Criteria and indicators for visualising theological research and evaluating its quality – a bottom-up approach

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outline

◦ the project, our approach
◦ quality criteria for research in theology
  ◦ online survey
  ◦ preliminary results
◦ discussion
project

- "Resource-based instrument for documenting and evaluating research in the humanities and the social sciences as exemplified by theology"
- SUK-Programme P-3: «Performances de la recherche en sciences humaines et sociales»
objective

- map, visualise and position research in theology as example for SSH, i.e.:
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  - Define criteria that are fit to adequately describe research in theology and assess research quality
  - Create and provide an open-source software application
objective

◦ map, visualise and position research in theology as example for SSH, i.e.:
◦ define criteria that are fit to adequately describe research in theology and assess research quality
◦ create and provide an open-source software application
◦ adaption and further development of the criteria-set and the software application
approach
approach

- bottom-up
approach

- bottom-up
- expert-interviews, focus group discussions, 3-part online survey
approach

◦ bottom-up

◦ expert-interviews, focus group discussions, 3-part online survey

◦ regular exchange with deans and faculty members; consultation of experts from theology and experts from research evaluation in the SSH
quality criteria
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- feedback to survey 1: criteria not specific for theology, they are not adequately integrating the characteristics of the discipline
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- discussion within the discipline whether to stress commonalities with other disciplines or to stress the distinctive features, the differences
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- discussion within the discipline whether to stress commonalities with other disciplines or to stress the distinctive features, the differences
- proposition of a “preamble” (premisses of theology)
core criteria for research design (and realisation of the research)

suited methodology
clear research question and objective, pertinent choice of methods, openness and transparency, distinction between description and interpretation, reflection on historical, cultural, socio-political... preconditions and influences on research, intelligibility, ethical and legal awareness and sensitivity

integration into the scientific community
reflection of and positioning to state of research, positioning to schools of thought, production of new knowledge, introducing new areas of research

topicality and connectivity
openness to interdisciplinary research designs, collaboration, connection with current social issues and issues in church, ecumenical compatibility, openness to and awareness of interreligious issues

innovation and creativity
use of new materials, generation of knowledge and new interpretations, new methods and areas of research

feasibility
feasible objective (research question and methods), realistic planning of financial resources and staff, time management

orientation of research
relevance
relevance as basic research, relevance as applied research, relevance for scientific discourse, relevance for societal discourse, relevance for church

transfer
impulses for teaching, inspiration from teaching, commissioned research and expert opinions etc., public outreach and communication with wider public

sustainability
public access to research results and preservation of research, creating sustainable research structures and networks, long-term research (continuity in research topics)
reception of research
recognition
reception in scientific community (national and international), societal reception, recognition by church

research performance and competencies of the researcher
performance up to date
quality of previous research output, quantity of research output, third-party funding, integrity and good practice

exchange and cooperation
exchange and cooperation within the university (intra- and interfaculty), scholarly exchange and cooperation on national level, . . . on international level, exchange and cooperation with non-academic players

transversal competences
capacity for teamwork, leadership and managerial qualities, constructive dealing with criticism, communication skills (intra- and extra-scientific community)

motivation
identification with the research area, intrinsic motivation to do research

research environment
independence and impartiality
freedom in choice of research topics and methods, openness of results, critical distance towards expectations of different stakeholders

infrastructure
provision of basic infrastructure (work station, access to databases, archives etc.), administrative support

favourable surrounding circumstances
long-term institutionalisation of research structures, fruitful and inspiring atmosphere, promotion of diversity in research teams (age, sex, cultural background etc.), endorsement of unconventional research approaches to avoid standardisation

promotion of young researchers
integration in research teams, integration in the wider scientific community, career opportunities for young researchers
results
results

- weight of the criteria is considered slightly different by protestant and catholic faculties, and by young and advanced researchers
- major differences between the subdisciplines (exegetical theology, historical theology, systematic theology, practical theology)