

Institution: University of Wales, Trinity Saint David

Unit of assessment: UOA33 Theology & Religious Studies

a. Overview

Theology & Religious Studies has been a core activity of UWTSD from its inception. Since the granting of the Royal Charter in 1822, St David's College Lampeter (latterly University of Wales Lampeter) has nurtured expertise in Theology, while its merger with Trinity College Carmarthen in 2010 to create UWTSD consolidated teaching and research in Theology, Religious Studies and Islamic Studies. The Welsh Government's 2010 strategy to concentrate HE provision in given centres of excellence resulted in further subject consolidation with the transfer of research active staff from Bangor University. Since 2012 UWTSD has further amalgamated with Swansea Metropolitan University. Subject provision is offered mainly in Lampeter and Carmarthen with elements of Islamic Studies now available in Swansea. In this context the School of Theology, Religious Studies and Islamic Studies (TR SIS) maintains a national and international profile which compares well with other departments of Theology and Religious Studies in both Wales and the United Kingdom.

b. Research strategy

Whereas the eight research centres which constituted University of Wales Lampeter's Research Institute for Theology and Religious Studies (RITRS) are no longer extant (see RAE 5a 2008), TR SIS has consolidated its research remit under the headings of Biblical Studies (**Ehrensperger, O'Kane, Read-Heimerdinger, Williams**), Historical and Theological Studies including Welsh religious history (**Morgan, Pope**), and Religious and Islamic Studies (**Bunt, Schmidt, Warrior**) thus combining areas of expertise developed formerly at both Lampeter and Bangor. With the merging of the School of Theology and Religious Studies at Bangor with UWTSD in 2010 under the Welsh Government/HEFCW approved network department arrangement, the Bangor tradition of Welsh language scholarship in Biblical Studies and Historical Theology now flourishes within TR SIS and has strengthened UWTSD's mission of being a bilingual university, nationally rooted and globally connected. The research plans of the school are imbued with the remit of the Learned Society of Wales (2010) 'to demonstrate, celebrate and disseminate the excellence of Welsh research and scholarship in an international context'.

Following a process of restructuring in 2013, the school has reconfigured its research aim in such a way as to ensure that the traditional subject boundaries (Biblical Studies, Religious Studies, Islamic Studies) become less compartmentalised and more fluid, the smaller number of staff ensuring that future research plans and events can be consolidated in a more integrated and harmonious way. The research aspirations for TR SIS for 2014-19 reflect the priorities of the research strategy of the university as a whole, engaging with similar or parallel research projects elsewhere in the Faculty of Humanities, while being in accordance with the strategic policy of the Welsh Government relating to a thriving bilingual culture. In these aspirations, the school will emphasise its distinctiveness and focus on three main projects, namely:

- **The TR SIS Interfaith Project.** Initiatives already begun in this area (research seminars on Muslim-Christian dialogue in 2011; a series of seminars in Interfaith Week in 2012 and accompanying exhibition of material in the Roderic Bowen Library) will be expanded to include a range of different faith communities. The school will provide an academic and research dimension to the work of Interfaith Wales, the forum aimed at building a culture of mutual understanding and respect between the different faith communities living in Wales, and with the wider secular society (www.interfaithwales.org). TR SIS has arranged to work with Interfaith Wales to ensure the impact value of its research in a rapidly developing multicultural Wales. Cooperation will be sought with European partners in order to secure

external funding.

- **Mapping Minority Religions.** In the light of radical demographic and cultural shifts and in response to the Welsh Government's policy initiative on inter-faith activity (see 'Inter-Faith Activity and Grassroots Faith Communities in Wales' www.wales.govt.uk/docs/grassroots_interfaith), this project aims to map, analyze and evaluate emerging patterns of belief within Wales, the UK and beyond. It continues initiatives from recent years (e.g., the establishment of a network of European scholars working on Afro-American religions in Europe, research in Skanda Vale and about Muslims in the UK, and also the presence of minority religions in Wales). The project will expand a new research initiative to look further at the growing number of people declaring in the national census to have no religion (initial papers have been already presented at two conferences in 2013). The outputs of this project include an online database (open access) for scholars and stakeholders working on Wales that will be launched at a conference at UWTSO in 2014.
- **The Biblical and Theological Legacy of Wales.** This project, which reflects bilingual expertise within the school, seeks to celebrate the distinctive legacy of theology and biblical scholarship within Wales and will make a valuable contribution to Theology and Biblical Studies internationally. Initial work has already been done on the Welsh-born NT scholar C. H. Dodd (T. Thatcher and C. H. Williams, *Engaging with C.H. Dodd on the Gospel of John* (CUP, 2013)), on the Welsh contribution to the reception of the theology of Karl Barth (D. D. Morgan, *Barth Reception in Britain* (T & T Clark, 2010) and on Protestant Nonconformity (R. Pope, *The T & T Clark Companion to Nonconformity* (T & T Clark, 2013)), while the successful AHRC project 'Imaging the Bible in Wales' has shown the potential for further research in the link between theology, Bible and visual culture (M. O' Kane, *Biblical Art from Wales* (Sheffield, 2010)). One of the major outputs of this project will be a conference on the contribution of another Welsh-born (and Welsh-speaking) scholar, W. D. Davies, to New Testament and Jewish studies, along with a substantial conference volume.

Each of these projects reflects the strategic aim of UWTSO, namely that primary research is conducted in Welsh academic and cultural contexts but in categories that reflect current and international trends in the subject area. Other considerations in identifying the three projects are the distinctive and unique collections in the Roderic Bowen Library which are relevant to all three topics; the vast collections of the National Library of Wales (whose material in these areas remain largely unexplored); ensuring that the profile and track record of current staff can be affirmed and continued, and that any future change in staffing/new staffing can be accommodated within their remit.

A priority for TRSIS is now to secure grant funding for these three strategic projects. It will be supported in this by the Research and Development Office (formed in 2009) and through the University's policies and structures as set out below. This renewed focus will build upon existing projects and our strong links with organisations such as The Muslim Council of Wales and Interfaith Wales (as set out in REF3A).

c. People

i. Staffing strategy and staff development. UWTSO has clear systems for staff progression based on research achievement, which had been recognised in TRSIS with several awards since 2008, including those made to **Warrier** who has been promoted to the position of Associate Professor in Religious Studies, **Bunt** to Reader in Religious Studies, **Ehrensperger** to Reader in Biblical Studies, and **O'Kane** to Professor of Biblical Studies. Appointments and promotions are made centrally by the Staff Development Committee (SDC). TRSIS has also taken full advantage of the facilities provided by UWTSO to support departmental research, including those outlined in The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The Research Development Office (RDO) for example organises training sessions based on

the Vitae Researcher Development Framework (RDF). We expect to see strong research profiles develop from several members of TRSIS staff through the university's measures to develop the careers of researchers, which includes a strong support and mentoring system for early career researchers; an activity profile and appraisal system which is in place to ensure that each member's targets and objectives are reviewed annually; the school-based staff development budget for external training events or programmes which can be match-funded from the Staff Development Committee's (SDC) central budget; and a centrally funded sabbatical leave scheme which is open to all members of the academic staff. UWTSO has also made research leave available through its QR financed Pump Priming Research Fund. Since 2008 **Pope, Schmidt, Warriar** and **Williams** were granted sabbatical leave during 2011-12 as was **Hoff**, whose impact case study has contributed to the present submission. In addition UWTSO has a policy of actively promoting staff to seek grant funding for research leave and fellowships. Participation in research networks is supported by the university's conference attendance policy while the central support to develop knowledge transfer and research impact is described below. Support for research networking has been awarded in TRSIS since 2008 for travel in Brazil, China, Croatia, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, UAE and the US. Likewise, relevant calls are circulated by the RDO and staff are supported in the application process. Since 2008 staff have been successful in winning awards from the AHRC (**O'Kane, Warriar**), the Wellcome Trust (**Warriar**) and the British Academy (**Ehrensperger**). In each of these schemes the university adheres fully to staffing policies with regard to equality and diversity, disability, and dignity at work in all research-related areas and is IIP (Investors in People) accredited. Impact equality assessment data undertaken on research active staff (under the auspices of our REF E&D Code of Practice) reveals a parity of opportunity between staff with characteristics protected under the 2010 Equality Act. In addition UWTSO's Strategic Equality Plan (2012-16) requires it to assess whether its policies help to achieve equality for research students and staff from all protected groups.

ii. Research Students. Since 2008 TRSIS has awarded 159 PhDs with a current cohort of 98 doctoral students. Recruitment remains strong in this area. Since May 2011 UWTSO has established close collaboration with the University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies in research degree provision including the sharing of staff development and student training events as well as joint research degrees supervision. In line with QA guidelines, research active staff are currently supervising, in the majority of cases, the maximum permissible research students. The school works hard to integrate its sizeable cohort of PhD students into the university's research culture. With support from the RDO, PGRO and Research Committee, the school holds research seminar series, workshops, colloquia and conferences to which research students are invited. These offer good opportunities to present papers and obtain training in presentation skills. In turn the Research Degrees Committee encourages and monitors initiatives organised by or for research degree students. Research projects often involve research students directly (e.g. the 'Imaging the Bible in Wales' project) enhancing the learning experience and providing opportunities to work alongside academic staff on research. TRSIS has continued its series of research seminars according to specific themes. The 2007-8 theme, 'Methodology in Theology and Religious Studies', resulted in the publication of the volume *Theology and Religious Studies: Methodological Convergence or Divergence?* (London: T & T Clark, 2008) while the 2008-9 series, held in conjunction with the Alister Hardy Research Centre, was entitled 'Religious Experience in Different Traditions'. Despite significant restructuring in both school and university, the series continued in 2009-10 with a new edition and launch of the volume *Verdict on Jesus* (London: SPCK, 2010) which included three new chapters by current and former members of staff. In 2011-12 the theme was 'Religion, Culture and Identity' and 2012-13 'The Past in the Present', with each series being organized and coordinated by TRSIS' Research Seminar Working Group. These seminars are attended by postgraduate students and staff, experienced and early career scholars as well as visiting academics from UK and overseas institutions. All sessions are podcast and available to distance learning students on VLE. During 2011-12 a Welsh language postgraduate seminar

series was inaugurated jointly between the Faculty of Humanities, TRSIS and the School of Welsh and Bilingual Studies in order to afford PhD students who intend submitting their thesis in the Welsh language the opportunity to share their findings. Beyond the school, all PhD students are actively encouraged to attend in the university's rolling RDF programme, where they are engaged with CPD activities alongside early career research staff throughout the faculty. Such a 'levelling' experience has worked well to raise the esteem and aspirations of late stage PhD students as they conclude their studies and plan careers. Feedback is generated through the annual Postgraduate Student Experience Survey.

Monitoring, support and equal opportunities. With such a high number of research students, TRSIS works very closely with central support officers and committees to ensure quality assurance. Applications to research degrees are made to the Postgraduate Research Office (PGRO) who liaise with the school's supervisory teams to ensure that applications follow a strict centrally-controlled admissions process. This is underpinned by a robust admission policy and international attendance policy. As a high proportion of TRSIS students are from overseas, the International Office takes responsibility for checking applications for compliance with immigration regulations. In addition a centralised system for ethics approval is embedded in the application process and annually throughout the candidature of each research degree student. The composition of all supervisory teams has been reviewed and brought in line with the new regulatory framework which follows UWTSD's central regulations. A robust annual monitoring process is in place with a central board to review and monitor the performance of all research degree students. The annual monitoring form seeks feedback on a wide range of issues from staff and students. All students whose performance is not classified as 'satisfactory' are very closely monitored, and all monitoring forms are analysed annually. The RDC sees all full research proposal, transfer, and annual monitoring forms, thus obtaining clear central oversight of the progress made by a student. The RDC also receives statistical data monthly, a statistical cohort, examination board, annual monitoring, and admission analysis annually, and supervisory capacity data on a quarterly basis. UWTSD's Academic Quality Handbook and associated student guides clearly outline supervisor and student roles and procedures, as well as key policies with regard to complaints processes, admissions, ethics and assessment. In this regard UWTSD's Strategic Equality Plan (2012-16) requires TRSIS to assess whether its policies and activities help to achieve equality for students and staff from all protected groups and whether they have, or could have, an adverse impact on such groups. The Learning Support Team within Student Services likewise provides comprehensive support for students at all levels with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) with comprehensive one-to-one support for disabled students. Confidential counselling is available to research students through the well-established professional counselling service which operates within the ethical framework of the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Strategy for generation of research income. During the funding period research in UWTSD has been organised around multidisciplinary research clusters, which in each case cut across faculty and school units on the Lampeter, Swansea, Carmarthen and London campuses. These reflect both existing and emergent areas of research excellence, and respond to government, research and funding council priorities. The humanities subjects are currently organised around Heritage (incorporating Archaeology, Environmental Sciences, Anthropology, Geography, History & Literature); Theology, Religious and Islamic Studies; Classics; Art, Media and Design; and Celtic Studies. Sitting above this structure UWTSD has also developed two overarching strategic and external facing units, the Heritage Academy and the award winning INSPIRE (Institute for Sustainable Practice and Resource Efficiency). These provide essential knowledge transfer mechanisms to interface between the scholarly research clusters and end-users of research. Research staff in TRSIS are developing plans to work on research themes under these priorities, including inter-disciplinary projects on the biblical and theological heritage of Wales; minority religions emerging patterns of belief; and several under

the theme of interfaith relations in Wales and a wider international context.

Income will be sought in conjunction with:

- **The Roderic Bowen Collection.** Lampeter campus' Roderic Bowen Collection and Library contains many unique manuscripts and artefacts, many of which are second only to the British Library in London. It houses the Special Collections of the UWTSD, our oldest printed books, manuscripts and archives and is one of the principal resources for academic research in Wales. Acquired over the last 200 years, largely by bequest and donation, the Special Collections include over 35,000 printed works, eight medieval manuscripts, around 100 post-medieval manuscripts and 69 incunabula. Over the last four years, TRSIS has mounted exhibitions to highlight much of the biblical material and some of the religious travel literature. It is our plan to seek external funding to mount major projects in the future. Collaborative research projects will be submitted to funding sources such as JISC and the AHRC (with whom UWTSD has already worked on funded projects with the archive). A senior faculty member has recently been appointed to direct this activity
- **Interfaith Dialogue** (cf. The TRSIS Interfaith Project and Mapping Minority Religions, section b above). In November 2012, TRSIS organised a series of open lectures in conjunction with Interfaith Wales that attracted substantial numbers from the general public. In future we have plans with the Muslim Council of Wales to extend the scope and the venues for these talks and we will seek public funding in conjunction with the Muslim Council of Wales to finance the cost of more extensive lecture series that promotes interfaith dialogue. Collaborative research projects led by **O'Kane** will be submitted to funding sources such as the AHRC as well as the EU under the seventh Horizon 2020 societal challenge of Europe in a Changing World. UWTSD is also in talks with charitable trusts (The Carnegie Trust and Prince of Wales Charities) regarding collaborative project funding. Further work, building on **Warrier's** research, will examine discourses of Hinduism in the UK and the ways in which the language of religious freedom and the representational politics implicit in state-backed multiculturalism leads to particular ways in which Hinduism comes to be constructed in Britain. The focus will be on Hindu representational groups, the recently-launched Hindu faith schools in London and Leicester, issues of citizenship, and public controversies relating to Hindu rights. A further project, led by **Schmidt**, will explore the changing religious landscape in Brazil, with particular reference to atheism.
- **Security.** Building upon **Bunt's** research and the activities outlined in his REF3B case study, TRSIS will prioritise collaborative research projects developed with funding sources such as the ESRC (policy), the AHRC (connected communities) as well as the EU under the seventh Horizon 2020 societal challenges of 'Europe in a Changing World' and 'Secure Societies'.

Operational Infrastructure. In order to provide appropriate administrative support for such research and knowledge transfer projects, two offices have been set up since 2008: the Research Development Office (RDO) and Postgraduate Research Office (PGRO). Across the four campuses the RDO and Commercial Services has ten full-time members of staff; the PGRO has two full-time members of staff. With named and specialised faculty representatives, the RDO provides considerable support in the development, management and ongoing delivery of a significant portfolio of collaborative research and knowledge transfer projects with business, government, public agencies and the third sector in Europe and beyond. Since 2008 the university has run more than 100 funded projects and numerous commercial contracts. For example: EU Intereg (7), JISC (3), ESF (9), 29 Welsh Government (29), HEFCW (37), EU Rural Development Programme (2), AHRC (6); British Academy (2), Arts Council (4), EU, Erasmus (3), POWIS (3), ERDF (4), EU, Leonardo (1), Charity, Trusts and Foundations (7). The value of such projects since 2008 has been in the region of £27,000,000. The PGRO is responsible for the enrolment, admission and support of research degree students throughout

their time at the university, including the submission and examination of theses. It is managed by the dean of the Faculty of Humanities and reports to the Research Degrees Committee. In close consultation with the supervisory teams and programme coordinators, the PGRO offers support to all research degree students throughout their candidature, but especially during the important processes of their study including applications, re-enrolment, annual reviews, transfer from MPhil to PhD, extension requests, submission of thesis and viva examinations. Central forms and processes are managed by the PGRO to oversee these processes.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

Collaboration. To ensure that it makes a distinctive and significant contribution to the research area, TRSIS has built up strong national and international partnerships while staff membership of professional and academic bodies will be sustained over the next funding period. In line with its research strategy, members have engaged in joint research projects including the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL) international research group on Pauline literature, the consultation on Paul and Judaism and the Roman through History and Cultures project (**Ehrensperger**), its John, Jesus and History group (**Williams**), its Bible and Visual Culture seminar (**O'Kane**) and its NT Textual Criticism group (**Read-Heimerdinger**); the Associacio Biblica de Catalunya (Spain) and the 'Marc multilingue' group (based in France), preparing an 'editio maior' of Mark's Gospel (**Reid-Heimerdinger**); the Colloquium Ianneum (**Williams**); the 'Religious Secrecy as Contact: Secrets as Promoters of Religious Dynamics' project at the University of Bochum and the Rhetorik als Kulturelle Praxis at of the Peter Szondi Institute for General and Comparative Literary Sciences (FU Berlin) (**Hoff**). Staff members have collaborated with various faith organisations such as the Muslim Council of Wales, Interfaith Wales (**O'Kane**); Doctrinal Commission of the Church in Wales (**Hoff**); Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education; Chatham House; Brookings Institution; Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies; Royal Society of the Arts /Tony Blair Faith Foundation (**Bunt**); and a number of museums and galleries nationally and internationally. The school has also developed interdisciplinary collaborations with universities throughout the UK and abroad including the Interdisciplinary Research Group 'Media of Transcendence' at the Catholic Academy in Berlin (**Hoff**); the Barth network at the Centre of Theological Inquiry, Princeton (**Morgan**) and AHRC-funded research network on 'The Public Representation of a Religion Called Hinduism' (**Warrier**).

Peer review and esteem. TRSIS is committed to ensuring that it plays its part internationally in peer-reviewing processes. It is well represented internationally in a range of professional and research organisations. These include RCUK positions which include regular peer review of proposals (e.g. membership of AHRC panels, peer review college and advisory boards); the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Science; and the REF sub-panel on Theology and Religious Studies. As part of this strategy research staff accept leadership positions in various professional societies, often as a means of maintaining the research profile of the school; for example, the executive committee of the British New Testament Society. As part of its research strategy, TRSIS contributed to a number of HEI consultancies to further aspects of impact. Examples of this include advising on the content of the *HEFCE Report: International Approaches to Islamic Studies in Higher Education*; co-consultant for CADW's: 'Pan-Wales heritage interpretation plan: Celtic saints, spiritual places and pilgrimage. Staff have likewise acted as external examiners for doctoral dissertations throughout the UK, Ireland and beyond including the Universities of Aberdeen, Aberystwyth, Birmingham, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Catholic University of Australia, Chester, Dundee, Durham, Edinburgh, Essex, Lancaster, Leeds, Leuven, Liverpool Hope, London School of Theology, Marburg, Melbourne, Oxford, Sheffield, St. Andrews, Stirling, Sydney, and University College Dublin.

Editorial positions. TRSIS is also represented on a large number of editorial boards, believing that such appointments further the school's research aims. All aspects of Biblical, Theological and Religious Studies are represented. Currently school members hold the editorship or joint

editorship of: *The International Journal for Hindu Studies*; *The Journal of Beliefs and Values*; *The Journal for the Study of the New Testament*; *The Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*; *Neutestamentliche Entwürfe zur Theologie*; *Religion Compass*; *Studia Traditionis Theologiae*; and *The Welsh Journal of Religious History*. Composite volumes being edited by staff members include *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Bible and Ethics* and *The T&T Clark Companion to Nonconformity*. Members have served, or are currently serving, on the boards of the following publications: *Biblical Interpretation*; *Biblical Reception*; *DISKUS*, the *Journal of the British Association for Study of Religions*; *Eurasia: National Spiritual Traditions* (Moscow); *INDIANA*, the *journal of the Ibero-American Institute*; *The Library of New Testament Studies*; *Radical Orthodoxy*; *Revista de Estudos da Religião* (São Paulo); *Studia Traditionis Theologiae* (Brepols), *SYNESIS*. Along with the above, staff are active in peer review of publications and proposals, acting on behalf of journals and imprints such as Blackwell; Brill; Cambridge University Press; Equinox; *European Review of History*; *European Journal of History*; Four Courts Press; *International Journal of Systematic Theology*; *Journal of Beliefs and Values*; Oxford University Press; Routledge; T&T Clark; *South Asian Studies*; *Studia Celtica Fennica*; University of Wales Press; Wipf & Stock; and Yale University Press.

Research leadership. Members of the school have been active throughout the period in organising numerous national and international conferences and colloquia. In several cases TRSIS members were the primary organisers, for example: *Interpretation of Spirit Possession* (2008); 'The Bible in Wales' (2008), the British Association for the Study of Religions (2009); British New Testament Society (2010); 'John's Gospel and Intimations of Apocalyptic' (2010), 'The Life and Work of Thomas Charles 1755-1814' (2013), and, in other cases, school members were co-organisers or on the organising committee of a wide range of international conferences. Research leadership and esteem has likewise been acknowledged through invited conference presentations and keynote speeches at: the University of Helsinki (2008); Villanova University, Pennsylvania (2008); Suleyman Demirel University, Turkey (2009); opening lecture at the Society for Old Testament Studies (2010); the Institut für Evangelische Theologie, University of Osnabrück (2010); the National Chengchi University, Taiwan (2011); the South African New Testament Conference (2011); the University of Zagreb, Croatia (2012); le Centre d'études de l'Inde et de l'Asie du Sud, Paris (2012); the British New Testament Society (2013) and the newly established Colloquium Ioanneum (2013). TRSIS's research on digital Islam has been presented, among other places, at the University of North Carolina (2009); the University of Colorado, Boulder (2010); the World Congress of Middle Eastern Studies, Barcelona (2010); the University of Tokyo (2011); the Royal Society of the Arts/Tony Blair Faith Foundation (2011); the Centre for the US and Europe of the Brookings Institution (2011); the Italian Institute of International Affairs (2011); the Emirates Centre for Strategic Studies and Research & Global Futures Forum (2012); and Chatham House (2012).

Recognition. During the period, members of the school were acknowledged by their peers or by the organisations to which they had made a valuable contribution. Examples include election to fellowships: Royal Historical Society; Learned Society of Wales; visiting professorship: École Des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (Paris) and Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo (Brazil); Tuohy Chair of Interreligious Studies at John Carroll University (USA); British Academy mid-career fellowship. Awards include: the City of Barcelona Prize for the best Catalan translation of 2009; monograph shortlisted for the 2010 American Academy of Religion awards for excellence in the Study of Religion; University of Wales Ellis Jones Griffiths Prize (best factual Welsh language publication between 2007-10).