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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
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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
- adaption and further development of the criteria-set and the software application

approach

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- bottom-up

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

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- 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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- 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

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- 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)