

<p><b>Institution:</b> York St John University</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 33 (Theology and Religious Studies)</p>
<p><b>a. Overview</b></p>
<p>The pursuit of internationally recognised research is one of the major strategic objectives of UoA 33 and this informs all aspects of our work. Staff are engaged in individual research projects and in a range of collaborative projects within the UK and throughout the world.</p> <p>Our research activity ensures that undergraduate and postgraduate teaching is informed by cutting edge research and debates informing both the theoretical and professional aspects of our programmes. UoA 33 has a growing number of research students who have the opportunity to be involved in teaching activities and are offered the option of studying a postgraduate module designed to develop their skills as future researchers and academics.</p>
<p><b>b. Research strategy</b></p>
<p>The Research Strategy of the Faculty, which informs the UoA 33 research strategy and derives from the University's research strategy, focuses principally on putting in place structures to:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enable academic staff to develop research knowledge, understanding and skills</li> <li>• provide opportunities for researchers to explore critically their own work and the research of others, both within the University and through external links and networking</li> <li>• provide appropriate staff development in research and research supervision and grow the numbers of staff with sole supervisor status</li> <li>• ensure that research aspirations, qualifications and performance play a large part in academic staff Performance Development Reviews</li> <li>• support an academic promotions system that gives due recognition to outstanding research contributions</li> <li>• facilitate research productivity through effective use of scholarly activity and opportunities for research leave</li> <li>• establish a research culture in which the contribution of research to the quality of teaching is recognised and celebrated</li> <li>• increase numbers of doctoral students.</li> </ul>
<p>Successful implementation of this strategy has been seen as an essential prerequisite for the University to achieve the Research Degree Awarding Powers for which is submitted an application in August 2013.</p>
<p><b>Committees</b></p>
<p>The Strategy is overseen by a Faculty Research Committee (FRC) that meets four times per year. It is Chaired by the one of the Faculty's Professors and its membership comprises the Dean, Faculty Research Professors, the Heads of Department and self-selected members of academic staff. The FRC reports directly to the Faculty Management Group. The FRC works in collaboration with the University Research Committee to further develop and monitor mechanisms and practices to promote staff research and respond to relevant external opportunities, and works also with the University's Research Degrees Sub-Committee on issues of quality assurance and enhancement regarding research degrees. A Faculty Research Ethics Committee reports both to the FRC and to the University's Research Ethics Committee with a brief to support staff in maintaining high ethical standards in all research projects and to facilitate wider discussion of research ethics.</p>

### ***Integration of Research***

A workload model and annual planning cycle supports staff to maintain their research through release from teaching and administrative/management responsibilities. Institution-wide and Faculty-specific funds are ear-marked to support this. Specific activities which stimulate the research activity of staff include:

- A programme of regular Faculty research seminars
- Staff Research Mentoring
- Meetings of research groups
- Seminars led by experienced researchers from research intensive institutions
- Financial support for academics to attend national and international research conferences and staff development workshops.

### ***Research Groups***

UoA 33 staff are involved in researching across a diverse range of topics using both qualitative and quantitative methods that relate to the three main research areas: (i) Theology and Public Life; (ii) Religion and Society; (iii) Practical Theology. Academic staff in these research areas have established forums to facilitate opportunities for further development of the research of individual researchers and to enhance collaborative activities through publications, funding applications and conference organisation.

### ***Appointment of Honorary Visiting Professors***

Currently UoA 33 has eight honorary Visiting Professors from Universities across the UK. Their involvement includes working with academic staff to develop research projects generally and, in particular, to support new researchers to publish their research and to apply successfully for research funding.

## **c. People, including:**

### **i. Staffing strategy and staff development**

#### ***Academic Staff in UoA 33***

There are 16 members of staff in UoA 33 (11 full-time and five part-time). Currently, of these 16 staff, 10 have doctorates and a further three are registered for doctorates.

#### ***Staffing Strategy and Staff Development***

First, since January 2002, being research-active has been an essential criterion in the person specification for all academic posts in the Faculty of Education and Theology. This means that doctorates are always looked for as a desirable criterion and no candidate is short-listed unless her/his application demonstrates willingness and potential, with appropriate support, to develop further as a researcher.

Second, opportunities are provided for all staff to develop their skill and understanding of research, as highlighted above (such as in-house seminars, staff development workshops, support for staff to attend and give papers at conferences).

Third, we assist academics to develop as researchers through supporting and funding their registrations for research degrees. This commitment to research degrees is valuable in enhancing the climate in which discussion and debate about research is embedded in normal discourse within the Faculty.

**Environment template (REF5)**

Fourth, in 2009 the Annual Research Conversations (ARC) system was set-up as part of the Performance Development Review process within the Faculty. Every member of academic staff is required to provide an overview of research activity on an annual basis with a view to the identifying of various forms of support for each staff member. Staff in UoA 33 discuss this with a panel, normally consisting of the Faculty Dean, and the two Professors in UoA 33. The conversations contribute to individual and institutional professional work planning.

Fifth, all researchers are encouraged and supported to attend relevant Research Supervisor courses and other relevant workshops run both by the University of Leeds and at YSJU. Since 2008 the number of UoA 33 staff successful in their applications for University of Leeds 'sole supervisor' status has increased significantly, enabling us to supervise all research students in-house.

**Faculty Research Administrator**

To support further growth and enhancement of research across the Faculty a strategic decision was taken by the Faculty Management Group to allocate funds to employ a part-time research administrator in 2009. In 2010 this post was increased to a full-time position due to increased research activity and growth in the recruitment of doctoral students.

**Research Fellow and Research Associate**

The subject area includes a part-time academic who works as the Managing Editor of the *International Journal of Public Theology* and also Chairs the Faculty Research Ethics Committee. In December 2012 additional University funding was secured to appoint a full-time Research Associate to support the development of the work of the Centre for Religion in Society (CRiS). Further external funding has been secured, in the first instance for a period of three years, to further fund this post as from September 2013.

**Research Assistants**

External money secured since 2009 for a variety of research projects being undertaken by UoA 33 staff has enabled the employment of four Research Assistants (RAs) on fractional contracts. The work of the RAs includes assisting with data collection; transcription; general proof-reading for edited books; funding applications; and symposium and conference organisation. The RAs play an important support role which enables academic staff to increase their research activity in terms of publication outputs, dissemination of their work and applying for research grants. The contribution of RAs to the subject area in terms of their own academic knowledge is recognised and normally RAs are encouraged to develop their own research expertise through further postgraduate study.

**ii. Research students**

Currently we have 13 doctoral students in UoA 33, an increase of eight since RAE 2008. In November 2011 we were successful in securing funds from St Christopher's Trust for a part-time PhD scholarship. We are seeking a modest expansion in the number of research students, both home and international. Our research students are encouraged to participate in the research culture of the Faculty through opportunities to attend and present at the Faculty research seminar series; to participate in the University's annual research students' methodologies conference; and to attend and present at national and international conferences. As part of their regular training plan review by research supervisors, doctoral students are encouraged to attend a range of courses and workshops, variously available at York St John University, the University of Leeds and the University of York, addressing different stages and aspects of being a doctoral student.

**c. Income, infrastructure and facilities****Income:**

Since 2008 we have secured significant external funding for research activities. This includes:

## Environment template (REF5)

- £30,000 from Younknak Presbyterian Church, Republic of Korea, for the first International Conference on Peace and Reconciliation (ICPR) held at York St John University, August 2006.
- £27,000 from Younknak Presbyterian Church, Republic of Korea, for the second ICPR held at University of California, Los Angeles, July 2009.
- £122,000 awarded by Younknak Presbyterian Church, Republic of Korea, for the third ICPR held in Seoul, November 2010.
- £51,606 AHRC Early Career Fellowship Award.
- £42,000 awarded by Younknak Presbyterian Church, Seoul, Republic of Korea, for the fourth ICPR in November 2012, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Israel.
- £21,000 from St Christopher's Educational Trust for a part-time PhD scholarship.
- £5,000 from the Biblical Creation Society for a study on Creationism.
- £5,000 from the Anglican Consultative Committee for the Bible in the Life of the Church Project.
- £1,000 from North of England Institute for Christian Education and the Living Theology Today Project.
- £28,800 from Younknak Presbyterian Church for administrative staff support for the ICPR conferences and related activities.
- £45,000 from York Minster, Churches Regional Commission, The Order of Carmelites, The Methodist Church and York Institute for Community Theology for The Ebor Lectures on Theology and Public Life which are delivered by prominent scholars, church and religious leaders and public figures both from the UK and overseas.
- £54,000 - from Younknak Presbyterian Church for a three year Research Associate post attached to the Centre for Religion in Society
- £6,000 – from SPRI, Sweden, for consultancy on religion, fundamentalism and politics.
- £25,000 - from Younknak Presbyterian Church, Republic of Korea for the fifth ICPR to be held in Seoul, Republic of Korea in 2015.

### ***Infrastructure and facilities***

The importance of having a physical location within the Faculty to support research was established in 2010. This provides desks and IT equipment for Visiting Professors and Fellows and for Research Assistants; with 'hot desks' for doctoral students and a small seminar room which has a video-conferencing suite.

Staff in UoA 33 have access to internal money devolved from the centre of the University to sustain and further develop their research activities and outcomes. The writing of bids for external funding is supported by the University Research Office and a Financial Accounts Manager. There is a culture in UoA 33 that colleagues who have been successful with securing external research funding work alongside those who are less experienced. The Faculty Research Administrator regularly up-dates staff about funding opportunities through e-mail.

In setting budgets, priority is given within the Faculty to maintaining and enhancing capacity to those areas of research in UoA 33 that have national and international significance and those that may have world leading potential. The Faculty has utilised funds to provide access to IT software and equipment relevant to the various research needs of UoA 33 staff in the gathering and processing of quantitative data; effective storing of research sources; and indexing of books. An allocation of monies from the Faculty's Library budget has been earmarked for purchasing sources relevant to the areas of staff research in UoA 33. Support is given to ensuring that staff research profiles, publication and other data are kept up to date through the work of the Faculty Research Administrator and the development of a University-wide central research database. Administrative support for UoA 33 staff involved in doctoral supervision is provided by the Faculty Research Administrator. The academic support is provided by the two Professors in UoA 33 and the Reader. Overseeing the quality of the academic experience for research students is the responsibility of the

**Environment template (REF5)**

University Research Committee which delegates day to day oversight to the University Research Degrees Sub-Committee which works in consultation with the Faculty Quality and Standards Committee and the Faculty Enhancement and Student Experience Committee.

As a key part of the implementation of the University Research Strategy 2007-2012 a new University Research Students Centre came on-stream in 2008. This incorporates ICT facilities, informal social learning spaces, a seminar room and areas designed to encourage intellectual interactions between research students of different disciplines and their research staff colleagues. This enhances the academic environment for research students by fostering collegial support and research rigour and the informal dissemination of progress on research projects and findings, and by promoting cross-disciplinary networking. The Research Office provides support to research students and staff. The Deputy Registrar: Research provides central support to Faculties in the management of their research students' and staff projects, as well as liaison with the research degree awarding body, the University of Leeds.

**d. Collaboration or contribution to the discipline or research base**

A large part of the research in UoA 33 involves collaboration on a range of levels. These include UoA 33 staff undertaking research activities:

- within the team (e.g. edited books, Sebastian Kim, Pauline Kollontai, Greg Hoyland & Richard Noake) and on cross- faculty research activities (e.g. UoA 33 and Arts Faculty, international conference on Cosmopolitanism, Religion and Public Life and publication of a book);
- with scholars nationally (e.g. joint publications of Andy Village with Leslie Francis (University of Warwick)); and Ann Christie with Jeff Astley (Durham University);
- with international scholars through conferences (e.g. International Conference Series on Peace and Reconciliation and subsequent publications; a series of workshops organised in collaboration with the Centre for Public Theology and Public Issues, University of Edinburgh, and the Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame, Indiana);
- with national and international scholars through academic journals. For example: Sebastian Kim and Esther McIntosh are Editor and Assistant Editor of the *International Journal of Public Theology*; Chris Maunder is Co-editor of *Maria: A Journal of Marian Studies*; and Andy Village and Pauline Kollontai are members of the Editorial Boards of *Rural Theology* and the *Religious Education Journal of Australia* respectively.

Recognition of the contribution which UoA 33 staff are making to the discipline is evidenced as follows:

Professor Sebastian Kim's contribution to the subject area is recognised through a number of international roles as Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Public Theology*, Executive Committee member of the *Global Network for Public Theology*, Chair of the Editorial Board of the *Cambridge Encyclopaedia of Christian Ethics*, and Fellow of *Royal Asiatic Society*. As one of the case studies shows, Kim's research involves work with religious leaders, policy makers, professionals and the wider public in various contexts within the UK and across the world including South Korea, China, South Africa, Israel and USA. Kim's contribution to the area of public theology is recognised within Europe, North America, Africa and East Asia and evidenced through the large number of invitations to be a Key Note speaker at conferences. One recent example of this is the invitation in 2012 for Kim to undertake a series of public lectures at five universities (Peking, Tsinghua, Renmin, Beijing Language and Culture, Capital Normal) in Beijing and in 2013 he was invited to undertake a series of lectures at two universities (Fudan and Tongji) in Shanghai. Arising from his visit to Shanghai is the request for his book, *Theology in the Public Sphere* (2011), to be translated into Chinese and he has been invited to advise Tongji University in the establishment of a Centre for Religion in Public Life.

Professor Pauline Kollontai's contribution to the subject area has received growing international recognition in various ways which include: the award of an International Visiting Fellowship on Peace, Community and Identity in 2008 from Meiji University, Japan; appointment as a Member of the International Editorial Advisory Board for the *Religious Education Journal of Australia* (2010); and appointment as Associate Member of the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV). Acknowledgement of Kollontai's contribution to the subject of religion, peace and reconciliation is shown through invitations to speak at a number of international conferences and events. For example, delivering a series of seminars on various aspects of religion and peace to Faculty and students at the Presbyterian College and Theological Seminary, South Korea (2009 & 2012); to school teachers and counselling professionals at Kaye Academic College of Higher Education, Israel (2012 & 2013); and speaking at the International Conference on Muslim-Christian Dialogue at University of Bethlehem (2013). In 2010 and 2013 she was invited by a consortium of inter-religious grass roots organisations in Bosnia-Herzegovina to participate in a series of workshops for educationalists and local policy makers.

Dr Andrew Village's use of empirical evidence as a basis for theological reflection, showing how lay people use and interpret the Bible, has resulted in many opportunities for national and international dissemination of his work through conferences, consultancy and publications. Recognition of Village's work is demonstrated in a number of ways which include: acting as consultant to the Anglican Consultative Council (ACC) for their *Bible in the Life of the Church Project* (BiLC); as a member of the Editorial Boards of *Rural Theology* and *Soma*; as a Peer Reviewer for a range of Journals, e.g. *Journal of Anglican Studies*, *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, *Journal of Empirical Theology*, and as a 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.

Other outputs in this UoA include the work of Dr John Williams on Theological adult education and approaches for developing this in Ministry Training. The contribution of William's work is recognised through the use of aspects of his work for Theological adult education carried out by the Regional Training bodies of the Church of England and the Methodist churches. The work of Dr Ann Christie on Ordinary Theology has led to her being invited to participate in a joint research project with Professor Jeff Astley, North of England Institute for Christian Education, Durham University. Evidence of Dr Esther McIntosh's contribution to the subject of Theology, Philosophy and Ethics is seen in invites to speak at the John Macmurray Fellowship annual conference, Oxford (2012); and the Philosophy of Education Society GB conference, University of Dundee (2012). McIntosh was elected onto the Executive Committee, Society for the Study of Theology (2008-2011); and Member of the Editorial Board for the peer reviewed Philosophy and Religion book series. As a result of her particular expertise on John Macmurray she was invited in 2012 to participate in a joint inter-disciplinary research project with Prof. Don MacDonald, Seattle Pacific University on, 'Macmurray, systems theory and family therapy.' Finally, Dr Alice Collett's area of expertise is in early Buddhist texts and also the lives of early Indian Buddhist women. Recognition of Collett's work is seen through the award of an AHRC Early Career Fellow Feb- Dec 2012; as Member of the Academic Advisory Board for the journal 'Asian Literature in Translation'; and a Committee member of the UK Association for Buddhist Studies.

Overall, large number of articles, monographs, edited books and research reports have been produced over the last few years for a wide readership. This, alongside our key involvement in a series of international conferences, high-profile public lectures, membership of international journals and research bodies and collaboration on research projects testify to the vitality of our research. This is evidence that external bodies and individuals recognise the important contribution we can make to the discipline through an approach which celebrates the diversity of our world's religious and spiritual belief systems through rigorous, academic study that is underpinned by an attitude of respect and empathy, promoting encounter and dialogue by observing and engaging in context-based practical experiences.