

Institution: Cardiff University

Unit of assessment: UoA 33 Theology and Religious Studies

a. Context

The Department of Religious Studies and Theology is part of the School of History, Archaeology and Religion and associated with South Wales Baptist College and St. Michael's College (Church in Wales). It is structured in three research groups: *Religion in Late Antiquity*, *Asian Religions* and *Religion in Contemporary Societies*. Its research focuses on the historical study of religions and religious texts, social-scientific approaches to the study of religion and a combination of the two with the aim to develop a better understanding of religion as a human phenomenon generally and of the various religious traditions studied in this unit in particular.

The main user groups are a) members of religious groups, who may seek a more research-based understanding of their faiths, b) professionals with an interest in religion, who access the benefits of research through events disseminating research, training workshops, or advisory activity on the part of researchers, and c) the wider public, who access information through publications in print and broadcast media, or through public events.

Groups a) and b) include Christians, Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, Sikhs, Pagans and Gnostics locally and globally, professionals including chaplains and chaplaincy educators, health visitors, ministers of religion, imams, priests, monks and nuns, administrators (e. g. in the prison and health services), legal practitioners, artists, representatives of professional bodies, bankers (HSBC Islamic banking), publishers, teachers, people involved in the creative industries (actors, directors, audiences), journalists and landscape gardeners, as for example in the case of Gilliat-Ray's Islamic Gardens project. This project, in partnership with Botanic Gardens Conservation International (BCGI), links research on Islam in the UK with efforts to increase awareness among Muslims of their horticultural heritage and its presence in Britain.

The main types of impact include

- informing the public about new research outcomes through press releases, public lectures, popular pieces in the media, online activities such as blogs and video clips posted online, and the response to such activities (note for example the discussion of Baker-Brian's book on Manichaeism in blogs on Gnosticism: <http://bit.ly/QzKwO7>);
- interfaith discourse; fostering dialogue; influencing the understanding of religious traditions and practices; training professionals, informing public policy, contributing to cultural enrichment and social cohesion, producing publications and contributing to the media, publishing and creative industries (for example Johnson's translation of Kālidāsa's 'Śakuntalā' and a series of theatre productions of the play as a direct result);
- curriculum development (e. g. adoption of Johnson's translation of Kālidāsa's 'Recognition of Śakuntalā' as textbook for courses on the history of drama in South Asia, for example at the University of Texas at Austin, or of Deeg's translation of the Lotus Sutra by Soka Gakkai International: <http://www.sgi-d.org/philosophie/lotos-sutra>);
- continuing professional development (CPD) and policy development (especially in response to research published by the Islam Centre and the Chaplaincy Centre and followed up in targeted activities such as workshops, training courses and advisory roles; for example Gilliat-Ray's advisory role at the Government's 'Muslim Faith Leaders' Review' 2008/9).

b. Approach to impact

Since 2008 the unit's approach to impact has been strategic. Longstanding relationships with external audiences and beneficiaries were enhanced, while new user groups (in particular groups using the internet and social media) were identified and targeted. The approach is based on a keen awareness of the unit's location in the capital of Wales and in the region of South Wales. Contacts to regional and national media (e. g. BBC Wales), cultural centres and arts centres (e. g. Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff) but above all to religious communities, churches, mosques, synagogues and temples, have been sought and maintained, not least through the unit's association with South Wales Baptist College and St. Michael's College (Church in Wales), the latter also being the basis of the *Cardiff University Centre for Chaplaincy Studies*.

Impact template (REF3a)

Impact in the unit is approached at three levels:

- 1. At unit level** all researchers are made aware of the impact dimension of their research and of pathways to impact, as they are required to comment on it in external as well as internal funding applications. The effect of this, especially on externally funded projects, is evident. For example,
- in November 2009 the AHRC funded 'History of Genealogy in Early South Asia' project led by Hegarty and Brodbeck combined a public lecture event with a public conversation on their research project and a performance by 'India Dance Wales';
 - the AHRC funded 'Harivamsha project' (since 2011) led by Johnson and Brodbeck is making a work of world literature accessible to the wider public through a series of public readings;
 - in November 2012 Brodbeck spoke on BBC R4's programme 'In Our Time' on items related to his research in both projects.

All research groups and centres develop pathways to impact from research conducted by their individual members by facilitating consultancy roles, readings, book launches, press releases, blogs and other web-based forms of communication.

2. At School level a dedicated 'Impact Team' enhances these efforts: The School's Director of Innovation and Engagement (I&E), who is also a member of the unit, supports and coordinates impact activities, contributes to University policy and collaborates with the School's Directors of Research to link I&E and research towards impact. A 0.8FTE administrator works with individual researchers, groups and centres to communicate research outcomes through events, in-house publications, social media and press releases to generate newspaper articles and in some cases radio and TV broadcasts. Generating evidence of impact is a recognised priority and the School uses questionnaires, follow-up communications and conversations to maximise the effects of its efforts. The School also has a dedicated fund of £8k p. a. to support impact-related activities.

One of the projects benefitting from this fund was Johnson's translation project of 'The Master Madam', thought to be the oldest known Sanskrit comedy. It was performed in Cardiff in March 2012, for the first time ever outside India, and brought together professional actors, designers, musicians, the translator, students and an audience from the local community.

3. At College and University level the Humanities Schools have launched 'Humanities Connect', a forum promoting Humanities research at Cardiff. With support from the University's Research and Consultancy Division, 'Humanities Connect' provides opportunities for knowledge exchange including support for impact-related initiatives, for example through REACT, the AHRC funded Knowledge Exchange hub for the creative economy. In addition, a University-wide 'impact manager' coordinates support for impact activities, offers public relations advice and helps to collect and archive impact-related data. Impact-related activities and public engagement are included in the University's appraisal and promotion criteria and staff are offered support and encouragement to undertake impact-related training, for example in the areas of knowledge exchange, use of traditional and social media and the development of evaluation strategies.

c. Strategy and plans

The unit's aim is to incorporate all its researchers into a culture of impact and to correlate all its research with external beneficiaries.

To achieve this goal the unit will strengthen and develop existing internal structures such as writing impact into all proposals for internal research grants, research leave, workload allocation, appraisal and training. The unit will also use external structures such as applications for external research grants (AHRC) and the involvement in knowledge exchange programmes such as REACT and 'SHARE with Schools', the latter bringing together research students with undergraduates and High School students, to further strengthen its impact infrastructure.

Appraisal, training and workload modelling will also be used to ensure that staff are adequately trained and supported for their impact activities, that these activities are recognised in terms of staff time and level of achievement, that staff-time is set aside and that staff are given the opportunity to explore new pathways to impact.

The unit will seek to maintain existing relationships with external bodies (such as BBC Wales, India Dance Wales, the Muslim Council of Wales, Soka-Gakkai International, the Church in Wales, Saint David's College, Cardiff) and explore and pursue opportunities for future impact case studies (for example with the NHS, MoD and HM Prison Service in the area of Chaplaincy Studies).

Impact template (REF3a)

Supported by dedicated funding from external research grants the unit will increase and sustain funding of impact-related activities and work towards creating strong case studies for the future. Specific examples of this strategy, where concrete plans are already being worked out, include

- the AHRC funded *Harivamsha Project* (Brodbeck, Johnson, 2011-2014); this has a dedicated impact fund to place the main output of the project, a translation of the classic Indian work *Hari's Line*, in a widely accessible and affordable format (OUP 'Oxford World's Classics'), to make the work more accessible through a series of public readings, and to celebrate the publication of the work in a launch event at the Cardiff 'Chapter' Arts Centre, projected for May 2014;
- the *Story of Story* project (Hegarty, AHRC, 2013-2016) has an impact strategy similar to that of the *Harivamsha Project*; it will build on its existing relations with India Dance Wales, which will add to public reading and publication events with classical Indian dance performances;
- Johnson plans further events in relation to his translation work in the area of classical Sanskrit drama. With support from a dedicated departmental research impact fund he plans a series of thirty hours of rehearsals, culminating in four public performances of 'Nala', a dramatization of one of the most famous stories from the Indian epic, the 'Mahabharata'.

The unit is also strategically embedding impact in its research student culture. Impact is addressed in the application and management of PhD projects and training of PhD students, especially in the context of the new AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership agreement in collaboration with, among others, Bristol and Exeter.

Similarly, Early Career Researchers receive strategic additional support at School and University level, especially through training, to enhance media skills, and opportunities to make contacts and connections with external beneficiaries and institutions (for example with the MoD in the area of Chaplaincy Studies).

d. Relationship to case studies

The selected case studies illustrate the unit's strategy and approach to impact. They emerge from the unit's three-pronged research group-structure (*Religion in Late Antiquity*, *Asian Religions* and *Religion in Contemporary Societies*) and represent impact-related initiatives and activities that are typical for this unit.

Case Study 1: Deeg's work with *Soka Gakkai International Germany* illustrates how impact in this unit is often generated by researchers' responses to specific needs as expressed by user groups with which they have already established links. Deeg's academically informed translation activity, which he took up at the express invitation of *SGI Germany*, can be compared with activities in other groups in the unit such as King's translation of Syriac texts and their use by Syriac Christians, or Baker-Brian's translation of Manichaean texts and their use by Gnostic groups. Case studies such as Deeg's can be developed from research undertaken in any research group in the unit including, for example, *Religion in Contemporary Societies*, where Malik's work on the present day reception of Quranic law in the UK is based on direct study of the Arabic texts. The fact that Deeg's research primarily benefits a specific religious group, too, is typical for the research in this unit. Other groups that benefit from research in this unit in a similar way include Hindu, Muslim, Jain, Sikh, Jewish and Christian communities as well as 'new religions' (work by Samuel, Child, and Baker-Brian is aimed at the latter). Not all research is text-based. Child, for example, studies film and ritual practice.

Case Study 2: Gilliat-Ray's case study on Muslim chaplains demonstrates a longstanding and close commitment by the unit in this area of Practical Theology. Gilliat-Ray's case study is closely related to the work of Todd on Chaplaincy, where a similar, albeit also quite distinct, kind of impact is being achieved, for example through the work of the *Cardiff University Centre of Chaplaincy Studies*, in training chaplains and in influencing the curriculum development of chaplaincy training in the UK and worldwide (note for example Todd's emerging work on training school chaplains in Hongkong, or the established work with British military chaplains).

Both the existing case studies and the examples mentioned in this template exemplify how the unit plans and implements its impact strategy, how researchers, both individually and collaboratively, work with external bodies and a wide variety of beneficiaries in view of benefitting those specific user groups as well as general non-academic audiences and the wider community, regionally, nationally, internationally and globally.