

<p><b>Institution:</b> Liverpool Hope University</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> Theology and Religious Studies (33)</p>
<p><b>a. Context</b>          Liverpool Hope University, an ecumenical Christian foundation with origins dating to 1846, has had at its heart a commitment to serving the community across its history. This is articulated in its mission to contribute to the “educational, religious, cultural, social and economic life of Liverpool, Merseyside, the North-West and beyond.” The impact of Hope’s teaching and research activities is noted in the ESRC/HEFCE January 2010 report “The Impact of Higher Education Institutions on Regional Economies” (Paul Benneworth), which states that “what Hope had achieved was in its own way peerless”. This institutional context is supplied to show how thoroughly an ethos of ‘making a difference’ beyond the academy infuses the university; the approach of Theology and Religious Studies in relation to impact reflects this culture. The progressive expansion and internationalization of research in the unit since RAE 1996 correlates to a similar expansion in the reach and significance of its impact.</p> <p>As outlined in REF5a, research in the unit falls into four primary categories: Christian theology, historical and contemporary; biblical studies; study of religion (incorporating sociology of religion, study of Islam, Buddhism, Christian-Buddhist relations and Jewish theology); and philosophy, religion and ethics. The unit hosts two Centres--the Centre for the Applied Study of Muslims and Islam in Britain, and the Andrew F. Walls Centre for the Study of African and Asian Christianity. Led by Professor Ron Geaves and Professor Daniel Jeyaraj respectively, aspects of the Centres’ work form the basis for the case studies.</p> <p>The main user groups and beneficiaries are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. faith-based groups, lay and leadership, from Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist communities;</li> <li>b. members of the public curious regarding religious matters and engaging via, for example, media coverage and attendance at public events;</li> <li>c. institutional bodies dealing with religious issues, policies and communities—specifically in the domains of (i) education and (ii) security. This relates particularly to the research of Ron Geaves and Professor Kenneth Newport.</li> <li>d. archivists. This user segment relates to the work of Daniel Jeyaraj and is detailed in REF3b.</li> </ol>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b>          Impact across the period has developed in a range of ways. The unit’s two Centres have since inception specific remits to develop activities which engage and benefit the public beyond academia thus achieving the stated ethos of the Department. Individuals seek, as appropriate, to take their research outside of academic contexts; impact has also emerged organically, for example where media interest in particular research has generated public interest and, through dissemination, caused cultural understanding to be enriched. Impact has in other cases been generated through user invitation. Examples of all these modes of engaging users and generating impact can be found below. Institutional support for these activities includes: (i) staff development on the developing impact agenda; (ii) provision of facilities for hosting public events; (iii) facilitating engagement through funding staff travel and accommodation where necessary; (iv) support from Research Facilitator (appointed 2010) in developing external funding applications including pathways to impact (v); subsidising and underwriting conference organization; (vi) support from the Conference Office in organizing events; (vi) corporate communications support in press and publicity. Key mechanisms by which user groups are engaged include:</p> <p><b>Invitations to inform a group through public speaking and workshop leading or participation.</b> For example, Elizabeth Harris prepared a response to the keynote address by Dr Aloysius Pieris s.j. at the 2009 World Council of Churches Consultation: Christian Self-Understanding in the Context of Buddhism (Wattala, Sri Lanka). Steven Shakespeare was invited to speak about his research at the annual service of the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals, Durham 2009; he was thereafter appointed patron of the Society in 2010. Publication of his <i>Prayers for an Inclusive Church</i> in 2008 also led to invitations, including to a national day conference of the Inclusive Church movement in January 2009, and invitation to contribute resources to support Inclusive Church’s 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations in 2013. Peter McGrail was Keynote Speaker (three plenary sessions plus three elective workshops) at the Summer School of the Society of St. Gregory, August 2013. This is the national association for Church musicians. He</p>

presented on the Vatican II Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, drawing upon and expanding sections of his recent monograph; the workshops exposed the audience for the first time to the untranslated sections of the first draft of the Constitution, offering a new hermeneutical key that plays an influential role in shaping the experience of liturgy on the ground in the Roman Catholic community. Duane Williams presented a research-based lecture in 2009 (“The Negative Theology of Pseudo-Dionysius”) to The South East Institute of Theological Education, and a further one (“Let Us Pray To God To Be Free Of God”) to The World Community for Christian Meditation in 2012. He also led a research-based day workshop “The Visionary Imagination of William Blake” for The Fintry Trust (2012). Simon Podmore was an invited participant in the Frontiers of Spirituality Seminar held at Campion Hall, Oxford, 21 March 2011; this was a discussion of secular spirituality in relation to the BBC 2 series ‘The Big Silence’ and involved featured participants from the programme and members of their families, interested members of the public, practitioners of Christian Religious Life and academics. He was also an invited participant in a workshop on “Mindfulness as Spiritual Practice: Cultivating the art of being” at the Oxford Mindfulness Centre, Campion Hall, Oxford, 30 April-1 May 2012. This involved discussion and practical experiential sessions on the emerging role of Mindfulness in relation to the management of anxiety and depression, a treatment currently being promoted within the NHS. This included mental health practitioners, service-users, academics. and interested members of the public.

**Media engagement.** Members of the team are featured in the media as a result of their research expertise and prominence. Such media engagement serves to bring their research insights to a wide public audience, thus broadening public access to knowledge and contributing to cultural capital. Simon Podmore was an invited panellist on BBC Radio 4, ‘Beyond Belief: Religion & Fear’, broadcast 6 August 2012. He was also the consultant and interviewed expert for a ten-page cover feature on Hell and suffering in religious thought for the Mexican popular culture magazine *Conozca Más*, November 2010. John Walliss was interviewed for BBC Radio Merseyside regarding prophecy beliefs (2011). Kenneth Newport’s research on Charles Wesley’s journals received wide-ranging attention (2008); he was interviewed for BBC Radio 4 ‘Today’ programme, and articles were carried in *The Times* (leader), *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Independent*. Volume 1 in the Charles Wesley Letters Project was featured in *The Telegraph*.

**Advisory Work and Expert Opinion.** Ron Geaves’ work on Islam led to appointment as an advisor to the Preventing Extremism Unit at the Ministry for Communities and Local Government from 2007-2010. He is also, as a consequence of his research expertise, advisor for the International Baccalaureate World Religions Examination, as is Elizabeth Harris. She is also Moderator of the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland Inter Faith Theology Advisory Group. This group, which began its work in 2012, largely consists of academics working in the area of Theology of Religion and Inter-Religious Studies; she was invited to do this because of her published work in the area of religion and plurality. Her work on this and conflict also led to an invitation to contribute to a working group of the Methodist Church in Britain to discuss responses to the Israel/Palestine situation (09-10, 2013). Bernard Jackson’s research contributed to the work of the Agunah Research Unit (which seeks to find a solution in Jewish law to the problem of the husband’s veto on divorce); in 2009-11, editorial and translation work were undertaken, leading to the Final Report and a Hebrew version of the Unit’s report. This reproduced letters from two senior Israeli Rabbis (who have recently held the posts of Chief Rabbi of Haifa and Director the Rabbinical Courts of the State of Israel), commending their work to the serious attention of the halakhic authorities. Kenneth Newport’s *The Branch Davidians of Waco: the History and Beliefs of an Apocalyptic Sect* (OUP: 2006) was featured on the entire front page of *The Friday Review of The Independent* (2006), which led to a series of follow-on impacts in the shape of FBI and Waco law enforcement officer consultation. The most recent such was in 2011.

**Running of Public Lectures, Seminars and Conferences.** The unit’s approach to impact is also demonstrated through its regular running of public events, a service to disseminate not only its own research but also that of others. In collaboration with the Merseyside Council of Faiths, Elizabeth Harris organized a series of public lectures that ran from February 2010 – March 2011 on the theme ‘What in my Faith could I not live without?’ Harris gave the final concluding lecture, which linked with her research into Religion and Plurality. The Andrew F. Walls Centre for the Study of African and Asian Christianity runs annual seminars, lectures and conferences (further details are in REF5a), which include the regular leading of local research-based seminars by Jeyaraj himself.

### c. Strategy and plans

The unit's strategy and plans for the future feed into and sit within a developing institutional strategy which will embed impact within academic life and culture. In terms of the unit's research environment:

1. Impact will form a part of annual performance review. This will include target-setting and identification of any staff development needs.
2. Impact achievement and potential will be one of the criteria to be considered in recruitment and promotion processes.
3. A portion of research funds, at unit level and institutionally, will be earmarked to support impact-related activity.
4. Regular review mechanisms for on-going projects will be established, to measure progress and effectiveness and assist with forward planning.
5. Staff development in impact for the unit will continue, to optimise the effectiveness of impact-related activity and support individuals/groups at all stages of the impact life-cycle.

In line with the above context, individuals and groups will be expected to draw up impact plans in relation to their research; Dagers, for examples, is to produce discussion group materials based on *Gendering Christian Ethics* for use with church groups. The unit will strategically select certain strands on which to focus resource and energy in order to optimise outcome. In addition to the continuing activities of individuals and the two Centres, two new research trajectories will be central to the unit's impact strategy for the future.

1. **The National Centre for Christian Education (NCfCE)**, formerly based in Education at Hope, is to be part of Theology and Religious Studies and has indeed already physically relocated. It is one of only two research centres in the United Kingdom engaged in empirical work which directly impacts policy development in the maintained Christian school sector and informs national debate around Christian educational provision. Its strategic foci are the 1) spiritual formation of Christian teachers and school leaders, 2) impact of Catholic schools, with a particular emphasis on social cohesion and 3) development of distinctive ethos in Christian schools and academies.
2. **Faith without Frontiers: Anglican and Nordic congregations before and after the Porvoo Agreement.** Peter McGrail is working closely with Dr. Jaakko Rusama (Adjunct Professor at University of Helsinki and Lutheran co-Moderator of the Anglican-Lutheran Society) and the Nordic Church in Liverpool to develop this project. The ultimate scope is to produce an in-depth comparative study of (a) the congregations of Nordic Churches in the UK, (b) the congregations of the Anglican Diocese of Europe in Nordic cities; (c) diaspora Lutheran churches in Nordic territories. It will generate a rich ethnographic record of personal accounts of emigration, settlement and integration and/or barriers to integration within the host society and contribute to community self-understanding. User engagement on a partnership network model is embedded in the project plan; developing this forms the first of three planned phases.

### d. Relationship to case studies

The case studies exemplify the unit's general positive and lively commitment to producing public benefit from its research work. The key mechanisms for engaging users and achieving impact identified above also apply to the case studies. Examples include:

**Invitations to inform a group through public speaking and workshop leading or participation.** Geaves engaged on an extensive programme of community lectures arising as a result of his research. Invitations for Jeyaraj include conducting a seminar for teachers at the Tamil Evangelical Lutheran Church.

**Media engagement.** Geaves's research led to his involvement in two BBC radio documentaries and a BBC1 documentary. Jeyaraj was featured in FRONTLINE and he was expert consultant for a documentary film on Ziegenbalg.

**Advisory Work and Expert Opinion.** Geaves was invited to address the foreign office on contemporary resonances between British foreign policy in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the Gulf Wars (4<sup>th</sup> November 2010). Jeyaraj was invited to present the keynote address at the "Science Transfer as Cultural Dialogue" workshop for archivists.

**Public Lectures, Seminars and Conferences.** Jeyaraj organizes seminars and lectures locally for the general public; Geaves has engaged in an extensive programme of public speaking.