

<b>Institution:</b> University of Kent
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 31: Religious Studies
<p><b>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</b></p> <p>For the majority of this REF cycle, the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Kent was based in the University's School of European Culture and Languages and Faculty of Humanities. Following the institutional re-organisation in 2020 described in the accompanying REF5a document, the Department is now located in the Division of Arts and Humanities, which includes all humanities subject areas within the University. Despite being one of the smaller units in this subject area nationally, with 6.8 FTE Category A staff, the Department has built on its success in REF2014 to make significant achievements in its research and impact activities over this REF cycle. Key examples include increasing its external grant awards by more than 300% to over £2.5m (including a landmark research programme on 'Understanding Unbelief' funded by the John Templeton Foundation), the organisation and hosting of major national and international conferences, a significant increase in the Department's doctoral completions, and major impact activities that have shaped public understanding and public policy.</p> <p>Staff in the Department have expertise across a wide range of areas in the theory and method of the study of religion, including biblical studies, modern theology, critical theory and religion, and the psychology, philosophy, and sociology of religion. In addition to specialisms in Abrahamic and Asian religious traditions, the Department also has an internationally recognised focus on the study of contemporary worldviews, meaning, and values beyond institutional religion, including the life-worlds of those who identify as non-religious.</p> <p>The Department places a strong emphasis in its research culture on the cultivation of inter- and multi-disciplinary conversations, both amongst its members and with other researchers within and beyond the University of Kent. This ethos is evident in the range of scholars invited to present their research at Departmental seminars and symposia (which have become a key means for the cultivation of interdisciplinary discussions), the interdisciplinary nature of research published by its staff, and the role of its staff in initiating the development of new University-wide multi-disciplinary research networks on migration and movement (Sherwood; this network is now one of the University's three Signature Research Themes) and conflict, security, rights, and violence (Lynch). Whilst drawing on longer historical insights to inform its work, much of the Department's research focuses on major contemporary issues in the study of religion, with recent examples including blasphemy, religion and migration, religion in urban contexts, religion and child abuse, and religion within the organisational structures of the United Nations.</p> <p><b>Research strategy</b></p> <p>During this REF cycle, the Department has successfully met the six strategic research aims outlined in its submission to REF2014. These aims were to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>Undertake and complete major research projects.</i> Research projects outlined in REF2014 have all been successfully pursued, with publications from these forming the core of the Department's outputs submission to this REF. In addition to the projects outlined in the Department's 2014REF submission, other major new research projects have also been initiated, and, in many cases, completed, including on non-religion in a global perspective (Lee), non-religious childhoods (Strhan), William James and love (Carrette), mindfulness (King), religion and nostalgia (Deacy), and the Bible and feminism (Sherwood).</li> <li>2. <i>Nurture creative cross-disciplinary research within the Department.</i> Our weekly research seminar and additional research symposia have supported and enhanced our vibrant research culture. All of our staff members have organised and participated in symposia run by the Department during this REF cycle, and these have involved researchers from around the world who work in anthropology, the creative arts, history, law, philosophy,</li> </ol>

psychology, and sociology. Topics addressed in these symposia have been the study of the sacred, religion and the global city, the anthropology of the good, blasphemy and freedom of expression, health, well-being, and the body, global philosophies, scripts and scriptures of the queer family, understanding unbelief, the uses of historical research in child abuse inquiries, and religion and atheism.

3. *Convene major conferences that will allow staff and research students within the Department to shape discussions in wider networks.* Over the course of this REF cycle, the Department has successfully hosted and curated six major national and international conferences, in which its staff research and wider multi-disciplinary approaches to the study of religion have been showcased (see Section 4 below).
4. *Use the Leverhulme Professorship and the internally funded Kent Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities (KIASH) Visiting Experts schemes to support a programme of senior visiting scholars who will engage with the Department's staff and research students.* External and internal funding have been used to support the Department's engagement with senior visiting scholars. Internal KIASH funding supported Kathryn Lofton's visit from Yale University in 2014, and internal Dean for Europe funding enabled collaboration with colleagues at Columbia University in 2019. A Leverhulme Visiting Professorship enabled Mia Lovheim (Uppsala University) to work with the Department in 2015. Other visiting scholars who have spent time at the Department during this REF cycle, both to present their work and have discussions with staff and research students, include Johanna Sumiala (Helsinki) and Karin Barber Neutel (University of Oslo).
5. *Work with our partners in the CHASE consortium (the AHRC Doctoral Training Partnership of which Kent is a member) to develop high-calibre cross-institutional doctoral supervision and training in the study of religion.* The Department has continued periodically to provide an intensive, week-long methods training course in the study of religion, which is open to students at Kent and at the other members of the CHASE consortium, and which has also attracted participants from institutions across the UK and continental Europe. More than fifty delegates, mainly from universities other than Kent, have attended this training during this REF cycle. Our Department has also been one of the lead sponsors for a CHASE-funded workshop on 'Ethics, Reflexivity and Writing in the medical Humanities', scheduled for 2021.
6. *Continue to build our base of AHRC doctoral awards.* Since 2014, the Department has secured four new AHRC doctoral studentships: an AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Award on women's experience of life in Magdalene Laundries in post-independence Ireland; and three AHRC BGP2 doctoral studentships through the CHASE consortium. An additional institutionally funded studentship was created by the University for a project on non-religion amongst adults in later life linked to the Understanding Unbelief programme, and another student was awarded a fully-funded Vice-Chancellor's Research Scholarship. Given the comparatively small size of this unit, securing six fully-funded doctoral studentships (nearly one per staff FTE) is a notable achievement. In conjunction with this, there has also been a significant increase in the number of doctoral completions over this current REF cycle compared to REF2014, with 18 of our students receiving their doctoral awards. This represents 2.5 doctoral completions per staff FTE, more than doubling the rate of 1.12 doctoral completions per staff FTE for our Department in REF2014.

### **Strategic aims for the next six years**

Over the next six years, we will build on this existing research strategy to deliver further major outputs and activities. Specific plans include hosting the major international conference of the Society for Biblical Literature in 2021 and the development and submission of major external grant applications. Current major applications under review or in development include projects on social and psychological factors underlying non-religion, and organisational, policy, and personal dimensions of abuse in religious contexts.

The development of the new Division of Arts and Humanities at Kent, operating as a single financial and administrative unit, will also create significant new possibilities for collaborations with other colleagues across the Division. For example, the bringing together of Religious Studies and the School of History in the same Divisional structure has enabled the creation of a new Centre for Anglican Studies co-directed by Carrette (Religious Studies) and Fincham (History), approved by the University in the summer of 2020. This initiative draws both on the University's existing links with the Church of England through its endowed Michael Ramsey Chair (currently held by Lynch), as well as its expertise in the history of Anglicanism.

Whilst wider uncertainties within the HE sector caused by COVID-19 have made detailed forward research planning more difficult in the short term, our future strategic aims for this research unit are:

1. To sustain a high level of grant capture within the unit to sustain substantial research and impact activities of world-leading quality;
2. To extend further the international profile, reach, and impact of established areas of research within this unit, including the study of non-religion and religion and abuse;
3. To develop further the role of the unit's staff in leading interdisciplinary collaborations at Kent, regionally, nationally, and internationally;
4. To continue to provide excellent training and support for our postgraduate researchers, and in particular to work towards increasing the representation of BME students in our PhD student cohort.

### Impact strategy

The Department has maintained and scaled up three main types of impact set out in the impact strategy in our REF2014 submission. As stated in our REF2014 submission, we work with:

1. *Public sector and third sector organisations, for whom our research helps develop a clearer understanding of issues of religion, ethics, and the sacred in ways that inform their policies, training, and professional practice.* In the current REF cycle, collaborations with external partner organisations undertaken by our staff have included social-mapping exercises, policy development, collaborative research initiatives based on stakeholders' archives, expert witness work for national inquiries and legal proceedings, film production, work in the creative arts, and a major museum exhibition. An illustrative list of key national and international stakeholders with whom we have worked closely in this REF cycle is supplied in Section 4.
2. *Wider public audiences, through public media, blogs, films, podcasts, and other public events, where our research contributes to deeper public understanding and debate of particular religious issues or traditions or introduces new conceptual frameworks for understanding public life.* Staff have been interviewed by broadcast and print media nationally and internationally (see examples in Section 4), authored articles for popular online websites such as *The Conversation*, as well as for specialist religious press, and delivered events through the AHRC 'Being Human' programme. The media audience reach for activities set out in our impact case studies alone is in excess of 50 million people.
3. *Religious and humanist institutions and organisations, where our research helps to influence their understanding of their tradition, social context, and organisational practices.* Examples from this current REF cycle include: Sherwood's leadership of a major series of talks, *See-Through Stories*, with Canterbury Cathedral; Day's work with the Church of England in relation to her project on older laywomen; articles in specialist religious press by Day, Lee, Lynch, and Strhan; Lee's collaborations with the British Humanist Association and the Pontifical Council for Culture; and invited public lectures at churches and temples given by Carrette, Day, Deacy, King, and Sherwood.

The exceptional range of this impact work for a small academic unit has been made possible by our continued emphasis on delivering high-quality impact activities in conjunction with leading national and international partners supported by substantial external funding. These projects are designed with strong pathways to impact from the outset, and delivered on the basis of collaborations with partner organisations who benefit both from the research and from the financial resources that we provide, and who contribute substantial value to our work through their expertise and reach. We have also benefited from generous internal funding through impact bursaries provided by the School of European Culture and Languages (see Sections 2 and 3).

Whilst some of our impact activities occur through members of the Department being approached directly by external organisations, many of our major activities have been undertaken by us proactively approaching organisations whom we recognise as being the best placed nationally or internationally to deliver a particular form of collaboration. Developing these collaborations on the basis of sustained conversations, in some cases over several years, has been invaluable in developing our understanding of the different timescales, priorities, structures, and delivery mechanisms of partner organisations, as well as issues involved in discussing academic research with a wide range of professional groups. We recognise the importance of cultivating long-term relationships with specific individual and organisational stakeholders (such as TrueTube, Humanists UK, the RE Council, and specific national journalists and media producers) as a means of developing sustained impact over a succession of activities which build on each other. We also recognise the value of grounding our impact work in our long-term research interests, both in terms of building our credibility with external partners and in providing a framework in which we can continue to contribute original research insights to this work. Future impact premised on this approach will include public engagement work by Lynch with researchers and civil society organisations in Ireland to develop spaces and activities of 'national conscience' in relation to historic institutional abuse, and Lee's ongoing work with the RE Council to support a major paradigm shift in UK religious education in schools structured around the concept of the study of worldviews.

### **Open Access**

Our Department is fully committed to making our research as accessible as possible to academic and public audiences. We benefit from strong institutional support for open access publishing in the form of the University's APC Fund, which meets the cost of Gold Open Access (with a CC-BY licence), both for published work arising from research funded by UKRI grants, as well as for other outputs identified through internal review as being of high quality. Since the creation of this scheme, the APC Fund has paid for the costs of three journal articles and one monograph by the Department's staff to be published open access, and will look significantly to increase the proportion of our outputs published in this way over the next six years. To support the wider dissemination of our research we have also produced three films about our research for the *Think Kent* digital platform and KMTV. The Understanding Unbelief research programme has also produced ten short films explaining its research approaches and findings to academic and wider public audiences, including content for the digital channel History Hit TV, presented by the historian Dan Snow. Two films on our research have also been produced by the BAFTA-awarding-winning digital educational channel, TrueTube.

### **Research ethics and integrity**

We are committed to the highest standards of integrity in our research. Our concern with the social relevance of the study of religion is reflected in the range of research in which we engage and our recognition of the need for the study of religion to attend to histories and structures shaped by inequalities of power, status, and resource. Staff in the Department have also sought to raise wider issues of power, injustice, and inclusivity in our subject areas, exemplified in a national event on 'Decolonising the Social Scientific Study of Religion', organized by Lee and Day, in conjunction with the British Sociological Association's Sociology of Religion Study Group in 2018. A significant amount of our research involves working with people as research participants, and staff in our Department always obtain the necessary institutional ethics approval for this, following University-wide and disciplinary guidance about appropriate ethical standards.

## 2. People

At the end of this REF cycle, our Department had seven members of staff on Education and Research (E&R) contracts (Blanton, Carrette, Deacy, King, Lee, Lynch, and Sherwood), with an unusually high proportion of senior staff, compared to other units in our subject area, consisting of four Professors (Carrette, King, Lynch, and Sherwood), two Readers (Blanton, Deacy), and one Senior Lecturer (Lee). One of these professorial posts – the Michael Ramsey Chair – is an endowed position with an associated research fund. The Department also has an ongoing Lecturer in Asian Studies on an Education and Scholarship contract (de Vries), and has also recently employed another Lecturer in the Sociology of Religion on an Education and Scholarship contract (Carpenedo) to cover for the period of Lynch's AHRC Fellowship. Research support for de Vries and Carpenedo is discussed further below. Three fixed-term postdoctoral research fellows (Amy Unsworth, Rachel Shilitoe, and Oliver Gibson) were also employed in the Department during this REF cycle through external grant funding.

All E&R staff in the Department are employed on permanent contracts, reflecting the University's commitment to the long-term development of staff. Where possible, staff on research fellowships have been supported with permanent appointments and further career progression. For example, after completion of her Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship, Strhan was given a permanent contract and promoted to Senior Lecturer. Similarly, Lee was appointed to the Department in January 2017, initially as a Senior Research Fellow and then, in 2020, as a permanent Senior Lecturer.

Although there has been a slight reduction in staff over this REF cycle between August 2013 and July 2020 equivalent to 1.0 FTE, we have benefited from considerable stability in our staff group. All but one members of staff in this REF submission were in post at the time of our submission to REF2014. Frazier left the Department in 2017 to take a post at the University of Oxford, and Strhan left in 2018 to take up a post in Sociology at the University of York. Abby Day, who had a temporary, fractional post, also left the Department in 2016 and took up a post in Sociology at Goldsmiths, University of London. Remaining staff in the Department fall within the age range 35-55. The effects of these staff changes on the gender balance of the Department are discussed later in this section.

Staff support and development in the Department operates within the University-wide structures, processes, and resources set out in the REF5a institutional statement accompanying this unit-level submission. Members of our Department have both benefited from, and made substantial contributions to, this University-wide provision. Specific examples of this in the current REF period include:

- All staff in our Department have received study leave according to the University policy of one term's study leave in every seven terms. The University also provides additional, internally funded research leave for projects of exceptional significance, and Lynch received an additional term of leave through this provision to undertake full-time expert witness work for the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse.
- Both Frazier and Strhan successfully completed the University's probation process, and benefited from the University's workload reduction scheme for probationary staff.
- Frazier, Strhan, and Lee all received support and advice from members of our School Promotions Panel, and achieved promotions to Senior Lecturer/Research Fellow at their first time of applying.
- All E&R staff in our Department have participated in annual Individual Research Planning (IRP) meetings with the Religious Studies REF Coordinator and the School Director of Research. These have provided staff with opportunities to reflect on their longer-term intellectual trajectory and research plans, review progress on specific projects, discuss opportunities for their development, consider additional internal and external funding

resources, and receive suggestions for possible research and impact collaborations within and beyond the School.

- Reflecting the emphasis in the Researcher Development Concordat on supporting the research development of all staff regardless of contractual status, the Department has sought actively to support the work of colleagues not on permanent E&R contracts. De Vries and Carpenedo have participated in Departmental research events, presented their own research for discussion and peer feedback, and been supported in specific activities such as the development of grant applications. Unsworth was actively involved in the development of Departmental research events. Shilitoe's research profile was supported through her involvement as a full co-author in publications arising from her project, and time was costed into Gibson's contract to allow him to work on publishing his own research.
- The University participates in the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) Aurora Leadership and Management Programme. This programme has been led at Kent by Sherwood in her capacity as University of Kent Aurora Champion. The School of European Culture and Languages also received an Athena SWAN Bronze Award in 2018, and relevant elements of our Athena Swan Action Plan are discussed in the Equality and Diversity sub-section below.
- Staff in the Department both participated in, and led, workshops delivered through the University's Grants Factory and Impact training programmes.
- The School of European Culture and Languages offered a generous impact bursary scheme (up to £15,000 per applicant) to support high-quality impact activities. Through this provision, Lynch received £9,198.64 to enable the recording of songs for the *Ballads of Child Migration* project and the development of this into a full album.

In addition to having opportunities for regular discussion about impact plans and opportunities in the context of their annual Individual Research Planning meetings, our staff have also benefited from the proximity of major partner organisations in London and the South-East to develop a wide range of public engagement activities.

### Research students

As a Department, we are committed to supporting the academic development of researchers from groups currently under-represented in our subject area nationally. We are conscious of a continuing gender imbalance amongst research staff in Theology and Religious Studies in the UK (see Equality and Diversity below). Whilst equally assessing all strong doctoral applicants to our Department, we have been particularly keen to encourage strong female applicants who have the potential for future academic careers. As noted in Section 1, our Department has secured six fully-funded doctoral studentships over this REF cycle, of which five were awarded to women.

The Department has continued its strong provision for doctoral supervision and training. Our postgraduate research students participate in the Departmental research seminar (at which they have the opportunity to present work in progress), a postgraduate reading group, and the wider programme of symposia and workshops run by the Department. Postgraduate students in the Department also organise their own workshops, either at the University or in collaboration with other institutions and subject associations. The Department has also offered an intensive week-long methods training course, which is open to students at Kent as well as other universities, and has attracted participants from institutions across the UK and continental Europe. Substantial training opportunities have also been provided by the University's Graduate and Researcher College (formerly the Graduate School), as described in the accompanying REF5a document. Additional resources provided by the Graduate and Researcher College include Postgraduate Experience Awards (up to £1,500 per student), which provide research students with the opportunity to apply for funding to run an event or project with an interdisciplinary and/or external focus, and which will enhance their development.

In addition to the Departmental Research Seminar, our research students are able to attend research seminars at other schools and departments across the University. There are also 50 research centres across the University that provide opportunities for research students to attend presentations and other events. The Annual Postgraduate Research Festival, organised by the Graduate and Researcher College, provides an opportunity for postgraduates to showcase their research to fellow students and staff through posters, the 3 Minute Thesis competition, and Pecha Kucha presentations. The festival provides an excellent networking opportunity for both postgraduate students and academic staff members. One of our students, working on women's experiences of life in Magdalene institutions in Ireland, was awarded the best student presentation prize for a similar showcase event organised by the University in conjunction with the University of the Third Age.

Our doctoral students are supervised by a team, including first and second supervisors, and an additional supervisory Chair if required. The Department makes use of cross-Department and cross-School supervision arrangements where this benefits the multi-disciplinary training of the student. We recognize the importance of maintaining clear supervision structures, while also allowing flexibility in these where this suits the training and development of an individual student. In the current REF cycle, we therefore supported the transfer of one of our AHRC DTP-funded doctoral students to Goldsmiths (a partner institution in the CHASE consortium) so that she could develop interests in religion and higher education policy that were better supported in its Faiths and Civil Society Unit.

Our School's Graduate Studies Committee has been responsible for monitoring student progress, approving the recommendations of review and examination panels, and mediating in the cases where panels are unable to reach a consensus. Online monthly supervision records are completed by the student and first supervisor to record meetings, topics of discussion, and plans for future action. Each postgraduate research student undertakes an induction review (after 3 months), end-of-year reviews, and a submission review (3 months before the end of the minimum registration period). This review system has proven extremely helpful in monitoring effective student progress and identifying points at which students may be needing additional forms of support. Alongside strong supervision and training, this process of periodic review has contributed to a high proportion (over 90%) of our students submitting their theses according to expected deadlines and receiving their doctoral awards.

Students in the Department benefit from being able to attend training provided through the AHRC-funded CHASE Doctoral Training Partnership, which gives them access to academic expertise and interdisciplinary training delivered by staff members from across all the institutions in the consortium. Our CHASE-funded students have, for example, participated in the biannual CHASE Encounters conferences, which provide opportunities for students to present work-in-progress, develop their own themed panels, and meet with other doctoral students from a wide range of AHRC-funded subject areas. Over this REF cycle, two of our doctoral students have also served as convenors of the international NYLON Doctoral Research Network (originally convened by Craig Calhoun and Richard Sennett for qualitative social researchers at the LSE, New York University, and Goldsmiths), which provides high-calibre training in critical and reflexive methods in qualitative research.

The Department is committed to the development of postgraduate researchers as academic teachers. Postgraduate students in our Department have taught seminars and occasional lectures in our undergraduate programmes, and are supported in this work through specially designed training for new postgraduate teachers provided by the University's Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching.

Each research student is allocated up to £150 per annum to attend a conference at which they are giving a paper, plus an additional £500 towards research expenses over the course of their registration. Exceptional research expenses (such as specialised training, the presentation of papers at overseas conferences, and visits to overseas archives) are supported from the Faculty (now Divisional) PhD Support Top-Up Fund.

**Equality and diversity**

The Department, School, and University are committed to employing and supporting excellent researchers across all stages of their careers in accordance with best equal opportunities practice. We are very conscious of national issues in relation to gender progression in our subject area, demonstrated both by research undertaken by Mathew Guest, Sonya Sharma, and Robert Song in 2013, and the British Academy report on Theology and Religious Studies provision in UK higher education in 2019. The latter noted that whilst there had been a very slight increase in the proportion of female to male staff in this subject area (37% female; 63% male) over the past five years, this level of gender imbalance was still significantly worse than in many other humanities subjects. We were already conscious of these problems of gender imbalance in our discipline, and in our Department, before the important work done by Guest, Sharma, and Song. Since 2011, we have worked closely with Human Resources at Kent to ensure that the under-representation of female staff in our Department was explicitly recognised in job advertisements, and that, where two interviewed staff were found to be equally strong applicants, we would prioritise the appointment of the female applicant.

For much of this current REF cycle, this approach helped us to achieve close to a 50:50 gender balance in the Department. Despite the permanent appointments of Lee and Strhan in this REF cycle, the departure of Day, Frazier, and Strhan has, however, created a significant gender imbalance in the Department again. We will therefore continue to maintain our recruitment strategy for supporting the appointment of female members of staff to our Department when vacancies arise. We are also conscious of the lack of ethnic diversity amongst our staff, again reflecting national under-representation of BME staff in UK higher education. We believe that an important element in addressing under-representation of BME staff in our subject area is increasing the number of BME students being trained and mentored at doctoral level. Since 2017, the University of Kent has invested substantially in its award-winning Student Success programme to address inequalities in attainment between white and BME students, and to increase the progression routes of BME students into postgraduate study. We anticipate that this work will lead to improved representation of BME students amongst our PhD cohort in the coming REF cycle, and have explicitly identified this as an important aim in our future research strategy. With the representation of BME students in our undergraduate programmes having increased significantly during this REF cycle, we will seek to achieve this by providing additional support and mentoring to BME students who have the academic potential to move successfully through postgraduate studies to future academic careers.

After staff have been appointed, we seek to achieve equality in our promotions process through the support and advice given by our School Promotions Panel, whose membership is gender balanced and includes the School's Athena SWAN lead as an observer. Part of our Athena SWAN Action Plan is both to ensure that staff who wish to make a promotion application receive one-to-one support on this from a member of the School Promotions Panel, and that any staff who have not made a successful promotion application for three years are assigned a mentor if they would like this. Our Athena SWAN Action Plan also includes a commitment to provide any member of staff returning from parental leave, who has secured sufficient leave entitlement, with an immediate term of research leave on return to work alongside additional staffing resource to cover their work during their parental leave. Our School's Athena SWAN Action Plan also included measures to increase the number of female reviewers available to meet with staff for their annual RPD review, and this has been successfully achieved with seven trained female reviewers now available within the School.

All staff involved in the selection of outputs for this submission have undergone Equality and Diversity training, which has addressed both relevant equalities legislation and the ways in which conscious and unconscious bias can affect REF selection decisions in ways that generate inequalities. Our output selection has been guided by the University's Code of Practice, and closely reflects the profile of our staff group according to protected characteristics and career stage across this REF cycle. The University established a confidential and voluntary system by which Category A staff have been able to register individual staff circumstances that they believe would



be relevant for consideration for possible output reductions for their unit. This process was centralised in our Human Resources department to ensure consistency in the management of these requests, and has had a good level of uptake from staff across the University. In our Department, individual staff circumstances have been approved for three members of staff (i.e. 43% of our staff group). To maintain confidentiality, the identities of these staff members are known only to the REF Coordinator for this submission, our Head of Division, and our Divisional Director of Research and Innovation, who have reviewed our output selection and confirmed that the selected outputs take reasonable account of the position of staff members for whom individual circumstances have been approved.

### 3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Since REF 2014, our Department has continued to increase its income from external research grant funding. This has provided substantial additional investment for our research activities. Staff have benefited from an excellent range of support provided centrally by the University's Research and Innovation Services team. In part, these are structured around the University-wide Grants Factory training programme, as well as events specifically tailored to researchers in the Division. The latter include grant-writing weeks, in which researchers can work collectively on grant applications with staff from Research and Innovation Services and other academics with experience of securing grant income, and a 'mock' AHRC awards panel, in which researchers are able to use previously submitted applications from the University to the AHRC (with the PI's permission) to get a better understanding both of the grant assessment process and the standard of grant application that is likely to be successful. A full-time Research Support Officer works with staff across the Arts and Humanities to identify suitable grant schemes for their interests, provides feedback on drafts, and arranges internal peer-review feedback on their applications.

This excellent internal support has seen our Department advance in the RGCI benchmarking above both peer and subject averages, despite our small staff group. Research income per staff FTE has significantly increased for our Department, with income per staff FTE at over £170,000 for REF2021, compared to £49,917 per staff FTE for REF2014. In personnel terms, external grant funding during this REF cycle has enabled us to expand beyond our core permanent staff base to employ a research project manager (for the Understanding Unbelief programme) and the three postdoctoral research fellows noted in Section 3. The four AHRC-funded doctoral studentships secured by the Department in this REF cycle (listed in Section 1) also constitute a slight increase on the three AHRC studentships held by the Department in the cycle assessed in REF2014. Specific external awards won by staff in the Department in this current REF cycle have been:

- Carrette (PI). 'William James on Love: Literature, Biography and the Divine-Human Relation'. William James Archive, Houghton Library, Harvard University. British Academy Small Grant. £2,584.
- King (Co-I). 'Mapping Mindfulness'. Leverhulme Research Project Grant. £212,578.
- Lee (PI). 'Understanding Unbelief'. John Templeton Foundation Grant. £2,170,735.
- Lynch (PI). 'British Child Migration Schemes to Australia, 1947-1970: Historical Perspectives and Public Memory Today'. AHRC Fellowship. £201,709.
- Lynch (PI). 'Remembering Britain's Child Migrants: Supporting Public Reflection through a National Exhibition, Media and Organisational Engagement'. AHRC Follow-On Funding Grant. £79,977.
- Lynch. 'Leverhulme Visiting Professorship – Mia Lövhelm'. Leverhulme Trust. £24,421.
- Sherwood. 'See Through Stories: Windows on the World' Cathedral Project. Ahmanson Foundation. £1,000.
- Strhan (PI). 'Nonreligious Childhood: Growing Up Unbelieving in Contemporary Britain'. John Templeton Foundation Grant. £108,634.

Over this REF cycle, staff research has been supported by a range of internal funding mechanisms, with this support continuing into the new Divisional structure. Internal grant awards of up to £2,000 have been made available annually to support cross-disciplinary collaborative initiatives, visiting senior scholars, and public engagement and impact activities, with support

particularly encouraged for early career researchers (ECRs) who are extending their research profiles. Substantial funding for preparatory work necessary for the submission of major research grants has also been provided, as well as £1,000 towards teaching buy-out for the preparation of research grant applications for awards in excess of £200k. A further £6,000 per annum has also been allocated to support research activities within the Department such as workshops, symposia, and visiting experts. Each member of staff is also able to apply for £800 annually (£880 for ECRs) to support conference attendance. The University also operates a Public Engagement Research Fund, through which staff are able to apply for up to £2,000 to support specific engagement activities. Additional funds are also available from the Faculty (now the Division) and University to support internationalisation activities, as well as from the University to support the completion of major outputs for the REF. These funds constitute a substantial reinvestment of QR funding received by the University of Kent to provide direct support for research.

Staff in our Department have benefited significantly from these different sources of internal funding. Over this current REF cycle, staff in our Department have received, £12,172.60 from the School conference fund and £35,972.53 from other funding schemes in the University and Faculty. Internal awards have included: £1,473.89 for a Rome research trip (Blanton); £1,000 towards the costs of the conference on 'Sex after '68' (Carrette); £1,250 towards public engagement activities on unbelief (Lee); £760.00 to support costs of a workshop run as part of the 2017 AHRC Being Human festival (Lee); £9,198.64 for the *Ballads of Child Migration* project (Lynch); £1,500 to support the development of an AHRC Fellowship award (Lynch); £1,200 funding towards a conference on blasphemy (Sherwood); £7,000 funding for development of research links with the University of Oslo (Sherwood); £3,500 REF output funding (Sherwood); £2,790.00 to support the development of the EuroBlas 'European Blasphemies' research project (Sherwood); £2,800 for the 'See-Through Stories' events with Canterbury Cathedral (Sherwood); and £2,000 to support a symposium on the social life of the Good (Strhan).

Research capacity in the Department has also been substantially supported in this REF cycle through the Michael Ramsey Research Fund, linked to the endowed Michael Ramsey Chair, which is administered by Lambeth Palace. Over the course of this REF cycle, £39,000 has been claimed from the Ramsey Fund, with major costs supported by this being the employment of four research assistants over five years to undertake extensive copying of archival material in the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom, which has been used by Lynch for his academic and public engagement work on the history of UK child migration programmes. An additional £23,000 was provided from other internal funds in the School of European Culture and Languages to enable the re-location of several hundred books from the David Clines library from Sheffield to the University Library at Kent. In total, internal funding from the University and Ramsey Fund to support research in the Department of Religious Studies in this REF cycle was £110,145.13.

The University also recognizes the achievements of its staff through annual University research awards. Over this REF cycle, Lynch received two University research prizes for his work on the history of UK child migration programmes: the Research Prize for the Faculty of Humanities in 2016 and the University's Public Engagement with Research Prize in 2019.

Staff in our Department have benefited from the substantial internal investment in the University's site and resources described in our institutional environment statement (REF5a), including the considerable expansion of the Templeman Library on the main University campus. Library resources for our subject area have benefited particularly in this REF cycle through the donation of several hundred books from the David Clines collection of key primary texts in nineteenth- and twentieth-century biblical studies. The University's location, and high-speed rail link to London, enables staff to make use of other outstanding research facilities in the region, including the British Library, which is less than an hour's rail journey from Canterbury.

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

Members of the Department have a sustained track record of substantial international research collaborations, and have worked with key national and international stakeholder organisations on

projects with significant social benefits. This work has included new national and international collaborations to lead the development of emerging areas of study or approaches to research, as well as contributing to the continued work of major national and international subject associations. A notable example of this has been the landmark 'Understanding Unbelief' research programme, for which Lee and the other programme directors commissioned and coordinated 20 research projects, involving more than forty researchers from across Europe, North and Latin America, and Asia, as well as delivering major international networking activities. This programme constitutes the largest global collaborative research initiative in the study of non-religion to date.

### Research outputs

Since January 2014, members of staff within the Department have produced seven monographs, eight edited books, twelve journal articles, twenty-three book chapters, and two edited special journal issues. Lee's monograph *Recognizing the Non-Religious: Reimagining the Secular* was shortlisted for the British Sociological Association's Philip Abrams Memorial Prize in 2016, and Strhan's *Aliens and Strangers? The Struggle for Coherence in the Everyday Lives of Evangelicals* was shortlisted for the BBC/British Sociological Association's Thinking Allowed Ethnography Award in 2016. Two of the edited books represent particularly major interventions within our subject area. Richard King's edited book, *Religion, Theory, Critique* (Columbia University Press, 2017; 56 chapters), is one of the most extensive texts yet produced on the critical study of concepts of religion with contributions from world-leading scholars, including detailed consideration of postcolonial concepts and approaches. Yvonne Sherwood's edited book, *The Bible and Feminism: Remapping the Field* (Oxford University Press, 2017; 37 chapters) is also a landmark volume, setting out the current state of the art in feminist biblical studies, again involving leading scholars from around the world.

### Invited keynotes and lectures

In this REF period, staff within the Department have given over 60 keynote lectures and other invited presentations, demonstrating international recognition of their contribution to a range of sub-disciplines and research areas within the study of religion. These have included: Blanton's keynote at the Vicissitudes of Pistis conference (Radboud University of Nijmegen, 2015); Blanton's keynote at the Nordic Society for the Philosophy of Religion Conference (2017); Blanton's keynote at the Phenomenology and Religious Existence conference (Oxford, 2016); Carrette's keynote address at the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Conference of the Alister Hardy Research Centre (Oxford, 2019); Carrette's special paper for the Boston University Institute on Culture, Religion, and World Affairs (2017); Frazier's plenary at the Logic and Religion conference (Warsaw, 2017); Lee's keynote on non-religion and the law at an international conference convened by the Eurel and GOBA research networks (Oslo, 2018); Lee's keynote at the International Conference of the Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network (London, 2018); Lee's keynote at the 12th International Study of Religion in Eastern and Central Europe Association conference & European Sociological Association RN 34 (Sociology of Religion) mid-term conference (Zadar, Croatia, 2016); Lynch's keynote at the British Sociological Association's Socrel Annual Conference (Lancaster, 2015); Lynch's plenary presentation at the Towards Transitional Justice international conference (Boston, MA, 2018); Sherwood's keynote at the North American Association for the Study of Religion (San Diego, 2014); Sherwood's keynote at the Society for Old Testament Study (Manchester, 2016); and Sherwood's delivery of the prestigious Oxford University Speaker's Lectures in Biblical Studies (Oxford, 2016);

The impact of King's book *Orientalism and Religion* on the study of religion was the subject of a panel at the annual American Academy of Religion meeting (San Diego, 2014). Lee's book *Recognizing the Non-Religious* was the subject of a panel convened at the Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Conference (Seattle, 2015). Strhan's edited collection *The Bloomsbury Reader in Religion and Childhood* was the subject of a panel convened by the Childhood and Religion group at the annual American Academy of Religion meeting in 2016, and her monograph *Aliens and Strangers* was the subject of a reviewer-meets-reviewed event at the Royal Anthropological Institute in 2017.

Staff have also delivered invited international lectures and seminars at the universities of Alabama (King); Boston (Carrette); Columbia Theological Seminary, Atlanta (Sherwood); European University Institute, Florence (Lee); Frankfurt am Main (Lee); Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich (Blanton, Sherwood); Lutheran School of Theology (Blanton); Sodertorn (Lee); Uppsala (Lee); and Utrecht (Sherwood, Strhan).

### **Editorial work and other professional contributions**

Lee is the editor of the journal *Secularism and Nonreligion*, published by Ubiquity Press. Staff have served on the editorial boards of the *American Journal of Cultural Sociology*, *The Bible and Critical Theory*, *Biblical Interpretation*, *Foucault Studies*, the *Journal of Biblical Literature*, the *Journal of Hindu Studies*, *Religion and Society*, the *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, *Political Theology*, *Postscripts: Sacred Texts and Contemporary Worlds*, *Religion and Theology*, and the *Journal of Theory and Method in the Study of Religion*. Deacy is co-editor for a proposed book series for T&T Clark on *Contemporary Writers in Theology and Popular Culture*. King is senior co-editor for the *Studies in the History of Religions* monograph series (Brill). Lee is series editor for De Gruyter's *Religion and Its Others: Studies in Religion, Nonreligion and Secularity* monograph series.

Both Carrette and Lynch served on the REF2014 sub-panel for Divinity, Theology and Religious Studies, and Lynch serves as chair of the sub-panel for Theology and Religious Studies for the current REF2021 exercise. In addition to serving as peer reviewers for the AHRC and British Academy, our staff have also acted as external reviewers for the John Templeton Foundation (Lee), Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (Deacy, Lee), and the Austrian Science Fund and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Lynch). Blanton is Chair of the Social History of Modern Biblical Scholarship within the European Association of Biblical Studies. Deacy is on the Steering Committee of the Theology, Religion and Popular Culture Network. Lee is founding director of the Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network.

### **Conferences and workshops**

In 2014, the Department organised and hosted the biennial International Media, Religion and Culture Conference, with keynote papers given by Kathryn Lofton (Yale) and Jonathan Walton (Harvard Divinity School). In 2015, the Department organised and hosted the British Association for the Study of Religions annual conference (in conjunction with the 50th anniversary booklet on 50 years of Religion at Kent), with a keynote lecture delivered by Peter van der Veer (Max Planck Institute). In 2016, the Department convened and hosted the Futures of Biblical Studies conference, involving participants from the universities of Kent, Exeter, Sheffield, and St Mary's Twickenham, with a keynote by David Clines (Sheffield). In 2018, the Department worked with Loren Wolfe (Columbia University Global Centre) to convene a conference on Sex After '68 hosted at the University of Kent's Paris School of Arts and Culture. In 2019, a major international conference presenting findings from the Understanding Unbelief programme was organised by the Department at the Vatican. The Department also organised and hosted a conference of the Theology, Religion and Popular Culture Network on 'Play and Protest'.

### **Public Engagement**

Staff in our Department have long-standing collaborative working partnerships with a wide range of external organisations undertaking key national and international work with a bearing on our subject area. These include Lee's well-established partnerships with Humanists UK (formerly the British Humanist Association), as well as her project work on non-religious life-worlds with NatCen, the British Library, the RE Council, and RE Today. Carrette and Sherwood have worked closely with staff at Canterbury Cathedral. Lynch's work over this REF cycle has involved extensive collaborations with the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse, the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry, and the V&A Museum of Childhood, TrueTube, and the production company, 7digital.

Led by Lee and the other project PIs, the Understanding Unbelief programme delivered the most substantial schedule of public engagement activities ever undertaken internationally to raise public

and professional understanding of non-religious life-worlds. This has included commissioning films on forms of non-religion in different national contexts that have been shown across the world, a prize for the best journalistic coverage of aspects of non-religion (which has led to publications in a number of major newspapers and magazines), the commissioning of new educational materials for use with secondary-school students in the United Kingdom, the development of policy-relevant reports and infographics, and the production of a photographic exhibition on non-religious lives displayed at the Vatican.

Our staff have also worked closely with the Religion and Media Centre to provide key insights on topical debates that have been of interest to media professionals. Staff members have undertaken extensive national and international media work, including discussing their research on BBC1 (*Big Questions*); BBC Radio 2 (*Jeremy Vine Show*); and BBC Radio 4 (*PM Programme*; *In Our Time*; *Beyond Belief*; *Thinking Allowed*; *Sunday Programme*); as well as other one-off programmes such as *A Believer's Guide to Atheism*). Staff have also been interviewed for the national press in the UK and internationally, including for *The Times*, *Independent*, *Sunday Express*, and *Kristeligt Dagblad*.

In 2014, a national Learning on Screen Award by the British Universities Film and Video Council was awarded for a film co-produced by Lynch on women's experiences of Magdalene Laundries in Ireland. Two films co-produced by Lynch with the BAFTA award-winning educational charity, TrueTube, were also shortlisted for national religious broadcasting awards by the Sandford St Martin Trust. Deacy's *Nostalgia* podcast series has to date received almost twenty thousand listens worldwide.