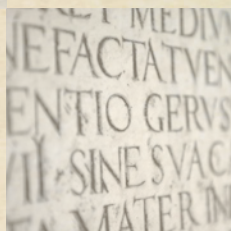
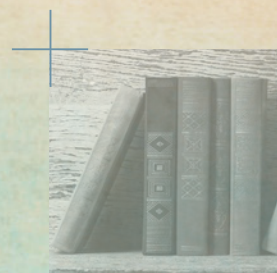


Evaluation of the Humanities in Norway

Report from Panel 7 – Religion and Theology

Evaluation
Division for Science



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Summary

Theology is a discipline that is as old as the European university system, whereas the Academic Study of Religion was established at European universities around 1900, to a certain extent (...) defined (...) as an agnostic alternative to the confessional approaches to religion. The historical background, and sometimes conflicting identities, of the two disciplines are still discernible in their structures, programmes and societal outreach.

Religion is (...) an important identity marker in European societies. All of the institutions participating in this evaluation are conscious of their responsibility for addressing religions as a relevant cultural factor. As regards academic output, the field of Religion and Theology is the second most productive area in the Humanities in Norway (only the area of Archaeology, History and Cultural Studies has more publications). With its publications, the field feeds into relevant work in the Humanities more generally, and the field's interdisciplinary character – which includes not only the Humanities but also the Social Sciences – is an important strength. Some of the evaluated institutions and research groups (...) are of outstanding quality nationally and internationally. Others are less research-oriented and have a stronger focus on professional education. While it is crucial for international top research to publish in English, publishing in Norwegian will continue to be necessary as well, particularly when research is linked to professional education and societal impact.

Research cooperation at the national and international level varies with the research strength of the respective institution and research group. While some institutions and research groups operate easily in international contexts, the work of others is only visible at the national or even local level. There are only a few examples of collaboration between Theology and Religious Studies, or between state universities, state university colleges and private university colleges. This can also be derived from the relatively low number of publications with national and international co-authorship. The panel recommends institutions to intensify these forms of collaboration in order to strengthen the field at the national level, with a clear outreach to international research networks.

The recruitment and training of staff members within the institutions under review reflect international standards, although only a few institutions and research groups (...) have adopted advanced strategic plans for human resources and talent development. Against the background of a patriarchal history of Christianity and Theology, the field faces greater challenges with regard to gender equality than other fields within the Humanities, reflected in the low proportion of publications (...) by women under the age of 40. The ambition to improve gender equality and to support young researchers (...) calls for strategic action. Some of the institutions have responded actively to this challenge, while others are still in the phase of formulating goals for the future.

For several years now, Norway's policy has been to encourage the merging of colleges and private universities to form larger organisations (...). In some cases, mergers have resulted in the formation of successful new organisations, but in other cases it remains doubtful whether the national imperative to focus on high-ranking international research, rather than on top performances in local teaching and education programmes, has been beneficial to the field in general.

Recommendations

- The evaluation uncovers a need to manage expectations and aspirations.
- Many of the university colleges (with or without a merger into universities) seem to overestimate their chances of acquiring funding from European research programmes or of raising their research output to an international level.
- On the other side of the spectrum, some of the established state universities could be expected to have a more ambitious strategy to invest in excellence and talent development.

1 On the evaluation

One of the duties of the Research Council of Norway is to conduct field evaluations of Norwegian research, that is, evaluations of how entire fields or disciplines are performing in Norway. These have two purposes: to provide an international view and feedback on performance, and to support the development of research policy. By tradition, the evaluated field has been given an opportunity to form a committee to decide how to learn from and change practices based on the evaluation. In many cases, the RCN has then provided some funding to help implement measures proposed by the committee.

The practice of field evaluation is long established in Norway. In the past, such evaluations have confined themselves to one or a small number of individual disciplines, such as Philosophy and the History of Ideas, Law or History. In 2011, the RCN published a wider evaluation of Biology, Medicine and Healthcare. In 2015, it published an evaluation of the fundamental Engineering Sciences. In 2016 it launched this evaluation of the Humanities as a whole and it has more recently started a similar evaluation of the Social Sciences. This evaluation of the Humanities could potentially spearhead a new and even broader field evaluation practice.

1.1 Terms of Reference

The task of this evaluation is to

- Review the scientific quality of Norwegian research in the Humanities in an international context
- Provide a critical review of the strengths and weaknesses of the fields of research within the humanities – nationally, at the institutional level and for a number of designated research groups
- Identify the research groups that have achieved a high international level in their research, or that have the potential to achieve such a level
- Investigate the extent of interdisciplinary research at the institutions and in the research groups
- Review the role of the Research Council of Norway in funding research activities in the humanities
- Investigate the connection between research and teaching activities
- Discuss the organisation of research activities and the role of the Humanities in the strategic plans of the evaluated institutions
- Assess the extent to which previous evaluations have been used by the institutions in their strategic planning
- Identify areas of research that need to be strengthened in order to ensure that Norway possesses the necessary competence in areas of national importance in future
- Discuss the societal impact of Humanities research in Norway in general and, in particular, its potential to address targeted societal challenges as defined in the Norwegian Government's Long-term Plan for Research and Higher education, and the EU framework programme Horizon 2020

The government's Long-term Plan for Research (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2014) prioritises the following areas

- The sea
- Climate, the environment and environmentally friendly energy
- Renewal of the public sector and more efficient welfare and health services
- Enabling technologies
- An innovative and flexible business sector, able to restructure as needed
- World-leading research groups

These priorities co-exist with a longer-term set of reforms aimed at increasing the quality of Norwegian research.

A recent analysis of the quality of Norwegian research as indicated by bibliometric evidence suggests that there are two dimensions to the need to improve quality (Benner, 2015). The average level of quality (measured by the field-normalised citation rate of Norwegian research as a whole) has risen to match that of Sweden, placing it among the stronger countries worldwide. However, Norway lacks research groups that publish in the most-cited 10% and 1% of articles worldwide. The Humanities are poorly served by bibliometric indicators, so Benner's analysis may be less applicable to the Humanities than to other fields, although it appears consistent with the judgements of the panel conducting this evaluation. Nonetheless, Norwegian research policy is likely to place increasing emphasis on the need not only further to raise the average quality, but also to develop and sustain some world-leading groups (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2014) (Hatlem, Melby, & Arnold, 2017). The focus on quality in this evaluation therefore responds to an important policy need.

At the same time, in Norway – as in other countries – there is also increasing pressure for research to be able to demonstrate its societal value. Both aspects are tackled in this evaluation.

1.2 The evaluation panels

The evaluation has been carried out by eight field panels comprising international peers, each of which evaluated one or more disciplines. The composition of the panels is shown in Appendix D. Their reports are published in separate volumes.

Panel 1 Aesthetic Studies

Panel 2 Nordic Languages and Linguistics

Panel 3 Nordic and Comparative Literature

Panel 4 Modern and Classical Languages, Literatures and Area Studies

Panel 5 Archaeology, History and Cultural Studies

Panel 6 Philosophy and Studies in Science and Technology

Panel 7 Religion and Theology

Panel 8 Media Studies

Table 1 shows which panels cover which disciplines.

The chairs of the panels have formed an overall evaluation panel – referred to in the Terms of Reference as the principal committee – which is responsible for reporting on the Humanities as a whole.

The tasks of the field panels specified in the terms of reference were to

- Evaluate research activities with respect to scientific quality, and national and international collaboration. Focus on research published in peer-reviewed publications

- Evaluate the relevance and impact of the evaluated research activities
- Evaluate how research activities are organised and managed
- Submit a report with specific recommendations for the future development of research within the subject fields encompassed by the panel, including means of improvement when necessary

Table 1 Overview of the field and panel structure

Panel	Panel name	Discipline
1	Aesthetic Studies	Dance
		Art History
		Musicology
		Theatre and Drama
2	Nordic Languages and Linguistics	Linguistics
		Nordic Language
		Norwegian as a Second Language
		Sámi and Finnish
		Sign Language and Interpretation
3	Nordic and Comparative Literature	Literature
		Nordic Literature
4	Modern and Classical Languages, Literatures and Area Studies	Asian and African Studies
		English Studies
		Classical Studies
		Romance Studies
		Slavonic Studies
		Germanic Studies

5	Archaeology, History and Cultural Studies	Archaeology and Conservation
		History
		Cultural Studies
6	Philosophy and Studies in Science and Technology	Philosophy and History of Ideas
		Science and Technology Studies
7	Religion and Theology	Theology and Religion
8	Media Studies	Media and Communication

Note 1: Researchers in History of Ideas were in most cases submitted to Panel 5

Note 2: The national academic council for Gender research is not included as RCN is planning a separate evaluation of Gender research in Norway

1.3 Methods and Limitations

1.3.1 Organisation of the evaluation

The evaluation addressed four different levels (Figure 1). At the highest level, this report evaluates the field of Humanities in Norway as a whole. To do so, it synthesises and analyses the reports of the eight discipline panels.

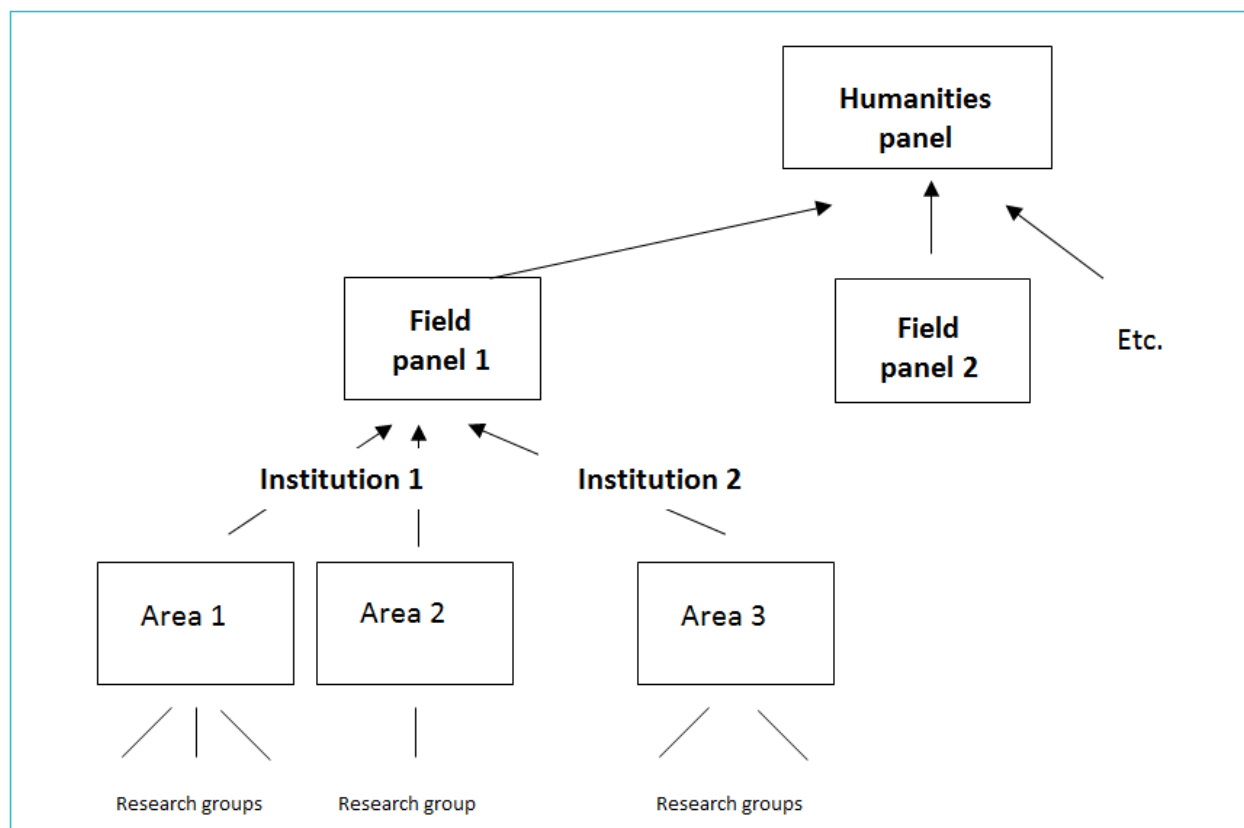
The division of the field of Humanities into panels was based on the established organisational structure of national academic councils (Nasjonale fagråd). There are 24 such academic councils, reflecting the historical development of research areas and teaching subjects within the Humanities in Norway. To avoid a very fragmented panel structure, the research areas of the academic councils were grouped into eight panels based on disciplinary similarities. For the purpose of this evaluation, the area of research and study covered by a specific academic council is referred to as a 'research area'.

The panels were asked to evaluate both research areas and research groups based on the following information.

- Each participating institution was asked to provide a list of its staff working within the Humanities and to indicate the most relevant research area for each staff member. The institutions also provided a self-assessment for each of the relevant panels, with a description of their research activities and results within each research area, as well as about the interplay of research and teaching and other societal impact.
- To support the panels' assessment of research areas, the RCN has provided a bibliometric analysis of all publications by listed researchers for each panel.
- The organisations were also invited to put individual research groups forward for evaluation within each area. The field panels evaluated them individually and also used these research group evaluations to support their area evaluations.

The universities and institutes have themselves decided which parts of their organisation to submit to the evaluation. The coverage of the evaluation is therefore not complete, but is likely to encompass the most significant research-active entities across the Humanities in Norway. Areas do not necessarily map directly onto organisational structures. For consistency, this evaluation refers to these submitted entities as ‘areas’.

Figure 1 Structure of the Evaluation



1.3.2 The data available to the panels

The data available to the panels were

- **Self-assessment reports** provided by the research-performing organisations. (The template for these is reproduced in **Feil! Fant ikke referansekinden.**). There is one for each area. A self-assessment report comprises a report firstly at the level of the organisation (most often at the faculty or research institute level), and, secondly, information about an area. The organisation-level information is repeated across multiple self-assessments. So, for example, UiO's self-assessment for the Aesthetics field will comprise an initial section about the University of Oslo as a whole and a second part about the work of UiO in aesthetic disciplines.
- A **bibliometric report** from NIFU (Aksnes & Gunnes, 2016) that provides field indicators at the national, organisational and area level
- **Funding data** from the RCN
- Examples of **scholarly outputs** from areas and groups submitted by the research-performing organisations

- **Societal impact statements** from individual areas. These have been inspired by the use of impact statements in the UK Research Excellence Framework. They are free-text accounts from the researchers of societal impacts they believe research in their area has had over a period of up to fifteen years
- **Survey data from NOKUT** about student views on teaching

Building from the bottom

- The assessments of individual scholarly outputs fed into the group and area evaluations
- The group evaluations fed into the area evaluations
- The report on personnel and publications (bibliometrics) was considered at the area level
- Impact statements were considered at the area level
- The area evaluations were used by the field panels to build a picture of national performance within the field covered by the panel reports
- The field evaluations are used by the main panel to construct the national HUMEVAL evaluation

Panelists met representatives of the areas evaluated in a series of one to two-hour interviews, in which they were able to check their understanding of the data submitted for evaluation.

1.3.3 Criteria used during the evaluations

The panels based their work on a consistent set of criteria, against which they reported their findings at the area level. These were

- Organisation, leadership and strategy
- Availability and use of resources
- Research production and quality
- Recruitment and training
- Networking with other researchers, nationally and internationally
- Impact on teaching
- Societal impact
- Overall assessment and feedback

Research group reports consider

- Organisation, leadership, strategy and resources
- Research production and quality
- Recruitment and training
- Networking with other researchers, nationally and internationally
- Impact on teaching
- Overall assessment and feedback

Impact was judged in terms of the reach and significance of the impact reported.

- **Reach:** The extent and/or diversity of the organisations, communities and/or individuals who have benefited from the impact.
- **Significance:** The degree to which the impact enriched, influenced, informed or changed the policies, practices, understanding or awareness of organisations, communities or individuals.

In each case, the panels wrote full-text evaluations, which are reported in a separate volume for each panel. They also awarded scores using a series of 5-point Likert scales. These were used internally in

order to gain an overview of the many parts of the evaluation. Only the grades for research groups' overall performance and research quality have been published (in accordance with the Terms of Reference).

1.3.4 Limitations

An exercise such as this inevitably suffers from limitations. This section briefly describes the main limitations of which the panels are aware.

Humanities in Norway does not have a strongly developed evaluation culture. There have been a number of field evaluations with a narrower scope than the present one in recent years, but Norwegian Humanities researchers are not often subject to evaluation unless they are working in an externally-funded centre of excellence. Humanities are also generally less exposed to the need for external, competitive funding from sources such as the RCN, reducing the extent to which scholars need to subject themselves to external assessment, compared with scholars in many other fields. As a result, at least parts of the community have limited experience of how to deal with an evaluation and how to communicate with the evaluators in ways that will enable positive judgements. This is particularly the case in relation to the use of impact statements, which is a novel technique everywhere. Clearly, those with a more developed evaluation culture will be better placed than others to receive a positive evaluation.

The panels worked on the basis of a limited set of data and information. The sources used were mainly

- The self-assessments of the institutions and research groups
- The (small number of) publications submitted by the institutions
- The personnel and publication analysis
- A report on the interplay of research and teaching in the Humanities
- A report on research organisation and external engagement in the Humanities
- Interviews with representatives of the institutions, and national data on publication performance and student satisfaction

The panels could not check the information provided by the institutions against information found elsewhere. Further, institutions and groups did not always specify what they saw as their contributions to knowledge in various fields, so that the panels have had to make their own decisions about the disciplines and areas to which individual research activities are relevant.

The request for self-evaluation data was not uniformly understood by the institutions, suggesting that, in future, equivalent requests could be made more explicit. The number of sample publications requested was low and the processes used to select them are not clear to the panels. Whatever process the universities used, it involves a positive bias. This is a normal feature of such evaluations and the panels regard it as unproblematic: injecting a positive bias means that it is known what sort of bias there is. However, the representativity of the publications submitted is unclear. The fact that some groups submitted publications that were not peer-reviewed was a further complication.

Universities followed different strategies in responding to the request. For example, the number of research groups submitted varied considerably. Some of the groups appeared to have been constructed artificially for the purpose of the evaluation. Others appeared to be groups of people who normally worked together. This variability makes comparisons difficult. The focus on groups also complicates the identification of individual, outstanding talent. It also does not always reflect

the way in which Humanities researchers work, since individual scholarship as opposed to group work is more normal than in the social and 'hard' sciences. There is significant variation among disciplines and panels in their perception of the appropriateness of using research groups as units of assessment. So the divide is as much within the Humanities as between the Humanities and the hard sciences. However, it should also be noted that most of the universities have policies in place to support research groups.

Both NOKUT and NIFU provided data to support the evaluation, based on existing statistical and disciplinary categories. As a result, they do not always match the scope of the areas or groups evaluated by the panels, so that, while they provided useful, broad indications, the panels had to treat them with some caution. NIFU's bibliometric analyses were very helpful. However, the particular weaknesses of bibliometric approaches to the Humanities, a field in which a great deal is published outside the channels normally used for bibliometric analysis, mean that bibliometric indicators present a picture that is even more partial in the Humanities than in other fields.

Participation in the RCN's field evaluations is optional and there are no incentives (such as an effect on funding) for participation, so that their coverage is inevitably partial. The panels are aware that some significant groups are missing from this evaluation, so that the evaluation does not cover the entire field.

It is important to note that the traditional universities in Norway, on the one hand, and the new universities and the university colleges, on the other, have different amounts of institutional research funding. In principle, in the old universities, academics have sufficient funds to split their time equally between teaching and research. At the newer universities and university colleges, the institutional funding covers a much smaller percentage of research time, typically of the order of 20%, though there is wide variation among individual institutions. Only the Norwegian Academy of Music is under 10% (7%), whereas the others are typically between 15 and 30%. Some – but not all – of these institutions actively manage research time, allocating more to some and less to others. These very different funding conditions mean that expectations of research productivity per person should not be the same for the old and the new institutions.

Disciplines and fields differ in terms of what they regard as knowledge or quality and the extent to which they make 'progress', so that knowledge is cumulative rather than comprising many parallel forms of knowledge. A uniform understanding of these dimensions across the whole of the Humanities would therefore not be appropriate; they must be judged within their own disciplinary contexts. The panel approach of using peers in relevant fields to make judgements addresses this issue. While this inconsistency might be regarded as a weakness, the panels regard it as a strength, because discipline-relevant criteria are used in each case in order to compare performance with an international benchmark.

These limitations mean that this evaluation is to some degree an exercise in hermeneutics and collegial advice, rather than in exact measurements and objective results. The panels based their work on an attitude of solidarity with the colleagues and institutions under review. In cases of doubt about information, a charitable interpretation of the data was chosen. The panel also tried to formulate critical feedback in as constructive a way as possible.

1.4 Those evaluated

The evaluation covered Humanities research at 36 research-performing organisations. Fifteen of these institutions participated in the panel for Religion and Theology.

Table 2 Research-performing organisations participating in panel 7 – Religion and Theology

	University faculties	No of Researchers	No of Research Groups
Norwegian University of Science and Technology	NTNU Faculty of Humanities	8	
University of Bergen	UiB Faculty of Humanities	21	2
University of Oslo	UiO Faculty of Humanities	9	
University of Oslo	UiO Faculty of Theology	41	3
University of Stavanger	UiS Faculty of Arts and Education	5	
The Arctic University of Norway (UiT)	UiT Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education	11	1
University of Agder	University of Agder	18	2
	Other HE-institutions		
	Ansgar University College and Theological Seminary	10	
	Diakonhjemmet University College	8	1
	Fjellhaug International University College	26	
	Hedmark University College	5	
	NLA University College	25	
	Norwegian School of Theology	54	3
	School of Mission and Theology	25	1
	Volda University College	13	

1.5 A note on terminology and the spectrum of the field

This evaluation covers the field of 'Religion and Theology'. The field's institutional context is defined by programmes that address the topic of 'religion' and 'religions' from diverse perspectives and under various names. While most institutions agree on the name 'theology' for their programmes – though not necessarily on the content and methods of this discipline – when it comes to the study of religion outside of the confines of theology, the situation is more complex. Institutionally, the study of religion can be located in a Faculty of Humanities, in a Faculty of Theology, within the Social Sciences, or in smaller units such as Area Studies Departments or Language and Culture Departments. There is similar variety as regards terminology: The most common names for this discipline are 'academic study of religion' and 'religious studies', but some institutions and scholars prefer 'academic study of religions', 'scientific study of religion', 'scientific study of religions', 'religion studies' or 'comparative religion'. These names reflect a theoretical and methodological discussion that has characterised the professional study of religion(s) for a long time, and has shaped different academic identities within the field (which were all represented on the evaluation panel). However, the lines between sometimes conflicting positions – in theory, methodology and epistemology – do not necessarily run between 'theology', on the one hand, and the 'academic study of religion', on the other, but also within those disciplines. This results in a wide spectrum of scholarly positions that a binary vocabulary only insufficiently captures.

While being aware of the importance of the underlying discussion, as well as the theoretical, methodological and epistemological differences of possible approaches, the present report does not adopt a stance in this debate. In most cases, it uses the names 'academic study of religion' and 'religious studies' synonymously as the most common way of describing the field of research (outside of theology), but without any normative implications. When other names are used, for instance names favoured by the institutions and research groups themselves, they should be seen as being interchangeable with the more common ones used in this report.

2 Assessment at the national level

2.1 Strengths and weaknesses of research in an international context

Theology is a discipline that is as old as the European university system. In contrast, the academic study of religion was established as an independent discipline at European universities around 1900. One main focus of the new discipline was the comparative study of religions outside the Christian tradition. To a certain extent, the Academic Study of Religion defined itself as an agnostic alternative to the confessional approaches to religion that had characterised Theology. More than 100 years after the establishment of the academic study of religion, the historical background of the two disciplines, including their sometimes conflicting identities, is still discernible in their structures, programmes and societal outreach. This is true internationally and also with regard to the Norwegian academic system. It has resulted in a situation that makes collaboration across disciplines more difficult, and the internal differentiation of approaches within Theology and the Academic Study of Religion less visible than would otherwise have been expected.

In Norway, the Lutheran Church had traditionally been the major player in a culture that was dominated by Christianity. During the second half of the twentieth century, however, an increasing pluralisation of religious options took place, a process that accelerated further after the turn of the century. Driving forces of this religious change in Norway can be identified as secularisation (however defined), the emergence of religious and spiritual alternatives, and the immigration of new citizens who brought with them a multitude of religious traditions. The new situation represented a challenge to the traditional views of religion in the country, and both Theology and Religious Studies responded to this challenge with new understandings of research topics, interdisciplinary work and societal outreach.

Hence, secularism has not resulted in the end of religion, quite the contrary: religion is still one of the most important identity markers in European societies, and addressing religions as a relevant cultural factor is a crucial responsibility of university programmes today. Societies experiencing tension and transformation need reflection on concepts, identities and narratives, including their religious dimensions. In other words, religious literacy is an important requirement at all levels of society today. All of the institutions participating in this evaluation are conscious of their responsibility, which is particularly true for many of the theological programmes that significantly broadened their view and opened up to pluralistic and interdisciplinary approaches to religion(s). One of the strengths of Theology today is its close ties to religious communities as societal partners.

As regards academic output, the field of Religion and Theology is the second most productive area in the Humanities in Norway (1,971 publications between 2011 and 2015; only Archaeology, History and Cultural Studies has more publications), but the field scores lowest (3%) when it comes to open-access journal publications (see NIFU, 2016, Tables 3.5 and 3.7). With its publications, the field feeds into relevant work in the Humanities more generally, and the field's interdisciplinary character – which includes not only the Humanities but also the Social Sciences – is an important strength. Some of the institutions and research groups evaluated in this assessment are of outstanding quality nationally and internationally. Others are less research-oriented and have a stronger focus on

professional education. Both directions fulfil a need within the academic and professional landscape of Norway, and it is not necessary to push all institutions to become internationally leading research institutes. A similar observation can be made with regard to the language of publications. While it is crucial for international top research to publish in English, publishing in Norwegian will continue to be necessary as well, particularly when research is linked to professional education and societal impact.

2.2 National and international research cooperation

Research cooperation at the national and international level varies with the research strength of the respective institution and research group. While some institutions and research groups operate easily in international contexts, the work of others is only visible at the national or even local level. There are only a few examples of collaboration between Theology and Religious Studies, or between state universities, state university colleges and private university colleges. This can also be derived from the number of publications with national and international co-authorship; of the 1,971 publications between 2011 and 2015, only 7% were co-authored with national co-authors, and 6% with international co-authors (see Table 3.8 in NIFU, 2016).

It seems advisable to intensify these forms of collaboration in order to strengthen the field at the national level, with a clear outreach to international research networks.

2.3 Funding and infrastructure

Most of the institutions receive their main funding from the Norwegian state. The top institutions are also successful in relation to national (RCN) and European (Horizon 2020 etc.) funding programmes. Some of the theological institutions receive additional funding from church-related organisations. In general, full public universities receive more funding from the state than public and, in particular, private university colleges do. On the other hand, the possibility for private institutions to receive public funding at all is a benefit that distinguishes the Norwegian situation from the situation in many other countries.

2.4 Staff (recruitment, training, gender balance)

The recruitment and training of staff members within the institutions under review reflect international standards, although only a few institutions and research groups in the field of Theology and Religious Studies have adopted advanced strategic plans for human resources and talent development. Furthermore, against the background of a patriarchal history of Christianity and Theology, the field faces even greater challenges with regard to gender equality than other fields within the Humanities. This problem is reflected in the fact that, for example, only 4% of publications in the period 2011–2015 are by women under the age of 40, while 38% are by men over the age of 55 (see Table 3.10 in NIFU, 2016). The ambition to improve gender equality and to support young researchers in a field where only 12% of publications are by personnel under the age of 40 (the lowest of the panels in HUMEVAL; see Table 3.9 in NIFU, 2016) calls for strategic action. Some of the institutions have responded actively to this challenge, while others are still in the phase of formulating goals for the future.

2.5 Comments and overall recommendations

For several years now, Norway's policy has been to encourage the merging of colleges and private universities to form larger organisations that are more likely to achieve university status and to become visible at the international level. This policy has had decisive impact on the strategies of the

institutions reviewed in this evaluation. In some cases, mergers resulted in the formation of successful new organisations, but in other cases it remains doubtful whether the national imperative to focus on high-ranking international research, rather than on top performances in local teaching and education programmes, has been beneficial to the field in general.

In relation to this development, the evaluation uncovers a need to manage expectations and aspirations. Many of the university colleges (with or without a merger into universities) seem to overestimate their chances of acquiring funding from European research programmes or of raising their research output to an international level. On the other side of the spectrum, some of the established state universities could be expected to have a more ambitious strategy to invest in excellence and talent development.

3 Assessment of institutions and research areas

3.1 Norwegian University of Science and Technology: Faculty of Humanities (NTNUHF)

The Faculty of Humanities at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNUHF) is at the time of the evaluation undergoing a merger, which, in 2017, will make HF one of eight faculties at NTNU, comprising six departments of varying size. According to the institutional self-assessment, the total expenditure of NTNUHF decreased from NOK 176 million (2013) to NOK 163 million (2015). The share of external funding increased, however, from 32% to 34% in the same period. The RCN is the most important source of external funding, followed by private Norwegian sources. Moreover, funding from the EU constitutes a relatively sizeable share of the total external funding (NOK 7 million in 2013 and NOK 8 million in 2015).

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, eight researchers were listed for HUMEVAL. The institution has submitted three research area publications and one impact case study. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

The faculty has a good strategy in place to establish itself as a relevant player in the Norwegian academic world. Recently, so-called ‘Spearhead research’ was introduced. Research groups could apply for funding on a competitive basis, and, after an evaluation (including external review), four out of 19 applications were selected and funded. Some of the groups that did not receive funding applied successfully to the RCN.

The staff members’ allotted time for research is high compared to other institutions in Norway. 50% is the norm for professors and associate professors, but after the successful acquisition of research grants, a further increase of research time is possible, up to 100%.

While there is a clear vision and strategy at the institutional level, some of these measures still have to prove their efficacy. Staff members also seem to be working in isolation. In the field of Religion, there is no real sense of collaboration across the faculty or even the department. Despite a list of research activities, it is not clear whether these areas are more than individual activities.

Resources

The Faculty of Humanities has a sophisticated infrastructure that is particularly well-equipped for language and educational research, as well as for theatre, film and music. The faculty also provides libraries for Classical Studies, Middle Ages research, African studies, Philosophy and Religious Studies. Furthermore, the faculty’s researchers have access to the Special Collections in the Gunnerus Library, which is maintained by NTNU. The collections consist of the Rare Books Collection, the Heraldic Collection, the Historical Archives, photographs, manuscripts, maps, the Music Collection, UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register – Norway, as well as the Theatre Collection.

Investments in the faculty's infrastructure in the last 5–10 years average NOK 2 million per year. All the funding stems from NTNU's own infrastructure funds, since the RCN's National Financing Initiative for Research Infrastructure has a lower budget limit for applications than the amount necessary for NTNU to be able to maintain its infrastructure.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the eight researchers listed at NTNUHF reached 77 publication points –50% of them had at least four publication points, while 13% had no publication points; 56% of the publications were at Level 2, 86% in English and 46% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

Some of the research under review is of very high quality, and there are a considerable number of Level 2 publications. The self-assessment provides much less information on individual research outputs, and no research group was submitted to HUMEVAL.

It is also not clear whether staff members in the field of Religion are sufficiently encouraged to collaborate with colleagues from other departments in order to develop interdisciplinary projects.

Recruitment and training

It is a positive sign that the faculty's policies for mobility and career paths are covered by an International Plan of Action and a Publication Strategy. A main objective of current plans is to increase researcher mobility. Currently, only 5% of the permanent academic staff stay abroad for longer periods. About 40% of postdoctoral fellows have spent extensive time abroad in the last three years and 10–15% of the PhD candidates employed at the faculty reside abroad for longer periods each year, often funded by the Faculty of Humanities or by RCN-funded research projects.

As regards recruitment from other Norwegian institutions, NTNUHF only has statistics for PhD candidates. In the past five years, about 23% of PhD candidates employed by the faculty have had an MA degree from a Norwegian institution other than NTNU, and about 11% have a degree from abroad.

The self-assessment provides little information about the training of junior members of staff or postdocs.

NTNU signed the European Charter & Code for Researchers in 2008.

Networking

The Faculty of Humanities has entered into collaboration agreements with the Falstad Centre, the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation (NRK), the 22 July Centre, the Regional Health Authority, and the Norwegian Fritt Ord [Free Word] Foundation. It will also establish close collaboration with the newly formed 'University-School Collaboration' – an initiative involving NTNU and two Trondheim schools, as part of the 'NTNU Teaching Excellence' initiative.

In 2015, NTNU established an office in Brussels as part of its focus on increased participation in the Horizon 2020 programme. This has produced results in the form of research groups from the faculty becoming involved in ongoing application processes.

In general, staff members are more involved in networks outside the institution than within it. This is supported by the research leave policy and other measures.

Impact on teaching

According to its self-assessment statement, the faculty's education portfolio is research-driven, i.e., the curriculum includes topics from previous and current research activities at all educational levels. In some cases, MA students are invited to participate in existing research projects or to attend conferences – individually or in smaller groups – as part of their MA projects.

NTNUHF notes that one fundamental challenge as regards the interplay between teaching and research is that most research projects within the Humanities are individual projects. Thus, having a research-based portfolio does not mean that there are always very strong, explicit and concrete links between individual projects and the various topics covered in the portfolio.

The self-assessment includes a broad number of research topics, but, again, the impression remains that there are no joint activities that link research in Religion with the respective BA and MA programmes.

Other societal impact

The case study is related to the research of two staff members on conspiracy theory. Linked to popular dissemination of the research – for instance in schools – the case claims to have changed popular attitudes to conspiracy theories. The submitted documentation is limited to public talks, newspaper articles and blogs on conspiracy theory, however.

Overall assessment

The overall assessment of this institution is good. NTNUHF is the second largest Faculty of Humanities in Norway. The faculty has become larger as a result of the merger, but in relation to the other faculties at NTNU, it is still comparably small. Being embedded in a technical institution provides opportunities for interdisciplinary research and a distinctive profile. The faculty has experience of this situation and generally makes good use of it.

With respect to the field of Religious Studies, the research area could use its strong links to applied science much more explicitly and strategically. While the overall structure is in good shape and supported by a good framework, the research area seems to be less well-developed. It lacks a coherent structure and explicit goals, which has a negative impact on the overall picture of the research area.

Feedback

It would be good to make better use of the other disciplines represented at NTNU and to develop a stronger focus on applied approaches within the research area. Interdisciplinary approaches are underdeveloped. It seems advisable, for instance, to bring scholars from other departments into the research groups in order to create a stronger interdisciplinary research environment.

3.2 University of Bergen: Faculty of Humanities (UiBHF)

Established in 1948, the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Bergen (UiBHF) has five departments and two inter-faculty centres. According to the institutional self-assessment, the total expenditure of the Faculty of Humanities increased from NOK 206.1 million (2013) to NOK 234 million (2015). The share of external funding of the total expenditure also increased from 21.7% to 22.9% in the same period. The RCN is the most important source of external funding, followed by private Norwegian sources. Some modest EU funding is also documented throughout the period (NOK 4.8 million per year on average).

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, 21 researchers were listed for HUMEVAL in two research groups (Religions of Late Antiquity and Religions of South Asia). The following data were submitted by the institution: one impact case study and one research area publication. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

Most of the research at the faculty is individually based and is carried out in contact with local, national and international networks, as well as with departmental research groups. The idea of a research group, as defined in the HUMEVAL process, is a new concept for UiBHF, and there is some resistance in the faculty to what is experienced as a 'top-down' enforcement of collaboration. The description of the faculty's research activities reflects wide diversity in the ways research is organised and carried out at the institution. Knowledge exchange activities are also largely the responsibility of the departments and individual researchers.

As regards the field of Religion, research is carried out at the interdisciplinary Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion (AHKR). Management and administration are well organised, and the goals are realistic and demanding. Its overarching priority is to maintain and strengthen excellent research. Research is implemented at the departmental level with an overall focus on Horizon 2020.

The overall impression of fragmentation and a certain lack of consistent research collaboration at UiBHF also applies to the field of Religion. Individual scholars achieve excellent research results, but the networks of these scholars are mainly international and do not include sustainable collaborative research in the faculty and department. The strategy of developing strategic plans while at the same time giving appropriate academic freedom to individual scholars has its merits, but this strategy runs the risk of isolating scholars and making their work less sustainable within departmental contexts and within research groups. Moreover, the policy of allocating a fixed number of doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships to each department can have the unintended effect that well-known research groups (such as Religions of Late Antiquity) will have even more difficulty recruiting sufficient young scholars to maintain their level of excellence. The faculty promotes a bottom-up process of creating research groups and collaboration, but there is no convincing strategy in place to better promote the collaboration of excellent scholars at the departmental and faculty level.

Resources

National responsibility for the maintenance and development of the Norwegian Language Collections has been transferred from the University of Oslo to the University of Bergen, effective from 2016, following a political decision at government level. Furthermore, extensive archives and collections of

linguistic, ethnographic, historical, musicological, theatre-historical and philosophical materials have accumulated in the various departments over the years.

National resources are good in the field of Religion (including RCN funded projects) and a promising strategy to participate in Horizon 2020 projects has been developed, although external research funding is weak at present. Overall, the balance between teaching and research is what can be expected from a research-oriented institution. Researchers are given research leave and are supported in their research activities.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the 21 researchers at UiBHF reached 239 publication points – 62% of them had at least four publication points, while 14% had no publication points; 58% of the publications were at Level 2, 71% in English and 48% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

Many of the members of staff in the faculty are strong individual researchers and internationally known experts in their fields. Both the quality and quantity of publications of these individuals are outstanding. The two research groups demonstrate the excellent quality of research produced by the research area. While the productivity is not always well-balanced (some staff members are more productive than others), the area is very productive overall.

Interdisciplinarity is underdeveloped, however. The researchers appear to be better linked outside the institution than inside it and seem to make insufficient use of possible collaborations with researchers in other departments at the same faculty. The research area appears to have no shared project, no common strategy for publications and no leadership in project development. Because there is no common project and also no well-defined aims and initiatives, research groups have difficulty attracting (international) PhD students and securing funded PhD positions. More collaboration with other research groups and more strategic planning is needed.

Recruitment and training

Appointments of international staff at the faculty have increased in number as a result of recent measures. The number of international applications and appointments varies across the different disciplines and position categories. The largest increase is found among PhD candidates, where approximately 50% are currently from outside of Norway.

UiB has increased its focus on internationalisation by establishing a Centre for International Mobility, and it has strengthened its efforts to support candidates, in particular through its research department.

Although a growing number of PhD candidates are expected to find career opportunities in other sectors than academia, systematic procedures for providing information about such opportunities have not yet been developed.

As regards the area of Religion, the number of PhD students is small (one defended PhD in 2013, one in 2014 and none in 2015). This is far fewer than one would expect given the size and quality of the research area.

There is a good balance between research and teaching, although it might be an idea to develop one or more Research MA programmes to bridge the gap between MA students and PhD students.

The gender balance has improved at most levels in recent years. Women make up 45% of the academic staff in the faculty, although only 27% of them are in higher positions. While the number of

women professors has even decreased slightly over the last five years, the research area is aware of the problem and has taken steps to address it.

UiB is currently implementing the European Charter & Code for Researchers.

Networking

Research collaboration is mainly initiated by individual researchers and departments. Extensive international collaboration already exists in all departments and centres. At the faculty level, international collaboration is encouraged through administrative support for the use of the instruments available at the national and EU level for both teaching and research. The university has made cross-disciplinary and cross-faculty research a priority, and the faculty will follow up by facilitating such research and teaching collaboration. Individually, the international and national networks are strong in the field of Religion. What could be improved is the development of sufficient collaboration within the institution.

Impact on teaching

All BA programmes at the faculty include as a minimum requirement a 15 ECTS course consisting of individual, tutored thesis work. At the MA level, students write a 60 ECTS MA thesis with a clear research component. MA students can also be included in their supervisors' research projects or in research group activities (although only a few research groups include MA students).

Some of the researchers in the field of Religious Studies have written textbooks that are widely used in schools in the Nordic countries.

Other societal impact

Writing textbooks, or books for general audiences and media appearances, are documented indications of strong dissemination and societal impact. Consequently, the impact case described the change in religious education in schools as being a result of the incorporation of new methodologies presented in new textbooks. It is clearly based on adequate research outputs and shows how scholars can have a positive impact on wider societal activities like education. It is well presented with supportive evidence for the claims.

Overall assessment

The overall assessment of this research area is very good. The expertise, quality and quantity of the research in the area of Religion and Theology at UiBHF are excellent. In a very traditional way, research practice in the Humanities is based on individual scholars, often working in isolation. During recent decades, collaboration, planning and programming in shared projects with well-defined purposes have become more and more important, nationally and internationally. The research in the area of Religion and Theology could be improved in this respect.

There is no clear strategy in place to maintain and make sustainable the excellent performance and reputation of the field of Religious Studies (and antiquity), and no strategic plan to fill the positions that will become vacant soon due to the age structure at the research group level. While there may be good reasons to favour an individual, bottom-up approach, such an approach would need a strategy to support those individuals and to ensure the education of a new generation of scholars.

Feedback

There is no doubt about the quality of research in this area. Scholars produce excellent work and are well-connected internationally. However, the self-documentation lacks concise information and a

well-thought-through strategy. It seems advisable to strengthen the collaboration within the institution, as well as nationally, to enable the development of an interdisciplinary and sustainable research environment.

3.3 Ansgar University College (ATH)

Ansgar University College (ATH) has three areas of teaching and research: Theology/Religion, Music and Psychology. ATH mainly aims to produce research that provides church life, culture, and society with new and relevant knowledge in the college's subject areas. According to the institutional self-assessment, the expenditure for research in theology and religion of ATH increased from NOK 7 million (2013) to NOK 7.4 million (2015). The share of external funding of the total expenditure also increased from 0% to 6.5% in the same period. Public Norwegian sources (the RCN not included) are the only sources of external funding in 2015.

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, ten researchers in one research group (Theology) were listed for HUMEVAL. No self-assessment for this group was submitted. The following data were submitted by the institution: one impact case study but no research area publications. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

Since ATH is a small teaching-led institution, high-level research is hard to achieve. However, the structures are clear and the management appears to be capable of making the most of the limited resources available.

Resources

The resources available to support research are very limited. A 20–30% allocation of staff time for research is comparatively low (especially with no time formally allocated for administration). There is no arrangement for research leave. The available library and electronic resources are limited. Virtually no external funding of any kind has been received, although the documentation mentions ambitions to apply for external funding. Institutional funds are provided to support doctoral studies by members of staff.

ATH collaborates with Sørlandet Hospital and the library at the University of Agder (which provides access to more databases etc.)

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the ten researchers at ATH reached 39 publication points – 60% of them had at least four publication points, while 20% had no publication points; 7% of the publications were at Level 2, 46% in English and 51% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016). There are more publications than included in these numbers (particularly from the music department), but for the field of Religion and Theology, these figures give an accurate picture of research production.

As these figures show, research production and quality are lower than the average in the field, although the institution clearly has appropriate levels of aspiration for its staff. The impact case study provides evidence of a substantial range of publications, but they are by an emeritus member of staff.

Recruitment and training

ATH is a small unit with limited staff turnover. Mentoring and training systems do not seem to be strictly organised. The institution funds doctoral studies for teachers, currently 2.5 PhD/postdoc positions. Researchers are recruited from universities in Norway (University of Oslo, University of

Agder), as well as from university colleges. ATH does not have a PhD programme but supports PhD training where appropriate. The institution is still in the process of implementing the European Charter & Code for Researchers.

Networking

ATH facilitates international research collaboration by (limited) funding of participation in international conferences. ATH has actively sought collaboration with regional institutions such as the University of Agder and the regional hospital. The institution also collaborates with MF and NLA, with Pentecostal/Baptist organisations such as Høyskolen for Ledelse og Teologi (not part of HUMEVAL) and Örebro Teologiska Högskola in Sweden. ATH also stimulates research across faculty boundaries by regularly organising interdisciplinary 'research days'. Church links provide a further potential network (including Baptists, Pentecostals, and other free churches, which are also relevant in the context of recent developments that will change the monolithic status of the Church of Norway). Finally, ATH works with NGOs and governmental stakeholders on interreligious relations. However, no evidence is provided of how these networks have actually been used to support ongoing research.

Impact on teaching

Being a teaching-led institution, research-driven teaching is a challenge, although staff members with relevant expertise are able to make use of research when appropriate. Students at all levels are trained in research skills and expected to carry out independent research projects.

Other societal impact

The case study submitted describes work that plainly has a potential to have considerable significance for health services and social work. However, the assessment must be limited because the question of whether and how it has actually had any effect on professional practice is not addressed, and no evidence is provided on this matter.

Research on abortion issues has been included in a book that is used, for example, in nursing education. Ethical guidelines and the 'holistic care' perspective have also contributed to a wider discussion.

As regards leadership and church development, ATH runs a publication that has just been included as a Level 1 publication in the Norwegian system: *Scandinavian Journal for Leadership and Theology* (SJLT), a digital open-access journal published jointly by Örebro Teologiska Högskola in Sweden, Høyskolen for Ledelse og Teologi and ATH.

Overall assessment

The overall impression of this research area is good. As a small, teaching-led institution, it is no surprise that ATH's research culture is relatively weak. What is being achieved is in many ways impressive. Management structures appear to be well designed to support research, given the limited resources available, but the research aspirations are much higher than past performances. Higher levels of international research would seem to be out of the institution's reach for the foreseeable future.

Feedback

ATH should continue working to build a research culture and particularly to take advantage of the institution's strong national and international academic and church networks. They can be used to build practical research projects capable of documenting benefit to non-academic partners. It also

seems advisable for ATH to articulate its research aims more clearly, focusing specifically on the intellectual agenda being pursued, the problems being addressed and the means by which researchers at ATH hope to contribute to moving them forward.

3.4 Diakonhjemmet University College (DHS)

In 2016, Diakonhjemmet University College (DHS) merged with three other institutions to become VID Specialized University. Before the merger, DHS was organised in four departments and a centre for diaconia and professional practice. According to the institutional self-assessment, DHS's total expenditure was at a constant level of NOK 6.4 million a year for research in religion and theology during the period 2013–2015. The share of external funding of the total expenditure increased, however, from 15.4% to 16.5% in the same period. Private Norwegian sources are the only sources of external funding.

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, eight researchers were listed for HUMEVAL. The following data were submitted by the institution: one research group (Psychology of Religion), one impact case study and one research area publication. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

The strategic goals for the years ahead are very ambitious, but because the assessment period does not coincide with the start of the new programme, it is hard to evaluate the concrete measures at this point. The aims, strategy and instruments employed to reach the aims are sensible, although highly demanding. The leadership appears to be aware of the requirements for the development of a good research environment and academic education, but it remains to be seen whether the challenges with regard to academic research will be met. The gender balance is excellent.

Resources

Resources comprise 83.5% core funding from the Norwegian government and 16.5% from the Diakonhjemmet Foundation. The institution is seeking external funding for R&D projects in the near future, but results are pending. In addition, there are a number of initiatives related to diaconia, such as a research archive and peer-reviewed journals that the institution is involved in.

VID is considering spending 50% of its research resources on research groups. The institution plans to keep the two PhD programmes (one of which is DHS's). It remains to be seen how these plans will be put into practice in the future.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the eight people at DHS reached 24 publication points – 50% of them had at least four publication points, while 13% had no publication points; 0% of the publications were at Level 2, 34% in English and 29% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

This institution is aware of the necessity of having highly qualified academic staff and it has structured its research in two larger programmes. There are very few researchers in the area of Religion and Theology, and no research project is mentioned. One PhD thesis of excellent quality was submitted for the assessment, but it appears to be the work of one individual scholar.

Recruitment and training

DHS formulated the goal that at least two PhD students and four staff members should spend time at an institution abroad every year, while two PhD students and two scholars from abroad should spend time at DHS. In addition to academic careers, DHS's close cooperation with partners in the field of

healthcare, welfare services, religious organisations, civil society and development organisations creates opportunities for PhD students to pursue alternative career paths.

The merger has broadened the profile of DHS. The doctoral programme currently has 32 PhD students, 12 of whom are funded by VID. While the PhD programme is promising, much has still to be done to achieve the goals formulated in the strategic plan.

DHS had implemented most parts of the European Charter & Code for Researchers. VID Specialized University will implement the Code and it is also a member of EURAXESS, where all PhD positions and most academic positions are announced.

DHS does not have any rules for sabbaticals (MHS used to provide sabbaticals but has abandoned this arrangement after the merger). Some limited support is available for staff members to work on grant applications, including a reduction of their teaching load. Staff members discuss their research plans with their line manager in preparation for the next year.

DHS has hired an officer who helps staff members to write applications for external funding. There are also plans to help researchers who want to be part of large grant applications, such as for the Horizon 2020 programme. However, DHS is realistic about the fact that, as a small institution, its opportunities are very limited.

Networking

According to its strategic plan, DHS aims to become a key arena for (research) education and research in the area of diaconia, values and professional practice at the national, Scandinavian and international level. The R&D plan for 2014–2018 focuses in particular on ‘Challenges in welfare and service innovation’ and ‘Values and religion in health and welfare’. In these areas, it is crucial for DHS (and now VID) to cooperate closely with national and international partners.

DHS has been involved in a number of projects together with international development organisations that combine research, development and education. These are interdisciplinary projects combining resources from the Humanities, the Academic Study of Religion and health and social care. DHS collaborates with partners in Europe, Japan, Hong Kong and South Africa. MA students are recruited from Africa and Asia.

Together with Diakonhjemmet Hospital and Diakonhjemmet Foundation, DHS runs a long-term collaboration on the future of faith-based healthcare institutions with partners from India, Israel, USA, Germany, South Africa and Switzerland.

Impact on teaching

DHS is a teaching-driven institution. Its education for professionals in the areas of health, social work, civil society and churches is well thought through. Research only has a very limited impact on the teaching programme, however.

Other societal impact

The institution plays an important role in society by educating professionals in the health sector and social services. This education includes critical reflection on psychological, ethical, as well as religious questions and dimensions. This societal relevance is also documented in the impact case. At the same time, research at DHS is not very innovative, and its impact is limited to the educational sector.

Overall assessment

The overall impression of the research at DHS is fair. DHS is a strong institution when it comes to teaching and education. Its performances and possibilities with regard to research in Theology and Religious Studies are limited, however. To achieve more ambitious goals, consistent planning would be needed to make the content and profile of the institution's research activities more targeted.

Feedback

Acknowledging the non-research-intensive background of this institution, the newly developed academic aims are noteworthy. To create a more successful and sustainable research environment, it will be important to further invest in the development of research profiles and activities. The context of the new VID Specialized University will probably help it to reach more ambitious research goals.

3.5 Fjellhaug International University College (FiH)

Fjellhaug International University College (FiH) is organised as a private company and operated accordingly, with a board elected by a general meeting and responsibility for day-to-day management delegated to the rector. The institution has two departments, one situated in Copenhagen and one in Oslo. According to the institutional self-assessment, the total expenditure of FiH increased from NOK 15.9 million (2013) to NOK 17.1 million (2015). The share of external funding of the total expenditure also increased from 25% to 49% in the same period. Private Norwegian sources are the only sources of external funding.

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, 26 researchers were listed for HUMEVAL. The institution did not submit any research area publications and no impact case studies. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

FiH's strong ties with the church mean that employees are required to have an explicit link to the Christian faith. While this may lead to a strong commitment among staff members to their work, it can also compromise the selection of candidates and the institution's scholarly reputation. The management emphasises the values of academic freedom, however, and researchers are free to choose their own methods, subjects, publication channels etc.

For historical reasons, FiH has a serious challenge with respect to gender equality. The institution has made gender balance a policy priority, but a strategic plan with clear performance indicators is still pending.

Given this context and (limited) ambition, FiH seems to be well organised and it has a consistent strategy, in particular by making creative use of limited resources to support research. The institution is aware of the particular challenges it faces and its responses to these challenges are reasonable. It is clear that some of these policies are newly developed and yet to be fully tested, but the shift in research productivity in recent years is testimony to effective leadership.

Resources

Research infrastructure at FiH reflects the institution's focus on offering BA and MA programmes in Theology, Missiology and Religions. According to the institutional self-assessment, FiH's research staff, both in Oslo and in Copenhagen, have full access to all other libraries through a cooperation agreement between the libraries.

Thus, while limited, the resources available to support research are being used creatively. The new structure for allocating research time to the most productive researchers may prove to be over-elaborate or may entrench existing patterns, but it is a creative way of deploying limited resources and rewarding research. The available library and electronic resources are limited, although investment levels are sensible for a small institution and mutual-access arrangements are of assistance here.

FiH does not intend to develop its own PhD programme; the institution wants to offer good education up to MA level. The instructors should be well educated, and all teachers involved in MA programmes should have obtained a PhD. The unit has no record of securing external research funding as such, and this is likely to be difficult to achieve given the unit's size and nature, but the substantial support it receives from church sources is noteworthy.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the 26 researchers at FiH reached 98 publication points – 35% of them had at least four publication points, while 23% had no publication points; 12% of the publications were at Level 2, 33% in English and 75% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

Since no publications were submitted, the only basis for assessment are the overall publication statistics. For a unit of this size and nature, the figures are respectable, although it remains to be seen to what extent researchers are publishing with internationally respected academic journals and presses. The broadening of publication from a handful of staff is also noteworthy.

Recruitment and training

FiH is a theological institution that, in the past, educated hundreds of missionaries working all over the world. Several members of the academic staff had international experience before being employed at FiH. Every year, about six to eight staff members from the Norwegian and the Danish departments have short-term teaching assignments (3–6 weeks) at theological institutions around the world. Several researchers have been recruited from other institutions in Norway and internationally.

FiH has not signed the European Charter & Code for Researchers. However, the institution states that it supports the principles of academic freedom.

FiH has a sabbatical policy that allows staff members to take research leave for six months every six years. The institution also allocates funding to PhD projects by its own staff (internal career paths – as *førstelektor*, associate professor, docent and professor – are central to FiH's faculty development plans) and tries to be flexible as regards scheduling research periods in accordance with teaching demands.

The fact that staff members come from a wide range of national and institutional backgrounds reflects the institution's own lack of higher degrees and also the theological networks with which it is connected. FiH's particular theological commitment is central to its nature and is of course legitimate, but it is not in itself supportive of a strong research culture.

Networking

FiH has only one faculty, but efforts are regularly made to facilitate collaboration across the two departments. A biannual conference serves as a meeting point for researchers from the two departments and with researchers from other private theological schools in Scandinavia. So far, international research collaboration has mainly been driven by individual contacts and efforts. Over the past two years, FiH has initiated attempts to take part in international research collaboration.

The institution is itself international in structure (although this is a recent development), and the staff members are well connected within the international church and missionary organisations that the institution is part of. Wider connections with the academic world and with other theological traditions, both within Norway and beyond, appear to be limited as yet, apart from some points of contact through major international conferences.

Nationally, FiH works with social partners connected to the church, but sometimes also beyond it; examples of this include training for EU soldiers going to Africa, staff members acting as court witnesses and the publication of textbooks for primary schools.

Impact on teaching

Since FiH only offers study programmes at BA and MA level, most instructors spend more time on teaching than on research. FiH has no plans to change this, as the time allotted for research is perceived as reasonable in relation to its aims; individual scholars have to obtain external grants to increase their research time.

Only about half of the lecturers have a PhD degree. FiH follows the principle that only professors and associate professors (hence with a PhD) teach courses at the MA level in Oslo. At the department in Copenhagen, eight out of eleven lecturers in the BA programme have a PhD. At the department in Oslo, 13 lecturers taught at lower levels in 2016. Six of them have a PhD, one is a docent, and three are enrolled in a PhD programme.

At lower levels, the study programme does not encourage students to participate in research (it is also noteworthy that a thesis at BA level remains optional). This is different at the MA level, where all students write a thesis. Some of the best MA theses have been published by FiH's internal press.

The departments in Oslo and Copenhagen have recently started to offer their lecturers courses in university pedagogy to enhance the level of research-based teaching.

Other societal impact

The institution did not submit an impact case study. It is to be expected that the research undertaken at FiH will be used within the church networks to which the institution belongs, and it is encouraging to see mention of this. The research apparently remains at a fairly low level, however.

Overall assessment

As a small, teaching-driven institution with a theologically defined mission, FiH cannot be expected to nurture an internationally visible research culture, and it does not aspire to. Given this weak research context, however, what has been achieved in the BA and MA programmes, as well as the goals that are being set for teaching, are reasonable.

Feedback

It is advisable for FiH to continue its new initiatives to build a research culture, and especially to work on exploiting the networks and opportunities offered by its particular position between academia and the church. There is a potential for research that could actually shape ecclesiastical practice, as well as for research that draws on practitioners' experience and expertise. FiH is unlikely to become a miniature research university, but it is well positioned to make a unique contribution from its own vantage point.

3.6 Hedmark University of Applied Sciences (HiHm)

In 2017, Hedmark University of Applied Sciences (HiHm) merged with Lillehammer University College to become Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences. Before the merger, HiHm's Faculty of Education and Natural Sciences (LUNA), which was established in 1994, was organised in four departments (Department of Humanities, Department of Social Sciences, Department of Fine Arts and Computer Science, as well as Department of Natural Sciences and Technology). According to the institutional self-assessment, LUNA's total expenditure increased from NOK 15.5 million (2013) to NOK 19.5 million (2015). The share of external funding of the total expenditure also increased from 7.1% to 11.8% in the same period. The RCN is the most important source of external funding, followed by international public sources.

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, five researchers across three research groups (Ethics & Moral Philosophy, Qualitative Empirical Research on RE Teachers & Educational Practices and Religion, Values & National Identity) were listed for HUMEVAL. The following data were submitted by the institution: one impact case study and one research area publication. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

HiHm's Department of Religion is very small, consisting of five scholars, including one professor and two associate professors. The department's professor received his PhD two years ago and does not seem to have published yet.

HiHm has a committee for diversity and equality (led by the rector) that advises the institution on equality policy, follows up its implementation and decides any disputes. As yet, however, most of these aims have been formulated as goals, but a concrete strategic plan with quantifiable results is pending.

While the presentation of the administrative side of the research area is conclusive and informative, little information is included about particular research activities. It is also unclear how research activities are monitored and thereby encouraged.

Resources

The most important research infrastructure is the HiHm library. The library's collection includes approximately 150,000 volumes, 13,000 e-books, 803 printed and 15,224 electronic journals. The library subscribes to 42 databases. According to the institutional self-assessment, literature and resources within the Humanities are extensive. The library collaborates with other national research libraries.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the five researchers at HiHm reached 13 publication points – 40% of them had at least four publication points, while 40% had no publication points; 5% of the publications were at Level 2, 36% in English and 29% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

Publications are predominantly in Norwegian, and only a few are rated Level 2. A significant number of staff members did not publish at all in the period 2011–2015.

The self-assessment mentions collaboration with three international partners. However, little information is provided about the actual form of the collaboration and how it influences research. There is also little information about collaboration across the faculty, i.e. whether colleagues from different departments are encouraged to work together. Hence, there is little evidence of interdisciplinary projects.

Recruitment and training

LUNA periodically offers grants for funding supervision for researchers who want to qualify for a more advanced position. Most Humanities researchers belong to a focused research group related to their particular field of expertise. This is intended to stimulate collaborative research as a step in career mobility. In accordance with the European Charter & Code for Researchers, a mentor programme is being established whereby senior researchers will advise junior researchers on their career development.

The area only has one PhD student at the moment. In general, PhD students are encouraged and provided with funding to spend time at research institutions abroad to work on their projects, professional networks and professional competence. Career opportunities for graduates of LUNA's PhD in Teaching and Teacher Education mainly lie in the education sector.

HiHm aims to sign the European Charter & Code for Researchers in 2017, and it is currently using the EU Commission's 2008 method for documenting the degree to which HiHm meets the Charter & Code's principles. A personnel policy action plan has been developed on the basis of a gap analysis. At the same time, a clear strategy of hiring (international) staff members with a background that would strengthen the profile of the institution is pending.

Networking

HiHm endeavours to maintain and further develop international collaboration, cross-faculty collaboration and collaboration with non-academic partners. The institution prioritises six strategic research areas, two of which encompass LUNA humanities researchers: Education and Diversity, and Arena for Culture and Language.

HiHm's R&D committee holds seminars for its researchers from all six prioritised research areas on themes relevant to them all (e.g. research ethics). LUNA's PhD in Teaching and Teacher Education has PhD fellows from three of HiHm's four faculties, under shared supervision. Interdisciplinary collaboration internally in LUNA has long been the norm because LUNA provides research-based teacher education (Grades 1–13 and preschool), which necessitates multidisciplinary cooperation.

LUNA has entered into collaborative agreements designed to strengthen collaboration on studies and research with 37 kindergartens in eight municipalities, 30 primary and lower secondary schools in seven municipalities, and seven upper secondary schools in two counties. LUNA is also active in the Ministry of Education and Research's GNIST and GLØD partnership programmes, which put research in focus among collaborating municipalities.

Impact on teaching

LUNA mainly educates candidates for schools and kindergartens. The purpose of its teacher education programmes is to furnish students with both subject-specific and general didactic knowledge. Recent reforms of Norwegian teacher education have strengthened the need for programmes based on research results of a high academic standard. One important consequence is the introduction in 2017 of MA degrees for teacher education programmes for primary and lower

secondary school teachers. LUNA has a commitment to interdisciplinary cooperation between Norwegian, Music, English, Pedagogy and the didactics of Ethics and Religious Studies.

The possibilities for students to engage in research are most apparent at the MA level, where research is part of the learning outcomes. At the BA level, students write a BA thesis, an obligatory part of all LUNA study programmes at this level.

Many of the professional study programmes have not been provided at MA level. This is currently the case for preschool teacher education programmes and primary and lower secondary school teacher programmes. From 2017, the latter will become MA degrees.

Other societal impact

The case study presented by the institution is clearly based on adequate research. However, the activities listed are more dissemination of knowledge than impact. Nonetheless, the information about the events of 22 July 2011 and the memorials is important and could have a wider societal impact in time.

Overall assessment

Given that the institution's main focus is on applied science and (religious) education, the research activities and performances are on a weak level. However, the case study and the plans to integrate research more seriously in the teaching programmes are signs of good strategic developments. Therefore, the overall assessment is fair. It remains to be seen whether the relatively broad spectrum of themes in research and education in the Humanities can be made sustainable at such a small institution.

Feedback

Researchers might aim to present their insights to an international audience, for example to connect their research on the memorial culture in the aftermath of July 2011 with related research in the UK, the USA or France.

3.7 University of Oslo: Faculty of Humanities (UiOHF)

The Faculty of Humanities at the University of Oslo (UiOHF) is organised in seven departments, which makes it the largest Faculty of Humanities in Norway. According to the institutional self-assessment, the total expenditure of the Faculty of Humanities decreased from NOK 434.9 million (2013) to NOK 413.5 million (2015). The share of external funding of the total expenditure also decreased from 27% to 24% in the same period. The RCN is the most important source of external funding, followed by other public Norwegian sources. Some modest EU funding is documented in 2013 (NOK 3.3 million), but this category has decreased as well (NOK 1 million in 2015).

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, nine researchers were listed for HUMEVAL. The following data were submitted by the institution: two impact case studies and one research area publication. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

The research area under consideration here, the Academic Study of Religion, is based in the Department of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages (IKOS) and currently does not have more than eight permanent staff members. Across departments (Area Studies etc.) there are other scholars working on religion as well. This situation means that the Study of Religion is a very small component in the faculty's overall structure. One would therefore expect that collaboration with UiO's Faculty of Theology would be a way of strengthening the overall research activities in the field, but such a collaboration is underdeveloped.

Resources

Responding to an increasing need for technology and more complex and costly infrastructure, UiOHF has made its heaviest local investments in the fields of language/text databases, music technology and media research.

The Norwegian Folklore Archive (NFS), housed at one of UiOHF's departments, serves as a national archive of cultural-historical texts and source material. It currently comprises a corpus of around half a million manuscript pages from all over Norway. In 2012, the oldest parts of the archives were selected for inclusion in the Norwegian Memory of the World Registry under the auspices of UNESCO.

At UiOHF, a very good percentage of time is allocated for research (45% for all research staff). The provision of study leave is in line with best international practice. The historical, anthropological and sociological study of religion is one of the smallest areas in UiOHF. There has been some success in drawing on international research funding, but there is clearly scope for further expansion in this area, depending on whether the new initiatives at faculty level bear fruit. The faculty provides adequate resources, notably a recent increase in administrative support for funding applications, and the research area was able to hire two younger colleagues recently.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the nine researchers at UiO's Faculty of Humanities reached 53 publication points – 67% of them had at least four publication points, while 22% had no publication points; 41% of the publications were at Level 2, 76% in English and 21% were journal articles (for the Humanities

as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

The quality of research is generally very high. There are some outstanding scholars at UiOHF who indeed advance their respective fields of expertise internationally. The research area supports interdisciplinary approaches in various fields, especially in the field of religion, contemporary society and politics.

Recruitment and training

UiOHF recently launched a five-year career development programme for early-career, full-time academic staff, with a strong emphasis on internationalisation. The participants are granted funding for a PhD fellowship, research expenses, administrative support, a reduction of teaching loads and additional training. They are also assigned academic mentors and build their international networks through extended stays abroad. PhD students, initially funded for three years, can be given a full extra year to prepare for a postdoc project, external funding, the publication of their thesis etc. PhD students finish their project within three years and three months on average.

UiOHF has a clear strategy to attract and support top talent. For instance, the faculty has identified a group of eight people (four women and four men, from 23 applicants) as high competitors at ERC level, supporting them with extra funding for five years (two mentors for each of them, including one international top mentor from a different field, and workshops and training). Moreover, if scholars have received high scores from the ERC but still did not receive funding, they can be given 'consolation funding' from the faculty to carry out (part of) their project.

UiOHF recruits a high proportion of its researchers from other international institutions. During the period 2011–2015, 43.5% of all researchers, including PhD candidates and postdoctoral fellows, were recruited from abroad. An additional 22.1% were recruited from other institutions in Norway.

The faculty is part of UiO's effort to implement the European Charter & Code for Researchers.

Networking

UiOHF has many types of international cooperation, with research projects and ongoing collaboration with researchers on all continents. Two Centres of Excellence have been established, with broad international participation in their advisory boards and research activities. International researchers participate in departmental centres such as the Centre for Research on Media Innovations, the Centre for the Study of Islam and the Middle East (SIMS), and the Centre for Museum Studies. The faculty administers more than 250 agreements with international partners.

Impact on teaching

Students have opportunities to engage with research at all levels. The impact on teaching is well attested by a large number of MA programmes that draw on resources from research groups. In the field of Religion, however, no such research group is mentioned. Moreover, essential information is lacking that would enable a more detailed assessment of the relationship between research and teaching.

Other societal impact

The information provided pertains to 'The Tibet Network and Research on Tibetan religions', which is a programme that allows Tibetans from the 'Autonomous Region' (TAR), China, to stay in Norway for study and research, especially on Tibetan religious practice. Tibetan studies at UiOHF are highly acclaimed, and through this programme the faculty supports research on, and within, an endangered

culture. However, this is primarily an example of important international collaboration rather than of the impact of research as such. It is not clear what effect the HF research has had on Tibetan partners besides helping to build effective networks with them.

The second impact case, Value Politics (2012–2013), examined ‘religious NGOs at the United Nations’. This topic has attracted a lot of attention lately and may not count as truly innovative, even though it is, of course, relevant. The research at UiOHF has been published as a report that has been broadly received. Unfortunately, the evidence cited does not provide any proof of how (if at all) the report has actually shaped discussions or affected policy or practice.

Overall assessment

HF’s research, and, to a lesser degree teaching, in the field of History of Religion is very good. The academic environment is supportive of outstanding research. International collaboration is very strong as well. UiOHF’s strategy of developing and supporting major centres of excellence could prove disadvantageous, however, for smaller areas such as ‘Religion’, even more so if researchers in the unit wish to focus more on history.

Feedback

In order to support and strengthen the Academic Study of Religion at UiO, more collaboration and strategic plans on interfaculty level seem to be important. Religion is not the key field at UiOHF (no research group was submitted for evaluation, while the Faculty of Theology submitted three research groups). This raises questions about the status of the Academic Study of Religion in the Faculty of Humanities. Overcoming historical gaps between Theology and the Academic Study of Religion would be important to further develop the high quality of research at UiO and to establish the institution at the level that can be expected of it.

3.8 University of Oslo: Faculty of Theology (UiOTF)

The Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo (UiOTF) is one of eight faculties at the University of Oslo, and the academic staff are assigned to three academic units: Biblical Studies, Church History, and Contemporary Theology and Religious Studies. According to the institutional self-assessment, the total expenditure of the Faculty of Theology increased from NOK 33.9 million (2013) to NOK 40.7 million (2015). The share of external funding of the total expenditure also increased from 19.8% to 24.8% in the same period. The RCN is the most important source of external funding, followed by funding from the EU.

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, 41 researchers were listed for HUMEVAL. The following data were submitted by the institution: three research groups (Interpreting Practices, The New Testament and Early Christianity, as well as Protestantism), two impact case studies and two research area publications. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

The overarching strategic aim of the Faculty of Theology is to be an internationally leading research and educational institution, contributing to the renewal, interpretation and dissemination of theological traditions of knowledge at both the national and international level. The reorganisation of the faculty into academic units and a strengthened focus on research groups are strategic steps that have been taken to improve the basis for developing applications for external funding. Being the only Faculty of Theology at a state university in Norway, UiOTF sees itself as a national hub for research on religion, with a special focus on Christianity. It has a high level of external funding compared to other departments of this size in the Humanities and Social Sciences. It has obtained one of very few ERC grants within the Humanities in Norway. With experience from top research and extensive international and interdisciplinary cooperation, the faculty aims to consolidate as a site for ground-breaking research on religion, history and society. This includes attracting external funding from the EU's Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, engaging in international collaboration and producing high-quality international publications.

UiOTF is a substantial unit with appropriate aspirations to international excellence, and not just within the more traditional theological disciplines. Its structure seems sensible for a unit of this nature. The faculty has a good understanding of the difficulties and opportunities it faces. It has to strike the right balance between being a nationally leading institution while at the same time being a smaller but potentially significant player on the international scene.

Resources

The faculty provides support for its researchers through access to the Theological Library. The Theological Library is part of the University of Oslo Library, which is Norway's largest academic library. The theological collections offer access to relevant and updated textual databases and collections. Further relevant collections are accessible at the National Library of Norway. The research infrastructures relevant to the faculty's researchers are regularly upgraded.

Substantial resources are invested in networking, notably in permitting exchanges and study abroad, as well as regular workshops and seminars. The aspiration to ensure 45% research time is in line with best practice internationally. Regular research leave is available.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the 41 researchers in UiO's Faculty of Theology reached 237 publication points – 49% of them had at least four publication points, while 17% had no publication points; 31% of the publications were at Level 2, 58% in English and 50% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

In general, researchers at UiOTF publish at a high level in terms of quantity and quality. Judging from the two articles submitted, however, the research quality is not quite at the level of critical and analytical engagement that one would expect to see from a unit of this prominence. Similar issues emerge in connection with the research groups submitted by the institution. There is little indication of overall research productivity across UiOTF, or of how researchers' endeavours to improve both the quality and quantity of their outputs are supported.

Recruitment and training

Researchers at UiOTF are increasingly recruited from other institutions in Norway and internationally. During the last five years, new staff members were hired from Princeton University, USA, and from Universities in Canada, England, the Netherlands and Denmark. The recent push towards a wider field of recruitment is taking place against the backdrop of a longstanding pattern of internal recruitment. The opportunity to reshape the unit through planned staff turnover in the coming five years is significant. Career planning is a prioritised issue in the faculty's personnel policy and among PhD students and postdocs. This also implies a stronger focus on information about career opportunities in other sectors of the job market.

There are currently 37 PhD students at UiOTF, 12 of whom are funded by the university and the others through external sources. UiOTF runs a PhD programme and a research school itself and participates in another graduate school on empirical studies. The national graduate school has 30 PhD students from various disciplines. PhD students and postdocs regularly present papers at international conferences, seminars and workshops. UiOTF has bilateral agreements with established higher education institutions in different parts of the world.

The faculty is part of UiO's effort to implement the European Charter & Code for Researchers.

As these details demonstrate, recruitment and training at TF are in good shape and match the ambition of the research area.

Networking

UiOTF provides a well-established research network, both nationally and internationally.

International research collaboration is stimulated by providing internal funding for network activities and project development. Together with partners in Pietermaritzburg/Durban, South Africa, New York, USA, and Sao Leopoldo, Brazil, the faculty hosts an annual transatlantic seminar for PhD fellows.

In 2008, UiO established seven inter-faculty research areas. One was initiated and hosted by the Faculty of Theology: Religion in Pluralistic Societies (PluRel) involves the Faculties of Law, Medicine, Humanities, Social Science and Education, as well as the Museum of Cultural History. The goal was to strengthen the academic network within the university and to highlight religion as an important interdisciplinary theme. PluRel ended in 2016, and it is unclear from the documentation how sustainable the collaboration across faculties actually is.

In 2015, UiO defined a new priority research area for inter-faculty collaboration: 'UiO: Norden'. The faculty is a member of the board, and several senior researchers, including a new professor II from a Nordic partner institution, participate in one of the three research groups established so far (The Public Sphere and Freedom of Expression in the Nordic Countries, 1815–1900). The faculty has received funding from the RCN for a national research school in Authoritative Texts and Their Reception (ATTR), for which the faculty is the host institution and a primary agent in developing the initiative. UiOTF collaborates with the Faculties of Law and Humanities at all the major universities in Norway.

There are long-standing research and education relations with the Church of Norway. In the last decade, cooperation has developed with other faith communities, as well as with health services.

UiOTF sees itself as an important producer of insight for public policymakers, especially in the field of ethics. It submits comments in public consultations, and politicians and government officials consult the faculty. UiOTF members participate as experts on various ecclesiastical committees.

Impact on teaching

Out of eight study programmes, TF has three main programmes: the six-year programme in Theology and a BA and MA in the field of Religion and Society (RESA). These programmes have clear links to the faculty's research areas. The research activity influences the profile of courses, as well as of study programmes.

The development of new programmes is based on the faculty's research competence. RESA includes more traditional theological disciplines, as well as additional competence in Islamic Theology and Philosophy. It focuses on the relationship between religion and ethics, religion and politics, gender and religion, as well as on interreligious encounters. The study programme also deals with how religion has played and continues to play a role in politics and society. The field of interreligious studies is an integral part of the joint first-year courses for all programmes at TF. In recent years, Islamic Theology and Philosophy have become an integrated part of interreligious studies.

The opportunities for students to engage in research are particularly relevant for students working on their MA theses (the self-assessment provides no information on BA theses). Both MA and PhD theses should be linked to the specialised competence of the supervisor and preferably find a place within research groups.

A main challenge in relation to optimising the interplay between teaching and research is that many of the courses offered have a fixed curriculum with mandatory elements. This allows little room for flexibility when it comes to developing electives based on the specialised competence of the researchers. It is still a challenge to integrate students in ongoing research activities.

Other societal impact

UiOTF's relationship with Norwegian churches and its involvement in policymaking on ethics and other matters makes good use of its standing. It is less clear, however, how this sits with the area's stated intention to play a leading role in the wider field of Religious Studies. The recently developed research theme of religious plurality certainly has some documented impact, such as a course for religious leaders in Norway from a foreign background (since 2007) that is funded by the Ministry of Culture. Another relevant field is health ethics, and UiOTF has offered several courses to the healthcare sector in recent years. These, and other examples, demonstrate that TF has developed many new relationships with societal partners outside of the more traditional church milieu.

The impact case on religious leadership in Norwegian society is clearly an important initiative, although evidence of any actual effect it has had is scanty and it is not clear how critical distance from the subject has been maintained. It is noteworthy that Swedish and Finnish initiatives use this course as a model.

The impact case on death in the early Protestant tradition does not appear to offer any evidence of or likely pathways to impact on society. It has resulted in some training of clergy, but what effect this may have had is unclear.

Overall, UiOTF has opportunities to make a societal impact both within and beyond Norway, but, at present, it appears to pursue this in a relatively reactive and uncoordinated way. A more focused and ambitious approach might open new possibilities.

Overall assessment

The overall assessment of the Faculty of Theology is very good. The research area has a potential for excellence, especially in the theological and theologically inspired interreligious field. The institution is currently taking active steps to fulfil that potential, but it has yet to achieve the level that might be expected. If the faculty and its scholars are to achieve the international prominence and contribution of which they ought to be capable, a more ambitious research culture needs to be nurtured in which the unit's arena is the global rather than mainly the Nordic setting.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that UiOTF embraces a very modern interpretation of Theology, which sees Religion and Theology embedded in cultural processes that have to be studied in an interdisciplinary way. The existence of Religious Studies at UiOTF helps to facilitate a Theology that is capable of dealing with 21st-century issues. Research and teaching across faculties, particularly a stronger collaboration with the Faculty of Humanities and its scholars of Religion, will be important to create a sustainable research and teaching environment.

Feedback

The institution is already taking many of the steps needed to raise its horizons from local to international prominence. An even sharper focus is recommended on supporting and mentoring staff at all levels of experience to produce top-quality research output, with a clearer orientation towards the research questions and problems to be tackled, and the significance of such problems for both academic and non-academic audiences. Further reflection is recommended on the unit's specific theological profile vis-à-vis efforts to include subject areas from the Academic Study of Religion, as well as exploring stronger collaboration with groups working in the field of Theology and Religious Studies at UiO and Norway in general.

3.9 University of Stavanger: Faculty of Arts and Education (UiS)

The Faculty of Arts and Education at the University of Stavanger (UiS) is organised in four departments according to their educational profile, and two national centres. According to the institutional self-assessment, the total expenditure of the Faculty of Arts and Education increased from NOK 265.7 million (2013) to NOK 321.9 million (2015). The share of external funding of the total expenditure also increased from 24.8% to 28.2% in the same period. While it receives external funding from other public Norwegian sources, the RCN is by far the most important source of external funding. Some modest EU funding is documented, averaging around NOK 1 million per year.

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, five researchers were listed for HUMEVAL. The institution has submitted one impact case study but no research area publications. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

Given the focus and priorities of the Faculty of Arts and Education, only minimal attention is devoted to research on Religion. The five colleagues in the research area are involved in teaching and research within Religious Studies and Religious Education. There is no specific strategy for the future development of Religion and Theology, apart from the fact that one of the nine Research Area Programmes addresses 'Religion, Culture and Globalization'. The activities of scholars of Religion remain quite isolated. As regards other strategic plans, it is not clear at this point what the results of the reorganisation of the university and faculty will be.

The proportion of 30% research time for staff members (without the possibility of increasing the allotted time individually) is less than what more research-oriented institutions offer their staff. This puts UiS in a difficult position compared to the national and international academic landscape.

Resources

The resources of the faculty are at a high level, although their relevance to the field of Religion and Theology is very limited. Among the many initiatives, the one that comes closest to the field under review is the project 'Historical Population Register for Norway', mainly based on censuses and church books. The register aims to include as many as possible of the 9.7 million people who were born in or migrated to Norway between 1735 and 1964. The project includes many national and international partners, with the University of Tromsø being the project manager. Harmonising and perhaps linking data from different countries could represent new research possibilities.

Despite these achievements, Religion remains a small research area in a still expanding university. Little time is dedicated to research. The faculty provides some adequate resources, though they are small in absolute terms. The Research Area Programmes, including 'Religion, Culture and Globalisation', entail a certain amount of additional funds, for instance seed money for grant applications. The faculty has taken explicit steps to help researchers to apply for external funding and to establish international networks.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the five researchers at UiS reached 42 publication points – 80% of them had at least four publication points, while 0% had no publication points; 26% of the publications were at

Level 2, 46% in English and 65% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

Given the size of the institution, research activities are good, ranging from religious education in schools to explorations of contemporary religion in Norway. A few contributions have international impact (especially in the field of Religion and Education, as well as in alternative spirituality), but most publications are disseminated nationally.

Recruitment and training

Academic staff at the Faculty of Arts and Education are mostly recruited nationally. All academic positions are publicly advertised. UiS organises regular information meetings about relevant programmes in the EU framework, and there is a central support staff to help with applications. More systematic work nevertheless needs to be done to motivate and better inform PhD candidates and academic staff about opportunities for mobility and about career paths.

The institution is currently implementing the European Charter & Code for Researchers.

Networking

All PhD candidates are encouraged to carry out a research visit abroad during their PhD education, for which funding is available at the faculty. Grants for academic staff (1–6 months) are also announced at faculty level for research visits abroad. The number of students and staff on exchange or research visits abroad has increased in the last two years. Mobility is an important factor for securing funding for a sabbatical. However the funding available for sabbaticals is reported to be sparse.

UiS was a member of the REDCo (Religion, Education, Dialogue, Conflict) project (EU-funded, concluded in 2009). The impact of this group is mainly limited, however, to the activities of the group's leader. There has also been cooperation with international colleagues since 2009 through networks, conferences, publications and research applications. Nationally, a network for research on education and religion has been initiated that is partly from Stavanger. From 2013, participation in the German state-funded ReDi project (Germany, England, Sweden and Norway) has continued to produce research on interreligious relations as well as education and religion.

Impact on teaching

Humanities at the Faculty of Arts and Education is integrated in several teacher education programmes covering early childhood to secondary school. UiS has a 90 ECTS BA programme in Religious Studies. Predominantly engaged in teacher education and less in original research in religion(s), the institution has to address the challenge of providing (advanced) students with academic skills necessary for research. Moreover, the BA programme will probably not be continued because the university and faculty administration are not convinced of the feasibility of the Religion programme at UiS.

It is not sufficiently clear whether and to what extent the PhD students at UiS enrolled in 'Educational Sciences and Literacy Studies' participate in the work of the Research Area Programmes.

Other societal impact

The impact case documented is the REDCo (Religion, Education, Dialogue, Conflict) project, an EU-funded project carried out at various universities, dedicated to enhancing learning on religious diversity and religious conflicts. This programme terminated in 2009. Several related publications (though not in leading journals) are documented. The significance of the whole project is well

attested, and UiS contributed to it with three PhD projects and a number of publications. It is difficult to evaluate whether UiS's contribution to REDCo has resulted in policy recommendations.

Overall assessment

The overall assessment of this research area is good. The strongest part of UiS's research on the Academic Study of Religion deals with religious diversity and conflict as an essential part of teacher education. In this area, the academic environment is supportive. However, given the lack of prioritisation of Religion, both in research and teaching, there are serious issues as regards the feasibility of the current (already small) programmes. UiS's strong focus on educational studies and literacy studies will probably result in the termination of research on Religion at a nationally and internationally competitive level.

Feedback

Given the information provided, research activities in Religion at UiS seem to co-exist predominantly as random fields of researchers' expertise. Developing a common strategy, i.e. demonstrating common goals of the 'diversity' focus and the others on religion and health and religious texts, would enhance and advance the scientific quality of the whole area.

There are serious concerns about whether the field of Religious Studies can maintain its level of performance without explicit support from the administration.

3.10 The Arctic University of Norway: Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education (UiTHSL)

The humanistic disciplines at the Arctic University of Norway (UiT) are part of a broad and multidisciplinary faculty, the Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education (UiTHSL). The faculty, the university's second largest, is spread across three campuses. According to the institutional self-assessment, the total expenditure of UiTHSL within the Humanities increased from NOK 136 million (2013) to NOK 140 million (2015). The share of external funding of the total expenditure decreased, however, from 18% to 13% in the same period. The RCN is the most important source of external funding, followed by other public Norwegian sources.

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, eleven researchers were listed for HUMEVAL. The following data were submitted by the institution: one research group (INREL), one impact case study and one research area publication. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

According to the self-assessment, the faculty does not have a separate strategy for individual disciplines or academic communities. It is therefore difficult to identify the administrative responsibilities and leadership that structure relations between the faculty, research groups and departments.

The faculty has a stronger emphasis on the Academic Study of Religion than on theological research and teaching, although HSL also supports research focus areas within Theology. HSL's strategy is in line with the overall goal of the university to strengthen its Arctic profile, which is evident from the research group and from the impact case submitted to HUMEVAL. Research at HSL comprises a broad methodological and theoretical spectrum (sociology of religion, history of religion, anthropology of religion, church history, systematic theology/philosophy) and maintains a strong focus on Northern Norwegian/Sámi and indigenous studies.

Judging from the evaluation of the research group INREL within the Academic Study of Religion, this group at least has a clear, ambitious, but feasible research strategy. This group makes good use of external research funding, assisted by the faculty, and it pursues publication strategies and international research collaboration that are likely to facilitate high academic quality.

Resources

The faculty has a large research infrastructure within History, Sámi, Russian and English linguistics. The strategic establishment of research groups and focused research profiles has been beneficial for the development of the faculty. According to the self-assessment, the purpose of the new model is to 'stimulate publication, co-authoring, and increase external funding'. However, the SWOT analysis lists the acquisition of external funding as a weakness, which raises the question of how strong the basis for the new model is at this point. The initiatives need to be maintained if they are to bear more fruit in the years ahead.

The balance between teaching and research in the faculty – with an administrative workload of no more than 5% for researchers – is beneficial to research and in line with international standards. This is also true of the active sabbatical policy, which provides extra time for research.

The research group INREL has been funded by FRIPRO, which had a very good impact on the development of this unit.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the eleven researchers at UiTHSL reached 139 publication points – 64% of them had at least four publication points, while 9% had no publication points; 48% of the publications were at Level 2, 71% in English and 61% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

Overall, the quality of research is very good. The work of the submitted research group is of excellent quality and the productivity is good, but it is difficult to evaluate the quantity and quality of the production as regards the area of Theology.

Publications in Religious Studies contribute to advancing the state of the art and make good use of interdisciplinary approaches, where these are relevant. However, despite close working relations within the same faculty, interdisciplinarity is not well developed. One would expect, for instance, that staff from other departments (e.g. Social Sciences) would be involved in the research groups.

Recruitment and training

All academic positions are advertised internationally. Employees are encouraged to conduct research abroad. Employees who are awarded R&D terms can obtain funding for their stays abroad. There are similar support systems for PhD students and postdoctoral fellows. Every year, a group of about ten academic staff and ten PhD students at the faculty benefits from these support systems.

The number of PhD students in the field of Theology and Religion is very small, with just one or two in recent years.

The institution has signed the European Charter & Code for Researchers.

Networking

International research collaboration primarily takes place through the projects supported by the RCN and other similar sources, but also through the individual efforts of staff members.

The faculty has a very favourable academic sabbatical system. Academic staff are expected to spend their sabbatical at an institution outside Norway, and the faculty has established its own support system for spending time abroad. In addition, the faculty finances five international adjunct professor positions. The purpose of this arrangement is to link the faculty's academic communities to reputable communities abroad.

As can be seen from the assessment of the research group INREL, the area of Religious Studies makes very good use of collaboration, nationally and internationally, to advance its strategy and produce high-quality and relevant research. Researchers are linked to relevant networks. The involvement of researchers from abroad is well-supported by the institution and it provides additional critical mass for researchers.

Impact on teaching

BA students are generally not involved in research projects. At the MA level, students' research can be funded when it is linked to a research group. Most PhD students at the faculty are affiliated to a research group or, through external funding, to a larger research project.

UiTHSL currently requires the departments to emphasise in their teaching how research and teaching are connected, for example by organising research workshops for BA students.

In the case of INREL, the broader field of Religious Studies has integrated the study of indigenous religions in the teaching programme. There is less information about other areas, but the link between teaching and research is adequate for the sector.

Other societal impact

One impact case looks at 'Local identity-building in light of the influence of religious traditions' and presents research, publications and lectures (for academic and non-academic audiences) with special attention being devoted to Sámi and Norwegian religion and culture, including Laestadianism. The case goes beyond the dissemination of knowledge about the local and national heritage and addresses processes of identity formation in a wider context. It thereby illustrates some societal impact. However, the evidence is quite vague because the documentation, for instance, lists lectures, but does not provide any information about the actual impact of the lectures.

Overall assessment

The overall assessment of this research area is very good. The area of Religious Studies is excellent, which has a lot to do with the research group INREL, a group that must be classified as nationally and internationally leading. There is less information about the area of Theology, however, and the group of researchers is too small to arrive at a well-argued assessment. The institution's decision to formulate a clear profile as an Arctic University with a strong link between the Humanities and the Social Sciences has proven very successful. The overall strategy is translated into concrete programmatic measures without individual scholars losing their freedom to develop their own lines of research.

Feedback

While the research area is very good and has provided the framework for establishing an excellent research group, it is recommended to clarify responsibilities between faculty, departments and research groups. The relationship between the Academic Study of Religion and Theology also needs to be addressed. Finally, it would be useful to award more PhD positions to ensure research-related recruitment, development and continuity.

3.11 University of Agder (UiA): Faculty of Humanities and Education (FHE)

The Faculty of Humanities and Education (FHE) at the University of Agder (UiA) has four departments under which all study programmes are organised. According to the institutional self-assessment, the total expenditure of the Faculty of Humanities and Education decreased from NOK 38.6 million (2013) to NOK 32.9 million (2015). The share of external funding of the total expenditure increased, however, from 7.4% to 12.2% in the same period. The RCN is the most important source of external funding, followed by private Norwegian sources. Moreover, a small share of the external funding comes from other public Norwegian sources (NOK 3.5 million from 2013–2015).

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, 18 researchers were listed for HUMEVAL. The following data were submitted by the institution: two research groups (Aestheticizing Religion [RESEP] and Ethics & Society), one impact case study and one research area publication. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

There are very good strategic plans in place at FHE. The faculty aims to gradually improve its participation rate in Horizon 2020, and staff members are encouraged to sign up as evaluators in relevant programmes, to take part in consortia and to join external project applications. The faculty also pays close attention to programmes within the RCN, particularly to SAMKUL and FRIHUMSAM. The faculty offers professors the possibility of taking one month off to develop an application; staff members can also apply to the heads of department for time to develop an idea, and there is decent administrative support for setting up budgets etc.

The Faculty Board is responsible for implementing a gender equality plan for each management period. This plan includes moderate gender quotas for advertised positions (if candidates from the under-represented gender are equally suitable for the position). The introduction of a Centre for Gender Equality that operates at a high administrative level between the Faculty Director and Dean is an important step. The self-assessment does not specify, however, what the work of the centre will include. It is also not clear whether this centre will be linked to a broader diversity office, which would also include goals such as internationalisation.

Resources

The University Library in Agder is an active organiser of research and education at UiA. This is ensured via a book collection containing over 300,000 titles, 20,000 periodicals and a specialist librarian for each department. During the period under evaluation, the institution also faced financial challenges that made it difficult to keep up the acquisition of books and journals. If the institution wants to achieve its ambitious goals, it will have to make sure that the basis for its research will be continued.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the 18 researchers in UiA's Faculty of Humanities and Education reached 153 publication points – 72% of them had at least four publication points, while 11% had no publication points; 19% of the publications were at Level 2, 42% in English and 42% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

With an average for allocated research time of 30% (ranging from 10% to about 50%), it is hard for the research area to compete with top research nationally and internationally. Nevertheless, the research output is good and it almost matches the average at Norwegian universities (though perhaps not internationally). A strong aspect of the programme is its link to teacher education and societal partners. Unfortunately, research output is only documented in Biblical Studies, and it is more difficult to assess the second area, Empirical Research on Religion in Current Society.

Recruitment and training

The heads of department decide the allocation of research time to each scientific staff member, taking into consideration the staff member's research ambitions and potential for career development. Staff members also have an opportunity to apply for research stays abroad. The faculty sets a target each year for the percentage of staff with scientific competence at associate professor or professor level.

Researchers are to a large extent recruited from other academic institutions in Norway, but international recruitment is (slowly) increasing. PhD students and postdocs only rarely spend time abroad, and, if they do, it is usually only for a few weeks. PhD students have so far not been offered information about career opportunities outside academia.

The use of annual performance interviews with all staff members, as well as other initiatives in the future, seems to suggest that there is a plan in place, but its concretisation is pending. The fact that UiA as a new university has a higher ratio of students to staff members, less time allocated for research, and a higher administrative load makes it difficult to attract top researchers nationally and internationally to work at FHE.

UiA is currently at the fourth stage of the implementation of the European Charter & Code for Researchers.

Networking

The faculty has a number of financial support schemes to enhance networking activities. This has contributed to research collaborations at the national and international level, but also in the region, particularly with Kristiansand hospital and with kindergartens and schools.

The research area has a strong network within Norway, mainly with societal partners. However, almost all staff members are Norwegian, and there is no significant international network. This means that the research at FHE runs the risk of being isolated, which also limits the chances of obtaining research grants at the EU and other international levels.

Impact on teaching

There is increased awareness at FHE of the importance of involving students in research and research-related work. This applies at both the BA and MA level. BA theses have been introduced in the majority of BA programmes at the faculty. Worth the equivalent of 60 credits, most MA theses are clearly linked to research. Students frequently write theses within their supervisor's research field. In some cases, MA students are affiliated to research groups or research projects.

The greatest challenge is the lack of correlation between teaching programmes and the expertise of staff members. The content of the teaching programmes is governed by many considerations that are not research-driven. This means that staff members can only randomly integrate their research with the teaching programmes. Moreover, research at FHE is often highly specialised, i.e. it only

covers a narrow part of the programme. The degree of specialisation also means that the research, when it relates to study programmes, can appear to be too advanced for the students.

FHE has BA, MA and PhD programmes in the area of 'Religion, Ethics, and Society', which seem to connect better with empirical research with a regional focus (as described in the impact case).

Other societal impact

FHE works together with societal partners and is able to demonstrate its relevance to a broader audience. The impact is limited to Southern Norway, however, with some outreach at the national level, but not internationally. The impact case illustrates that the research area has the potential to contribute on a high level to international research activities in the future. The case emphasises the (high) academic dissemination in particular, which is not exactly the impact measured here. There are other forms of impact, however, that document the societal relevance of this work.

Overall assessment

The overall impression of FHE is good. The research area has achieved a lot since the University of Agder was founded in 2007. It has established itself as an important player in the Norwegian academic landscape, and it functions as a regional institution for the education of teachers. Establishing itself as a research institute with international recognition is much more difficult; success in this regard will depend (among other factors) on whether FHE will be able to acquire more external funding.

Many activities mentioned in the self-assessment have yet to be initiated and developed. While the plans are certainly reasonable and adequate, their successful implementation remains to be seen.

Feedback

To make the research (and teaching) at FHE feasible in the future, and to establish the research area more firmly nationally and internationally, it seems important to enhance the international outreach of research at FHE. An active internationalisation policy is important in this context, as well as an attempt to secure research time for staff members.

3.12 NLA University College (NLA)

NLA University College is a private university college offering studies in a variety of areas from four different campuses in Bergen, Oslo and Kristiansand. Research and development is carried out through the different departments and within the Humanities. NLA supports research and offers studies in a wide range of research areas. According to the institutional self-assessment, NLA's total expenditure increased from NOK 171.2 million (2013) to NOK 190.6 million (2015). The share of external funding of the total expenditure also increased from 2.8% to 4.4% in the same period. The only sources of external funding are public Norwegian sources (RCN not included).

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, 25 researchers were listed for HUMEVAL across nine research groups (Theology & Spirituality, Hallesby, Religion & Culture, Religion & Music, Christian Private Schools, Rhetoric & Leadership, Interdisciplinary Leadership, Youth Ministry, and Text meets Text). No self-assessments for research groups were submitted. The institution submitted two research area publications but no impact case studies. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

NLA does not currently have any research group that would meet the standards for HUMEVAL. For this institution, the term 'research group' means at least four individuals, and the leader should as a minimum have a PhD and preferably be a professor (many employees at NLA do not have a PhD). Judged on these criteria, NLA has perhaps 12–15 small research groups. Some of them have been formed recently. Some of the groups are expected to merge with each other to form more stable units, but there is no strategic plan in place to facilitate this, apart from a grant of NOK 0.5 million to invest in research groups.

The first measures have been taken towards achieving these goals, although it remains to be seen whether a postgraduate programme will be possible and realistic. This will depend on an increase in publications with top publishers, attracting excellent researchers and allocating enough research time to them (the average percentage of time for research is currently about 35% in the area of Religion and Theology). None of these steps seem to be easy to achieve in the current situation.

NLA has few policy documents concerning Research & Development or formal processes for the implementation of national or international research policy at the institutional level. The institution presents this as an intended strategy in order not to over-administer research engagements. However, this can also be perceived as a lack of professional administration. Moreover, the goals formulated in the self-assessment are not linked to concrete strategic measures for internationalisation, professionalisation of research and the acquisition of external funding.

NLA's organisational structure is quite complex, given the large number of underlying religious organisations and the existence of four campuses in the country. It is unclear how the institution organises this diversity and how it guarantees a smooth workflow and administration. An increase in research administration staff is needed and in preparation.

Resources

The institution's research infrastructure primarily consists of standard equipment such as libraries, buildings and offices. There have been projects aimed at establishing collections of historical sources for the study of lay Christian movements in Norway and the legacy of Hans Nielsen Hauge. However, they are not in a complete, publically accessible state.

The institution is almost entirely dependent on state funding. The few small additional funds are of a regional nature and linked to the mission of NLA. The documentation indicates that there is no clear and separate calculation available of research and development costs and funding. The expenditure on the area of Religion and Theology is approx. NOK 35 million or about 19% of its total expenditure.

Questions can be raised about the lack of steering of research and development structures. In relation to this issue, the self-assessment simply notes that 'This is part of an intended strategy in order to not over-administrate research engagement'.

Most of the resources are used for teaching-related activities, and research results are translated into teaching programmes on a regular basis.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the 25 researchers at NLA reached 95 publication points – 36% of them had at least four publication points, while 28% had no publication points; 16% of the publications were at Level 2, 31% in English and 56% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English, and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

Since the limited research at NLA is mainly linked to the core activity of the institution (professional teaching and education), the research output and amount of publications do not match national or international standards. There is some good (and very good) research being published, but these publications are written by a few individuals and they are not representative of the overall work of and collaboration with the research area.

Recruitment and training

NLA does not have a PhD programme of its own. With regard to recruitment, hiring scholars from other institutions and hiring people who join the academy after a shorter or longer career in a profession are both viable options. Recruitment from abroad is mostly to professor II positions connected to concrete scholarly needs and the development of study programmes.

NLA encourages PhD candidates employed at the institution to spend time abroad. However, few candidates make use of these opportunities, especially as regards longer stays (whole terms or years), and this number has recently further decreased.

The self-assessment does not specify any training for staff members (from PhD to associate professor) that the institution offers, or measures that would professionalise the search for new staff members.

Networking

Because of the structure of the organisation, NLA offers opportunities for internal collaboration across faculties. For instance, in the BA in Practical Theology and Leadership at campus Sandviken, Bergen (the degree is also planned in Oslo from 2017), different fields collaborate on research and teaching, in this case Pedagogy (religious education), Theology, and Leadership Studies. The Media Department in Kristiansand brings together research and teaching in the fields of media, communication, Christian worldview and apologetics.

NLA is involved in international research collaboration primarily at the individual researcher or research group level, and primarily in the fields of Theology and Pedagogy. Through exchange programmes such as Erasmus, through institutional exchange agreements and through individual contacts, researchers from NLA spend time at institutions abroad. Individual researchers participate in international networks or organisations.

Impact on teaching

The interplay between research and teaching at NLA generally works well. Many of the study programmes have more or less directly connected research groups for their subjects. Because of the relatively small size of the fields, researchers also often participate in research groups based at other institutions.

Student opportunities to engage in research are mostly provided at MA level, especially in connection with the MA thesis and its supervision process. There is a potential, however, for more student contributions to the research done by the research groups.

Other societal impact

The research area did not submit a case to illustrate its societal impact. Nor has NLA developed indicators for valorisation and impact measurement.

Given its background in Christian organisations, a direct impact on Christian communities is part of NLA's vision. It can be assumed that there is some relevant impact on the policies of the Church of Norway, but international outreach seems to be absent.

Overall assessment

NLA is a relevant player in the field of Christian education, the Church of Norway and its link to academic research. Although the research area is closely connected to a few universities, research activities and research output are weak and limited to a few individual researchers who operate under difficult research conditions. The research groups at NLA are small and do not have any significant international network and outreach. It is problematic that professional coordination between the various faculties and campuses is underdeveloped and that there are no strategic plans in place to improve the quality of research.

Feedback

To respond to the weaknesses and threats indicated in the self-assessment, and in light of the above assessment, it seems advisable to explore the following measures: (1) Formulate clear visions and goals for quality of research, internationalisation, gender and diversity policy, protection of research time for staff members etc.; these visions should also include Key Performance Indicators; (2) develop a (better) plan for cooperation and monitoring of the various parts of the institution; (3) given the denominational context of most of the research at NLA, the quality of research (output and acquisition of external funding) could be improved by intensifying collaboration with public universities.

3.13 Norwegian School of Theology (MF)

Established in 1907, the Norwegian School of Theology (MF) has been the main educator of clergy for the Church of Norway since the 1920s. Today, MF offers a full teachers education programme at MA level and several BA and MA programmes, as well as PhD programmes in a range of disciplines within Theology and Religious Studies. According to the institutional self-assessment, MF's total expenditure increased from NOK 92 million (2013) to NOK 102 million (2016). The share of external funding of the total expenditure increased from 5.2% to 13.9% in the same period. Most of the external funding comes from private Norwegian sources.

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, 54 researchers were listed for HUMEVAL. The following data were submitted by the institution: three research groups (LETRA, RELPSYK and Tracing the Jerusalem Code), one impact case study and three research area publications. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

With its experience and current activities, MF is one of the major theological institutions in Norway, working at the interface between university and the Church of Norway. The institution is well-staffed and is thus perfectly able to provide training for a significant number of undergraduate and PhD students. Research facilities are very well-maintained, particularly the library. The long-term strategy has for several years been to clearly signal the inclusion of interdenominational, interdisciplinary and otherwise innovative approaches. This effort is reflected in the newly hired staff – who also improve the gender balance – and the strong effort put into applying for research grants at the international level. However, the school's traditional background is still rather dominant, which means that the innovative strategies need to be pursued further in order to become sustainable.

Resources

Compared to other national institutions, MF has a large library of theological works, with approx. 80,000 volumes and 700 journals in the field of Theology and Religious Studies. In addition, MF has special collections in the fields of Religious Education (*Religionspedagogikk*), Qumran literature and hymnals. MF has a large collection of letters and documents from 19th-century Norwegian church history (Heggtveit's Collection), which is of great relevance to historical research into that period. There is also a large collection of reference works and lexica in Theology. The holdings include the Egede Library, which has a special collection in the area of mission and new religious movements.

Despite financial constraints, the library is endeavouring to acquire more material related to Social Sciences, including Psychology. This has to do with the changing profile of MF, as well as with the need of scholars in this field to have easier access to such material.

There are good opportunities for exchanges of material with other institutions, and MF has four librarians who are responsible for developing the collections.

In 2009, MF initiated the establishment of an interdisciplinary research school focusing on empirical studies, called Religion, Values and Society (RVS). It aims to facilitate research cooperation among various research institutions in Norway. By the end of 2015, this school had produced a significant number of doctoral theses, and had attracted increasing attention internationally. In 2016, RVS received a large endowment from the RCN to become a National Research School and expanded its cooperation with two Swedish universities and with Boston University. It is anticipated that this research school will have a substantial impact on the research profile of MF in the years ahead.

Another research school initiative with MF as a partner, also funded by the RCN as a National Research School, focuses on normative texts. This means that two of the main research areas are supported by interdisciplinary research schools with national and international projects.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the 54 researchers at MF reached 417 publication points – 67% of them had at least four publication points, while 7% had no publication points; 17% of the publications were at Level 2, 52% in English and 57% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

In 2011, the institution started to change its research structure by extending the disciplinary research to research areas. Thus, MF is aware of the need to increase its international and interdisciplinary state-of-the-art research, e.g. by strengthening research in ‘hyphen’-fields. The area of Religion and Theology is very well represented in international research, has had several major publications with international publishers, and is one of the most innovative research units in Europe (e.g. in Systematic Theology); its research output is less innovative, however, in the exegetical disciplines. There have been comparably few PhD students in 2013–2015, although the number is increasing.

Recruitment and training

Recruitment and training of staff is very well organised at MF. Scholars collaborate with colleagues at other institutions in the fields of History, Philosophy, Law, Cultural Studies, Religious Studies, Sociology, Education etc. Two professors presently also hold positions at other universities/university colleges.

According to MF’s self-assessment, PhD candidates are well-informed about their chances on the job market, also outside academia: 70% end up in higher education, 20% in other parts of the society and 10% are able to start an international career.

As regards career paths, MF has programmes for associate professors and assistant professors to support the continued development of their competence. These programmes have led to an increase in promotions to higher positions and to an overall awareness of the importance of developing competence in various fields of academic work.

It adds to the positive evaluation that MF is working actively towards a more balanced workforce. Presently, about 60% of PhD students and postdocs are women. During the last five years, five female associate professors and four female full professors have been appointed. Currently, about 25% of permanent teaching staff members are women.

MF has signed the European Charter & Code for Researchers.

Networking

Scholars at MF participate in different international research groups and initiatives. Some of them have been members of steering committees for research programmes in other countries, such as the Religion and Society programme in the UK. Since the establishment of the doctoral programme in 1990, there has been increasing emphasis on international exposure of the research carried out at MF, which is visible, for example through the presence of younger MF scholars at the American Academy of Religion, the Society of Biblical Literature and similar organisations.

MF is part of the international Global Network on Theology and Religious Studies Institutions. This network offers PhD students easy access to other scholarly institutions in different parts of the world. Some, but not all, doctoral students make use of these opportunities.

Most professors on sabbatical leave spend time at institutions abroad. Researchers have visited universities and other research institutions in Europe and the USA, and others have visited institutions in Africa or China. Some of these institutional contacts have led to more regular visits, cooperation and exchanges, also including PhD students.

As for collaboration with non-academic partners, MF has close ties to different churches and to teachers' organisations. MF also cooperates with a number of hospitals and the Institute for Pastoral Counselling at Modum Bad.

Impact on teaching

All students are expected to carry out some research in preparation for their BA and MA theses. At the MA level, this is required. The results of students' MA theses have sometimes been published in scholarly journals. The existence of several research schools ensures a high impact on teaching programmes. The research group 'Tracing the Jerusalem Code' will develop an MA programme in the near future.

Other societal impact

MF graduates contribute to higher education and other parts of society, including the professional staff of the Church of Norway. Due to the strengthening of their international and interdisciplinary training, graduates and PhD students will certainly have a high impact on Norwegian society. The case on ethics and professional practice that MF submitted is well-documented and shows a high level of societal impact.

Overall assessment

The overall assessment is very good because of the clearly visible and already successful strategies of opening up the formerly rather traditional institution to challenging and innovative fields of research and training, which has proven successful in some of the disciplines involved. It is clear that MF is not only a school for Theology. It is perhaps the institution with the most diversified programme in religious education in Norway. There are strategies in place to further enhance the quality of research and the opportunities offered to talented staff members.

Feedback

MF should continue in the direction set out in its current strategic plan. The research groups are functioning at a very high level (particularly 'Tracing the Jerusalem Code') and should be made sustainable. Opening up the institution's research profile to the pluralistic landscape of Religion and Theology, both in Norway and abroad, will further enhance the quality and the outreach of MF's research activities. Further effort is needed to improve the gender balance and the recruitment of internationally competitive PhD students.

3.14 Misjonshøgskolen, School of Mission and Theology (MHS)

On 1 January 2016, the School of Mission and Theology (MHS) merged with Diakonhjemmet University College (DHS), Betanien University College and Haraldsplass University College to become VID Specialized University. MHS was a mono-faculty institution with four sections in the Department of Education and Research, each consisting of three to five faculty members. These sections were Biblical Sciences, Systematic Theology & Church History, Theology of Mission & Practical Theology and Religious & Cultural Studies. According to the institutional self-assessment, the expenditure for research related to this panel MHS increased from NOK 17.6 million (2013) to NOK 18.7 million (2015). The external funding also increased from NOK 3.2 million to NOK 4.9 million in the same period. Private Norwegian sources are the most important sources of external funding, followed by funding from the RCN. Some modest funding from other public Norwegian sources is also documented.

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, 25 researchers were listed for HUMEVAL. The following data were submitted by the institution: one research group (Religion, Culture and Globalisation), one impact case study and two research area publications. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

It is clear that MHS is in a process of transition. The strategy adopted by the leadership endeavours to accommodate this process and prepare the institution for the challenges that lie ahead. It is difficult to assess at this point whether the measures taken will prove successful in future.

Resources

The most important components of the research infrastructure at MHS are the library and the archive. The library, in addition to a physical collection of 85,000 books and journals, contains the Special Collection 'Lars Dahle's Library'. VID Historical Archives was established in January 2016, and one of its aims is to continue the work of the Mission Archives previously held by MHS in Stavanger. The collections from the organisation Norwegian Mission Society (NMS) are the major holdings, documenting Christian missions overseas since 1842. There are also private papers from more than 300 individuals and families related to NMS. The repository at MHS contains about 2,000 metres of shelves. A large proportion of the material is registered in the ASTA database, which is used by most public and private repositories in Norway. The collections from Lars Vig and Otto Christian Dahl are examples of material with important scientific content from the research fields of Ethnology and Linguistics.

During the last 5–10 years, major investments have been made in storage systems (shelves and accessories) and photographic and scanning equipment. The Mission Archives is a partner in International Mission Photography Archives (IMPA). Donations to IMPA have come from the Getty Foundation, the Mellon Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities of the United States. The website is hosted by USC in Los Angeles. The repository at MHS is in need of an upgrade of its system for control of temperature and humidity.

Resources are very good in general, including grants from the RCN and private institutions, but the Norwegian government is still the major funding source.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the 25 researchers at MHS reached 181 publication points – 52% of them had at least four publication points, while 36% had no publication points; 30% of the publications were at Level 2, 64% in English and 60% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

Research production is high and good in some specialised areas, but there is no tradition yet for collaborative research and interdisciplinary and state-of-the-art research at the international level. The research group that MHS submitted (Religion, Culture and Globalisation) exemplifies this problem, as well as the issues of transitioning to a new institutional entity after the merger. MHS is aware of these challenges and has a strategy in place to ensure further enhancement.

Recruitment and training

MHS considers itself a 'global node', where mobility and internationalisation are important values. About 30% of students in the PhD programme are recruited internationally. MHS also recruits to a large extent from other institutions in Norway. Many PhD students and postdocs spend time abroad, either doing fieldwork or as visiting scholars. MHS has seven state-funded PhD students and 20–25 PhD students funded by other sources. Together, MHS and DHS have increased the number of PhD students from 39 to 62 in just a few years and expect to have 80–100 PhD students within ten years. Some PhD students fund themselves, often part-time, but they still have to prove that they can work 50%.

Networking

Individual professors at MHS have participated in international and national research projects and structures within their disciplines on an individual basis. MHS has facilitated this by encouraging a global perspective on research engagement and provided benefits in the form of research time, travel budgets and sabbaticals.

In addition, in the period 2011–2015, there was increased focus on international research collaboration, which led to some promising networks (mainly Africa, Germany, the UK and Scandinavia).

As regards collaboration with non-academic partners, MHS cooperates with NMS and other such organisations (Danmission and the Norwegian Lutheran Mission) on a funding scheme for PhD students from partner churches in Africa and Asia. MHS also cooperates with Stavanger University Hospital on the funding of a postdoc position.

Cooperation across faculty boundaries has not been a challenge so far, but this has changed with the merger. VID Specialized University has made it a focus to bridge faculty boundaries in the new institution, with a clear aim of developing innovative research rooted in research environments that have not collaborated closely in the past. This development started some time before the actual merger, and it is regarded as very fruitful and productive. It means, however, that existing research groups – such as Religion, Culture and Globalisation – will perhaps not be continued in future.

These developments underscore the transitional nature of the current situation.

Impact on teaching

Impact on teaching is comparably low at MHS, even though the institution emphasises the importance of linking education and research. It is a challenge to link student-initiated research with the wider academic community of senior researchers at MHS. Attempts have been made to do so,

but stronger measures seem to be required if this is to materialise. Some impact is visible in the areas that are linked to international networking and among staff members who have turned to topics of globalisation, post-colonialism, intercultural theology and related themes.

MHS endeavours to improve the employability of its students. Some study programmes have been changed slightly to suit the job market, and some researchers have developed teaching that has a more relevant societal dimension; this includes the topic of migration, which is an area where MHS is very ambitious at the moment.

Other societal impact

MHS traditionally has a very high impact on society due to its ecclesiastical, diaconal and ethical output. Again, the international focus is of high importance here, as institutions like MHS have been collaborating internationally for decades and can now build on long-term and high-ranking institutional collaborations (e.g. with African churches). This is clearly demonstrated in the impact case study 'Reintegration of Female Child Soldiers in Northern Uganda'.

Overall assessment

The overall assessment is good, and the impression matches the institution's own SWOT analysis. MHS is a traditional academic institution (characterised by individual research projects, no specific interest in group funding, no high-ranking training programmes etc.) that is in a process of transformation in a situation with increasing financial pressure. The strategies employed provide a basis for future development, but need to be extended and enhanced. It is expected that the merger and the formation of VID will benefit the professionalisation efforts and financial sustainability of the institution.

Feedback

The international students and the African research projects are an achievement to be highlighted. On the more critical side, research output needs to be improved, more external funding needs to be achieved and the recruitment of PhD students should be made more sustainable. Other practical education models (dual career, dual education etc.) could be implemented as well.

3.15 Volda University College (HVO)

Volda University College (HVO) is organised in four faculties, of which the Faculty of Humanities and Education is the largest. According to the institutional self-assessment, the total expenditure of the Faculty of Humanities and Education increased from NOK 58.7 million (2013) to NOK 66.2 million (2015). The share of external funding of the total expenditure decreased, however, from 15% to 12% in the same period. The RCN is the most important source of external funding, followed by other public Norwegian sources. Some modest EU funding is documented of around NOK 1 million per year.

Within the research area of Religion and Theology, 13 researchers were listed for HUMEVAL. The institution has submitted one research group (Cultural Encounters) that was evaluated by panel 5 and one impact case study. The evaluation committee interviewed representatives of the institution during the project.

Organisation, leadership and strategy

No specific information was made available to the committee for the field of Religion and Theology. The panel will therefore have to abstain from assessing this aspect.

Resources

With regard to the field of this report, the main resource is the HVO library, which employs ten staff members and supports all subject areas taught at HVO.

There seems to be a close link between the research group on 'Cultural Encounters' and an MA programme with the same name. The self-assessment states that students taking the MA programme have contributed to research within the framework of the research project.

Research production and quality

Between 2011 and 2015, the 13 researchers at HVO reached 72 publication points – 62% of them had at least four publication points, while 0% had no publication points; 1% of the publications were at Level 2, 8% in English and 73% were journal articles (for the Humanities as a whole, the respective figures were 23% at Level 2, 57% in English and 53% in journals; NIFU, 2016).

Besides these general publication figures, no relevant information was provided about the field under review that would make it possible to assess this aspect.

Recruitment and training

The PhD candidates are recruited through externally funded research projects and by advertising positions at HVO. The PhD candidates participate in a PhD forum. HVO offers two (internal) programmes to support PhD candidates: Welfare Research (Study of Professions) and Didactics. The PhD candidates are encouraged to participate in international conferences and networks, and they are also encouraged to apply for funding from HVO in order to be able to spend time at research institutions abroad.

Only two PhD students have graduated in the area over the past four years.

Networking

HVO collaborates with local, national and international institutions, and internationalisation is said to be important to the institution. There is no concrete information about the networks in the field of Religious Studies and Theology, however.

Impact on teaching

There is a close link between the research group on 'Cultural Encounters' and an MA programme with the same name. The MA is also linked to the education of teachers, a core task for a university college. The self-assessment states that students taking the MA programme have contributed to research within the framework of the research project.

Other societal impact

Insufficient information is provided to assess this aspect.

Overall assessment

On the basis of the sparse information provided for this area and the relative marginality of Religious Studies and Theology at HVO, the overall impression is that the research performance is weak. The area of Religious Studies and the researchers within it do not seem to have a strong profile. It would also have been interesting to hear more about their links to research on religious education and the education of teachers.

Feedback

The MA in Cultural Encounters entails elements of specific relevance to the study of religion, as does the research project Ora et Labora. Apart from that, however, there is no evidence of any structural support for the Academic Study of Religion and for Theology.

4 Assessment of Research Groups

4.1 UiBHF - Religions of Late Antiquity

Overall score: 4

Research production and quality: 5

Organisation, leadership, strategy and resources

There have been some administrative changes in the faculty and in departmental structures that have also had an impact on the organisation of this research group. Research is basically carried out as the work of each individual scholar. Notwithstanding the fact that seminars, reading groups and informal contacts help to create some collaboration and discussions, there is no shared project, no common strategy for publications and no leadership in project development. Given the university's policy of recruiting all PhD students and postdoctoral fellows through university-wide competition, and due to the lack of external funding that would allow the recruitment of PhD students, it is very hard to recruit and educate good candidates for PhD and postdoc positions in this research area. With five members (three tenured and two postdocs), the group is very small. There is a good gender balance in the group.

Research production and quality

The quality of the group's publications is excellent. The members of the group are internationally leading in their field. The level of production is outstanding in terms of both the amount of publications and the variety of relevant publication channels (monographs, book chapters and publications in highly ranked peer-reviewed journals).

Recruitment and training

Because there is no common project and no well-defined purpose, the research group has difficulties attracting (international) PhD students and in securing funded PhD positions.

Networking

The group's members are very well-connected internationally and their work is recognised by leading international experts. The quality of the national and Nordic networks can be seen in the foundation of the Nordic Nag Hammadi and Gnosticism Network (2003) and in the funding through NorFA/Nordforsk 2004–2008.

Impact on teaching

The high-quality research has been used in the writing of textbooks and course material. The research group participates at all levels of the teaching programme, but most significantly and relevantly at the graduate and postgraduate levels.

Overall assessment

The quality of the research group members, i.e. of the individual scholars, is very high, but, although the performance of the research group has been excellent in the past, there are concerns regarding

its future development. It is problematic that the last external funding was received for the period 2004–2008. When senior members retire in the near future (two of the five members of the group), the group will face serious sustainability problems.

Feedback

To make the research group feasible in the future, it is advisable to formulate a common project; this would also distinguish the research group from other groups, both at UiB and elsewhere in Norway. Furthermore, clear planning and a clear strategy will be needed when it comes to leadership and the recruitment of new staff, as well as the professionalisation of grant writing.

It might be worthwhile to explore collaboration with other successful research groups in Norway, particularly with the UiOTF New Testament and Early Christianity Group, as this group works on very similar themes and is actively involved in the national graduate school ATTR.

The institution should improve its support for this internationally recognised research group with a view to maintaining Bergen's reputation as a leading research unit for the study of religions in antiquity.

4.2 UiBHF - South Asian Religions

Overall score: 4

Research production and quality: 5

Organisation, leadership, strategy and resources

The group focuses on the study of the religions of South Asia. While this is a relevant area of study, the self-assessment provides little information about specific goals (apart from the production of high-quality publications). For this group, South Asia encompasses the religious traditions emerging in India, but also Zoroastrianism. This makes some sense, as there is an important Parsi community in contemporary India. However, the combination of historical and text-based research with contemporary ethnography with regard to various traditions makes it somewhat difficult to identify a shared research basis (other than the common denominator of being located in South Asia). Although the quality of the research output of its members is undoubtedly very high, there is little information about a common strategy, apart from a focus on individual research activities. There is no sense of leadership or structure. Instead, the focus is on individual work and case-to-case cooperation. Nor does the self-assessment provide evidence of support from the university (apart from a good library and help with grant applications). The gender balance in the group could be improved, but the self-assessment does not address this point at all.

Research production and quality

The quality of the research output is excellent. The core members of the group are well-established scholars with a very good research profile. The field of handbooks, encyclopaedias and edited volumes is especially well covered, which contributes to the visibility of the individual research, although not necessarily of the research group as such.

While the output of monographs is weak for some, others are producing an impressive range of publications. Even some of the PhD candidates have already had good publications.

Recruitment and training

The group includes several PhD students supervised by staff members in the group. There is no clear recruitment strategy apart from the traditional ones (e.g. project funding). Recruitment encourages and attracts international PhD students. The training of PhD students is also more individually based, rather than being organised by the group, the faculty or university.

Networking

The senior members of the group are well connected to scholars nationally and internationally. Research collaboration within the group is more informal, though quite lively. Identifying their research as being politically sensitive, members of the network deliberately refrain from close collaboration with research partners outside academia.

Impact on teaching

All staff members in the group are involved in teaching. The group's theme is relevant to the undergraduate degree and less relevant to MA teaching. The group only has a small number of students working on South Asia, which impedes efforts to establish MA or PhD programmes.

Overall assessment

The research group gives little impression of having a common strategy and the self-assessment even states that the group is based on individual research activities. While this leads to a lack of a coherent research profile, the individual activities produce a high amount of excellent research output.

Feedback

The self-assessment statement is very short (just three pages) and does not provide much information. It is not sufficient to present claims without providing some evidence to support them. Instead of presenting the fact that the group consists of individual research activities as a virtue (rather than a problem), it would seem more appropriate to highlight and strive towards some common activities, such as conferences, research seminars or joint publications.

In order to improve the group's profile and sustainability in future, it would help to develop joint activities among the group members (e.g. research seminar series, conferences, workshops); to develop more support for and mentoring of junior members to help them in their development (e.g. by setting up more formal meetings or a structured programme); and to address the question of how the international activities of the individual members are linked to the theme of the research group.

4.3 UiOTF - Interpreting Practices: Contemporary Theology and Lived Religion

Overall score: 3

Research production and quality: 3

Organisation, leadership, strategy and resources

The research group consists of eleven members, eight from the Faculty of Theology at UiO, one associated with the faculty, and two external (international) members. The self-assessment indicates the aspirations of the group, which was newly formed. The group was established around several

active individual researchers (with senior positions in the faculty), and it reflects these individuals' research interests in various areas of Theology. The self-assessment does not present a special focus of the research group, apart from listing the research areas of its individual members, and its overall area of interest is very broadly defined. While there is no doubt that several of the members have a good to excellent research profile, the common theme of the group is unclear. The self-assessment refers several times to subgroups and sub-projects but provides little information about how they are connected. Nor is there much evidence of leadership, internal structures or common activities. The group seems to be more an umbrella for individual research projects, some of them with good external funding. It is unclear to what extent the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Moreover, the strategy for the future and the common goals of the group are insufficiently worked out.

On the other hand, there are some indications that there is a shared intellectual agenda as regards the direction of the discipline, which unites the group's members. It is also clear that some of the individuals already collaborate, for instance on publications (three submitted chapters were from the same edited volume), which can be interpreted as proof of the existence of a common interest and some synergy.

The group's self-assessment does not mention what type of resources the faculty and the university provide apart from administrative support. The same lack of information applies to the infrastructure and how the group makes use of it. Finally, there is a gender imbalance that is not addressed at all in the self-assessment.

Research production and quality

The quality of the publication output is mixed. The list of articles and book chapters is good, but the number of monographs, in particular from senior members of staff, is below average for the discipline. The publication profiles are also not well balanced; while one individual has an excellent publication record, others are more average, with several articles and book chapters, but no monograph, and often a preponderance of non-peer-reviewed publications.

The quality of the publications is good to excellent. Only one PhD student had not published with an internationally recognised publisher.

Three of the submitted chapters are from the same book and show good collaboration within the group. There is also a good tendency to link Theology to the Social Sciences (e.g. several publications present case studies based on empirical data). However, some work appears to be pursuing complexity without a matching commitment to intellectual clarity.

Recruitment and training

The senior members of staff all supervise a good number of research students. The group offers good training to PhD students and postdocs (e.g. in publication, conference presentation and involvement in research projects). Little information is provided about the mentoring of postdocs who do not come out of the pool of PhD students. National and international mobility seem to be low; it is notable that six of the seven UiO-based staff received their PhDs from UiO, which indicates that the group is, or runs the risk of being, a system that is insufficiently open to wider networks.

Networking

The individuals, in particular the senior members of staff, are internationally well connected. The group also includes two external (international) members, although the extent of their actual involvement remains unclear. The self-assessment does not provide any evidence of conferences or

other network activities that would involve the whole group. Nor is it clear how external academic collaborations have actually strengthened the group's research, although collaboration with non-academic partners has certainly done so. Members of staff are encouraged to bring in external funding in order to ease their teaching load and to allow more time for research. However, there is little information about the support that these staff members receive in return.

Impact on teaching

The self-assessment points out that the research feeds into teaching activities. It also refers to the development of new (non-denominational) study programmes within the faculty, with the involvement of members of the research group, although this predates the formation of the group by some years.

Overall assessment

This unit has the potential to become a very good research group. At the moment, however, it is more of a collection of active researchers affiliated to the faculty. The self-assessment refers several times to subgroups and sub-projects, which shows that a shared underlying identity is insufficiently developed. There are clear indications of collaboration and common interests, but they will have to be worked out and realised.

Feedback

It would help to develop more joint activities involving all members of the group (e.g. research seminar series, conferences, workshops); to strengthen support for and the mentoring of staff at all levels of their careers, encouraging them to formulate focused intellectual agendas and to pursue ambitious publication strategies; to develop international activities in line with the theme of the research group; and to make better use of the resources of the faculty and university. It may be worth considering whether the group's membership is too broad for it to add real value.

4.4 UiOTF - Protestantism

Overall score: 4

Research production and quality: 3

Organisation, leadership, strategy and resources

This is a collaborative, loosely led grouping of researchers working on connected subjects, rather than a tightly focused research group. The overall strategy of the group is not clearly defined. It aims instead to provide a broad arena for tackling a wide subject. Hence the group's strengths and weaknesses are that it appears to be a collection of scholars rather than a focused research community, but those scholars' efforts have been successful in securing external funding, which they have pursued energetically, and have also mobilised resources within the institution to a considerable extent. The group has clearly contributed to the institution's goals in the recent past, but the redefinition of those goals makes this harder to demonstrate at present. The group has a serious problem with gender imbalance (only one of eight members is a woman), which is not addressed at all in the self-assessment.

Research production and quality

The quality of the research output submitted ranges from the excellent to the merely adequate. At its best, this group is producing thoughtful, well-focused, analytical pieces, but there are also more superficial and descriptive works, and many pieces suffer from a poor ability to articulate the significance of their findings, or to engage with wider debates. The result is that the contribution toward advancing the wider discipline is less than it might otherwise have been. Productivity also varies, with some group members being surprisingly slow to produce high-quality output and with a preponderance of book chapters, while others are working at a high level in relation to their career stage.

Recruitment and training

The group appears to be committed to good practice with respect to recruitment and training, and the international networks made available are strong, although mentoring practices are not so clear. Only one of the eight scholars secured a PhD at a different institution, suggesting that the group needs to work harder to bring in high-quality international researchers in the field, and to avoid the perception that graduates of other institutions might be disadvantaged or unwelcome.

Networking

The group is well networked internationally, especially in Germany and North America, but also in the Nordic region. To what extent the group's research agenda has benefitted from or has been shaped by this networking is less clear, but it is at least plain that the structures are present. However, most of the collaboration described remains formal and structural: workshops, conferences and journals that are respectable if not prominent.

Impact on teaching

From the limited information provided, it appears, as one might expect given the subject matter, that the research group's topic is highly relevant to teaching at all levels, and it has clearly helped to produce good PhD students. The evidence provided does not make clear to what extent the group's actual research contributes directly to teaching, or how far it is possible to involve students collaboratively in that research.

Overall assessment

This is a solid group with some internationally outstanding members, but as a group it is not internationally leading. In addition to some excellent work, there is some rather pedestrian material, which does not engage in wider debates or ask big questions to the extent that a group of this size and prominence could be expected to do.

Feedback

The breadth of the group's interests is commendable, and it does not seem advisable to artificially pressure the group into adopting a more narrow focus. However, its subgroups and individual members need to articulate the agenda for and significance of their work more clearly, if they are to have the international impact of which the group ought to be capable. It would be helpful to concentrate attention on smaller numbers of high quality outputs that have the potential to contribute to or to lead major scholarly discussions, and, if necessary, to put in place clearer mentoring and peer support for both junior and senior staff in order to encourage this.

4.5 UiOTF - The New Testament and Early Christianity

Overall score: 5

Research production and quality: 5

Organisation, leadership, strategy and resources

This is a well-defined, well-led and well-organised research group, firmly rooted in the strategic goals of the Faculty of Theology at UiO. The group is successful in obtaining external funds, as well as in recruiting early-career scholars. It has a good gender balance and also a sound balance of members at different stages of their academic careers.

Research production and quality

The research group publishes at the highest level of quality, clearly advancing the state of the art in the discipline. The quantity of output is very high. It makes use of interdisciplinary approaches, which in some studies lie at the heart of the research, such as memory theory, gender studies and intersectionality. (It must be noted, however, that the publications submitted do not provide enough information to verify the methodological claims of using 'new philology', cognitive science and linguistics.)

Recruitment and training

There are good strategies and practices in place to recruit and train new members of the group. Particular mention should be made of the national research school ATTR, which has only recently started, but has received funding from the RCN (2016–2023) and seems to be very promising.

Networking

Research and recruitment are firmly embedded in national and international collaborative networks.

Impact on teaching

On all levels of education, the group makes a relevant contribution to the faculty's educational programme.

Overall assessment

This group belongs at the top of the national academic landscape and has a recognised international position. The research group is well managed and organised; it carries out innovative research and is firmly embedded in the profile and structure of the faculty.

Feedback

The research group has used its resources very well and organises its work in a way that seems to be sustainable in future. National collaboration, particularly on the national graduate school ATTR, is a promising development. At the same time, it will be necessary to adjust research agendas and methods in negotiations with other schools. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the research group in Bergen is working on more or less the same research themes and agendas; either collaboration or a clearer distinction would be advisable.

4.6 UiTHSL - Indigenous Religion(s): Local Grounds, Global Networks (INREL)

Overall score: 5

Research production and quality: 5

Organisation, leadership, strategy and resources

The group is a small but highly creative and productive group that developed from and is closely linked to a research project. The group was initiated by its two core members in 2013. They organised a series of research seminars with external speakers. This initiative developed into a successful grant application, which led to the establishment of the research group in 2015. This bottom-up process, with efforts to include, link to and take the lead at the top of the research area, both in Norway and abroad, has already proved highly effective and has led to impressive results. The group has a clear strategy and sensible goals that are ambitious but achievable. The gender balance of the team is excellent. While the local group is small (with three scholars at UiTHSL), it has attracted first-rate associated members and members from abroad. It is well embedded in the wider faculty and university structure and strategy. It is therefore surprising that an application for a PhD scholarship was unsuccessful at the university. One would expect stronger and more explicit support for this research group from the faculty and university.

Research production and quality

The research output is very good and in many aspects excellent, both in terms of quantity and quality. This is particularly noteworthy because the group is small and newly established. The Brill Handbook will become an important reference work in the field of indigenous religions. The group links the study of the topic to all relevant developments in the field of Religious Studies, while at the same time making relevant contributions to the further development of theories and methods in the Academic Study of Religion.

Recruitment and training

As the group is very new, the number of PhD students is low (just two covered by the grant). After the rejection of a PhD scholarship funded by the university, the group is making good efforts to increase the number of PhD and postdoc positions. While the self-assessment mainly addresses plans for future developments, it demonstrates that good structures are in place for the training of PhD students.

Networking

The group makes very good to excellent use of collaboration, nationally and internationally, to advance its strategy and produce high-quality, relevant research. By including five internationally leading scholars from abroad, the group ensures that PhD students and postdocs will have the best possible platform for incorporation into an international network of scholars.

Impact on teaching

All members of the group are involved in teaching programmes that are influenced by their research expertise. While the self-documentation states that the topic is not highly relevant to undergraduate and graduate teaching, it has some relevance to the wider study programme at the host institution.

Overall assessment

There is no doubt that this is a group of international excellence. The bottom-up development has proven highly effective and has led to an exceptional range of activities and research output. Even though the group is young and still very small, it demonstrates how effective collaboration between a few members can be if it is well organised, clearly focused individually and collectively, highly motivated, and supported by a well-developed infrastructure and research funding.

Feedback

The self-assessment explains very well the process that led to the establishment of the group, and it clearly outlines the group's goals. These goals still have to be achieved and a long-term impact on the subject has yet to be made. To do so, it seems advisable for it to stick to its aims and further develop the individual and collective focus. This will ensure the continuation of output by individual members who advance the collective research scheme. At the same time, the group should further develop the conversation between the Academic Study of Religion in general and the subfield of indigenous religions. This will benefit the theoretical discussion in the international academic field and will strengthen the Academic Study of Religion in Norway. Finally, the group might try to promote the incorporation of its topic and research results into religious education in schools in Norway, thus also enhancing the group's societal and cultural impact.

4.7 UiA - Aestheticizing Religion (RESEP)

Overall score: 2

Research production and quality: 2

Organisation, leadership, strategy and resources

The group is formed around a topic that has gained scholarly attention both nationally and internationally. The topic of aestheticization of religion is also clearly related to the situation in Southern Norway (with the focus on institutionalised Christian religion) and thus responds to a public interest. The group has organised workshops and was able to attract funding for them. It is well embedded in the activities and administrative structures of the institution. There is a decent balance of men and women researchers and all ages and stages of career are represented in the group.

Research production and quality

The research output presented mainly consisted of three edited volumes, which reach a national and a limited international audience. The submitted publications by members of the research group are of mixed quality (the number of publications per member is quite low). A few publications add to the state of the art, while the others are of a very descriptive nature. The activities aimed at reaching out to a broader audience are relevant and support the work of the group.

Recruitment and training

The group has succeeded in hiring one postdoc researcher. Apart from that, there have been no further appointments, and it remains unclear how the group will manage to be feasible strategically in the future. Almost no international collaboration has been established.

Networking

There is decent collaboration with other Norwegian institutions and colleagues, but there are only rudimentary international networks.

Impact on teaching

No teaching programmes have been developed on the basis of the research group's results, but some of the output is used in BA, MA and PhD courses.

Overall assessment

This group organises relevant research activities that link up with the institution's wider research network. The group has some visible impact on Southern Norwegian religious communities as societal partners. Its international significance is limited, though.

Feedback

The research group should try to build a stronger international collaborative network. Aesthetics of religion is a field of research that attracts many scholars internationally, and reaching out to those networks would make the group's activities more visible and sustainable.

4.8 UiA - Ethics and Society

Overall score: 3

Research production and quality: 4

Organisation, leadership, strategy and resources

The group mainly serves the purpose of organising workshops for all members in order to discuss work in progress in preparation for publication. PhD students are invited to participate. The organisation seems to be rather loose and the group only met eight times in five years. The group's leadership mainly confines itself to preparing interdisciplinary meetings of members from Philosophy, Theology, Medicine and Sociology, as well as overseeing the subsequent publications. Although 'ethics and society' is the indicated core theme, publications deal with a wide spectrum of topics. There appears to be no strategy for a more focused goal. Available resources are essentially for tenured personnel at the University of Agder and cooperating national institutions. The group has a serious problem as regards gender balance, which is not addressed in the very short self-assessment statement (of just two pages).

Research production and quality

Several members of the group contribute actively to their field. Some philosophical contributions are very good. There is a certain predilection to focus on ethics in, and for, Norwegian society, and several publications are in Norwegian. However, some publications focus only occasionally on contemporary 'ethics and society', concentrating instead on the philosophy of Anselm, or on early Stoicism, whereas others deal with very concrete normative problems of ethics embedded in society (e.g. democratic procedures of society; response to terrorism; dignity and respect). The group has produced few monographs, and few contributions build on interdisciplinary approaches emerging from the group. The group seems to have somehow shifted its focus – the anthology from 2013 concentrated on ethical perspectives in the field of mental health, which seems insufficiently in line

with its current topic. Hence, the title 'ethics and society' seems to be too unspecific and without clear priorities.

Recruitment and training

The self-assessment lacks any evidence relating to career development practices, apart from the essential workshop meetings and publication efforts related to anthologies. There are few PhD students. Although some researchers, including the group leader, have international partners, the documented activities are almost entirely part of national institutions. Recruitment strategies seem to be absent.

Networking

Networking is confined almost exclusively to national institutions. Relevant research is distributed more through the individual activity of the group's members. A broader impact of the collaboration (apart from the anthologies) is not visible. International collaboration and the international visibility of the network as such are weak.

Impact on teaching

Members of the group are involved in teaching at BA and MA level, but, with respect to the research group's topic, its activities are especially relevant to supervising PhD students. The documentation provided does not allow any assessment to be made of whether the group contributes to the institution's study programmes. Given the heterogeneity of the research foci within the group, the impact will probably be limited in scope.

Overall assessment

Research by group members is in part very good, and some researchers contribute significantly to advancing their fields. However, those researchers would seem to do their work without being embedded in the group. The overall topic is nevertheless very relevant, and group members contribute in general to reflection on ethical problems in contemporary Norwegian society. The group has limited aims, however. So far, no external funds have been raised. It aspires to international cooperation, but this is also largely absent.

Feedback

The group might consider focusing even more on contemporary society, or it should at least demonstrate how the historical and theoretical study of classical philosophical and theological ethics contributes to the group's internal discussions and its outreach. It would be helpful to include more formal PhD training and to draw up a clear training plan containing specific training items. The group's self-assessment emphasises the publication of anthologies. Perhaps research would be more relevant if the group were to aim for more thematically specific joint publications (edited volumes or special issues of journals instead of anthologies), ideally reflecting shared interests that need to be better defined.

4.9 MF - Learning and Knowledge Trajectories in Congregations (LETRA)

Overall score: 3

Research production and quality: 3

Organisation, leadership, strategy and resources

There are strong indications of a coherent and constructive leadership of this group: the number of PhDs successfully completed, the potential for attracting new members and the common development of theories and research ideas. The strategy of placing itself at the interface between practical theology, psychology and sociocultural theories is feasible, as it fits the overall aim of the institution to contribute to a critical, self-reflective, but at the same time close connection to the church as a special denominational part of modern society. The institution offers adequate resources, which are properly used. The group has received considerable funding from the church, although there is little other major external funding so far, and large grant applications are still pending. There is a good gender balance in the group.

Research production and quality

Apart from a few individual works, the quality of the research is on an average level. Even though the group offers interesting contributions to the analysis of processes of learning and knowledge creation in congregations, which is in accordance with the institution's overall aim of reflecting religion as a sociocultural process, the contributions remain average or even below the level of theoretical complexity needed to match state-of-the-art research. The overall vision and objectives, with research topics as a common goal, turn out to have some disadvantages as well, since coherence can lead to redundancy. Most of the articles refer to the special perspective of sociocultural approaches to education, as well as to material perspectives, and thus remain rather narrowly focused. The productivity is on an average level in relation to age and research experience. The group has contributed to many ongoing debates through its specific potential for interacting with traditional denominational settings, often taking a critical stance towards conservative denominational tendencies. As a group, however, it does not advance the state-of-the-art research at an outstanding theoretical level. The current effort to increase the potential for highly competitive applications and output by hiring very promising staff members may change that picture in future.

Recruitment and training

The group appears to be committed to good practice in this area, and the international networks that the group provides for its members are used successfully. PhD projects have been finished in good time, so that adequate mentoring seems to be offered. The international mobility of early-career researchers is high, but, since research is conducted in close interaction with the Norwegian Church and its practitioners, the focus remains national. Given the limited number of current PhD projects and the fact that there is no group member under the age of 40, the future development and feasibility of the group need to be addressed.

Networking

The group's major networks are in Boston, Claremont and Princeton, each of them representing a strong theological unit in its own way. Especially for the (few) younger researchers, the group offers many opportunities for short- and long-term research abroad.

Impact on teaching

From the limited information provided, it can only be guessed that the research carried out feeds into teaching programmes and is attractive for graduate students.

Overall assessment

The group's overall tendency to link academic research to work with practitioners in the respective denominational fields leads to a clear national and denominational focus, also because there is a special obligation to publish in Norwegian. However, the group has defined steps – theoretical work and the preparation of research grant proposals – to contribute to processes aimed at reforming traditional theological and denominational ways of thinking. Understanding religion as hybrid, tool-mediated interaction, instead of understanding it as practices of belief, may not be completely new in Theology and Religious Studies, but critical reflection on more traditional understandings of Theology certainly has innovative potential.

Feedback

The group's close connection to church practitioners and their institutional affiliation offers an opportunity to contribute to creative and innovative processes in these denominational congregations, as well as in segments of society that are more broadly interested in religion. However, the group should strive for a much broader theoretical frame of research, for much higher precision and complexity in its analyses and for an increase in research output.

4.10 DHS - Psychology of Religion

Overall score: 3

Research production and quality: 2

Organisation, leadership, strategy and resources

The group mainly portrays itself as a platform for cooperation on research projects and as a forum for presentation and discussion – especially for PhD students – that meets on a monthly basis. The group has a clear focus on positive and negative psychological functions of religion in the therapeutic field, not on the psychology of religion proper. This is well represented by the group leader's theological interest in proving positive effects of religiosity, rituals and spiritual coping on end-of-life care, public health, disaster therapy etc., drawing on qualitative and quantitative data. The information provided does not allow conclusions to be drawn about how the leadership operates. The group as a whole does not follow a specific joint research agenda or strategy. The group scores highly with regard to gender equality. Members of the network publish high-quality publications, but they are more individual activities rather than a direct outcome of network activities. There are a number of group activities, however, such as the published handbook of psychology of religion. The institutions, especially MF, are active in PhD supervision, for which considerable external funding has been raised. Moreover, the host institutions offer courses in pastoral care, psychotherapy, spiritual care, nursing etc. that are directly linked to the related research. There is close collaboration between the group and the host institutions, particularly when the research can produce results relating to healthcare techniques that can be integrated in study programmes.

Research production and quality

The quality of the research is difficult to ascertain as a whole. Some articles describe from a normative point of view the psychological effects of 'existential dynamic therapy' or analyse disaster rituals as collective religious rituals; other contributions aim to describe quantitative correlations between, e.g., church attendance and mental health. In general, the contributions of network members attract attention in theology, spiritual care/nursing, and ritual studies. Some are less academic. Psychology of religion in a broader sense is almost absent in the group; 'empirical research' is often understood as relevant to diaconia and pastoral care. The output of monographs and academic papers is rather low.

Recruitment and training

The group is actively engaged in mentoring and training a considerable number of PhD students. Training is based on monthly meetings with presentations. Recruitment strategies are not described. Research recruitment is more of a national outreach. Project funding has seen some success, however, and the group mentions plans to apply for EU funds (which are highly competitive, however).

Networking

The participating institutions are supportive; the fact that the network encompasses hospitals, prisons etc. that provide empirical grounding is an advantage. However, only two institutions grant PhDs. Collaboration includes some other Scandinavian institutions, only one of which grants PhDs. Networks are established at the local and national level, while collaboration in the international field is weak. It is noteworthy, however, that the Norwegian Network of Psychology of Religion (with VID and MF as co-organisers) is hosting the conference of the International Association of Psychology of Religion in 2017.

Impact on teaching

The members of the group are involved in teaching, which is closely linked to the group's research. Psychology of religion, as understood by the group, has an immediate impact on all study programmes or subjects offered (such as family therapy, nursing, social work etc.).

Overall assessment

Though research by group members only occasionally results in very good research that could open up new or original perspectives in the field of psychology of religion, there is a good output in basic qualitative research. Studies aim to demonstrate the importance of religion in the field of individual and public health, without being interested in contributing to methodology or theory of religion(s). In the assessment, it is also taken into account that, nationally and internationally, the field of psychology of religion often has difficulty combining applied work with thorough research activities.

Feedback

Given the group's dominant interest in the health effects of religious practice, the research group might consider renaming itself as 'psychology of religion and health'. This would probably also increase its visibility. The self-documentation stresses the importance of the field to (practical) theology, nursing and health care, but it would be good to point out in which respect the group pursues scholarly and more research-oriented interests. Various aspects of the psychology of religion are only present in a very limited sense. It would be good to qualify and improve relations between the network and other fields and actors, such as university departments of psychology. In this context, the relationship between psychology of religion and Theology should be described more

thoroughly; while the relationship to spiritual health care is now quite evident, the question of how psychology is part of and contributes critically to the Academic Study of Religion in this group should be more thoroughly addressed.

Many publications build directly on the religious field in Norway, reflecting the rather homogeneous Christian tradition, particularly of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. This amounts to a strongly national focus, as can be seen in the disaster-ritual studies. This might limit the studies' broader impact. International cooperation and a more comparative focus might be considered.

It would be advisable to introduce a more formal strategy for how to integrate all of the group's partners in the monthly workshops.

4.11 MF - Tracing the Jerusalem Code

Overall score: 5

Research production and quality: 4

Organisation, leadership, strategy and resources

This is a well-led group with a clear, ambitious and very tightly focused strategy. The director's leadership appears to be central to the entire project. Her conception of it has succeeded in securing the substantial RCN grant that underpins the project. The institution's commitment is plain in the provision of a fully funded PhD scholarship and good infrastructure. Given the group's potential to raise the institution's profile internationally, this seems highly appropriate. The use made of these resources also seems to be well planned, although, given that the project is still in its early stages, this remains to be seen. The group has a good gender balance and its members come from all stages of their academic careers.

Research production and quality

The fact that this project is at an early stage precludes any clear judgment on issues relating to research production and quality. None of the publications submitted relate directly to the project. They do, however, demonstrate that the project leaders, in particular, are carrying out work of good international quality, and in some cases of extraordinary quality and significance. Not all of the publications submitted reach that standard, but the weaker works tend to come from more peripheral members of the group. The levels of productivity appear to fit with what one might expect of scholars with this level of seniority. Many of the publications, especially by the core group, show strong interdisciplinary engagement.

Recruitment and training

When it comes to recruitment and training, everything appears to be thoroughly in order. The PhD students and postdocs are drawn from across the Scandinavian countries, and there is an external PhD student in Germany. Strong plans for international travel for these group members are built into the project. There is little evidence of training and mentoring but what there is appears adequate.

Networking

The group is particularly strong in networking. The project seems to have had international horizons and collaboration built into it from the beginning. There is an excellent international advisory board, and some of its members have already spent periods as visiting scholars in residence. It is not clear

how deep the involvement went with the York-led group in 2014, but the roster of international conferences planned is both ambitious and thoroughly appropriate. The international reach of the core group is evidence of this.

Impact on teaching

The contribution to teaching appears to be minimal at present, although there is a potential for more engagement. The project is claimed to be 'relevant' to BA level teaching, but the self-documentation does not provide any evidence of this. An MA level course is planned, but does not appear to be imminent. It should be said, however, that a tightly focused project of this kind should not, in itself, be expected to have a marked impact on the curriculum.

Overall assessment

This is an internationally leading group whose well-conceived project, strong core team of scholars and resolutely international horizons are a model for how a project of this kind at a small institution can make a major impact.

Feedback

The concerns here focus on the execution and delivery of what is, at present, a well-conceived and ambitious programme, and on the long-term future of the group. It seems important to apply the most rigorous editorial oversight of the projected volumes, which must not be mere conference volumes in which all speakers are entitled to place essays. It is also advisable that the project team and the institution pursue longer-term plans to build on what has begun here. The project itself has a natural lifespan and needs to be wound up once it has been completed, but appropriate continuity based on a reshaped team, perhaps in a more broadly and traditionally defined research group that might be able to shape teaching more effectively, would be a sensible medium-term goal.

4.12 MHS - Religion, Culture and Globalisation

Overall score: 3

Research production and quality: 3

Organisation, leadership, strategy and resources

The group was established in 2012 to facilitate the development of common research interests of staff at two institutions that were to be merged (School of Mission and Theology and the University of Stavanger). The group consists of nine members (all from SMT) and 15 associated members (mainly from UiS). Leadership alternates between a member of staff from SMT and a member from UiS, but little information is provided about the function of the leader. There is a decent balance of male and female staff members. However, the documentation does not include information about the age structure of the group.

While the self-assessment presents a common theme around the topic of globalisation, the research activities are divided into four sub-themes that reflect the previous and current research interests of the nine core members of the research group. External funding is also allocated to individual projects rather than to the research group.

This impression is confirmed as regards the joint research activities, such as seminars, conferences and joint publications, that are highlighted in the self-documentation. However, the CVs and

publications submitted seem to represent individual research activities that are more or less closely linked to the common theme and the four different thematic subgroups. The links between the publications and the common theme(s) are sometimes hard to see.

Research production and quality

Nine members of the research group have submitted publications, all affiliated to the School of Mission and Theology, and none from UiS. Most of them are senior members of staff with a good publication record. The quality of the submitted publications varies from fair to good and very good. The link to the common theme(s) is not always apparent.

Recruitment and training

While the self-assessment and the list of staff state that the group includes several PhD students, no publications by these members were submitted. Apart from one research fellow, all submitted publications are by professors or postdocs. Recruitment is managed by the central institution and not the research group, although some students receive funding via the research projects of individual members. Training also seems to be linked to individuals rather than to group activities.

Networking

The group was established to strengthen collaboration between the two institutions. National and international networking takes place in the subgroups, which organise conferences, seminars etc.

Impact on teaching

All members teach and the topic of globalisation and religion is said to be highly relevant to all levels of the study programmes of the School of Mission and Theology. No further information or evidence for this is provided.

Overall assessment

The establishment of the research group – to facilitate research collaboration in preparation for a merger of two institutions – is well explained in the self-assessment. However, the evidence submitted along with the self-assessment paints a different picture. The subgroups seem to be divided between the two institutions, with the School of Mission and Theology being mainly active in one subgroup, i.e. the interpretation of classical texts.

Feedback

It would be advisable for the group to develop a strategy that highlights the common theme and enhances the collaboration between members from the two different institutions.

As the self-assessment was very brief (three pages), it did not provide sufficient information to explain how the subgroups are linked to the research group, which members are in which subgroup, and how the subgroups facilitate collaboration across the two institutions and across disciplines.

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6 List of abbreviations used in the reports

Abbreviation	Meaning
AHKR	Archaeology, History, Culture Studies and Religion (UiBHF)
AHO	Oslo School of Architecture and Design
ATH	Ansgar University College and Theological Seminary
ATTR	Authoritative Texts and Their Reception (research school, UiO)
BI	BI Norwegian Business School
BVH	Buskerud and Vestfold University College
CRISTin	Current Research Information System in Norway
DHS	Diakonhjemmet University College
ERC	European Research Council
FHE	Faculty of Humanities and Education (UiA)
FIH	Fjellhaug International University College
FP	EU Framework Programme
FRIHUMSAM	Independent project support (RCN funding scheme)
FRIPRO	RCN's 'bottom-up' funding instrument for investigator-initiated research
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
HERD	Higher Education Expenditure on R&D
HiHm	Hedmark University College
HiL	Lillehammer University College
HiØ	Østfold University College
HiOA	Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences
HiT /TUC	Telemark University College
HUMEVAL	This evaluation of the Humanities in Norway
HVO	Volda University College
IFS	Norwegian Institute for Defence Studies
IKOS	Dept. of Culture Studies and Oriental Languages (UiO)
IMPA	International Mission Photography Archives
INREL	Indigenous Religion(s) – Local Grounds, Global Networks (Research Groups, UiTHSL)
LETRA	(Research group, MF)

LUNA	Faculty of Education and Natural Sciences (HiHm)
MF	Norwegian School of Theology
MHS	School of Mission and Theology
NFS	Norwegian Folklore Archive
NHH	Norwegian School of Economics
NIFU	Nordic Institute for Studies in Innovation, Research and Education
NIKU	Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage Research
NLA	NLA University College
NMH	Norwegian Academy of Music
NMS	Norwegian Mission Society
NOKUT	The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education
NRK	Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation
NTNU	Norwegian University of Science and Technology
NTNUHF	Norwegian University of Science and Technology Faculty of humanities
NTNUMuseum	Norwegian University of Science and Technology University Museum
PluRel	Religion in Pluralistic Societies (research network, UiO)
PRIO	Peace Research Institute, Oslo
RCN	Research Council of Norway
RE	Religious Education
REDCo	Religion, Education, Dialogue, and Conflict (EU funded research project)
REF	UK Research Excellence Framework (a system for performance-based research funding)
RELPSYK	(Research group, MF)
RESA	Religion and Society (study programme, UiOTF)
RESEP	Aestheticizing Religion (Research Group, UiA)
RVS	Religion, Values and Society (Research school, MF)
SAMKUL	Cultural conditions underlying social change (RCN funding programme)
SH/SAMAS	Sámi University of Applied Sciences
SIMS	Centre for the Study of Islam and the Middle East (UiO)
UHR	Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions
UiA	University of Agder
UiB	University of Bergen
UiBHF	University of Bergen Faculty of Humanities

UiBMuseum	University of Bergen University Museum
UiBSV	University of Bergen Faculty of Social Sciences
UiN	Nordland University
UiO	University of Oslo
UiOHF	University of Oslo Faculty of Humanities
UiOMuseum/KHM	University of Oslo Museum of Cultural History
UiOTF	University of Oslo Faculty of Theology
UiS	University of Stavanger
UiSMuseum	University of Stavanger Museum of Archaeology
UiT	The Arctic University of Norway
UiTHSL	The Arctic University of Norway, Faculty of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education
UiTmuseum	The Arctic University of Norway University Museum
UNI	UNI Research (In the case of this evaluation specifically the UNI Research Rokkan Centre)
WoS	Thomson-Reuters Web of Science

7 List of panel members

Chair	von Stuckrad	Kocku	University of Groningen
Secretary	Fridholm	Tobias	Technopolis/Faugert &Co
	Jensen	Tim	University of Southern Denmark
	Richter	Cornelia	University of Bonn
	Ryrie	Alec	University of Durham
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