

Self-Assessment Report

Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion (NOSTER)

2013-2018

Radboud University



1. Introduction

The Netherlands School for Advanced Studies in Theology and Religion (NOSTER) is the primary platform for research and training in the fields of theology and religious studies in the Netherlands and Flanders.¹ Twelve research institutes in these fields have joined forces and provide a national research context and training programme for currently 176 senior researchers, 90 PhD candidates and 30 ReMA students.² This report focusses on NOSTER's contribution to the training of PhD candidates as well as on NOSTER's contributions to national research collaboration.³

NOSTER's previous assessment took place in June 2014, when the Research School Accreditation Committee (*Erkenningscommissie Onderzoeksscholen*; ECOS) of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) granted NOSTER re-accreditation for six years based on the evaluation period 2005-2012 and NOSTER's plans for the future. Later it was decided that the quality assessment of research schools would become part of the research and teaching assessments of the Faculties that act as host institutions (*penvoerders*). Until the end of 2016, NOSTER was hosted at the Faculty of Humanities, Utrecht University. As of 1 January 2017, the Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies of Radboud University (PTR) has functioned as NOSTER's host institution. PTR and the Utrecht Faculty of Humanities agreed that the NOSTER assessment would be included in the PTR research assessment, rather than be included in the research assessment of Religious Studies and Islamic & Arabic Studies at Utrecht University in October 2018.

This self-assessment starts by providing relevant organisational information in Section 2. Major issues addressed in the 2014 assessment report are discussed in Section 3. The PhD candidate training programme in theology and religious studies is presented in Section 4. Section 5 focusses on interinstitutional research activities in theology and religious studies initiated, facilitated or organised by NOSTER. The report concludes with a SWOT analysis in Section 6.

2. Organisational Information

Host institution ('penvoerder'): Faculty of Humanities, Utrecht University (1995-2016); Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies, Radboud University (2017-present).

Director: Professor dr. Anne-Marie Korte (Utrecht University, 2009-2016); Professor dr. Heleen Murre-van den Berg (Radboud University, 2017- June 2019); Professor dr. Frans Wijzen (Radboud University, July 2019 - present).

¹ While there is one Belgian/Flemish institution that participates in NOSTER (Evangelical Theological Faculty, Leuven), most of NOSTER's work focusses on the Dutch national context.

² Participating institutions and an overview of the number of members are listed in the Appendix: Tables 1 and 2 respectively.

³ NOSTER's contribution to the training of ReMA students will be evaluated during upcoming assessments of the ReMA programmes.

Staff: director (0.2 FTE in 2013-2016; 0.15 FTE in 2017-2018), executive secretary (0.4 FTE), curriculum coordinator (0.2 FTE) and secretary (0.5 FTE in 2013-2016; 0.3 FTE in 2017-2018); total: 1.3 FTE in 2013-2016; 1.05 FTE in 2017-2018.

Academic mission: NOSTER offers a cutting-edge and challenging curriculum in theology and religious studies for junior researchers (ReMA students and PhD candidates) of the participating institutions. The programme has three major objectives. Firstly, it serves to familiarise junior researchers with a range of research forms and methodologies in the field of theology and religious studies, offering a wide variety of perspectives, building on and complementing what their home institutions have on offer. Secondly, the programme provides specific training in the skills and techniques of the disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches in theology and religious studies. Finally, NOSTER contributes to the formation of a national academic community in the field of theology and religious studies, a community that embraces both new generations of researchers as well as established scholars at the participating institutions, sensitizing them to innovative disciplinary and interdisciplinary developments and to theoretical and methodological alternatives. In addition, NOSTER stimulates new initiatives and explorations in research and provides a national platform to foster communication between the participating institutes with a view to both short and long-term research collaboration.

NOSTER cooperation is based on the Common Regulation 2017-2021 (*Gemeenschappelijke Regeling 2017-2021*) for research schools in the humanities domain, accepted by the Council of Deans of the Faculties of Arts and Humanities (DLG), and signed by the Executive Boards of the general universities (LU, RU, TiU, UA, UG, UU and VU).⁴ The specialized universities participating in NOSTER, mostly in the theological domain (ETF, PThU, TUA, TUK and UHS), signed an Agreement of Cooperation (*Samenwerkingsovereenkomst*) subordinated to the Common Regulation. In 2018, the NOSTER School Board adopted Internal Rules of Operation (*Huishoudelijk Reglement*) specifying some of the procedures for NOSTER. As proposed by the Common Regulation, strategic plans are to be drafted every five years, setting out the plans for the coming years. The most recent NOSTER Policy Plan (2017-2021) was accepted by the School Board in 2017.⁵

The NOSTER School Board includes formal representatives from all participating institutions.⁶ The Board is responsible for strategic decision-making and annual budgets and report approval. NOSTER has two advisory bodies: the *Junior Council* consisting of four PhD candidates and, as of 2018, two ReMA students, which plays a key role in the evaluation processes of separate curriculum events and of the curriculum as a whole; and the *Executive Board* (EB) consisting of eight senior members from the participating institutions and two Junior Council members. The

⁴ The current Common Regulation was preceded by the Common Regulation 2012-2016. The list of general and specialized universities that participate in NOSTER (including the abbreviations for the names of these institutions as used in this self-assessment report) can be found in Table 1 in the Appendix.

⁵ These documents (in Dutch) can be found on [the NOSTER website](#).

⁶ See Table 1 in the Appendix.

EB decides on the grants for Thematic Seminars and Research Collaboration Groups (Section 5), and advises the office on finance, curriculum and research policies.

Previously, all participating institutions paid an annual contribution to NOSTER, the size of which was determined by the School Board. As of 2017, NOSTER adheres to the DLG regulations for research schools in the humanities domain, with each institution paying an annual contribution depending on size plus a one-time contribution of €1k for each PhD candidate registered with NOSTER. The annual contribution of UA, UU, RU, VU, UG, LU and TiU is determined by DLG; that of ETF, PThU, TUA, TUK and UHS is determined by the School Board.

3. Recommendations from the Previous Assessment

On July 9, 2014, ECOS granted NOSTER re-accreditation for the next six years based on the 2013 self-assessment report, the 2013 report of an international peer review committee, and NOSTER's 2014 response to additional questions from ECOS. In this section, we briefly summarise comments made by ECOS and the review committee, and describe improvements made by NOSTER in 2013-2018.

The 2014 ECOS report, while overall positive about NOSTER and its activities in the field of post-graduate education and research collaboration, identified three areas requiring sustained attention in the coming years: its disciplinary and transdisciplinary positioning (both national and international), its gender policies, and its long term viability, especially with respect to PhD candidate numbers. These three issues are briefly addressed in the context of responses to the 2014 ECOS questions given by the NOSTER director, Professor dr. Anne-Marie Korte, and serve as an introduction to the remainder of this self-assessment.

NOSTER's positioning in the wider field of theology and religious studies has remained high on the agenda in the past five years. In line with recommendations, NOSTER has committed to offering its junior and senior members access to contemporary research in the field of theology and religious studies and to trends in the humanities. NOSTER is inclusive, inviting contributions from scholars from related fields and choosing and approaching themes from other perspectives. It has sought and often succeeded in inviting scholars working at the forefront of new developments, for example, as suggested in the report, concerning "religion and sexuality/violence/media/law", "the imagination of religious pluralism", and "the field of comparative religion". NOSTER has ensured that the range of teaching activities represents as wide an introduction to the field as possible, and that the sub-fields of theology and religious studies are fully integrated and approached in tandem, rather than relegated to distinct sessions and seminars. Moreover, NOSTER has expanded its collaboration with other research schools and professional organisations (Section 4), has actively participated in the discussions about the National Research Agenda (*Nationale Wetenschapsagenda*), and is continually working to expand its national and international network in the fields of theology and religious studies, as well as in adjacent fields (Section 5).

This has not yet resulted in intensified forms of institutional cooperation among the participating institutions. This is mainly due to the 2017 decision to gear the financial and organisational

structures of the humanities research schools in the Netherlands mostly towards PhD and ReMA training, rather than to national and international research collaboration. However, given these budgetary constraints, NOSTER has taken a number of initiatives to foster research collaboration; this is discussed in Section 5. Moreover, the NOSTER School Board recently decided to spend a considerable part of its reserve funds on a large-scale common research project proposal (Section 5) By investing in the development of such a research proposal, NOSTER aims to foster fundamental collaboration between different participating institutions and to move the field forward both nationally and internationally.

The issue of gender balance raised by the 2014 ECOS committee continues to be a cause for concern, with a (considerable) majority of men in higher positions. While the majority of NOSTER staff members are female, including its former and current director, the male/female ratio among PhD candidates has shifted slightly in favour of men (53/47% in January 2019, compared to 50/50% in January 2013). Moreover, there has been no change in the gender imbalance among senior members, which remains stable at 73/27%. Notably, the NOSTER School Board (including institutional representatives) has a 58/42% male/female ratio. The committee preparing the large-scale research project (partly recruited from the same intuitional representatives, partly from those with major research grants) has a male/female ratio of 81/19%. The NOSTER Executive Board currently has a 60/40% division. These numbers indicate that, while progress has been achieved regarding the position of female institutional leadership, improvements are needed among the more experienced senior researchers. While NOSTER is dependent on the hiring and representational practices of the participating institutions, it is committed to ensuring that gender and diversity related themes are continually on the agenda (e.g., in the Research Seminar in Religion, Theology and Gender, the Intensive Text Reading Seminar 'The Challenge of Difference', and the Grand Course 2017), and that more women are invited to teach seminars and to contribute to lectures and workshops. We should note that it has proven difficult to find more women to teach the seminars, perhaps because, as the Dutch Network of Women Professors (LNVH) has recently argued, women in senior positions tend to have heavy workloads at their home institutions.

Finally, the issue of size and viability addressed by ECOS continues to be a concern. While the total number of junior members (PhD candidates) increased strongly in the first years of the period 2013-2018, the number of *new* PhD candidates has decreased in recent years: 25 in 2015, 17 in 2016, 14 in 2017, 7 in 2018. Unless there is a surge of new PhD candidates, we can expect the total number of PhD candidates to decrease considerably in the near future. This has already had an effect on NOSTER income, as institutions pay €1k for the whole membership period of a new PhD candidate. A possible cause for the decline in the number of PhD candidates is the closure of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) Programme 'Religion in Modern Society' (2013-2018), which yielded several PhD candidates. Additionally, the participating institutions have little funding available for full-time PhD candidates. The success of the NOSTER PhD programme, therefore, is largely dependent on the institutions' successes in acquiring grants in the field that enable them to hire new PhD candidates (see Section 5: NOSTER's plans for a major funding application).

4. Training PhD Candidates

As indicated in the introduction, all NOSTER courses, seminars and meetings are open to both PhD candidates and ReMA students. While this report focusses on PhD education, the number of ReMA students has increased considerably in the past five years, thereby contributing to the liveliness and viability of all of these courses. Most institutions require their ReMA students to take 6 to 10 ECs with one or more of the national research schools in the humanities. However, they merely encourage their PhD candidates to become members of a research school while not requiring them to complete a minimum number of ECs. In general, most institutions allow ReMA students and PhD candidates to individually choose one of the research schools rather than direct them to one school in particular. Notably, membership of one school automatically gives students access to programmes at other schools, without further fees. On the one hand, this means that the research schools compete for students and are not naturally inclined to collaborate. On the other hand, it allows students to choose from a wide variety of (inter/trans) disciplinary courses. The humanities research schools are united in LOGOS (Council of Dutch Research Schools in the Humanities), which was chaired by Professor dr. Heleen Murre-van den Berg between May 2017 and May 2019.

Since 2016, NOSTER has worked closely together with the Netherlands Interuniversity School for Islamic Studies (NISIS), sharing annual events. NOSTER regularly sponsors the annual NGG conference (the Dutch Association for Religious Studies), stimulating NOSTER members' participation with free attendance. In 2018, the NGG-conference was preceded by a combined NOSTER-NGG masterclass as part of the NOSTER curriculum.

The NOSTER curriculum includes two types of meetings. The first are the Research Seminars (2.5 ECs) consisting of ten half-day meetings per year. NOSTER offers six Research Seminars on a variety of sub-disciplines: (a) Empirical Research in Religion; (b) Biblical Studies; (c) Historical Research in Theology and Religious Studies; (d) Dogmatics, Ethics and Philosophy of Religion; (e) Religious Studies; (f) and Religion, Theology and Gender. Participants (5-15 per monthly seminar) discuss their research-in-progress as well as concepts, methods, publication strategies and other topics relevant for the discipline. Seminars are usually taught by two senior members with expertise in the sub-field. In addition, the monthly Intensive Text Reading Seminar 'The Challenge of Difference' (5 ECs) offers candidates the opportunity to explore formative texts for the interdisciplinary study of religion within the humanities and the qualitative and conceptual studies in the social sciences, in particular from gender-critical, postcolonial, and post-secular perspectives. Most of NOSTER's junior members will attend at least one of these ongoing seminars, which introduces them into disciplinary peer-groups within the wider field of Theology/Religious Studies.

The second type of meetings are one or two-day *annual events* that aim at all NOSTER's junior researchers, irrespective of their specific research foci. The programmes of these events often include lectures, workshops, panel debates, or discussions, focussing on interdisciplinary themes and general skills. Each year we offer:

- *Opening of the Academic Year* (0.5 EC): a one-day event in September; in the morning, participants attend a session of one of the Research Seminars (see above), while the plenary afternoon programme focusses on current issues in the study of theology and religious studies;
- *Midyear Meeting* (0.5 EC): a one-day event in January/February, initiated in 2015 and co-organised with NISIS from 2017; in the morning, participants attend a session of one of the Research Seminars in the morning programme, while the plenary afternoon programme focusses on career perspectives in and outside of academia;
- *Spring Conference* (1-2 ECs, depending on whether the participant presents a paper): a two-day conference in April with a keynote from a senior scholar, research presentations, and workshops;
- *Grand Course* (2 ECs; an additional 3 ECs for participants who write a paper): a two or three-day event in which a group of about fifteen participants reflect on a theme from different disciplinary perspectives by discussing preparatory readings, and listening to and engaging with guest speakers. In 2016, the Grand Course was integrated into a two-day Autumn Conference with NISIS; in 2018, the Grand Course consisted of a masterclass plus the NGG conference.

The themes of the Opening of the Academic Year, the Midyear Meeting, the Grand Course and the plenary lecture at the Spring Conference over the past years are listed in Table 4b in the Appendix. The numbers of PhD candidates participating in each curriculum event per year are shown in Table 4a.

It is important to note that NOSTER does not provide specific requirements to PhD candidates. The latter can freely choose from the courses and events that NOSTER offers, in addition to complement courses they take at their local graduate schools or at other research schools. However, those who want a NOSTER certificate need to follow the 15 EC “PhD Study Programme”. By following this programme, PhD candidates achieve all three objectives of the NOSTER curriculum: disciplinary training, interdisciplinary introduction in the field and transferable skills, and introduction into the academic research community of theology and religious studies. The programme consists of compulsory elements including a two-year participation in a Research Seminar, and participation in two Spring Conferences, with two presentations on recently started and advanced dissertation research respectively, and a selection of electives.

All courses and events are evaluated by participants and by NOSTER staff. After each curriculum event, NOSTER sends a digital survey to all participants. Evaluation reports are written by the Junior Council and discussed by the NOSTER staff; research seminar evaluations are also sent to seminar teachers. Regular meetings with seminar teachers are organised to discuss the results, and follow-up actions are also addressed by the Junior Council and the Executive Board. Overall, NOSTER is confident that procedures are in place to adequately monitor the programme’s quality, even if the number of respondents is not always high. In these cases, the Junior Council is willing and able to see to what extent any criticism needs to be addressed. In general, the Junior Council and the Executive Board are important partners in discussions on new types of courses, new teachers, and new topics for the NOSTER programme. The increasing number of

ReMA students has caused NOSTER to re-evaluate its grading and assessment procedures.⁷ In line with regulations for the graduate schools, it has decided to introduce assessment procedures for all courses with a minimum of 3 ECs, accompanied by more precise descriptions of learning objectives and assessment procedures. While this has slightly increased the administrative workload of NOSTER staff and seminar teachers, it helps ReMA students and PhD candidates to be more aware of the level and kind of work expected for each individual course or event.

Overall, PhD candidates are positive about the NOSTER curriculum (7-8 on a 1-10 scale). These high scores can be attributed to the successful creation of an inter-institutional interactive PhD research community, where candidates appreciate the diversity of subjects on offer, even if occasionally some raise the issues of ‘too much theology’ or ‘too much religious studies’.

5. National Research Collaboration

As indicated in the 2014 accreditation, the national graduate schools are seen by many as a platform for national research collaboration and national research agenda integration. As of 2017, however, to adhere to DLG regulations, NOSTER’s budget has been geared solely towards PhD candidate and ReMA student education, with only a limited budget to support activities of senior scholars or activities that promote the field as whole. Despite these financial constraints, NOSTER has been and continues to be active in this field, partly because it can source funds set aside in earlier periods, and partly because NOSTER combines research and training aspects to benefit both junior and senior members. In the following section, we list the most important of contributions to the field of national research collaboration, which, in many examples, also includes incidental or long-term cooperation with scholars from abroad.

In recent years, NOSTER has (co-)sponsored ‘Thematic Seminars’ (average annual budget of €4k) organized by scholars from a number of the participating institutions, and actively involving junior researchers. The second type of (co-)sponsoring are the ‘Research Collaboration Groups’ (average annual budget of €2k) that involve scholars from more than one participating institution, who work together on a common research project (e.g. an edited volume or special issue of a journal, a conference, or a major research funding application). Overviews of Thematic Seminars and Research Collaboration Groups (co-)sponsored by NOSTER are included in the Appendix: Tables 5a and 5b.

In 2015, the government initiated the National Research Agenda (NWA: *Nationale Wetenschapsagenda*), soliciting research questions from academia as well as from the broader public. NOSTER contributed four research questions to this Agenda. Despite these efforts, however, in the final 25 programmes or ‘routes’, religion remains a marginal research theme. Nevertheless, a number of these 25 programmes – such as “Between Conflict and Cooperation” or “The Origin of Life: On Earth and in the Cosmos” – provide interesting starting points for research in the religious domain.

⁷ ReMA students are enrolled in regular 120 EC taught programmes. PhD candidates, however, are not considered students and in most cases they do not need ECs.

NOSTER played a key role in the 2016/2017 consultations regarding the new QRiH (Quality and Relevance in the Humanities) protocol for research assessment. While the role of the research schools in relation to the university and faculty boards in the various domains was not clearly demarcated, NOSTER was able to comment on and contribute to QRiH in its present form, and hopes to contribute to the next round of consultation and improvement following up on the current round of research assessments.

In 2015, a KNAW Exploration Committee on Theology and Religious Studies published the report Klaar om te wenden (“Ready about”). This report firstly describes the many difficulties that universities, faculties and departments of theology and/or religious studies in the Netherlands face. It recommends establishing a Netherlands Academy of Religion (NAR) to break through institutional “inertia” and that the NAR takes steps towards the necessary reform of methods and content, based on shared interests. Moreover, the NAR should set a national research agenda with a common theme for the field of theology and religious studies. While the report was received positively and a committee (including NOSTER’s director) was formed to work towards the set goals, this did not lead to concrete results. After a year, the committee prematurely ended its activities, and plans for a NAR were shelved.

NOSTER has committed itself to address as many of the NAR’s objectives within its institutional, practical, and financial possibilities. The most important of these is the common research agenda, which has now taken the form of a committee with senior researchers from nearly all participating institutions. They are working on a collaborative grant proposal for the next round of Zwaartekracht funding.⁸ Since mid-2018, the committee has regularly met to develop a joint research programme that aims to bring the national field to the forefront of research in theology and religious studies, and to strengthen the field by integrating university and institution research programmes, by supporting and expanding collaboration with scholars of religion in related fields, and by providing opportunities for young researchers. For the years 2018-2020, the NOSTER School Board has agreed to set aside funding for these meetings, including a number of workshops and a major conference leading up to the finalization of the proposal in 2020/2021. Along the way, regardless of the proposal’s outcome, its activities will be set up in such a way that the field benefits from the process as much as from the outcome.

In 2019, NOSTER will initiate another project related to KNAW report recommendations: the creation of an online theology and religious studies portal that actively and collectively showcases the diverse and complicated landscape of the study of religion, with as many cross-references and search options as possible. This project will also be funded from surplus funds.

As indicated above, NOSTER is confident that these projects will benefit PhD candidates and ReMA students in the initial phases of their research, and stimulate senior researchers in our field to engage more with colleagues in the Netherlands and Flanders as well as further abroad. NOSTER hopes and expects that, due to its longstanding experience in the academic field of theology and religious studies in the Netherlands, it can and should continue to play a key role: this will undoubtedly present many challenges.

⁸ ‘Gravitation’ is a form of direct government research funding by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, facilitated by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research.

6. Strengths and Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities

Strengths

- NOSTER has well-trained staff and a stable organisation and office, previously in Utrecht and currently in Nijmegen. This became clear when long-term director Professor dr. Anne-Marie Korte fell ill in 2016. Building on Korte's groundwork, NOSTER was able to continue its work smoothly and facilitate the move to Nijmegen, after which NOSTER was up and running quickly and efficiently, despite staff changes and staff size reductions.
- NOSTER's PhD candidates are loyal and committed: they actively contribute to NOSTER through the Junior Council and Executive Board, and many take courses even if their home institution does not require them to do so.
- NOSTER is administered by active and supportive School Board and Executive Board members.
- The participating institutions and their teaching and research staff show long-term commitment.
- NOSTER is financially stable due to long-term financial commitments from the participating institutions.

Weaknesses

The institutional cooperation that constitutes the strength of NOSTER can easily become a weakness should the participating institutions disagree on major aspects of university politics and research priorities. This may result from their distinct methodological and theoretical traditions and/or their very different institutional structures; these range from being part of large general universities and faculties of humanities with separate Theology and/or Religious Studies Faculties/Departments, or even independent specialist universities. While all participants value the cooperation in and through NOSTER, different views regarding educational and research emphasis in the participating institutions can lead to differing ideas about how NOSTER should add to what they themselves are doing. To date, NOSTER has been able to successfully manage these different expectations; however, changes in government or university policies or in the religious landscape of the Netherlands or further afield may lead to new discussions, including NOSTER's future role.

Threats

- The numbers of PhD candidates with a paid position at participating institutions is declining. This directly impacts annual finances and the viability of some of the research seminars. In response to this threat, NOSTER is developing new ideas for PhD (and ReMA) education, i.e., by devising new types of seminars, combining existing seminars, and/or collaborating with other research schools in various sub-domains.
- Increasing work pressures on academics make it more difficult to find suitable teaching staff.
- As part of the problems of the humanities as a whole, the field of theology and religious studies is increasingly under pressure, both financially and conceptually.
- The reorganisation of NWO and in particular the establishment of a Domain of Social Sciences and Humanities may reduce funding opportunities for research proposals in the field of theology and religious studies (while it provides opportunities for funding applications for interdisciplinary research projects).

Opportunities

- LG's request to develop a plan to spend a major part of NOSTER's financial reserves has created an opportunity for NOSTER to invest in the future by preparing for and submitting a major research grant proposal. If and when funding is awarded, it will strengthen the field (and thus NOSTER) considerably, contributing to educating the next generation of researchers and teachers. Should the proposal not be accepted, working towards a common research agenda in itself will strengthen the field.
- Despite the relatively weak position of theology and religious studies research groups, and the diminishing numbers of students, the topic of 'religion' remains high on the agenda at universities, in their departments, and in the outside world. Collaboration within and outside our field will lead to increasing visibility and further opportunities for research and teaching. The increasing emphasis by funding organisations on viewing the field of Humanities and Social Sciences as one field, may provide opportunities for Religious Studies, as we have a long history of combining theories and methodologies from both disciplinary fields.

7. Appendix

Table 1: Participating institutions and School Board members

Institutions	Relevant units at each institution	Abbrev.	Current School Board members
Evangelical Theological Faculty, Leuven, BE	N/A	ETF	dr. M. Verhoeff
Protestant Theological University, Amsterdam/ Groningen	N/A	PThU	prof. dr. M.M. Jansen
Leiden University	Leiden University Centre for the Study of Religion	LU	prof. dr. J. Frishman
Radboud University, Nijmegen	Faculty of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies	RU	prof. dr. F.J.S. Wijzen
Theological University of the Christian Reformed Churches, Apeldoorn	N/A	TUA	prof. dr. H.J. Selderhuis
Theological University of the Reformed Churches (liberated), Kampen	N/A	TUK	prof. dr. R. Kuiper
Tilburg University	Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences & Tilburg School of Catholic Theology	TiU (TSHD & TST)	prof. dr. M. Sarot
University of Amsterdam	Capacity Group Religious Studies	UA	prof. dr. J.W. van Henten
University of Groningen	Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies	UG	prof. dr. M. Popović
University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht	N/A	UHS	prof. dr. G.J.L.M. Lensvelt-Mulders
Utrecht University	Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Faculty of Humanities	UU	prof. dr. M.T. Frederiks
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam	Faculty of Religion and Theology	VU	prof. dr. R.R. Ganzevoort

Table 2: Members⁹

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
ReMA students	6	14	21	18	30	41
Junior members (PhD candidates)	47	56	68	83	79	87
Senior members (postdocs, assist./assoc./full profs.)	147	158	154	168	174	176
Total	200	228	243	259	283	304

⁹ The numbers provided refer to the number of members at the end of each year.

Table 3: Annual balance sheets¹⁰

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total income	92	91	92	96	102	-
Expenses on teaching	14	14	16	19	20	-
Expenses on research collaboration	3	6	1	4	6	-
Expenses on PR, meetings etc.	2	1	2	6	2	-
Expenses on staff and overhead costs	65	59	70	83	61	-
Balance viz. use of reserves	8	11	3	-16	13	-

Table 4a: Number of PhD candidates participating in each curriculum event (per year and average [x])

Name	Type	EC	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	[x]
Opening of the Academic Year	Central event	1.0	36	30	29	47	26	14	30
Midyear Meeting	Central event	1.0	N/A	N/A	29	26	35	29	30
Spring Conference	Central event	1-2	35	41	35	41	36	25	36
Grand Course	Central event	2-5	N/A	8	N/A	N/A	7	4	6
Autumn School with NISIS (2016)	Central event	2	N/A	N/A	N/A	22	N/A	N/A	22
Religion, Theology, Gender	Research Seminar	2.5	8	9	6	6	4	5	6
Religious Studies	Research Seminar	2.5	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	5	5	5
Empirical Research	Research Seminar	2.5	24	26	14	14	16	24	20
Historical Research	Research Seminar	2.5	12	13	10	10	9	6	10
Dogmatics, Ethics, Philosophy of Religion	Research Seminar	2.5	12	14	8	8	8	6	9
Biblical Studies	Research Seminar	2.5	9	21	13	13	12	12	13
Key Concepts	Research Seminar	2.5	N/A	N/A	6	N/A	N/A	N/A	6
The Challenge of Difference	Text Reading Seminar	5	7	9	10	10	5	7	8
The Study of Religion	Text Reading Seminar	5	N/A	N/A	7	7	N/A	N/A	7

¹⁰ Amounts in k€. The Balance Sheet 2018 has not yet been approved by the NOSTER School Board.

Table 4b: Themes of the central events

Curriculum event	Year	Theme
Opening of the Academic Year	2013	Career Perspectives for PhD Candidates in Theology and Religious Studies
Opening of the Academic Year	2014	Academic Integrity
Opening of the Academic Year	2015	Reflections on the Report <i>Klaar om te wenden</i> by the KNAW foresight committee
Opening of the Academic Year	2016	[No afternoon programme]
Opening of the Academic Year	2017	Current Research Themes in Theology and Religious Studies in the Netherlands
Opening of the Academic Year	2018	Positionality in Research
Midyear Meeting	2015	Writing Research Applications (PhD, Veni, Rubicon etc.)
Midyear Meeting	2016	Working in Business, Journalism, or Policy Advising after finishing a PhD in Theology or Religious Studies
Midyear Meeting	2017	The Academic as Entrepreneur
Midyear Meeting	2018	Academic Biographies
Spring Conference	2013	Valorisation: Examples and Benefits
Spring Conference	2014	From Exploration to Exposition: Making Research Accessible to a Broad Audience
Spring Conference	2015	State of the Art and Future Prospects of Theology and Religious Studies
Spring Conference	2016	The Future of the Field of Theology and Religious Studies
Spring Conference	2017	Explaining the Humanities in Times of Repression
Spring Conference	2018	Migration, Religion and the Identity of Europe: Contributions and Challenges for Theologians and Scholars of Religion
Grand Course	2014	Food for Thought
Grand Course	2017	Race-Religion Constellations
Grand Course	2018	Interpreting Rituals: Historiographical Perspectives and Pluralistic Contexts
Autumn School with NISIS	2016	Religion and Modernity: Oppositional Pairing?

Table 5a: Overview of Thematic Seminars (co)funded by NOSTER in 2013-2018

Title	Date
Silence and Religion in Film	30-05-2013
Lived Religion: Studying Religious Practice	24-10-2013
The Post-modern Theologian as Witness to Dispossession (seminar with Thomas M. Beaudoin)	10-04-2014
Private Parts and Public Debate: Circumcision as a Contested Practice	10-04-2014
Metamorphoses of Christianity in Philosophy, Art and Literature (seminar with Jean-Luc Nancy)	10-06-2014
A Quest for Quality of Life: Spiritual Discernment and Choice in Contexts of Societal Renewal	27-06-2014
Co-publication Strategies in Theology and Religious Studies	14-11-2014
D'Costa & Kearney	04-06-2015
Making the Case on Chaplaincy & Spiritual Care	23-03-2015
Religion and the Crisis of Meaning	29-10-2015
Paul's Contexts	06-06-2016
Devotio: Individualization of Religious Practices in Western European Christianity c. 1350 / c. 1550)	26-10-2016
Public Religions and Their Secrets	26-10-2016
Transgender, Religion and Faith	31-10-2016
Dynamics of Religious Diversity	19-10-2017
Religion and Philosophy of Life at Public Institutions	07-06-2017
Does the Secular Matter?	18-04-2017
Memory, Orality and Performance and the New Testament	12-06-2017
Exploring New Directions towards an Interdisciplinary Study of the Life Worlds of Believers	08-02-2018
The Pastoral Epistles	30-11-2018
'Traditional Values' versus 'Human Rights'	01-10-2018
Exploring Intersections of Embodiment and Agency in Religious-secular Formations	27-02-2019
Evolution and Religion	27-08-2018
Teaching Material in Religious Education	31-10-2018
Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion	10-12-2018

Table 5b: Overview of Research Collaboration Groups (co)funded by NOSTER in 2013-2018

Title	Period
Canon, Commentary, Heritage	2015
Case Studies Project Spiritual Care Givers	2016-2018
Death and Consolation	2012-2013
Evangelical Theology in Transition	2008-2014
Film and Religion	2010-2015
Future of Religious Leadership	2013-2014
Iconoclashes.... Pussy Riot	2013
Meals in Search of Meaning	2016-2018
Synopsis Purioris Theologiae	2012-2015
Theology after Gulag	2016-2018

