

Institution: Liverpool Hope University
Unit of Assessment: Theology and Religious Studies
1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy

Introduction

The heart of this unit is the Subject (previously 'Department') of Theology, Philosophy and Religious Studies (TPRS), part of the School of Humanities. TPRS inherits a long history: it has been at the core of Liverpool Hope University's identity, as the only ecumenical Christian foundation in Europe. It has also been at the forefront of Hope's research activity since before university status was granted.

This forms the context for the unit in two significant ways. First, its research activity has always involved significant partnerships with the churches and wider communities of the north west. Secondly, it has been a catalyst for research activity across disciplines.

This overarching context has shaped the specific research strategy for the unit since REF2014. As a result of feedback given from that exercise, the TPRS team prioritised the development of a coherent and supportive strategy to nurture research.

In the aftermath of REF2014, a 2015 institutional review offered a timely opportunity to reflect more fully on the way forward. Through dedicated, inclusive meetings, three commitments emerged to shape the ethos of the team's research:

1. Service

The 2015 review identified service as a key defining feature of TPRS. Concretely, this meant that a significant body of our research was to engage with stakeholders in the churches and other social constituencies.

2. Global Perspectives

In REF 2014, TPRS affirmed that 'A determination to engage global perspectives and challenge Eurocentrism provides an overarching concept for the TPRS Research Strategy'. This commitment was retained in the revised TPRS research strategy.

3. Interdisciplinary Synergies

A core commitment emerging from the 2015 review was that synergies between staff research interests would be exploited to work in an interdisciplinary mode across constituent disciplines, identifying and enhancing clusters formed by overlapping research

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interests. The key intention is that interdisciplinary work is pursued in close relation to the wider service and global dimensions of the strategy.

Each of these strategic commitments share a common feature: they are constitutive of the unit's research identity, not merely add-ons. The narrative below will set out evidence for this while articulating the commitments in more detail. This will be preceded by a brief account of the unit's structure and context.

Structure and Context

The unit includes 14 members of the TPRS Subject team along with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Kenneth Newport. The Subject Lead is Associate Professor Peter McGrail.

The Subject team falls into three areas: Theology and Biblical Studies (with specialities in liturgy, Methodism, Biblical reception, philosophical theology, mysticism); Philosophy and Ethics (with considerable expertise in continental philosophy of religion); and Religious Studies (where Islam and Indic religions are core specialisms). Staff may work predominantly in one area, but there is significant interdisciplinarity within the team and beyond, extending into a diverse range of subjects such as Education, Disability Studies, Geography, History, and the Creative and Performing Arts.

The unit is home to two Research Centres: The Andrew F. Walls Centre for the Study of African and Asian Christianity (director: Prof. Jeyaraj); and The Centre for Christian Education (director: Dr Stuart-Buttle). TPRS is also home to The Association for Continental Philosophy of Religion.

Importantly, the unit includes a huge diversity of backgrounds: Indian, Polish, Palestinian, Ukrainian, black British, Hong Kong, Roma Hungarian, American, Malawian. Class and social backgrounds also differ widely, with several of us being first-generation university goers in our family. Across these differences, all members of staff are research active and make crucial contributions to the unit's research strategy. We will see further how women's voices are prominent in key areas of research, and how inclusivity and dialogue is part of our research DNA. This will be a core aspect of the following sections, as they explore the three strategic commitments to service, global perspectives and interdisciplinary synergies.

Service

The 2015 institutional review of TPRS (which included external experts in the field) was timely, coming after REF 2014 and subsequent discussions about refining the TPRS research strategy.

The Subject's self-evaluation document began with rooting its activities in a culture of service. This entailed a holistic 'commitment to the human person', 'the essentially interdisciplinary mode' of the team's work, and an affirmation that 'inclusivity and dialogue is, therefore, essential to its identity'.

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This was specifically related to the heart of the Subject's research activity as it engaged with faith communities 'to reflect their voices and concerns and to engage with their own exploration of questions relating to truth, aesthetics and ethics'. An example was drawn from Professor Jeyaraj's research:

the transcription of the palm leaf records that map early Christian-Hindu encounter in Tamil Nadu is recognised as being of significance today to both Hindu and Christian communities in South East India. Thus, our research does not seek only to investigate religious communities, but puts itself also at their service by offering them a rigorous critical lens to reflect upon their own story and current realities.

This example forms the substance of an ongoing research project central to one of our impact case studies for the current REF.

The research conducted by Dr Ros Stuart-Buttle, offers further evidence of this fundamental orientation. A central facet of her research, through the Centre for Christian Education, has engaged with the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales to assess and make recommendations about adult theological literacy through a study of the Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies (CCRS) which feeds directly into the formation of teachers for Catholic schools. This has led to concrete changes in policy, administration, curriculum and delivery of the CCRS at national, regional and local levels, specifically across a number of Catholic dioceses, schools and universities.

This natural overlap between research, service and contribution to wider society is crucial. A further example: the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Liverpool has been a key partner for the ongoing research activity of Dr Peter McGrail, who was engaged to gather, analyse and report on qualitative data garnered through surveys and listening groups in advance of the Archdiocesan 2020 Synod – a meeting key to setting the agenda for future pastoral, ministerial and theological decisions. In advance of the Synod, a number of TPRS colleagues (Stuart-Buttle, McGrail, Juhász, Kurek-Chomycz, Khomych) contributed to the programme of Synod Talks for the Archdiocese, bringing their research to bear directly on key ethical and theological questions in order to facilitate reflection and debate.

A further instance, establishing the ecumenical ethos of the Subject's service, concerns the continued growth of Methodist studies as a focus of research activity, focusing on primary text publication. Professor Newport's ongoing work is making available comprehensive critical editions of Charles Wesley's letters and is complemented by Dr Andrew Cheadle's work on the neglected preacher/theologian W.E. Sangster. These publications are only part of the picture, however, which also involves regular collaborations with stakeholders at joint sessions of the American Academy of Religion, particularly with the University of Manchester and representatives of British Methodism's Archival Group. This collaboration has been cemented by the appointment of Methodist honorary

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research fellows and the acquisition of the Methodist Missionary microfiche library. These activities have significantly extended scholarly access to and wider dissemination of neglected Methodist history. A concrete fruit of this three-way collaboration has been the creation, propagation and use in teaching of the '*Rapture and Reason* on-line archive' of primary 18th century Methodist materials (John Rylands Library).

In key areas, the unit's research is thus deeply bound up with the wider service of communities, especially communities of faith, while maintaining the aim to produce scholarly work of international significance. Thus, Dr Yazid Said's specialist expertise on Islamic philosophy is also brought to bear on the promotion of Muslim-Christian dialogue. This is evidenced by the 2018 volume *The Future of Interfaith Dialogue: Muslim-Christian Encounters through a Common Word*, of which Dr Said is co-editor and contributor. The launch event for this book at Lambeth Palace involved such figures as Prince Ghazi of Jordan and Archbishop Rowan Williams. Dr Said was also involved in the process which led to the Council of Christian Unity's 2019 report *God's Unfailing Word: Theological and Practical Perspectives on Christian-Jewish Relations*; and in a Policy Exchange round table on 'Faith and Ofsted' in February 2020, helping to lay the ground work for a significant report on Ofsted's approach to faith schools. Across these examples, impact is designed and embedded into research and not simply an afterthought.

The culture of service thus shapes the research ethos of the Subject and wider unit. It is reflected in a practical way in the involvement of staff as Senior Pastors of the University, managing chaplaincy activities. In more overtly scholarly form, it informed the public lectures held to commemorate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, organised by Dr Gergely Juhász and involving internal and external experts.

In this way, service remains core to our research strategy, in ways which remain rooted in rigorous scholarship and commitment to truth, while empowering a diversity of voices. This is nicely reflected in the contribution made by Dr Dominika Kurek-Chomycz to the Synod 2020 Talks mentioned earlier, on the topic of faith and the family: 'our Scriptures do not provide any simple answers that could help us solve our current problems. Yet the polyphony, or at times, cacophony, of voices in biblical writings must not be too easily silenced'.

(<https://synod2020.co.uk/resources/lectures>" <https://synod2020.co.uk/resources/lectures>).

This careful, scholarly attention to polyphony is central to the second strategic commitment to be explored: the promotion of global perspectives.

Global Perspectives

Of course, most research units will be able to point to international audiences and networks of research. However, our unit is seeking to do more than connect and network; it is also actively exploring how diverse global voices can actively reshape the understanding of our fields.

As cited above, the TPRS research strategy actively seeks out engagements which challenge Eurocentrism. This is both a topical approach – researching traditions and texts neglected by the Western academy – and methodological one, which rethinks the nature of the field.

An early fruit of this in the current REF period was the symposium jointly organised by the philosophy team with Christ Church University, Bangalore in January 2015, which focused on pedagogies of teaching philosophy of religion across East/West boundaries. Papers (subsequently published) were delivered by Dr Patrice Haynes and Dr Duane Williams, who also facilitated one of the conference strands.

Individual research dovetails with this: Dr Haynes is researching ways in which west African religious traditions – often primarily oral – can challenge and reshape Western norms as to what does and does not count as ‘philosophy of religion’; she is already producing outputs which introduce new methodological approaches to think *from* African traditions in a way which does not simply treat them as objects of a pre-defined field of ‘religion’, let alone ‘theism’. Dr Williams’ work on Heidegger (*Language and Being: Heidegger’s Linguistics*) elucidates the latter’s philosophy of language through dialogue with Asian philosophical and mystical traditions.

The confluence of Asian, African and mystical traditions across East and West has been central to international conferences organised by the Association for Continental Philosophy (especially those held jointly with the Mystical Theology Network in 2016 and forthcoming in 2021). Dr Podmore’s leadership role in the Mystical Theology Network, and his own work across both Jewish and Christian mysticism as well as contemporary philosophy and theology, has been an important bridge in this regard.

The Andrew Walls Centre has been a longstanding focus for research activity on Christian missions and global expressions of Christian faith. Its work has been a core part of the process whereby African and Asian Christian voices – once seen as the ‘receivers’ of mission – are empowered to speak in return to the global North. Annual international conferences are a core aspect of its work, alongside significant partnerships – for example, with the Nigerian Baptist church in PGR work (in which Dr McGrail has played a key role alongside Professor Jeyaraj and Dr Kwiyani). Dr Kwiyani’s research takes this further, exploring the challenges and opportunities facing African diaspora communities in the West.

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The strong emphasis on Christian theology in the Subject is thus also a global one: Christianity is researched as a diverse world tradition, further instanced by the focus on engaging with Byzantine/Orthodox theology in research by Drs Khomych and Casewell.

These global perspectives are embedded in the Subject though a range of interdisciplinary synergies, to which we now turn.

Interdisciplinary Synergies

Ours is one of the few UK departments and units to include 'philosophy' along with 'theology' and 'religious studies'. The integration of philosophy with these subjects exemplifies our shared ideals and is reflected in the research of many of our staff whose work operates across the disciplines.

Thus, Dr Williams and Dr Podmore work primarily in philosophy and theology respectively, but have research interests across all three areas. The emphasis on mysticism, both Eastern and Western, is strong, with Dr Podmore being the co-founder and co-convenor of the international 'Mystical Theology Network' and Dr Williams acting as chief editor of the international peer-reviewed journal *Medieval Mystical Theology*. Dr Haynes is a philosopher working with theological, anthropological and religious studies material in relation to African religious traditions. Dr McGrail's research is both theological and ethnographical, as is Dr Kwiyani's.

Such synergies bear fruit:

- Philosophers and theologians collaborated on an international conference with the Mystical Theology Network in 2016, out of which came the volume *Mystical Theology and Continental Philosophy: Interchange in the Wake of God* (Routledge, 2017). Two of the co-editors were Drs Williams and Podmore.
- Dr Said's work on Islam coheres with this focus on mystical knowing and experience; one of his major ongoing projects examines possible roots of Ghazali's concept of 'taste', *dhawq*, the illuminative fruits of systematic and divinely assisted introspection as the path to knowledge. The project compares similar sentiments found in the biblical commentaries of the Church Fathers on the psalms and in Greek philosophy and attempts to draw implications for comparative religious studies today.
- Dr Haynes' and Dr Kwiyani's shared interests in African traditions have allowed them to discuss methodologies and co-teach an MA module bringing African perspectives into philosophy of religion, informing their publications.
- Shared interests in hermeneutics across the department have shaped work across biblical studies, philosophy and theology, for instance: Dr Podmore's work on Kabbalistic and Germanic mystical texts; Dr Said's work on a critical edition of an Egyptian Muslim polemical manuscript against Christians and Jews in seventeenth century Ottoman Egypt;

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Dr Juhász's monumental study of the approaches to scripture found in post-reformation debates about the resurrection.

This work enables unit staff to develop their own ideas and work, but its implications and outreach are much wider. For example, arising from their networking through the Association, Drs Williams and Shakespeare co-edit a series with Rowman and Littlefield entitled *Reframing Continental Philosophy of Religion*. This offers a platform for innovative, cross-disciplinary approaches, engaging with continental philosophy of tradition from diverse global traditions.

Interdisciplinary research is also core to the work of The Centre for Christian Education, which links scholars and practitioners across theology and education studies. Important examples include the research on the CCRS course and the 2018 volume, co-edited by Dr Stuart-Buttle, *Christian Faith, Formation and Education* (Palgrave, 2018). This volume gathered international contributions following a colloquium (2015) and conferences hosted by the Centre (2016 and 2018).

Several members of the unit are also active within the interdisciplinary Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies, with Dr Said playing a leading role in organising its seminars. Dr Kurek-Chomycz has co-organised a number of research events for the Tutu Centre, including the 2015 Conference on 'Narratives of Peace and Conflict'. She is also a core member of Hope's Centre for Culture & Disability Studies, connecting with her own research on disability, the Bible and early Christian ministry, which has led to a number of invitations to give papers and seminars.

Members of TPRS are also at the heart of other recently established interdisciplinary Research Groups: 'Renaissance and Early Modern Studies', bringing together Biblical reception studies, English and History (Juhász); and 'Limina: Constructing Contemporary Philosophy' which engages with philosophy, art and performance (Shakespeare). The latter connects closely with Dr Shakespeare's collaborations with scholars and practitioners in Creative and Performing Arts on the link with the Tate Liverpool, organising annual scholarly workshops. Dr Shakespeare is currently under contract to edit a volume arising from the 2017 workshop, centred on the philosophy of François Laruelle.

These overlapping synergies thus extend across the Subject, and connect with our other strategic commitments: they engage with global traditions and often serve to enhance the practice and reflection of wider stakeholders and faith communities.

Future Strategy

The future strategy will retain the three commitments, and build on the ground laid in this period and on the team's core strengths:

1. Developing new paradigms in philosophy of religion, guided by decolonisation and ecology.

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2. Embedding a collaborative culture around hermeneutics-focused research, drawing in the study of Islamic, biblical and mystical texts.
3. Extending work done with partners such as the Liverpool Archdiocese and offering opportunities for ministerial development
4. Ensuring that the impact agenda is actively extended further throughout the unit areas, through identification of additional strategic areas on which to focus in addition to existing core strengths/partners.

2. People**Introduction**

The strategic commitments of the unit to Service, Global Perspectives and Interdisciplinary Synergies provide a framework for staffing and staff development strategies in TPRS.

The period since the 2014 REF has been one of significant personnel change. Four senior staff have retired, with especially serious effects for religious studies. It has meant that previous areas of strength - Islam in a British context, for example – are now not as prominent.

In light of this, the approach to appointments and allocation of responsibilities has reflected a desire to create synergies of research which do not depend simply on one member of staff. Rather than simply 'plugging gaps' the aim has been to create a sustainable and coherent unit for both teaching and research, while further enhancing the diversity and equal opportunities of the staff team. Thus, despite natural staff turnover, the unit maintains a strong commitment to a permanent and settled body of research active colleagues.

The approach will be explored further in what follows, under the headings of equality, diversity and inclusion; appointments; staff development; and PGR work.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Equality, diversity and inclusion is core to the identity of the unit, and reflected in its commitment to research, conducted by staff across all protected characteristics, which empowers individuals and communities to shape their own life and narrative.

The diversity of the staff team has been noted in Section 1. All members of the team participate in equality training, and decision making structures are devolved to the team level as much as possible to ensure all affected staff have a voice. The development of research strategy and the REF submission have reflected a dialogical approach, where care has been taken to hear every

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voice. Subject seminars are deliberately inclusive of all staff research. No one has been excluded from the REF submission.

Appointments (as detailed in the next section) have been successful in extending the diversity of the team, actively encouraging applications from under-represented groups. Performance and other staff reviews have been used to address potential areas of exclusion (for example in relation to staff or partners of staff with conditions which make them vulnerable to Covid). Built into every person's review is a focus on support needed for research, taking into account individual circumstances.

Working patterns have been made flexible enough to allow staff with significant caring responsibilities not to be disadvantaged. Mental health issues are addressed with the same seriousness as physical health problems, with structured and successful routes back planned from longer term sick leave. Proper planning for the reallocation of teaching actively supported the statutory right for paternity leave for one member of staff.

Appointments and Promotions

Four permanent staff were appointed in this period:

- Dr Deborah Casewell, appointed in philosophy but with a significant research background in theology, including the interface between contemporary philosophy and key concepts in Eastern Orthodox thought.
- Dr Harvey Kwiyani, whose work on world Christianity and African communities in the diaspora has been mentioned. Dr Kwiyani has led on the development of the MA African Christianity and the development of the Andrew Walls Centre.
- Dr Yazid Said, whose research and teaching on Islamic thought crosses religious studies and philosophy; and whose scholarly contribution to Muslim-Christian and Jewish-Christian dialogue has been noted. He also works in the interdisciplinary Archbishop Desmond Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies.
- Dr Taras Khomych (0.4FTE), who has brought expertise on Byzantine theology into the mainstream of the Subject.

All four appointments thus reflect the TPRS commitment to fostering service, interdisciplinary synergies and engaging with non-Western traditions (African, Islamic and Byzantine). Recruitment is thus strongly driven by research strategy, not merely in the sense of finding people who 'fit' with the existing profile, but bringing on board innovative researchers who will extend and develop the strategy.

While relatively early in their research career, each person recruited has significantly contributed to the postgraduate and staff research culture across disciplinary lines through proactive work in

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PGT, PGR, seminars, conferences and wider networks. These staff members also come from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. All successfully completed probationary period and received mentoring, which, for instance, supported Dr Casewell in moving from Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow to Lecturer.

The appointment and contribution of these staff members thus reflects and advances the TPRS strategy, and its commitment to equality and diversity.

The same can be said of staff promotions in the same period. These have advanced staff to Grade 9 (Podmore, Cheatle, Shakespeare) and Grade 8 (Kurek-Chomycz, Juhász, Williams). Dr Newport's role in senior management has expanded, as he has become Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

In addition to the permanent staff, Dr Michael Miller was appointed as a postdoctoral research assistant to Dr Peter McGrail (see further details on this project in sections 3 and 4). During the time of his appointment, Dr Miller participated in research seminars and was subsequently successful in moving to a further research position in Erlangen.

Staff Development and Support

The introduction of the University's 'consolidated research time' (CRT) mechanism has allowed the unit to provide focused periods of time for research. This allows staff to apply for up to six weeks leave from teaching and other responsibilities to focus on particularly intense periods of research.

A number of TPRS staff have taken advantage of this policy. Examples include:

- Dr Haynes: to write up a symposium paper for an edited collection, published as 'African Humanism: Between the Cosmic and the Terrestrial', in *Beyond the Doctrine of Man* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2019).
- Dr Shakespeare: for completion of a journal article exploring the concept of the 'unconditioned' as offering new pathways for research in philosophy of religion; and a conference keynote for the interdisciplinary 'Engaging the Contemporary' event in Malta in 2019.
- Dr Podmore: to support completion of an MA by Research in Jewish and Holocaust Studies (University of Birmingham).
- Dr Said: for work on a 17th century Egyptian MS (see Section 1).
- Dr McGrail for work on his Synod project.

Again, it is noteworthy that, while CRT is used to support individual research, these projects also reflect and extend the unit's strategy. For instance, work by Drs Haynes and Shakespeare contributes to reshaping the parameters of the field of philosophy of religion, drawing on interdisciplinary and global traditions. Further details on institutional financial support for research activities can be found in Section 3.

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In addition to research leave, unit staff have accessed the programme of staff development created by the University, which has included REF Impact workshops and regular mandatory training for PGR supervisors, independent chairs and examiners. The unit is committed to upholding the highest standards of ethics in its research. An academic member of staff acts as ethics lead (Khomych), and the chair of the research ethics committee for the School currently sits within the unit (Shakespeare). All staff, postgraduate and undergraduate research undergoes ethical appraisal and clearance according to the University's policy. Researchers are committed to research integrity and the sharing of good practice, for example through the regular team seminars.

A strategy group set up after REF2014 helped to formulate the unit's approach in a coherent and inclusive way. Subject research seminars were reviewed, and a programme created that now offers a platform for staff research which also engages with PGR students. This has also offered a seedbed for exploring synergies between staff, for example around questions of textual hermeneutics across philosophy, theology and biblical studies.

The unit adheres to the University's REF Code of Practice, which sets out clear and supportive processes to identify staff who are not to be submitted to REF. In the event, however, our developmental processes mean that all eligible staff are included in this submission.

PGR

A key concern during this period has been providing tracks from UG to PGT and to PGR which work seamlessly with the existing research strengths and synergies of the Subject, attracting students from our own UG programmes as well as from outside the University.

- The MA in Theology, Philosophy and Religion has been developed specifically with this in mind: an interdisciplinary degree, building on collaborative teaching at undergraduate level, while offering a distinctive, interdisciplinary, global but coherent pathway towards PGR.
- The MA in Bible and Pastoral Contexts continues to run, attracting students from ministerial settings in faith communities, and combining the scholarly, hermeneutical and applied dimensions so important in our overall strategy.
- The MA in African Christianity, introduced in this period, represents a deepening and extension of our commitment to this area, drawing in a significant cohort of African students. This connects with the notable dimensions of PGR work in the Subject with African students, especially from Nigeria, whose research relates directly to issues which face them as church ministers. Their research, as well as being a personal commitment, is also aimed at service to the faith communities in which they often exercise leadership positions.

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Almost all staff have been engaged in PGR supervision itself, as candidates and expertise allow. As mentioned, they are supported by University training, and organised into supervisory teams. This allows for varying levels of engagement with supervisory responsibility, offering a way of building up confidence and expertise through mentoring. Those with more experience have accessed training to enable them to chair confirmation and examination events, and to act as examiners themselves. Dr Juhász has a wider role, co-ordinating PGR work across the University's liberal arts and social sciences subjects.

PGR supervision itself follows a structured and documented course, with 8 logged supervisions per year for each candidate, annual monitoring and confirmation processes. PGR students engage in skills training alongside their core supervision. These skills are designed to be transferable to career situations requiring advanced critical thinking, research and analysis.

PGR work has a significant international dimension, especially focused on the Andrew Walls Centre, which remains a core element of the unit's postgraduate work. The Centre was able to offer two PhD Scholarships in this period, funded by the University, and has continued to successfully guide doctoral work to completion.

In addition, our unit has played a key role in Liverpool Hope's partnership with the Maryvale Institute, an international Catholic HE institution in Birmingham with over 30 years of experience of providing global distance learning opportunities. Hope validates and stands in for the academic quality of Maryvale's PGR programmes (MPhil and PhD). Total student numbers are between 20-25 each academic year. The retention rate is very high and the number of successful completions shows the quality of students and of supervisors at Maryvale..

Between 2012 and 2016, Dr Podmore acted as the Hope Coordinator for the provision, and since 2016 Dr Juhász has been tasked with this responsibility. Each student's Confirmation of Registration Event is chaired by a member of staff from the unit and many of us have provided training, lectures or other support during the residential stays at Hope. Dr Taras Khomych also acts as supervisor to one of the Maryvale PhD students. During the period 2012-2016 the Maryvale residential Summer School at Hope was co-organized with the Andrew Walls Summer School. As such, this collaborative provision constitutes a rich academic research environment both for members of staff and the Maryvale and other Hope students, and reflects our mission and values.

As shown, PGT and doctoral work in our unit often reflects the significant strengths of our research environment in critical reflection upon ecclesial ministries. Building on this, new degrees of Master of Ministry and Doctor of Ministry were recently validated. These are professional degrees which provide an opportunity to engage in sustained reflection and research upon the practice of ministry in a fast changing world. They are designed for people who cannot take extended periods of study away from their ministry. The DMin in particular will build on and enhance academic cross-disciplinary collaboration across the University, benefitting from the richness and diversity of its

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various research centres and fora, as well as the wide, long-standing professional partnerships in which colleagues engage, particularly churches and partner institutions.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Introduction

The unit's strategic approach to research shapes the way in which it supports staff in accessing vital income and infrastructure. The keynotes of Service, Global Perspectives and Interdisciplinary Synergies run through applications for and allocations of support.

As the narrative below substantiates, this can be most clearly demonstrated in relation to internally available support. However, while external grants cannot be guaranteed, the unit has also been successful here in attracting funding to support its strategic agenda. While there is always room for staff to pursue individual funding, the coherence of the unit's vision remains central to its overall approach.

Internal support

In addition to funding research leave (see Section 2), the University has provided direct financial and administrative support for Research Centre and Group activities. This recognises and enhances the distinctive strengths and commitments of the unit, notably to the fostering of global perspectives and interdisciplinary work which actively reshape the field. Examples include:

- Andrew Walls Centre: annual PGR summer school and conference; the Centre also jointly organised a conference (end of July 2019) with the Theology and Religious Education Department at De La Salle University, Manila. Hope sponsored Dr Harvey Kwiyani and Professor Jeyaraj to participate.
- Association for Continental Philosophy of Religion: the reception and launch of the Reframing Continental Philosophy of Religion series at the 2015 Association for Continental Philosophy of Religion conference; and the joint Association/Mystical Theology Network 2016 conference, from which the volume *Mystical Theology and Continental Philosophy: Interchange in the Wake of God* resulted.
- Tutu Centre for War and Peace Studies: the seminar series on religion and conflict jointly organised by Dr Said.

Such assistance has also enabled projects with important strategic outward-facing and networking dimensions, for instance:

- the public launch of Dr Said's *The Future of Interfaith Dialogue: Muslim-Christian Encounters through a Common Word* (see Section 1).

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- a lecture series for the Commemoration of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, organised by Dr Juhász.
- logistical support for the Annual Conference of the British New Testament Society (BNTS) at Hope in September 2019, organised by Dr Kurek-Chomycz.
- office space, software and other facilities for the Research Assistant on Dr McGrail's Synod Project (see Section 1).

These examples show that support is offered across the diversity of the unit, supporting equality and inclusivity. These events enrich both the development of global networks which shape our research perspectives and interdisciplinary work.

The University offers support for individual colleagues to attend conferences, especially where this involves presentation of papers which will be the basis for significant published outputs; or where it contributes to the building of international research networks and/or to cultivating impact. Examples of the latter include:

- Professor Jeyaraj's participation in four Hope-MCC Seminars held at Madras Christian College, Chennai. Each of these visits was also used for the underpinning research of his impact case study.
- Dr Cheatle and Dr Kurek-Chomycz's regular recent participation in AAR/SBL annual meetings in order to facilitate sessions on Methodist Studies (Cheatle) and "Senses, Cultures and Biblical Worlds" and Second Corinthians (Kurek-Chomycz), all of which attract significant international participation.
- Dr Shakespeare's US launch of the *Reframing Continental Philosophy of Religion* book series at the AAR in 2017.

Special Library Collections

The University has made considerable resources available for the deposit, cataloguing and care of a number of special library collections directly related to TPRS. Dr Juhász has taken a leading role liaising with specialist library staff to ensure these are made accessible for study and research purposes. They include

- the Gradwell collection (formerly at the Roman Catholic seminary at Upholland), covering theology, philosophy and ecclesiastical history among other subjects. It also houses a significant John Henry Newman section, including first editions of his own publications.
- the Radcliffe collection, an extensive holding of texts in liturgy (formerly held by Liverpool Anglican cathedral and St Aidan's Theological College), including early printed books, incunabula and manuscripts dating back to the 15th century.

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- the Andrew Walls collection, linked to the TPRS Research Centre, including donations from Professor Andrew Walls and the Universities of Aberdeen and Edinburgh. It offers resources across a range of mission studies, its principal focus being Africa and the Asia-Pacific region.

External support

A number of projects have received external funding during the current REF period which has contributed towards the overall research strategy. In doing so, the Subject makes use of the expertise of the University's Research Facilitator, who offers early dialogue, review and detailed advice, especially on financial aspects of bids, which complements the support provided by colleagues.

Again, this funding supports work which coheres with the unit's priorities. As the following examples show, bids are won across the unit, from early career to more experienced staff; they include significant aspects of service and impact; and they enable both individual research outputs and the establishment of international and national interdisciplinary collaborations:

- Dr McGrail has received significant funding for a number of key projects:
 - a Ministry Research Project commissioned by the Archdiocese of Liverpool and run jointly with Hope's Geography and Environment Sciences Department, which has received Porticus Trust funding (see Section 4 for more details)
 - ESRC funding of nearly £200,000 for a project on which he is co-investigator, whose goal is 'to identify the appropriate parameters of conscientious objection to abortion, and communicate the findings to a range of national and international beneficiaries' (see Section 4 for more details).
 - The Synod Project (see Section 1), funded (over £11,000) by the Archdiocese of Liverpool, which allowed appointment of Dr Mike Miller as Research Assistant.
- The Centre for Religious Education has major funding from The Jerusalem Trust, originally granted in 2010. It has supplemented this in the current REF period with grants from What If Learning, the Church Universities Fund, and the CCRS Board of Studies. It also generates its own internal income from fees for the three Church Certificate professional development courses as well as hosting events, supervision of RE scholars for The Farmington Trust, plus income from consultancy work.
- Dr Casewell received the US\$10,000 Junior Faculty Summer Research Grant from the Yale Center for Faith and Culture's 'Theology of Joy and the Good Life' project. The topic was on Simone Weil's account of joy, alongside other research into feminist ethics of vulnerability, leading to three articles in progress (one currently under review) and a forthcoming book chapter.

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- Dr Haynes has been awarded a six-month Fellowship at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (STIAS), which is due to commence in January 2021. Haynes will be undertaking research for the book she is currently writing provisionally titled *Animist Humanism: Decolonizing Philosophy of Religion In And Through African Cosmo-Sense*. While based in South Africa, Haynes will be well positioned to gain increasing awareness of, and familiarity with, contemporary African religious and philosophical thought and thinkers. The Fellowship will enable Haynes to prepare a book proposal for potential publishers.
- Dr Shakespeare is part of the interdisciplinary core team involved in Liverpool Tate's partnership with Hope, centred on the organisation of an annual public workshop on philosophy, art and performance. The Tate provides space and a £4,000 budget p.a. for these events.
- Dr Podmore's MA by Research in Jewish and Holocaust Studies (University of Birmingham) is funded by a £2,000 British Academy Training Grant.
- Dr Kurek-Chomycz received the Polonsky Visiting Fellowship to spend two months in Oxford (11 January – 10 March 2018) to conduct research as part of the Oxford Seminar in Advanced Jewish Studies project on "The Vocabulary of the Septuagint and the Cultural World of the Translators". This included a number of papers, one of which is in the process of being published, as well as public lectures. She also received funding from 'The Bible and Women: An Encyclopaedia of Exegesis and Cultural History' project. This allowed her to attend and present invited papers at events in Vienna and Cluj in 2019, organised in preparation of two volumes to be published as part of this project.

Funding may support teaching cover, but it is important to note that this cover has also been supplemented by existing TPRS staff where necessary. This was especially important, for example, in facilitating this important period in Dr Casewell's growing research profile as an early career researcher.

External funding is thus enabling the development of the interdisciplinary research culture and networking at Hope and, crucially, contributing to a growing impact agenda beyond the case studies submitted for the current REF.

4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

Introduction

The previous sections have already offered details of a number of the unit's important research collaborations. Some of that information which be touched on again and expanded here, alongside other initiatives. However, to avoid simply listing discrete links and initiatives, we will show how our networks are informed by, and strengthen, our strategic commitments.

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The fact that many of the aspects of our research mentioned in this Section have come up in previous contexts is not accidental; rather it is itself an indication that our commitment to service and impact, and to global and interdisciplinary approaches, runs like a thread through all our work, including our collaborations.

Collaborating for Service

As we suggested in Section 1, Service certainly involves impact. However, for our unit, it is more than this: it is a holistic commitment to working with communities – often of faith – to enable life-giving policies to be shaped and voices heard.

Section 1 gave some instances of this. Dr Stuart-Buttle's project on the Catholic Certificate for Religious Studies is already shifting Catholic diocesan and university policies to reconfigure and promote the course – and in turn, equip teachers and lay ministers for the work of Catholic education and ministry. In our second impact study, Professor Jeyaraj's work is core to the tangible preservation of Tamil community memory and the (in the West) largely neglected history of Christian-Hindu encounters.

Dr McGrail's Synod Project has shaped the agenda for the Archdiocese of Liverpool's Synod, giving a platform to a huge diversity of voices – lay and ordained, male and female, young and old. The effect is not only upon the concrete content of the Church's priorities in this area, but upon the way in which it understands itself as Church beyond being a clerical hierarchy.

Dr McGrail's relationship with the Archdiocese continues to bear fruit in the other funded initiatives mentioned in Section 3. The Ministry Review Project is a major undertaking, running until June 2022, to investigate and evaluate the deployment of permanent deacons and pastoral associates in the Archdiocese, using both social scientific and geospatial methodologies. Service, impact and interdisciplinary practice are thus core to it. In addition, the ESRC-funded project on conscientious objection to abortion has identified a number of pathways to impact, from resourcing health care professionals to influencing law and policy around abortion nationally and internationally.

The environment of service is reflected in other ways. The unit plays a key role in hosting the annual Archbishop Blanch lecture, a public scholarly theological lecture which draws hundreds of attendees mainly from churches across the region. Dr Shakespeare, in addition to his academic work, publishes collections of prayers which are widely used in churches. The latest was *The Earth Cries Glory* in 2019; prayers from a previous collection, *Prayers for an Inclusive Church*, which came out in 2009, are now authorised for use in the Anglican Church of Canada.

The connection between Hope's core ecumenical identity and TPRS research is further evidenced by Dr Podmore's role as co-founder and co-collaborator of The Mystical Theology Network. This rapidly-growing international Network enhances Hope's commitment to ecumenism by facilitating

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conferences and publishing work by scholars across the range of Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox traditions and beyond. Focus on 'the mystical' offers progressive opportunities to develop theological and interdisciplinary conversations across ecumenical and religious boundaries.

Collaborating in Global Perspective

The Andrew Walls Centre is clearly important in its own right, but it has also played a key role in orienting the unit as a whole towards serious engagement with African and Asian traditions. Through conferences and visits, the Centre has created and sustained an important global research conversation on Christian mission and world Christianity. Its scholarly work also has a dimension of service, as many of those completing doctoral work under its roof are motivated by concerns arising from their exercise of Christian ministry, and the wider ramifications these have for the church and society. The research of PGR students, Dr Kwiyani and Professor Jeyaraj engages theologically with issues of inculturation, contextualisation and ethnicity. For example, recent doctoral work on African Diaspora communities has highlighted the complexity of issues of identity, migration, and racism which face them in seeking to establish and grow churches.

These concerns have resonated in philosophy of religion and religious studies. The Association for Continental Philosophy has held several international conferences and its Reframing book series actively solicits work which challenges dominant Western definitions of philosophy of religion. Dr Said's leading work on Muslim-Christian dialogue brought together a global company of scholars. As previously noted, Dr Haynes' work is pioneering a serious engagement with African religious traditions on their own terms, rather than subjecting them to Western paradigms of thought and religion, and this helped shaped the 2015 collaboration with Christ Church University, Bangalore.

Staff have been active in promoting further international links. The work in international AAR/SBL networks carried out by Drs Cheatle and Kurek-Chomycz also entailed forging connections with a number of US institutions. In addition, staff have engaged with the ongoing partnership between Liverpool Hope and the Université Catholique de Lille, including joint planning of a two-day symposium on 'Vulnérabilité et sacralité du corps humain et animal' (21-22 January 2019), which included papers by Dr McGrail and Dr Kurek-Chomycz.

Dr Kurek-Chomycz also has important research links with KU Leuven, including co-supervision of two PhD students, one of whom is a former Hope student awarded a Leverhulme Study Abroad Studentship.

Collaborating for Interdisciplinary Synergies

A number of interdisciplinary collaborations have been mentioned already: the joint work between the Association of Continental Philosophy of Religion and the Mystical Theology Network; the core involvement with the Tutu Centre for War and Peace studies; the international work in Wesleyan studies and Methodist primary texts.

Significant here, however, is the way that such collaborations engage diverse audiences. For example, Dr Shakespeare's work with colleagues in Creative and Performing Arts on the annual workshop at Liverpool Tate results in public events attracting 80-100 people each year. These involve new performances (musical and dramatic) alongside more conventional scholarly papers, and offer a chance for dialogue between non-specialists, practitioners and academics.

Textual and hermeneutical work often provides a focus for such engagement. Dr Cheatle and Professor Newport's work with the University of Manchester library has helped to make available the 'Rapture and Reason' database of accounts of conversion in Georgian Britain. Importantly, this previously unpublished collection is now made available publicly, not only to scholars, but to members of faith communities and others interested in the roots of some of the world's leading denominations.

Another example is the shared research interest of Drs Juhász and Kurek-Chomycz in biblical hermeneutics, *Wirkungsgeschichte*, and the various ways in which the Bible has functioned, and continues to function, in the development of Christian theology, liturgy, and Christian spirituality. They have recently engaged with the 'Bible in Its Traditions' research project of the École Biblique et Archéologique Française de Jérusalem. This aims to produce a new kind of annotated Bible, making serious interdisciplinary study of the Bible and its interpretation available to the public.

The importance of mystical texts has already been noted as a focal point for interdisciplinary engagement across the unit. Dr Williams plays a significant wider role in this regard through his editorship of the peer-reviewed journal *Medieval Mystical Theology*, and his organisational role as a Trustee of The Eckhart Society. The journal and society have a significant scholarly aspect in that the society trustees and journal contributors include some of the most respected scholars studying mysticism, while also engaging with lay audiences. Something similar may be said of Dr Shakespeare's editorship, between 2016 and 2019, of *Modern Believing*. Again, this peer-reviewed journal aims to bridge academic and lay audiences in reflecting on liberal and progressive theology.

Dr Williams is also an honorary member of the educational charity the Temenos Academy, which offers education in philosophy and the arts in the light of the sacred traditions of East and West. He also has connections with the charity and funding body, Sustainability, Health, Education, Development (SHED). He has recently applied to them for funding for postgraduate scholarships in

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the study of mysticism, and has discussed the idea of establishing an active body known as, The Institute for Applied Mysticism (IAM).

Of course, collaborations already mentioned – such as Dr McGrail’s Ministry Review and abortion projects, or those of The Centre for Christian Education – are also interdisciplinary and impact-oriented by their very nature, engaging with non-academic audiences in ecclesial, educational and health sectors.

Indicators of Esteem

Unsurprisingly, individual academics in the unit enjoy markers of esteem, such as membership on committees of academic organisations and editorial boards. There is neither space nor purpose to listing all of these, but a few instances will be picked out for their wider significance.

- Dr Kurek-Chomycz plays a leading role in international Biblical research networks, as part of the committees of Society of Biblical Literature (Status of Women), the European Association of Biblical Studies (of which she was Executive Officer from 2016 to 2019) and the British New Testament Society (2015-2018).
- Dr McGrail is a member of the multiagency CREDO (Catholic Religious Education Opportunities) convened by the Catholic Education Service of the Bishops Conference and the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisors. He is also a member of the Liturgy Committee of the English and Welsh Roman Catholic Conference of Bishops, whose Liturgical Formation Subcommittee he chairs.
- Dr Shakespeare is Patron of the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals, on the editorial board of the Palgrave MacMillan Animal Ethics series, and a fellow of the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. He was keynote speaker at the Engaging the Contemporary conference at the University of Malta, 2019.

Dr Stuart-Buttle sits on the national CCRS Board of Religious Studies and chairs the Northern regional group. She is a founding member of the Network for Researchers in Catholic Education and has given keynote addresses at their 2017, 2018 and 2019 international conferences