.

Fr Michael Holman SJ said in a letter today that a number of factors influenced his decision to quit, including an underlying health issue.

He added that the four-year period to which he had been assigned to the college by the Society of Jesus had expired.

His resignation comes as doubt was cast on the viability of the Jesuit college's remaining lifeline, a partnership with the University of Roehampton. Heythrop is due to close at the end of 2018; after a proposed merger with St Mary's University in Twickenham fell through it was hoped a partnership with Roehampton could save it. But last week The Tablet reported that a number of issues, including the future of the Bellarmine Institute, an ecclesiastical faculty at Heythrop that trains seminarians, had proven a sticking point.

On negotiations to save Heythrop Fr Holman said: "I can't see that much more could have been done!" He went on: "I am of course disappointed that in my time we have not been able to arrive at a plan that could be agreed by all those who would rightly need to agree it. However, my hope is that this will open up new opportunities for the intellectual apostolate in a form well suited to the mission

of the Church and the Society today and to the world of higher education as it now is.”

In a statement the college said that the Governors will immediately start the process of appointing his successor, who will focus on leading the College during its final two years as a college of the University of London.

Reacting to Fr Michael’s decision to step down, Chair of Governors Andrew Kennedy, said: “Michael has made an outstanding contribution to the College at a challenging time. He has been a great colleague and friend to so many at the College and will be greatly missed. The Governors are extremely grateful for all his hard work and commitment. We wish him all the best for the future.”

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Liz Dodd -The Tablet