The background of the entire page is a vibrant, abstract painting with swirling colors in shades of green, yellow, pink, blue, and purple. The style is expressive and textured, resembling a collage or a complex, multi-layered composition.

# Religious Literacy for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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TST Strategic Policy Plan 2022-2027

Tilburg School of Catholic Theology



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Tilburg School of Catholic Theology





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# Introduction

## Catholic theology between the past and the future

In 1927, when the Roomsche Katholieke Handelshoogeschool was first established as precursor of our present-day university, academia, the Brabant business world and a defensive Catholic identity all naturally belonged to the same environment. Just under a century later, society, the university and religion have changed radically. And even though religious knowledge and literacy have dramatically declined, religion remains an ineluctable reality of daily life. This double observation clearly touches the mission and profile of the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology in the twenty-first century.

The School's mission is to research and teach Christianity and religion conceived in a broad sense. It does so from a Catholic perspective, and in accordance with Tilburg University's core values. The current Policy Plan 2022–2027 operationalizes this mission, drawing on a series of dialogue sessions with academic and support staff, students and external stakeholders. The shared conviction emerged from these sessions that TST faces a dual task: on the one hand, it wants to present a broad and socially relevant profile; on the other hand, as a small School, it must meet the challenge of structural simplification.

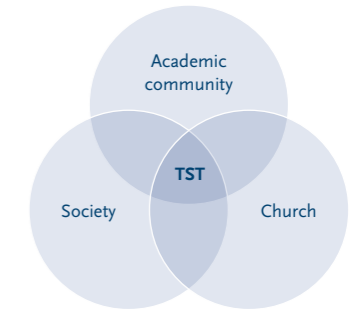
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TST is *Connected*: theology traditionally comprises a multitude of disciplines and methods and is embedded in a global network of Catholic universities. This interconnectedness inspires the School to seek close collaboration in education and research with the other Tilburg Schools, as well as between researchers and teachers within the School, and to contribute to public debate.

# Profile and organization

## A broad profile. Theology for the university, for society and for the church

According to the American theologian David Tracy, any school of theology today stands at the intersection of three distinct audiences: the academic community, the church, and society in all its religious and ideological diversity. TST seeks to play a role within each of these three domains and to develop strategies that fruitfully exploit its presence in each area.



*Embedded in the university* – 2027 not only marks the centenary of Tilburg University but also the twentieth anniversary of the Tilburg School of Catholic Theology. Building on the past, and conscious of the contribution that theology has made to the university tradition as one of the oldest academic disciplines, it endorses the university's Catholic identity. This identity was explored by the university-wide consultation on an 'Open Catholic Identity', and expressed in the core concepts of the acronym THREADS: Together, Humane, Responsible, Explorative, Aware, Diverse, and Sustainable.

This orientation motivates TST to be fully embedded in the Tilburg academic and learning community, and particularly in the institutions of the university and in campus life. It seeks, through structural simplification, to connect more intimately with local, national and international academic reflection on issues of importance to society, and to respond to declining religious literacy. On the basis of its scholarship and focus on the Judeo-Christian sources of European identity, TST wishes to foster connections with society at large in all its religious and ideological diversity, as well as with the Roman Catholic Church and the multiformity of the Christian tradition.

*Focused on society* – A tradition of interdisciplinary reflection has long been foundational to theology. Under the motto *Understanding Society*, the School is committed to investigating the changing place of religion in late modern society, and it is fully conscious of the context of ideological and religious fragmentation in which it exists. The School of Theology wishes to form Bachelor, Master and PhD graduates who have religious literacy – a concept it understands as a combination of knowledge of the intra- and inter-religious world on the one hand and of competencies related to religious and philosophical understanding on the other – and who can contribute responsibly and critically to relevant debates in society, academia and the church. This kind of religious expertise can be of great service to the media, NGOs and the educational and healthcare sectors. Following on from the vision developed during the

## 1 Profile and organization

university-wide consultation on ‘Digital Sciences for Society’, TST is planning to prioritize research on the digital revolution, with a particular focus on ethical issues and its implications for the religious field. A review of the Master’s program is underway which will incorporate inter-School collaboration and which includes a review of the Master’s tracks, including one focused on spiritual care. For instance, the ‘Altar for an Unknown God’ research program and the University Centre for Chaplaincy Studies (UCGV) look specifically at the contemporary interaction between Christianity and society.

*Connected to the church* – True to Anselm of Canterbury’s motto *fides quaerens intellectum*, the School of Theology promotes critical reflection on the presence of religion in society and academia. As a canonically recognized institution, it cherishes its special connection with the Roman Catholic Church. It seeks to further deepen its expertise in the study of texts and religious views and practices, and offers students formation for ministry as well as the opportunity to earn the canonical degrees of *sacrae theologiae baccalaureus*, *licentiatus*, and the doctorate (STB, STL, STD). Furthermore, it provides academic training for professionals in healthcare, prison and military chaplaincy. TST researchers and lecturers are particularly interested in the interaction between tradition and renewal, and they engage in the study of texts, ethical and doctrinal beliefs, and liturgical practices in a contemporary context.

### A leaner organization. Integration of existing structures

*Current structure* – Currently, early 2022, all members of the academic staff at TST are attached to one of three departments: the Departments of Biblical Studies and Church History, of Practical Theology and Religious Studies, and of Systematic Theology and Philosophy. The three heads of department share responsibility for staff supervision and performance and talent development (P&TD, formerly R&O). They are involved in the allocation of teaching staff and oversee research progress, but they are not part of the education and research teams, which are led by the vice-deans.

An Education Team oversees teaching at the School; it consists of the Vice-Dean for Education, support staff and four curriculum coordinators. This team is advised by the program committee, which includes student representatives. The School offers a Dutch-language and an English-language Bachelor’s program in Theology, at both its Utrecht and Tilburg locations. In addition, it offers a three-year Master’s program in Theology, officially recognized as a formation program for church ministry, a two-year Master of Religious Education (*ULO*), and a one-year English-

## 1 Profile and organization

taught Master’s program in Christianity and Society. The Bachelor’s and Master’s curricula in Theology are structured in conjunction with the canonical track, which means that students can obtain the canonical degree of STB upon graduation. Postgraduate training is provided by Luce, TST’s Center for Religious Communication.

The School’s research is carried out in the context of eleven units. As has been seen, members of the academic staff are attached to one of three departments (each of which represents two disciplines), and they also belong to one of the two research programs (‘Teaching and Tradition’, and ‘An Altar for an Unknown God’). Research policy is set by the Research Team, consisting of the Vice-Dean for Research, two program leaders and a member of the support staff. The departments are currently not represented in this team, nor in the six research centers, which fall under the Dean’s authority: the Centre for the Study of Early Christianity (CSEC), the Thomas Institute (TU), the University Centre for Chaplaincy Studies (*UCGV*), the Cardinal Willebrands Research Centre (CWRC) and the Study Group for the Relationship between Judaism and Christianity (*WRJC*). The Franciscan Study Center (FSC) is affiliated with TST.

*Structural simplification* – The 2022–2027 Policy Plan aims to strengthen the School’s structures by integrating them. The underlying principle is that the university and its Schools must be defined as research-driven institutions that provide academic-level education, and the organization of academic staff and the overlap of policy positions and competencies are being reviewed in this light. TST plans to study and implement the intended simplification along the following lines:

- In terms of content, the School’s two interrelated fields of expertise will be defined more clearly: TST scholars study the origins and lasting impact of Christian sources in changing contexts, without losing sight of current developments; the School’s research also focuses on the evolving role of religion in society and culture, particularly in sectors such as health care, education, primary spiritual care, the defense forces and prisons.
- These priorities provide the starting point for restructuring: the existing spread of academic staff over five units (three departments and two research programs) has created superfluous structures, overlapping competencies and unnecessary administrative pressure. These problems will be remedied as follows:

Two new departments will be established to reflect specific research themes.

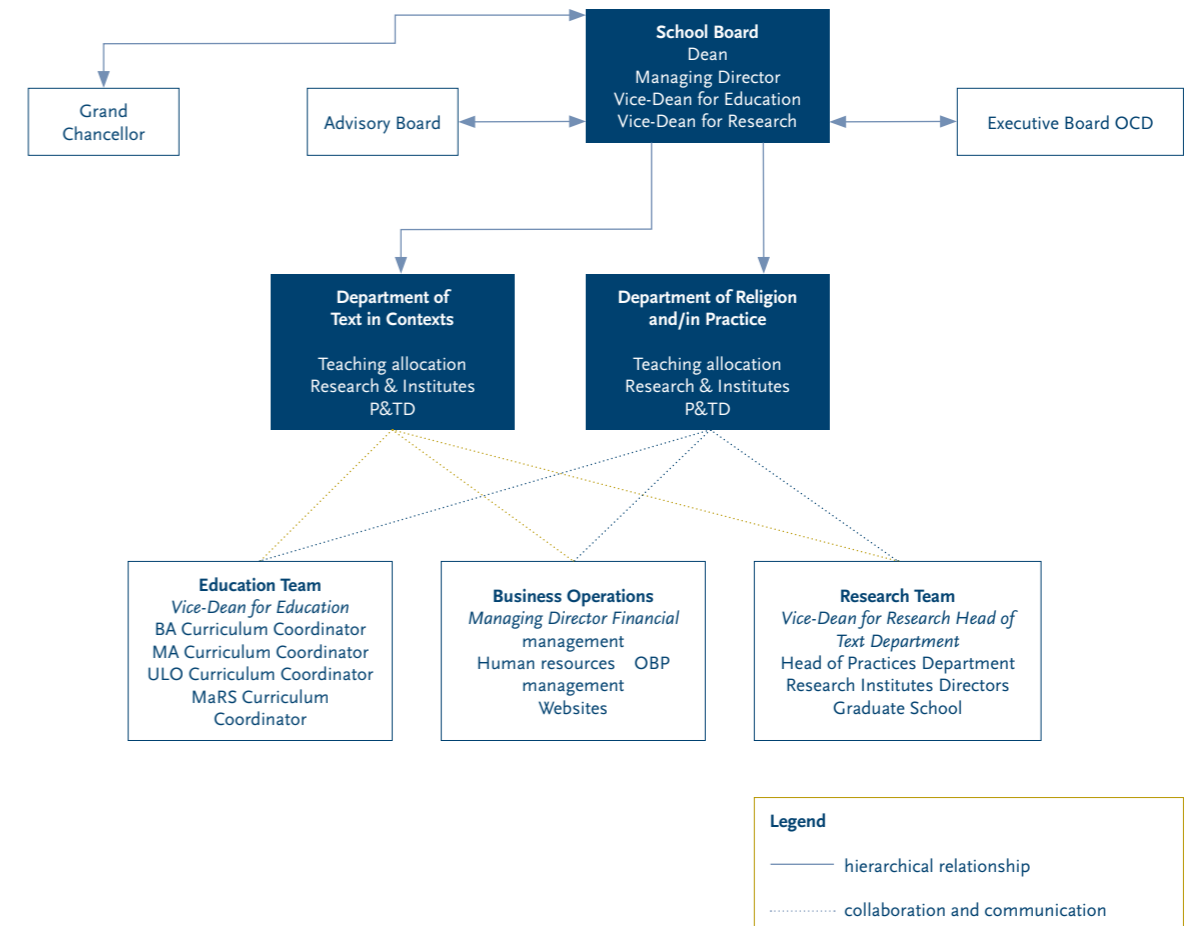
The former research programs will be transferred to these two new departments.

The focus of the new departments will be on ‘Text in Contexts’ and ‘Religion and/in Practice’ respectively, but their official names are to be determined.

# 1 Profile and organization

- Lines of communication between School management and the education and research teams on the one hand and departments on the other will be shortened. Departments and their heads will share in the responsibility for operations, education and research; the details are to be elaborated later.
- Close contact between the management of each department and the School's Managing Director and Vice-Deans will be encouraged.
- The role of the departments will be strengthened as follows:
  - The position of head of department as an administrative middle manager will be upgraded and defined more clearly.
  - The heads of department will be involved in human resource management and operations, and they will share responsibility for P&TD discussions, assisted by support staff.
  - The departments are responsible for teaching allocation (for instance through the curriculum coordinator who is a member of the Education Team).
  - The departments are responsible for managing the research carried out by its members (preferably through the head of department, who is a member of the Research Team).
  - The internal division of duties within the departments will be further examined and defined in new task packages during the Policy Plan's implementation phase.

# 1 Profile and organization



On the basis of its profile and renewed organizational structure, the Tilburg School of Theology strives to bring its educational content and its structural policy choices into harmony. The basic principles of its policy for 2022–2027 are as follows:

- As an academic institution, TST aims to form students who can contribute to society and to the church in today's evolving environment. In the secularized Dutch context, the primary focus is on acquiring religious literacy and expertise in spiritual care.
- The Education Team, consisting of the Vice-Dean, curriculum coordinators and departmental representatives, is responsible for setting out educational policy.
- Education and research mutually reinforce and complement each other. The strengthening and integration of the departments and research programs should therefore be reflected in curriculum design.
- Regular consultations are held with lecturers through curriculum team meetings and education days.
- TST wishes to integrate its educational offer more closely with that of TiU as a whole. It seeks to attract students from other Schools, reflecting the natural propensity of a School of Theology to engage in interaction with the academy, society and the church.
- Given the School's particular position, formation for the ministry and the corresponding canonical requirements will remain an essential aspect.

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TST is *Courageous*: it engages with new developments in society and the church, and is alive to religious diversity and to the impact of the digital revolution on religion. TST focuses actively on religious literacy in order to form students who are able to contribute to politics, NGOs, the education, healthcare and prison sectors and to the defense forces.

These principles give rise to a number of structural choices at the level of policy and curriculum design.

#### Organizational innovation

The integration of the School's departments and programs necessitates a review of management profiles to ensure smooth collaboration between the new departments and the Education Team. Department members who bear responsibility for education will be added to this team, so that it has a clearer overview of teaching allocation. Policy processes that are currently conducted separately (i.e., teaching allocation, educational evaluations and changes to the curriculum) will in the future all be carried out by the Education Team.

Another consequence of the School's policy choices is that the organizational impact of its double location in Tilburg and Utrecht will have to be examined more closely. The guiding principles for this reflection are the choice to prioritize stronger connections with the Tilburg campus and the other Schools, and the awareness that both locations and all the School's educational programs are integral parts of Tilburg University. A new balance will be sought with regard to TST's organizational center of gravity.

#### Integration of study programs

As regards its Bachelor's programs, TST welcomes the recent rise in student numbers for its English and Dutch-language curricula (see Appendices). The School will continue both these programs, and wishes to attract new students, strengthen the integration of teaching and research, and increase collaboration with other Schools.

A number of interrelated strategies have been adopted to realize these goals: first, within the existing BA program, we will develop a track for students who are interested in general approaches to the study of religion and spirituality. In addition, we will increase the free space to 30 EC, preferably in a single mobility window. And, finally, we are endeavoring to re-position the Bachelor's program by introducing minors, provided that this can be done without expanding the current staff establishment. The following changes are under consideration:

- A Dutch-language minor in Utrecht to obtain the canonical STB degree. It will consist of courses from the current range of electives.
- English-language minors in Tilburg that will help to strengthen the identity of TiU, for instance a minor in 'Bible in Context' and/or in the 'Catholic Intellectual Tradition', with a focus on topics such as the broad cultural significance

of the Bible and the impact of Christian traditions of thought (e.g., social teaching or anthropological and metaphysical models).

- Depending in part on additional grants, an inter-School English-language minor in Professional Identity, to be organized at the TST's initiative. This program will include input from lecture series on personal leadership and spirituality (in collaboration with research institutions such as the FSC), and its emphasis will be on professional identity development.
- Participation in inter-School minors on the Tilburg campus. A minor in Applied History is currently in preparation together with TSB, TLS, and TSHD. TST's expertise in the role of religion in regional and European identity formation can connect with the historical study of law, economics and politics conducted in the other Schools. Interfaculty collaboration between historians is likely to produce courses that interest a wide audience at the Tilburg campus, and, in time, offers opportunities in the European-wide *Engage* alliance.
- A minor in 'Digital Religion and Humanities' together with TSHD, is in line with the outcome of the consultation on Digital Science. This minor will reflect TST's expanding expertise in religion in the digital world, and will provide a gateway to the revised Master's program in 'Christianity and Religion'.

With regard to its Master's programs, TST is planning a thorough overhaul of its graduate tracks. It is proposing four mutually integrated tracks that will help to make them future-proof:

- The three-year Master of Theology program, which is recognized as a canonical program, will be retained, but will be redesigned on the basis of the following three objectives: a) stronger links with various professional fields, b) further integration of outflow tracks, and c) no increase of the existing staff establishment. To achieve this, the first year of the Master's program will in the future be conceived as the *truncus communis* of three distinct tracks. As a common basic year, this year will prepare students for a Master's degree in Theology, in Religious Education (ULO) and – a recently added program – in Spiritual Care (*Geestelijke Verzorging - GV*)
- The range of programs on offer for the relatively small group of Master's students will be used optimally, and we will ensure that the Master's program in Theology continues to provide the best possible preparation for the canonical degrees for those students who wish to obtain them. TST's objectives can be presented schematically as follows:

	Master of Theology	Master of Spiritual Care	Master of Religious Education (ULO)
Year III	Advanced Issues in Theology Thesis		
Year II	Internship Internship-related courses	Internship Internship-related courses  Thesis	Didactic curriculum (internship and courses) Thesis
Year I	Common basic year		

- TST aims to offer a two-year track Master's degree in Spiritual Care: recent evolutions in the field show that it is opportune to further orient theological education towards spiritual care. TST already has a strong presence in the national network through its UCGV research center, and its three-year Master's program in Theology includes a major in spiritual care. While this meets the basic competencies for spiritual care, dialogue sessions with students and the professional field, as well as a study by Kaski, Radboud University's expertise center for religion and society, have shown that a three-year Master's program is too long for profession-oriented students. During the common basic year, the curriculum for this program will be the same as that for the revised Master's in Theology; the second year will offer differentiation. TST is exploring whether this could include courses taught in collaboration with other Schools (especially TSB), in addition to the internship and thesis. The strategic advantages are as follows:
  - Although it would require new accreditation, almost all the expertise is in place to launch a Master's program in Spiritual Care.
  - The integration of the common basic year and inter-School collaboration make it possible to offer this program without increasing the staff establishment.
  - This policy will help improve the transfer of students from the Bachelor's program to the Master's, which is currently suboptimal. This may help attract new students.
  - Lastly, study efficiency can be increased by allowing students to change their orientation after the common basic year.



- The Religious Education program (*ULO*), currently offered in Utrecht, will also undergo urgent changes. Despite the efforts of the Landelijk Expertisecentrum Levensbeschouwing en Religie, or 'National Expertise Center on Religion in Secondary Education' (LERVO), to strengthen Religious Education, the inflow of students remains subpar. TST will investigate whether a new structure might better serve to ensure the viability of this program. The guiding principle in this review of the program is its integration within TST and within TiU: the common first year of the Master's will be followed by a second year of *ULO*, the curriculum for which will be developed on the Tilburg campus. This graduation year will be interlinked with Tilburg University's teacher training programs (*ULT*). The expectation is that this will build on both the existing theological research curriculum (made up of components from the Master's program) and existing TiU expertise. Parallel organizational structures that currently exist with regard to general didactic courses and internship supervision will be eliminated, and the program will become more attractive to potential students for the following three reasons: a 1+1 structure facilitates lateral entry of students with a Master's degree in Theology or Religious Studies from another university through exemptions; theology students in the *ULO* will no longer complete their teacher training separately from students and teachers in social studies, law, etc.; and it will become easier to combine the various courses in the first degree track across the tracks. TiU's Strategy Plan promotes student exchange across its locations and across School boundaries. This provides opportunities for *ULO* students to take relevant courses from this program. A SUTQ project is in preparation to study the feasibility of this new structure, which will look at the existing accreditation, financial consequences and the new curriculum. This study will benefit from TST's good relations with *ULT*.
- Lastly, the profile of the existing Master's program in Christianity and Society (MaCS) in Tilburg will be broadened. This one-year English-taught track is separate from the canonical programs and not subject to their requirements. The MaCS is a society-oriented degree that includes a six-month extended option with internship, for instance with an NGO or a media company. This curriculum has the potential to become a showcase for degree programs on religion and society, both within TiU, nationally and internationally. The School is committed to transforming this program into a one-year Master's in 'Religion and Society'. The name change is significant, and it must be reflected in terms of content, in a way that is consistent with the Tilburg Educational Profile (TEP) and the School's focus on religious literacy. Students have expressed a demand for greater attention to religious diversity and a clearer focus. The name change therefore implies adjustment of the names and content of some of the program's components.

In addition to the existing dialogue courses on the political, legal and economic intersections with religion, this change also creates scope for greater interaction with digital sciences. TST is currently investigating the possibility of designing a course on Religion in the Digital World, and strives to improve organization, for instance by offering courses from the extended Master's.

### Students and lecturers

Students at TST are introduced to TEP within the various curricula. We seek to form all our students into knowledgeable, self-aware and socially engaged scholars who can play a role as experts on religious questions in sectors such as research, the media, the church, as well as healthcare, the defense forces and the prison system. As a Catholic School of Theology, we will continue and expand, the character-learning pathway at the Bachelor's and Master's levels, in both the Dutch-language and international programs. Elements of this curriculum can also be incorporated into programs offered by other Schools.

TST is proud of the relatively high percentage of its lecturers who hold UTQ and SUTQ certificates and of the enormous efforts they have recently expended on digital education. We will continue to invest in knowledge of and innovation in the digital humanities, and in the development of postgraduate education by Luce. In addition, we are anticipating measures during the coming policy period to broaden our range of programs:

- TST's expertise can help to enhance the programs offered by University College, and its expertise on religious literacy can be used in academic majors.
- We aim to encourage a team of lecturers to design at least one Massive Online Open Course (MOOC) in collaboration with other international schools of theology. We will also explore integration in Engage to foster international cooperation.
- We will focus on lecturer professionalization and lifelong learning.
- TST is committed to caring for students by providing tutoring, quality supervision, and personal and religious support through the university chaplaincy.

# 3 Research

The broadening of the TST's profile and the integration of its structures outlined above necessitate a more streamlined research framework. The School of Theology's research policy in the lead-up to 2027 is based on the following principles:

- TST strives to increase the visibility and impact of its scholars within the national and international academic community, in society and in the church.
- As a research institution, TST aims to deliver PhDs who contribute to public debate on religion on the basis of their academic expertise.
- The Research Team is responsible (in close consultation with the departments and research institutes) for policies that promote the visibility of research at an international level.
- The integration of departments, research programs and institutes should lead to greater research coherence and impact.
- While the TST's educational policy focuses on increasing student enrollment, the School's research policy seeks to increase funding through research council funding as well as contract funding.

The three fields in which theology stands - society, academia, and the church – impel TST to make a number of structural and research choices.

TST is *Curious*: it investigates the changing role and impact of traditions and viewpoints and their meaning for contemporary society. Inspired by fundamental questions on human existence, it reflects on issues such as ecology, migration and the digital revolution.

# 3 Research

## Content and organization

TST currently has two multidisciplinary research programs. The 'Teaching and Tradition' program examines how traditions and sources are handed down in changing contexts. This expertise will repose within the 'Text in Context' department, which will focus on the origins and varying reception of Judeo-Christian sources in Western culture. This includes growing focus on how religion evolves in the digital age, a priority consistent with the university's Digital Humanities impact program.

The second research program, 'An Altar for an Unknown God', explores the changing place of Christianity in late modernity, in a collaborative effort between practical and systematic theologians, sociologists, philosophers, liturgists and historians. The dynamics of the shift of knowledge, practices and rituals from the religious field to a secular context is central to this research. This will be transferred to the 'Religion and/in Practices' department, which will focus particularly on the fields of pastoral ministry, spiritual care, the prison system and the defense forces, in connection with the TiU's impact programs on Health and Wellbeing.

These priorities form the basis for further organizational integration. Research at the TST can benefit from the growing consolidation of structures:

- The organization of research will become more coherent due to the integration of programs, departments and institutes.
- The role of the Research Team will be enhanced as all actors involved in research will be represented in it: the two departments and research institutes in addition to the Vice-Dean and administrative support staff.
- The profile of the heads of department will be overhauled on the basis of the reform proposals in Chapter I.
- In order to remedy the current fragmentation of research activities, the institutes will be included in the research policy: they will be attached to one of the two departments, and the directors of the institutes will report to the Vice-Dean for Research on their institute's activities. The Research Team will examine the embedding of the institutes in the two research programs with a view to their future positioning in the academic, ecclesiastical and social fields: The Cardinal Willebrands Research Centre will be phased out, and the national and international positioning of the Study Group on the Relationship between Judaism and Christianity requires further consultation. An important point of attention will be the repositioning of the UCGV within national projects, including potential cooperation with PThU, a possible role in the *Kenniswerkplaats Zingeving* expertise network, the continuation of ZonMW projects

and links with WeCare.

With regard to the TST's expertise on 'Text in Context', the international repositioning of the Centre for the Study of Early Christianity is an important task. Further collaboration between the Thomas Institute and the Franciscan Study Center may be considered, given their complementary expertise in the field of the medieval sources of Christian spirituality and the Christian intellectual tradition.

- In principle, research institutes will be headed by an endowed or full professor who is a member of one of the two departments. Ideally, the institutes will operate cost-neutrally. They are encouraged to help attract revenue from contract funding.

### Outreach and publications

TST strives to enhance its national and international position as a research and educational center that specializes in religious literacy. It does this primarily by promoting, encouraging and valuing research output, through encouraging participation in international conferences and through funding applications. The School aims to increase the physical and digital visibility of its research activities. The Research Team and the heads of department have committed to the following measures:

- Active participation of researchers in conferences is encouraged as a conscious part of our internationalization and recruitment strategy.
- In addition to 'in-house' publications that reflect the department's research program, TST promotes offering output to external series and journals for publication. TST is investing in publishing strategies by increased translation and correction grants and by promoting awareness of theological work instruments and rankings (*ERIH*, *Index Religiosus*, *IxTheo*, etc.).
- Its own journals and series must meet the highest possible standards, and the emphasis is on attracting external authors. The existing series (*Utrechtse Studies*; *Brill's Series in Catholic Theology*; *Jewish-Christian Perspectives*; *the European Journal for the Study of Thomas Aquinas*) are being evaluated with regard to their financial position and reputation in the field.
- TST encourages collaboration on joint publications with scholars from other disciplines and TiU Schools, and with international colleagues.
- The Open Access policy stipulates a preference for 'Green' Open Access and for making publications accessible through repositories and networks.

### Research funding and PhD researchers

In addition to income from government funding, the School of Theology is seeking revenue from research and contract funding. In terms of funding applications, the School has adopted the following strategy:

- Contacts with Grant Support are to be encouraged.
- Full and associate professors are required to make a best efforts commitment to apply—both individually and as part of consortia or networks—for public funds and grants (NWO, Porticus, Templeton, ERC, etc.). TST implements this policy through a strategy of 'informing and rewarding'.
- Staff members are individually briefed on grant opportunities that are appropriate to their seniority.
- The Research Team is compiling a research funding guide that will contain information on the various possibilities for research applications.
- In recognition of efforts made, submitted project applications will be valued as international peer-reviewed articles at staff members' P&TD interview.
- With regard to endowed chairs, TST intends to pursue a transparent policy of accepting only external funding, as required by TiU regulations. The current practice in which endowed chairs are funded from TST's own resources will be phased out by 2027.
- TST will facilitate the continuation of external chairs (funded by the defense forces, the FSC, the Ladies of Bethany, etc.) and seeks to attract new endowed chairs that are likely to propagate and strengthen its areas of expertise in religion.

At the level of PhD candidates, the emphasis is on building connections. This requires the following priorities for the Graduate School:

- Creating a strong connection among PhD researchers by organizing research meetings (with mandatory participation in the first two years of the PhD program) and by involving PhD researchers more extensively in the departments to which their supervisors belong. Also, external PhD researchers should be more actively involved in the School's community and the research meetings of the departments.
- To strengthen international outreach, PhD researchers are encouraged to publish internationally, attend conferences and be part of research networks, both at the international level (*European Forum on the History of Religious Institutes*, *European Academy of Religion*, *European Society for Catholic Theology*, *American Academy of Religion*, ...) and at the national level (*Nederlandse Onderzoeksschool voor Theologie en Religiestudie*, *het Huizinga Instituut*).

- The aim is to increase the inflow of young PhD researchers, and to advertise PhD positions internationally.
- We are monitoring supervision to ensure that the relationship between supervisors and PhD researchers is a safe environment/context.
- Post-doctoral researchers receive guidance on how to develop an exit profile.

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TST is *Caring*: in addition to emphasizing recognition and rewards and careful interaction with one another, TST places special emphasis on the spiritual well-being of staff and students, on the basis of its expertise in spiritual care.

### Image, and a School in two locations

The question of the impact and visibility of the Tilburg School of Theology is inextricably linked with how it positions itself with respect to its three audiences: society, academia and the church. Dialogue sessions with staff, students and stakeholders have revealed that there is a concern that the School's image is too heavily slanted towards its affiliation with the church, while its societal and academic relevance appeared less prominent. TST regards it as very important to highlight the existing diversity of its education and research. The dialogue sessions with staff and students have also raised the question whether the School's presence in two locations is affecting its visibility. These observations inspire TST over the coming years to implement strategies to broaden its visibility and image, and thus to enhance its attractiveness for students, researchers and the social field.

### Visibility within Tilburg University

Visibility is a decisive factor for both research and education. It is the main priority of our valorization and student recruitment policy. As has been seen, with regard to education, TST aspires to cooperate in the European *Engage* network, and is planning the reorganization of Master's programs in Spiritual Care and in Religion and Society. With regard to research, it is working to enhance the international presence of TST scholars in networks, forums and conferences. To further strengthen its visibility, TST is also planning to develop concrete strategies to enhance its physical and digital presence.

TST aims to increase its physical presence on campus through a more balanced distribution of organizational, educational and research activities across its two locations. Specifically, this involves:

- Embedding the *ULO* in Tilburg university's general teacher training programs and contributing to interfaculty minors;
- Promoting the creation of more integrated student communities in Utrecht and Tilburg (e.g., by spreading School events and the activities of the *Ad Interim* student association across both locations, and through increased involvement of the alumni association VAK with the TST's Tilburg students);
- Co-operating with University College;
- Ensuring the even distribution of academic events, conferences and other activities over both locations;
- Making greater use of the buildings on Nieuwegracht in Utrecht as TiU's Utrecht branch. Both collaboration with TIAS and the planned relocations of the Theological University Kampen and the Protestant Theological University

## 4 Visibility and impact

in Utrecht are strategic elements in this broadening of the image.

- Conversely, making Tilburg more of a 'home' for the School of Theology and permanently basing both academic and support staff there.

TST is also endeavoring to increase its digital visibility: it is aligning its efforts with university-wide strategic choices and seeking partnerships with TiU researchers and departments, particularly through academic collaborative centers and impact programs. Participation in implementing insights from the consultation on Digital Science under the adage of 'Digital Sciences for Society' has proven important in this respect (cf. references to this in the Education and Research sections).

In particular, the focus will be on innovation in the digital field (through research and education aimed at developing new digital techniques) and innovation through the use of digital resources (by using digital science in research and education and through valorization).

As regards innovation in the digital field, TST is using its expertise to invest in reflection on existential dilemmas raised by digital science and its intersections with current social issues.

It is exploring the areas in which theologians connect with university impact programs on social issues such as migration (changing relationships between communities and conflict between beliefs and worldviews); climate and sustainability (fundamental reflection on the Anthropocene and on human relatedness with the broader environment cannot occur without confronting old traditions of thought); digitalization (the interaction between humans and technology and the dilution of social relationships are affecting cohesion within and between communities and are thus impinging on religion and visions of humankind).

Innovating through the use of digital means, for example within the digital humanities, is important as a possible impulse for research of text and tradition. TST wishes to highlight its expertise and toolkits (e.g., in online modules for education in classical languages, etc.) and explore further collaboration with the other theological institutions that are moving to Utrecht. A basic understanding of digital science must be a consideration when hiring new faculty members and PhD researchers.

### Impact and valorization

The academic mission of creating impact and of knowledge valorization similarly requires visibility. First and foremost, this means that TST must be visible on the TiU website and social media channels. In addition, it involves visibility

## 4 Visibility and impact

to stakeholders and the professional fields (especially pastoral ministry, education and spiritual care) as well as in the public debate.

- Close collaboration between academic and support staff in the development of media strategies is important.
- Key components of the strategy are: decentralized website management and the digital visibility of public activities, education and research. TST intends to renew its webpages and make them more accessible. Considering the School's mission and profile, the aspect of storytelling will be highlighted, and the available information will be made more accessible. This will be done through internal consultation and in dialogue with the Communication & Marketing Division.
- As part of this media strategy, policies are being developed to (a) streamline and properly present input and diversity of content, (b) make content relevant to TST's strategic goals (including for recruitment purposes), and (c) create a clear profile and recognizable presence in press communications and the social media channels where TiU is active (Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube).

In terms of impact and knowledge valorization, Luce, TST's Center for Religious Communication, remains the preferred platform. Its range will be further expanded in co-creation with external partners and in accordance with the existing agreements on lecturer deployment. Luce makes TST's expertise visible for stakeholders, professionals in the field and the general public. Its activities include:

- A program for the general public related to TST's research (including symposia on recent publications or book launches).
- A range of online courses, such as Theology Online and online modules for Biblical Languages.
- A range of activities for professionals in the field, especially pastoral ministry, education and spiritual care.
- Close collaboration with societal actors, such as the Utrecht Museum Catharijneconvent.
- Luce explicitly seeks further integration in TiU, for example by involving lecturers from other Schools in its postgraduate programs. TST's expertise in spiritual care can benefit from collaboration with other TiU academics, not only with regard to research and education, but also to valorization. This connection is consistent with the recommendations of the consultations on lifelong learning.
- Luce continues to work closely with the School's alumni association VAK.

# 5 Business operations

TST's business operations fall under the responsibility of the School's Managing Director, who establishes them in collaboration with the Academic Services, Finance & Control, Marketing & Communication, Human Resources, Library & IT Services, and Facility Services divisions. TST regards the support staff of these various divisions as part of the School, even though they report to their managers in their respective divisions. The School strives to organize its operations in conformity with the standard processes of service delivery, and adapts the services delivered by the divisions to its own needs.

The managers of the support staff teams play a strong advisory role within the School. This goes especially for the members of the Faculty Board in the core areas of education, research and human resources. Thus, they prepare the annual agenda in relation to the strategic plan and the multi-year budget. During the duration of the new strategic plan, the School will work on several sub-themes that are discussed below.

## Human resources and internal organization

TST participated actively in the TiU steering committee on Recognition & Rewards. A working group was set up at School level to ensure the implementation of the outcomes. This has inspired the following important priorities:

- Employees are treated in an honest, open and transparent manner.
- Open lines of communication are sought between the Faculty Board and the various organizational units.
- Employees have the opportunity to shape their careers in a manner that fits their talents.

Members of teams, whether in education, research or social impact, are valued for their team spirit and the results of teamwork as well as for their individual contributions.

Furthermore, TST intends to take the following steps to ensure that the School will be future-proof:

- Implement a simplified organizational structure so that TST becomes a clear, professional, learning- and values-driven organization.
- Equip both strategic and tactical School leaders, and especially the new heads of department, for leadership based on TiU's core values and the principles of connected leading. They will therefore be trained and coached in talent development, teamwork, self-reflection and personal leadership. Specific arrangements have been put in place to ensure that TST support staff plays an important role in supporting the leadership.
- Equip managers to conduct performance and talent development (P&TD) interviews with employees according to

- the university's standard policies. An implementation document governs the way P&TD interviews are conducted.
- Help new employees (including PhDs) to feel at home quickly in the School community through an onboarding program.
- Increase employees' involvement in policy, funding applications and participation. Efforts are being made to ensure smooth communication from the Faculty Board, and to ensure the visibility of the School Council's role and activities.
- Focus specifically on building the staff establishment plan for the coming years, on the basis of the principles of vitality, sustainable employability, shared values and community, and TiU's Health and Wellbeing program.
- Attend to the quality of the support given to expand collaboration within and outside the university and the potential additional work that this requires.
- Carry out a study of the use of and investment in libraries (Utrecht and Tilburg).

## Finance

The following overview shows the development of the multi-year budget.

The School faces the challenge of balancing its budget once the investment period from the School reserves comes to an end (up to and including the year 2022).

### Overview of the multi-year budget and realizations

	Real 20	Budg 21	Budg 22	Budg 23	Budg 24	Budg 25	Budg 26
	€	€	€	€	€	€	€
<b>Revenues</b>	4,207	4,385	4,549	4,450	4,501	4,536	4,556
<b>Charges</b>	4,935 4,852 4,813			4,565	4,590	4,531	4,537
<b>Balance</b>	-/-728	-/-468	-/-264	-/-115	-/-89	5	19

Source: 2020 financial statements, 2021 budget and 2022 multi-year budget

## 5 Business operations

In the future, strategic investments will have to be funded from additional resources, derived either through university or government funding. The School itself no longer has reserves that can be used for investment. TST's policy regarding building and facilities management is compliant with university policy. The following principles will guide policy during the 2022-2027 period:

- Endowed chairs will be established and/or continued on the basis of full external funding only, in accordance with university policy.
- New and existing research institutes will endeavor to break even.
- New and existing study programs will be assessed for efficiency and cost.
- A balance will be sought between the multi-year budget and a staff establishment plan.
- Applications for research funding will be in accordance with the School's research policy.
- Academic staff members at the assistant professor level are encouraged to apply for grants from the research council, for contract funding and possibly donor support; full and associate professors are required to make a best efforts commitment. The topic will also be raised during the P&TD interview.
- A research funding guide is being developed to help potential applicants to find funds and grant providers.

### Recruitment and communications

The School's recruitment strategy is compliant with the vision of the university's Marketing & Communication Division, though on occasion certain adaptations are required given TST's particular recruitment market, which sometimes demands additional steps both nationally and internationally, and given the School's presence in two locations. Our marketing strategy in the coming years will focus on the following areas:

- Increasing the visibility of the School and improving the image of the Bachelor's and Master's programs in Theology among prospective students so as to expand student enrollment.
- Recruiting for the Master's programs among TST Bachelor's students, to achieve greater internal transfer from Bachelor's programs to our own Master's programs.
- Offering activities that help prospective students choose their degree program.
- Enhancing online visibility, both on our website and through social media channels, to improve the societal impact of TST's research. The research done at the School has much to add to many current issues and public debates. Our online presence will help demonstrate that theology is a relevant degree choice.

## 5 Business operations



# Appendices



# a

## Figures

	2016/2017	2017/2018	2018/2019	2019/2020	2020/2021	2021/2022
<b>New enrollments</b>						
BA Theol NI	17	18	14	14	11	15
BA Theol Eng			6	10	6	12
Pre-Master's	6	1	6	6	4	6
MA Theol	7	7	4	5	10	12
MA ULO	8	4	3	2	4	3
MA C&S	6	3	5	7	7	5
<b>Enrolled students</b>						
BA Theol NI	60	69	59	61	48	48
BA Theol Eng			6	12	14	26
Pre-Master's	11	6	11	9	6	7
MA Theol	28	32	31	31	41	43
MA ULO	19	13	11	11	12	9
MA C&S	14	5	6	10	12	12
<b>Degrees awarded</b>						
BA Theol NI	3	13	6	14	10	
BA Theol Eng					1	
MA Theol	3	6	0	2	3	
MA ULO	6	4	3	0	3	
MA C&S	7	5	3	6	6	
STB	0	1	0	0	0	
STL	3	2	1	1	0	
SRB	17	14	11	15	7	
SRL	0	0	0	1	0	
<b>PhD</b>						
PhD researchers	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	
PhD dissertations	60	67	59	60	59	
PhD dissertations	2	9	4	4	6	
STD degrees	0	5	1	1	1	
<b>Academic staff</b>						
Number						
FTE						

# a

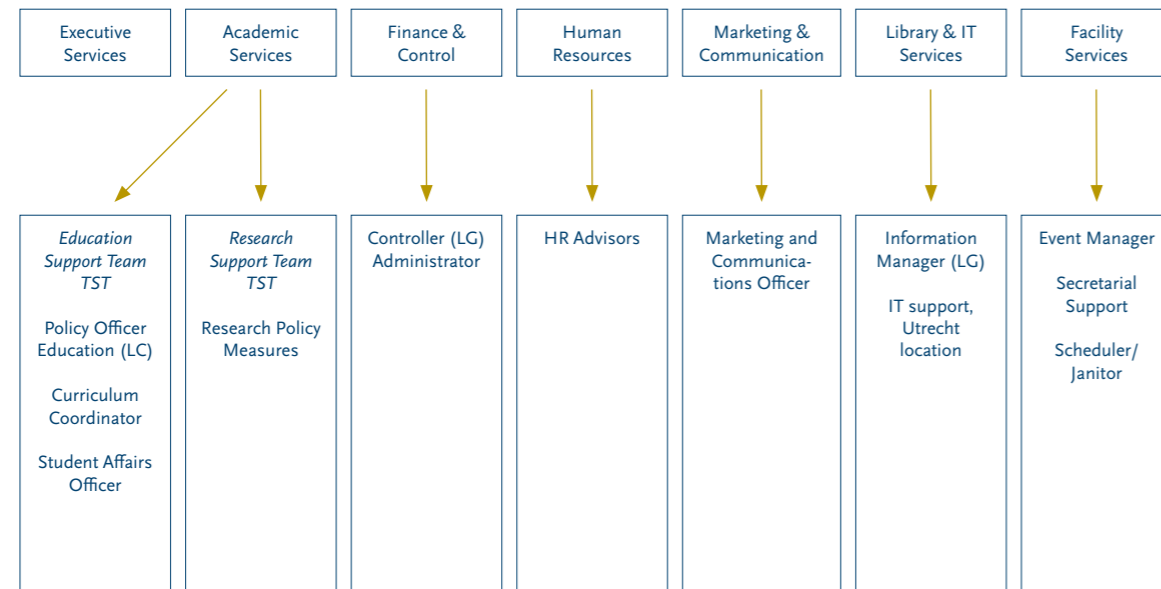
## Figures

### Overview of Chairs, December 2021

Dean	1 Professor
Bible and Church History	2 Professor (1 Biblical Studies + 1 Church History)
Systematic Theology and Philosophy	1 Professor (Systematic Theology)
Practical Theology and Religious Studies	1 Professor (Practical Theology)
Others	1,5 Philip Eijlander Chair (Religious Education and Biblical Studies)

# b

## Schematic overview of support staff



# c

## Strategic Policy Plan (SPP) Procedure

<b>Phase I: Preliminary memorandum</b>	
Preliminary memorandum on SPP (based on input from Faculty Board, policy advisors and support staff)	February 12, 2021
<b>Phase II: Dialogue sessions</b>	
Consultation between FB and heads of department	March 3, 2021
Dialogue session with Adrianusfonds	March 22, 2021
Preliminary memorandum on SPP (revised version)	April 19, 2021
Dialogue session with young academic staff	May 12, 2021
Dialogue session with Faculty Council	May 28, 2021
Dialogue session with assistant and associate professors and post-doctoral researchers	June 16, 2021
Dialogue session with PhD researchers	June 23, 2021
Dialogue session with (full and endowed) professors	June 24, 2021
Dialogue session with students	September 21, 2021
<b>Phase III: Drafting</b>	
Synthetic memo on SPP (see sources)	September 19, 2021
Adoption of table of contents and structure of SPP by FB	September 27, 2021
Discussion of synthetic memo in RT and ET	October 2021
Dialogue session with Advisory Board in formation	October 19, 2021
Allocation of tasks in FB	October 19, 2021
Draft SPP (Chapters I-IV, and appendices)	October 29, 2021
<b>Phase IV: Consultation on draft SPP</b>	
Discussion of draft SPP in RT	November 2, 2021
Discussion of draft SPP with sounding board group (heads of department, program leaders and FB)	November 2, 2021
Discussion of draft SPP with Advisory Board	November 8, 2021
Discussion of draft SPP in FC meeting	November 12, 2021
Discussion of draft SPP in ET	November 15, 2021
Discussion and adoption of SPP in MT	November 30, 2021
Discussion with directors of research institutes	
SPP sent to FC	December 10, 2021
Final adoption of SPP in FC	December 21, 2021
Layout	End of December 2021
Presentation of SPP at New Year's reception	January 10 and 11, 2022
<b>Phase V: Implementation</b>	
Elaborating roll-off strategy / multi-year plan	January-April 2022

# C

## Sources

*Preliminary memorandum on Strategic Policy Plan*  
(G.A. van der Velden)

*Synopsis of Strategic Policy Plan*  
(K. Schelkens)

*Reports of dialogue sessions within TST*

Full professors

Assistant and associate professors and post-doctoral researchers

Young academic staff

Students

Faculty Council

*Input submitted*

Proposal for 'List of Lists' (Faculty Council)

Institute for Jewish Studies Working Group Report

Individual student input

Individual input from academic staff

*Output from consultation sessions*

THREADS of our Identity (lead by E. Hirsch Ballin)

Digital Science for Society (lead by B. Haverkort)

Lifelong Learning and Development  
(lead by L. Meijdam)

*Draft policy plans of TiU and other Schools*

Building Blocks Strategy 2027

TSHD

TSB

TiSEM

*Review Reports*

Education review of TST

Research review of TST

*Reports of the educational sessions*

Educational session, June 17, 2021

Educational session, October 8, 2021

*Other*

Adrianusfonds

Memo on Character Building

Report of the consultation with the Advisory Board

Documentation of the Steering Committee on

Recognition & Rewards

Cover illustration: tapestry in which Marc Mulders (1958) gives shape to his garden. It is an ode to creation, in its splendor of colors, range of forms and Christian symbolism. The tapestry was executed by the TextielMuseum in Tilburg and was donated to Tilburg University by the Adrianusfonds. It currently hangs in Adrianus Hall in TST's Utrecht location.