

| |
|---|
| Institution: University of Chichester |
| Unit of Assessment: 31: Theology and Religious Studies |
| <p>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</p> <p>Research in Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Chichester (UoC) is located in the Department of Humanities, which in turn is located within the Institute of Arts and Humanities. The Unit consists of three full-time staff with a significant responsibility for research, Professor Graeme Smith, Dr Tommy Lynch and Dr Hannah Strømmen. Prior to this submission the Department of Theology, Philosophy and Religious Studies was first integrated into the Department of Humanities (2018), with the Departments of History and English and Creative Writing, and then integrated into the Institute of Arts and Humanities, with the Department of Theatre (2019). The new collective structure is organised to recognise and develop research collaborations across the Humanities and Arts. In 2019 a new Institute Research Coordinator was appointed who supports and advises this Unit. Research strategy for the Unit is coordinated by the Director of Institute of Arts and Humanities and Head of Humanities, alongside the Research Coordinator for the Institute. This is carried out in consultation with Unit staff through departmental meetings. Unit strategy is then integrated with the University-wide strategy through the Research Office, directed by Dr Antonina Pereira with the support of the Senior Research Assistant, Dr Charles Green. This is then directed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Simeon Keates, who reports to the University's Vice-Chancellor's Group. Research strategy is coordinated by the Research and Innovation Committee and Research Degrees Group, both of which are University-wide structure. Our focus is on developing strategy through dialogue and inclusion at all levels.</p> <p>Research and Impact Strategy</p> <p>The Unit's research strategy is designed to support and develop curiosity-driven research and impact that is interdisciplinary, outward facing, inclusive, and sensitive to addressing the social implications of the humanities. The Unit did not submit to the 2014 REF. However, with the appointment of Smith as Head of the then Department in 2014, there was a new emphasis on developing research work, which has borne fruit across the REF2021 assessment period. The Unit identified future strategic priorities as the ongoing development of research work in the field of public theology, working with local partners, the development of early career researchers, and integration with the University of Chichester Research strategy. These strategic aims have been addressed in the new context of the Institute of Arts and Humanities, especially its overarching emphasis on interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research.</p> <p>Our strategy in relation to developing the research impact work in relation to public theology has been particularly productive. Smith has published significant articles in the field, challenging methodologies and developing new approaches. As Public Theology Coordinator for the British and Irish Association of Practical Theology, Smith has also been instrumental in arranging national conferences in the areas of lay ministry and public theology, as well as bringing together scholars in public theology.</p> <p>The strategy of working with local partner institutions has also been successful. Smith has collaborated with Portsmouth Cathedral to establish the Portsmouth Cathedral Institute (as is detailed in REF3). Smith also sits on the West Sussex SACRE and the Unit has collaborated closely with local schools to promote the study of Religious Education across the REF2021 assessment period. The second REF3 impact case study details this work, together with the work with Chichester Cathedral in its annual Schools Day. Smith works closely with the Chichester diocese in developing their ministerial provision through postgraduate awards based on his research in the field of public and practical theology.</p> <p>The Unit's work in developing early career scholars has been successful. Lynch and Strommen have been supported in the production of their first monographs, and supported in developing</p> |

contacts and networks through speaking at subject conferences. Smith led the Department's bids for University funds to enable Lynch to become part of a doctoral supervision team, and a similar opportunity was then afforded to Strømme. Strømme was granted a sabbatical for one semester to study at the Centre for Theological Inquiry at Princeton University. Both Lynch and Strømme were further supported in organizing a conference in 2017 to which leading theological scholars were invited. The structural advantages of the new Institute of Arts and Humanities offer opportunities for all researchers in the Unit to enhance their interdisciplinary work.

Future strategic aims

Our new integration within the Institute of Arts and Humanities offers fresh scope for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary research and impact. Research strategy will retain an emphasis on curiosity-driven research while also encouraging opportunities for research and research bidding with members of the Institute of Arts and Humanities in collaborative projects. The Unit will also integrate with other partners across the University for potential projects developing around new university-wide research themes, such as health and well-being. The discrete strengths of subject areas within the Institute for Arts and Humanities will be retained, whilst, at the same time, support will be offered for cross-fertilisation.

The Unit will develop and plan future impact work. While one of our REF2021 case studies is finite within this period, the other is at its early stages, and has enormous scope for development. We will also work hard to sustain and further develop our inclusive ethos, especially by providing routes to development for our researchers (at staff and PGR level). Internal structures, Institute of Arts and Humanities structures, and integration with University-wide strategies and support are aimed at sustaining and developing our inclusive and curiosity-driven research culture.

2. People

In 2014, Smith took over responsibility for leadership of the Unit. Under his guidance Lynch and Strømme were both individually awarded Research Development Awards (amounting to GBP8,000) which have allowed them to kickstart their academic development at a key moment in their careers. As mentioned above, the area of public theology was identified in 2014 as a key focus for research and teaching within the Unit.

Individual staff profiles and successes within the REF2021 assessment period are outlined below:

An expert in public theology, Smith has been invited to contribute to the forthcoming *Oxford Handbook on Reinhold Niebuhr*, and the *T&T Clark Handbook of Public Theology*. He also co-edited a book, *Religion in the European Refugee Crisis*, as a result of which he was interviewed on Australian national radio as part of their Easter special, writing an article for the *Church Times*. Smith has also led the Unit's public engagements within the local area, especially in the dioceses of Chichester and Portsmouth. In recognition of this work, Smith was appointed a Canon of Honour of Portsmouth Cathedral.

The Unit's two ECR appointments have energised and refreshed the vitality and sustainability of its research profile. Lynch was appointed first, in 2017, as a philosopher of religion with a particular interest in public and political issues; Strømme was appointed as a biblical scholar with an interest in popular political movements in 2018. Both Lynch and Strømme had reduced teaching loads for the first four years of their appointments. Strømme was awarded a sabbatical which she was able to spend at the Centre for Theological Inquiry, Princeton. The department supported Lynch and Strømme in the organisation of an academic conference. Dr Stephen Roberts was appointed during the period under review but has subsequently left to a new job. During his time with the Unit he contributed through two research articles in the area of

practical theology in the areas of chaplaincy and popular culture. He was also appointed book reviews editor for the journal *Practical Theology*. Professor Smith was awarded a sabbatical in 2018, at the end of his period as Head of Department.

Support mechanisms for PGR students

The Research Degrees Coordinator for the Institute for Arts and Humanities monitors all PGR admissions and progress. All PGR students have access to internal University training sessions (delivered through the Research Office), free access to all Institute events, associated Research Centre activities, conferences and symposia, and all courses on our MAs to audit (free of charge). In addition, all PGRs have access to the University-wide PG Certificate in Learning and Teaching. There is also research funding support for conference attendance available via the Research Office. The annual University Research Conference integrates PGR involvement, training, and workshops (including sessions delivered by Unit staff). We offer an online 'Moodle' platform page for our PGR students.

The Unit recommitted itself to doctoral work when Smith became Head of Department, and this commitment continues now the subject area is part of the Institute. This policy has borne significant fruit for a Unit of our size, with **five completions** within the REF2021 assessment period: one in 2013/14, one in 2015/16, and three in 2019/20.

University of Chichester bursaries and fee waivers were awarded to two PhD students within the Unit. A further two fee bursaries were awarded to PhD students.

Smith worked with one doctoral student to organise a conference funded by the Bible society which led to a published collection of papers.

Equality and diversity

The Unit is integrated into the University's Equality and Diversity strategy, which is implemented through the Equality and Diversity officers. The Unit regularly reviews equality issues surrounding appointments, access to research opportunities, career development, and research expectations. Department of Humanities meetings are a regular forum to address and raise equality and diversity issues, including in relation to research. The Unit is also integrated into the Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee. Staff involved in decision making for REF have undertaken unconscious bias training and been constantly advised on equality issues by the Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee.

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Staff within the Unit have attracted internal and external funds to support research and associated activities.

Smith has received University Research and Innovation funding (GBP2,500); a Bible Society grant (GBP3,000) and been part of successful bids with the Church of England, 'Mustard Seed Grant Evaluations', (GBP4,200) and then the ESRC Grant 'Religion in multi-ethnic contexts: A Multi-disciplinary Case Study of Global Seafaring', which has attracted in total of c. GBP560,000 – of which GBP6,000 (2017/18), GBP5,000 (2018/19) and GBP6,000 (2019/20) has come to Chichester (GBP17,000 in all).

Lynch was part of an AAR Collaborative International Research Grant, American Academy of Religion for 'Liberalism's Islams and Islam's Liberalisms' project (USD4,280). He has also received travel grants and a substantial Research Development Grant (GBP8,000) awarded internally, in support of his research.

Like Lynch, Strømmen was also part of an AAR Collaborative International Research Grant, American Academy of Religion for 'Liberalism's Islams and Islam's Liberalisms' project

(USD4,280). She has also received travel grants and a Research Development Grant (GBP8,000) awarded internally.

The Unit has hosted regular research seminars, attracting a range of scholars within the discipline – often in association with the Chichester Theological Society, which Smith founded. It has also run regular film and discussion evenings. Between September 2015 and May 2019, the Unit was involved in the organisation of over 40 research and discussion events. Speakers have included leading scholars such as Prof. Martyn Percy, Prof Elaine Graham and Prof. Graham Ward, as well as significant church figures such as Dr Paula Gooder, who was able to attract an audience of c. 200 people.

Facilities

Research within the Unit is supported by the University's Bishop Otter Campus Learning Resource Centre, which has extensive holdings and online resources, including Project Muse and JSTOR. The Unit is also supported by a dedicated subject librarian. The University has constructed a new academic building completed in August 2016, which serves as a public platform for research events and conferences organised by the Unit. The Learning Resource Centre provides online and material research support for the Unit. Research is made available through the University of Chichester Chipprints Repository, addressing the ever growing need for Open Access accessibility for the Unit's research.

4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

The integration of the Unit within the new Institute of Arts and Humanities in 2019 has strengthened its collaborative and outward-facing orientation. The Unit has ongoing collaborations with local and regional partners, particularly in the local churches and the local education authority. Smith sits on the West Sussex SACRE, and Lynch has been regularly involved in their annual youth conference. Smith works closely with the diocese of Chichester and the Chichester Theological Trust to enhance the ministerial practice of clergy and laity. For some clergy this means undertaking Masters level courses. Smith also co-founded the Portsmouth Cathedral Institute and been made a Canon of Honour of Portsmouth Cathedral.

Contribution to research base

The Unit makes a significant contribution to the subject area in a wide variety of ways, adumbrated below:

Editorial contributions

Smith is a member of the editorial boards of the journals *Political Theology*, and *Practical Theology*, and is an active reviewer for the journals *International Journal of Public Theology*; the *British Journal of Religious Education*; and *Literature and Theology*.

Lynch is a reviewer for the journals *Political Theology*, *Religions*, *Critical Research on Religion*, and *Bloomsbury Philosophy*.

Strømme is on the Editorial Board of *Svensk Teologisk Kvartalskrift*; *The Bible and Critical Theory*; *Biblical Interpretation: A Journal of Contemporary Approaches* *Critical Research on Religion and the Bible and Critical Theory* Book Series with Wipf & Stock. She is also a Board Member of SBL program unit 'Reading, Theory and the Bible' and on the Steering Committee for SBL consultation, 'Animal Studies and the Bible'. She co-chairs the Deconstructive Poetics Panel, European Association of Biblical Studies (with Francis Landy).

Academic Conference Participation.

All staff researchers within the Unit have presented papers in a variety of contexts, and have been invited to give lectures in international settings as well as in the UK. For example, **Smith** delivered a keynote lecture on 'Talking to Ourselves: An Investigation into the Christian Ethics Inherent in Secularism' at the International Colloquium on Enlightenment and Secularism at the Institute of Philosophy at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków, as well as on 'The End of

Liberalism and the Ubiquity of Ignorance', which was a plenary response to Professor Courtney Goto at the BIAPT 25th anniversary conference in July 2019. He also delivered a keynote address at the The John Bowden Memorial Consultation, Sarum College, (May 2014) entitled 'A History of Radical Theology in the Twentieth Century'. **Lynch** was invited to give a lecture at the Stockholm School of Theology entitled 'Suffering Subjectivity: Religion and the Reality of Enmity', at the Theology and Materialism Workshop. He also spoke on 'A Political Theology of the Citizen', at the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies, Radboud University, and, at the University of Edinburgh, offered a 'Response to Malabou' at the Bodies in Movement Seminar Series (Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities). **Strømmen** was invited to lecture at the University of Bern on 'The Bible in a Populist Context: Real and Virtual', Conference on 'Ordinary Readers of the Bible'. She was also invited to lecture on 'The Bible as a Text of Terror – Anders Behring Breivik and Right-Wing Discourse on Religion' at the University of Oslo, Norway. Beyond these appearances, she was invited to speak on 'The Features and Functions of the Far-Right Bible' at an expert consultation on Ultra-nationalism at the United Nations, New York, USA, and to lecture on 'Terrorist Redactions of the Bible: The Bible in Anders Behring Breivik's Manifesto', at the Interdisciplinary Seminar series on The Bible in Art, Music and Literature at the University of Oxford.

External Examining

Smith is currently an external examiner for the University of Manchester Luther King House undergraduate degrees. He has also acted as a PhD examiner for the University of Wales and for Kings College London.

Public Engagement Events

The Unit's team have been involved in a variety of public engagement events, at which they have contributed from their research expertise:

Smith has spoken at Portsmouth Cathedral's 'Faith in Politics' series, at the 2019 National Diocesan Communication Officers Conference in Canterbury on 'Resonance and the Christian Heritage in Contemporary Western Society', as well as at the 2014 Cathedral Group Chaplains' Conference on 'Investigating the Secular Other'. He has also lectured at local theological societies, such as (in 2013) on 'Barack Obama's favourite theologian: Reinhold Niebuhr and Public Theology', at the Peterborough Theological Society.

Lynch spoke on 'Climate Apocalypticism' at the Symposia, Political Theology Network. Available at: <https://politicaltheology.com/climate-apocalypticism/>, and also on 'Why Hope Is Dangerous When It Comes to Climate Change', Slate. Available at: www.slate.com/articles/technology/future_tense/2017/07/why_climate_change_discussions_need_apocalyptic_thinking.html. This was reprinted in What Future 2018: The Year's Best Writing on What's Next for People, Technology & the Planet (Los Angeles: Unnamed Press, 2018).

Strømmen lectured at the Clergy Study Day: 'Faith in the Public Sphere: the Bible, Theology and the Common Good' in the Diocese of Chichester. In 2015 she spoke on 'An Uncommon Humanity? Questioning the Human/Animal Boundary', a Public Lecture at Qom Women's Seminary, Qom, Iran. She has also spoken on 'Bi-Sexuality and the Bible: A Scandal' at the West Sussex Religious Studies Day at Chichester Cathedral.

Impact and Engagement Achievements.

The Unit has developed diverse and meaningful impact – particularly within the south east – through its sustained and close collaborations with a range of diocesan and ecclesial partners. This work has been both individually-focused and Unit-focused, building on our combined strengths and expertise (such as in the field of public theology). This includes both regular impact activity, through public engagement, as well as particular projects developed and implemented throughout the period. The two impact case studies, which both centre on issues of public theology, are both the products of the Unit's integrated research culture and its broader commitment to developing impact. This culture has involved a whole host of mentoring, Unit administrative support, and investment that is difficult to capture in factual terms, being based on

ongoing and meaningful relationships within the community. The Unit is working ever more closely with the University's Research Office to coordinate and evaluate these ongoing impact achievements, and the Unit's wider contribution to economy and society.