

Institution: University of Roehampton
Unit of Assessment: 33 Theology and Religious Studies
<p>a. Context</p> <p>Theology and Religious Studies at Roehampton is a unit comprised of seven scholars. Our impact is driven by a strong emphasis on issues of social equity and the social impact of religious and non-religious belief, and is derived from the range of our research. The main beneficiaries of our work are religious communities, charities, NGOs, local authorities, and HEIs.</p> <p>More specifically, both Beattie and Power are high-profile public intellectuals whose research has had an impact on an international scale. Beattie's research has generated significant public discourse, particularly around academic freedom and magisterial/hierarchical church authority within Catholicism (see case study). Her research has benefitted a range of individuals and organisations, including a number of interest groups relating to homosexuality and gender in Catholicism specifically. Beattie has provided theological analysis and feedback to management and policy-makers at CAFOD and <i>The Tablet</i> that furthers the influence of her research (see case study). Power's research has similarly influenced public discourse on issues of sexuality, gender and authority, philosophy, ethics and human rights amongst broad public audiences through her high-profile publishing and media work.</p> <p>Our direct engagement with religious communities has had a range of subsequent impacts on diverse groups, including organisational impact. The ministerial theology group is a new research focus for the unit, and has a strong impact profile through collaborative research with religious communities, particularly in the experiential and congregational dimensions of religion. Rogers' most impactful research concerns the development of a bible hermeneutics course, h+, which is influencing engagement with the bible on an international scale, and has enhanced service provision of the Bible Society, and a range of other NGOs. It has also influenced course design and content in an HEI context. Rogers' more recent research project, 'Being Built Together', examined black majority churches, and has influenced local authority policy in the London Borough of Southwark. Undertaken in collaboration with the Southlands Methodist Trust, a charity of the Methodist Church in Britain, this research has also influenced local church leaders. Burgess is developing his profile in this area, and has already begun engaging with Pentecostal church leaders.</p> <p>Significant impact on religious communities is enhanced in a local context. Through building on the University's religious foundations and chaplaincies (Anglican, Roman Catholic, Methodist and Muslim) and our close relationship with the Southlands Methodist Trust, which provide a direct interface and relationship with local religious communities, we have achieved impact. We facilitate this through open lectures and events focusing on social justice and inter-faith dialogue. The impact with the greatest reach and significance in this area is coordinated through the Digby Stuart Research Centre for Religion, Society and Human Flourishing (DSRC). The DSRC, directed by Beattie, is a publicly engaged forum for research and awareness raising about the Catholic tradition and its intellectual, cultural and social engagements. For example, Beattie and Calderini have contributed to debates for local communities on female ritual religious authority in events hosted at the university, which were supported by the Roman Catholic Church and Methodist Church, and involved Muslim faith leaders. Calderini's research on Fatimid women has had an impact on teaching, including at the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, which trains teachers and missionaries, extending the reach of her impact on religious communities.</p> <p>b. Approach to impact</p> <p>We have been active in enhancing the impact of our research, extending its reach and increasing its significance. We have engaged with the primary users of our research to effect change in two ways: 1) by engaging with religious communities, NGOs, charities and organisations directly, and; 2) by communicating our research insights to both specific audiences and the wider public. Given the nature of research carried out in our unit and the beneficiaries it involves, our approach has also included a commitment to raising awareness of, and providing a solid framework for, ethical considerations around engagement and impact.</p> <p>The links between research, engagement and impact are at their strongest in the unit when we have adopted formal external roles. In working directly with religious communities, these roles have enabled our research to shape community strategies and projects. Examples range from the</p>

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Three Faith Forum (Beattie, Calderini) to the Anglican-Roman Catholic International Commission. Beattie also acts as an advisor to the Theological Advisory Group for the Catholic Agency for Overseas Development (CAFOD), where her research has influenced the 'Live Simply' campaign in particular. Similarly, Burgess has collaborated with metroZones, which incorporates the Center for Urban Affairs, on an academic and artistic project entitled *Global Prayers: Redemption and Liberation in the City*. This interface with the public and also religious communities is facilitated further by public lectures, symposia, events and workshops. In addition, these events often target NGO and human rights groups. Since 2008 we have organised more than 60 such events to reach wider audiences, including: an HIV/AIDS Symposia, held in May and November 2009, which led to the establishment of the group Positive Catholics, for British Catholics affected by HIV/AIDS; the 'Women, Authority and Leadership in Christianity and Islam' conference, held in September 2012, which led to Beattie being invited as guest speaker at a women's day organised by the Christian Muslim Forum; and the 'Wellbeing & Social Justice: Theology and the Capability Approach' symposium, held in August 2013, which resulted in invitations from cardinals to Beattie and PhD student Zampini to collaborate on developing Catholic Social Teaching in dialogue with the Capability Approach.

Researchers in the Unit have been particularly adept at communicating their research insights to reach and interact with the wider public. Beattie and Power effectively use new media to reach broad audiences and achieve impact. We also engage with the main users of our research through broadcast media, with contributions to BBC News, Sky News, Al Jazeera, BBC Radio 2 and 4, for example. Popular publications enable us to reach the wider public, for example, Power's *One Dimensional Woman* (Zero Books, 2009) was aimed at a public audience, whilst Beattie's monographs have reached beyond the academic sphere. The dissemination of research through these publications is supplemented and enhanced by contributions to newspapers, blogs, and online publications. For example, Power has contributed to *The Guardian*, *The New Humanist*, *The New Statesman*, and blogs on feminism and gender equality regularly. Our research has also featured in news outlets such as *The Independent*, *The Telegraph*, and *The Tablet* to name just a few. This approach has subsequently solicited widespread debate, particularly in the blogosphere.

A strong example of the impact derived from the success of communicating research to wide public audiences is Rogers' impact on local policy in the London Borough of Southwark. Rogers' research on the ecclesiology and demographics of 23 black majority churches around the area of the Old Kent Road in London informed a research report, which was launched at a public event involving local policy makers, and also solicited media attention which enhanced the impact of the research. This research was disseminated further in collaboration with the Southlands Methodist Trust in public meetings in the local area, and has influenced local church leaders, including in their future planning for building and local community engagement programmes. The success of this project is influencing our strategy.

Support for impact:

Institutional resources and localised support mechanisms facilitate these means of engaging the users of our research and recording impact. In the first instance, training to support our engagement with these groups has been provided on an institutional basis since 2012. The University has commissioned localised training programmes and attendance at external events to enhance this area of our work, and more specialised training and support is offered on an individual basis. To encourage and establish good practice an impact mentor provides support to colleagues and works closely with a post-doctoral Research Facilitator in the Department to ensure the effective delivery of the engagement strategies for different projects, and the appropriate evaluation of impact; training is provided to this post-holder to ensure that she provides relevant support for impact evaluation in the unit. There is formal workload provision for impact-related work, and impact now features in departmental business plans, and is a feature of appointment/promotions criteria. In addition, there are central impact-support funds, for which we have successfully applied to support our engagement with the key users of our research, for example, a public event involving Beattie and Calderini on 'Mary and Women in Christianity and Islam'.

c. Strategy and plans

An absolute commitment to research excellence underpins, and will continue to underpin the development of our impact strategy. Overall, we aim to develop and consolidate links with existing

users of our research, and to take a more strategic and ambitious approach to engaging new users. We will achieve this by:

1) Fostering partnerships with external users that are built on a commitment to research excellence: A key feature of our impact plans relates to our strategic partnerships with key existing and future users of our research. By building these relationships, we will engage the users of our research at the inception of our projects, rather than engaging the public simply as the consumers of our research. Our plans in this area are illustrated by the establishment of a formal partnership between the University and the Southlands Methodist Trust in Autumn 2013, which will develop research that addresses questions of significance to the Church, particularly relating to organisational development, leadership and management. The partnership has created a space where theological reflection will meet practical application, and will directly influence practice across the country and policy at a national level. The partnership will build on the successful "Women, Authority, Leadership" event supported by, and the 'Being Built Together' project in collaboration with, the organisation. Particular plans for this partnership include projects on the question of diversity in leadership, particularly in relation to women and BME groups, and especially within a London context. The project will be conducted alongside the London Methodist District and with the Methodist Church's Ministerial Formation staff team, one of whom will be seconded to the University to work on the project from January 2014. The project indicates the nature of the partnership and the intention for the research to influence Church policy directly. Similar plans are being adopted in other areas of research strength, and will be facilitated by the provision of more visiting fellowships, to enhance our understanding of the communities we wish to engage, whilst the Reverend Dr Nicholas Sagovsky, Canon Theologian and Sub-Dean of Westminster Abbey, is currently a professorial fellow in the unit. The unit will also draw on the institutional provision of sabbaticals for work around impact to encourage the exchange of good practice and the consolidation of formal relationships with external partners including NGOs, churches, and charities.

2) Raising the profile of our key research strengths amongst public audiences more broadly: The successful experience in engaging different audiences with social and traditional media accumulated by staff like Power and Beattie will be pursued by other members of the Unit, with the support of the university Research Dissemination Coordinator and the Communications Department. The aim is to achieve more targeted communication and to enhance engagement with our research at public events directed at specific audiences. One instance is already visible in the positive and constructive feedback by participants of "Well-Being and Social Justice: Theology and the Capability Approach", a conference specifically targeted at academics and NGOs, including Islamic Relief and CAFOD (August 2013).

3) We will also plan for impact more effectively and target support for strategic work around its development. The Unit is already taking a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to impact through the development of a long-term impact strategy, underpinned by robust planning processes. This will enable us to take a more strategic approach to building collaborative projects by expanding Collaborative Doctoral Awards and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships. One instance is the AHRC-funded collaborative doctoral studentships with the British Museum in the 2013-15 research priority topic "Seeing the Divine".

d. Relationship to case studies

Both case studies are embedded in the wider work of research the Digby Stuart Research Centre and the Ministerial Theology Research Group. They exemplify core aspects of the Unit's approach to impact, including communicating research findings to non-academic, policy-making and practice-shaping users through events and a range of different media outlets. They illustrate the consultation between high quality research and external users, through commissioned research, advisory roles and public discourse. They also illustrate the Unit's main types of impact on public discourse by enhancing the public understanding (Beattie), on public services in regard to religious education and provision for practitioners (Beattie, Rogers) and the delivery of professional ethical and religious services (Rogers). Rogers' case study is illustrative of our recent expansion into practical theology, and both his and his work on black majority churches will inform the development of our strategy around impact in the future, as both a model for effective community engagement and sustainable collaboration with partners.