

Institution: St Mary's University College

Unit of Assessment: 33: Theology and Religious Studies

a. Context

This submission comes from the staff of Theology and Religious Studies (hereafter 'The Unit') presently within the School of Education, Theology and Leadership (prior to September 2013, the School of Theology, Philosophy and History), of St Mary's University College, Twickenham (hereafter 'SMUC'). In consonance with the University College's founding principle to contribute to the life of the Catholic Church in this country, much of the research activity and impact of the Unit is dedicated to promoting and preserving the highest standards of intellectual integrity in this wider arena. Consequently the research of staff in the Unit and their impact generally concentrates on the life of the Church in the UK and beyond and how intellectual rigour can be brought to the pressing problems facing faith communities at a challenging time. This is demonstrated in the two impact case studies: Prof Jones' work with end-of-life and beginning-of-life issues which includes intervention on the Parliamentary, National and International arena and Dr Bullivant's work which is presently informing the Catholic Church's response to the Clerical Sexual Abuse Crisis. All Unit members are committed to developing world class research which is then used to inform and influence the public arena, especially in the area of faith concerns. The outstanding work of Prof Jones and Dr Bullivant clearly demonstrates the overall level of excellence with which this is being pursued within the Unit.

b. Approach to impact

Following St Mary's successful submission to RAE2008 in UoA 61 (Theology, Divinity, and Religious Studies) it was decided to establish two new research centres: a Centre for Spirituality and Society and a Centre for Bioethics. These have both been established: The Centre for Bioethics and Emerging Technologies (CBET, established 2008) and The Centre for Initiatives in Spirituality and Reconciliation (InSpiRe, established 2010). Both Research Centres comprise research-active staff, graduate assistants and early career researchers from St Mary's as well as other international scholars (for more information on the activities of the Centres see www.smuc.ac.uk/inspire and www.smuc.ac.uk/cbet). As well as promoting world-class research in their specialist areas they both disseminate their research through the wider impact of international conferences, research days, seminars, blogs and newsletters. Mention must also be made of the newest Research Centre to be established at St Mary's: the Centre for the Social-Scientific Study of the Bible (CSSSB) established by Prof Chris Keith in 2012. Although more recent than the other two Centres, CSSSB is already making a big impact on an international level, including Prof Keith's blog: "The Jesus Blog" (www.jesusweblog.com), started on 1st August 2012 and presently averaging about 1,000 "hits" per day (it has had over 6,000 in one day). Its total page-views total up to the end of the submission period was 338,000, an impressive indication of the world-wide

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influence of Prof Keith's work. In addition, members of the Unit are continually influencing the agenda of public debate and of policy makers by appearing on television and radio programmes, at public fora and by writing position papers, and popular pieces, further examples of which will be found in the Impact Case Studies. The promotion of events likely to produce the dissemination of research – a pre-requisite for producing impact - has been actively supported through the use of the University College's communications and marketing department.

A good example of this approach is seen in the work of Dr Pia Matthews who is a visiting lecturer at St John's Seminary Womersley. Here she has designed the Bioethics course to work alongside the formation of the seminarians so that its focus is theological and pastoral as well as bioethical. As a pastoral outreach she also gives seminars and talks to parishes and other audiences on a variety of topics. These include talks on spirituality and end of life care (Catholic Medical Society, SW London, 2010 also DABCEC Crawley, 2011); on Christian marriage and family life (New Malden, 2011; Theology of the Body Conference, St Mary's 2011); on disability (The School for Profound Education, Tadworth, 2011); 6th Form conferences on bioethics, focusing on the natural law (St Mary's 2011, 2012); on a theology of dignity and the human person, and living well (Worth Abbey 2012); on spirituality and dementia (DABCEC Crawley, 2012); moral theology, social relationships, family life, healthcare issues (Balham, 2013) and a reflection on ministry (Sutton Deanery, 2013). She is also a member of the National Catholic Disability Network, a think tank for the CBEW, with special focus on the theology of disability and was invited to speak at the Disability Forum for the Paralympics in July 2012 with the title 'Playing a different game with the language of the body'.

c. Strategy and plans

Having successfully established three Research Centres over the last assessment period the Unit is now preparing for the next five years by promoting the work of The Aquinas Centre, formerly of the School of Education. The Centre will be developed both as a 'think tank' with a network of national and international scholar-consultors, but also as a nodal point harnessing practical insights and robust data from educators and formators in the field. In this regard, St. Mary's has an enviable alumni teacher network and hundreds of research-trained postgraduates who have graduated through programmes such as the Postgraduate Programmes in Leading Innovation and Change, Catholic School Leadership and Pastoral Theology. In addition, Dr Paul Rowan, a contributing editor to *Gilbert*, the official magazine of The American Chesterton Society, having been awarded his Doctorate in Chesterton studies at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, 2012, will be working with Dale Ahlquist, the President of The American Chesterton Society, to establish a Centre for Chesterton Studies at St Mary's.

All five potential centres will continue to promote impact by using traditional and contemporary media to disseminate the results of the world-class scholarship fostered in the Unit in user-friendly ways, drawing on our close relationships and established networks with our audiences and potential users. As with the case of Dr Bullivant's *Redeeming Power* project outlined in the case

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study and Prof Keith's current Research Grant Proposal for circa £900,000 to the AHRC for a project entitled 'The Reception of the Jesus Tradition in the First Three Centuries', much of this work will be undertaken in collaboration with major international HEIs such as the University of Edinburgh (UK), Durham University (UK), Humboldt Universität (Berlin), University College Dublin (Ireland), KU Leuven (Belgium), Opole University (Poland), Christ University (Bangalore) and Trnava University (Slovakia). In terms of impact, such a range of collaborating HEIs will of course lead to a greater range of audiences/users/beneficiaries of the research.

d. Relationship to case studies

The Unit has chosen the work of Dr Bullivant and Prof Jones for its Case Studies because they both exemplify the way in which scholarly research at St Mary's affects wider national and international arenas concerning the relationship to faith and society. In responding to the Catholic Clerical Abuse scandal of the past decade Dr Bullivant, and his colleagues at InSpiRe, have been able to offer a 'safe place' for academics, theologians, church officials, psychologists and lawyers to address the issues arising from these terrible events and establish ways forward for the church and society. As a result of St Mary's respected status both within the Roman Catholic Church and the British university network, we have been able to offer a unique nexus for these conversations to take place. We believe Dr Bullivant's work is of outstanding international importance and this has recently been confirmed by the decision of the National Catholic Safeguarding Committee of the English and Welsh Bishops to commission Dr Bullivant to conduct a 10-year review of its statistics on abuse allegations, and to make recommendations for a revamping of its reporting and data collection procedures.

Similarly, Prof Jones' work highlights how academic research on beginning of life and end of life issues can inform public debates at the very highest levels. During the submission period Prof Jones has authored 26 responses to consultations by parliament, regulatory or professional bodies and other organisations and on nine occasions has spoken in parliament and/or given oral evidence to parliamentary committees. Three times in this period, guidance drafted by Prof Jones has been sent to every Catholic parish in England and Wales (over 2,500 parishes). He has also authored a number of public letters to journals such as *Nature* (30 June 2011) and appeared on numerous occasions in the national media (for example on Newsnight, the Today programme, Beyond Belief) and has been cited in debates in parliament (22 Oct 2008: Hansard Column 411). The work of both scholars demonstrates how the world-class research at St Mary's has had a major impact on public and professional debate in the area of Bioethics and Corporate Social Responsibility within the Church sector over the past five years, both on a domestic and international scale.