

Institution: Leeds Trinity University
Unit of Assessment: Theology and Religious Studies
<p>a. Context</p> <p>The Theology and Religious Studies team at Leeds Trinity consists of a small (though increasing in number) complement of staff, with research specialisms in eastern Christianity, mission studies, indigenous religions, philosophy, ethics, 20th century Catholic theology, and latterly Islamic studies in connection with gender studies. Research produced by the department can be shown to have considerable impact on policies of global Christian bodies, representation of the heritage and religion of Indigenous Peoples, and the personal and professional development of practitioners and those interested in spirituality/meditation. The unit has strong partnerships with international Christian organisations such as the World Council of Churches and CAFOD, as well as national and local religious communities and organisations including native American and Druid networks, MONOS (a centre for the study of monastic culture and spirituality in Leicester) and the World Meditation Group. Such partnerships have created various pathways to impact of the unit's research.</p>
<p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>Leeds Trinity has had a strategy for developing research as part of its aim to become a University (a goal that was achieved when the Privy Council granted it University status on 10th December 2012). A central part of this strategy was to raise the profile of the institution locally, nationally and internationally, and this was a key driver of impact-related activities. The institution has a strong community ethos grounded in respect, reflecting its foundation principles, and part of this is to be known for our contribution as a community partner, in a manner that contributes to the evolving social and cultural setting. Impact is therefore embedded in the character of the institution. Impact activities have been supported by the institution's involvement with CREST (the Consortium for Research Excellence, Support and Training). CREST is a sub-association of Guild HE, a network for small and specialist institutions. Through CREST, Leeds Trinity has benefited from the dissemination of policies related to impact and specific impact workshops for staff. Prior to the REF assessment period, the institution was awarded HEIF funding for the creation of several Business and Community Fellows who supported knowledge transfer. In 2008 this impact-related activity was devolved to the Enterprise and External Engagement Group, an arm of the Research Committee. Pathways to impact have also been supported by Leeds Trinity's Marketing and Communication team who have publicly disseminated research undertaken at the institution.</p> <p>This support has been fully utilised by the Theology and Religious Studies team in their approach to impact, which was to encourage staff to take opportunities presented by their expertise in non-academic environments at local and global level for the sake of knowledge exchange and tangible research applications. Links were established with various churches, religious groups, faith based organisations and global bodies, both by responding to invitations and proactively seeking opportunities. Professor Kirsteen Kim has utilised her role as Research Coordinator of the Edinburgh 2010 project (2008 – 2011), Vice-moderator of the World Council of Churches (WCC) Commission on World Mission and Evangelism and other consulting activities to create impact with her research. This has resulted in the creation of a statement of faith and position statement that are significantly influenced by her work. Dr Hannah Hunt was invited, due to her research in the desert fathers and spiritual direction, to be a member of the Board of MONOS, a relationship which has pastoral as well as academic input. At a national level, Dr Ann Marie Mealey is a theological consultant to CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development), the official Catholic aid agency for England and Wales. In this role, gained through her research and expertise in Catholic social responsibility, Mealey is a member of CAFOD's Theological Reference Group. Luke Fox has links with the local Sea of Faith group (Sea of Faith Yorkshire), a network that seeks to explore</p>

Impact template (REF3a)

human religious traditions without any reference to a supposed divine reality outside human experience. Dr Suzanne Owen (Chair of the Indigenous Religions Traditions Group at the American Academy of Religion and the British Association for the Study of Religions) has links with many faith groups, especially Druids and those who cultivate the memory of the Beothuk of Newfoundland.

In order to create further pathways to impact the UoA has hosted an annual series of public lectures, beginning with the Eastern Christian Studies Seminar, which is now broadened as the Heaven and Earth Series to include a range of topics relating to our partnerships. These lectures are held in conjunction with the University Chaplaincy and attract members of the wider community. The unit has made efforts to ensure that user groups and beneficiaries of their research have a presence at conferences and events hosted at the institution. Since 2008, these have included public lectures, an interfaith day (March 2011), a philosophy day conference (Nov 2012) and the international theological conference on Vatican II and the New Evangelization (held at and organised by Leeds Trinity, June 2012). The conference featured high profile speakers from church and academy including Prof Susan Wood, Marquette University, USA and Fernando Cardinal Filoni, Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples. The residential conference drew an attendance of more than 200 from the local and global Catholic community – clergy, lay and academics – from all continents.

The unit has benefitted from institutional facilities and resources to support their research and their work with link organisations. Activities that have enabled impact have been supported by Leeds Trinity University in several ways:

1. The encouragement of the Catholic identity of the institution to work with churches.
2. Permission to use institutional resources (such as administrative support, use of rooms and catering services, for the Edinburgh 2010 project and WCC-related work).
3. Allowing flexibility to attend meetings and events abroad.
4. Providing facilities to host the Heaven and Earth lecture series incorporating the Eastern Christian studies seminars.

c. Strategy and plans

As a new University, Leeds Trinity is focusing on protecting and building on areas of research excellence whilst encouraging the broadening of the research base into new areas of research activity. Within this vision, we have an expectation of research impact and seek to embed impact as part of the research cycle. Research schemes funded by the institution, such as the Research Fellowship scheme, will require applicants to consider who might benefit from the research (beyond academia) and how these users might be engaged. The University however recognises that not all research will have impact in this manner and will still continue to fund such projects. The future inclusion of impact in the institution funded schemes aims to support researchers to consider the specific benefits of their research and identify particular user groups. This emphasis is evidenced by the replacement of the University's Research Committee by a Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee which will now be monitoring impact in addition to research activities. The increased work involved in creating impact will be factored into staff workload planners and flexibility in subject teams (for example rearranging or covering teaching responsibilities) will be encouraged. The Marketing and Communications team will be more involved in research projects from the beginning so that research findings can be disseminated effectively to targeted audiences at any appropriate point. Though many staff are 'impact literate', the institution will focus on staff development to ensure that all research active staff are fully versed in impact and how this can be created.

Impact template (REF3a)

To support impact from research in the future, the unit will seek to achieve the University's strategy of embedding impact into the research process. Individual staff members will, in each research project, identify potential beneficiaries of the research. This identification process has initially begun. Owen's recent project on 'Indigeneity, memory and representation of the Beothuk of Newfoundland' (culminating in a workshop on 19 June 2013) funded by the British Academy, helped support the profile of first nations artists in St John's, Newfoundland. Kim's research area in evangelisation and inter-cultural Christian theology contains relevant messages to the churches for the future of Christian mission and Christianity as a global religion. Mealey seeks to develop further links with CAFOD related to her research on moral theology. Hunt is actively engaged in her current Research Fellowship with evaluating responses to issues concerning church-state relations within Eastern Christianity populations as divergent as New York and Moscow.

The current strategy used during the REF assessment period was to respond to invitations from institutions whilst also proactively seeking opportunities to engage. It has provided the unit with a flexible and natural method of communicating research findings and influencing decision-making. The unit therefore intends to continue with such activities while also identifying potential beneficiaries at the earlier stages of the research process. This will enable involvement of such groups at key points in projects and that staff members can target key messages from the research appropriately. To support this communication activity, staff will receive training in the use of social media, which will enhance effective dissemination of their findings. The unit also plan to identify sources of research income related to collaborating bodies, especially Catholic sources (in line with the institution's identity and ethos). This will be supported by the appointment of a Research Officer to provide institutional support for grant application. It will also be facilitated by establishing a research centre, the Centre for the Study of Evangelization, within Theology and Religious Studies. Having impact through research will be at the heart of this centre as it will bring together academic research staff and local and global church bodies as identified user groups and beneficiaries of research specialisms at Leeds Trinity.

d. Relationship to case studies

The selected case studies provide illustrative examples of how the Theology and Religious Studies unit have had impact on, firstly, the policies of international religious organisations and secondly, on the personal and professional development of practitioners and those interested in spirituality/meditation. The case studies reflect the reach of our impact – from an ecumenical international context to a local community based one. The first case study focuses on the impact a body of research had on global discourse on theology of mission across the world's churches. Kim has developed a model of doing theology by global conversation which was put into practice in the Edinburgh 2010 project and a pneumatological framework for mission theology which has shaped the new World Council of Churches (WCC) statement on mission and evangelism. Her involvement illustrates the unit's approach to partnerships with other non-academic organisations as such invitations are accepted and subsequently supported by the institution through its Catholic identity, research leave schemes and flexible approaches to working to allow attendance at meetings abroad. Kim's involvement with the WCC has resulted in significant impact on ecumenism and mission at a global level.

The second case study focuses on the personal and professional development of practitioners and those interested in spirituality/meditation. Hunt's research explores the practice of spiritual direction within the Desert Fathers and its meaning for modern Eastern Christians who can find themselves in a very challenging situation in terms of the engagement between politics and church. Hunt works with groups of lay Christians and others who meet to study and practice spirituality in the face of a predominantly secular world, where psychology has largely replaced spiritual insights.