

Institution: University of Aberdeen
Unit of Assessment: 31 (Theology and Religious Studies)
<p>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</p> <p><i>Institutional Context</i></p> <p>Theology and Religious Studies (designated locally and henceforth as DRS) houses 19.4 eligible full-time equivalents (FTE) and sits within the School of Divinity, History and Philosophy. The School provides a resource and policy framework that supports a vibrant environment for impactful research. The Unit and School are supported by University systems and structures, which include the newly founded PGR school, the Grants Academy, the Research and Innovation team and the Development Trust. Taken together, they afford access to wider organisational resources and to stable financial and administrative support. The Unit in turn contributes to the University's ambitions outlined in the <i>Aberdeen 2040</i> strategy, in particular the identified research themes of interdisciplinarity and social inclusion and cultural diversity (see <i>REF5a</i>).</p> <p><i>Structure, Identity and Research Characteristics</i></p> <p>The Unit is structured according to the classical disciplines of Divinity: Systematic Theology, Historical Theology, Practical Theology, Theological Ethics, Biblical Studies and Religious Studies, and its core research identity is shaped by the fundamental concerns of each of these fields. To an extent that is widely acknowledged to be distinctive, however, DRS is committed to advancing the integration of the sub-disciplines in its research activity and to pursuing interdisciplinarity, while sustaining the critical distinctiveness and integrity of each sub-discipline. The subject areas within Theology and Religious Studies are intrinsically interdisciplinary, drawing together linguistic and philological study with philosophical, historical, scientific and cultural research. The distinctive significance of interdisciplinarity in DRS at the University of Aberdeen lies in the <i>particular</i> intersections that characterise our work and how they shape our research and the associated impact. While maintaining a commitment to the core skills of each discipline (particularly in the biblical and ecclesial languages) and to preserving study of the history of ideas in its research, the Unit's research is characteristically oriented towards end-users in church/parachurch organisations and in healthcare, for whom the typically strict boundaries between the disciplines are meaningless. Consequently, particular areas of interdisciplinarity have become characteristic of the Unit's identity— disability and healthcare, reconciliation/cross-faith dialogue, gender and sexuality—but with these distinctively connected to the traditions of ideas within the respective sub-disciplines.</p> <p>The Unit has a longstanding international reputation for this level of integration, reflected in impressive PGR recruitment in a growing culture of grant success and, more recently, in a number of significant external indicators of international esteem. The department was ranked joint 25th in the 2020 <i>QS World Rankings by Subject</i>, with the granular data revealing genuinely important research accomplishments: the department had the top "citation per paper" scores out of all European institutions, the 4th highest "citation per paper" scores in the world (92.7) and is 2nd in Europe and 12th in the world for "h-index citations" (88.4). Whilst recognising that such metrics are limited, they suggest the relevance and significance of the research generated by the Unit.</p> <p><i>Centrality of Impact to Research Identity</i></p> <p>The impactfulness of research in DRS at the University of Aberdeen was acknowledged in REF 2014, in which the Unit was ranked 2nd for impact in the UK. For the current REF cycle, and for the five years beyond it, the key objective has been to ensure that the impact-orientation of the Unit's research is more intentionally embedded across and throughout the extent of the Unit, through (1) the involvement of a wider range of staff in impact activities, including ECRs, (2) the</p>

integration of impact-related activity into workforce planning and recruitment processes at every level and (3) the establishment of a Unit-wide “culture of impact”. This has further involved the development of regular and sustainable programmes of knowledge-transfer activities to open pathways for impact, with the establishment of new centres intended to support this aim by hosting regular public lectures, seminars and workshops. Institutional support for impact activities comes from the Public Engagement with Research Unit (PERU) for public engagement events, and from Communications for media work (see **REF5a**).

Several policies and processes have been developed to support and incentivise impact-oriented activity. The annual “research review and support” process now includes discussion of potential or emergent impact, and funding is made available at School-level and University-level to support “pump-priming” activity, intended to open new pathways to impact. Public engagement and dissemination activities that might open pathways to impact are now acknowledged within the School workload models and are recognised in promotions processes, as well as in specific prizes for impact awarded by the Principal annually which have been won by Divinity.

Distinctive Culture of Impact

Key to the impact success of the Unit is the collective recognition of the principal non-academic partners and users for whom research should be developed. Primarily, these are global faith- or religious-communities and the charities that work alongside them; secondarily, our non-academic partners include healthcare providers that acknowledge the significance of faith/religious commitments in shaping the experience of health, illness and disability. A classically structured DRS Unit has a particular capacity to engage with the needs of these communities and organisations. Several colleagues have written publications directly intended for these audiences, including monographs not included in **REF2** (e.g., *The Breadth of Salvation*, *Living in Union with Christ*, *Autism and the Church*) and policy support documents (see Section 4).

During the current REF cycle, through reflection upon the need to formalise and develop the commitment of the department to integration and impact, the Unit has added two new research Centres to those already established within the Department. The Centres *collectively* function as outward-facing, impact-oriented contexts for cross-disciplinary activity. They are:

New: The Aberdeen Centre for Protestant Theology (Directors: **Nimmo, Ziegler, Greggs**)

New: The Centre for the Study of Autism and Christian Community (Directors: **Macaskill, van Ommen**)

The Centre for the Study of Spirituality, Health and Disability (Director: **Swinton**)

The Centre for Ministry Studies (Director: Jeffrey)

The Centre for Ministry Studies is further linked to Christ’s College (Master: **Swinton**), the historical ministry college of the University of Aberdeen, which serves the needs of churches and their ministers and which provides a parallel pathway to impact.

In addition to the research Centres, the Unit piloted the “Friendship House” project (2017–), which brought doctoral researchers together with individuals affected by cognitive or intellectual disabilities, for mutual benefit and learning. The project was supported by the University more broadly, with significant internal funding (see Section 3). This reflected the institutional commitment to inclusivity articulated in the *Aberdeen 2040 Strategy* (see **REF5a**).

Beyond the work of the Centres, the Unit’s impact further emerges from the ongoing *direct* involvement of staff in the activity of church and para-church organisations, nationally and

internationally. The staffing strategy of the Unit has been shaped by an awareness of the need to ensure appropriate diversity in the personnel who can build such partnerships through their research interests and non-academic networks.

Importantly, the major clusters of impact-activity and interdisciplinarity are not associated solely with individuals, but with groups of staff representing different career stages. Many of these activities are mature, building on the longstanding work of both current and former colleagues, with new members of the Unit joining and developing this work. There are several notable themes within this work:

i. Healthcare, Ageing and Disability

The Unit has a number of policy- and practice-informing links with non-academic partners, particularly in the healthcare sector, who recognise the relevance of faith commitments to human experience and models of care. **Swinton**'s submitted case study exemplifies this, with extensive changes in practice and policy traceable to his work on dementia and theology, demonstrable in both national and international contexts. **Macaskill**, **Brock** and **van Ommen** are all involved in activities and organisations seeking to improve autistic experience in the U.K., North America and Singapore.

ii. Reconciliation and Religious Dialogue

Greggs has worked with a range of charities, including the World Council of Churches and the Tony Blair Faith Foundation, to develop resources intended to foster dialogue and reconciliation in areas of religious conflict. These draw upon his research into "generous particularity", an approach to religious dialogue that recognises and accepts non-negotiable differences in faith commitments, while providing scripturally resourced grounds for mutuality and friendship (see section 4). The recruitment of **Heimbürger**, whose research is principally concerned with religious dimensions to immigration and post-conflict reconciliation in South America, is a direct extension of this impact-oriented agenda. He has long-term involvement with the *Fe y Desplazamiento* (Faith and Displacement) project in Medellín, Colombia.

iii. Gender, Sexuality and Power

Cross' work on changing perceptions of sexuality, the abuse or trauma of females in the church and the theological cultures that either enable or challenge such abuse represents a development of impactful research associated with the Unit over several decades. While distinct in theme from these works, the submitted case study associated with Torrance's work (on military covenant) is grounded in the underlying concept of "solidarity within diversity", generated by a formalised common union "covenant". This work also culminated in Torrance's report submitted to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in 2017 on human sexuality. This research aligns with the work of colleagues in History, notably Harper's involvement with the historical abuse enquiry in the Church of Scotland. **Greggs**' work with both the Anglican and Methodist Churches on a "generously particular" approach to issues relating to gender and sexuality has also continued this legacy.

Interdisciplinarity

Built upon its disciplinary excellence, the Unit has developed a rich culture of interdisciplinary activity. First, this involves the practice of re-connecting the fragmented sub-disciplines of Divinity. This is partially accomplished by the work of the Centres, which are concerned with areas of relevance across disciplinary boundaries, and is also supported by an annual programme of Joint Research Seminars that bring together the various disciplines within the Unit to consider an object of study in which all have distinct investment.

Second, most colleagues maintain the historical commitments of the Divinity disciplines by drawing upon the insights of other disciplines in order to progress their own (e.g., **Schaper**'s use

of material studies to advance his work on Hebrew Bible; Hockey's use of emotion studies; Cross's use of postcolonial theory in the study of power and abuse).

Third, and more distinctively within the sector, the intentional commitment to generating research of immediate relevance to our non-academic partners in faith communities and in the healthcare sector requires colleagues to engage with contemporary topics that are not typically dealt with by the traditional disciplines of Divinity. This, in turn, necessitates engagement with non-Divinity disciplines that provide critical resources by which these topics can be understood. Most obviously, the work of **Swinton** on dementia, Mawson on ageing, and **Brock, Macaskill** and **van Ommen** on autism exemplify activity such dialogues across the boundaries between theology/biblical studies and science/medicine.

Swinton's personal awards further exemplify the international reputation of the department for interdisciplinary research. His work on dementia was awarded The Michael Ramsey Prize in 2016 and was shortlisted for the 2018 Grawemeyer Prize in Religion (award value, USD100,000). He was awarded the American Psychiatric Association's Oskar Pfister award for an outstanding contribution to religion and psychiatry in 2018 and the Lafranc Award by the Archbishop of Canterbury in 2020.

In recognition of the Department's strengths in interdisciplinary research, **Macaskill** was appointed to the University's "Interdisciplinarity Workstream", which generated the relevant section of the *Aberdeen 2040* Strategy document.

It is also important that the Unit sits within a composite School of Divinity, History and Philosophy, within which a number of research interests straddle disciplinary divides. The appointment of **Laffin** jointly between DRS and Philosophy reflects the overlap of that discipline with Theology, but there are also intersections with History, particularly in relation to ecclesiastical history and the associated heritage sector.

Advancing Open Access (OA)

The Unit has worked with the Dean for Cultural Strategy and Research Governance and with the Library (which hosts the OA repository) to develop open access for its research, within the context of a broader commitment to widening access to research. All new staff are made aware of the Open Access Policy and its national context at induction and through mentoring, and emails are sent at regular intervals to all staff, reminding them of the policy and process for lodging articles on the repository, which is supported by Library colleagues from the Scholarly Communications Service (see **REF5a**).

It is important to note that a significant proportion of the Unit's research continues to be released through international journals, considered to be the best venue for publication, some of which do not support OA. This affects the overall statistics for publications, which demonstrate the increasing standardisation of OA, once this important qualification is taken into account. In 2013, prior to the implementation of the OA mandate, the proportion of journal articles made available as open access by the Unit was 33%, with this figure rising to 47% in 2019. While international publishers are not necessarily in agreement with OA policy, it is worth noting that in one case—the *Journal of Theological Interpretation*—a request from **Macaskill**, as a member of the editorial board, led to the journal adopting an OA policy. As editor-in-chief of *The Journal of Disability and Religion*, **Brock** has facilitated the limited release of one article per edition in its published form, above and beyond the standard green access. **Macaskill's** article on autism was made freely available in its published form for a three-month period, during which it was accessed over 2,000 times. The University is also a member of the Brill Journals Open Access Bridging Agreement 2020, by which OA charges are waived for authors of articles published in Brill journals, one of the major hosts of research in biblical studies.

All articles included as submissions in this exercise have been made available in OA form.

In common with the Humanities more broadly (and in line with the British Academy's comment on the UKRI consultation, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/news/british-academy-comments-key-aspects-ukri-open-access-review-consultation/>), there has been less uptake of open access for longer form publications, such as monographs and edited books. This reflects the fact that most of the leading international publishers for DRS do not support open access. The University is currently developing Aberdeen University Press as a vehicle for OA, and the Unit expects that, in future, this will be of particular value in publishing conference proceedings and supporting doctoral and postdoctoral researchers. Most of the contributions to edited collections and conference proceedings that members of the Unit have provided to date, however, are associated with external (and usually international) events, with publishing details determined by the organisers.

Recognising the concerns that have held international publishers back from supporting open access for longer form publications, the Unit hosted a meeting in March 2020 on "Open Access and the Future of Theological Publishing". The online event brought together academics and publishing partners (particularly those representing smaller and independent publishing houses) to consider the distinctive challenges facing the theological publishing sector and to reflect on models of OA that take proper account of the variegated economies of publishing. This involved analysis of international research on the actual costs of monograph production (including in e-format) and the role that publishers play in the generation, dissemination and publicising of responsible research. Relevant outcomes were fed into the UKRI consultation process.

Recognising the need to embed open access in a broader culture of accessible research, the Unit has also worked to share research findings through other media, particularly online video and podcast, working with the University of Aberdeen Media Services team to release these in high quality formats. In 2017, a series of lectures was recorded as The Christ's College Lectures, with contributions by **Greggs, Swinton** and **Macaskill**. The lectures were supported by financial investment from the Principal of the University, to cover venue-hire and production. Following the success of these videos (c.10,000 views), the Unit began to develop a programme of further lectures and shorter videos, intended to share core research findings with a wider audience (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCVlk42V_ZsFFYyeMa3CW34w/videos).

Further Elements of Research Support, Oversight and Integrity:

With oversight of the Director of Research and School Research Committee, the School fully adheres to University Governance on Research Ethics and Integrity, monitored through biennial "Research Governance Health Checks" and regularised email notifications, directing colleagues to relevant policies. The School has a dedicated Ethics Officer (for 2019–20, a role held by **Tiemeyer**) and a Deputy Ethics Officer (**Cross**), who provide consultation services to colleagues during the preparation of research projects and grant applications and who are responsible for the approval of projects submitted for funding. Further details concerning policies and processes are provided in Section 2.

2. People

Strategy and Staffing Profile

The research strategy focuses on consolidating clusters of excellence in systematic theology, theological ethics, practical theology and biblical studies—and their intersections—and on the creation of a world-leading Church History/Historical Theology Unit. Church History/Historical Theology was identified as the principal area of understaffing following REF2014. The recent appointment of two senior Professors in Historical Theology (**Behr, Saak**) to complement **Ehrenscheidtner's** research was intended to address this strategically, as was the establishment of the Centre for the Study of Protestant Theology. Staffing strategy (capacity building, retention and maintenance) has centred on retaining and developing world-leading researchers through their mid-career points into senior roles (during this period, **Tiemeyer** was

promoted to Reader, with **Brock** and **Ziegler** promoted to Professor); and on recruiting impressive early career researchers (**Cross**, **Epsen**, **Heimbürger**, **Hewitt**, **Hockey**, **Pederson**).

The Unit has invested significant finances in the creation of five early career research fellowships, covering the major subject areas within the Unit (see Section 3). Two of the recent ECR appointments have moved from 3-year fellowships to permanent lectureships (**Hockey**, **van Ommen**), reflecting their impressive early career work and the Institution's commitment to developing and retaining excellent research staff. The open positions they vacated have been filled by other ECRs (**Hewitt**, **Cross**). All ECR appointments have been subject to University of Aberdeen recruitment policies and shaped by the University's involvement in the Athena Swan scheme.

Finally, a small number of key appointments have been made at the senior level (**Macaskill**, **Behr**, **Saak**), with these appointments prioritising accomplishments in interdisciplinarity and impact within the context of the classical disciplines (New Testament and Historical Theology), in line with the Unit's culture. Crucially, two of these appointments are expansion positions, intended to create a centre of international excellence in Church History and Historical Theology from Patristic to Reformation periods; this discipline is designed to work in close relations with New Testament, Systematic Theology and Ethics.

The Unit has enjoyed a relatively stable staffing situation through the period of assessment, despite this coinciding with a challenging financial period for the sector as a whole. While a small number of colleagues left early in the cycle, the retention of senior colleagues has been impressive—largely because of the quality of collegial research activity. Those who left have, furthermore, been replaced through rigorous recruitment processes based upon business cases driven by research success and focus in DRS: colleagues appointed in this period exceed the number who have left, with seven leaving and nine substantive appointments to replace these (**Macaskill**, **Behr**, **Saak**, **Pedersen**, **Hewitt**, **Hockey**, **Epsen**, **Cross**, **Heimbürger**).

The University and the Unit are equally concerned to address the long-term gender imbalance within Theology and Religious Studies (TRS) subject areas. However, the fields of applicants for positions at every level continue to be composed largely of white males, reflecting the composition of the fields themselves. DRS recognises that the key to transforming this reality is a long-term commitment to developing a diverse community of doctoral researchers, who can proceed to take up staff-level positions within the wider sector. We have made considerable progress in this regard, with especially high proportions of students with protected characteristics in New Testament, Theological Ethics and Practical Theology. At the level of current appointments, one female postdoctoral scholar (**Hockey**) was subsequently recruited to a permanent lectureship, while a recent graduate was appointed to a postdoctoral position (**Cross**).

Structural Support for Researchers

The University subscribes to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (see **REF5a**); in line with this, the School sees the support and development of staff at all career stages as integral to a flourishing research environment. All research staff have a contractual entitlement (regardless of external funding and excluding sabbaticals) to devote 40% of their time to research. In 2018–19, for example, the Unit invested around GBP559,000 in funding staff time devoted to research. This figure does not include periods of routine sabbatical leave, which are also allocated regardless of external funding and are maintained even where funding has been secured. All academic staff on standard teaching and research contracts in DRS are entitled to apply for research leave after teaching five semesters. This is more frequent than the University mandated minimum of 1 in 8, and colleagues are given the option to “roll over” entitlement and to take a whole year. This has allowed colleagues to schedule longer periods of leave to suit domestic arrangements or to accommodate the need for continuity in high-level administrative positions. The Unit's flexible workload model also incorporates a 2.5x multiplier for the first time a module/session is taught to ensure that research is not inhibited by a move to

Aberdeen and that curricular development is not undertaken at the cost of research. All research staff, regardless of level, are given individual offices and equipment.

The structural support has ensured the research productivity of the department is maintained through the cycle, with multiple works completed that are not included in the submission, including several monographs aimed at wider readership and several major edited works (notably the Oxford Handbooks to Barth and Bonhoeffer, edited by **Nimmo** and **Ziegler**, respectively). During the census period, colleagues have produced 35 monographs; 21 edited works; 123 peer-reviewed journal articles; and 142 book chapters. All members of DRS have received invitations to give papers on their research at major international conferences and universities, including indicatively: Cambridge, Duke, Durham, Edinburgh, Fuller, Harvard, Heidelberg, Humboldt (Berlin), Oxford, Princeton, St Andrews, Tel Aviv, Yale, Vrije (Amsterdam).

The School also makes dedicated funding available to researchers. All professorial staff receive annual allowances (GBP1,500-5,000, with the variation in levels linked to the volume of impact activity undertaken by individuals), while other staff are entitled to GBP800 in funding through the School Research Committee. Funding is also available at University level, with multiple schemes (particularly for “pump-priming”) advertised through the Unit’s Business Development Officer (BDO) (see **REF5a**). Working in collaboration with the BDO, the School Director of Research oversees a peer review process designed to be both rigorous and supportive. The workload model allocates 20 hours to the development of any standard research grant application, with further hours allocated for multi-stage or large-scale applications.

ERCs are supported through a lightened teaching load in their first two years, by 300 hours in the first year and 175 hours in the second (equivalent to 30% and 20% reductions, respectively). All new colleagues are also awarded an allowance of 100 hours in the first year and 75 hours in the second year to account for the transition into DRS and to help ensure this transition does not reduce research intensity. ECRs complete three years of probation and are then allowed to apply for leave in the following academic year. There is a dedicated postdoctoral representative on the School Research Committee and on the University of Aberdeen Post-Doctoral Researcher’s Committee. The School Research Committee provides research support funding to staff on temporary research contracts and to staff on teaching and scholarship contracts. Under University policy the latter receive 15% of their time for research and scholarship and many colleagues in such arrangements contribute especially to the impact of the Unit (notably Jeffrey, who directs the Centre for Ministry Studies).

To support development, the standard Annual Review is supplemented by dedicated Research Support Interviews. These are intended to articulate both short- and long-term research goals, to help identify possible sources of funding internal and external, to identify training needs, to ensure research is conducted in line with University-wide governance frameworks (for example for ethics and integrity) and to enable staff to feed up and discuss ways in which they can be supported.

The Unit has made use of short-term contracts (6–12 months) only to cover periods of funded research leave (as with **Greggs’** British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship in 2018–19) or to cover unforeseen gaps in staffing occasioned by personal circumstances, so as to protect the research capacity of all colleagues.

Postdoctoral researchers have been prominently integrated into the research culture of the Unit in several ways. During the academic year 2019–20, the department ran a programme of joint seminars specifically focused on the research of postdoctoral fellows. Postdoctoral fellows have also been given responsibilities in leading the discipline-level research seminars on a regular basis. Fellows have also been encouraged to develop grant applications to appropriate schemes and have been involved in collaborative grant applications made by more senior colleagues.

Research accomplishments for all levels of staff (and PGR researchers) are frequently noted in Departmental and School-level communications, and celebrated at an annual event displaying

significant published work. The University also awards prizes (Principal's Medal) to celebrate research and impact (awarded to **Greggs** in 2018), with the Head of School nominating staff.

Impact and Engagement/Secondment

Impact-related activity is now factored centrally into workload models, which can be flexibly adjusted to create further space for those who have demonstrated a capacity for successful impact to pursue this, freed from other responsibilities. During the academic year 2018–19, **Macaskill** was seconded to the Chalmers Institute, a Scottish charity concerned with Christian leadership, on a 10% basis, to run weekly workshops focused on the implications and applications of his work on Union with Christ and Intellectual Humility. The arrangement was partially replicated in 2019–20. **Swinton's** consultancy work, particularly for Hammond Healthcare in Australia, is detailed in the submitted impact case study.

Postgraduate Research

The Unit has made widening access to PGR studies a priority, establishing non-residential and part-time options in doctoral research and developing infrastructures, policies and cultures to support students and staff involved. This has enabled those unable to pursue full-time, residential study for financial or other reasons to access the doctoral programme. This has led to significant overall growth in PGR numbers: during the REF period, the headcount rose from 108 (in 2013–14) to 198 (2018–19), excluding extensions, with the FTE in years 1-3 rising from 64 to 117. It has also led to a more diverse demographic of doctoral researchers, though this is masked somewhat in the HESA data, which exclude non-residential students and thereby some of those with protected characteristics. The Department's completion figures are also around 20% higher than those detailed by HESA, reflecting the proportion of students completing their projects on a non-residential basis.

Proportionately, the doctoral programme is the largest part of the Unit's business and the activity devoted to it reflects this. Within the workload model of the Unit, PGR supervision is allocated 70 hours per annum.

The Unit has recognised, however, that part-time and non-residential research also creates significant new challenges. It requires creativity to ensure a sense of participation in the research community and flexible working patterns to maintain supervisory activities with students who frequently live in different time zones.

There are weekly or fortnightly research seminars held in each subject area. These are recorded and posted to the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), along with further resources intended to support distance study. It has become standard for the seminars to be delivered in a blended format, with non-residential students accessing them live through the VLE. In addition to the weekly seminars, each of the subject areas holds an annual symposium for its students, with non-residential students strongly encouraged to attend. Finally, the Unit runs reading groups in both ancient and modern languages, to support the development of core skills and to build community.

In 2017, a GBP10,000 investment from the Principal of the University enabled the Unit to hold a symposium in Pasadena, California for non-residential PGR students based in North America, with around 25 students in attendance and three faculty members.

Funding Support for PGR

Establishing doctoral scholarship funds is a development priority for the Unit. In 2016, a GBP100,000 endowment allowed the department to create the T.F. Torrance Scholarships, which provide partial funding for students. The Unit is working closely with the University Development Trust to establish further funds for doctoral scholarships, and this is a strategic priority for 2021–2026.

The principal external funding body for studentships in this area is the AHRC, with its PGR funding model now operating through devolved consortia and graduate schools. In Scotland, the relevant funding body is the Scottish Graduate School for Arts and Humanities (SGSAH). In recent years, reflecting Aberdeen's leadership in doctoral research in DRS, **Brock** and **Schaper** have had principal responsibility for developing training specific to the relevant discipline areas within the SGSAH. Two scholarships were awarded in 2020, following the implementation of a new internal process to support applications, and it is noteworthy that **Cross** completed her doctorate on this scheme.

Frameworks for PGR Monitoring and Support

The School provides a supportive framework for PGR study, overseen by the School PGR Director, supported by a dedicated School administrator and Unit-level Leads. Each student has two supervisors, although the second supervisor may principally function in a pastoral capacity. All new supervisors receive mandatory training from the University Postgraduate Research School, which provides a suite of training for both students and supervisors (see **REF5a**). DRS also conducts its own tailored supervision training. PGR students receive a School level induction at the start of the academic year, with routine monitoring and a substantive review every 12 months. In support of conferences, the School makes GBP100 available to students through the School PGR Committee, with additional support available across the University (see **REF5a**). The School runs an annual Research Gym for PG Students in the Humanities jointly with Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture. The Unit pays for offices, computers, telephones, printing and photocopying for residential PGR students and for distance students visiting campus. Given the high numbers of students, this is a significant investment.

In addition to training provided by the University Postgraduate Research School, the SGSAH acts as a gateway to bespoke training across Scotland. Staff and PGRs Staff/PGRs at universities that belong to this consortium may apply for funding to run a training session or programme through the scheme.

Equality and Diversity

Because of the Unit's distinctive concern with disability and theology, it is particularly sensitive to the range of issues around equality and diversity. **Swinton** and **Brock's** research, in particular, has challenged the limits of "inclusion" as a concept and has pressed for a richer discourse of "belonging" that acknowledges the distortive effects on research constituted by the absence of diverse voices; institutionally, this has focused on a GBP172,795 University investment into Friendship House. Three of the senior chairs within the department are held by individuals with explicitly protected characteristics: colour/race (**Swinton, Greggs**) and disability (**Macaskill**). **Greggs**, the Marischal Chair and Head of DRS, represents a further protected characteristic: coming from a background (and postcode) of poverty associated with indices of multiple deprivation, he actively addresses sector-wide issues faced by those from such contexts.

As noted, the Unit also recognises the sector-wide problem of gender representation, an external problem that has directly affected recent appointment processes. The Unit has implemented a longer-term strategy of removing barriers of access to the PhD programme, to enable more female candidates to pursue a career in academic research. The distance-study option has been a key element within this, enabling women with families who wish to work in this way to access the programme without compromising their family life, and prospective scholars

from lower income or minority backgrounds to study without the costs demanded by an international move.

Various institutional structures further support the equality agenda. The School operates an Equality and Diversity Committee, the remit of which extends to encompass all protected characteristics and other relevant areas of consideration. During the current REF cycle, the position of Equality and Diversity Officer for the School has been held by **Tiemeyer**. The School Director of Research sits on this committee, with all Units individually represented. The Athena Swan process has also been treated as a priority by the School, which achieved the Bronze Award in April 2017 and is currently working towards the Silver Award.

The School management recognises the impact of caring and other duties and enables forms of flexible working, in line with broader University policy and implemented through the Academic Line Management System. Academic Line Managers and School-level Directors of Research and Equality and Diversity officers are charged with ensuring that all broader University frameworks ensuring equity between staff are adhered to. The School has also created a “family-friendly” fund to assist attendance at conferences. It has also implemented a revised policy on seminar conduct to ensure all are given equal voice in an inclusive environment. These policies are embedded within the University’s wider strategy for inclusion, reflected in the *Aberdeen 2040* Strategy document (see **REF5a**). **Van Ommen** and **Macaskill** contributed to the consultation sessions held by the workstream tasked with preparing the “inclusivity” policy for this document, in recognition of their work on autism. Through a commitment to ensure females account for at least 50% of all invited speakers, over the last two academic years, 53% of all seminar speakers and public lecturers in Divinity have been women.

In preparing this submission, the Unit has complied with the requirements of the institutional Code of Practice. Outputs were selected on the basis of quality, as indicated by at least two independent reviews. Where choices between outputs of equal quality had to be made, the Unit took care to appropriately represent protected characteristics. There was bespoke Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) training for staff involved in REF decision-making, including selection of the output portfolio. Unconscious bias training is mandatory for appointing panels. The distribution of outputs was reviewed by the institutional REF Steering Group. All colleagues were invited to declare circumstances that could entitle the Unit to a reduction in the number of outputs required, and a reduction for the Unit was agreed by EDAP.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

The total research income for the Unit during the current period was GBP1,372,633. While much of this (70%) is associated with UK grant capture, significant amounts are also associated with international charitable income, reflecting the collaborative activity of the Unit and the University of Aberdeen Development Trust. As an example of this: In 2016, **Macaskill** and **Ziegler** secured a GBP1,200,000 award from the Kirby Laing Foundation to support an impact-oriented postdoctoral research fellowship (**Hockey, Hewitt**).

Grant Income

Colleagues have secured prestigious awards from highly competitive UK schemes, including **Greggs’** British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship (GBP122,000) and **Swinton’s** AHRC Follow On Grant (which was secured in March 2013, but which funded research within the present cycle, to March 2014: GBP65,000). The Unit has also successfully secured international funding: **Ziegler** was awarded USD100,000 from the John Templeton Foundation, to support a collaborative project on immortality; **van Ommen** secured a networking award from Templeton, as part of the Yale project on Human Flourishing; and **Mawson** secured USD44,000 from the Issachar Fund, to support a project on ageing. **Schaper** is one of the project managers for the

Measuring Value and Accommodating the Gods: Abstracting from the Material in Ancient Cultures project, awarded DKK1,141,723 in 2019 by the Independent Research Fund Denmark.

Structural Support for Funding Applications:

The Unit has sought to foster a culture of grant awareness and application during this REF cycle, and this has been reflected in a significantly higher application rate to grant schemes, particularly since 2017. This is supported by the Unit's BDO, who notifies colleagues of specific calls for proposals and guides potential applicants through the process of application, coordinating the costings and ethics elements through the University's review portal. Grant applications are now given appropriate weighting within workload models, to ensure that adequate time is devoted to their development. There are several opportunities for internal peer-review to be obtained: all applications are processed through internal peer-review before being approved at Institutional level, and the University runs various grant-writing workshops, through its Grants Academy (see **REF 5a**). The recent success in securing highly competitive AHRC funding (through the SGSAH) reflected multiple stages of constructive input through the processes previously noted. While the award will run outside the current cycle, **Schaper** has recently secured a Leverhulme Major Research Fellowship, with an application that was refined through internal peer-review. Importantly, ECRs are directed towards schemes specific to their career points and all colleagues have been encouraged to build funding through the networking and priming schemes hosted by the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the British Academy.

Strategic Investment

DRS has invested around GBP175,258 per annum in the establishment of five early career research fellowships, with three of these part-funded by endowments secured by the department. The Kirby Laing Fellowship in New Testament is supported by a GBP1,200,000 endowment. The Christ's College Fellowship in Practical Theology (**Cross**) is supported by an endowment of GBP2,000,000, held by the historical ministry college of Aberdeen; as an indicative figure, the endowment contributed GBP46,463 to the salary and on-costs of the fellowship in 2019–20. The Lord Gifford Fellowship in Natural Theology (**Epsen**) is supported by the Lord Gifford endowment, which has allocated GBP76,500 to co-fund the position, with the Unit matching this from operational budgets. DRS was successful in securing two Principal's Strategic Investment Posts. This was achieved through a competitive process, and the University has centrally invested in the first three years of salary costs for the two new professors in Church History/Historical Theology; indicatively, the investment from the University into DRS for these strategic posts in 2019-20 was GBP157,341.

The University has also provided significant resources to support the Friendship House impact project, equivalent to scholarships valued at GBP128,695 and accommodation valued at GBP44,100.

Library resources remain critical to research in DRS, with the subject areas benefiting from the various strands of the digitisation movement, including OA, while also continuing to rely upon traditional formats (including undigitised older works). The University has significantly increased its holdings of digital resources, which allows remote access to extensive collections of material, something that has been particularly beneficial to non-residential students. From 2017–2019, for example, the University spend on e-books rose from GBP96,378 to GBP161,406 and on e-journals from GBP2,247,291 to GBP2,365,036. The Unit has benefited from this wider increase in electronic subscription. The Unit has also secured additional library resources maintained locally within the department. These include the personal journal collection of I. Howard Marshall, which is in the process of being catalogued, representing 50 years of scholarly journals, many of which are not digitised. They also include the extensive Ratschow Collection, which was bought by DRS (with the aid of GBP10,000 from the Development Trust) for GBP35,000.

There are two significant endowments to fund annual public lectures from world-leading scholars: the Gifford Lectureship and the Hay of Seaton Lectureship. The Giffords involve a minimum of six lectures on Natural Theology with the lecturer in residence at the University; each set of lectures is budgeted at around GBP12-13,000. The Hay of Seaton involves lectures given in both Aberdeen and (to facilitate wider public access) London on Jewish-Christian relations; a set of lectures is budgeted at around GBP3–4,000. Two GBP10,000 awards from the Principal's endowment have funded major international research conferences open to academics and members of the public: The Freedom of the Christian Ethicist (2014) and The Future of Protestant Theology (2020, delayed to 2021 by Covid-19).

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

All colleagues are involved in academic networks particular to their areas of interest, with several holding key roles in the learned societies specific to the disciplines. During this cycle, **Greggs** and **Swinton** were also elected Fellows of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the national learned society of Scotland.

The majority of colleagues have strong connections with various church bodies, with several serving on national church committees or advisory boards. **Nimmo** has served as Theological Advisor for the Church of Scotland's "Learn" initiative for four years, consulting on a range of award-winning and publicity-receiving publications aimed at congregations, with a readership of 8,000. **Greggs** and **Swinton** have both served as theological advisers to the Archbishop of Canterbury, as members of his Theological Reference Group. Through the Centre for Ministry Studies, the Unit offers regular Continuing Professional Development (CPD) support to ministers/pastors/priests and interested lay-people through a programme of conferences that runs throughout the year.

While the research shared with faith communities spans the range of interests within the Department, it is noteworthy that much is particularly concerned to provide theological resources to overcome enmity and marginalisation and to foster inclusion, belonging and understanding. The Unit's work on autism and disability has been taken up by a range of church partners, concerned about the extent to which the disabled are seen as marginal; the work of **Cross**, **Greggs**, **Torrance** and **Brittain** on gender and sexuality has likewise informed church-level responses to the contemporary challenges of diversity.

A second set of partners comprises the para-church organisations that work alongside the churches to address specific issues; these organisations are generally registered charities operating within the third sector. **Greggs** has served as chair of a subgroup of the Faith and Order (F&O) Commission of the World Council of Churches, an inter-church organisation, which collectively represents 590 million people across the world in about 150 countries. He was appointed in light of his capacity to mediate inter-faith concerns for more traditionalist ("particularist") faith practitioners in light of his research. Through his oversight, the F&O Commission embraced and advocated a theologically careful pluralism, generating a study document entitled *Love and Witness: Proclaiming the Peace of the Lord Jesus Christ in a Religiously Plural World*, which is the first F&O statement on other religions and serves as a global resource to support mutual religious understanding at the institutional and grassroots levels. He has also contributed resources to the Tony Blair Faith Foundation for work intended to contribute to peace-building efforts between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria in areas affected by the Boko Haram movement. **Nimmo** has been appointed to the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE) delegation for ecumenical dialogue with the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity (PCPCU). **Macaskill** was partly seconded over the course of two years to work with the Chalmers Institute, a charity focused on supporting Christian leadership, who work with the USA-based McLellan Foundation to explore the relationship between models of biblical interpretation and abusive leadership practices. **Greggs** continues to provide guidance to the religious environment and conservation charity A Rocha International.

A third set of partners relate to the particularly strong commitment to supporting the primary and secondary teaching sector, recognising that RE teachers are a major audience for our research. **Greggs** has been involved in the Theology and Religious Studies UK (TRS-UK) organisation and with Academy Conferences, a body that produces resources for schools and teachers, to produce a series of short films on current research within the Unit for classroom use.

A fourth set of partnerships is particular to the dense cluster of research into theology and healthcare (including disability and ageing). **Swinton** has provided extensive consultation over the course of several years to Hammond Healthcare in Australia (see impact case study). **Macaskill, van Ommen** and **Brock** have worked with the National Autistic Society (NAS) to advise on the significance of faith-commitments to the experience of autism and with one NAS trustee (Stewart Rapley) to develop a separate pilot project on autism and the church. **Macaskill** and **Brock** have also worked (through their involvement with the Wheaton Faith and Disability Initiative) with disability care providers in the USA and Canada to share theological insights relevant to the frontline care of Christians.

Members of the Unit hold key roles associated with wider influence in the field:

1. Several colleagues have held senior editorial roles with journals. Indicatively: **Nimmo** is Senior Editor of *International Journal of Systematic Theology*. **Brock** and **Swinton** are Managing Editors of *Journal of Disability and Religion*. **Tiemeyer** is Co-editor of *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*. **Ziegler** is Associate Editor of *Journal of Reformed Theology*. **Schaper** is book review editor of *Vetus Testamentum*.
2. Colleagues have also held senior editorial roles for monograph series and other forms of research book series. Indicatively: **Segal** is editor of *Theorists in Myth* (Routledge). **Greggs** is senior editor of two series, the *Edinburgh Critical History of Theology* (Edinburgh University Press) and the *Brill Companion to Modern Theology* (Brill). **Nimmo** is co-editor of the series *Explorations in Reformed Theology* (T&T Clark). **Brock** is founding editor (with Susan Parsons) of *T&T Clark Enquires in Theological Ethics*. **Macaskill** is consulting editor (with John Collins and Adela Yarbro Collins) of the *Ancient Literature for New Testament Studies* series (Harper Collins-Zondervan), having previously served as series co-editor. **Tiemeyer** is editor-in-chief of *Society for Old Testament Study Monographs* (Cambridge University Press). **Ziegler** is one of three editors of *Studies in Systematic Theology* (T&T Clark/Bloomsbury) and of *New Studies in Bonhoeffer's Theology and Ethics* (T&T Clark/Bloomsbury), is editor-in-chief of *Brill Research Perspectives in Theological Traditions* (Brill) and is consulting editor for *T&T Clark Digital Theology Library*.
3. Colleagues also serve on a range of editorial boards. These include *Holiness* (**Greggs**); *Teologica Revista* (**Greggs, Nimmo**); *Zygon* (**Segal**); *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* (**Segal**); *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (**Macaskill**); *Journal of Theological Interpretation* (**Macaskill**); Eerdmans Commentary Series, *Illuminations* (**Macaskill**); *The Wiley-Blackwell Commentary Series* (**Tiemeyer**); Oxford University Press's *The Oxford Bible Commentary* (**Tiemeyer**); *Hebrew Bible Monographs* (Sheffield Phoenix Press, **Tiemeyer**); *Revisioning Reformed Dogmatics* (**Nimmo**); *Studies in Dialectical Theology* (**Nimmo**); and InterVarsity Press's *Christian Doctrine and Scripture series* (**Nimmo**).
4. Several members of the Unit have held key leadership roles in the learned societies associated with our disciplines. Indicatively: **Schaper** recently served as the President of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, a role for which he was given an Aberdeen Ambassador award by the City of Aberdeen; **Macaskill** acted as Secretary for the Congress associated with the International Organisation for the Study of the Old Testament (IOSOT) during the same period; and **Nimmo** has served as treasurer of the Society for the Study of Theology.

5. Members of the Unit have also served on committees and steering groups for the learned societies of the relevant disciplines. Most colleagues have held positions on the steering committees of various subject groups within the American Academy of Religion (AAR) and the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL). Indicatively: **Nimmo** has served on the committee for the “Schleiermacher” Unit and is Co-Chair of the committee for the “Reformed Theology & History” Unit for AAR; **Tiemeyer** serves on steering groups for “The Book of the Twelve”, “The Formation of the Book of Isaiah”, “Prophetic Texts in their Ancient Context” of SBL; **Hockey** serves on the steering group for “Bible and Emotion” of SBL; **Macaskill** sits on the SBL International Meeting steering group for “Apocalyptic Literature”; and **Greggs** is a member of the Committee for election of new fellows for the Royal Society of Edinburgh and also sits on the grant review committee for the Society.

6. Colleagues are regularly invited to give lectures at international events. Indicatively: **Macaskill** has delivered two named lecture series since his arrival in Aberdeen (Lund Lectures, Chicago 2016; Kistemaker Lectures, Orlando 2017); **Swinton** delivered the Didsbury Lectures, 2020; **Greggs** gave the 75th anniversary lectures at Trinity College Singapore (2018); **Segal** delivered a public lecture in Prague, following the translation of *Myth: A Very Short Introduction* into Czech. It is noteworthy that **Swinton** has given over 100 public lectures across four continents since 2014.