

<b>Institution: University of Nottingham</b>
<b>Unit of Assessment: 33 Theology and Religious Studies</b>
<p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>The Department of Theology and Religious Studies has an outstanding history of public engagement, drawing on the fruits of its research to communicate with church groups and inform wider public conversations about the critical and transformative contributions of religious faith in the modern world. The national prioritisation of impact has given a new prominence to, and opportunities for development of, ongoing activities that are already highly valued by researchers in the department. Research in the department divides into contemporary studies, including the interaction of theology with philosophy, science, culture and politics, and historical studies, including the history of Jewish, Christian and Islamic thought and how the religious understanding of history impacts upon the present – in both cases it relates to the profoundest debates and questions emerging from the religious traditions, having broad significance beyond the confines of the academy.</p> <p>The main types of impact include those on:</p> <p><i>Public discourse</i>, by enhancing public understanding of major issues such as the relation between theology and science, or the place of faith in economic life, with beneficiaries including the BBC and other media organisations (ABC, the Guardian), as well as the wider reading public of theological literature and web-based discussion groups;</p> <p><i>Policy making</i>, by influencing the reports of think tanks (Res Publica Trust), charities (CAFOD), and church commissions (Church of England, Church of Scotland and Church in Wales, International Anglican Communion);</p> <p><i>Cultural life</i>, by interpreting the theological dimensions of important cultural productions such as Wagnerian opera (Royal Opera House), Gothic literature and benefiting museums and their publics (Bibelhaus, Frankfurt &amp; the Ashmolean, Oxford);</p> <p><i>Education</i>, by the production of fresh theologies that are subsequently studied as primary texts in theological seminaries and universities worldwide, benefiting clergy, students in ministerial education, students of theology and religious studies worldwide who read primary texts produced in Nottingham and benefit from Youtube videos made by the department, as well as researchers and students in other disciplines who engage with theology (politics, philosophy, economics and the interface of science and religion);</p> <p><i>Civil society</i>, by contributing to the self-understanding of the Christian church and its mission, and the religious history of political institutions, public bodies, and private enterprise.</p>
<p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>Public engagement has had a vital and dynamic place in the life of the department during the REF period: to ensure that impact reaches its full potential we are committed to a wide range of public engagement both collectively and individually, and the selection of research areas. As a unit, the Department systematically reaches out to the broadest public possible through the creation of an expanding library of Youtube videos which are accessed around the world. Complementing this, it nurtures individual initiative in establishing relationships with beneficiaries, and while staff respond generously to the interest, invitations and debates that their research stimulates, the department enables this through some suspension of normal duties. The approach to impact has therefore evolved organically, and previous successes are now being incorporated into strategic planning. The following are the main approaches to impact within the unit:</p> <p><i>To produce original theology that will become an object of study at other universities.</i> For example, Radical Orthodoxy, many of whose foremost representatives are or have been researchers in the department (John Milbank, Alison Milbank, Cunningham, Oliver, Pabst), is widely studied throughout the world as an important theological movement. This has been facilitated by Milbank and Oliver's production of <i>The Radical Orthodoxy Reader</i> (in 2009). In a</p>

complementary way, Alison Milbank's *For the Parish: A Critique of Fresh Expressions* has become an object of study in Anglican theological colleges in the UK (see case study). Similarly, Thiselton's important work on hermeneutics within the unit during the 1990s and 2000s has had a longstanding influence on the place of hermeneutics within theological curricula worldwide. Also, Goodchild's *Capitalism and Religion* (2002) and *Theology of Money* (2007) have been used as primary texts in courses at John Hopkins, University of California Santa Cruz, Syracuse, Grinnell, Haverford & Swarthmore Colleges, and elsewhere during the period. Key books, such as Cunningham's *Darwin's Pious Idea* and Goodchild's *Theology of Money*, have been the object of dedicated blog discussion groups.

*To establish a strong relationship with the global media.* Cunningham was commissioned to write and present a BBC documentary on his work on theology and evolution (see case study). Also, O'Loughlin has recently been filmed for Channel 4, Alison Milbank has appeared on Radio 3, while John Milbank has been interviewed numerous times on Radio 4, as well as appearing on the Moral Maze programme and French radio. John Milbank has also established strong relationships with the ABC and the Guardian, contributing regularly to their blogs.

*To communicate with the broadest possible audience through producing Youtube videos,* with the Department emerging in this REF period as the world-leader in the discipline, producing 256. The videos were initially supported by University (£41,000) and external (£7,000) funding. Some have been made in conjunction with the video-journalist Brady Haran (114 BibleDex videos), others professionally recorded in the University's television studio (141 to date). The videos have been watched over 600,000 times, and feedback indicates that they are regularly used in classrooms. They communicate not only the areas of research interest of Nottingham staff, but also in many cases the results of the research (e.g. Alison Milbank on Tolkien, Kilby on the Trinity and von Balthasar, Goodchild on theology of money and philosophy as a spiritual practice). Evidence for their impact is gathered not only from viewing figures but also from blog discussions and email responses from around the world.

*To undertake leadership and consultative roles in civil society organisations, churches and charities.* John Milbank is Chair of the Res Publica Trust, a leading political think-tank (see case study). He has also taken a significant role in the London Citizens and Nottingham Citizens movements. There is a close relationship between members of the department and the Anglican Church, with Revd Alison Milbank as Priest Vicar at Southwell Minster, while Canon Oliver has been Chair of the Doctrine Commission of the Church in Wales and member of the Inter-Anglican Standing Commission on Unity, Faith and Order. Kilby's membership of CAFOD's Theology Reference Group has enabled her to write policy papers, contribute to CAFOD publications, and give talks to MPs and members of religious orders. Goodchild delivered a presentation on his research on money and finance to the Church of Scotland's Economics Commission, which is cited in their final report.

*To draw on staff research expertise in training clergy.* Several members of staff have been involved in delivering clergy training to Roman Catholic and Anglican clergy at diocesan, national and international levels (O'Loughlin, Oliver, Cunningham, Kilby, Milbank & Milbank, Goodchild).

*To contribute to museums and cultural institutions.* Staff have contributed to museum exhibitions on historical topics in Bibelhaus, Frankfurt (Deines) and the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford (Crouch). Bell has been interviewed (and engaged in debate with Michael Tanner) on redemption in the Ring Cycle of Richard Wagner at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

*To influence public discourse by communicating with a wider literate public in a variety of ways.* Staff have delivered public lectures and conference presentations outside academia, such as at the Modern Churchpeople's Union annual conference and the Deutscher Evangelischer Kirchentag (a five day conference with over 100,000 attending). Staff have also been involved in public debates, such as Alison Milbank on her work on Fresh Expressions (see case study), and Goodchild on money with a hedge fund manager and *The Economist* journalist Philip Coggan in the City of London. Goodchild also participated in a conference on theology and money at the Leeds Church Centre, initiated by a group who were engaged in ongoing study of his book. Staff have also published journalistic articles based on their work, with John Milbank publishing in ABC online and the Guardian, Deines publishing in German historical and ecclesial magazines. To

## Impact template (REF3a)

facilitate the engagement of a wider public with research outputs, staff have often chosen to publish books with popular or commercial presses such as Eerdmans, SCM Press, T & T Clark, Routledge, SPCK and Palgrave.

## c. Strategy and plans

The School of Humanities, of which the department is a component, places its aspiration to develop 'Engaged Humanities' at the heart of its research strategy, and the department conforms to this goal. To mentor colleagues on impact, the Faculty of Arts has appointed an Impact Manager who assists departments in identifying, developing and recording impact activities. The Centre for Advanced Studies in Arts and Social Sciences provides support for pathways to impact and public engagement by working with external organisations, providing seed-corn funding for impact, and offering staff training events – workshops on developing and recording impact. A new post of Knowledge Exchange Manager, funded by the Business Engagement and Innovation Services but hosted in the Faculty of Arts, will support staff in developing the potential social, cultural and economic impact of their research (including support in accessing knowledge exchange income streams, relationship-building with partners, and undertaking evaluation of activity). Further training for research staff on embedding impact where possible within research is planned for future departmental staff development days. In order to enhance the impact of research activities in the department over the coming years, researchers will:

*Develop strategies to market the results of research* through public engagement activities such as public lectures and conferences, offering web-based, print and broadcast interviews, and publishing journalistic writing.

*Target specific user groups and beneficiaries* of research so as to build ongoing relationships with them, devising research activities to be responsive to their needs.

*Improve strategies for measuring and recording impact*, such as participant questionnaires or other mechanisms to gather evidence of the transformative effect of public engagement activities.

*Enhance existing approaches to impact*, such as: researchers involving themselves in leadership or consultative roles with civil society organisations, churches and charities; making professional Youtube videos on the key topics and findings of their research, using the University's facilities and expertise; organising and making presentations at conferences involving participants from outside academia; writing and editing books that may give shape to the curricula at other universities.

## d. Relationship to case studies

Case studies have been chosen as models of extensive engagement with beneficiaries, and to illustrate the diversity of approaches to engagement with a range of beneficiaries:

- Broadcast media: Conor Cunningham's research on evolution and creation was disseminated via the BBC, discussion in non-academic journals, and talks to clergy and believers in UK, US and beyond: its main impact has been **informing the public debate on creation and evolution**.
- Church of England: Alison Milbank's response to the Fresh Expressions movement of the CofE based on her research on the role of mediation in mission and ecclesiology has impacted upon ministerial education and clergy development through book publication, lectures, public debates and a cathedral exhibition: its main impact has been **restoring 'Fresh Expressions' to the parish as the focus of mission in the Church of England**.
- Think tank and policy discussion: John Milbank's research on the politics of paradox has stimulated the founding of the Red Tory movement (led by Phillip Blond) and the Blue Labour movement (led by Maurice Glasman): its main impact has been **shaping the ideology of Red Tory and Blue Labour**.