

<p><b>Institution:</b> University of Aberdeen</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> Theology and Religious Studies</p>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>The main non-academic user groups, beneficiaries and audiences who have drawn on the research of this unit during the assessed period are: churches; para-church organizations; government; NGO's; inter-faith organizations; general public; media; education organizations. The main mechanisms for impact that have arisen from research outputs in the unit have been: public engagement in churches and wider communities; policy formation; consultative work; and the media. Research underpinning these engagements has been from across the School, in the fields of: Practical Theology; Doctrine; Theological Ethics; Religious Studies; and Biblical Studies.</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>Impact in Theology and Religious Studies in Aberdeen has strategically been grouped around certain identifiable themes, user groups and mechanisms of impact:</p> <p><b>1. Church and Para-church: (a.)</b> Of the nineteen researchers submitted, eleven from within biblical studies and theology engage local and national churches with their research through preaching, teaching, policy advice, governance and leadership (<b>Brittain, Brock, Clarke, Greggs, Leonhardt-Balzer, Nimmo, Swinton, Tiemeyer, Wood, Ziegler</b>). This ecclesial work generates new ways of thinking that influence and inspires new forms of religious expression, engaging religious communities with current research in biblical studies and theology. <b>(b.)</b> A number of researchers also engage their research in training and continuing professional development of clergy (<b>Brittain, Clarke, Greggs, Leonhardt-Balzer, Nimmo, Swinton, Wood</b>), through workshops, lectures and seminars, influencing the methods, ideas and ethics of this profession, including work with clergy trainers (such as the Conference of Anglican and Ecumenical Institutes of Ministerial Training) on the nature of theological ministerial training. The DMin in Reformed Theology (in conjunction with Pittsburgh Theological Seminary) is also located in the unit and offers an international platform for high-level ministerial continuing professional development. Christ's College (the Church of Scotland's training college) is located in the unit, and the College also organizes 'Church-Academy Fora', gathering divinity academics and interested clergy together for conferences around public themes. <b>(c.)</b> The Centre for Ministry Studies is currently being established, with <b>Swinton</b> as its director. This will engage in research in the field of ministry studies in order to provide cross-denominational ministerial education and continuing professional development. <b>(d.)</b> Researchers are actively involved in training clergy outwith the confines of British HEI. For example, <b>Greggs</b> is one of five Visiting Professors at St Mellitus College, London (an Anglican training college for clergy and laity, which includes a 'Saturday Theology School'), a post to which he was appointed as a result of his research in evangelical theology and pneumatology; <b>Swinton</b> is the Master of Christ's College (which trains Church of Scotland clergy), arising from his research in practical theology. This work directly impacts church leaders, and generates new ways of thinking among religious people so as to inform creative practice. <b>(e.)</b> Research outputs have formed the basis of expert policy advice for church communities. For example, <b>Swinton</b> and <b>Pokorny</b> have addressed bishops' conferences (in London and Vienna respectively). <b>Clarke, Greggs, Nimmo</b> and <b>Swinton</b> sit on national advisory and doctrine bodies for the Baptists, Methodists and Church of Scotland. <b>Swinton's</b> research underpinned the Church of Scotland's report 'Suicide among Young Men'. <b>Clarke's</b> research formed the basis for 'Enabling Structures for Emerging Ministries' and 'Re-imagining Church Membership' for the Baptist Union of Scotland. <b>(f.)</b> There is ongoing research located in the unit into discrimination over sexuality which is aimed at informing church policy and practice, including <b>Brittain's</b> research into the worldwide Anglican communion, and <b>Nimmo's</b> work with the Church of Scotland Working Group on Issues in Human Sexuality. <b>(g.)</b> Research outputs have led to advisory roles being undertaken by researchers within influential para-church organizations. For example, as a result of her research in biblical studies, <b>Tiemeyer</b> sits on the Theological Advisory Board of the Evangelical Alliance (2006- ), offering expert advice on public policy in theological questions; the Alliance has over 1 million members. <b>Greggs</b> advises Alpha International on the basis of his research in pneumatology; conferences for which he has been an advisor have been attended by over 2,000 church leaders, and Alpha has been studied by approximately 15 million people in 163 countries.</p>

## **2. Policy Formation and Advice for Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations:**

**(a.)** The research of this unit has been the basis of policy formation and expert advice for government and governmental agencies. For example, **Swinton's** Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability has been the locus for research into theology and disability and health care, and its research outputs have formed policy for the Scottish Executive, producing reports on the 'Community Chaplaincy Listening Project' and 'Suicide in the Highlands'. **Pokorny** has advised the Austrian Government on national security issues in relation to new religious movements through an advisory paper from his research given to the Austrian Federal Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth. **(b.)** Research has also been utilized by NGO's, and has led to appointments on working groups and advisory bodies. For example, **Tuladhar-Douglas** is a Commissioner with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Working Group on Cultural and Spiritual Values of Sacred Areas and its Direction on Governance, Equity and Livelihood Rights in Relation to Protected Areas. His research into religious ethnobiology has enabled the IUCN to understand and respond to the needs of millions of hectares of land across China, India and Nepal. **Greggs'** research into inter-faith among exclusivist communities and his *Theology against Religion* has been used by the Blair Faith Foundation to inform aspects of their engagement with Muslim communities; his publications have been used to offer theoretical background to the Foundation's work, and have recently been cited in documentation on the promotion of religious freedom circulated in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

**3. Public Engagement and Media: (a.)** Researchers have engaged the broader public with their research locally, nationally, and internationally, creating cultural capital arising from their research outputs. **(b.)** To facilitate this mechanism for impact further, the unit also hosts a number of public lectures, including: the Gifford lectures (six lectures in both 2009 and 2012, attendance c.100-150 at each); the Hay of Seaton Memorial Lecture (annual attendance c.100-150); and the Centre for the Study of Myth lectures (with eight international speakers p.a. and an attendance of c.25 per event). **(c.)** Cultural capital has been created by a number of researchers who have discussed their research, or had it discussed, on TV, radio or in newspapers. For example, **Pokorny** has used his research to write for [www.orf.at](http://www.orf.at) (22 March 2012, 1.3 million readership) and for Ö1 Radio (27 March 2012, 650,000 listeners). **Nimmo's** research lecture in Kampen made the front page of the *Reformatorisch Dagblad* in the Netherlands (March 2011, 60,000 readership). **Greggs'** research was the basis of a Youtube Bonhoeffer programme with 10,000 viewings; **Re Manning's** work formed the basis of a lecture for a Youtube Tillich programme with over 2,500 viewings; and **Nimmo's** formed the basis of two Youtube Schleiermacher programmes with 2,000 viewings. **Brittain** has appeared on BBC2 Scotland on issues relating to sexuality (24 May 2009). **Brock's** published work was the basis of two bi-monthly audio-magazine shows for the Mars Hill Audio Journal (listeners c. 10,000). **(d.)** Advisory work has been undertaken in relation to documentary production and the media. **Mason's** research has been used to provide advice for DCD Media (London), for a TV documentary on ancient crucifixion; *National Geographic TV* for their special on John the Baptist and his historical environment; and *Esquire* magazine, for the column 'Answer Fella' on the question of evidence for Jesus of Nazareth's existence. **(e.)** Popular works have arisen from the research of members of the unit: **Re Manning** has edited the *30-Second Religion* and *30-Second Bible* books; **Segal** has edited the *30-Second Myth* volume. **(f.)** **Greggs'** research has formed the basis of his lectures to over 9,000 'gifted and talented' school students with Academy Conference throughout England; and his work on theology of religion(s) has been used in workshops at several continuing professional development days for teachers.

**4. Inter-faith Engagement:** The research of a number of members of the unit has been used to stimulate thinking about community cohesion and political engagement around the issue of religious pluralism. **Greggs'** research into theologies of religion(s) has been used through his appointment to Scriptural Reasoning in the University (the intellectual basis for the Children of Abraham Institute, A Thousand Cities, and Society for Scriptural Reasoning) and as a member of the annual Pluralism consultancy of the Shalom-Hartmann Institute, Jerusalem. **Hadromi-Allouche's** research in Islam has been the basis for al-Maktoum (an Islamic Studies institute) public lectures in Dundee. **Mason** engages his research in work relating to Jewish-Christian relations, including public lectures and workshops at Southampton's Parkes Institute for the Study of Jewish/non-Jewish Relations and the Woolf Institute. **Schaper** convenes the Hay of Seaton

## Impact template (REF3a)

Memorial Lecture Committee; these lectures are dedicated to combating anti-Semitism and furthering the knowledge of the history and culture of the Jewish people.

The unit has supported these activities, recognizing them within the School workload model, and providing teaching cover for consultations as necessary (**Swinton**, **Greggs** and **Brittain** have received such support). Financial support from the unit has been given to the Homosexuality and the Anglican Communion Project, and the research undertaken by unit academics. University lecture theatres and facilities have been used for public lectures and the Aberdeenshire Theological Club; and events have been actively supported by the University Communications Team. The Centre for Spirituality, Health and Disability was created as a result of research carried out at the unit, and its director (**Swinton**) is a professor in the unit. During the cycle, the Centre for the Study of Myth was founded, and the inter-disciplinary Centre for Ministry Studies is in the process of being established. The unit has invested in impact in this REF cycle in strategic appointments of colleagues with significant continuing impact profiles (**Pokorny** in new religious movements and East Asian religions; **Greggs** in the church, education policy and inter-faith; **Nimmo** in the church and ecumenism; **Mawson** in ethics and politics). Strategic partnerships have been built with the NHS, the Scottish National Executive, Academy Conferences, and the IUCN, along with various church and para-church organizations (through individual researcher's outputs). An impact and engagement officer (**Greggs**) has been appointed in the unit to advise on potentially fruitful avenues of impact, and to record impact arising from research within the unit.

### c. Strategy and plans

The unit has adopted an Impact and Engagement Strategy which recognizes that impact and engagement rest on excellent research. The unit will continue to encourage the highest standards of scholarship in terms of rigour, significance and originality. It will continue to recruit and retain researchers of the highest quality, and to consider the potential impact of prospective employees' research in relation to issues of recruitment and retention. The unit is committed to developing and buttressing existing links with user groups, and to continuing to recognize impact as part of research within the workload model. It is also exploring strategic partnerships with other potential beneficiary and user groups (such as the Blair Faith Foundation). Central to the long-term flourishing of impact and engagement is the recognition that impact requires time and may be diffuse or indirect in relation to research outputs and projects. Financial support will be available to those who are engaging in potentially impactful research from within the School's research budget. There has been investment in future research outputs which are likely to have significant impact (such as, the Homosexuality and the Anglican Communion Project). The impact and engagement officer will continue to monitor the fulfilment of the Impact and Engagement Strategy, through an internal annual exercise. As a result of a successful AHRC Network Grant (£30K), **Greggs** is Co-I in a project on the nature of impact for research in doctrine in 'post-Christendom'. In part, this project will issue a report to the AHRC and build a website, identifying avenues of impact for theology in church and para-church, media and culture, and politics and policy. This has the potential to facilitate future impact and to shape future strategy within the discipline more broadly. Given the project's joint location in the unit in Aberdeen, this network will create further avenues for impact for the unit and directly influence its impact policy in light of **Greggs'** research.

### d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies have been selected in order to reflect best practice from the identified approaches to impact. The *Spirituality and Health Care* case study arises from the unit's commitments to both the church (and para-church organizations), to policy formation and advice for governmental and non-governmental organizations, examining the impacts of research carried out in the unit on health care and the NHS in its delivery of public services, and through broader societal impact in terms of enriching public life, including effects on the Olympic Games. These twin strategic foci are each explored individually in the second and third case studies. The *Patterns of Ministry and Church Leadership* study is an example of impact on church leadership which is a vital part of the unit's engagement and impact. The *Sacred and Protected Areas* case study is an example of policy formation for an NGO, and subsequent international environmental impact arising from religious studies research.