

**University of Glasgow**

**Academic Standards Committee – Friday 23 May 2014**

**Periodic Subject Review: Report of the Review of Theology and Religious Studies held on 6 March 2014**

**Ms June Cullen, Clerk to the Review Panel**

**Review Panel:**

Professor John Briggs	Clerk of Senate & Vice Principal, Convener
Professor Oliver Davies	Kings College London, External Subject Specialist
Professor Bob Davis	Head of School of Education, Cognate Member
Professor Christine Forde	Senate Assessor
Dr. Cathy Bovill	Senior Lecturer, Learning & Teaching Centre
Mr Oli Coombs	SRC Vice President (Education), Student Representative
Ms June Cullen	Corporate Human Resources, Clerk to the Review Panel

**1 Introduction**

*1.1 Background Information*

- 1.1.1 Theology and Religious Studies has been a subject area at the University since its founding in 1451 and has been incorporated within various different organisational structures over that time period. The subject is currently based in the School of Critical Studies which is one of four Schools in the College of Arts. The other subjects in the School are: English Language; English Literature; and Scottish Literature. The School is spread across multiple locations with Theology and Religious Studies housed in 3 and 4 The Square. The subject has, since 1935, incorporated Trinity College (which provides liaison between the University and the Church of Scotland).
- 1.1.2 The previous internal review took place in 2008 when the subject was the Department of Theology and Religious Studies within what was, prior to the restructuring of the University in 2010, the Faculty of Arts.
- 1.1.3 The Self Evaluation Report (SER) was prepared by Dr Lloyd Ridgeon (Head of Subject), Dr Charles Orzech (Reader), Dr Heather Walton (Senior Lecturer) and Dr Sarah Nicholson (Lecturer), with the assistance of other members of the subject. Consultation was undertaken with: subject staff; Graduate Teaching Assistants; undergraduate students, student representatives, Staff-Student Committees; and the School of Critical Studies (Dr Helen Stoddart, Learning and Teaching; and Professors Nigel Leask and Jeremy Smith the outgoing / incoming Heads of School). Other documentation provided to the Committee included the School of Critical Studies' Learning & Teaching Strategy and workload model.
- 1.1.4 During the visit, the Review Panel met with: Dr Lloyd Ridgeon (Head of Subject), Professor Jeremy Smith (Head of School) and Professor Alice Jenkins, (Dean of Learning and Teaching, College of Arts); 12 other members of staff (including two probationary members of staff and a Lord Kelvin Adam Smith (LKAS) Fellow); five Graduate Teaching Assistants;

and 11 undergraduate students who represented all levels of the subject's provision and students across the provision (MA and BD courses). The Panel found the meetings with staff and students to be open and engaging and from these meetings formed a view of a subject which, despite recent challenges such as the departure of a number of key staff, has a strong community spirit and enthusiasm for building on its dual approach to theology and religious studies.

- 1.1.5 The Panel noted that the subject had made good progress against a number of recommendations in the 2008 Review, such as the development of Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) and enhanced Moodle provision. However, it noted that significant areas such as effective workload modelling; timeliness of student feedback; formal support mechanisms for Graduate Teaching Assistants; effectiveness of Staff-Student Liaison Committee operation; and pursuit of interdisciplinarity outside the subject remained areas for development

## 1.2 Staffing

- 1.2.1 The subject has a total of 13 members of academic staff (12.45 FTE). Following restructuring, administrative support was centralised to a School Administration Office based at 5 University Gardens which removed subject-dedicated administrative staff from 3 and 4 The Square.
- 1.2.2 The subject experienced an unforeseen and acute period of staff re-profiling due to six full-time members of staff leaving in the past three years (four professors, one senior lecturer, one lecturer); given the overall staffing numbers this was significant. This led, for a time, to some areas of weakness in the provision (e.g. Biblical Studies) and the use of multiple lecturers to ensure delivery of courses. The Review Panel **commends** the subject for adopting a strategic approach to staff recruitment during an acute and challenging period of staff restructuring, which reflected a commitment to continuing traditional subjects in theology and to meeting increased student demand for courses in religious studies.
- 1.2.3 The Review Panel recognised the effective leadership provided by the Head of Subject during the period of uncertainty and considered that this leadership had directly contributed to the impressive staff morale. Despite the uncertainty, the subject had maintained a positive relationship with its students who were, in turn, supportive of the subject.

## 1.3 Student numbers for 2013/14

Students	Headcount
Level 1	417
Level 2	150
General degree	3
Honours	61
Undergraduate Total	631
Postgraduate Taught	2
Postgraduate Research*	75

\*(for information only - research is not covered by the Review)

## 1.4 Range of Provision

- 1.4.1 The Review Panel considered the following range of provision offered by the subject area.

## Undergraduate Programmes

- MA honours in Theology and Religious Studies (single honours)
- MA honours in Theology and Religious Studies (joint honours)
- BD honours and general degree / BD (Min) honours and general degree

## Postgraduate Taught

- The subject is currently revising its PGT provision and strategy. No students were recruited for 2013-14 or 2014-15.<sup>1</sup>

1.4.2 The subject also contributes to the three year general Master of Arts degree.

1.4.3 The Panel recognised the challenges imposed on PGT provision due to the sudden change in staffing and **encourages** the subject to progress the re-development of PGT provision which identifies and capitalises on Glasgow's distinctive provision and expertise, and builds on interdisciplinary links across Schools and Colleges.

## 2 Overall aims of the Department's provision and how it supports the University Strategic Plan

2.1.1 The subject's programmes are delivered in a research-led, interdisciplinary environment concerned with the impact of religion in a contemporary global context. The Panel **commends** the strong culture of co-teaching and the collaboration between the dual pathways in the subject which students appear to find compelling. The Panel **recommends** the subject builds on the inherent interdisciplinary nature of theology and religious studies and proactively builds stronger interdisciplinary links across the University through joint courses, joint teaching and joint programmes.

2.1.2 The subject has experience of working beyond the subject and University in its relationship with Trinity College. The subject and staff clearly value the relationship with the Church of Scotland. The SER reported that the Church of Scotland made a financial contribution of £45,000 a year in teaching support grants, as well as other student and staff-related grants, but also offered the possibilities for interchange and partnerships. The financial contribution contributed indirectly to programmes beyond the BD (Min), as staff teaching on the BD (Min) also contribute to other programmes.

2.1.3 In the course of the Review, the Panel formed the view that the subject would benefit from articulating a clearer learning and teaching strategy. This would encourage the subject to reflect on University strategic priorities such as internationalisation and Graduate Attributes (see 3.2.2). The Panel **recommends** that TRS engage effectively with University strategies and strategic priorities, ensuring staff have a strong understanding of University and subject priorities and University wide initiatives so that they can effectively implement them in their teaching programmes.

2.1.4 The Review Panel, guided by the views of the External Subject Specialist, confirms that the programmes offered by the subject remain current and valid in light of developing knowledge and practice in the discipline.

## 3 An Evaluation of the Student Learning Experience

3.1.1 The programme specifications (available on the University web pages) include: programme aims; Intended Learning Outcomes; assessment methods; and reference to QAA Subject Benchmark statements. The Review Panel considered the course specifications to be appropriate in terms of subject benchmarking.

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<sup>1</sup> Two part-time students have continued to be taught and supported in 2013-14

### 3.2 *Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs)*

- 3.2.1 The Panel noted the considerable work done since the last Review in 2008 to articulate and communicate Intended Learning Outcomes to students. The ILOs were discussed in class, provided in the course handbooks, and referenced in feedback and examination preparation sessions. Most courses had a range of commendable ILOs although there was some inconsistency, for example, one course having only one ILO.
- 3.2.2 The Panel explored staff and students' understandings of Graduate Attributes and found that there was a lack of familiarity with the term. Further discussion with staff and students clarified that much valuable development activity related to Graduate Attributes (e.g. presentation skills) was being developed within the subject's provision, but it was not explicitly linked to the University Graduate Attributes Framework. The Panel **recommends** that the subject engage more fully with the Graduate Attributes agenda by reviewing current course and programme information to articulate them more explicitly.

### 3.3 *Assessment, Feedback and Achievement*

- 3.3.1 The Panel identified a varied range of assessment tools for formative and summative assessment in support of student learning. The Review Panel **commends** the broad range of assessment tools used, which include: examinations; essays; presentations; group projects; creating Wikipedia pages; and reflective journaling.
- 3.3.2 The Panel **commends** the subject for the choice provided to students over whether to undertake an examination or extended essay in one of their courses and to be able to set their own essay titles in some Level 3 and 4 courses. The choice of assessment methods was extremely positively received by the students the Panel spoke to. The Panel **encourages** the subject to consider extending the choice of assessment methods to other courses as appropriate.
- 3.3.3 The Panel noted that detailed information on assessment methods is provided in the course catalogue, but students noted it would be useful if it were also in the course handbook.
- 3.3.4 Students commented favourably on the standardised cover sheet used to provide feedback on assessed work which encouraged staff to comment on a broad range of topics. The Panel found, however, that there was considerable variability in the timeliness and level of detail of feedback. The Panel **encourages** the subject to continue to use the standardised feedback cover sheet and **recommends** the subject agrees minimum standards for timeliness and level of detail provided in feedback on assessment.

### 3.4 *Curriculum Design, Development and Content*

- 3.4.1 The SER outlined Glasgow's distinctive approach to theological and religious studies education, particularly offering clear pathways in either theology or religious studies, a focus on the changing religious landscape of Scotland, and (along with Edinburgh) strengths in world religions other than Christianity. The Review Panel **commends** the exemplary breadth of provision which reflects national Scottish priorities and a balanced curriculum attractive to a diverse student body.
- 3.4.2 The Review Panel noted the opportunity to provide a global experience through this approach to delivery of theology and religious studies. The Panel **recommends** that the subject reflects on the distinctive nature and synergies of its dual, cohesive approach to theology and religious studies in articulating an explicitly international curriculum, for example in their programme offerings and their external marketing.

### 3.5 *Student Recruitment*

- 3.5.1 The SER reported successful recruitment of students in Levels 1 and 2 to Theology and Religious Studies. The subject enrolled 417 students onto level 1 courses in 2013-14

reflecting the highest enrolment figures since 2009-10. The subject aims to admit 30 students a year at the Honours level (35 admitted in 2013 -2014).

- 3.5.2 The Head of Subject and the SER outlined various approaches which the subject has taken to improve recruitment. The number of potential recruits has risen in recent years as demonstrated by the increasing numbers attending Open Days at TRS. In the SER, the subject noted that it is exploring revitalising TRS relations with local schools and will hold a School Visit Day in 2014. In the meeting with the Panel, students remarked on the friendliness of TRS staff on the Open Day which had influenced choices. It was considered that the reform of curriculum content appears to have had a positive impact on student recruitment.
- 3.5.3 The SER also noted that recruitment for BD (Min) was challenging with only a handful of students currently studying on the programme; however, this reflected similar difficulties faced by other institutions with similar programmes.
- 3.5.4 Three years ago the subject initiated a new PGT programme in Religion, Theology and Culture as a result of rationalising previous provision; however, low levels of interest made it difficult to sustain. The PGT provision was suspended in 2013-14 due to staffing changes. The subject is considering how to offer a viable programme from 2014-15 within a very competitive PGT environment. (See 1.4.3)

### 3.6 *Student Progression, Retention and Support*

- 3.6.1 In its meeting with the Head of Subject and Head of School, the Review Panel noted the student numbers in Level 1, Level 2 and the number of students progressing to Honours. The Panel noted that Honours numbers had steadily increased from 31 in 2009-10 to 61 in 2013-14 and that Level 1 enrolments had varied from a high of 457 in 2009-10 to a low of 352 in 2012-13 before rising again to 417 in 2013-14. It was explained that Level 1 courses attracted students from a broad range of disciplines who studied theology and religious studies as a third-option, but did not intend to progress to Level 2. The subject also permits second year students in the University to study level 1 theology and religious studies courses meaning they could not progress to Honours. The Panel **encourages** Theology and Religious Studies to undertake greater research into student progression; for example exploring the number of students taking Level 1 in their second year of university study (preventing progression to Honours); reviewing students entering on UCAS code progressing to Honours; re-focusing on Erasmus international exchanges to encourage experience abroad (e.g. change Honours course structures to facilitate).
- 3.6.2 The subject seeks to limit the number of students enrolled on Honours courses to 15 – 20 in order to preserve the effectiveness of seminar style of teaching; a desire which was reflected by the students who met the Panel. The Panel noted that the subject was successfully recruiting to Honours at the level they intended (c. 30 per year) and **commends** innovative initiatives such as the Honours taster day for level 2 students to gain a better understanding of honours options.
- 3.6.3 The University strongly encourages students to undertake internationalisation elements to their studies; however, in its Review, the Panel found that there is a considerable imbalance with significantly more incoming Erasmus students than outgoing. The students meeting with the Panel were aware of Erasmus opportunities though more from communications at the University level than from TRS. Reasons for not taking up these opportunities ranged from lack of mobility (e.g. for mature students with families), financial reasons and the fact that the 'long, thin' course structure at Honours level made it difficult to go away for a semester (though in at least one case TRS had gone to considerable lengths to enable an international experience for a student). Staff members felt it was difficult to persuade students of the benefits and pointed to other issues such as language barriers and that many European institutions teach in very traditional ways that Glasgow has moved away from. Staff also expressed frustration that Glasgow had recently reduced

its number of Erasmus partners. The Panel **recommends** TRS develops innovative ways of encouraging internationalisation of the student experience, including increasing opportunities for outward learning experiences, for example through shorter experiences such as dissertation research visits, and restructuring honours courses structure to facilitate longer exchanges.

- 3.6.4 Students who met with the Panel felt that the subject provided good support for those with physical and learning disabilities. However, views were mixed about the availability of learning resources, including lectures, being available on Moodle - in particular being made available in advance of the lecture. The variable quality of amplification sound systems was also noted by a student who was hard of hearing and so picked courses based on which lecturers that student could hear clearly. The Panel **recommends** that TRS review the timeliness of materials being made accessible on Moodle, especially where this is to support students with a disability, to ensure the approach supports student learning. The TRS building has no wheelchair access and is built over a number of levels; however, the subject has shown willingness to make necessary arrangements and the SER provided an example of provision which had been made to support a student who used a wheelchair.
- 3.6.5 The Panel confirmed that the subject provided a high-level of support for their students but identified that University-wide resources to enhance the student learning experience were not necessarily being broadly promoted (e.g. Academic Writing Centre). The Panel **recommends** TRS reviews the available University-wide resources to ensure that students in Theology and Religious Studies benefit from the broad-range of student learning support mechanisms available beyond the subject.

### 3.7 *The Quality of Learning Opportunities*

- 3.7.1 The SER referred to research-led teaching, co-teaching, and new modes of delivery such as films, podcasts and Moodle. It also referred to: student visits to places of worship; implementation of learning journals; individually chosen research projects. Students valued the variety of teaching methods; however, it was noted that teaching quality varied not only between lecturers, but also between different courses offered by the same lecturer. Students recognised the recent staffing difficulties encountered by TRS and noted that this had impacted on their learning experience e.g. through the large number of different lecturers for one course. In 2008 the Review Panel noted the limited use of Moodle by TRS. The SER and students confirmed that Moodle usage had clearly increased. However, students raised concerns that the quality and comprehensiveness of the materials on Moodle was variable, and not always posted in a timely fashion. The subject is encouraged to consider if there is an opportunity for Moodle to be used for more dynamic forms of learning to enhance classroom discussion and not just as a repository for materials. The Panel **recommends** TRS review the variability reported by students, including the level of engagement with Moodle in each course and standard approaches to referencing, to ensure high standards and high-levels of satisfaction in some areas are replicated across all provision.

### 3.8 *Resources for Learning and Teaching*

#### **Staffing**

- 3.8.1 The SER noted (see also 1.2.2) that six members of staff left TRS in the past three years and while five new appointments have been made, there had been some interim challenges in managing staff resources. The 2008 Review recommended that there should be two members of staff within each field of specialisation in order to provide cover for staffing absences or staffing changes. However, in a small subject with limited resources, this had not been possible. The subject sought to address this at least in part by offering courses taught both by TRS staff and staff from cognate areas of interest, and by encouraging students to pursue interdisciplinary study. As noted in 1.2.2, the Panel

recognised the impact on staff workload brought by staff changes and was impressed by the commitment of staff to working together to offer a broad range of provision and deliver a high quality student experience.

- 3.8.2 The Panel met with two probationary staff and a Lord Kelvin Adam Smith (LKAS) Fellow. The staff were broadly positive of their experience praising the collegiate nature of the subject and reflecting on the importance played by formal and informal mentors. However, probationer staff also noted that the pressures on the subject impacted on their workload, which was exacerbated by the lack of a workload model and limited recognition for the administrative responsibilities the probationary staff had taken on. The Panel **encourages** TRS to review support for probationer staff, including recognition of workload, and provision of formal and informal support.
- 3.8.3 In light of the University's revised approach to supporting early career academics, the probationary staff also expressed concerns about the new Early Career Development Programme and about a lack of clarity around the new contracts of employment, particularly in relation to probationary requirements and continued employment after completion of the programme.
- 3.8.4 The SER indicated that all research students are invited to apply for Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) positions and the subject receives adequate numbers to cover its seminars. GTAs who met the Panel found subject staff supportive, approachable and accessible and considered that their overall experience of being GTAs was very positive. However, GTAs also identified a number of areas for improvement in relation to opportunity, workload and support. GTAs who met the panel commented there were inconsistent allocations of tutorial groups to GTAs, meaning that some had a great deal of work and others very little. GTAs also expressed a desire to be more included in the teaching team e.g. through greater interaction with course leaders or through membership of the teaching committees. GTAs also highlighted that, while some members of staff were very supportive, initial training for the role was very light touch. The Panel **commends** the subject for introducing a 'shadowing scheme' for GTAs aimed at providing GTAs with ongoing support and guidance in improving their teaching.
- 3.8.5 The GTAs also noted that there were no formal mechanisms for seeking feedback from students on their teaching and it would be welcomed if this could be introduced.
- 3.8.6 The Panel **recommends** that TRS review the extent and quality of support provided to GTAs to ensure that they are appropriately trained, inducted and provided with sufficient guidance and ongoing feedback and support to carry out their duties.

### **Teaching and Social Space**

- 3.8.7 The Review Panel was provided with a tour of the subject facilities at 3 and 4 The Square as part of the Periodic Subject Review. The subject believes that the subject student amenities (e.g. common room, IT facilities, study space) contribute to a sense of community and belonging which encourages students to progress within the subject to Honours-level study. The welcoming and collegiate nature of the Unit and a sense of community and belonging was affirmed by students in their meetings with the Panel. Teaching for larger courses, such as Levels 1 and 2, take place elsewhere in the University.
- 3.8.8 Students who met the Panel commented very favourably on the facilities at 3 and 4 The Square for informal student interaction and for IT access and study space. It was noted that this was predominantly Honours students and not Level 1 and 2 students, and it was suggested that there could be more social activities for mature students. There were some negative comments about the Lower Seminar Room's lack of good ventilation, lighting and sound system.

## 4 Maintaining the Standards of Awards

- 4.1.1 The Self Evaluation Report and supporting documents (e.g. Annual Monitoring Reports, External Examiner Reports) indicate these processes are in operation and effective. The Panel was satisfied that quality assurance processes are good, but noted that more could be done to promote quality enhancement in planning for future academic sessions. The Panel **recommends** that the subject establishes a Quality Enhancement review cycle to realise the benefits from the enhancement aspect of quality processes. This includes engaging in ongoing discussions about teaching and learning by reflecting on and sharing the good practice identified (e.g. in external examiners' reports), reviewing pedagogical practice and student learning and then identifying areas for development as part of the cycle of a quality enhancement process and as part of this process ensure the feedback loop to GTAs and students is effectively closed (see 3.8.5).

## 5 Assuring and Enhancing the Quality of the Students' Learning Experience

- 5.1.1 Overall staff student relations were commented upon favourably at all levels and students were positive about staff expertise and enthusiasm. Students clearly valued the interaction with staff in TRS and noted that staff were accessible and willing to engage with students in office hours and out with formal teaching times.
- 5.1.2 In its meeting with the Panel a number of students commented very favourably on a guide called 'Academic Study Skills' which covers a range of topics including: making lecture notes; correctly referencing work; and plagiarism. Students who met the Panel expressed confusion at the agreed approach to referencing within the subject. The Panel consider that there could be value in identifying and publicising through the Academic Study Skills Guide a single, agreed approach to referencing. The Panel **commends** this guidance for students and **recommends** it be made available to all students within the subject with updated guidance on referencing.
- 5.1.3 The Panel found the effectiveness of the class representative and Student Staff Liaison Committee system to be variable. Not all students were aware of who their class representative was or even that there was one. There was also a lack of broad awareness of any feedback as a result of SSLC actions. Students who had attended SSLC meetings did feel their concerns were listened to and taken seriously, however, students who did not attend were then unaware of actions taken in response to feedback. The mandatory training for class representatives given by the SRC was commented upon favourably by students. The Panel **recommends** that the subject review the approach to Staff-Student Liaison Committees to ensure that the broader student body are engaged in identifying issues for, and are informed of outcomes from, formal staff-student liaison meetings and informal discussions between class representatives and staff as well as ensuring SSLC minutes are an accurate record of the meeting and actions are carried over to the following meetings.

## 6 Summary of Perceived Strengths and Areas for Improvement in Learning and Teaching

### Strengths

- strong community spirit (staff and students), enthusiasm and mutual respect in building of the subject's dual approach to theology and religious studies
- very engaged student body
- students appreciate staff accessibility, expertise and friendliness
- strong culture of co-teaching and interdisciplinarity within the subject
- tradition of research led teaching and co-teaching



- exemplary breadth of provision reflecting national Scottish priorities and balanced curriculum attractive to a diverse student body
- continuing positive links with the Church of Scotland with financial and personnel benefits
- good range of assessment tools
- good variety of delivery methods
- GTAs on the whole find their experience very positive
- excellent student / IT / social space enhance the students' learning experience and promote the sense of community
- innovative initiatives such as Honours taster day and job shadowing for GTAs
- Academic Study Skills guide for students

### **Areas for Improvement**

- development of a revised PGT provision
- building interdisciplinary links beyond subject across University
- development of a workload model in the subject
- development of a clear learning and teaching strategy for the subject capitalising on its distinctive broad, dual approach and having an explicitly internationalised curriculum
- addressing variability reported by students, including the level of engagement with Moodle in each course and standard approaches to referencing
- enhancing students' ability to articulate Graduate Attributes
- enhancing awareness of and opportunities for international experiences for students
- addressing variability in timeliness of feedback
- developing more comprehensive and timely Moodle resources especially for students with disabilities
- reviewing support for probationary staff
- addressing variability of support for GTAs between staff and courses and lack of formal mechanisms for feedback from students
- closing feedback loops in Staff Student Liaison Committees

## **7 Conclusions**

7.1.1 The Review Panel was impressed by the spirit and enthusiasm of staff and students and the strong mutual respect in building the subject area's dual approach to theology and religious studies. It commends the strong culture of co-teaching and interdisciplinarity within the subject, as well as its breadth of provision. The Panel also noted: the good range of assessment tools; variety of teaching methods and initiatives such as Honours taster day and job shadowing for GTAs. However, the Review Panel identified some area of weakness which are addressed in the Recommendations below. The Recommendations have been cross-referenced to the paragraphs in the text of the report to which they refer. They are ranked in order of priority.

## 8 Commendations

### *Commendation 1*

The Review Panel **commends** the subject for adopting a strategic approach to staff recruitment during an acute period of staff restructuring, which reflected a commitment to continuing traditional subjects in theology and to meet increased student demand for courses in religious studies. *[paragraph 1.2.2]*

### *Commendation 2*

The subject's programmes are delivered in a research-led, interdisciplinary environment concerned with the impact of religion in a contemporary global context. The Panel **commends** the strong culture of co-teaching and the collaboration between the dual pathways in the subject which students appear to find compelling. *[paragraph 2.1.1]*

### *Commendation 3*

The Panel identified a varied range of assessment tools in use in formative and summative assessment which supported student learning. The Review Panel **commends** the broad range of assessment tools used, including: examinations; essays; presentations; group projects; creating Wikipedia pages; and reflective journaling. *[paragraph 3.3.1]*

### *Commendation 4*

The Panel **commends** the subject for the choice provided to students over whether to undertake an examination or extended essay in one of their courses and to be able to set their own essay titles in some Level 3 and 4 courses. The choice of assessment methods was extremely positively received by the students the Panel spoke to. *[paragraph 3.3.2]*

### *Commendation 5*

The SER outlined Glasgow's distinctive approach to theological and religious studies education, particularly offering clear pathways in either theology or religious studies, a focus on the changing religious landscape of Scotland and (along with Edinburgh) strengths in world religions other than Christianity. The Review Panel **commends** the exemplary breadth of provision which reflects national Scottish priorities and a balanced curriculum attractive to a diverse student body. *[paragraph 3.4.1]*

### *Commendation 6*

The Panel noted that the subject was successfully recruiting to Honours at the level they intended (c. 30 per year) and **commends** innovative initiatives such as the Honours taster day for level 2 students to gain a better understanding of honours options. *[paragraph 3.6.2]*

### *Commendation 7*

In its meeting with the Panel a number of students commented very favourably on a guide called 'Academic Study Skills' which covers a range of topics including: making lecture notes; correctly referencing work; and plagiarism. Students who met the Panel expressed confusion at the agreed approach to referencing within the Subject. The Panel consider that there could be value in identifying and publicising through the Academic Study Skills Guide a single, agreed approach to referencing. The Panel **commends** this guidance for students and **recommends** it be made available to all students within the subject with updated guidance on referencing. *[paragraph 5.1.2]*

### *Commendation 8*

The Panel **commends** the subject for introducing a 'shadowing scheme' for GTAs aimed at providing GTAs with ongoing support and guidance in improving their teaching. *[paragraph 3.8.4]*

## 9 Recommendations

### *Recommendation 1:*

The Panel recommends that TRS engage effectively with University strategies, strategic priorities and University wide initiatives ensuring staff have a strong understanding of University and subject priorities so that they can effectively implement them in their teaching. [paragraph 2.1.3]

*For the attention of: **Head of Subject and Head of School***

### *Recommendation 2:*

The Panel recommends that the subject reflects on the distinctive nature and synergies of its dual, cohesive approach to theology and world-religious studies in articulating an explicitly international curriculum, for example in their programme offerings and their external marketing. [paragraph 3.4.2]

*For the attention of: **Head of Subject and Head of School**  
For information: Director Recruitment & International Office*

### *Recommendation 3:*

The Panel recommends the subject builds on the inherent interdisciplinary nature of theology and religious studies and proactively builds stronger interdisciplinary links across the University through joint courses, joint teaching and joint programmes. [paragraph 2.1.1]

*For the attention of: **Head of Subject and Head of School**  
For information: Dean (Learning and Teaching)*

### *Recommendation 4:*

The Panel **recommends** TRS review the variability reported by students, including the level of engagement with Moodle in each course and standard approaches to referencing, to ensure high standards and high-levels of satisfaction in some areas are replicated across all provision. [paragraph 3.7.1]

*For the attention of: the **Head of Subject***

### *Recommendation 5:*

The Panel recommends TRS develop innovative ways of encouraging internationalisation of the student experience including increasing opportunities for outward learning experiences for example through shorter experiences such as dissertation research visits and restructuring honours courses structure to facilitate longer exchanges. [paragraph 3.6.3]

*For the attention of: the **Head of Subject***

### *Recommendation 6:*

The Panel **recommends** that the subject establishes a Quality Enhancement review cycle to realise the benefits from the enhancement aspect of quality processes. This includes engaging in ongoing discussions about teaching and learning by reflecting on and sharing the good practice identified (e.g. in external examiners' reports), reviewing pedagogical practice and student learning and then identifying areas for development as part of the cycle of a quality enhancement process and as part of this process ensure the feedback loop to GTAs and students is effectively closed (see 3.8.5). [paragraph 4.1.1]

*For the attention of: the **Head of Subject***

*Recommendation 7:*

The Panel recommends that TRS reflect on the extent and quality of support provided to GTAs to ensure that they are appropriately trained, inducted and provided with sufficient guidance and ongoing feedback and support to carry out their duties. [paragraph 3.8.6]

*For the attention of: the **Head of Subject***

*For information: Academic Development Unit, Learning and Teaching Centre*

*Recommendation 8:*

The Panel recommends that the subject review the approach to Staff-Student Liaison Committees to ensure that the broader student body are engaged in identifying issues for, and are informed of outcomes from, formal staff-student liaison meetings and informal discussions between class representatives and staff as well as ensuring SSLC minutes are an accurate record of the meeting and actions are carried over to the following meetings. [paragraph 5.1.3]

*For the attention of: the **Head of Subject***

*Recommendation 9:*

The Panel **recommends** that the subject engage more fully with the Graduate Attributes agenda by reviewing current course and programme information to articulate them more explicitly. [paragraph 3.2.2]

*For the attention of: the **Head of Subject***

*Recommendation 10:*

The Panel recommends the subject agrees minimum standards for timeliness and level of detail provided in feedback on assessment. [paragraph 3.3.4]

*For the attention of: the **Head of Subject***

*Recommendation 11:*

The Panel recommends that TRS review the timeliness of materials being made accessible on Moodle, especially where this is to support students with a disability, to ensure the approach supports student learning. [paragraph 3.6.4]

*For the attention of: the **Head of Subject***

*Recommendation 12:*

In its meeting with the Panel a number of students commented very favourably on a guide called 'Academic Study Skills' which covers a range of topics including: making lecture notes; correctly referencing work; and plagiarism. Students who met the Panel expressed confusion at the agreed approach to referencing within the subject. The Panel consider that there could be value in identifying and publicising through the Academic Study Skills Guide a single, agreed approach to referencing. The Panel **commends** this guidance for students and **recommends** it be made available to all students within the subject with updated guidance on referencing. [paragraph 5.1.2]

*For the attention of: the **Head of Subject***

*Recommendation 13:*

The Panel recommends TRS review the available University-wide resources to ensure that students in Theology and Religious Studies benefit from the broad-range of student learning support mechanisms available beyond the subject. [paragraph 3.6.5]

*For the attention of: the **Head of Subject***