

Guidelines for Evaluating Research Output in Theology and Religious Studies

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This document provides directions to Dutch scholars and research units for evaluating publishers and journals in the field of theology and religious studies. The document replaces the previous DGO list of journals, and the QRiH list of journals and publishers drafted by a NOSTER domain panel. Although the document is not binding, it should be seen as the result of consultation between institutions affiliated with DGO. It aims to give a broadly supported vision of publication cultures in theology and religious studies. The document ties in well with the Strategy Evaluation Protocol (SEP), which explicitly leaves it to the research units to be assessed to formulate their own ambitions and have these tested. It provides further guidelines for formulating these ambitions.

Theology and religious studies encompass a broad field of study spanning various subdisciplines, each of which has a slightly different ‘publication culture’, that is, norms and conventions regarding the publication and dissemination of scholarship. Generally speaking, double-blind peer review remains the most significant tool to identify high-quality scholarship. Publishers with transparent processes and high standards in this regard are therefore particularly valued. This is true for the publication of monographs and book chapters, as well as journal articles. In most subdisciplines, the former retains its traditional status as the most significant publication format, but it is rivalled by articles published in A-journals in certain other subdisciplines.

Few journals are regarded as top tier outlets for the entire field of theology and religious studies; almost all subdisciplines have a small number of journals specific to their own field that are broadly recognised by experts as publishers that publish particularly significant work. Moreover, some of the best work in religious studies is published in journals that transcend disciplinary boundaries with other fields (e.g. history, philosophy, psychology). This renders it unfeasible to produce an exhaustive list of all journals that publish high-level articles produced by scholars in theology and religious studies.

Many top tier journals publish mostly or even exclusively in English and publications in this language are accordingly highly valued. However, depending on the discipline, publications in other languages such as German, French and Italian may be just as significant. In addition, within the context of the Netherlands there is naturally a place for scholarly analysis of topics specific to the Dutch language world and many of these publications will be published in Dutch and/or in outlets geared specifically to a national rather than international audience. This in no way diminishes the scholarly quality of that research.

Publications written with an eye toward the popularisation and valorisation of academic research will likewise often be in Dutch, insofar as they seek to communicate scholarly results to a national or regional audience, however publications that reach a broad international readership are obviously also prized. It is important that institutions offer insight into their standards for evaluation in this regard, particularly since institutions often differ in terms of the societal and (in some cases) religious constituencies that they primarily seek to address, which may translate into distinctive levels of appreciation for certain outlets or types of publication.

Institutions are also encouraged to clarify the extent to which they value digital output (including websites, databases and software applications), which remains generally undervalued relative to monographs and journal articles, but can be valuable both from a scholarly and a societal perspective. Co-authored publications are often similarly undervalued. While this reflects a broadly held view that excellent researchers in theology and religious studies are capable of independently producing significant work, this undervaluation discourages scholarly collaboration (including interdisciplinary work) in ways that can be detrimental to the field. Co-publications occur in empirical research, in line with the social sciences.

The use of citation scores to determine the relative quality of journals, book series and authors is not usually a reliable method in this field of study given the wide range of subdisciplines (which vary greatly in scale), the diversity in reference styles used and the incomplete data available on platforms such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate and Crossref.

Appendix: Example Lists

Below you will find an overview offering an orientation regarding existing lists of journals and publishers in theology and religious studies, including their advantages and disadvantages. The DGO affiliated institutions are free to make measured use of these lists; which lists are used where will depend among other things on an institute's narrative.

[DHET List of Approved South African Journals](#), Department of Higher Education and Training, South Africa

[ERIH PLUS list of approved journals](#), European Science Foundation

[Excellence in Research for Australia \(ERA\)](#), Australian Research Council

[INDEX ISLAMICUS](#), Brill

[International Bibliography of the Social Sciences \(IBSS\) journal list](#), ProQuest

[ISI Web of Science](#), The Institute for Scientific Information / Web of Science

[Louvain Index of Theology and Religious Studies for Journals and Series \(LITaRS\)](#), Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies, Catholic University Leuven

[Norwegian List](#), The National Board of Scholarly Publishing (NPU) and the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) on behalf of the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research

[Quality of Research in Humanities \(QRiH\): list of journals and publishers](#), Disciplinary Councils of Arts and Humanities (DLG), Theology and Religious Studies (DGO) and Philosophy (DWB), and the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW)

[Scimago Journal & Country Rank: Journals in Religious Studies](#), Scopus/Elsevier

[Shanghai Journal Ranking: Religion Studies](#), NYU Shanghai