

<p><b>Institution:</b> York St John University</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 33 (Theology and Religious Studies)</p>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>York St John University has a vibrant and developing research community across its various disciplines. The institution’s key objective for research includes an undertaking to ‘engage with and influence users of research, locally, nationally, and internationally’ and thereby makes explicit the university’s commitment to the pursuit of research which has the broadest possible impact.</p> <p>Within this UoA the development of research activity with national and international reach and significance is an essential part of our strategy. The diverse research represented in this UoA is part of a long tradition at York St John University of working collaboratively with individuals, groups and organisation outside the academic sector, as demonstrated in the two impact studies submitted as part of this submission. The case studies demonstrate how and why our research has impacted on a diverse range of communities, professional bodies and organisations from the local to the international and enabled various types of interaction and dialogue between them.</p> <p>There are three main areas of research in UoA 33: Theology in Public Life, Religion in Society and Practical Theology. The work of each area is overseen by academics at either Professorial or Readership level. The external user groups for these three areas are: Religious leaders and their faith communities; Policymakers; NGO personnel and Ministerial training practitioners; and the general public. We use our research through collaboration and dialogue to assist these external users groups in responding to the issues and needs which they encounter through their professional and personal lives. Therefore, our research is designed to aid and assist them with the development and enhancement of their work in the wider society. In turn, as researchers, we continue to learn from our external users about their reality which is an essential part of ensuring that our research is relevant to the wider society.</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>The majority of staff in this UoA have established collaborative and durable relationships with key external partners outside of the academy. Examples include the following:</p> <p><b><i>Collaborative Partnerships</i></b></p> <p>Professor Sebastian Kim works with Younknak Presbyterian Church (YPC), South Korea on public theology and peace-building particularly in the Korean peninsula. The main impact of the work on religion, peace and reconciliation has been in assisting Christian communities, and NGOs in South Korea to reflect on their praxis of religious contributions to peace-building and reconciliation between North and South Korea. In conjunction with this work Kim established the International Conference on Peace and Reconciliation (ICPR) which was held in Seoul in 2010. One of the key aims of ICPR is bringing together religious leaders, policymakers, NGO professionals and academics. A further ICPR is planned in Seoul during early 2015.</p> <p>Professor Pauline Kollontai’s research on Religion, Peace and Reconciliation involves working with groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Israel. Kollontai delivered workshops in 2011 and 2013 for Beit Yaziv, an educational organisation in Be’er Sheva, Southern Israel, working with established school teachers and counselling professionals on the topic of religion, education and democracy. The workshops focussed on the use of art in building understanding and trust between children and young people from Israeli Arab, Bedouin and Jewish communities with the aim of contributing to the development of cross-professional inputs into the school curriculum. Also in 2010 and 2013 Kollontai was invited by an inter-religious consortium to participate in a series of workshops for educationalists and local policy makers designed to enable reflection and review on the use of two models of Peace Education curriculum which are being piloted in some schools in post-conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina.</p>

Dr Andrew Village's use of empirical evidence as a basis for theological reflection, showing how lay people use and interpret the Bible, has involved his acting as consultant to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) for their *Bible in the Life of the Church* (BiLC) Project. This project was commissioned by the Anglican Communion in the wake of the global controversies related to homosexuality and other issues that threatened the cohesion of the Anglican Church. The impact of the research on the BiLC project has been to help members of the ACC working group recognize that without some attempt to reach 'ordinary' members of the denomination the project would have been in danger of projecting a view of Scripture that is wholly derived from the educated, informed and interested sections of the hierarchy. Village has also acted as co-investigator of the *Church Times* national survey aimed at investigating attitudes, beliefs and behaviours of lay and ordained members of the Church of England.

Dr John Williams's research on Theological adult education and approaches for developing this in Ministry Training is being undertaken in collaboration with the Regional Training Partnerships (RTPs) of the Church of England and the Methodist Church. As a result of this collaboration some of the RTPs are reviewing how to develop and embed Theological adult education in Ministry Training.

Dr Ann Christie's research on Ordinary Theology has involved working with a number of church leaders and members of churches in Yorkshire. Christie's work has helped faith groups to understand how clergy and lay people engage with Scripture, leading to developments in the theory and practice of preaching in some of these churches.

### **Online Presence**

Professors Kim and Kollontai and Dr Victoria Nesfield (a very new early career academic who is not submitted in this UoA) engage with a wider public audience through the Web-hub of the Centre for Religion in Society, which was launched in May 2013 and where materials (academic and visual) relating to their research, the ICPR series and the Ebor lectures are available. This Web-hub also provides materials identified through their research which are considered to assist a wide range of individuals, groups and official bodies in their work on issues around theology and public life and religion, peace and reconciliation.

The web-hub uses Google Analytics to track online traffic and engagement with the website. Statistics from May to October 2013 show that in the first six months of the Web-hub there have been 1,272 visits to it, and the unique page views indicate that we are receiving repeat users. In the two months of its existence the Twitter account has also begun to attract a small but growing number of users.

### **c. Strategy and plans**

One of the University's key strategic objectives for 2012-2015 is to 'engage with and influence users of research, locally, nationally and internationally.' In UoA 33 members of the team will continue to build upon and enhance this aspect of our research. Staff will continue to be supported in this regard by allocation of time through the workload planning model and through financial support for activities which require travel. Our strategy will continue to emphasise the importance of potential impact when undertaking research by enhancing existing partnerships and establishing new links with religious leaders, faith communities, NGOs, policy makers and media professionals. This strategy includes:

- Expansion of our existing non-academic networks: (i) religious leaders and religious organisations working in conflict and post conflict contexts; (ii) practitioners in the area of peace-building and conflict resolution; (iii) professional bodies and government organisations working on the role of religion in Public Life; education and training bodies – secular and religious.

**Impact template (REF3a)**

- Sustaining the work of the cross-fertilisation of ideas between the general public and academia through the Ebor Lecture Public Lecture Series and the subsequent publication of these lectures presented in a style appropriate for general public readership.
- Enhancing the dialogic work between religious leaders, NGOs, policy makers, media and academics in the Korean Peninsula through the International Conference on Peace and Reconciliation and through a series of consultations in Israel on Religion, Education and Democracy; and in the Palestinian Territories on Inter-religious Dialogue and Peace; and in China on Theology and Public Life.
- Enhance and expand the on-line presence of the Centre for Religion in Society.
- Further development of the work with the Anglican and Methodist churches and new work with non-conformist churches on Theological Adult Education in ministry training.
- New work with established Chaplains in the armed forces and public sector on theological education and training for Chaplaincy.

As part of its research strategy, the Faculty continues to delegate budgetary responsibility to the Professoriate, who also are UoA leads, to ensure that funding decisions accurately reflect the needs of individual researchers. Recognition of the importance of impact is evident in the proactive approach to the distribution of available funds where evidence of potential impact of the research is embedded in the application process. Financial support is also available for staff to undertake further development and training which enhances their skills in working with external groups and organisations. Staff are encouraged to be active members of non-academic bodies – professional and voluntary – enabling on-going engagement with the day-to-day reality of the work of these bodies and providing the opportunity for our staff to review and reflect on this in relation to the currency of their research to wider social audiences.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

Our approach to impact reflects our institutional values as a supportive, creative, critical and reflective community with a commitment to extending the external contribution and impact we make nationally and internationally through our research. The research submitted in the case studies is congruent with the University core value to be a transforming institution in terms of contributing to transformation of life-chances and experiences through our research. The case studies we have submitted demonstrate this through the relevance of the research to practice; to transforming thinking; and to achieving personal and professional betterment.