

## **Appendix A**

### **Research ethics information sheet for staff and students involved in the research project**



## **Information Sheet**

### **Inquiry-Based Learning in Theology and Religious Studies**

#### **1. Research Project Title:**

Inquiry-Based Learning in Theology and Religious Studies

#### **2. Invitation paragraph**

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide whether or not to participate, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

#### **3. What is the project's purpose?**

This mini-project is a collaboration between the Higher Education Academy Subject Centre for Philosophy and Religious Studies at the University of Leeds (PRS) and the Centre for Inquiry-Based Learning in the Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Sheffield (CILASS). It will examine the potential for inquiry-based learning (self-directed exploration or research) in Theology and Religious Studies and suggest potential areas of future collaboration between CILASS and PRS. The mini-project will run from September 2007 to January 2008 and will culminate in a joint PRS-CILASS conference in May 2008.

#### **4. Why have I been chosen?**

As part of the mini-project, we would like to consult with a sample of people – academics and students – about their experiences and opinions of the

pedagogies (learning and teaching methods) in use in Theology and Religious Studies at the higher education level, particularly inquiry-based learning. We are also interested in the experiences of students in other arts and humanities subjects, since this may help to inform practice in Theology and Religious Studies. You have been selected to take part because it is our view that you have had some form of exposure either to Theology and Religious Studies pedagogies, which may include inquiry-based learning, or to inquiry-based learning in other arts or humanities disciplines, and will therefore have something to contribute to our research on the value and potential of inquiry-based learning in Theology and Religious Studies.

**5. Do I have to take part?**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep (and be asked to sign a consent form) and you can still withdraw at any time without it affecting any benefits that you are entitled to in any way. You do not have to give a reason.

**6. What will happen to me if I take part?**

If you take part and you are a member of staff, you will participate in an in-depth one-to-one interview which. If you are a student, you will participate in a focus-group interview with other students, of various levels, from your discipline. Interviews will usually be one to two hours in length and will be audio-recorded. Other research activities (usually in the form of further interviews) may be added from time to time.

**7. What do I have to do?**

To participate in this research, at a minimum, you will need to attend a minimum of one interview (one-to-one in the case of staff; focus group in the case of students) between October 2007 and January 2008. Other opportunities may be made available as well.

**8. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

There are no foreseeable physical risks to participants.

The research procedures to be used will (in the case of student participants) include focus group interviews in which your identity will be known to the other participants. Further, and in the case of both staff and student participants, since this study involves in-depth description of your unique experiences, details of these experiences will be part of any resulting articles and other dissemination materials. Your identity will, however, be anonymised.

**9. What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Whilst there are no immediate benefits for those people participating in the project, it is hoped that this work will engender a clearer understanding of the role and potential of inquiry-based learning in Theology and Religious Studies,

suggest potential areas of future collaboration between CILASS and PRS and, ultimately, lead to the development of richer, more effective pedagogies in Theology and Religious Studies which may then be transferred for use in other disciplines.

We also hope that you will find it interesting to be involved in this research project. It will provide an opportunity for you to participate in conversations and discussions about your own and other staff/students' experiences of learning and teaching at University, as well as to learn, through participation, about what is involved in carrying out research of this kind. It will also provide an opportunity for you to contribute to the development of inquiry-based learning at Sheffield University and beyond, which you may find rewarding.

**10. Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

All the information that we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications.

**11. What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The results of this research project will be used to inform a joint CILASS-PRS conference in May 2008 on inquiry-based learning in Theology and Religious Studies. They will also be published in *Discourse*, the PRS journal, and are likely to be published on both the PRS and CILASS websites. You will not be identified in any report or publication.

**12. Who is organising and funding the research?**

This research is being funded the Higher Education Academy.

**13. Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

This project has been ethically approved via CILASS' ethics review procedure. The University's Research Ethics Committee monitors the application and delivery of the University's Ethics Review Procedure across the University.

**14. Contact for further information**

Dr. Rebecca O'Loughlin,  
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Department of Theology and Religious Studies (Hopewell House),  
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**You will be given a copy of this information sheet and a signed consent form to keep.**

**Thankyou for agreeing to take part in this project.**

## **Appendix B**

### **Consent form for staff and students involved in the research project**

**Title of Project:** Inquiry-Based Learning in Theology and Religious Studies

**Name of Researcher:** Rebecca O'Loughlin

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 5<sup>th</sup> October 2007 for the above project and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason. ☐
3. I understand that my responses will be anonymised before analysis. I give permission for members of the research team to have access to my anonymised responses. ☐
4. I agree to take part in the above research project. ☐

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant  
(or legal representative)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of person taking consent  
(if different from lead researcher)  
*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Lead Researcher  
*To be signed and dated in presence of the participant*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Copies:

*Once this has been signed by all parties the participant should receive a copy of the signed and dated participant consent form, the letter/pre-written script/information sheet and any other written information provided to the participants. A copy for the signed and dated consent form should be placed in the project's main record (e.g. a site file), which must be kept in a secure location.*

## **Appendix C**

### **Sample of staff interview questions**

1. Can you tell me a little bit about the teaching you are involved in for Biblical Studies/Religions and Theology?
2. As a theologian/religious studies academic, how do you understand the roles of the teacher and the learner in your discipline?
  - a. What constitutes teaching in TRS?<sup>140</sup>
  - b. What constitutes learning in the context of TRS?<sup>141</sup>
3. What constitutes inquiry<sup>142</sup> in the context of TRS, and what might this understanding mean for pedagogy in TRS?
4. What roles do the following play in your teaching/your students' learning:
  - a. information literacy?
  - b. networked learning?
  - c. collaborative inquiry?
5. How do you support and assess students doing their own research?
6. What has the feedback been from the students you have used IBL with?
7. What do you feel the benefits and challenges of IBL/research-based learning are for:
  - a. staff?
  - b. students?
8. How would/do you design IBL?
9. If you aren't using IBL, why not?
  - a. Is this a pedagogy you would like to use in the future?
  - b. What forms would you like IBL to take?
10. Do you have any views on IBL being a particularly appropriate pedagogy for TRS?

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<sup>140</sup> Is a teacher in TRS a facilitator or someone who transmits knowledge? Do they try to conflate the methodologies of their discipline with learning and teaching methodologies?

<sup>141</sup> Can learning be open-ended, or does it have to arrive at definite answers?

<sup>142</sup> Is inquiry *all* student learning, or a specific kind of learning which starts with a question?