

**RESEARCH REVIEW  
THEOLOGY &  
RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

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# 1. The review Committee and the review procedures

## Scope of the assessment

The Review Committee was asked to perform an assessment of the research in Theology and Religious Studies at six universities. This assessment covers the research in the period 2005-2011.

In accordance with the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2009-2015 for Research Assessment in the Netherlands (SEP), the Committee's tasks were to assess the quality of the institute and the research programmes on the basis of the information provided by the institutes and through interviews with the management and the research leaders, and to advise how this quality might be improved.

## Composition of the Committee

The composition of the Committee was as follows:

- Prof. Willem Frijhoff (chair), Erasmus University Rotterdam;
- Prof. Rainer Albertz, Universität Münster;
- Prof. David Chidester, University of Cape Town;
- Prof. Hans-Günter Heimbrock, Goethe-Universität Frankfurt;
- Prof. Keith Ward, Oxford University.

A short profile of the Committee members is included in Appendix A.

Roel Bennink of the Bureau of QANU (Quality Assurance Netherlands Universities) was appointed secretary to the Committee.

## Independence

All members of the Committee signed a statement of independence to safeguard that they would assess the quality of the institutes and research programmes in an unbiased and independent way. Any existing personal or professional relationships between Committee members and programmes under review were reported and discussed in the Committee meeting. The Committee concluded that there were no unacceptable relations or dependencies and that there was no specific risk in terms of bias or undue influence.

## Data provided to the Committee

The Committee has received detailed documentation consisting of the following parts:

1. Self-evaluation reports of the units under review, including all the information required by the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP), with appendices.
2. Copies of the key publications per research programme.

## Procedures followed by the Committee

The Committee proceeded according to the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2009-2015 (SEP). Prior to the Committee meeting, each programme was assigned to two reviewers, who independently formulated a preliminary assessment. The final assessments are based on the documentation provided by the institutes, the key publications and the interviews with the management and with the leaders of the programmes. The interviews took place on 4 to 8 June 2012 (see the schedule in Appendix C) in Utrecht.

Preceding the interviews, the Committee was briefed by QANU about research assessment according to SEP, and the Committee discussed the preliminary assessments. The Committee also agreed upon procedural matters and aspects of the assessment. After the interviews the Committee discussed the scores and comments. The texts for the Committee report were finalised through email exchanges. The final version was presented to the faculties for factual corrections and comments. The comments were discussed in the Committee. The final report was printed after formal acceptance by the Boards of the participating universities.

The Committee used the rating system of the Standard Evaluation Protocol 2009-2015 (SEP). The meaning of the scores is described in Appendix B.

### **Delay**

The Committee regrets the unfortunate delay of more than eight months in the production of the report. This delay was caused when the faculties demanded to stop the review process because it was found that the quantitative data they had provided to the Committee showed considerable differences in the interpretation of the definitions and tables specified by the Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP). The Committee would have preferred to continue the review and to deliver a draft report to the faculties in October, since it was convinced that the differences in the quantitative data could be eliminated in the process of the faculty comments on the draft report and in the final acceptance by the boards of the universities. The Committee did not have the intention to base its assessments solely on quantitative formulas or rankings nor to disregard differences in mission or context of the institutes under review. For that reason, the Committee believed that strict harmonisation of the data could have been given lower priority than preserving the impetus and topicality of the findings based on the self-assessment reports, the key publications and the interviews during the visit. The assessments and conclusions were practically finished and the Committee did not look forward to having to reread the material in the light of adjusted numerical data. After serious discussions, however, the faculties decided in a special meeting in December that it was necessary to harmonise the numerics in order to create a "level playing field" for the assessments and they agreed on a set of rules for that purpose. New numerical data based on these rules were provided to the Committee in February/March. The new data gave an overall reduction of 11% in the number of academic publications per full time equivalent of research staff. This reduction was not evenly distributed over the programmes and institutes, also not within each institute. The total number of academic staff per programme stayed the same in only 2 programmes, went slightly up in 2 programmes and went slightly down in the rest of the programmes. There were corrections in every category of publications. The average number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff (tenured and non-tenured, but excluding PhD-students) changed from 9.7 to 8.5. The Committee concluded that the adjusted data would allow for more comparison between the programmes and institutes than usual in the research reviews. Some remarks to that effect were added to the assessments.

### **Productivity calculation**

The Committee has chosen to base the scores for productivity mainly on (a) the total number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff, (b) the percentage of academic publications, (c) the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff, and (d) the percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications. For these four aspects the relative position of each programme was calculated in the quartiles Very high, High, Medium and Low. The final score is based on the average of these four scores, then weighed and transposed to the SEP-scale. This method gives more weight to academic and refereed publications than to publications for the society-at-large or to PhD-training, which are assessed separately.

## 2. General remarks

Before presenting the evaluation of the single faculties, departments or research programmes in theology and/or religious studies, the Committee wants to make some general comments on a variety of topics related to the field of research, its outcome and the policies involved that it has met during the procedure or that have otherwise come to its attention. First of all the Committee wants to emphasize that not all the faculties or departments concerned by both disciplines in the Netherlands have participated in the present evaluation procedure. The University of Amsterdam, its sister institutions at Leiden and Nijmegen, and the University of Humanistics at Utrecht have not joined the procedure. This makes it difficult to draw from this report general conclusions for the whole country and impossible to dress a national quality scale. Besides, several of the programmes under review are already finished and redefined. The confrontation of an old, outdated track of research, and the new one of other programmes may be confusing. In spite of these imperfections, the Committee feels entitled to the following general comments, on its own behalf as well as because of the feelings of uneasiness with regard to the institutional evolution of the research field it has felt among a fair number of its interlocutors.

1. The overall quality of the research in theology and religious studies in the faculties and departments evaluated by the Committee is good. Several programmes are very good, and nationally leading in their domain, and two of them are in the Committee's opinion excellent, and internationally leading. In several faculties the output is at top level, further pressure should not be applied. Taken as a whole, the University of Groningen, where the two excellent programmes (P17 and P18) are located, has obtained the best scores and presents excellent provisions for the future, closely followed by Utrecht University where the new research group (P14) has made a quick and very promising start, and by most of the research units at the VU-University. Globally, research in theology, a discipline that in past centuries was one of the main assets of Dutch international scholarship as a whole, maintains itself on a good level, but innovation seems now more often to be found in the interdisciplinary space of the religious studies, on the interface between religion and the secular world, or between the old and the new Christian or the non-Christian religions, than in the traditional domains of theological scholarship as such, even if some of them manage to maintain their high level of performance.
2. **Institutional developments.** This globally positive outcome of the evaluation is the more remarkable as, seen from an international point of view, the research landscape of theology and religious studies in the Netherlands has in a very short time gone through an amazing, and for a sound scholarly research climate barely acceptable number of changes, fusions, mergers, transfers and other accommodations, mostly unintended by the researchers themselves, sometimes unwelcomed and counter-productive. Individual scholars voice it with reluctance because of their loyalty to their institution, but at many moments the Committee decidedly got the feeling that the repeated institutional changes encroach too much on their research time, and that some of them result in harmful redistributions of research potential, occasionally even in personal tragedies. The apparent absence of coherence on a broad, inter-university managerial level has brought about some disastrous merger problems. For the sake of scholarly research, tranquillity is badly needed.
3. **Problems of conceptualisation, scope and definition.** The most evident evolution in the research landscape is the changing relation between theology and religious studies, and the apparent shift toward a preference for the latter in the policy of several academic institutions, although the name 'religious studies' covers in fact a variety of

fields in the departments under review. Theology and religious studies may seem connected by their common object ‘religion’, but they often evolve in different domains, on rather diverse conceptual bases, sometimes in virtually opposite scholarly, disciplinary or ecclesiastical traditions and in diverging social and cultural settings. That makes it tricky business to evaluate them simultaneously, and it probably complicates their management at university level. To say it bluntly: religious studies are not simply theology with God left out, and theology is not simply religious studies plus the supernatural or the church. Judging from the whole set of reports submitted to the Committee, the disciplinary position of theology itself is shifting towards new kinds of relations with the humanities and the social sciences, whereas the religious studies, initially set up in an interdisciplinary position between theology, philosophy, the humanities and the social sciences, tend to evolve towards new disciplinary autonomy. Besides, there is a growing tendency to include subject matters such as religion, church, Christianity or the sacred as research topics in departments outside theology or religious studies as such: anthropology, history, ritual studies, sociology, psychology, philosophy – research fields that are only partially covered by the present evaluation. Yet, generally speaking, the Committee has noted a lack of reflection on the conceptual foundations of the disciplines under review, and on the scope and definition of the research fields concerned. Most research is rather empirically based, not conceptually. Moreover, the place of scholarship in the training programmes of ministers and priests (pastors) who constitute part of the student body in the field of theology, remains unclear. Finally, the general focus of the research is on Europe, principally the Netherlands, now also including Islam, a geographical limitation apparently taken for granted. Very little research goes beyond Europe’s boundaries. Although this limitation often plays in favour of ‘societal relevance’, from a conceptual point of view it needs reflection and justification. Therefore the Committee would strongly recommend more meta-level reflection on what the study of religion has meant and would have to mean in the different (inter)disciplinary settings concerned by this evaluation.

4. **Continuity and innovation.** The Netherlands experience at this moment a cultural redefinition of its identity, of which the repeated changes of the scholarly world are a challenging, sometimes harsh reflection. In this context, a general tendency, including in the field of scholarly research on religion, is apparently to cut oneself off from the past, as if one must be ashamed of Christianity and theology. This basically counter-denominational attitude seems (unconsciously) corrected by adding a surplus of Islamic studies. With regard to this point, the Committee wonders whether in the current research input of the departments taken together the place of Islam is not overestimated. The Committee is in particular concerned about the future of Biblical studies in the Netherlands, by lack of funding. Will Bible study keep its strong place in the future, now Islamic Quran is added?
5. **The future of academic theology.** Religion was traditionally taken for granted as a legitimate research topic in the Dutch university system and its study in an academic setting was considered as self-relevant, because of the formerly dominant place of the churches in the social and political organisation of the country. The slower or quicker switch of theological departments towards religious studies should be a warning that a profound modification of the Dutch religious landscape is under way, and that it will have repercussions on the maintenance of theology as an autonomous discipline. Proof are the funding problems apparently experienced already above average by many researchers in theology. Taking together all the evolutions mentioned in the reports, the



Committee apprehends a gradual disappearance of theology as an autonomous discipline in the public Dutch university system. Many reasons may be invoked: the downfall of ecclesiastical commitment, the fall of student numbers, the changes in everyday religiosity as a cultural phenomenon, the need for comparative studies, or the rise of Islam and other non-Christian religions in the public space. Although the institutional reshufflings mentioned above are certainly performed with the best intentions, the virtual absence of a broad national reflection on the fundamentals of the theological discipline makes academic theology a potential victim of financial cuts and a ready object of accommodations to the issues of the day, certainly well-intended but from a scholarly viewpoint often inappropriate. It is important for theology to be present in secular universities. It has a very positive role to play in providing reflective enquiry into fundamental questions of human nature and existence, and in exploring the approaches to those questions within one or more major and historically crucial religious traditions. Theology has therefore to be conserved as an autonomous discipline with its own theory-building and methodology, independently of the external approach of religion by religious studies and of its more instrumental use for ministerial training, and also irrespective of the commitment to church policies. In fact, however, much research in theology is too inward-directed: a greater dialogue with the wider world is necessary, and even compulsory. Moreover, theology should not be too descriptive and cannot cover everything and everywhere: it needs to make clearer choices and, starting from a strong disciplinary sense of identity, engage with other humanities and with the sciences in order to interact with them in a spirit of interdisciplinary openness. Therefore, the Committee suggests that the Dutch universities commit themselves in a concerted action to the permanent preservation of at least one (but, for the sake of a fruitful competition and of the necessary diversification of scholarly traditions, preferably more than one) full-fledged faculty or department of theology as a discipline with a broad range of specialisations, open to any form of interdisciplinary research and cooperation, and capable to maintain or store the international reputation Dutch research in theology is now at risk of slowly losing. A solution, that would also help to overcome an unproductive divide between theology and religious studies, is the creation of a **Divinity school** which would function as a training institute, provide church service and continuing education, maintain the links with denominational institutes, etc.

6. **Confessional theology.** While the general interest in theology is waning, the Committee is especially concerned about the eventuality of a complete disappearance from the Netherlands of the confessionally shaped academic theology as represented by the PThU, which was common in Europe for a millennium. Whatever the decision of the PThU concerning its relocation and future cooperation with other universities may be, all those who are responsible for the further development of religious and theological academic education and research in the Netherlands, should feel an obligation to care for its survival, under the condition of a close cooperation between community-bound ecclesial studies and independent scholarship. Given the rather poor results in quality at some of the church-committed institutes, the Committee estimates that there should be a place for one church-committed theological university of sufficient scholarly level.
7. **Theology and the churches.** The Committee noted several occasions in which the commitment of theological research to church supervision had become problematic. Commitment from the side of the university takes mostly the form of ‘critical’ or ‘sympathetically critical’ support, but churches may show a less understanding attitude, limiting theological research to its instrumental role for the training of their ministers. Similarly, church-bound and societal, popular publications are useful and even necessary

for the benefit of the church and religion, but only when written in Dutch. For taking them into consideration, they must be research-based. It is therefore important to achieve in the institutes a good balance in the output between academic publications and the valorisation of knowledge in clerical organisations, consistent with the mission and objectives of the specific institute or research programme.

8. Problems of **output measurement**. The Standard Evaluation Protocol (SEP), followed in this Evaluation procedure, stipulates that information should be provided on the number of articles in the top 10% and top 25% journals, but an authoritative list of such journals for the humanities in the Netherlands does not exist. Recently, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) has contended in an advisory report that a national classification of journals, publishers, and books series in the humanities is required. As of January 2012, the Universities of Groningen, Utrecht and Amsterdam are cooperating in compiling a national list with rankings of journals in the field of religious studies and theology, and Groningen wishes to expand this with a ranked list of publishers and academic series, in line with the advice of the KNAW report. The Committee agrees that book chapters in peer-reviewed series should count as fully academic publications, equivalent with articles in peer-reviewed journals. A specific problem is the monograph, i.e. the autonomous scholarly book by one or more authors. They play a significant role in the humanities, including theology, and the social sciences, and are internationally – in Europe, and still more in the USA – considered of major importance for the advancement of scholarship and compulsory for the scholars' careers. Therefore, in order to correctly assess the quality of the research output of the individual scholars and the research teams, a measure of the quality and impact of monographs should be developed, e.g. with the aid of book reviews or by considering the book's peer-review and/or its publication by a reputable academic publisher. Quite recently, the KNAW-based "Young Academy" of junior scholars has produced its own report on this matter. It contains a strong plea in favour of a real differentiation of output measurement per discipline. In theology and the humanities, and in some sectors of the social sciences, books or book chapters, formally refereed, group-monitored or submitted to an extended editing panel, many of them published outside of the book series of purely academic publishers, play for instance a different role from that in medicine and the sciences. They should be evaluated and honoured at their own merit and the specific significance they have for the advancement of national and international research. A too narrow article-bound evaluation does no justice to the nature of the research output in the humanities nor to the specific relation between discipline-bound scholarship and the dissemination of its results among a broader public or their reception in other types of disciplines.
9. With regard to the quality of the research output, the Committee is aware of the debate about **scholarly integrity**, fraud and plagiarism in research that has recently pervaded the Dutch world of science and scholarship. However, it hasn't met examples of scholarly attitudes or research output that should be blamed in this respect. On the contrary, as a whole Dutch scholars in theology and religious studies appear as honest, hard-working, committed and self-conscious partners in the landscape of academic research.
10. Some **concerns about the future**. Finally, the Committee wants to signal some general problems in this field of research that require action or repair. The most important is that of the ageing staff, and the lack of *Nachwuchs*, especially in theology. The second one is that of funding of research, in particular at the smaller universities. Generally speaking, funding from the so-called second (NWO) and third *geldstroom* is getting more difficult for the humanities and theology. Finally, the Committee has noted that many visiting,

extraordinary, or church-committed professors perform some form of research in the margin of the university system, without being well inserted into their research programmes. Similarly, theology in particular attracts a huge number of *buitenpromovendi*, i.e. PhD dissertation students, many of them of a more advanced age and with a professional career, who are not or only marginally enrolled or submitted to the university's supervision. One should look for a general way of inserting them into the training system, survey the quality of their work, and profiting from their experience. NOSTER could play a more important role in this respect.



### 3. Theological Universities Apeldoorn and Kampen

#### 3A. Institute level

##### 1. The institute

The *Theologische Universiteit van de Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* (Theological University of the Christian Reformed Churches in Apeldoorn, TUA) and the *Theologische Universiteit van de Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt)* (Theological University of the Reformed Churches (Liberated) in Kampen, TUK) have documented their academic research in a combined self-assessment report for this review.

The TUA and TUK are legally designated as institutions for academic education and research and have the right to grant the academic degrees of Bachelor, Master and Doctor in Theology. In 2002 the boards of the institutions decided to merge all activities relating to academic research, while the educational curricula remained separate. The research takes place in joint research groups.

Both universities are ecclesiastical institutions and their most important task is the training of church ministers in an academic environment. They serve as seminaries for their respective churches, both of which are firmly rooted in the Reformed tradition. The main areas of research are biblical studies, systematic theology, ministerial practice and church history. The research as a whole is conducted from a Reformed theological perspective.

In order to participate in the broader scholarly discourse, the Universities have become extensively involved in research networks both within and outside the Reformed Churches, nationally and internationally.

The research submitted for this review is organised in three programmes:

1. Biblical Studies: *Historical Processes and Revelation*.
2. Systematic Theology: *Renewal and Reconsideration from the Sources. In Search of a Relevant Reformed Systematic Theology for the 21st Century*.
3. Church History and Church Policy: *Office and hermeneutics in historical context*.

The research intends to contribute to the development of theological scholarship from a Reformed perspective in the context of the 21st century. In this way both Universities want to serve church and society on the basis of and with the gospel of Jesus Christ. The research is conducted in obedience to the Word of God, as given in Scripture. The Universities consider themselves bound by the Reformed confessions and on that basis stand in a critical solidarity with their own tradition.

Senior researchers formally spend 30% of their time on research and 70% on education and other responsibilities. There is a mutually beneficial relationship between teaching and research; the research also serves as training for preaching the gospel.

The Universities receive financial support from the Christian Reformed Churches (TUA) and the Reformed Churches (Liberated) (TUK). Until 2009, the costs associated with Kampen University were completely borne by the Reformed Churches (Liberated), but since 2009 40% of the budget comes from the Dutch government. For Apeldoorn University the government funding is 60% of the budget.

## **2. Quality and academic reputation**

The position of the TUA and the TUK is different from the general universities in that they are responsible not only to the Dutch government but also to their respective churches. Also, they are both small institutions compared to the general universities. Their boards can act independently because there is no separate faculty level; the two universities each have only one faculty.

The general circumstances and level of these institutions are comparable to that of American seminaries such as Calvin Theological Seminary and Westminster Theological Seminary. Although there is no formal cooperation with these institutions, several researchers in Apeldoorn and Kampen have good relations with their colleagues in Grand Rapids and Philadelphia. Within Europe the TUA and TUK cooperate with the Evangelical Theological Faculty (ETF) in Louvain and with various smaller seminaries in several countries. In South Africa, there are institutional relations with the theological faculties of Northwest University in Potchefstroom and with the University of the Free State in Bloemfontein.

The researchers regard their common doctrinal basis as a stimulus for collaboration and discussion. The shared drive for the proclamation of the gospel means that they maintain a wider interest in the broad projects carried out at both institutions. Another strength is the firm reliance on primary sources combined with an appropriate knowledge of the languages (such as the classical and Semitic languages and modern languages).

The self-assessment report states that more collaboration within the research groups and a greater degree of coherence and focus in the research programmes is needed. The total quantity of research time available is small and dispersed, because each research group has only a few senior members who can spend 30% of their time on research, and because many researchers split up too much of their time into too many projects. The programmes are still too broad; they are descriptive but not prescriptive enough for new research projects.

In the view of TUA and TUK, more collaboration is also needed with other theological research organisations in the Netherlands but also (and especially) abroad. Although some individual scholars have an excellent international network, other scholars tend to stay in the safe haven of their own university or similar institutes in other countries. There is not enough discussion with researchers from other universities in scientific journals, because the researchers favour the immediate presentation of their results to a wider public and do not put enough effort into publishing their articles in international peer-reviewed journals.

The report also states that research in practical theology should have a prominent place in the research of both universities, but attempts to set up this type of research were not successful, mainly because the researchers were too involved with practical ecclesiastical problems or university duties.

### **Assessment/remarks**

Given the small size of the research groups of the two institutions, the merger of their research capacity in 2002 and the measures taken for the enhancement of the research quality have been good and wise decisions, with positive results. The reshuffling of the common research programmes in 2012 into three less traditional research lines may provide some relaxation of the strong ties with the church orthodoxy and should allow the TUA/TUK to widen its intellectual horizon. The Committee agrees with the remark in the self-assessment report that a great deal of the output seems more descriptive than prescriptive. Yet, more than other theological research centres in the Netherlands, the TUA/TUK evidently experiences an apparently growing tension

between the non-academic mission of their mother institutions, i.e. the respective churches and in particular their Synods (although they do not interfere directly into academic research), on the one hand, and the academic level of their scholarly research on the other. Although the self-assessment speaks of a habit of ‘critical solidarity’ of the scholars with their own tradition, this may easily come into conflict with the basic requirement that “research as a whole is conducted from a Reformed theological perspective.”

Quite clearly, for instance, the theological orientations adopted by the TUA/TUK researchers or imposed upon them hamper any serious and structural form of national cooperation within the Dutch university network. They may easily privilege an unsuitable form of inward-directedness and motivate the research institute for a flight toward foreign partners of exactly the same confessional persuasion. The Committee is not convinced that in the specific TUA/TUK situation the privileged choice for foreign (often intercontinental, mostly neo-Calvinistic) research partners is a sound and in the long run a viable solution. The legitimacy of the institute’s quality research has first of all to be recognized by its immediate competitors on a national or European scale; the scholarly world is wider than the confessional world. The Committee would therefore advise to widen at the same time and at the same rate the institute’s national research network and the cooperation with other Dutch or European research institutes. Moving the research institute to the neighbourhood of a general university would in this perspective probably be a first, fruitful step.

### **3. Resources**

The TUA and TUK have a growing awareness that external funding is necessary in order to improve research volume and output. Because they could always rely on the financial support of the churches, and had a low level of expectation regarding fundraising for theological projects from the national research funding organisations, researchers seldom tried to acquire money for projects and programmes through competitive funds. In the review period only three PhD projects were externally funded. The total research input in 2011 was 15.2 full-time equivalents; there were 9 external PhD students in 2011.

More than half of the senior researchers at both universities are sixty years or above and will have retired at the time of the next research assessment. The self-assessment report describes this age distribution as a serious threat, but also states that the coming retirement of many senior researchers in the next few years opens the door to a recruitment policy with more emphasis on research qualities. In 2011 four postdoctoral fellows were appointed (2.2 fte).

### **Assessment/remarks**

The Committee sees the funding problem as one of the main risks for the research quality of TUA/TUK in the long run. In spite of the real possibilities to acquire some small-scale private funding from church-committed foundations or even the occasional wealthy individual, larger projects and programmes need the help of national funding agencies, which are and will be more and more reluctant to finance confessionally inspired research, even on ‘neutral’ themes. A strategy of cooperation with non-committed or otherwise accepted research institutes elsewhere seems therefore inevitable for a sound development of the centre’s quality research.

Moreover, perhaps more than the sister institutions, the TUA/TUK has a very serious *Nachwuchs* problem: the tenured staff is ageing, and younger research associates either seem to be rather scarce or tend to be engaged by the service of their church. Besides, most of the external PhD’s do not seem to be a serious option because of their age or their own ecclesial perspectives in foreign countries. It is quite possible that retirements will free some places for external quality candidates, but the consequence might be a lower commitment to the founding churches; in the

Committee's view, this would ask for a thorough previous reflection on the very character of the institute's research.

#### **4. Productivity**

The self-assessment report states that the available research time is dispersed over four research groups that each have only a few senior members who can spend 30% of their time on research. The quantity of the output of too many researchers was insufficient, and too many researchers spent too much time on writing for the general public.

In the review period, the total number of publications was 796. This includes 100 publications for the general public in the three years 2009-2011. Publications for the general public were not registered before 2009. The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 32, which is very good. The percentage of academic publications is 22%, which is satisfactory, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 7.1, which is good. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 14%, which is low.

There were 55 registered PhD students during the period under review; 12 of them were employed as (internal) PhD students (3 of them partly externally funded) and 43 worked on a free lance basis (*buitenpromovendi*). The total number of completed PhD's during the period under review was 28, of which 9 were internally funded PhD students (2 of them were partly externally funded), and 19 unfunded *buitenpromovendi*.

#### **Assessment/remarks**

Given the frequent encroachment of church service upon research time, the overall productivity of the TUA/TUK is quite honourable. But the number of refereed articles is far too small in the overall production, whereas the number of book chapters is relatively high. This is to be appreciated in relation to the intended ecclesial and societal relevance of much of the research output.

Some products at the interspace of scholarly research and popular dissemination, like the 2006 *Handbook of Dutch Church History*, have enjoyed a clear printing success. This book has been the object of an important conceptual discussion on church/religious history writing with regard to a similar, competing handbook written from a non-confessional background.

#### **5. Societal relevance**

The TUA and TUK are ecclesiastical institutions whose main task is the training of church ministers. This task is given precedence over the task of academic research. Moreover, the two churches tend to confer the professors with a high number of ecclesiastical duties. They are frequently appointed members of advisory Committees to the General Synod. They are sought-after speakers at ecclesiastical conferences and church meetings. Not infrequently they spend a lot of time writing articles for church periodicals. As a consequence, some find it hard or even impossible to spend 30% or more of their working hours in research.

Although the number of independent theological universities in the Netherlands has fallen rapidly, the situation elsewhere is very different. In many countries there is still a number of such seminaries some of which, particularly in America, rank highly in national rankings for theological research. In addition to this, the growing interest in Reformed theology, especially in its neo-Calvinistic guise, is growing in several international contexts, America, South Korea and Eastern Europe being prime examples. Research in Apeldoorn and Kampen could greatly benefit from more cooperation with researchers in these countries.



### **Assessment/remarks**

Seen from the perspective of the two churches concerned, the ecclesial relevance of an autonomous, church-bound research institute may seem high, and beyond doubt the TUA/TUK researchers have loyally served their churches with many conferences and publications for the general church public and the confessional media. Yet the Committee perceived several frictions between the ecclesiastical wish for doctrinal conformity and church service, on the one hand, and the scholarly wish for freedom of research, both intellectually and in time provisions, on the other. Quite clearly, the service of the church has until now often encroached upon the need for solid conditions for scholarly research achievements, as perceived by the scholars themselves and mentioned in the self-assessment or in the interviews.

### **6. Strategy for the future**

The self-assessment report states that in the review period it became increasingly clear that the organisational structure for research was not suitable. The chairmen of the research groups were not in a position to function as programme leaders. The boards of TUA and TUK have accepted the recommendations of the mid-term review Committee (2010) and have taken several measures to improve the research.

Starting in 2012, three new research groups will be formed in place of the four old groups. These new groups will no longer be formed along the lines of the classic fourfold division of theology in biblical studies, systematic theology, practical theology and church history, but in accordance with the strengths and the possibilities of the researchers who will have to take the lead for the next six years.

Three new programmes have been set up:

1. 'Who is Like You Among the Gods? The One and the Three in a Pluralistic Context', a programme in which biblical exegetes and systematic theologians work closely together.
2. 'Early Modern Reformed Theology: Church, Faith, and Theology in Reformation and Reformed Orthodoxy', a programme on Reformed historical theology (until 1750).
3. 'Reformed Traditions in Secular Europe', a programme set up by scholars engaged in research on practical theology, public theology and theological ethics.

The appointed leaders of these programmes will have substantially more authority than the current programme leaders. A suitable candidate for the position of research director has yet to be found. In the meantime the deans provide provisional leadership for all research activities.

From 2012 onwards, the boards have decided that all researchers have to spend 40% of their time to research instead of 30%. However, some scholars who are more qualified for other tasks, e.g. education, will receive less time for research and more time for other activities. Measures are also taken for individual researchers to ensure that they will not spend too much time on church and other duties. Clear standards have laid down the required amount of publications in accordance with the standards of the national research school NOSTER. Several measures have been taken to encourage researchers to cooperate with foreign colleagues and to visit international congresses. A postdoctoral fellow from abroad (Scotland) has been appointed for the first time in Kampen.

The self-assessment report states that the researchers have taken up these challenges with most encouraging enthusiasm.

### **Assessment/remarks**

The main threat for the future of these research programmes may come from inside the confessional churches that support and partly finance them. Indeed, in the churches' eyes, the first mission of their two universities is education for the service of the church itself, and they show virtually no drive towards scholarly research. Yet the Committee has been struck by unshaken confidence shown in the TUA/TUK reports and by their universities' delegates in the future of theology as an autonomous, confessional discipline, even in spite of diverging trends in many other Dutch university settings and in Dutch society as a whole. In the changing religious landscape of the post-secular Netherlands and the wider world, this conviction might be a strong asset of the TUA/TUK for the attraction of church-bound scholarly research, as might be the rising interest in neo-Calvinistic thought and belief as perceived in Dutch society. However, this will certainly not facilitate the forms of funding from outside the churches and by independent funding agencies which in the present have become compulsory for the development of internationally and even nationally excellent and competitive research programmes, guided by an interdisciplinary concern and methodological innovation.

In actual fact, the future of these research programmes appears to depend very much on the personal achievements and organisational skills of some programme leaders, and this dependency is structurally increased by the new 2012 programme reshuffling. Given this situation, and the rather important portion of church-bound financing, the real future of these programmes remains uncertain and unclear. The fact that until now (i.e. the meeting with the Committee) no research director for the new structure has been found is in the Committee's eyes an ominous sign for the TUA/TUK's future as a full-fledged research centre. The TUA/TUK rightly boasts of a range of international contacts and collaborators, and attracts a relatively high number of external PhD students, but all this remains essentially enclosed within the confessional world of Reformed theology in its strict interpretation. In the Committee's vision, there is a strong need for a diversification of the contacts and forms of collaboration and competition outside the narrow boundaries of Reformed theology in the sense as promoted by the two founding churches, including collaboration with the 'big sisters' in the Netherlands, but also internationally. There certainly should be a place for a church-committed theological research institute in the Netherlands, but the Committee doubts whether in the long run the autonomous position of the TUA/TUK research centre should and can be maintained.

### **7. PhD training and supervision**

The TUA and TUK attach particular significance to the training of PhD candidates. They have joined NOSTER, the Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion, which offers rigorous courses for PhD students. Most PhD students have followed these courses, although some historical research students have been sent to networks focused on training for PhD students in general history.

The PhD students receive training in all relevant theological disciplines. They receive a thorough methodological training, which is regarded as useful within the context of wider theological research.

Almost all funded PhD students have obtained their doctorates, or are expected to finish their research successfully, within the appropriate time frame. Additional support is provided for the completion of the dissertation in order to speed up the last stages of doctoral study.

### **Assessment/remarks**

Reports from the graduates were generally very positive, also on the recently implemented changes. But they confirmed the Committee's impression that future research at the TUA/TUK

will be greatly improved by a multiplication and diversification of the contacts with the scholarly world outside these two institutions, including training, seminars, and meetings with other students in theology, and by the adoption of a less strictly traditional curriculum.



### ***3B. Programme level***

Programme 1 (TUA/TUK 1): **Historical Processes and Revelation**  
Programme director: Prof. dr. P.H.R. van Houwelingen  
Research input 2011 (tenured): 1.8 fte

Assessments:                      Quality:            2.5  
   Productivity:       2  
   Relevance:        3  
   Viability:         2

The programme aims to make a contribution to the exegetical, hermeneutical and theological exploration of the Old and New Testaments. The leading concern is how to do justice to both the historical-literary dimensions and the religious function of the biblical text in the context of the church and Christian faith. It strives to serve both the scholarly community and the church. This explains the comparatively large number of publications aimed at the general public, both within and outside the research programme.

The research programme consists of two sub-programmes: Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament sub-programme has two main areas of interest: (a) investigation of texts ('Early and Late Prophets'), (b) investigation of theological themes ('Theology'). In the New Testament sub-programme three areas of interest can be distinguished: (a) Apostolic Period (general), (b) Luke, (c) Paul.

Attached to the programme is a subsidiary programme consisting mainly of projects dealing with relevant languages: Biblical Hebrew and Syriac (Peshitta).

#### *Quality*

The programme seems to lack a thorough reflection on a hermeneutical and systematic theological level. The relation between historical reliability and theological truth is not really made clear. The coherence of the programme is rather low; it is reflected only in one of the key publications. Although all key publications are solid and add to our understanding, and some are even internationally visible, they also show some methodological weaknesses. The entire range of relevant research is not always recognized, and sometimes an apologetic or even biased tendency is visible. It seems that the academic discussion is not always openly pursued because the ecclesial positions prevailing in the related churches are taken into consideration. It seems that no efforts to acquire external funding were made.

#### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 22.2, which is medium. The percentage of academic publications is 24%, which is low, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 5.2, which is also low. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 14%, which is again low.

The overall productivity is quite good and consistent, but the rate of peer reviewed articles is rather low. The professional publications exceed the academic ones. The productivity suffered under the unclear and limited authority of the research board of the two institutions, and under the staff's duties in the church. The number of external PhD students is 11.

#### *Relevance*

Because of the close connection of both universities with their churches, there is a good transfer of academic results and insights into these societal organizations. The universities serve for further education of officials and members of both churches. Their significance for the general public seems to be rather restricted.

#### *Viability*

The size of the group, which comprises the Old and the New Testament scholars of both universities, is rather small (on average 2.6 fte research staff). In relation to this, the number of 38 different research projects seems much too diversified. Prof. Kwakkel will move with 0.5 fte to Aix-en-Provence. This loss was compensated by the tenured appointment of Dr. K. van Bekkum as an assistant-professor with 0.7 fte, which means that the group is strengthened. In the new programme “Who is Like You among the Gods? The One and the Three in a Pluralistic Context” biblical exegetes and systematic theologians are expected to cooperate. This shows some flexibility and an increasing interdisciplinary effort. In its present form, however, the programme sounds even more fastidious than the old one. The committee is not sure whether it can really be elaborated by the rather small research group, which means that the viability of the future research group is not beyond any doubt.

#### *Conclusion*

It seems that the academic potential of both theological universities is not fully unfolded. Efforts should be made to foster their academic standing. Special programmes as the Hebrew Bible and the Peshitta should be more developed in cooperation with other universities. More international cooperation beyond the related ecclesial institutes seems to be necessary. The programme should be developed in a direction which corresponds with the profile of the two universities as ecclesiastically bound institutions but the churches should exonerate the academic teachers from some of their church duties. They should be careful not to limit the researchers’ academic freedom, needed for developing new ideas and insights. The PhD students should be encouraged to recognize the entire range of research and exegesis performed on the Bible.

Programme 2 (TUA/TUK 2): **Renewal and Reconsideration from the Sources: In Search of a Relevant Reformed Systematic Theology for the 21st Century**

Programme director: Prof. dr. B. Kamphuis

Research input 2011 (tenured): 0.7 fte

Assessments:	Quality:	2.5
	Productivity:	3
	Relevance:	2
	Viability:	2

The group's origin lies in a shared conviction concerning the worth of the Reformed tradition. At the same time, the group saw the necessity of examining and re-establishing this tradition through a conversation with contemporary theologians. This programme strives at the study of dogmatic and ethical questions in a manner relevant to the contemporary challenges by which the Reformed tradition is critically confronted. The programme is oriented at the Biblical text as both the source and norm of Reformed thought. In that light, it views the discipline of theology as an aid to both understanding and obeying Scripture in new situations and contexts. The embedding in an ecclesial context reminds the researchers of the sense in which their work must be relevant, whilst also facilitating the dissemination of that research in a non-scientific context.

#### *Quality*

This group has just undergone a major re-structuring, and became obsolete in the form it takes in this review. But in the period under consideration, the programme aimed to study Reformed traditions 'in the light of contemporary challenges'. There is not much evidence that this aim has been achieved. The programme in Practical Ethics apparently proved unsuccessful (according to the self-assessment report). The texts on Dogmatics which were provided were certainly scholarly, but did not really relate to contemporary challenges, or take them very seriously. While being well-researched and containing original discussion, both the language used and topics chosen were very internal to a specific take on the Reformed tradition. The scholarly quality of the works not really show engagement with the work of contemporary theologians from other traditions or with secular challenges to Christian faith. As the report states, more publications in peer-reviewed journals are needed to establish a stronger research focus.

#### *Productivity*

The overall productivity of the group is high, but there are no peer reviewed publications. Eight PhD students have completed their doctorates between 2006 and 2012.

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 40.7, which is very high. The percentage of academic publications is 19%, which is low, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 7.8, which is medium. There are no refereed articles among the academic publications.

#### *Relevance*

The relevance of publications is high, if considered at a popular level and in relation to church members. It is quite low, however, when peer-reviewed academic material and wider societal relevance is considered. Staff members spend much time in church-related activities, and if this is considered, the relevance would be much higher. However, in the light of the declared aim to

reach a wider audience with first-rate research projects, the scoring is lower. The quality of the material submitted shows however, that this could be remedied fairly readily.

#### *Viability*

The group is small and it is difficult to establish clear leadership in a joint institution. This is acknowledged in the report, and it is vital to have an overall research director with the authority to motivate and monitor the research activities of staff. The institution has had to show great flexibility in the last few years, but it is making great efforts to re-structure in a positive way.

#### *Conclusion*

It is a strength of the group that it is rooted in a Reformed tradition with clear goals. It is very small, but has a niche market and financial support from the churches. If this continues, the future is positive. The group is rapidly changing, with three new programmes replacing the older structure assessed in this review. It is slightly worrying that one of the new programmes, on ethics and practical theology, is one which failed to be instituted in the past. The coupling of Dogmatics with Biblical studies is also very difficult to achieve, and – despite Reformed stress on the Bible – is not clearly evidenced in research so far. Positively, the training of PhD students, and stress on the study of texts in the original languages is a valuable contribution to theological studies. If close contacts with other universities, nationally and internationally, can be developed, the programme would be better placed to achieve its aim of cultivating an open and communicative attitude to wider cultural forces, while being rooted in its own tradition.



Programme 3 (TUA/TUK 3): **Office and Hermeneutics in Historical Context**  
Programme director: Prof. dr. H.J. Selderhuis  
Research input 2011 (tenured): 1,4 fte

Assessments:                      Quality:            3  
  Productivity:   3  
  Relevance:     4  
  Viability:      2

The focus of the research programme is on the Church history of the Reformation, and the impact of the Reformation on the Reformed Churches in various political and social (European) contexts; background of the Reformation, religious settlements in the Netherlands in the 15th–18th centuries; Dutch Protestantism in particular, as well as developments in the Reformed Church during the 19th and 20th centuries, along with their influence on the individual and community.

The programme consists of three spearheads:

1. Dutch Church History in the early modern Period (the impact of the Reformation on the early modern Dutch (church)history; the development and formation of traditions during and subsequent to the Reformation: Bible, Church and belief 1500-1750);
2. Theology and history of the Reformation (outside the Netherlands, European context);
3. The Reformed Church in Dutch culture and society of the 19th and 20th century (the Reformed tradition in the Netherlands after 1800 in response to important 19th- and 20th-century theological and cultural issues).

#### *Quality*

The programme has produced solid research in Calvinist sources, including contributions to the collected works of Calvin, the theology of Jacob Arminius, and the collection of Reformed confessions. Is this a clear focus or a limited scope? Compelling research questions do not seem to be formulated. Although the research is not defined by ecclesiastical standards but by historical methods, the importance of Reformed traditions is assumed as an implicit justification for editing Reformed texts and writing about Reformed theology.

Although the focus on Reformed churches suggests coherence, the proliferation of sub-projects, which reached as many as 47 during the period under review, raises the concern of control over research. Sub-projects were cancelled if they were not fruitful, but the principles for establishing sub-projects are not clear. Recognizing this problem of coherence, the group has reduced sub-projects to 24. Nevertheless, more work could be done in establishing control and identifying coherence of sub-projects.

#### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 39.2, which is very high. The percentage of academic publications is 24%, which is low, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 9.2, which is high. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 11%, which is low.

The programme has maintained a very good quantity of output for such a small research group. Although identified as a goal, the publication of refereed articles in high-impact international

journals did not seem to be a priority during the period under review. Relatively few articles in refereed journals were published compared to chapters in books. The period under review witnessed a decline in the number of external PhD students, from 16 to 9, although the number of 13 dissertations produced during the period suggests a very good productivity for a relatively small group of doctoral supervisors. The programme is actively involved in collaborative projects, such as the collection of Reformed confessions, the celebration of the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Reformation, and the staging of an exhibition; a major participation in three new research projects, among which the edition of the Acts of the Synod of Dordrecht and of works of Philippus Melanchthon, was prepared in the period under review.

#### *Relevance*

Relevance for society is primarily focused on serving the Reformed churches in the Netherlands and Europe, although public events, such as Reformation500 and the Calvin celebrations, have also engaged wider interest. The Committee was impressed by the research group's considerable activities in church communities, academic associations, and the website, *kerkrecht.nl*.

#### *Viability*

Academic leadership appears to be vested in one individual, Professor Selderhuis, who has produced, edited, or facilitated the publication of most of the key texts of the unit. The group might be too small to do what it wants to do. The change of the name of the research group from Church History and Church Polity Research Group to Early Modern Reformed Theology appears to signal a narrowing of the scope of research. In particular, nineteenth- and twentieth-century developments are now excluded from the research profile. Even if confined to Reformed early-modern church history and policy, the group could consider extending its scope and relevance beyond European churches. Evidence of this interest outside of Europe already appears in research on Dutch encounters with Islam in Indonesia, but perhaps more could be done in this regard.

#### *Conclusion*

As the research group acknowledges, "weaknesses outweigh the strengths." However, the self-evaluation has not produced a clear strategy for the way forward. Areas identified for improvement include organizational leadership, research coherence, research management, and resources. The programme aspires to an interdisciplinary approach, weaving together church, theological, and general history, but might explore possibilities for closer collaboration with researchers working on questions arising out of general history.

## 4. Protestant Theological University

### 4A. Institute level

#### 1. The institute

The Protestant Theological University (PThU) was established January 1, 2007. It has campus locations in Utrecht, Kampen and Leiden, and a Seminary (training institute) in Doorn. The PThU is the legal successor of the *Theologische Universiteit Kampen (Oudestraat) (TUK)*, the *Theologisch Wetenschappelijk Instituut (ThWI, Leiden and Utrecht)* and the *Evangelisch-Luthers Seminarium (ELS, Utrecht)*.

The mission of the PThU is to safeguard knowledge of religious practices, beliefs and sources in a way that provides useful insights into lived religion and contributes to responsible religious actions and behaviour and to competent leadership in the churches.

The vision of the PThU is to pursue national and international recognition as a well-respected academic institution for protestant theology, in particular as an institution that deals critically and creatively with the major contemporary shifts and challenges in the realm of faith and religion, church and society. In scholarship and teaching the PThU aims to be recognized for its theological study of the Christian Faith, and for its service of the churches in the world (in particular the protestant churches in The Netherlands).

In 2012, the PThU closes the locations in Utrecht, Kampen and Leiden, and moves to Amsterdam and Groningen. This means that the PThU will be located in the academic environment of two broad universities (VU University Amsterdam and RUG in Groningen), and will co-operate with two faculties of theology. In this transition, the organization of the research is regarded as a major anchorage for the identity and unity of the PThU.

The main strategic objectives of the PThU are to practise theology on an academic level on the one hand, and ecclesial and societal relevance on the other, based on thorough knowledge of religious sources and traditions and their current interpretations. The research is both descriptive and constructive, taking into account a multiplicity of theoretical perspectives, such as a phenomenological perception, hermeneutical awareness, conceptual analysis, and intra- and interdisciplinary methods.

#### 2. Quality and academic reputation

In 2007, new programme leaders were asked to foster a climate of mutual understanding and cooperation and to write new research programmes, if possible in continuity with the programmes of the merging institutions. The research has been structured in three research groups: *Sources, Beliefs* and *Practices*. The programmes contributed to the identity of the PThU as an academic institution for protestant theology and the new organization of the research was an important step towards safeguarding an adequate research capacity in theology.

In line with the mission of the PThU each research programme engages in the interplay between contexts and sources, not only with respect to the past, but especially in view of the actual meaning and practices of the Christian religion. This overall concern is labelled as: *Revisiting Sources and Contexts*.

According to the self-assessment report, the Faculties of Theology of the VU-University Amsterdam and the University of Groningen will function from 2012 onwards as the primary

academic environment for the PThU. The faculties of theology of Berlin (Humboldt), Pretoria and Stellenbosch, and Princeton Theological Seminary are important international sparring partners, while other theological faculties and seminaries (especially in Asia and Africa) are important partners in terms of the contextual relevance of theology.

In 2011/12, an independent survey into the academic reputation of the PThU showed that the PThU is recognized as an academically sound theological university, committed to church and society, with a strong international orientation. The intrinsic value of the research is labelled in terms of 'critical support'. International contacts gave an even higher qualification than national contacts (8,1 versus 7 on a 10 point scale).

#### **Assessment/remarks**

The quality of the Biblical (Sources) group seems high, especially in Targum and Byzantine studies. The emphasis placed on ministerial training and on church-related programmes does slightly militate against the possibility of high-level ('scientific') research. The very wide spread of connections, with VU, RUG, and other institutes, may also tend to greater fragmentation. This points to the need for strong central leadership. Positively, international contacts are good, and programmes with Amsterdam and Groningen open up new opportunities for research.

#### **3. Resources**

The PThU aims at financing 15% of the total expenditure for research activities on the basis of secondary and tertiary financial sources. Three projects are funded by NWO (Jewish Targum in a Christian World; The Construction of a Catalogue of Byzantine NT Manuscripts; Theological, historical and political research into the legacy of Karl Barth). The Board encourages application for secondary funding (both on the national level of NWO and on the European level). In addition, in line with the specific theological identity of the PThU, the Board encourages tertiary funding. The Practices group acquired contract funding in 2007-2009.

The research input of the PThU in 2011 was 27.7 full-time equivalents, including 8.7 employed PhD students and 2.6 external Phd students.

Within 5-8 years from now many senior staff members will retire. In view of the declining numbers of students, governmental decisions on university funding, and the concentration of the PThU on two locations, the PThU regards it as important to recruit young staff and prepare them for leading positions in the near future.

#### **Assessment/remarks**

Given the constraints imposed on the institution, it is taking a very positive stance. With a sensitive use of the host universities' facilities, there is opportunity for innovative programmes, while retaining a distinctive church profile. This could finally present a positive profile.

#### **4. Productivity**

The total number of publications in the review period was 1840. This includes 352 conference papers, 382 professional publications and 466 popular publications.

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 23, which is medium. The percentage of academic publications is 27%, which is also medium, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 6.3, which is low. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 14%, which is low.

There were 70 registered PhD students during the period under review; 31 of them were employed as (internal) PhD students, 10 of them externally funded and 29 worked on a free lance basis (*buitenpromovendi*). The total number of completed PhD's during the period under review was 44, of which 12 were internally funded PhD students, 7 externally funded, and 25 unfunded *buitenpromovendi*.

Further details of the productivity are discussed in the programme assessments.

### **Assessment/remarks**

The main problem is the balance between academic research and church relevance and ministerial training. In the light of this, productivity seems high. But time for research must be formally structured, and for group seminars.

### **5. Societal relevance**

The PThU is the official training institute for the clergy of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands (PCN). The PThU takes responsibility for the academic competence of the religious leadership in the churches, in a society that is increasingly secular and religiously diverse.

Religious leaders, ministers and teachers are important stakeholders, and the PThU takes responsibility for their academic and professional reputation. This results in academic and professional publications and conferences to support these stakeholders. Professionals in NGO's and in the public arena also function as stakeholders, especially in matters of ethics, religious identity and diversity, and societal integration. PThU scholars contribute to the debates in publications, conferences, Committees, and the media.

Based on their international and ecumenical contacts researchers study global developments in religious communities as well as national trends. The research output comprises (1) systematic studies in medical ethics and human dignity, (2) studies on religious rituals and on religion & art, (3) the international Barth-network on challenges in Church & Society, (4) dissertations on contextual theology and empirical studies on lived faith, (5) a biblical study on gnosis and dogma, (6) studies on migrant churches and revival churches.

The PThU has developed dual PhD projects in cooperation with faith-based-organizations and church related institutions.

Cooperation with the missionary and social development programme of the PCN (*KerkinAktie*) resulted in conferences on "religion and conflict" (in Jakarta, Indonesia) and on "Églises de réveil" (in Kinshasa, Congo). In preparation is a conference in Hong Kong (2012) on "Church life in an urban, secular and multi-religious context" (with participants from mainland China).

The PThU staff is responsible for the Continuing Education of the ministers of the Protestant Church in The Netherlands (PCN). In 2010/11 the PThU and the PCN developed a new system of continuing education, which is compulsory for all ministers of the PCN.

Staff members play a role in the media on a regular or incidental basis. The research groups produce a large number of popular publications. The PThU organizes various conferences and study meetings for ministers and for a wider audience. Professors of the PThU serve as advisors to the synod of the PCN.

### **Assessment/remarks**

The mid-term review appraised the popular publications and remarked that a more apparent distinction should be made between research based valorisation and general reflections on present day issues. This remark is still valid. It concerns the relevance for the church and for the wider public, versus academic and international standing. The programme leaders have stated their intention to establish some sort of division of labour, so that some faculty members would concentrate on one area and some on the other. This is very helpful, for the Institute is strong in both areas, and specialisation would enable both areas to flourish, and avoid any confusion of aim and audience for publications and research activities.

### **6. Strategy for the future**

As mentioned under 1. and 2., the Faculties of Theology of the VU-University Amsterdam and the University of Groningen will function from 2012 onwards as the primary academic environment for the PThU. This strategic choice was made to maintain a solid basis for the PThU for the next generation. The concentration in Amsterdam and Groningen makes it possible to meet the targets while facing the decline of staff and students in the Netherlands. Cooperation with the broader faculties of theology and religious studies is expected to strengthen the research in terms of academic infrastructure and methodology.

The new research environments are also expected to offer promising networks for secondary and tertiary research funding. Strategic alliances with the Tilburg (Catholic) School of Theology will be intensified (e.g. on Byzantine Manuscripts). On an international level the PThU will use its institutional contacts to form interdisciplinary research projects and to contribute to the international network of Christian Theology.

The PThU intends to strengthen its reputation in academic theology in two directions: (1) PThU scholars should demonstrate high quality in their academic work, (2) PThU scholars contribute to present-day issues in church and society. Although the mission of the PThU requires that each scholar takes responsibility for religious and societal valorisation, programme leaders and Board intend to differentiate in the division of tasks for individual scholars.

### **Assessment/remarks**

This is a new beginning for the institution, and there will obviously be difficulties of integrating, especially with the very different faculties at Amsterdam and Groningen. The stated strategy seems sound, although not everything can be done at once! There is a place in the Netherlands for a committed theological university, and it is important that it should be clearly seen to be both committed and open to challenges, compatibilities, and interactions with the wider culture, and internationally. Perhaps one important thing is to sustain close and friendly relations with the Amsterdam and Groningen faculties, to ensure that diverse sub-programmes do not fall into isolation, and to avoid overloading staff with too many diverse responsibilities.

### **7. PhD training and supervision**

The PThU has a Graduate School with the aim to stimulate, intensify and monitor the training of PhD students. The objective is to contribute to the quality of theology and to educate qualified staff for faculties, professional schools, churches, institutes and organizations. The Graduate School offers seminars, colloquia, expert meetings, lectures and workshops. These meetings are supervised by the programme leaders of the research groups. The PThU organizes two one-day conferences in March and June and a two-day conference in December each year. Leading scholars are invited to illustrate how research processes develop and become successful.

The regular PhD students are members of NOSTER and also participate in the NOSTER training programme. Incidentally external PhD students also participate in NOSTER courses. On a regular basis foreign PhD-students who work in a sandwich-construction are invited to stay six weeks in the Netherlands and they participate in GS meetings.

In 2011, the School officially registered 80 PhD students (18 regular and 62 external PhD students). The majority of the external PhD students are employed as ministers or work in faith-based organizations. After graduation, PhD students usually also find employment in churches and faith-based organizations.

In order to recruit a new generation of PhD students, the PThU launched an honours programme for excellent students of the three year MA programme in 2009. These students follow 30 ECTS in the Graduate School: 15 ECTS as a substitute for the regular curriculum (i.e. courses in theory of science, methodology and disciplinary knowledge) and 15 ECTS specialization (extra curriculum) with a supervising professor. Qualified students with an MA degree and an honours certificate can apply for a research grant of six months. During that period they write and develop a research plan for a PhD thesis. PThU students with an approved research plan and external students with a research MA may apply for an PhD position. In the academic year 2010 – 2011 there were 19 registered students in the honours programme.

#### **Assessment/remarks**

Reports from graduate students were extremely positive, and the Graduate School seems to be fulfilling its function well. It may be of benefit to seek greater integration of external graduates, if this is possible.





## ***4B. Programme level***

Programme 4 (PThU1):	<b>Scripture, Religious Identity, and Transformation (Research Group Sources)</b>
Programme director:	Prof. dr. Klaas Spronk
Research input 2011 (tenured):	2,7 fte
Assessments:	Quality: 4
	Productivity: 2
	Relevance: 3.5
	Viability: 4

The programme studies the development and transformation of religious identities in the history of Christianity and Judaism. The three notions of Scripture, Religious Identity, and Transformation lead the way as heuristic notions with interchanging foci. Research in Biblical studies, with its primarily literary and historical orientation, focuses on the Scripture as holy text in various contexts, understood as expression of Religious Identity and as directive for developments (Transformation) within Christianity and Judaism. Research in Church history, primarily oriented on society, religion and cultural historical aspects focuses on individuals and communities in their societal contexts, in which religious identity is developed and transformed – also determined by the Bible as holy text (Scripture).

The programme aims at reinforced mutual observation and influence of research in biblical studies and church history, which fits into the specific profile of a Protestant university, the sources being embedded in tradition. It comprises a wide area ranging from the Ancient Middle East, the Old and New Testament, Early Christianity, Judaism and early religious history of Western Europe to Protestantism in its European context. The programme purposely deals with a number of well-reflected and interdisciplinary foci in terms of the aforementioned heuristic notions. Scholars within the programme operate in the international academic arena, but are also active in the specifically Dutch academic context and the church.

### *Quality*

The programme combines Biblical exegesis and Church History in a creative manner. Insights from the history of Christian and Jewish interpretation of the Bible are used as well reflected hermeneutic tools for a further development of Biblical studies. The fruitful results of this approach can be seen in the excellent study of R. Roukema on Jesus, Gnosis, and Dogma. Not all key publications, however, are aligned to the programme and meet the highest standard. A strong research project on the Targumim, funded by the NWO, belongs to the programme. As the key publication of A. Houtman shows, it is at the forefront of this field. Another interesting NWO funded research project was started on Byzantine Bible manuscripts. The research group participates in three other interdisciplinary projects on a national and international level. It enjoys a very good leadership.

### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 17.5, which is low. The percentage of academic publications is 27%, which is medium, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 4.8, which is low. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 16%, which is medium.

The strategies for fostering the academic publications at the expense of the professional ones show some effect. Also the number of PhD students has been increased during the last two years. Both efforts can still be strengthened.

#### *Relevance*

The interaction with the churches and their officials is exemplary. A special programme for the further education of ministers is established. The activities towards the public still do not show the same degree of intensity and could be strengthened in the future (e.g. the committee recommends an exhibition of Byzantine manuscripts).

#### *Viability*

After a considerable institutional reorganization of the units which formed the PThU in 2007, the research group comprising the disciplines Biblical Studies and Church History has been well organized and directed. The group is strong enough to survive. There are, however, new chances and threats connected with the planned relocation of the PThU at Amsterdam and Groningen. On the one hand, the research of the group will surely be strengthened by a closer cooperation in Judaic and Qumran Studies performed at VU and RUG. On the other hand, the faculty of "Theology and Religious Studies" at the RUG could profit, for example, from the PThU's resources in Patristics, whereas the faculty of "Theology" at the VU would be able to benefit from PThU's resources in Old Testament Studies. In any case, the opportunity of a cooperation of the PThU with other disciplines of the humanities at the two universities is promising and would be advisable. A threat, however, is the division of the research group at two places, which could cause diverging commitments of its members. Other threats are the limited availability of academic positions for the coming generation and the growing dependence on external funding, which is difficult to acquire in this domain.

#### *Conclusion*

The programme 'Scripture, Religious Identity, and Transformation' of the PThU constitutes a very good research unit. It includes two excellent projects, which are or will become internationally important. Thus, it is important enough to survive and should be protected, when it will be relocated next to the Faculties of Theology and/or Religious Studies at Amsterdam and Groningen. In the Committee's view the PThU may have even better chances for survival as an undivided unit at Groningen, because the Faculty at the RUG is more focused on Religious Studies; the PThU could then become a kind of Theological Seminary or church-committed Divinity School at its side, a combination whose fecundity has already been proven in the USA.

Programme 5 (PThU 2): **Christian Faith in Changing Contexts  
(Research Group *Beliefs*)**  
Programme director: Prof. dr. M.M. Jansen  
Research input 2011 (tenured): 5.4 fte

Assessments:                      Quality:            3  
   Productivity:       3  
   Relevance:        3  
   Viability:         3

The research is aimed at constructive elucidation of Christian faith, its development in different historical contexts, carried on by people speaking and acting, in Western and non-Western cultures. This entails an on-going change of perspective: how to understand and interpret the world from the perspective of sources of Christian tradition, and how to understand these sources from the perspective of the world. In this entire field of dynamisms, differences and developments in cultures as well as in living Christian faith, theology has become an interpretative enterprise.

The group consists of several sub-disciplines, i.e. dogmatics, ethics, intercultural theology, missiology, philosophy, gender studies and church law. The research group has grown to adopt a shared hermeneutical approach to its systematic-theological task. It has interchange with PThU's group on biblical studies. The audiences being academia, church and wider society, questions are addressed that present themselves as urgent in one or more of these arenas.

#### *Quality*

The quality of the research of this group is internationally accepted as medium to high. One of its strengths is that it addresses fundamental questions of the modern (post-)secular society. Members of the group are well known in the national as well as international scenes of the discipline. They participate actively in academic theological discourses by organising high-level conferences and taking initiatives to set up a wide range of new sub-programmes. The senior researchers participate in editorial groups of outstanding Dutch publication forums. Although the group's activities are rather widely spread, its most important publications are focused on essential topics of systematic theology (e.g. the nature of God-talk; Kierkegaard). The group puts an emphasis on internationalisation of research through steady cooperation with non-European partners (like South Africa, Congo and others). In the future the group would benefit from an enlargement of these contacts by the inclusion of partners beyond the "family" of Reformed theology.

#### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 25.8, which is medium. The percentage of academic publications is 30%, which is medium, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 7.7, which is also medium. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 16%, which is again medium.

The productivity of the group resembles its quality. Publications make important contributions to the various disciplines involved. Some of them appear in major international peer-reviewed journals. Others are average in quality.

### *Relevance*

The high relevance of the Beliefs programme for Protestant church boards (leadership, advice, theological education) and congregations can be easily shown through the various involvements of the group members. It is recognizable that efforts are made to contribute to a broader audience by picking up general social, political, and ethical issues, and communicating their research results in popular media and social organisations. Nevertheless, the research programme's main stakeholders so far are the church communities. Its societal relevance would increase by trying to address chosen research topics ("burning issues") and developing answers more directed to a non-theological academic and political audience.

### *Viability*

From an organisational point of view, the Beliefs research group is the strongest among the three PThU groups (total research staff 11.2). It includes a reasonable number of PhD students, which has increased through the period under review. The members of the group are aware of the necessity to attract junior researchers as well as funding beyond the sources so far obtained.

### *Conclusion*

Seen from the context of theology's overall development at Dutch universities, this programme provides the chance to maintain systematic theological reflection on a high academic level without neglecting the secular social context in which it functions. The aim to preserve and develop coherence is fully recognized but will need continuous implementation. In the future, this programme, performed by a strong group of researchers, could well benefit from the restructuring of PThU as a whole. The particular way of cooperating without losing one's own identity will be decisive.

Programme 6 (PThU 3): **Practices of Faith in Socio-cultural Networks  
(Research Group *Practices*)**

Programme director: Prof. dr. Marcel Barnard

Research input 2011 (tenured): 4,9 fte

Assessments:

Quality:	4
Productivity:	3
Relevance:	4
Viability:	4

In this programme researchers from practical-theological disciplines and from the social sciences are working together. In a multidisciplinary approach practices of faith are the subject of empirical-theological investigation in their cultural and social contexts. The focus is on new, usually complex and fragmented developments in practices of faith.

The fading church boundaries and the mixture of traditional faith and new spirituality on the one hand, and a renewed emphasis on strict protestant practices of faith in varying degrees on the other, position practices of faith both within and outside the church in the narrow sense. The simultaneous movement of fluidisation and solidification of practices of faith is seen as characteristic of a network society. The programme's activities focus on two topics: a) worship and formation, b) community and care.

In terms of methodology, the research profile is empirical-theological: the empirical reality of the lived religion is investigated by means of instruments and concepts determined by a definitely protestant-theological stance as well as by social sciences, religious studies and the humanities. The programme distinguishes itself by its theological accentuation

#### *Quality*

The quality of this programme is rather high with regard to international recognition of publications as well as researchers. The programme's leader, Prof. Barnard, is an outstanding scholar in his field with a high national and international reputation in liturgical and ritual studies. A clear indicator to this is his extra research and teaching engagement at other universities within the Netherlands and abroad. Other strong and internationally well-known figures are senior researchers in the discipline such as Prof. Immink and Prof. De Roest. The publications address theological issues in an inspiring and interdisciplinary way and make substantial efforts to communicate practical theology with social sciences, anthropology and cultural studies, both on the level of content as well as in terms of methodology. Among the key publications really innovative masterpieces are to be found (Barnard, also Brouwer). The programme undoubtedly highly contributes to develop a PThU theology matching scholarly standards and cultural challenges. The leadership of the group in the past period provided a solid basis for high-ranking qualitative research.

#### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 25.7, which is medium. The percentage of academic publications is 24%, which is low, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 6.1, which is also low. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 25%, which is high.

The self-evaluation shows the good productivity of this programme, both in terms of absolute figures as well as considering the rate of refereed publications out of the academic output compared to the other PThU programmes. Some of the key publications (especially Barnard) appear in highest standard international as well as national journals of the discipline. Publications aiming at a broader audience should be linked more to academia. Also the number of defended PhD-theses deserves extension.

#### *Relevance*

The Practices programme has made continuous efforts to display and prove its relevance for leadership, advice and theological education of the Protestant church in the Netherlands. Beyond that, the group has made recognizable efforts to contribute to the discourse on religion and religious change for a broader audience. Researchers are involved in work for societal, educational, cultural and church institutions and thus extend their field in which knowledge is disseminated and acquired.

#### *Viability*

In the period under review, the research quality has clearly improved. Although the list of research group members is impressive, it is remarkable that this group has done excellent work on a relatively small basis of full-time researchers (including a large number of PhD students). Moreover, one of the former leading figures in PThU's practical theology, Prof. Immink, has been appointed rector of the whole institution. In fact, the strength of the group and thus the viability of the programme is highly dependent on a few of its members. The future rearrangements with partners at Groningen will show how this challenge is met, but the Committee is confident that the programme will be continued.

#### *Conclusion*

At this moment, the Practices programme belongs to the top quality group of practical theological research projects in the Netherlands. It fosters a type of research on religious and Christian practice that is methodically open to interdisciplinary academic research. In the future, this programme could benefit from the restructuring of PThU as a whole. For the "Community and Care" subgroup especially, the RUG theological faculty's research activities on secular care ("Meaning, Tradition and Change") could provide an excellent context and even a cooperation partner. It will be the responsibility of PThU as a whole to maintain substantial theological research on practice while also engaging actively in interdisciplinary academic work.



The research combines descriptive and normative aspects of the study of religions and religious communities. While theology is regarded as the academic study of a particular religious tradition by researchers who consider themselves in some sense as belonging to that tradition, religious studies does not necessarily imply a similar commitment, although the VU Faculty also proclaims a committed attitude, originating in a self-conscious world view, for religious studies.

## **2. Quality and academic reputation**

In the review period, the Faculty stimulated its research groups to focus on results in the two main categories of academic output, PhD theses and articles in peer-reviewed journals. The Faculty also developed its PhD-training in a much more coordinated and structured way. Finally, increased international cooperation added to a stronger research-orientation than in the years 2000-2002, when the Faculty was heavily engaged in reorganizing its curriculum, not only in terms of a Bachelor/Master degree structure, but also in terms of a changing mission.

The Faculty seeks to extend its relations with other European schools in collaborating research groups, research projects, joint degree programmes, and student and faculty exchange programmes. The Faculty is among the leading partners in working towards a League of European Faculties of Theologies and Religious Studies (together with, among others, the Catholic University of Louvain).

With respect to its mission to be a community of learners, contributing to religious understanding through dialogue, the Faculty positions itself as an alternative to two radically opposed developments in the world of academic theology. One is to replace theological reflection on (Christian) religion by a purely descriptive religious studies approach, thereby opting into the separation of science and religion; the other is that of Christian schools of theology seeking to maintain their own confessional identity as part of a particular history. The VU Faculty believes that the first approach ignores the emergence of a post-secular culture throughout the Western world, while the second approach ignores the emergence of a post-Christian culture.

The VU Faculty seeks to maintain rigorous academic standards for critical investigation of religious practices and religious convictions in view of the urgent questions of contemporary society. The Faculty wants to be a centre of international excellence in the study of theology and religion, where researchers from different continents and backgrounds enjoy collaboration in service of just and peaceful relationships between faith communities and traditions in a globalizing world.

The annual planning and control cycle provides the Faculty Board with data to develop and execute its research policy. Annual output evaluation in research provides information on the research performance. The Faculty participates in university-based cycles of external research grant applications such as NWO and ERC. Finally, scouting new research talent, and monitoring the progress of PhD students are important management tools with regard to the Faculty's research policy.

### **Assessment/remarks**

The Committee appreciates the ambitious mission of the faculty in combining not only the different approaches of Theology and Religious Studies but also in practicing religious diversity and dialogue in the same academic institution under a globalized perspective. In this regard, the implementation of Islamic Theology into the faculty appears to be a great progress. The Committee, however, has concerns whether the research programmes of the six departments, although they are of very good or good quality in their academic field, are well enough aligned to this general mission. Moreover, the Committee misses a higher degree of methodological and



philosophical or theological reflection in the different programmes, i.e. how the ambitious mission could be more substantiated on an academic level. It seems that the possibilities of cooperation with other humanities and social sciences in this direction (e.g. philosophy, history, sociology, anthropology, cultural studies) are not sufficiently exploited.

In this respect the Committee has wondered why, in spite of the faculty's proclaimed interdisciplinary commitment, the inter-faculty "VU Institute for the Study of Religion, Culture and Society" (VISOR) received so little attention in the strategic reflections of the self-evaluation report (4 lines on p. 9), and why it was not enhanced as a major tool to assemble the VU research on religion in all the faculties or departments concerned. Information provided by the faculty after the site visit on the basis of the Midterm Evaluation Report 2008-2010 has shown that the institute lacked a clear vision of its role and ambitions and that its direction had not yet succeeded in setting up a stimulating governance model for inter-faculty research. A stricter policy, involving greater commitment of the individual researchers of the faculties concerned and a more sustained monitoring of the research output, has been advocated by the VU university board. The Committee strongly supports these recommendations.

### **3. Resources**

In the years 2005-2011, the faculty's research staff has grown considerably in numbers, financed both from direct and from non-direct funding. In the non-direct funding, especially the contract research has risen strongly. The contract funding increased 62% from 2005 to 2011, while the direct funding increased 78%.

The self-assessment report states that the competition for research grants in the humanities from academic funding organizations is particularly strong for theologians. In spite of this, the faculty aims at raising the level of research grant funding (NWO, ERC) to 30% of its direct funding.

#### **Assessment/remarks**

The Committee appreciates the considerable increase of research staff, which the faculty achieved during the last six years. Although the high rate of external funding and contract research is impressive, it seems to create some problems concerning the organizational stability of some of the research programmes. Thus, the faculty should not only strengthen the leadership in the research groups, but also defend or even increase the number of directly financed tenured staff.

### **4. Productivity**

The output figures for 2005-2011 show that the average fte in 2005-2011 resulted yearly in 9.6 academic publications. The total output in all categories of publications is 3029, including 436 conference papers and 488 professional publications.

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 35, which is high. The percentage of academic publications is 28%, which is medium, but the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 9.6, which is still high. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 20%, which is high.

In theology, PhD tracks are often 'unfunded' in the sense that doctoral candidates pursue a doctoral degree out of their own resources. These students are known as external doctoral students (*buitenpromovendi*). The VU Faculty currently has over 150 of these doctoral students. The total number of regular PhD students in the review period is 78, with an average of 11 per year.

There were 182 registered PhD students during the period under review; 6 of them were employed as (internal) PhD students, 11 of them externally funded and 165 worked on a free

lance basis (*buitenpromovendi*). The total number of completed PhD's during the period under review was 80, of which 8 were internally funded PhD students, 5 externally funded, and 67 unfunded *buitenpromovendi*.

### **Assessment/remarks**

The publication strategy of the faculty was very successful. The number of refereed articles could be more than doubled during the period under evaluation compared with the evaluation period before. All of the programmes of the faculty have a very good or good academic output per fte.

### **5. Societal relevance**

In a process of reorientation since 1999, the Faculty has redefined its relationship to its social and cultural environments by “thinking from the outside in”, i.e. asking what society expects from theologians in a rapidly changing world where the resurgence of religion is a dominant feature.

In the years between 1999 and 2004 several faith communities affiliated themselves to the VU. The first to join the Faculty on VU campus were the Mennonites (*Doopsgezind Seminarie*) and the Pentecostals (Azusa), followed by the inauguration of the Centre for Islamic Theology (CIT), which introduced Muslim scholars and students as part of the Faculty with a programme for the education of Islamic ministry.

In 2005 the Restored Reformed Church (*Hersteld Hervormde Kerk*) decided to bring its seminary to Amsterdam, followed in 2009 by the Baptists (*Baptisten Seminarium*). The cooperation entails participation in BA and MA programmes as well as in research programmes. Furthermore, the Faculty established the Amsterdam Centre for Eastern Orthodox Theology (ACEOT) in 2010.

The Protestant Theological University (PThU) decided to locate part of its Faculty and its governing body on the VU campus in 2012. The cooperation has resulted in a joint BA of Theology programme starting in 2011. Development of shared research projects is under way.

In 2012 the Faculty will also start a programme for MA degrees for Buddhist Chaplaincy, as well as for Hindu pastoral care ministry. Finally, the Remonstrant Church has decided to move the programme for the education of its ministry (now at Leiden University) also to VU University Amsterdam.

The self-assessment report regards these developments as an exciting experiment in practicing religious diversity and dialogue in one and the same academic institution.

### **Assessment/remarks**

The mission of the faculty reflects the increasing relevance, which religions and their theologies may get in a changing globalized world. By educating ministers and chaplains of a diversity of religious communities on an academic level the FThVU contributes to this process in a substantial and a responsible way. Many of its initiatives in showing and reflecting the societal relevance of those theologies for different cultures are impressive. The critical impact of academic theology, however, should be upheld and eventually defended against those tendencies within certain religious groups, which would reflect a non-academic or possibly even an anti-academic attitude.

### **6. Strategy for the future**

In the fall of 2011 the Faculty introduced a new principle for its research development policy, the so-called crossword approach. This involves a new standard for the selection of viable projects: to succeed with their own project, researchers have to build upon the results of other projects

within the same programme. The idea is that research proposals are more successful in the competitive environment of external research funding when they meet this standard.

The next stage in the process of quality management will be to set up a system of weighing the prominence of peer reviewed journals.

The combined strategy of the Faculty to aim at ambitious standards of academic excellence and to include perspectives from a variety of 'lived religions', nationally and internationally, has proven to be attractive for extended collaboration with a wide variety of partners. In this context, the self-assessment report specifically mentions the establishment of ACEOT in 2010, which inaugurated the cooperation with the Cyril & Methodius Post Graduate School of the Russian Orthodox Church Moscow in Russia for educating and training of PhD's. Similarly, hosting the Dutch Baptist Seminary on VU campus since 2009 has paved the way for the European Baptist Federation to consider the option of joining FThVU with IBTS (International Baptist Theological Seminary), currently located in Prague.

Further international partnerships mentioned in the self-assessment report are with a number of schools and universities in the Republic of South Africa (the University of Stellenbosch, the University of Pretoria, and the University of the Free State). Both on the Northern and Southern continents of America the Faculty cooperates with several schools on projects for joint doctoral degrees (Fuller Theological Seminary, Duke Divinity School; Procola in Costa Rica, Semisud in Ecuador). Finally, the Faculty is exploring new territory for cooperation in Asia. In 2011 a MoU was signed with Sogang University in Seoul, South-Korea. In 2013 a prestigious (second) conference will be organized together with Renmin University in Beijing, under the auspices of both the Chinese and Dutch governments.

### **Assessment/remarks**

In the view of the Committee, 'the exciting experiment in practicing religious diversity and dialogue in one and the same academic institution' is worth to further develop. The research programmes should be more aligned to the overall mission, its inherent methodological and philosophical or theological problems should be more reflected. The leadership in and the stability of the research group should be stabilized. The cooperation with other humanities should be strengthened.

The future cooperation with the PThU opens the chances of strengthening the research in Biblical and Judaic studies. In consequence of the recent developments, the FThVU has become – apart from PThU and TUA/TUK - one of the few remaining bastions for Protestant Theology in the Netherlands. Therefore it has the responsibility that study and research of Protestant Theology can be done here in all of its disciplines and all its aspects. For a theological faculty two tenure positions in each of the classical disciplines belong to the normal European standard. Thus, as important as the study and research in other religions may be for the policy of the FThVU, this standard in academic Protestant Theology should not be undercut.

### **7. PhD training and supervision**

Until the formation of the Graduate School in 2008, external PhD's (*buitenpromovendi*) were only officially registered shortly before their graduation, because they had no formal relationship with the Faculty. This meant that the monitoring of their progress was limited by a lack of data. The Faculty now offers external PhD students a student account with access to the library, but the fact that VU University Amsterdam does not ask student fees from external candidates for its doctoral studies programmes is still regarded as a barrier to swift expansion of the Graduate School.

Investment in the further development of the Graduate School amounts to an annual budget of about K€ 50 starting in 2012. The Faculty seeks to enhance the quality of its doctoral studies programme by placing it under the supervision of the Doctoral Examination Committee and to increase the role of external examiners in the evaluation of dissertations. The new ruling prescribes that the members of reading Committees from outside the Faculty numerically outweigh those from within the Faculty.

The monitoring of doctoral students' progress will be enhanced by introducing a digital portfolio system. It will store data on supervision and results that are approved by both student and supervisor.

**Assessment/remarks**

The FThVU seems to be a good place for external PhD candidates. The results for the standard PhD candidates, however, are rather disappointing: only 2 from 11 students achieved their dissertation in the evaluation period. Therefore, the Committee welcomes the decision of the faculty to enhance the quality of the doctoral programme with a budget of its own.

## ***5B. Programme level***

Programme 7 (VU 1000):	<b>Description and Interpretation of Biblical Texts</b>
Programme director:	Prof. dr. M.C. de Boer, until 1 December 2011
Research input 2011 (tenured):	1,8 fte

Assessments:	Quality:	4
	Productivity:	4
	Relevance:	4
	Viability:	3

### *Short description*

The programme investigates the historical origin and setting of the biblical texts using rigorous scholarly methods that seek to foster sound interpretation of these texts in both the academy and the church, as well as in society at large.

The sub-programme New Testament Studies investigates the theologies of the writings of the New Testament within the framework of the historical, religious, and cultural context in which they originated, the history of textual criticism and of the manuscripts of the New Testament texts, and the hermeneutical issues that arise in the interpretation and application of the message of the New Testament texts today. Attention is also paid to the way in which the New Testament texts have been interpreted in the course of history since the first century.

The sub-programme Old Testament Studies investigates the relations between methods of exegesis, linguistic analysis of biblical Hebrew and related Semitic languages, discourse analysis of biblical texts, Bible Translation and the theology of the Old Testament.

### *Quality*

This thematically rather unspecified programme, which methodologically emphasizes the descriptive textual aspect of Biblical studies, is internationally competitive with regard to sound semantic, linguistic, and text critical studies, partly supported by electronic tools. In these fields the research unit hosts three strong NWO funded projects, the first one on “New Testament Conjectural Emendations” cooperating on an international level with Münster and Birmingham, the second one on “Computer-Assisted Analysis of Non-Narrative Texts of the Hebrew Bible”, and the third one on the “Hebrew Bible as a Linguistic Corpus and Literary Composition”, all of them also elaborated with international contacts. The academic reputation of M.C. de Boer and E. Talstra is excellent. The latter is one of the most influential figures, whom Old Testament scholars of the world have to thank for the possibility of using the computer as an important new tool for the exegesis of the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, while the key publications of the New Testament sub-programme show the entire range of semantic, textual, literary, tradition critical studies with partly excellent Biblical theological results (e.g. M.C. de Boer on the Galatians), the research done in the Old Testament sub-programme seems to be too narrowly restricted to a solid textual criticism and to very peculiar problems of using the computer for text comparison. Thus, the latter’s substantial contribution to the field appears to be somewhat limited. Other important aspects of Old Testament studies, such as archaeological, historical, literary historical, and religious historical investigations, seem to have faded into the background.

### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 57.8, which is very high. The percentage of academic publications is 16%, which is low, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 9.4, which is high. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 20%, which is high.

The productivity of the rather small group, which was amplified by positions from external funding, is very good. The strategy of accumulating more articles in peer-reviewed journals was successful. The programme includes a considerable number of PhD students, most are external PhD students, two of them are externally funded, one is employed. The number of these defended during the period is quite good.

### *Relevance*

The faculty's concept of including Christian theologies of several denominations plus theologies of other religions (Buddhism and Islam) in the same institution allows fruitful interactions with different religious communities and with the public in several multi-religious countries of the world (including Middle Eastern and Far Eastern Asia). The specific design of Biblical studies preferred so far at the VU, however, focuses for those interactions (for example, Encyclopaedia of Early Christianity, computer-assisted textual work) rather on a distinctly academic level.

### *Viability*

The strategy of strengthening the rather small group (3 professorships) by the means of externally funded positions was very successful. No less than 5 additional non-tenured positions were won at the present time. For the future, however, this strategy has some risks, because the overlapping termination of the funded projects can lead to "hazardous effects" as recognized by the research group already (cf. p. 29 of the Research Self Evaluation). As a successor to the retiring leader of the New Testament sub-programme, Prof. de Boer, Prof. Lietaert Peerbolte was already installed as the designated leader. For the succession of Prof. Talstra, who has retired in 2011 and will continue his NWO projects until 2014, a successor of the Old Testament sub-programme seems to be found. Thus, a smooth transition from the older to the younger generations of programme leaders is secured. There is, however, no clear concept of developing the programme into the post-Talstra era. In the case that Talstra's successor would like to continue his emphasis on computer-assisted exegesis, the Old Testament sub-programme should be provided with a second tenured position, which could cover the historical, literary historical and the religious historical aspects of Biblical Studies. The viability of the research group is not endangered, but it needs to be strengthened.

### *Conclusion*

The programme is of a very good quality and makes significant contributions to Biblical studies. However, especially in the Old Testament studies, the programme is too much focused on linguistic and textual critical studies. It does not represent the entire range of Biblical Studies, including the historical, literary historical and religious historical and hermeneutical aspects, which are necessary for a Theological Faculty, especially for a basically Reformed faculty, where traditionally the Bible plays a significant role. Thus, the programme should be methodologically broadened and thematically better focused. As important as the computer-assisted exegesis is and may become even more in the future, it should be realized that it is just a tool of exegesis and will never be able to replace the sophisticated and responsible exegesis done by human beings. There are good reasons for continuing the research of Talstra, but his important yet very special subject should not dominate the entire research programme in Old Testament Studies. A normal standard for larger Theological Faculties in Germany and many other countries would be two professorships in each of the two branches of Biblical studies. If the VU intends to host the

strongest Theological Faculty in the Netherlands, it should meet this international standard, including in the field of research. An important asset, in this respect, could be the forthcoming cooperation with the Old Testament research team of the PThU which will be relocated at Amsterdam.

Programme 8 (VU 2000):	<b>Christian Faith: Present and Past</b>
Programme director:	Until December 2009 Prof. dr. C.P.M. Burger; from January 2010 Prof. dr. W. Janse, replaced by Prof. dr. M.G.K. van Veen; from February 2012: Prof. dr. M.G.K. van Veen
Research input 2011 (tenured):	2.06 fte
Assessments:	Quality: 3 Productivity: 4 Relevance: 4 Viability: 3

The Department of Church History seeks to contribute to understanding the role of religious movements, traditions and their organizations in the formation of European identity. It investigates how religious identity was shaped throughout the ages, and how it has been handed over and shaped the identity of later generations.

The department aspires to make a substantial contribution to innovating research through international presentations and publications, and to enlighten public debate by means of newspaper articles, interviews and symposia on the role of religion in shaping national and regional identities.

Major research areas are:

- Early Christianity (Centre for Patristic Research – CPO);
- Reformation history, which includes the history of Religious Books in the Middle Ages (the Biblia Sacra Project);
- Neo-Calvinism (related to the Historical Documentation Centre for Dutch Protestantism).

### *Quality*

The main strength of this department is in closely argued textual studies. The submitted publications are well-researched and detailed analyses of historical documents. They are modest in aim, but they deliver what they promise. Of the three research areas, the most obvious indicators of quality are to be found in the first two. However, the publication of one volume of Calvin's letters, the conference on Mennonite women and the conference on the mystagogy of the Church Fathers, show evidence of sustained research work. There seems to be a good rate of external funding, even though the publication of Calvin's letters has funding problems. Members of the department have an established international reputation, and hold key editorial positions. Possibly there needs to be a greater concentration on a few significant research projects, rather than spreading too widely across a number of fields. The potential for making 'a substantial contribution to innovating research' is yet to be fully realised.

### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 37.3, which is very high. The percentage of academic publications is 32%, which is high, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 12, which is very high. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 12%, which is low.

The research output is mainly in articles in books, but these books are often published by reputable academic publishers; they deserve full consideration. Interviews with graduates show a



high level of satisfaction with teaching and research arrangements. The most obviously productive areas are Reformation history and patristics, but priority has been given to funding the publication of critical editions of Calvin's letters, and it is hoped that this will bear fruit.

#### *Relevance*

The department has achieved a high degree of societal relevance. Its members organised the National Calvin Week in 2009. The Centre for Religion, Law and Society organises public meetings and produces a database for jurisprudence. It produces online resources in patristics and on Bibles printed in the Netherlands and Belgium ("Biblia Sacra"). It is also closely involved with the Restored Reformed and Mennonite churches and seminaries. Its members regularly contribute to newspapers and give public lectures.

#### *Viability*

In 2006 the Department of "Christian Faith: Past and Present" was separated into Dogmatics and Ecumenical Studies, and Church History. The three main research areas of the Church History department form a coherent group, centred on Patristics, medieval and Reformation history, and neo-Calvinism. A Centre for Eastern Orthodox Theology has been established, as well as a Centre of Law, Religion, and Society. There are new links with the Protestant Theological University, and Mennonite and Baptist seminaries. There are also joint ventures with the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology, the Catholic University of Louvain, and the International Congress of Calvin Research. These are all good, but there needs to be careful shepherding of research time and resources, to ensure an excellent quality of research. Prof. Van Veen's presentation suggested that there may be problems of coherence, especially with regard to non-tenured staff who sometimes are only present for one day a week. Strong leadership is needed here. Moreover, the Committee expresses its concern about the future of the research on neo-Calvinism, after the recent substantial reduction of the research time allocated to the Historical Documentation Centre for Dutch Protestantism.

#### *Conclusion*

The department is very productive in research, particularly in patristics and Reformation studies. It would perhaps be good to supplement the analysis of texts with book-length historical studies of a broader nature. The proliferation of Centres, and the association with the Protestant Theological University and with Mennonite and Baptist seminaries, offer many new opportunities for joint research projects. They may also lead to an over-extension of research resources and a fragmentation of research. This needs to be carefully monitored. The proposed project, "The Soul of Europe", could form a useful departmental focus. It should include Islam (and probably already does), and it will be interesting to discover if Europe has a soul. Overall the department is a strong, productive, and soundly based one.

Programme 9 (VU 3000):	<b>Philosophy of Religion and Comparative Study of Religions</b>
Programme director:	Prof. dr. H.M. Vroom, from 2005 – 2010 Prof. dr. W.L. van der Merwe, since 2010
Research input 2011 (tenured):	1.6 fte
Assessments:	Quality: 4 Productivity: 4 Relevance: 5 Viability: 3

The programme aims to advance the understanding of cultural and religious diversity through high quality research and education from the combined perspectives of the philosophy of religion, the comparative study of religion, comparative theology, intercultural philosophy and intercultural hermeneutics. Research focuses on religious pluralism, cultural diversity, cross-cultural interpretation, interreligious dialogue, religion in the public domain and the (comparative) study of philosophical and religious traditions.

In the first year of the evaluation period 2005-2011 the department was selected by the Dutch Minister of Education to realize its ambition of an academic training programme to prepare Islamic students for the position of religious leadership as imams in Dutch society. With the establishment of the Centre for Islamic Theology, the research effort of the department was significantly reduced.

In 2007 the department took the initiative to establish the European Society for Intercultural Theology and Interreligious Studies (ESITIS). To continue and profile the research programme of the department further, Professor Van der Merwe founded the Amsterdam Centre for the Study of Cultural and Religious Diversity (ACCORD).

Recently (2010-11) four new chairs, externally funded, have been established within the department, to wit, the Chair for Orthodoxy and Peace Building in Europe, the Nicolaas Pierson Chair for Buddhist Philosophy in dialogue with other worldviews, the Schillebeeckx Chair for Theology and Society, and the Socrates Chair for Humanism in relation to religion and secularity.

### *Quality*

As suggested by the key texts, research is philosophically driven, with research in philosophy of religion merging into comparative philosophy of religion. During the period under review, research questions with respect to the problems of evil or transcendence appear to be formulated within the framework of the philosophy of religion. The programme engages different research methods—Christian theology, interreligious dialogue, and history of religions—that do not obviously cohere in a coordinated research focus. The research mission, “understanding . . . cultural and religious diversity,” might be more clearly articulated, in the process of clarifying the notion of “interculturality,” if that notion is indeed central to the group’s research.

Key publications were generally of high quality, although they varied widely in approach, including work in sociology of religion, theological ethics, and comparative religion. The most important books, all edited collections arising from conferences, were of uneven quality, but indicated the commitment to research networking. While including some original research, these collections generally drew together summaries of research while facilitating capacity building by

publishing the work of younger scholars. The research has gained international recognition, although consideration might be given to establishing formal rather than personal links with other institutions.

#### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 29, which is high. The percentage of academic publications is 39%, which is high, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 11.3, which is very high. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 18%, which is medium.

The research programme has shown a good productivity. The number of articles in refereed journals might be increased. Output has been reduced organizationally by establishing the Centre for Islamic Theology, formally embedded in this research group, as a separate research unit. PhD registrations seemed healthy at 16, although only 6 were completed during the period under review.

#### *Relevance*

Concerted efforts have been made for the public dissemination of research through popular media and political consultation. It was done very successfully.

#### *Viability*

The research group appears to have successfully made transitions in leadership and organizational structure to remain an outstanding research group. However, as noted in the self-evaluation, more attention needs to be given to securing external funding and gaining infrastructural support to ensure the viability of the unit. The unit has a strong strategic vision, but there is uncertainty that sufficient staff will be mobilized and necessary resources secured. In addition to external funding and infrastructural support, the involvement of internal PhDs and postdoctoral fellows will be important to the on-going vitality of the programme. The self-evaluation refers to the appointment of four new chairs in 2010-11, which suggests both opportunities and challenges. How are these new chairs, in such diverse fields, involved in the research mission of the unit?

#### *Conclusion*

During the period under review, the leadership of Professor Vroom was evident in key texts and collaborative research projects, with key themes—interreligious understanding, the problem of evil, the notion of transcendence. Under a new director, Professor Van der Merwe, the unit appears to be creatively addressing the challenge of clarifying its disciplinary profile and defining its future research agenda. ACCORD - Amsterdam Centre for the Study of Cultural and Religious Diversity - appears to be an important network to facilitate research collaboration in the study of religious encounter and pluralism. Aligned with VU's explicit mission to advance studies of religious plurality, this research group is a key programme within the overall faculty. It deserves further support and development by the Faculty.

Programme 10 (VU 4000):	<b>Praxis</b>
Programme director:	Prof. dr. H.C. Stoffels
Research input 2011 (tenured):	2.46 fte

Assessments:	Quality:	4
	Productivity:	4
	Relevance:	5
	Viability:	4

The mission of the Praxis group is to contribute to empirically based theory building and research on moral and religious practices of communities and individuals, trying to find their own identity in a changing context of cultural plurality. The research covers the fields of practical theology, social sciences, religious education theory, ethics, and disability research. In the period under the group made a threefold choice for particular topics: a) new forms and ways of religious, or religiously inspired communities, b) practices of care (spiritual care, pastoral care, care of vulnerable individuals, and c) the cultural dimensions of current forms of religion (virtual religion, religion in popular culture, religion and ecology, social media). The methodological orientation is following current paradigms of “lived religion”.

### *Quality*

The quality of this programme is outstanding. Some parts display national leading quality, some even score on the top rank within related international fields (Miedema; Stoffels; Ganzevoort; Reinders). The programme’s leader Prof. Stoffels is an outstanding scholar in his field with high national and international reputation in sociology of religion. Many participants of the group are internationally well known experts on empirical research in religion. Several members participated in prestigious international research programmes (like EU Framework 7) and made major contributions to the leadership of these programmes as well as to their publications. The editorial activities in high-ranking academic journals and book series are remarkable. During the period under review, the group initiated and organized many international conferences in almost all of the involved disciplines (among them the prestigious International Academy of Practical Theology 2010). The achievements to attract PhD students and to care for their guided academic training (within and parallel to NOSTER) is remarkable.

### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 35.4, which is high. The percentage of academic publications is 28%, which is medium, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 9.9, which is high. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 25%, which is high.

The research output from this group is very good in terms of academic publications of all sorts (9.9 per fte) as well as in the number of completed PhD theses (10 in total).

### *Relevance*

This group successfully was able to contribute with its research efforts to both society and the related churches. The particular choice for research topics like migration, new practices of care, or religion and urban life display a clear sense of this group for taking up essential cultural challenges for academic theological research. Doing this, the group was able to show theology’s high societal relevance in a brilliant and nationally recognized way. In addition, many research

results have been disseminated effectively within church groups contributing to their need for gaining new orientations in times of cultural and religious change.

### *Viability*

The group so far is an excellent functioning research unit, combining in a most effective way scholars from several disciplines. One outcome of this fact is the possibility to gain substantial research funds. There has been considerable change in the group of staff members, which in combination with the rather small size should be matter of attention. The further flourishing of the programme will certainly benefit from continuing previous success by earning new international research grants. It will be an extra challenge for the group, and moreover for the board of the theological faculty, to take care for timely and adequate replacement of several of the strongest figures (Meininger, Miedema, and Stoffels) after their retirement.

### *Conclusion*

This research programme undoubtedly has its strength in picking up deliberately late-modern post-Christian global and national challenges and developing a sound context-related academic theology, and particularly an empirically based practical theology. The move of part of PThU research staff to the VU could provide extra chances for the future of this research group, all the more if personnel related to practice research will come to Amsterdam. The proposed new research area, “Religious Identity Construction and Community Building at the Intersection of the Rural, the Urban, and the Virtual,” provides a most promising frame.

Programme 11 (VU 5000):	<b>Centre for Islamic Theology (CIT)</b>
Programme director:	Prof. dr. H.M. Vroom (2005 – 01-09-2011), vacancy since 01-09-2011. Interim leaders: Dr. W.B.S. El Bouayadi–Van de Wetering, and Dr. Y.A.I.A. Ellethy
Research input 2011 (tenured):	1.22 fte
Assessments:	Quality: 3 Productivity: 2 Relevance: 4 Viability: 3

The Centre for Islamic Theology (CIT) was established in 2005 after the Faculty of Theology of the VU had obtained a grant from the Dutch government to start an MA programme for Islamic ministry in pastoral care.

Being firmly rooted in its own tradition, CIT wants to contribute to the study of Islam developing in the context of a modern Western society, and to educate students for Islamic ministry in this context. With regard to this aim the Centre's ambition is to contribute to a hermeneutics of living Islam, which will enable its students to converse with their own tradition in a responsible way. To maintain its roots in Islamic tradition, the centre developed cooperation with leading universities in Turkey, Egypt, and Morocco.

In the Netherlands, the study of Islam is well established, but teaching and researching Islamic theology in a Dutch university is a new development. Its primary task is to explore academically solid ways to explain the Islamic tradition as brought to the Netherlands from Islamic countries. CIT faculty are held accountable by their constituencies in the countries as well as the international community of Islamic theologians. Therefore CIT is investing in its relations with Arabic institutions, while at the same time seeking cooperation with descriptive Islam studies in the Dutch academic community.

#### *Quality*

The Centre for Islamic Theology became independent in 2010, currently with acting leadership, faced with establishing a clear research profile and institutional identity. Academic leadership will be needed to clarify the rationale, mission, and research profile. Interreligious dialogue appears to be central to research, but if that is the case then more work needs to be done in clarifying the theory and practice of dialogue. Among the key publications, essays on sociology of religion and religion and gender are of high quality, while the other publications are of a more popular nature, including an apologetic defence of Islam and a handbook for youth work. The highest quality research associated with the period under review does not seem to feature in the on-going mission or research agenda of the CIT.

#### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 19.9, which is low. The percentage of academic publications is 25%, which is medium, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 4.9, which is low. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 16%, which is medium.

As the self-evaluation recognizes, the research productivity of the group in terms of articles in peer-reviewed journals has not been high, and very few PhDs were enrolled. During the period under review, publications were mainly produced by two senior scholars. The programme's investment in education and public relations has had its costs for research productivity.

#### *Relevance*

Relevance seems to be pursued in two directions, the training of Muslim clergy and the promotion of Christian-Muslim understanding. Societal relevance provides the central rationale for the CIT, with projects in education, Christian-Muslim relations, Muslim counselling, and support for imams in penitentiary institutions. But greater clarity is needed on the relation between the centre's research programme, which is in development, and its social outreach projects.

#### *Viability*

As a work in progress, the CIT needs strong leadership and coherence. Although the programme has gained financial support, its viability will hinge on establishing a coherent and credible profile. The CIT claims to be unique in Europe because it is established by the state, in a Protestant Christian university, with support by Muslim organizations, but it is analogous to initiatives in Germany, such as Münster and Tübingen, where centres for Islamic theology have been established. How is the CIT distinct from or related to these and other centres of Islamic theology elsewhere in Europe? As far as the training of imams and spiritual care is concerned, viability also depends upon support from Muslim organizations. In the training of imams this was apparently forthcoming from Moroccan, Surinam and Shiite, but not from Turkish organizations. In whatever ways these relations are negotiated, it is not yet clear how the CIT will emerge as an autonomous research programme, viable in the long run.

#### *Conclusion*

CIT is dedicated to training and educating Islamic clergy, free from church and state and Islamic theologians in a broad sense of the word, but located in a Christian theological university and established by the Dutch state. Accordingly, the centre is in a delicate situation. During the interview, the Committee was struck by the different understandings of the CIT expressed by the acting directors for internal and external affairs. On the one hand, in line with the faculty regulations, the CIT has an educational mission, with a curriculum comprising 40% Islamic theology and 60% context (including religious diversity), which is designed for training Muslim clergy (although students do not necessarily have to be Muslims). On the other hand, the CIT aspires to advancing a distinctive research programme in Islamic theology that is positioned between the Christian theological context of VU, which would lend itself to research in Christian-Muslim relations, and the growing field of interreligious studies, although the role of religious studies seems to be identified with classical textual studies. More work needs certainly to be done in coordinating these different interests within a coherent programme.

Programme 12 (VU 6000):	<b>Systematic and Ecumenical Theology</b>
Programme director:	Prof. dr. M.E. Brinkman, from 2005 - 2007 Prof. dr. C. van der Kooi, since 2008
Research input 2011 (tenured):	2.94 fte
Assessments:	Quality: 3 Productivity: 4 Relevance: 3 Viability: 4

### *Brief description*

The mission of this programme is to advance the understanding of the Christian faith within Western and non-Western contexts through top quality research and education with focus on Christ, church and culture, indicating the Christological, ecclesiological and cultural focus of the programme. Within the programme there are three focal points: 1) Biblical and Patristic Theology; 2) Reformed Theology, both in its 'classical' and in the neo-Calvinist formation, and Ecumenical and Charismatic theology. The programme draws on the sources of specific confessional traditions in order to find answers to new questions in diverse and changing cultures.

Until 2000 the main reference point for understanding the Christian faith was the Reformed tradition. Since then the programme has deepened and broadened, bringing in other elements of the Protestant tradition. This approach is much more international, including a wide variety of Christian perspectives, such as Evangelical, Pentecostal, Baptist, Mennonite, and Eastern Orthodox theologies. The research environment of the department has been shaped to a significant extent by the International Reformed Theological Institute (IRTI). Researchers from the Pentecostal, Mennonite, Baptist and Evangelical traditions have joined the department. They also link the department to research institutes of their communities in Europe and beyond.

### *Quality*

Senior researchers in the department have a good international reputation, are leading participants in relevant international conferences, and hold editorial positions in major journals. The key publications selected for submission were, given this fact, slightly disappointing. They were certainly scholarly and well-researched. But the content was mostly expository, and sometimes more like a literature survey for scholars than a piece of original research. This is, of course, important, but it probably does not adequately reflect the abilities and insights of the senior researchers. The Committee does not think it could be said that the material submitted (with some exceptions) formed a contribution to cutting-edge scholarship in modern systematic theology. It would be good – and it would be possible - to have a really original and ground-breaking restatement of the Protestant tradition in its new global context.

### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 30.9, which is high. The percentage of academic publications is 29%, which is medium, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 8.9, which is also medium. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 26%, which is high.

The research productivity of the department is good (8.9 academic publications per fte). This is in part due to the fact that 20% of publications are in the journal of the International Reformed



Theological Institute, founded within the department. This is a peer-reviewed journal, and the Institute is an important forum for ecumenical discussion and research. The department has no regular (funded) PhD students, but the number of external PhD students (*buitenpromovendi*) is significant and the number of achieved PhD theses overall stands at an average of 5.2 per year. The department is seeking funding for internal PhD students, and this would seem to be a priority.

#### *Relevance*

The work of the department certainly has societal relevance. Their main stake holders are, naturally enough, the church communities, and this highlights the problem of how properly theological work can be made relevant to the wider community. The comparatively low score reflects the general limitation of relevance to church communities. However, this can readily be expanded, and work undertaken with wider church communities throughout the world is globally relevant. Though this is just beginning at VU, it is an important feature of the academic culture.

#### *Viability*

This department separated from “Christian Faith: Past and Present” in 2006. It has basically the same three research areas: Biblical and Patristic Theology; Reformed Theology; and Ecumenical and Charismatic Theology. The emphasis is, however, on doctrines rather than on history. The department aims particularly at interreligious understanding, and hosts programmes for the education of ministers in the Mennonite, Pentecostal, Restored Reformed, Remonstrant, and Baptist traditions. It also co-operates with the Protestant Theological University (see p.27 of this report). The present aim is to enhance the understanding of the Christian faith in a wide ecumenical context. The main problem is one of co-ordinating research in all the very diverse communities now integrated into or associated with the department, and in balancing research priorities with the primarily ministerial training requirements of those communities. The danger is that those priorities may make genuine research more difficult. We hope, however, that these queries about viability will be resoundingly and positively answered by the work of the department.

#### *Conclusion*

The existence of this department signals a major change in the orientation of theological research at VU. The structure is new and therefore largely untried. It is a bold experiment in promoting a truly ecumenical and global theology. The senior staff are of high quality, very productive, and have an original vision. The major difficulties are likely to be those of integrating so many diverse groups with differing interests, and making time for research. But this is a remarkable attempt to use rapidly changing circumstances in a positive way, and given strong and imaginative leadership the department could well become a leading international centre for ecumenical theology.



## 6. Utrecht University

### 6A. *Institute level*

#### 1. The Institute

The *Instituut voor Theologisch en Godsdienstwetenschappelijk Onderzoek* (Research Institute for Theology and Religious Studies, INTEGON) is a research institute of the Faculty of Humanities of Utrecht University (UU). Founded in 1988, INTEGON is the oldest research institute for the study of religion in the Netherlands. The area of research is the non-denominational interdisciplinary study of religion with a special emphasis on Christianity and Islam.

INTEGON's goal is to create a research environment with a stimulating and collegial atmosphere with cross-fertilization among disciplines, in which the various research traditions mutually reinforce each other. The research of the institute has been organized into two programmes:

1. Sacred Texts and Religious Traditions: (Re)Appropriating Religious Heritage
2. Religion(s) in the Modern World: Encountering Difference.

The research agenda of the subject area of Islamic and Arabic Studies has been directed by the Chair of Islamic and Arabic Studies, in close collaboration with the two INTEGON programme leaders.

Until 2005-2006 INTEGON functioned as a joint research institute of Utrecht University and the Catholic Theological University at Utrecht (KTU), but a separation was carried out when the KTU merged with the Faculty of Catholic Theology of the University of Tilburg.

At about the same time, a group of scholars of Islamic and Arabic Studies from the Research Institute for History and Culture at UU joined INTEGON. This allowed INTEGON to strengthen the relatively small section studying religions other than Christianity and Judaism.

Another important factor in the development of INTEGON in the review period was that the formerly very close cooperation between the Department of Religious Studies and Theology at UU and INTEGON, on the one hand, and the Protestant Theological University (PThU), on the other, was discontinued. The synod of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands decided in 2010 that the PThU would be located in Amsterdam and Groningen in the future. In 2012, Utrecht University announced plans to terminate the bachelor programme Theology (which is one of the two lines in the bachelor programme Religious Studies and Theology) in 2014.

These developments and a number of personal changes created an opportunity to reconfigure the study of religion at Utrecht University. The new profile distinguishes INTEGON from other research institutes in the field of the study of religion in the Netherlands: Research at INTEGON integrates religious studies, theology and Islamic studies and combines fruitful approaches from the various (sub)disciplines.

As a result of the re-profiling, the former seven research programmes of INTEGON were reorganized into two robust research programmes. After an intermediate phase this was implemented in July 2010. For reasons of clarity, the self-assessment report presents the research of the former seven programmes as if it were part of one of the current research programmes.

As a result of further profiling, the self-assessment report states that it is to be expected that these two programmes will become one programme comprising four research foci.

Current programmes	Envisioned new programme	Research foci
Sacred Texts and Religious Traditions: (Re)Appropriating Religious Heritage	Religious Dynamics: Imaginaries; Institutions; Identities	Texts and transmissions
Religion(s) in the Modern World: Encountering Difference		Media, arts, aesthetics
		Christian and Islamic movements in past and present
		Religion in the public sphere

## 2. Quality and academic reputation

Since its establishment in 1988, INTEGON has built an academic reputation as a strong research institute and a reliable partner in international collaborative research activities. Some of the developments in the review period have been difficult, but the self-assessment report lists a number of remarkable results that demonstrate the visibility and academic reputation of the institute, such as the publication of significant books and articles with internationally renowned publishers, editorships and memberships of journal editorial boards, prestigious grants from NWO and ERC, fellowships, awards, international conferences hosted, invited lectures and posts in the academic field.

INTEGON seeks to move beyond the divide between ‘theology’ and ‘religious studies’. The institute believes that this distinctive position will allow it to play a prominent role in re-configuring the study of religion for the 21st century. Its setting in the Faculty of Humanities embeds the study of religion in broader theoretical questions and approaches. There is sustained and productive cooperation with historians, philosophers and scholars in literary studies and media, as well as with anthropologists studying religion in the Faculty of Social Sciences. INTEGON researchers take part in the inter-faculty UU focus areas Cultures and Identities, and History and Philosophy of the Sciences and the Humanities.

In INTEGON’s view, the study of religion must re-invent itself in a post-secular environment, without throwing out important expertise and resources for the future study of religion. Discipline formation is understood as a dynamic and open-ended process aimed at developing a new, historically grounded standpoint for the study of religion in our time.

The recently appointed professors play a leading role in sharpening INTEGON’s profile and reputation as a major player in the study of religion (grant applications, publications, events, PhD candidates), particularly with regard to the development of a ‘material’ approach in the study of religion (Birgit Meyer) and cutting edge work in the field of Islamic studies, aiming at a closer exchange with theory building and methodological concerns in the study of religion (Christian Lange).

All INTEGON scholars are active members of the Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion (NOSTER) and the Netherlands Interuniversity School for Islamic Studies (NISIS). On an international level, they are active in academic societies such as the American Academy of Religion, the European Society for Philosophy of Religion, the Society of Biblical Literature, the Union Européenne des Arabisants et Islamisants, as well as participation in smaller research networks.

### **Assessment/remarks**

Generally speaking, the Committee was impressed by the excellent quality of the research within INTEGON. The setup is clearly interdisciplinary, and clear progress in terms of quality can be detected, following the advice of the 2005 assessment to reduce the number of programmes. As a result, INTEGON has received some prestigious grants and awards in recent times (Marie Curie; NIAS, NWO, Annelies Maier Research Award, Wissenschaftskolleg Berlin, and many others).

INTEGON's research now shows a clear concentration on Christianity and Islam. In comparison to other programmes in this review, the programmes display a research focus and a thorough reflection on the theoretical and conceptual foundation of the research issues. The new research line shows a strong interest in matching fundamental challenges of public and academic issues. The scholars involved have made tremendous efforts to maintain the study of religion as an academic enterprise within the humanities and to reshape religious studies.

The Committee was particularly impressed by the programme "Religion(s) in the Modern World: Encountering Difference" directed by prof. B. Meyer and prof. Chr. Lange.

### **3. Resources**

In the period under review, a number of INTEGON researchers have had a very heavy teaching load and others have had substantial management tasks. The director of INTEGON developed a systematic policy in 2010 to ensure that INTEGON scholars have at least one quarter ('block') available for research, which implies that the number of weeks teaching is reduced from 40 to 30.

During the period under review it became increasingly clear that securing external funding is an important task for researchers. Externally funded projects can serve as instruments to stimulate innovation and to drive research. On a more pragmatic level, external funding is needed to attract young scholars and to extend directly funded research time, which is increasingly under pressure.

In 2011, the percentage of direct funding for INTEGON was 51.6. The percentage of funding from research grants was 20.7 and the percentage from contract research was 8.2.

### **Assessment/remarks**

The founding of INTEGON in 1988 was an important step to provide a solid basis (both in quantity and in quality) for the research that had to be undertaken. Recently the faculty and the university have made substantial investments by appointing two outstanding scholars in the field of religious studies (Meyer; Lange), while concentrating the resources on a smaller number of programmes, which is a prerequisite for the further prospering of related research. The scholars appointed as new leaders have a suitable experience in academic leadership.

### **4. Productivity**

In the first part of the period under review, a disproportionate amount of research time was spent on activities that aim at a broader public. In 2007, the management implemented a new research policy and defined the minimum research output of its researchers per 0.4 fte research time as follows:

- Two scholarly journal articles or contributions to volumes per year, one of which being an international and high-level publication. This applies to contributions to peer-reviewed volumes and to articles in journals defined as A- or B-journals.
- One research monograph published with an internationally renowned publishing house counts for five scholarly articles or contributions to volumes.

- Further research activities such as successful supervision of PhD theses, key notes at international conferences or editing of volumes or journals are taken into account, but cannot completely replace publications.

The total number of publications in the period 2005-2011 is 1379, not counting the contributions to local colloquia at Dutch universities.

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 23, which is medium. The percentage of academic publications is 42%, which is high, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 9.6, which is also high. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 22%, which is again high.

There were 66 registered PhD students during the period under review; 15 of them were employed as (internal) PhD students, 18 of them externally funded and 33 worked on a free lance basis (*buitenpromovendi*). The number of 66 registered PhD students includes PhD students who were enrolled in 2010 or later and are still within their allotted time. The total number of completed PhD's during the period under review was 43, of which 10 were internally funded PhD students, 6 externally funded, and 27 unfunded *buitenpromovendi*.

#### **Assessment/remarks**

The records show that the productivity in both research programmes has been good, especially when taking into account that this report is about an institute with programmes in transition. Considering the productivity of the new leading scholars, the Committee is quite confident that the output of the research groups will increase considerably in the near future.

#### **5. Societal relevance**

A core aspect of the mission of INTEGON is to contribute to a better understanding and to solve problems that are relevant to professionals outside academia and to society. In this respect, the institute's strategy reaches out beyond the academic community and includes professional stakeholders and the broader public.

In recent years, INTEGON has established five areas in which research explicitly aims to have an impact within society. This research is rooted in professional practice, explicitly associated with an application context, and INTEGON scholars closely cooperate with professional stakeholders. Cooperation takes place at various stages of the research, e.g. in the definition of the research agenda, during the research itself, or in the dissemination of research results among societal stakeholders. These five areas are:

- Intercultural theology and interreligious dialogue
- Islam in contemporary societies
- Religion, literature, and popular media
- Religion and education
- Spiritual care.

Thanks to the great societal interest in issues concerning religion, INTEGON published a relatively large number of Dutch-language books, articles and contributions to volumes. These publications provide knowledge to professionals such as policy makers, journalists, religious professionals, teachers, people working in the health care sector etc., and they contribute to public debate about matters concerning religion. INTEGON scholars also conduct commissioned research. In the period under review, this included reports for the Dutch government, and various NGOs.

### Assessment/remarks

The choice of the research topics and the structuring of the research programmes display a major concern for research on religion in a post-secular and pluralistic society. Research is directed to and connected with vibrant issues in contemporary Dutch society, concerning religious bodies in the country as well as in other Western societies. The Committee appreciates the clear efforts to disseminate academic work to a broader audience.

### 6. Strategy for the future

Given its expertise and vision, INTEGON aims to profile its research by building upon and further integrating the following characteristics, which are distinctive of INTEGON's approach:

- a combined expertise in disciplines such as biblical studies, history of religions, philosophy of religion as well as philology-based Islamic studies and anthropology/social science, allowing them to grasp religion's multiple dimensions and achieving synergies in collective endeavours;
- a global as well historical-comparative perspective that moves beyond a Western-centred and presentist bias;
- alertness to the historicity of the conceptual terms of our analysis in the coinage of research issues, approaches and terms of analysis;
- multi-level analysis of religion, on the levels of a) religious traditions themselves (imaginaries, doctrines, institutions, practices), b) broadly shared cultural concepts and imaginaries derived from or feeding into religious traditions, c) the presence and representation of religion in the public domain;
- special expertise regarding Islam and Christianity, in past and present;
- 'contextual' study of religion, with a focus on negotiating difference in settings of religious pluralism;
- a 'material' approach, asking how religion becomes a tangible presence in 'the world' via concrete practices and cultural forms (bodies, things, pictures, texts) that can be studied empirically.

The first part of the title of the new single research programme (Religious Dynamics: Imaginaries; Institutions; Identities) captures INTEGON's understanding of religion as subject to transformation, as the placing of religious phenomena in a broad historical and global perspective. The second part emphasizes the social-cultural approach of religion, distinguishing three interlocking dimensions:

- the religious imagination and its *imaginaries*<sup>1</sup> (expressed in images and texts, as well as in more or less ritualized practices),
- social-religious *institutions*, and
- personal and collective *identities*.

In other words, this title encapsulates the approach of religion as a multifaceted social-cultural phenomenon that 'materializes' in the world via practices that (re)produce, as well as negotiate and contest, imaginaries, institutions and identities. The title also acknowledges INTEGON's existing links with larger inter- and intra-faculty research areas such as "Institutions", "Youth and

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<sup>1</sup> The imaginary or social imaginary is the set of values, institutions, laws, and symbols common to a particular social group or society. It is the dimension through which human beings create their ways of living together and their ways of representing their collective life.

Identities” and “Cultures and Identities”. INTEGON expects that these research areas will be increasingly important in the future, and in the newly developed profile of the Faculty of the Humanities.

As mentioned before, the following research lines are envisaged in the new programme:

- Texts and transmissions  
(analysis of texts, modes of transmission and textual practices with regard to Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Work in this area does not focus on “holy scriptures” alone, but rather seeks to critically reflect the processes of canonization and institutional embedding of dominant textual traditions, while comparing and contrasting these traditions against subversive and marginalized discourses).
- Media, arts, aesthetics  
(research relating to religion and film, the way religion features in literature and popular culture, and wider questions regarding both the adoption of media into religious traditions and that of religious ideas into media products. Special attention is paid to aesthetics, understood in a broad sense of sensorial engagement with cultural or religious forms).
- Christian and Islamic movements in past and present  
(the study of “world Christianity”, from colonial missions to the rise of Pentecostalism as global religion par excellence, contemporary migrant churches, and Islamic movements in traditional Muslim societies as well as in the Netherlands today. Bringing together these phenomena under the umbrella of religious movements allows for sustained comparison).
- Religion in the public sphere  
(exploring discussions about the presence and contestation of religions in the public sphere, relating to broader theoretical issues regarding the (trans)formation of religion(s) and religious identities in contexts of religious pluralism and (post)secularism. Particular attention is paid to the transformative effect of religious imaginaries with regard to formal and informal social institutions such as moral and political rules, schools and hospitals).

One of the key aims in the next 4-5 years is to actively encourage and support writing competitive research grant applications for NWO schemes and other national or international research grants.

### **Assessment/remarks**

At the time of the Committee’s visit, the research policy described in the self-evaluation report was already outdated to some extent. However, INTEGON’s on-going efforts for the further restructuring of its research along clear choices including the concentration on two programmes, was most convincing. The reconfiguration of the academic study of religion is quite substantial, just as the measures that are being taken for changing the research practice in the period that is now starting. The Faculty, supported by the University Board, has taken some essential decisions concerning the future of research, in matters of money and other resources.

The Committee considers the proposed innovations as a very promising choice of research objectives and organisational structures. This holds especially for the four mentioned research foci (Text and transmission; Media, arts, aesthetics; Christian and Islamic movements in past and present; Religion in the public sphere). Research on religion in Utrecht will be able to keep its reputation as one of the most competent centres for research in religion in the country if the continuity of this new line is guaranteed by the Faculty and the University Board.

Within the next assessment period it will be a particular challenge for Utrecht to compete with VU Amsterdam and especially with the Centre for Religious Studies (CRS) at RU Groningen.



The clear choices made so far for Utrecht's own research line should be followed and implemented consistently. For instance, the Utrecht expertise on Arabic and Islamic studies should be fully integrated into INTEGON.

Aside from these remarks about Utrecht's excellence in the study of religion, the Committee regrets that the intention of INTEGON "to move beyond the divide between 'theology' and 'religious studies'" in practice comes to almost closing down theological research at Utrecht. Its centuries old research traditions, especially in systematic theology, have made Utrecht and the Netherlands famous all over Europe. The label "theology" will now be removed from Utrecht research descriptions. Considering also the developments in other places in the Netherlands, the Committee would like to express its regrets that the growth of the academic study of religion seems to go along with a reduction of scholarly theological research on top level and unbiased by clerical preoccupations.

### **7. PhD training and supervision**

PhD training comprises individual supervision that takes place at the institute, and a specific training programme with courses that are offered for the most part outside INTEGON. The training programme of PhD candidates is embedded in the Graduate School of Humanities in which all research institutes of the Faculty of Humanities participate. The procedural aspects and the supervision of the planning and progress of the training programme are monitored by the PhD coordinator. In addition to the annual assessment interviews, and the supervision by the PhD supervisor(s), the PhD mentor (a function separate from the PhD coordinator) regularly meets with the PhD candidates individually. Problems or specific concerns that the PhD candidate cannot discuss with the supervisor or director of the institute can be discussed with the PhD mentor, who will mediate, if necessary, in conflicts of interest.

In collaboration with national research schools and the Graduate School of Humanities at Utrecht University, INTEGON facilitates training programmes that are tailored to the needs of the respective PhD candidates and their particular research projects. National research schools provide training programmes for PhD candidates, offering courses and seminars to help PhD candidates to get better acquainted with their field of research, and to familiarise themselves with the theories, methods and modes of analysis that are prevalent in that particular field. At INTEGON, PhD candidates usually participate in either the Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion (NOSTER) or in the Netherlands Interuniversity School for Islamic Studies (NISIS), although some enlist in the training programme of the Research School for Cultural History (Huizinga Institute).

INTEGON scholars contribute to the PhD courses and PhD conferences of NOSTER, NISIS and the Huizinga Institute, and are thus actively involved in the training of doctoral candidates on a national level. PhD candidates receive part of their training by participating in INTEGON colloquia, conferences and workshops. The various INTEGON colloquia and working groups present an opportunity for the candidate to present work in progress and discuss it with advanced INTEGON colleagues. PhD candidates are encouraged to co-organize conferences with experienced colleagues and/or to chair panels or respond to a paper, so as to gain experience in this branch of academic professionalism as well. Although work on the PhD thesis has priority above other research activities, INTEGON supports PhD candidates to also publish articles in journals and book chapters.

The scholarly training programme is supplemented by courses that are geared towards acquiring professional skills, such as "Academic Professionalism", "Writing Academic English" or

“Research planning and time management”, and career orientation, such as “Orientation on the job market” and individual coaching by Utrecht University’s centre for reintegration activities. In the period under review, most standard PhD candidates were employed for a period of 4 years (0.75 fte research time). A persistent problem of PhD projects generally, and specifically in the humanities, is the low number of theses that are finished on time. Only 25% of dissertations were finished within four years. A further 42% submitted up to a year late. Important reasons for significant delay were maternity or illness. Compared to other research institutes in the humanities, this success rate is relatively satisfying, but INTEGON still feels the need for further improvement, e.g. by means of even more intensive supervision. There is evidence that this is proving successful: judging by the current progress of the five PhD projects that started in 2008, it is expected that all members of this 2008 cohort will finish their dissertations on time.

### **Assessment/remarks**

The PhD students participating in the audit were very positive about the supervision of their individual research projects as well as about the structure of their academic education. They benefit largely from the strong international connections of the research programmes they are part of. All participate in the new double structure: the research school NOSTER, responsible for general and formal matters; and the local Graduate School responsible for learning skills and for the supervision of concrete research topics, though the coordination between the two is not yet perfect. Some candidates would wish to have more information about on-going research projects of the PhD students of other programmes, some mention a lack of transparency of the overall decisions concerning the policy decided by the institute or by the university, some others express their irritation about the permanently changing research structures in the university.

## ***6B. Programme level***

Programme 13 (UU 1):	<b>Sacred Texts and Religious Traditions: (Re)Appropriating Religious Heritage</b>
Programme director:	Prof. dr. Bob Becking
Research input 2011 (tenured):	3.45 fte
Assessments:	Quality: 4
	Productivity: 4
	Relevance: 3
	Viability: 4

The ambition of this research group is to understand and clarify processes of religious change, and their far-reaching implications for the way communities engage with their heritage. The main focus is on Christianity and Judaism. The programme studies selected periods of change, from the ancient Near East to the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, and the reshaping of these traditions in modern societies.

The research programme has three foci:

- How do Biblical texts interact with greater historical events, such as the Babylonian exile (and the assumed return of the offspring of the exiles), the destruction of Jerusalem by Roman forces in 70 CE, and the partings of the ways between Judaism and Christianity?
- How, around the year 1700 CE, were hegemonic discourses – especially on politics and religion – able to change in a strongly decentralized society like the Dutch Republic, where public opinion was severely limited?
- How can systematic and philosophical discourses help to explain shifts and changes in religious identities?

### *Quality*

Although the institute (INTEGON) had to cope with heavy difficulties concerning the change of its environment and a loss of staff during the last assessment period, it was able to keep the quality of its research on a very high level. The present programme constitutes more an umbrella, under which the rest of the former faculty departments, Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, and Philosophy could continue to do their work under a perspective of Religious Studies. Most of key publications show a high academic standard, varying from very good up to excellent in the fields of early Judaic, early Christian, and early modern Church historical studies and make significant contributions to their fields. The contribution of philosophy to the programme was not fully assessable; the major studies on the philosophical discourses about religious changes (M. Sarot and D.-M. Grube) were not published yet. Very promising seems to be the new project of A. Merz and T. Tieleman on “Text Processing in Philosophical and Religious Movements within the Roman Empire (1-300 C.E.)”, which was the only proposal within the humanities that succeeded in gaining a major financial support from the UU. The academic reputation of A. Merz and B. Becking is excellent. The group enjoys a very good leadership. The coherence of the programme, however, needs to be strengthened in the future. The main strength of this programme lies in the study and exegesis of texts in their historical contexts. The philosophical and more modern historical elements perhaps do not fully cohere, and philosophy might better fit into other groups, like “Religion and Culture”. This, of course, is not excluded by the structure.

### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 21.6, which is low. The percentage of academic publications is 43%, which is very high, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 9.3, which is high. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 20%, which is high.

In spite of the changing conditions at the institutional and personal level the productivity of the research group was good. The institute made good efforts to increase the productivity in the future. The number of PhD students in the programme has been constantly improved over the period; the number of theses is quite good.

### *Relevance*

Changing the shape from a Faculty of “Theology” to one of “Religions Studies”, the programme group had to build up relations to new stakeholders. The group makes good progress in contributing not only to the general academic, but also to the public debates on religion. This is instanced by wide publicity surrounding the discovery of the Jezebel Seal and by a good number of publications for general readers.

### *Viability*

The programme has lost half of its staff during the last seven years, therefore it was considerably weakened. In comparison with other, similar programmes, however, it shows still some strength (3.45 fte of tenured positions). The institute as a whole developed a promising strategy for the future to merge the two former research groups together and build up a new structure which allows INTEGON to become a highly professional Institute for Religious Studies focussing on Jewish, Christian and Islamic religion. Under the heading “Religious Dynamics, Imageries, Institutions, Identities” the former programme group will contribute its distinctive quality through a detailed philological and historical investigation of the foundations of Judaism and Christianity. Thus, the programmatic task will become more coherent. In the future this task will be expanded by a similar highly qualified investigation of the foundations of Islam by the newly installed Professor Christian Lange. By this material expansion and the integration of the former programme group into a broader and theoretically reflected programme of Religious Studies, the viability of the group will considerably be strengthened.

### *Conclusion*

Although the programme group had to suffer considerable losses during the last assessment period, it was successful in continuing the research on Old Testament, New Testament and Church History fields on a very good level, where it is internationally competitive. Expanded by Islamic Studies, it will provide the future programme of the INTEGON with its masterful philological, historical, and religious historical expertise investigating the foundation documents of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Thus, the programme group is in a good way, and is well placed to enter on a new, enthusiastic, and productive phase of research activity. The group is in a good position to place even greater emphasis on the philosophical and social implications of religious texts and practices, and to co-operate with scholars in adjacent fields. Recent appointments suggest that this will be a major strength of INTEGON, and their efforts merit to be sustained.

Programme 14 (UU 2):	<b>Religion(s) in the Modern World: Encountering Difference</b>
Programme director:	up to July 2011: Prof. dr. Martin van Bruinessen (ad interim); from Sept 2011: Prof. dr. Birgit Meyer
Research input 2011 (tenured):	3.52 fte
Assessments:	Quality: 4 Productivity: 4 Relevance: 5 Viability: 5

The programme studies processes of encountering difference (in practices, beliefs and images), which are regarded as pivotal for the understanding, explanation, and systematic reconstruction of religion(s) in the modern world. Such encounters challenge and call into question the self-understanding of both individuals and formal and informal social institutions such as religious communities, the public sphere, schools, and media.

The programme addresses three dimensions of encountering difference:

- the individual and existential dimension: research addresses the challenges posed by encounters with difference to the religious identities of individual people in different biographic situations and social contexts
- the social and institutional dimension: research addresses the impact of encounters with e.g. different value systems and religious practices on institutions such as religious communities, schools, media, or the public sphere
- the philosophical and conceptual dimension: research addresses important concepts and modes of thinking in the study of religion and the challenges resulting from approaches developed in different cultures.

The research combines a range of interdisciplinary approaches and, among others, comparative, philosophical, and social scientific methods. It aims at developing new ways of thinking about religion(s) in our contemporary world and the social and conceptual consequences of diversity in this field.

#### *Quality*

During the period under review, the research group has demonstrated leadership in the academic study of religion, with internationally recognized publications, which promises to be further enhanced by recent appointments of leading scholars and a clear strategic mission to advance the study of religion both in the Netherlands and internationally. High-quality publications have been produced, in particular, at the forefront of research in the study of religion and media, religion and education, and Islamic studies. The key publications provided did not yet include much of the work of the new professors nor did they reflect the recent reorganization of the programme.

#### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 23.5, which is medium. The percentage of academic publications is 41%, which is very high, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 9.6, which is high. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 23%, which is again high.

The research group has a strategy for increasing quantity, with special attention to increasing international publications. With its academic leadership, the programme should be able to expand its already substantial enrolment and output of PhDs.

#### *Relevance*

The research group has a strong record of securing external funding through research grants and contract research. Drawing directly on research expertise, the programme has an impressive record of societal relevance, consulting government, conducting workshops for stakeholders, and engaging public media. Socially relevant outputs included advisory reports, contract research, and popular publications. The research group's relevance, however, also includes formulating a strong mission for religious studies in the Netherlands.

#### *Viability*

Already a viable research group, the programme will only be strengthened by new appointments of established and leading scholars in the anthropology and history of religions. The research group articulates a clear vision of religious studies and a compelling strategy in formulating a distinctive methodology and coherent plan for the future.

#### *Conclusion*

The research group is clearly aligned with the institute's mission to overcome the unproductive divide between religious studies and theology and contribute to the reinvention or reconfiguration of the study of religion in the Netherlands and internationally. The focus on Christianity and Islam is solid and creates a profile that distinguishes this research programme at the University of Utrecht from other programmes in religious studies in the Netherlands. The recent appointments of Professor Birgit Meyer and Professor Christian Lange indicate a strong investment in Religious Studies at Utrecht. This research programme is a national asset at the forefront of the academic study of religion.

## 7. Tilburg School of Catholic Theology

### 7A. *Institute level*

#### 1. The institute

The current Tilburg School of Catholic Theology (TST) is the result of a process of mergers and reorganisations in the review period. In 2004 a new Catholic Theological Faculty in Utrecht was established as a result of the merger of the Catholic Theological Faculties of Utrecht, Tilburg and Nijmegen. In 2005, Nijmegen decided to step out of this merger. In 2007, Tilburg University (then UvT, since 2010 TiU) incorporated the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology (TST), which now has two locations: one in Utrecht (where the majority of the management, the faculty and the staff has its offices), and one on the campus of TiU. The staff was redistributed between Utrecht and Tilburg, but the management tried to keep the viable parts of their research programmes intact as much as possible.

In the light of these far-reaching changes, the self-assessment report focuses on the two research programmes that are operational since 2007, though all required data from 2005 onwards were also provided. The titles of the research programmes are:

- Christian identity in a pluralistic context: continuity and discontinuity;
- (Re-)actualizing Catholic Identity in Advanced Modernity.

The TST hosts several research centres, which highlight specific aspects of one of the two research programmes. These centres are expressions of long-term research foci of the TST, and most of them receive partial external funding.

The research centres belonging to the programme ‘Christian Identity’ are:

- Centre for Patristic Research (CPO, in cooperation with the VU-University, Amsterdam);
- The Thomas Institute;
- The Study Group Relation Judaism Christianity (RJC);
- The Cardinal Willebrands Research Centre (CWRC).

The research centre belonging to the programme ‘(Re-)actualizing Catholic Identity in Advanced Modernity’ is the Centre for Prison Pastoral Studies (CPPS, in co-operation with the Protestant Theological University).

The research focus of the TST can be summarized as actualizing Christian (Roman Catholic) identity in past and present. It focuses on the Christian (in particular the Catholic) identity, rooted in Judaism and taking shape in interaction with other religions and cultural contexts. This identity is investigated via various disciplines: theology, philosophy and social sciences. This mission is closely linked to the mission of TiU, i.e. understanding society, and this common ground facilitates faculty of the TST to cooperate with researchers from other Schools. The TST is proud of its Catholic identity, and seeks to actively connect this identity with its mission, namely to engage, from a Catholic perspective, in a fruitful dialogue with contemporary, pluralistic society at large.

## 2. Quality and academic reputation

Until 2006, i.e. before the merger, the research at CTU comprised nine research programmes (most of them in a joint venture with the TF-UU), covering all major areas in theology and religious studies. The TFT hosted four research programmes, covering various theological sub-disciplines (Bible, liturgy, dogmatics, moral and practical theology).

At the start of the TST, the number of programmes was reduced and their focus was redesigned. All senior researchers had to categorize their projects in one of the two new research programmes, with the aim to answer key questions of that programme. The researchers in each of the two programmes were also stimulated to develop and participate in interdisciplinary collective projects or in one of the research centres, focused on various aspects of the TST's overall research focus. The connection between the two research programmes is made explicit and linked to the overall research focus of the TST in a position paper that serves as a point of reference.

As part of the reorganisation, the research profiles were realigned with the clearly theological mission of the TST<sup>2</sup>, a more hands-on monitoring of the PhD's and the research output of the faculty was put in place, a clearer focus of the research programmes was formulated.

Almost all the researchers originally working in the first programme have been integrated in the TST and could continue their research without major adaptations. The researchers now belonging to the second programme were before 2007 scattered over several programmes of both the TFT and the CTU. In Tilburg, some of them were integrated in the TST, others were appointed at the Department of Religious Studies and Theology (DRT), part of the TiU Tilburg School of Humanities.<sup>3</sup> A major part of the external funding intended for projects related to the contemporary situation of religion and the Catholic Church went to "Luce", the TST's Centre for Religious Communication.

Because the restructuring of the TST was earlier and more radical than that of other faculties, its current position is relatively more stable than those of other faculties or departments in theology and/or religious studies, the self-assessment report states.

On an individual level, researchers of the TST have good contacts with colleagues from other Dutch universities and sometimes cooperate with them in collective projects. On an institutional level, the TST has the closest relations with the VU-Amsterdam and with the Protestant Theological University, because of the two joint research centres (CPO and CPPS) and the correspondence in profile and mission with these two institutions.

In terms of the number of researchers, the TST is one of the most important participants in the research school NOSTER.

The research programmes and centres of the TST have structural contacts with various universities abroad. Also, the management has taken several initiatives to conclude strategic partnerships with similar theological institutions abroad, such as the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic University of Leuven, Heythrop College (London), the Bar Ilan University (Ramat Gan, Israel), and University of Pretoria (South Africa).

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<sup>2</sup> The TST is recognized by the Holy See and delivers the degrees of BA and MA in Theology. A research master's programme Theology and Religious studies is offered in cooperation with the Tilburg School of Humanities, and the interdisciplinary MA Christianity and Society is offered in cooperation with the Schools of Economics and Humanities.

<sup>3</sup> In 2009 the DRT ceased to exist and became part of the Department of Language and Culture of the TSH.



Since its foundation in 2007, the TST has been able to attract far more international guest researchers than during the previous period of assessment. A total of 38 international guest researchers have spent a longer research stay at the TST since 2007.

The TST aims at organizing (at least) one international conference a year in the field of theology (apart from smaller symposia and the congresses of which it is co-organizer). The TST (co-)edits three national, one international book series, and an international journal. Through its research centres, the TST additionally supports the edition of three international and three national book series.

In 2008, Staf Hellemans won the biannual prize for religious books published in Flanders in 2006-07 (in the category academic books). In 2010, Marcel Poorthuis and Theo Salemink won the gold medal prize of the Teyler's Theological Society at Haarlem for their book *Lotus in de Lage Landen* (2010).

### **Assessment/remarks**

It is the Committee's strong impression that the repeated reorganisations and reconfigurations of the research potential at Tilburg and related institutes have generated major problems for the research climate and output, and for the researchers themselves. Tranquillity now appears to be badly needed, in order to reconstruct a sound research climate in which quality and cooperation with other institutes may prosper. The Committee remains somewhat sceptical about the outcome of the rather surprising division on two locations of this small institute with the single mission of "re-actualising Christian (Catholic) identity in past and present". It looks forward to actual proof of an increased cooperation and of stronger links with the sister institute at Utrecht University, and, for that matter, of the future of the internal cooperation of the research teams within the geographically divided TST institute.

Notwithstanding these vicissitudes, problems and uncertainties, the former and more recently created research teams have generally achieved a good level of research quality. In less hectic managerial contexts, they would probably have achieved better. At present, the TST is provided with several scholars of international reputation, including a valuable range of endowed chairs; they will be capable of restoring the institute's quality and putting it again on the forefront of international research.

### **3. Resources**

By September 2012, the offices and class rooms of the Utrecht location of the TST will have moved to new buildings (the Tilburg location will remain the same). The new location is a separate building, situated in the centre of Utrecht (the department of Religious Studies and Theology of Utrecht University is within walking distance), and is right next to the most important museum for religious art in the Netherlands (the National Museum Catharijneconvent). The management expects that all these factors will contribute considerably to the 'branding' of the TST, and will create important new opportunities for cooperation. The TST and the Catharijneconvent are very keen on strengthening their cooperation, because they complement each other's expertise, and strengthen each other's branding.

The research input of the TST in 2011 was 11.4 fte, plus 12 funded PhD students and 16 external Phd students. In spite of the decrease in student numbers, the resources of the TST are relatively stable thanks to its relatively high percentage of fixed endowment by the Dutch state.

The direct funding constituted 89%, contract research 7% and other funding sources (e.g. for special chairs) 4% of the research budget. No funds were obtained from competitive national or international research organisations; one of the reasons given for this is that until 2009 the recruitment policy for PhD students was not competitive enough.

As a consequence of its sharply defined profile, the TST has been able to attract considerable external means for endowed chairs and research centres, focused on specific fields of interest that are highly relevant to Catholic theology. These research centres are able to attract a considerable number of external junior and senior researchers.

#### **Assessment/remarks**

The Committee welcomes the cooperation of these two complementary institutions. A strong, structural research link of both universities with the National Museum Catharijneconvent (which houses not only Catholic but also Protestant religious art) would be beneficial to all, since the Dutch museums have gradually lost their research capacity and the two universities will be able to provide them with a multidisciplinary research context going well beyond the classical art history.

#### **4. Productivity**

The total number of publications in the seven year review period is 1351. This includes 99 publications for the general public and 297 professional publications. Conference papers are not included in these numbers; their number was not registered.

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 18, which is low. The percentage of academic publications is 45%, which is high, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 7.6, which is medium. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 24%, which is high.

There were 43 registered PhD students during the period under review; 17 of them were employed as (internal) PhD students, 4 of them externally funded and 22 worked on a free lance basis (*buitenpromovendi*). The total number of completed PhD's during the period under review was 14, of which 3 were internally funded PhD students, 2 externally funded, and 9 unfunded *buitenpromovendi*.

“Luce” started in 2010 with setting up an online database on theological and religious issues, including a number of introductory courses on theological topics. At the end of 2011 *Lucepedia* comprised a total number of 200 lemmas, including 90 lemmas provided by the Centre for Patristic Research. Since January 2011, when *Lucepedia* went online, an average of 2350 visits (1963 unique visitors) a month have been registered, consulting together 11.800 pages.

The self-assessment report lists the most significant results and highlights of academic quality and relevance per programme. Many of the publications were still in press at the time of the visit and were due to be published in 2012, which year is formally not included in this review.

#### **Assessment/remarks**

The relatively low output figures of the TST may partly be related to the reorganisation troubles, but the Committee has also noticed that book chapters and professional publications very much outweigh the production of refereed and non-refereed articles. For a sound restart of the Institute and a fruitful cooperation with the Utrecht University sister institute, it would be strongly advisable to re-gauge the institute's publication policy, as mentioned in the section on Strategy below.

## 5. Societal relevance

Because of the specific mission of the TST, the two research programmes comprise various collective and individual projects that are focused on vital religious questions of the Catholic Church and contemporary society. Although the overall character of its research is fundamental, it is crucial for the TST to share the spin-off of its teaching and research with the Catholic Church and society.

TST has organized study-days for a broader audience three times a year, during which the results of research projects are communicated and discussed. Since 2007, study-days have been organized on various topics such as: Paul and the Jews, Avant garde and religion, Dialogue in the Catholic Church, Thomas Aquinas on God, Christianity and the economy, Europe and Christianity, Prayer and community, Aquinas and the Holy Spirit, Liturgy and architecture, The position of faith-based development organizations, The place of Islam in the Netherlands, Biblical theology, Religion and youth.

The TST has recently started a new project, consisting of making theological research better known among youngsters through master classes and tailor made projects for high schools.

In order to structurally safeguard the societal dimension of its profile and mission, the former CTU founded in 2001 “Luce, Centre for Religious Communication”. Its activities have been continued and further developed after the integration of the CTU in the TST. Luce serves as an ‘interface’ between the academic research in theology of the TST and questions and needs of the Catholic Church and society in religious matters. The primary task of Luce is to organize post-academic courses for people who are active in parishes as pastoral professionals or for specific professional groups (e.g. prison chaplains). These courses are organized in co-operation with several Dutch dioceses and social organizations. Professional courses have been offered in liturgy, religious community building, catechesis, spiritual guidance, clinical pastoral formation. Within the framework of permanent education courses have been given on exegesis, philosophy, sacramentology, canon law. On request of the Dutch dioceses Luce also provides preparation courses for church volunteers who have a special permission from the local *ordinarius* to participate in the administration and the pastoral work of their local communities. Furthermore, Luce organizes symposia, book-launches and workshops on topics that are of interest to the general public.

### Assessment/remarks

The ecclesiastical mission of the research institute justifies its strong accent on societal relevance. The Centre for Religious Communication “Luce” appears to be its main instrument but it remains unclear until what point its performances and publications may be considered as the output of the scholarly research programme. The strong focus on Catholic identity (“re-actualising Christian (Catholic) identity in past and present”) may be expected in a research institute fostered by the Roman Catholic Church and provided with the canonical recognition of its teaching curriculum, yet valorisation should not outweigh the scholarly research neither should the actual needs of the Catholic Church organisation decide on the design of research programmes, as may easily (but perhaps falsely) be inferred from their titles. Fundamental research may of course be of actual interest for the ecclesiastical institution, and church-committed research may bear a scholarly character, but it should avoid the appearance of instrumentality. Close scientific cooperation with a non-committed institution, such as Utrecht University, is probably the best warrant for a sound research design and performance.

## **6. Strategy for the future**

Thanks to canonical regulations, the TST will remain in the future a full faculty of TiU, and this in spite of its small size. This enables the TST to make itself known academically and in society at large.

Now that the phase of building up the TST is by and large completed, the TST enters into a new phase, that of consolidating its strengths and constantly trying to improve itself. The management expects that it will become easier to attract highly qualified faculty with innovative ideas about research projects, to attract more students and PhD's, especially international ones, to consolidate the external funding, and to further enhance its relevance for the Catholic Church and society.

Since 2009 the recruitment of PhD's has been made far more competitive, also internationally, while at the same time the TST sees to it that the academic and societal goals of their projects strengthen the overall profile of the TST. The next step of this policy is to actively encourage excellent PhD's to apply for external funding of their post-doc research by NWO.

The TST wants to strengthen its international academic reputation by increasing the number of publications in international top journals and with renowned publishers. In order to realize this, the TST facilitates publishing in international journals by subsidizing the correction costs of publications in a foreign language, and by supplying a travel budget for international congresses. Moreover, through its strategic partnerships the TST wants to stimulate faculty to embed their research in an international academic environment. At the same time it wants to improve the academic status of its own international series (*Tilburg Theological Studies*) by publishing the results of its collective research projects in this series.

According to the self-assessment report, the most important threat for the TST is its small number of students, which inevitably will also affect its research capacity. Though the TST has taken various initiatives to counter this trend, the general situation of institutionalized religion and theology in the Netherlands, and the negative image of the Catholic Church due to recent scandals have a much larger impact than regardless which promotion strategy.

## **Assessment/remarks**

Although the small number of students constitutes a real threat for the basic funding of the TST as a university, a sound development of scholarly research asks also for programmes funded by national or international funding agencies, independently of the university's basic funding. Until now, the TST has obviously invested much energy in valorisation programmes, and with an undeniable success; it would probably be advisable to redirect part of this energy toward the design of greater and more fundamental research programmes, eventually in cooperation with partners inside or outside the Netherlands, and toward their submission to independent funding agencies.

## **7. PhD training and supervision**

All standard PhD's are recruited on the basis of a two-tier international competition, in which the quality of the proposal, the track record of the PhD, the supervising capacities of the supervisor, and the degree in which a project contributes to answering one of the major research questions of one of the two programmes are the determining selection criteria.

Additionally, the TST currently has 5 other internally funded, non-structural PhD's working at their dissertation, plus 13 contract PhD's. Finally there are 10 external PhD's, who are neither internally nor externally funded, and 5 students, whose contract at the TST has expired, but who

have not completed their dissertation yet. In sum, the TST currently has 37 PhD's, of whom seven are from abroad.

In principle, all PhD's receive the same benefits, such as a working place, computer, internet, and library facilities, a TST email account, invitations to all official meetings and festivities, and a budget of € 3000 to cover research costs.

The work of all PhD's is monitored in the same way. Before being officially accepted, each project is assessed by the research team on all relevant aspects. Once accepted, every PhD has to submit the chapters that he/she has written and that have been approved by the supervisor to the research team on a yearly basis in order to monitor the progress of the project, in particular its observance of the original work schedule (time and content). In order to safeguard the academic responsibility of the supervisor, the research team does not communicate directly with the PhD, but only gives suggestions or warnings to the supervisor, to which the latter is expected to react (except after the first year of the appointment of a PhD, when the dean has to take a formal decision about the renewal of his/her contract for the remaining duration of the project).

From 2011 onwards, the vice-dean for research has an exit interview with all standard PhD's in order to receive suggestions for further improvement of their training and facilities. If a PhD has not been able to submit the manuscript when his/her contract expires, the vice-dean draws up a plan with him/her and the supervisor as to ensure that the dissertation will be completed within a year.

The research team of the TST functions as the theological department of the Graduate School of the Tilburg School of Humanities (GSH), of which all PhD's are a member. The GSH is responsible for the general quality policy regarding the education and training of the PhD's, offers courses in academic skills, and plays a mediating role in case of a major conflict between a PhD and his/her supervisors. The GSH has framed a Training and Supervision Plan, including a form in which the yearly progress of the project is evaluated. All these instruments have been adopted by the research team of the TST, which sees to it that they are adequately implemented. The GSH also hosts the research master programme of theology and religious studies, in which the TST participates.

The day-to-day supervision of the PhD's is taken care of by their supervisors. For training and specialized courses the students make use of the offer of the GSH, NOSTER, research master courses of the TST and other faculties, and national and international symposia and conferences.

Due to the great variety of sub-disciplines in the field of theology and the great differences in academic background of the PhD's, the number of training and teaching initiatives aimed at all of them is limited. However, the TST organizes at least twice a year a seminar for all its PhD's, during which one of them presents and discusses his/her on-going research. Finally, all standard PhD's participate in the regular meetings of the departments and programmes to which they belong. All these initiatives basically serve three goals: making the PhD's familiar with necessary academic skills and specialized knowledge, socialize them with the academic world, and enhance group dynamics among the PhD's.

### **Assessment/remarks**

The TST has achieved a well-organized PhD training and supervision scheme. The TST graduates showed much satisfaction with the arrangements, which ensure an active and steady supervision but leave to the students enough liberty for the personal design of their thesis. More student contacts with graduates outside the TST would however be greatly appreciated.



## **7B. Programme level**

Programme 15 (TST 1):	<b>Christian Identity in a Pluralistic Context: Continuity and Discontinuity</b>
Programme directors:	Prof. dr. G.P. Freeman, Prof. dr. M.J.J. Menken
Research input 2011 (tenured):	4.3 fte
Assessments:	Quality: 3
	Productivity: 3
	Relevance: 3
	Viability: 3

The programme examines Christian (and in particular Catholic) identity as it has developed through the ages. Four factors are of crucial importance in this respect:

- 1) the common Christian ‘memory’ that is expressed in Scripture;
- 2) the Christian communities within which Scripture was read and made relevant, and which were part of and responded to (changing) social, cultural and religious contexts;
- 3) the ritual (liturgical) meetings within which the Christian faith was articulated and celebrated, shaping the *lex orandi* over the course of time;
- 4) with the help of philosophical categories and based on Scripture, the development of the theological reflection on faith, at first in the context of the *lex orandi*.

The participating disciplines in this programme are: Biblical Studies, Church History and Systematic Theology. The projects within this programme are connected by two core questions:

- how does the theme of ‘identity’ appear in the sources of Christian identity?
- how do these sources function in the quest for and formulation of new identity?

The following collective projects are currently being executed in the programme:

- Breaches and Bridges in European Spirituality;
- Dream Stories among Spiritual Leaders and Theologians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages as Sources of Christian Identity ;
- Prayer in the Old Testament.

Two other collective projects are part of the research centres.

### *Quality*

After an institutional change the faculty has just started the programme in order to foster the cooperation of four different theological disciplines, Old and New Testament Studies, Church History, and Systematic Theology. One result of this cooperation can be seen in the key publication “Dream Stories among Spiritual Leaders and Theologians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages as Sources of Christian Identity”, a volume of collected essays (scheduled to appear in 2012), to which members of the research group contributed. These articles constitute a quite interesting anthology of Biblical, theological, and philosophical judgments on dreams through Church history, but they do not really show how those dreams or their assessments had an effect on constructing Christian identities. Their contribution to the topic of the programme is

therefore rather limited. The second key publication and other disciplinary publications, which were not included into the former, show that the academic research in the four disciplines meets a good academic quality, which in part is internationally visible. The programme, however, does not seem to have achieved its definitive organisation at the moment and is not fully thought through. The list of content (appendix 2 of the Self Evaluation Report) shows a number of six collective projects and ten individual projects, which is really too high. One of the central questions of the programme, i.e. how Christian or Catholic identity remained recognizable among the plurality of processes of constant re-actualizing older Jewish and Christian traditions, is just touched upon, but not made a subject of research. The amount of external funding is rather small; the research group seems to have made no efforts to apply for NWO funding.

#### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 21.6, which is low. The percentage of academic publications is 38%, which is high, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 8.2, which is medium. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 23%, which is high.

Because of heavy institutional changes, the productivity of the research group is not high. Some efforts are made to improve this in the future. From the high number of PhD students at the TST (37) only six seem to be integrated into the present programme. There is some internal funding, but there are no external research grants. The Committee's scoring intends to show understanding for the difficulties experienced in the past and to encourage all efforts to improve the productivity in the future.

#### *Relevance*

The faculty has close contacts with the stakeholders of the Roman Catholic Church, both on the national and on the international level. It has established a very active centre for further education of the (Catholic) public ("Luce"), which serves also to the research group for the dissemination of its results. It is not clear, however, whether "Luce" is itself actively involved in research, as opposed to being primarily an educational centre.

#### *Viability*

Including four theological disciplines (Old Testament, New Testament, Church History, and Systematic Theology) the research group has a considerable size (4.3 fte tenured staff). As long as there is still one professorship at least for each of the disciplines, survival is not put at risk. The faculty's strategy of keeping the traditional theological disciplines alive, while simultaneously developing new inter-faculty projects with the humanities, including religious studies, seems to be promising. The stability of the institution as the only faculty of Catholic Theology acknowledged in the Netherlands by the Holy See seems to have been strengthened, but may be threatened by a further decline of students.

#### *Conclusion*

After a period of forced reorientation, the research group has started a programme that intends to lead the disciplines Biblical Studies, Church History, and Systematic Theology to closer cooperation in research. This seems to be a promising way. At the moment the results of this cooperation are just visible; so far they meet a good academic standard. The quality, however, could be much improved, if the publications were more aligned to the topic of the programme. In the presentation of this programme the contributions of systematic theology are hardly visible. Also, the relation between the Research centres and the research programmes is rather unclear. Most of the strength of the overall programme seems to lie in the research centres, but they are not fully integrated into the two specific research programmes of the TST (as conceded in the



self-evaluation report). In order to strengthen its coherence, the programme should be reworked, reorganized, and theologically more reflected. Not all of the individual research has to fit the topic of the programme, but there should be some strong publications with clear contributions from several disciplines.

Programme 16 (TST 2): **(Re-)actualizing Catholic Identity in Advanced Modernity**

Programme directors: Prof. dr. S. Hellemans, Dr. S. Gärtner

Research input 2011 (tenured): 5.2 fte

Assessments:

Quality:	3
Productivity:	3
Relevance:	4
Viability:	3

The central theme of this research programme is the position of Christian religion and the Roman Catholic Church in advanced or late modernity. Special attention, in line with the research profile of the TST, goes to the transformation processes which the Roman Catholic Church is undergoing. The central research question of this programme is how individuals and religious organizations respond to the changing late modern context. How do they succeed – or not – in taking the challenges and in actualizing their identity? This general research question will be dealt with by various disciplines. Practical theologians, social scientists and philosophers – each with their own specific sub-disciplines – make up the core of the research group. Systematic theologians, experts in canon law and historians of contemporary church history are also participating in certain projects. Research particularly focuses on two topics, a) The Catholic Church in Contemporary Society and b) Spiritual Centres in the Netherlands.

#### *Quality*

The strength of the programme clearly is its theological identity, taken as scientific analysis of modernisation processes within the Catholic Church. The leading scholars of the programme (Hellemans, Gärtner) are nationally and internationally well recognized researchers in their sub-disciplines (sociology of religion; pastoral care). Hellemans performs especially well in the area of empirical sociology of church religiosity. The programme management was able to attract a large number of smaller individual research projects (17!). Specific projects apply well approved instruments for empirical analysis of church embedded religion. This topic was promoted also by organising a substantial number of nationwide scholarly conferences. The policy of publications has made substantial efforts to make visible contributions to the international discourse. The small number of key publications (the self-evaluation Report mentions only three) and other important forms of output display scholarly quality, so far more relevant for the national debate, since several of them are written in Dutch. Other scientific publications as well as the setup of book series (Tilburg Theological Studies, LIT publishing), show considerable efforts to increase the international standing of the group. The programme members were able to attract junior researchers and shape a fruitful academic education.

In the future the programme's quality would benefit from integrating the specialised analyses into the general practical theological discourse. More publications in books and journals outside the institution of the researchers themselves are desirable. It would also be good to see a continuation of the internationalisation efforts and particularly of taking up a broader research scope including also non-institutional religious phenomena.

#### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 13.6, which is low. The percentage of academic publications is 51%, which is very high, and the number of academic

publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 6.9, which is low. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 25%, which is high.

The research output of the programme and related individual projects is not high. Many publications are in Dutch. The programme members recently were able to attract more junior researchers (PhD students). However, the number of successfully defended PhD-theses until now is relatively small. The measures taken after the mid-term review to enhance the productivity of the programme deserve special attention.

#### *Relevance*

The high relevance of this research programme for the needs of the stakeholders, in this case the Catholic Church, is obvious. The programme's results in many respects are useful for analytic insight as well as for their scientific relevance. Besides, the group made considerable efforts to communicate its results not only within the Catholic Church but also to a broader audience in society interested in Catholic affairs. A special success in this respect was the setup of the "Luce Centre for Religious Communication" organizing symposia, offering courses also for non-professionals, and publishing results in a non-academic format.

#### *Viability*

The size of the group maintaining this programme is average, especially with regard to TST relations. Given the rather short time frame since Tilburg theological faculty restructured the programme, it developed its academic basis in a quite acceptable way. Within the period under review the programme was almost completely financed by direct funding of TST; the research staff was not successful in attracting external research funds (NWO). The new bi-located situation of TST (Tilburg and Utrecht) does not seem to imply risks for the group's stability. The future growth of the programme will depend on the faculty's policy concerning the present vacancy.

#### *Conclusion*

The programme has a clear (Roman Catholic) theological identity, strong in focussing on Christian and particularly Catholic church life. To avoid academic isolation this programme should seek to expand its research by networking and by further internationalization (beyond Catholic theological partners). The close vicinity of the Utrecht location of TST and of the Utrecht University theological institute INTEGON provides an excellent opportunity for such forms of cooperation. National as well as international standing could increase, if the programme would try to be more open to cultural developments outside the church and engage also in more interdisciplinary research on post-Christian society.



## 8. University of Groningen

### *8A. Institute level*

#### 1. The institute

The Centre for Religious Studies (CRS) is the only research institute of a faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at a public university in the Netherlands. The University of Groningen is non-confessional and non-denominational. The name of the Faculty includes “theology” alongside “religious studies,” which reflects the view that these approaches do not differ in terms of methodology, but in subject matter: whereas “religious studies” highlights the interest in the phenomenon of religion as such, “theology” refers to a specific attention to the dogmas, beliefs and ideas of Judaism, Christianity and, increasingly, also Islam.

The Faculty’s vision is to contribute significantly to the study of the dynamic relationship between religion and culture, in past and present. This comprises the positive relation of religion to culture through processes of accommodation, as well as the negative relation of cultural criticism, either exerted by religion or by its surrounding culture. The aim is to develop innovative approaches to how religion is understood and how it is to be investigated as a cultural factor. In this way the Faculty wants to contribute to a better understanding of the role which religion plays, both in global developments and in public discourses in Europe. All fields of study in the Faculty use methodologies that they share with the faculties of the Humanities and the Social Sciences.

In the review period 2005-2011, the research was organised in three programmes. A new structure takes effect in 2012.

2005-2011	From 2012
1. Jewish and Christian Traditions (JCT)	1. Jewish, Christian and Islamic Origins
2. Religion, Representation and Power (RRP)	2. Comparative and Historical Study of Religion
3. Meaning, Tradition and Change (MTC)	3. Christianity, Philosophy and Culture.

In the first research group, two institutes are embedded: the long-established Qumran Institute, and the more recently founded research institute for Culture, Religion and Society: Interdisciplinary Studies (CRASIS) in Greco-Roman Antiquity, an interdisciplinary cooperation between the research group and the areas of Classics, Ancient History, Roman Law, Classical Archaeology and Ancient Philosophy in the neighbouring faculties of Arts and Philosophy.

The second research group is linked with the Institute of Indian Studies, which is, among others, involved with the publication of the Skandapurana, an important collection of early Hindu religious texts.

The third research group is the basis of the Institute for Christian Cultural Heritage (ICCE), and of the recently established Centre for Religion, Conflict and the Public Domain.

Interdisciplinary cooperation between the research groups is stimulated through the common themes of the Faculty Research Colloquium.

## **2. Quality and academic reputation**

The self-assessment report points at many signs of academic recognition, such as editorships of international journals and international academic book series, the large amount of conference organisations, invited guest lectures, keynote papers, memberships of academies and chairs of international academic organisations. These receive specific attention in the programme assessments in this report.

At the international level, the University of Groningen, Uppsala University, Ghent University and the University of Göttingen joined forces in an intensive collaborative network: the so-called U4. Members of the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies cooperated in various U4 initiatives such as Winter Schools for PhDs. There is a strong collaboration with the University of Göttingen in particular. Structural collaboration was also developed with Durham University, Princeton Theological Seminary, Rice University (Houston), University of British Columbia (Vancouver), the University of Richmond and Aarhus University. Members from these institutes participate in the Faculty Research Colloquium and joint research projects, and staff mobility among staff and students is encouraged.

At the national level, the Faculty cooperated with most other Dutch institutions, for instance through NOSTER, the Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion; through the Dutch Association for the History of Religions (NGG), and in the field of Islamic studies, through NISIS, the Netherlands Interuniversity School for Islamic Studies.

The CRS has an internal system for grading the yearly output. It encourages staff members to publish their work in peer reviewed journals and series with an international outreach. Strategies for further enhancement of research are discussed with the entire staff in a meeting at the end of each academic year. Since 2010, the research group leaders have also met twice a year with the Faculty Board to discuss plans for strategy and organisation.

The CRS enhanced the coherence of the programmes by installing the Faculty Research Colloquium, in which all research groups participate. The innovative potential of the different types of expertise (philological, historical, philosophical, psychological, theological) is further stimulated through the joint treatment of a specific topic in three plenary sessions each year for a three-year period, followed by an international colloquium on the topic. For 2009-2011, the theme was “The Gods as Role Model: Imitation, Divinization, Transgression,” organised in close collaboration with the Department of Religious Studies at Aarhus University, Denmark.

### **Assessment/remarks**

The Committee found that the Centre for Religious Studies (CRS) had an impressive record of producing internationally recognized research of very high quality, with two of its three research programmes rated at the highest quality. Overall, the quality of the research produced by CRS received the Committee’s highest rating out of the six institutes in theology and religious studies reviewed. The leadership of the CRS has developed an effective system for monitoring the quality and quantity of research publications. While several of the researchers in the CRS are international leaders in their fields, the CRS is recognized internationally as a centre of excellence in the study of religion.

## **3. Resources**

As part of a comprehensive human resources policy, a competitive tenure-track system was implemented, which will guide selected candidates to a full professorship in particular areas that are desirable for the coherence and development of the Faculty’s profile. Such tenure tracks were

opened for positions in Philosophy of Religion and Ethics (2007), Hebrew Bible and Early Judaism (2010), and Islamic Origins (2011).

The indirect, external funding amounted to a quarter of the CRS's research funding. This external funding consisted of *a.*) research grants that were obtained from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) in the national competition. Two grants were received from the NWO Top Talent programme for the most talented PhD students. European and other international funding was acquired through grants for fellowships at foreign scientific institutions, for international research cooperation, and for collaboration with museums for the scientific preparation of particular exhibitions. No grants were acquired from the ERC. The external funding also comprised *b.*) research contracts for specific research projects obtained from external organisations.

CRS linked up with the faculties of Arts and Philosophy in a joint application to the Sustainable Humanities programme of NWO. Through this programme, awarded in 2010, and amounting to € 180,000 for a five year period, the Faculty is, among others, able to finance a new Centre for Religion, Conflict and the Public Domain.

The Faculty also profited from two specific programmes developed by the Board of the University. Firstly, the Endowed Chair programme allowed the Faculty to attract a top researcher, with additional funding for PhDs, a postdoctoral researcher, and additional research facilities (€ 1.5 million for the period 2009-2013). Secondly, the CRS profited from the Rosalind Franklin Fellow (RFF) tenure-track programme of the University of Groningen, which, following a worldwide search, offers outstanding female academics a career towards a full professorship. In this programme, a young French scholar in Islamic origins was recently appointed (2011), whose expertise is meant to supplement the already existing expertise in Jewish and Christian origins.

The Board of the CRS and the head of departments will more systematically encourage the researchers in their departments to develop external research grant proposals both in the national and European domain. The Transfer and Liaison Group (TLG) of the University of Groningen facilitates the continuous professionalization of the research staff with detailed information regarding national and European funding policies and opportunities.

#### **Assessment/remarks**

The Committee notes that the CRS has developed effective approaches to the management of both financial resources and human resources. While successful in raising funds, the CRS has also given admirable attention to staff development through the tenure-track system and the balance, which was explained to the Committee as part of the "work-life balance," between publishing research and securing funding for research.

#### **4. Productivity**

Although the composition of the research staff of the Faculty remained essentially the same, the Faculty saw a considerable increase in output of academic publications for the current assessment period.

The number of academic publications in the seven year review period is 570. The total number of publications is 2091. This includes 537 conference papers, 66 publications for the general public and 305 professional publications.

The average of 10.6 academic publications per fte in the research period 2005-2011 is considerably above the average of 5.39 academic publications per fte in the humanities. The three

successive assessments saw the Faculty raise its output figure from 7.74 in 1994-1998 to 9.56 in 1999-2004, and now to 10.6 in the current period under review. The CRS does not intend to raise this figure even further in the coming period, because a one-sided interest in research output might discourage staff members to invest more in applications for external funding and to raise the earning capacity of their groups.

There were 44 registered PhD students during the period under review; 15 of them were employed as (internal) PhD students, 9 of them externally funded and 20 worked on a free lance basis (*buitenpromovendi*). The total number of completed PhD's during the period under review was 27, of which 11 were internally funded PhD students, 6 externally funded, and 10 unfunded *buitenpromovendi*.

The CRS will maintain more strictly a minimum output of one annual academic publication in a scholarly journal or a book chapter in a book series for every 0.2 fte of research effort. This means that the minimum research output for the 0.4 fte research component of a full-time appointment is two academic publications in scholarly journals or book series. The CRS wants to stimulate the research staff to publish more consciously in top journals, publishers and book series.

#### **Assessment/remarks**

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 28, which is high. The percentage of academic publications is 37%, which is high, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 10.6, which is very high. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 30%, which is also very high.

The research programmes “Jewish and Christians Traditions” and “Religion, Representation and Power” achieved very high productivity. Over the long-term, the productivity of the CRS has been steadily increasing.

#### **5. Societal relevance**

The self-assessment report states that the societal relevance of the Faculty's research proved itself in two ways. In the first place, staff members disseminated their research findings to wider professional and societal audiences, through lectures, interviews and exhibitions (preparations for exhibitions in the Drents Museum in Assen on the Dead Sea Scrolls in 2013, and in the British Museum on Politics, Ritual and Religion in India in 2016). Furthermore, they wrote reports for governmental and other organisations about such issues as civic virtues, religion and good citizenship and the daily life of Islamic immigrants in Dutch society. Several research grants were acquired for these projects, some of which were undertaken in close cooperation with the Groningen based Institute for Integration and Social Efficacy (ISW). Other staff members, in the Institute for Christian Cultural Heritage, worked together with institutions such as the Cultural Heritage Agency (RCE) and the Groningen Redundant Churches Trust (SOGK).

In the second place, there was an increasing awareness that the entire research of the Faculty should, in the end, serve not only scholarly but also societal concerns. The researchers became aware that they want to address more explicitly those religious issues which surface in the public discourse. Examples of such issues are the relation and interaction between the formative stages of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; the continued global significance of religion; and the relation between religion and the public domain in Western Europe. The CRS will take these scholarly themes, which are highly relevant for contemporary societies as well, as the focal points for the next research period.



Within the University of Groningen, the Faculty takes an active role in the development of a common research focus for the humanities and social sciences. This focus is defined as “Sustainable Society,” alongside the other focuses of the University’s research on “Healthy Ageing” and “Energy.” The Faculty envisions contributing to “Sustainable Society” through the study of religion in relation to the public domain and civic society.

### **Assessment/remarks**

The Committee was impressed by the quality and impact of the Centre’s engagement with social concerns and constituencies. The social relevance of all three of the research programmes was regarded very highly. During the period under review, the Committee could see how a variety of social-outreach projects flowed directly from the research of the CRS. Whereas the university’s recent initiatives in ‘Healthy Ageing’ and ‘Energy’ are not directly relevant for the CRS, the latest initiative in ‘Sustainable Society’ does offer possibilities to link up with the Centre’s research expertise. Still, it is important for the CRS to clarify its distinctive research contribution to this initiative.

### **6. Strategy for the future**

The strategy for the following research period 2012-2017 addresses the structure and profile of the Faculty’s research groups, its earning capacity and output. The strategy will be assessed annually, both at the level of the individual staff members and at the levels of the institute and its research groups. The strategy is translated into a general vision for the Faculty in the coming period, and a set of concrete thematic research objectives for the research groups.

As mentioned under 1., the three research programmes are refocused in order to deal with the current scholarly and societal challenges as effectively as possible. The Departments will bear the same name as their programmes. The new vision and mission of the Faculty have also been described under 1.

As mentioned under 3., the researchers will be more systematically encouraged to develop external research grant proposals both in the national and European domain. An annual budget is allocated for offering temporary exemptions from teaching to particular staff members, on the basis of competition, so that the applicant can concentrate on his or her research grant applications.

As mentioned under 4., the CRS will maintain more strictly a minimum output of one academic publication in a scholarly journal or a book chapter in a book series for every 0.2 fte of research effort. The CRS wants to stimulate the research staff to publish more consciously with top journals, publishers and book series. The Board of the CRS regards an average output between 7.0 and 10.0 academic publications per fte as desirable.

### **Assessment/remarks**

The CRS has clearly engaged in serious strategic reflection and planning, which has resulted in the reconfiguration of its three research programmes. In interviews, the Committee found that academic leaders and staff were supportive of this realignment and committed to making it work. However, the Committee noticed what appeared an imbalance in which two programmes had a clear and relatively narrow focus on ancient texts or modern society while the programme “Comparative and Historical Study of Religion” was so broadly defined to include, in principle, the entire study of religion and religions. The Committee recommends that this research group continues to engage in strategic reflection and planning to clarify its distinctive research profile in the study of religion in the Netherlands and internationally.

During interviews, it was unclear to the Committee what the precise relationships between various institutes, which are described as embedded in research programmes, and the leadership, staff, and projects of the research programmes were.

The integration of part of the Protestant Theological University, scheduled for September 2012, raises both challenges and opportunities. While “theology” remains in the title of the faculty, theology, as several staff members observed before the Committee, has effectively disappeared from the CRS’s research activity. With the arrival of the Protestant Theological University, the faculty might consider the possibility of establishing a Divinity School, which would be separate from the strong concentration in religious studies but also open to exchanges and collaboration in teaching and research.

Having ascertained the tendency of the Dutch universities to amalgamate smaller faculties into greater ones, the Committee expressly wants to support the preservation of the autonomous status of the RUG Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies and of its Centre for Religious Studies, in order to further develop the necessary disciplinary competences and for the added value of a clear-cut cooperation with the PThU.

### **7. PhD training and supervision**

The Graduate School of Theology and Religious Studies (GSThRS), established in 2007, offers a two-year Research MA (ReMA) programme and a four-year PhD programme. The ReMA programme, accredited again in 2009, may be taken as a step towards the PhD programme or as a final degree.

The Graduate School offers students a training programme that is tailor-made to their research interests and conducive to the development of research skills that are applicable in postgraduate or postdoctoral careers, whether inside or outside the academy. The School provides hands-on supervision by senior scholars of the CRS who are experts in the fields in which these student wish to specialise, and monitors the progress of the individual student’s training programmes and their research projects, as well as the supervision thereof.

The PhD students have a personal budget of € 800 per year for the costs of travel, conference visits and the like. All PhD students have a (sometimes shared) room and enjoy the same facilities (library, IT, etc.) as other staff members do. Stays abroad, fees for courses taken outside the Faculty and membership fees of local or national Research Schools are funded additionally.

In 2011, the RUG University Board ruled that its graduate schools should see to it that at least 50% of the manuscripts of the PhD theses must have been approved by the supervisor(s) in question within four years after enrolment.

The admission to the PhD programme is highly selective for all candidates, whether local, national or international. Currently, out of the eighteen PhD students, six have taken the GSThRS Research MA programme.

The four-year PhD programme has both a training and a research component. The training has a study load of 25-30 EC, distributed over the first three years. It offers a balanced mix of compulsory and optional elements. Compulsory are the introductions, practical skills courses and research seminars. PhD students also participate actively in the Faculty Research Colloquium and in the regular research meetings of their research groups (presenting drafts and/or participating in the discussions). The optional elements of the training programme are tailor-made to the interests of the PhD students and may freely be chosen from courses offered by other local or

(inter)national graduate schools or research schools, provided that they are conducive to the student's research project and/or future career possibilities.

The PhD research projects are fully embedded in the CRS groups and supervised by its senior academic staff. Training is partly provided by the CRS staff, partly also by the local Graduate School of Humanities, the national School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion (NOSTER) and other schools such as, for example, the national Research School for Classical Studies (OIKOS).

The international character of the programme(s) is exhibited by the stays of PhD (and ReMA) students at foreign universities with which research or exchange agreements are in place, or to which the PhD candidates are admitted as visiting students (for example, Uppsala, Oslo, Göttingen, Oxford, Durham, Rice and Princeton Seminary). During the period under review, sixteen standard and contract PhD candidates were enrolled, two thirds of Dutch background, and one third of foreign background (three EU: Germany and Portugal; and three non-EU: Chili, Israel and Egypt).

PhD students must draw up a Training and Supervision Plan (TSP) in consultation with their supervisor(s) in which the prospective training and research activities are specified. The TSPs serve as point of reference for evaluating progress. On the basis of progress interviews and the underlying documentation, the director advises the Faculty Board whether to continue or to terminate a project.

#### **Assessment/remarks**

In a series of interviews with current PhD students, the Committee found that the student experience of the CRS was very positive. Students in all three programmes testified that they received excellent supervision in the context of well-structured doctoral training. Outside of their formal training, students especially appreciated the ample opportunities to attend and participate in international academic conferences.



## ***8B. Programme level***

Programme 17 (RUG 1):	<b>Jewish and Christian Traditions</b>
Programme director:	Prof. dr. E. Noort 2005-2009 Dr. J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten 2009-2011
Research input 2011 (tenured):	1.1 fte
Assessments:	Quality: 5 Productivity: 5 Relevance: 4 Viability: 5

The objective of the research group “Jewish and Christian Traditions” in the research period under review was to deepen the understanding of the relationship between Judaism, Christianity and Gnosticism through the interdisciplinary analysis of the history of reception of biblical traditions. The programme furthered the understanding of these writings through the detailed disciplinary study of some of them. It aimed to provide a better basis for the study of the literature of early Judaism, early Christianity and Gnosticism through the production of critical editions, translations and other scholarly tools for the study of these writings, and to disseminate its findings to colleagues from other disciplines and to people who are interested in religions and its role in society.

### *Quality*

The Biblical studies research is a world-leading programme. Emphasis is placed on the interpretation and reception of the Hebrew Bible, early Judaism and Qumran, early Christianity in its Graeco-Roman context, Gnosticism and Nag Hammadi. In all these fields outstanding scholarly work of international standing has been produced. The major project on the apocryphal Acts of Thomas and the Acts of Andrew, and work on the Qumran Physiognomics and Astrology, are good examples of this work. One indicator of the excellent quality of research is the high amount of external funding from NWO, KNAW, and others. The research group has coped with the retirement of famous scholars (Luttikhuisen, García Martínez and Noort) in a professional way. The already existing interdisciplinary cooperation with scholars of the Classics has been intensified by the instalment of an institutional platform (CRASIS).

### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 28.5, which is high. The percentage of academic publications is 45%, which is very high, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 12.7, which is also very high. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 19%, which is medium.

Research productivity in academic publications per fte is the highest in this review. Together with editorial responsibility for leading academic journals and books series, 8 conferences in Groningen, structural partnership with Gottingen, Durham and Princeton, and the work of the Qumran Institute, research performance and productivity is impressive. The number of successfully completed PhDs (7, including 2 contracts and 3 external) seems limited in relation to the importance of the research input; this may need consideration.

### *Relevance*

The programme has made good efforts to establish societal relevance, giving over 80 popularizing lectures, providing post-academic education for ministers, and helping to organise exhibitions in the British Museum and the Drents Museum in Assen. The proposed co-operation with the Protestant Theological University will establish closer connections with the largest Protestant Church in the country.

### *Viability*

The group is aware of a need to develop external research grant proposals on a more professional basis. It is important that good researchers should not have to devote too much time to this, and it is essential to use professional and dedicated administrators to co-ordinate such proposals. The Centre for Religious Studies is sensitive to the changing culture of research in the Netherlands, and is developing new research groups. The Biblical Studies group, renamed “Jewish, Christian and Islamic Origins” is, however, well able to continue its excellent work, with the addition of the study of Islam, which makes very good sense.

### *Conclusion*

The Biblical Studies group is a world-leading programme of researchers, well aware of the needs and opportunities for new research. The addition of the study of Islamic origins to the programme is academically sound as well as increasing the societal relevance of the group’s work. Co-operation with the Protestant Theological University will obviously increase the societal impact of the group, on the one hand, on the other hand it will stimulate the Biblical Studies of the PThU. It may seem rather odd that Targum studies will apparently not come to Groningen, while Patristics studies will. But there is no doubt that this is a very strongly based research group.

Programme 18 (RUG 2):	<b>Religion, Representation and Power</b>
Programme director:	Prof. dr. H.T. Bakker 2005-2008 Prof. dr. J.N. Bremmer 2008-2009 Prof. dr. C.K.M. von Stuckrad 2010-2011
Research input 2011 (tenured):	3,6 fte
Assessments:	Quality: 5 Productivity: 5 Relevance: 4 Viability: 4

In the period under review, the research group “Religion, Representation and Power” (RRP) had as its prime objective the study of religion in a comparative way by bringing together historical and anthropological research that analyses religion in ancient and contemporary contexts. The members of RRP combined a variety of expertise on well-defined central themes of the discipline of the academic study of religion in order to gain new insights that transcend the limits of individual research.

#### *Quality*

During the period under review, publications were at the highest level of quality, internationally recognized, with researchers at the forefront in the study of ancient Greek religion, Asian religions, the history of the study of religion, and advances in theory and method. Intellectual leadership was evident in collaborative projects, such as the NWO-supported “Holy Ground: Re-inventing Ritual Space in Modern Western Culture,” which resulted in a ground-breaking book on sacred space in contemporary society. The research group has demonstrated the capacity for producing research in the study of religion of the highest international quality.

#### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 30.5, which is high. The percentage of academic publications is 35%, which is high, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 10.8, which is very high. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 35%, which is also very high.

The programme had a good record of peer-reviewed articles, but also highly regarded and influential monographs and edited collections. Rather few PhD theses were completed with regard to the number of PhD students.

#### *Relevance*

Demonstrating social relevance through public initiatives, such as public lectures, websites, and museum exhibitions, the programme’s relevance should also be recognized in the academic and intellectual leadership demonstrated in professional societies.

#### *Viability*

The research programme shows evidence of making a successful transition in leadership, reproducing expertise in ancient and contemporary religion but also adding scope in cutting-edge developments in theory and method in the study of religion. The programme’s strategy, going forward, inspires confidence, with concentrations on two crucial issues in the study of religion: change and memory. The focus on religion, identity, and memory strategically builds on earlier productive work in the study of religion and biography. However, it was not clear how separate

initiatives, such as the Institute of Indian Studies, were being integrated within the research programme. The creation of an assistant professorship in sociology of religion augurs well for the viability of the group. But viability as a coherent research programme still depends upon coordinating diverse activities within a convincing and compelling mission.

### *Conclusion*

Recasting the programme as “Comparative and Historical Study of Religion” raises the challenge of articulating a new and coherent focus. From the outside, the research group might appear as an arbitrary assemblage of disciplines rather than a coordinated programme. While clarifying the practice of comparison in the study of religion, the research group is well-positioned to engage in interdisciplinary conversations about comparison more generally. Successfully navigating a transition in leadership, the programme needs to formulate a compelling vision of the research group’s coherence and its distinctive profile in the study of religion in the Netherlands.



Programme 19 (RUG 3):	<b>Meaning, Tradition and Change (MTC)</b>
Programme director:	Prof. dr. P.M.G.P. Vandermeersch 2005-2008 Prof. dr. A.L. Molendijk 2009-2011
Research input 2011 (tenured):	1,7 fte
Assessments:	Quality: 4 Productivity: 4 Relevance: 5 Viability: 3

MTC aimed to clarify the nature and scope of public reason in relation to religious and secular life-view traditions and practices in Western liberal democracies. MTC also explored the implications of public reason for both the dialogue between religious and secular life-view traditions and for the individual and communal construction of meaning. It applied the findings of its research to psychological and pastoral issues in non-denominational pastoral care.

#### *Quality*

The quality of the research publications is high, and of international significance and interest. Professor Zock, for instance, was vice-general secretary of the Board of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion, and the main psychologists and philosophers in this group have an established international reputation. Publications submitted for consideration range from commentary on contemporary philosophers of religion to studies of Stoic ethics, and from studies of Sigmund Freud to studies of spiritual care in hospitals. These publications are certainly of more than national scholarly interest, and have, or should have, a substantial impact on their field.

#### *Productivity*

The number of publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 23.1, which is medium. The percentage of academic publications is 31%, which is high, and the number of academic publications per full-time equivalent of academic staff is 7.2, which is medium. The percentage of refereed articles in the academic publications is 35%, which is very high.

The group apparently fell behind its previous score, and was less productive than the other two groups in the Centre. New appointments and a new structure have been implemented to improve this performance. There was a small number of PhD students and the number of completed theses is low. This may need to be looked at carefully.

#### *Relevance*

Largely because of the concentration on spiritual care, as well as on the increasing emphasis on religion in the public domain (as evidenced in the new “Research Centre for Religion, Conflict and the Public Domain”), this group has high societal relevance. It has direct relevance for spiritual care in hospital work, and members of the group are active in giving lectures for the general public. This element will largely be lost to this group when psychology transfers to the new “Comparative and Historical Study of Religion” group. But with the addition of a proposed new chair in Ethics, work on religion in the public sphere will continue.

#### *Viability*

The new chairs in Ethics and in the History of early modern Christianity should ensure the viability of the group. Psychology will be transferred to a different group, and the history of

Christianity will in this group be associated with philosophy and ethics and together they will work on the new programme in “Cultures of Consolation”. It is important that the psychologists should have a clear sense of where they belong, and that they should be encouraged to flourish without having too little time for original research.

### *Conclusion*

The group, “Meaning, Tradition and Change” has already ceased to exist, and been replaced by “Christianity, Philosophy and Culture”. There is no question that, whatever they are called, the philosophers and psychologists will continue to do excellent work. But from the outside it seems that psychology may find itself uneasily split between two new groups. Moreover, “Religion and the Public Domain” does not seem to be a research programme that would unite early modern church historians and philosophers of religion. Indeed it seems (again from the outside) to belong more to sociology of religion, and so to the second group. So there are questions about whether the new third group is really coherent or helpful to the self-understanding of its researchers.

## Appendices



## Appendix A: Profiles of the Committee members

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**Willem Frijhoff** held in 2010-2012 the Erasmus Chair in the Humanities of the G.Ph. Verhagen Foundation at the Erasmus University, Rotterdam, where his teaching focused on the theme of Memory and oblivion in history. In 1983-1997 he held the chair of cultural history and history of mentalities of pre-industrial societies at the Erasmus University, Rotterdam (faculty dean 1986-1989), and he was from 1997 to his retirement in 2007 professor of early modern history at the VU University Amsterdam (faculty dean 2002-2006). In 2005-2008 he chaired the Arts and Social Sciences division and was a member of the executive board of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW). Since 2003, he chairs the thematic research programme 'Cultural Dynamics', of the Dutch National Research Organization (NWO).

**Rainer Albertz** is senior professor in the Excellence Cluster Religion and Politics in the Pre-modern and Modern Cultures, Universität Münster. In 1995-2008 he was professor for the Old Testament, Universität Münster. He also held posts in Heidelberg and Siegen. His research interests include History of Religion, Creation in the Old Testament and Near Eastern Region, Patristics, Pentateuch and Hexateuch.

**David Chidester** is professor of comparative religion in the Department of Religious Studies, University of Cape Town. His interests lie in the relationships between religion and globalization, religion and popular culture, religion in society and the problems of social cohesion. He has written extensively on religion in South Africa, North America, as well as on religion and education.

**Keith Ward** was the Gresham Professor of Divinity (Gresham College, London) between 2004 and 2008. He also held the Regius Professorship of Divinity at the University of Oxford for over a decade. He was Fellow, Dean and Director of Studies in Philosophy and in Theology at Trinity Hall Cambridge, where he was also Lecturer in Divinity. He was the F D Maurice Professor of Moral and Social Theology at the University of London, where he was also Professor and Head of Department of History and Philosophy of Religion. He is an ordained priest in the Church of England and was Canon of Christ Church, Oxford. Currently he is Professorial Research Fellow at Heythrop College, University of London, and a senior member of Christ Church, Oxford.

**Hans-Günter Heimbrock** is professor of Practical Theology and Religious Education at the Johann Wolfgang Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt am Main. In 1987-1990 he was professor of Psychology of Religion in the University of Groningen. His main research interests are on contextual and empirical theology. He is also engaged in homiletics and liturgics. He has developed an empirical-theological approach based on life-world and phenomenological philosophy.



## Appendix B: Explanation of the SEP-scale

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<b><i>Excellent (5)</i></b>	Research is world leading. Researchers are working at the forefront of their field internationally and their research has an important and substantial impact in the field.
<b><i>Very Good (4)</i></b>	Research is nationally leading. Research is internationally competitive and makes a significant contribution to the field.
<b><i>Good (3)</i></b>	Research is internationally visible. Work is competitive at the national level and makes a valuable contribution in the international field.
<b><i>Satisfactory (2)</i></b>	Research is nationally visible. Work adds to our understanding and is solid, but not exciting.
<b><i>Unsatisfactory (1)</i></b>	Work is neither solid nor exciting, flawed in the scientific and/or technical approach, repetitions of other work, etc.

Quality is to be seen as a measure of excellence and excitement. It refers to the eminence of a group's research activities, its abilities to perform at the highest level and its achievements in the international scientific community. It rests on the proficiency and rigour of research concepts and conduct; it shows in the success of the group at the forefront of scientific development.

Productivity refers to the total output of the group; that is, the variegated ways in which results of research and knowledge development are publicised. The output needs to be reviewed in relation to the input in terms of human resources.

Societal relevance covers the social, economic and cultural relevance of the research. Aspects are:

- societal quality of the work. Efforts to interact in a productive way with stakeholders in society who are interested in input from scientific research, and contributions to important issues and debates in society;
- societal impact of the work. Research affects specific stakeholders or procedures in society;
- valorisation of the work. Activities aimed at making research results available and suitable for application in products, processes and services. This includes interaction with public and private organisations, as well as commercial or non-profit use of research results and expertise.

Vitality and feasibility. This dual criterion regards the institute's ability to react adequately to important changes in the environment. It refers to both internal (personnel, research themes) and external (developments in the field, in society) dynamics of the group. On the one hand, this criterion measures the flexibility of a group, which appears in its ability to close research lines that have no future and to initiate new venture projects. On the other hand, it measures the capacity of the management to run projects in a professional way. Policy decisions and project management are assessed, including cost-benefit analysis.





## Appendix C: Programme of the site visit

	<b>Monday 4 June 2012</b>	<b>Names</b>
09:00	preparatory committee meeting	
11:00	Institute management TUA/TUK	prof. dr. G.C. den Hertog (TUA) prof. dr. B. Kamphuis prof. dr. M. te Velde (TUK)
12:00	P1: TUA/TUK 1. Historical Processes and Revelation	prof. dr. P.H.R. van Houwelingen (TUK) prof. dr. H.G.L. Peels (TUA)
13:00	P2: TUA/TUK 2. Innovation and Resourcing (reformed systematic theology)	prof. dr. G.C. den Hertog (TUA) prof. dr. B. Kamphuis
14:00	lunch with PhD students TUA/TUK	drs. D. Timmerman drs. A. Versluis (TUA) drs. H.W. den Boer drs. L.H.L. Kamphuis drs. M.G.P. Klinker-De Klerck
15:00	P3: TUA/TUK 3. Office and Hermeneutics in Historical Context.	prof. dr. F. van der Pol (TUK) prof. dr. H.J. Selderhuis (TUA)
16:00	committee meeting (drawing conclusions; preparing next series)	

	<b>Tuesday 5 June 2012</b>	
09:00	Institute management PThU	Prof. dr. F.G. Immink (rector) Dr. H.C. van der Sar ( voorzitter CvB)
10:00	P4: PThU 1. Scripture, Religious Identity and Transformation	Prof. dr. K. Spronk
11:00	P5: PThU 2. Faith in Changing Contexts	Prof. dr. M.M. Jansen
12:00	lunch with PhD students PThU	J. Tanja (Sources), F. Ziel (Beliefs) R. Nasrallah (Practices) E. Asscher (dual track), C. van Ekris (external PhD)
13:00	P6: PThU 3. Practices of Faith in Socio-Cultural Networks	Prof. dr. M. Barnard
14:00	committee meeting (drawing conclusions; preparing next series)	

	<b>Wednesday 6 June 2012</b>	
09:00	Institute management VU	Prof. dr. Wim Janse (dean) and Prof. dr. Hans Reinders (vice dean for research)
10:00	P7: VU 1000. Biblical Studies	Prof. dr. Bert Jan Lietaert Peerbolte
11:00	P8: VU 2000. Church History	Prof. dr. Mirjam van Veen
12:00	lunch with PhD students VU	Gustaaf Bos, Silvia Castelli, Marjolein de Mooij, Srđan Sremac
13:00	P9: VU 3000. Philosophy of Religion and Comparative Study of Religions	Prof. dr. Willie van der Merwe
14:00	P10: VU 4000. Praxis	Prof. dr. Hijme Stoffels
15:00	P11: VU 5000. Centre for Islamic Theology	Dr. Yaser Ellethy
16:00	P12: VU 6000. Dogmatics and Oecumenia	Prof. dr. Eddy Van der Borcht
17:00	committee meeting (drawing conclusions; preparing next series)	

<b>Thursday 7 June 2012</b>		
09:00	Institute management UU	Christoph Baumgartner (ethics; director of INTEGON) Keimpe Algra (Vice Dean for Research of the Faculty of Humanities)
10:00	P13: UU 1. Sacred Texts and Religious Traditions	Bob Becking (Old Testament Studies) Jo Spaans (History of Christianity / Church History)
11:00	P14: UU 2. Religion/s in the Modern World: Encountering the Different	Martha Frederiks (World Christianity and Interreligious Dialogue) Birgit Meyer (Religious Studies) Christian Lange (Arabic and Islamic Studies)
12:00	lunch with PhD students UU	Niek Brunsveld (Philosophy of Religion) Pieter Coppens (Islamic Studies) Abdelghani El Khairat (Islamic Studies) Trudeliën van 't Hof (History of Christianity / Church History) Anne-Mareike Wetter (Old Testament Studies)
13:00	Institute management TST	prof. dr. P.H.A.I. Jonkers (Vice Dean Research) prof. dr. H.J.M. Schoot (Vice Dean Education) drs. G.A. van der Velden-Westervelt (Managing Director)
14:00	P15: TST 1. Christian identity in a pluralistic context: continuity and discontinuity	prof. dr. G.P. Freeman prof. dr. M.J.J. Menken
15:00	P16: TST 2. (Re)actualizing Catholic identity in advanced modernity	prof. dr. S. Hellemans dr. S. Gärtner
16:00	PhD students TST	W.R. Arfman MPhil drs. Th.J.W.M. van Geffen D.R.M. Godecharle MA C.J. Kuttiyanikkal MA
17:00	committee meeting (drawing conclusions; preparing next series)	

<b>Friday 8 June 2012</b>		
09:00	Institute management RUG	G.H. van Kooten, dean of faculty and director CRS
10:00	P 17: RUG 1. Jewish and Christian Traditions	J.T.A.G.M. van Ruiten (Old Testament Studies) M. Popovic (Old Testament Studies) G.H. van Kooten (New Testament Studies)
11:00	P18: RUG 2. Religion, Representation and Power	C.K.M. von Stuckrad (Comparative Religion) Y.B. Kuiper (Anthropology of Religion) M.P.A. de Baar (History of Christianity)
12:00	P19: RUG 3. Meaning, Tradition and Change	A.L. Molendijk (Philosophy of Religion) T.H. Zock (Psychology of Religion) Ch. Jedan (Ethics)
13:00	lunch with PhD students RUG	N. Bosma (Indian Religions) M. Green (History of Christianity) B.E.A.L. van der Lans (New Testament Studies) K.B. Neutel (New Testament Studies) R.A. Wagenvoorde (Philosophy of Religion)
14:00	committee meeting (drawing conclusions; finalising scores, procedures)	

## Appendix D: Productivity graphs

