

**Institution: Lancaster University**

**Unit of Assessment: 33: Theology and Religious Studies**

**a. Context**

The interdisciplinary research agenda of Politics, Philosophy and Religion (PPR) is to explore how religion is changing in the contemporary world and what these changes mean for ethical debates and dilemmas, national and international political conflicts, and security. Given this real-world oriented agenda, we treat impact and knowledge exchange as essential parts of our research activity. All our research areas and associated centres have well-established links with a range of user communities local, national, and international, through which we are bringing benefits to society more broadly. Amongst the main such links are:

1. **Religion and Society:** PPR staff work with many religion-related organisations including Engage, Theos, and the Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury and are regularly drawn on by UK media including the BBC (e.g. Thinking Allowed, Woman's Hour), *The Guardian*, and overseas media, e.g. National Broadcasting Company (US), US Public Radio.
2. **Politics and Religion:** The Richardson Institute and Security Lancaster work with many governmental and non-governmental agencies that promote peace and security and address religious radicalisation, including Demos, International Alert, and the Ministry of Defence (MOD).
3. **Conceptual and Theoretical Issues:** PPR research on mind and mindfulness is used for health and well-being benefits by, e.g., the Mind & Life Institute and Stepping Stones Nigeria; over 40 schools, involving 600 school students, take part in our Philosophy in Schools Programme.
4. **Contemporary Ethical Debates:** The Centre for Bioethics and Medical Law works with organisations in health and biomedicine such as the NHS, Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital and the Brocher Foundation, and practitioners who use our work on economic equality include the Clean Clothes Campaign and Rosa Luxemburg Foundation.

By working with these organisations we are achieving the following main types of impact on society (numbers in brackets indicate the research areas involved):

**Enhanced public discourse and culture:**

- Enhanced media and public debate about religion (1) through the Westminster Faith Debates and media features on religion that draw on our staff, e.g. BBC's *Around the World in 80 Faiths* and *Does Christianity Have a Future?*, the latter attracting nearly 1.5mil viewers. The beneficiary is the general public whose understanding of religion's continuing relevance is significantly improved.
- Cultural enhancement (1) by way, for instance, of Department members advising on exhibitions (such as *Pilgrimage and Buddhist Art*, Asia Society Museum New York) and use of our research in tourist literature (e.g. in pilgrimage diaries in *Ottawa Citizen*), again benefiting the general public.

**Improved public policy and practice:**

- Promoting equality (1, 4): our research is helping to advance equality for religious individuals and groups, women, and ethnic and religious minorities – e.g. by documenting anti-Muslim bias in the media, which informed Engage's testimony to the Leveson Inquiry, taken up in Leveson's final report. Engage's Research Director confirms: 'the high quality research that has come out of Lancaster has been of vital importance to our policy and media work';
- Improving peace and security (2), including by improving understanding of religion amongst state officials: PPR staff have been consulted by, *inter alia*, Public Safety Canada and the MOD Strategic Trends Unit, whom we advised against categorising all conservative religious groups as 'fundamentalist' and exaggerating the threat they pose. The beneficiaries are government officials, security agencies and the publics affected by their policies.
- Improved health care (4): By, *inter alia*, playing major roles in a multi-level European intervention against child obesity and advising the Brown government against an opt-out organ donation system, staff in the Centre for Bioethics and Medical Law are helping to improve health-care and policy, benefiting medical practitioners and patients across Europe.

**Improved education** (3): PPR's Schools Programme assisted BBC Schools Radio with a forthcoming 'Philosophy for Kids' series and piloted a new approach to A-level Philosophy, adopted by EdExcel (<http://www.edexcel.com/quals/project/level3/Pages/documents.aspx>), illustrating just two ways that PPR research is benefiting school students and teachers.

### b. Approach to impact

PPR's **overall approach to impact** unites the long-standing strengths of the three former departments that it combines. Philosophy was oriented to applied work with users in biomedicine and health policy. Religious Studies had a history, going back to Ninian Smart, of impact on the school curriculum (continuing today with one Department member advising Pearson-EdExcel on reform of the A-level RE syllabus). Politics and International Relations had many embedded relationships with policy agencies, politicians and NGOs, especially in peace-building. Pooling these strengths, PPR **builds relationships with users** in these main ways:

(a) All PPR staff regularly provide consultancy and expertise for users, e.g. testimony to the Crown on drug use in religious rituals, and many staff hold ongoing roles in user agencies: e.g., one staff member is strategy director for the Terrorism and Political Violence Association, another is a consultant for Hope Street Centre Liverpool, whose director confirms: 'PPR's research on complexity provides a theoretical framework for the applied work of the centre, such as helping doctors, nurses and social care workers respond to restructuring demands within the NHS'. All staff regularly collaborate on practitioners' events and publications, e.g. authoring the context-setting chapter of Human Rights Without Frontiers' 2011 report *Japan: Abduction and Deprivation of Freedom for the Purpose of Religious De-conversion* – the key reference point for current campaigns against forced de-conversion (see <http://foref-europe.org/2013/04/12/587/>).

(b) Regular placements of our PGRs in non-HEI internships (thereby also including PGRs in our impact activities): e.g., one PGR was Policy Officer for Health Systems (2013) at the European Public Health Alliance, whose Secretary General testifies: 'our cooperation with PPR has been very useful, giving us excellent placement students and interns and enabling us to draw on PPR expertise to further our policy activities'. The Richardson Institute has initiated an internship programme that has placed more than 30 postgraduates with organisations including Engage, the Refugee Council and the MOD's Foreign Policy Centre. Our Schools Programme employs a dozen postgraduates annually as teaching assistants.

(c) As well as co-organising public events with practitioners (e.g., one PGR organised a conference *The EU and the Middle East* in Palestine with EU representatives), we organise our own public engagement and dissemination events. Examples are: the 2011 PPR Question Time event *Debating Politics and Religion*, which brought PPR staff into dialogue with Clare Short, Ziauddin Sardar, Liam Burns; Richardson Institute public Peace Lectures featuring, for one, Tony Benn (500+ attendees); a branch of the Royal Institute of Philosophy running public events at a local community centre (e.g. *Vices and Disorders* workshop, attended by NHS employees and the general public). We also allocate visiting speaker sessions to members of non-HEI organisations, such as (in 2012-3) the Daily Telegraph, Democrats Abroad.

(d) All staff engage in public events and dissemination activities including, during 2008-13, over **130** public lectures; over **150** radio contributions; over **40** television appearances; and over **50** newspaper and magazine articles written by staff. We make full use of electronic and digital media: e.g., the Religion and Society website drew **14,000** visits per month in 2012, from 58 countries; the online Faith Debates are viewed c. **2000** times weekly; radicalisationresearch.org, a new platform for disseminating religion research to policymakers and non-HEI users administered within PPR, has received 30,000 visits to date. PPR has its own twitter feed as do several staff members.

**PPR supports these activities at departmental level** through our staffing policy and promotions criteria, which take impact into account (e.g. we appointed the Rt Hon Charles Clarke as Visiting Professor of Politics and Faith, enhancing our links with politicians and policy-makers); we incorporate impact into training and review structures such as Personal Development Reviews and annual research away-days; senior staff mentor newer staff on impact; our workload model relieves individuals engaged in funded projects into which impact is built (e.g. the PI on the EU-funded I.Family intervention against obesity receives 50% relief). PPR's Impact Champion co-ordinates and advises on these activities. We provide intra-departmental funding, usually administered through our Research Incentivisation Fund (£7k annually), to support impact (e.g. we funded a conference on Turkish-Armenian rapprochement that included activists, NGO workers and policy-makers).

The **Faculty** of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) adopted a strategic approach to knowledge exchange (KE) in 2011, doubling funding, benefitting from HEIF and establishing an Associate Dean for Enterprise (based in PPR), Enterprise Officer, and FASS Business and Enterprise Centre. The Centre runs lectures ('Enterprising Academics'; one was on the Faith Debates) and

## Impact template (REF3a)

workshops for staff and PGRs to share best practice and build capacity. It funds KE Fellowships (one of our PGRs held one, on the benefits of mindfulness practice to industry) plus schemes such as the Richardson Institute Internship Programme. At **University** level planning for impact is part of research strategy: e.g., it is considered in promotions and appointments; peer feedback on impact is provided on all grant bids; Pathways to Impact awards are funded for up to £5k.

**c. Strategy and plans**

PPR's strategy beyond 2013 is to continue to embed impact and public engagement into our research activities with **clear objectives for maximising the impact of each research grouping**. For Religion and Society, our major pathway will be the 2014 and 2015 Faith Debates, which will employ a Research Associate with a public relations brief to maximise their reach. Politics and Religion will continue redeveloping the Richardson Institute by (i) expanding the Internship Programme to involve 60 PGs annually, (ii) using its new External Partnerships Co-ordinator, whose charitable sector experience has already brought the Institute 100 partners including Citizen Ink, Together for Peace, Peacewalks and Atkinsons Coffee, (iii) running annual public engagement conferences modelled on 2013's *Is Peace Possible?* Additionally, the Global Uncertainties Leadership Fellowship (2013-15) on ideological aspects of violence will include forward scans for policy makers, a 'Debating Matters' Question Time event and learning resources for teachers and young people. Under Conceptual and Theoretical Issues we will continue to expand our Schools Programme into religious and political areas, focus our Royal Institute of Philosophy events on topics of public concern, and deepen links with the Mind & Life Institute. In Contemporary Ethical Debates we will maximise the impact of major projects on the model of the Wellcome Ethics and Society project, whose advisory board will include stakeholders in reproductive health, and which will run policy briefings, media features, and practitioner workshops.

Uniting the above are our **department-wide mechanisms** to deliver impact:

- Augmenting support for impact activities by staff and PGRs, by, *inter alia*: establishing regular 'surgeries' and workshops in which senior staff mentor newer staff on impact; strategically using our Research Incentivisation Fund to fund impact activities; further involving PGRs in impact activities, e.g. by expanding our PGR internships (in and beyond the Richardson Institute);
- Broadening and deepening our links with practitioner organisations, and identifying and cultivating new partners (e.g. through visiting speaker invitations);
- Continuing to find innovative ways to engage our audiences, taking the Faith Debates as model;
- Enhancing PPR's visibility via social media;
- Building ongoing, dynamic relationships with beneficiaries into the life-cycle of funded projects, informed by, for example, the I.Family project against child obesity, which will work with stakeholders to devise communication strategies to change families' dietary behaviour;
- Learning from and sharing good practice, e.g. through the FASS Enterprise Centre, and making agile use of University and Faculty support schemes.

**d. Relationship to case studies**

Each case study illustrates certain elements of our approach to impact and how these contribute to our achieving a particular type of impact. Numbers in brackets indicate research areas involved.

'Recasting the Public Debate on Religion' (1) shows how, through consultancy work with practitioners (notably the Equality and Human Rights Commission) and by organising major public engagement events (the Westminster Faith Debates), one UOA member's research and leadership is improving UK policy on equalities law and has recast public discourse on religion in the UK and beyond, benefiting policy-makers, politicians and the general public.

'Buddhism and Women's Empowerment in Myanmar' (1, 4) shows how, through building sustained relationships with practitioners (in women's religious education in Myanmar, and NGO workers in gender and development), research by one UOA member has improved the religious and social standing of nuns in Myanmar, benefiting the country's women more broadly and also benefiting relevant civil society and development actors, in and beyond Myanmar.

'Ethics and the Care of Premature Babies' (4) shows how, through consultancy work – membership of a Nuffield Council for Bioethics Working Party – and collaboration on that Party's published report, ethical research by one (now former) PPR academic has contributed to significant improvements in health policy and care for extremely premature babies, benefiting medical practitioners as well as premature babies and their families across the UK.