

From:
Professor Jeremy Carrette
(University of Kent, Canterbury)
Professor Linda Woodhead
(University of Lancaster)

External Reviewers for Religion,
University of Stirling, May 2013

Professor Gerry McCormac
University Principal and Vice-Chancellor
University of Stirling
Stirling, FK9 4LA.

Dear Professor McCormac,

RE: Religion Review Report 2013 and the future of Religion at Stirling

While we are wary of stepping into management decisions when we do not know the full situation, we hope our comments will be taken in that spirit and be seen as part of a considered management reflection on the present complex situation in relation to the future of religion at Stirling. We feel that it might be useful to draw attention to the 2013 review of religion, which we carried out as external advisers, and which management may not be fully aware. The recommendations of which offer positive ways for a sustainable future for the study of religion at Stirling, as part of the enhancement of the arts and humanities.

While there is obvious national and international concern that the only independent department of religion in Scotland faces closure and an example of the unique tradition of Religious Studies, established by new universities in the 1960s is being threatened, we are also concerned that a careful review held at the University of Stirling in 2013, which offers effective solutions, does not appear to have been implemented or fully explored.

As members of the University of Stirling religion review panel of May 2013, we wish the recommendations of the 2013 report be considered in full to show how religion can be part of a strong future as a joint honours programme. While we recognise that it may not be viable to continue religious studies as a stand alone subject, we recommended that it should be integrated in new ways, just as it has in some other universities. We thought that with a small amount of investment, particularly in a leader who can push things in this direction, much could be gained.

We ask the senior management to consider the recommendations of the report to enhance the market of religion as an academic course and enhance the interdisciplinary strength of the University of Stirling across philosophy, history and

education with religion. To lose religion, as the report recognizes, is to lose a “vital and vibrant aspect of the arts and humanities” and something that undermines the diverse subject base at the University of Stirling, of which religion forms a key part. To undermine religion is to undermine the arts and humanities at Stirling, because religion remains an interdisciplinary project.

We would like to underline the recommendations of the report to explore the “research synergies with English and CMC”, the value of a senior appointment in one of the joint honours programmes to integrate the provision of religion, to rebrand the study of religion and explore new programmes of study. We believe, as the report and examination of the subject at Stirling revealed - from numerous interviews with staff across the arts and humanities and examination of the extensive documentation - that these changes will enhance the University of Stirling and its renewal of religion as a joint honours undergraduate course.

These decisions are not about emotive demands for keeping subjects against economic and educational sense, but concrete realities about the vitality of religion as part of the arts and humanities. We ask you therefore to reconsider any closure of religion for its value to national education and the arts and humanities provision at the University of Stirling.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "pp. Jeremy Carrette". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

Professor Jeremy Carrette & Professor Linda Woodhead