

Research Strategy 2025-2027

Introduction

The London School of Theology (LST) has long been a key institution for theological education and ministry training in the UK and beyond. As the global landscape of both the church and academia continues to evolve, it is vital for LST to develop a research strategy that aligns with its mission, responds to emerging global challenges, and enhances its contributions to the broader theological community. Its vision is ‘forming disciples, resourcing churches, impacting society’. This strategy seeks to fulfil this vision at the research level by fostering a rich research culture, strengthening academic partnerships, and ensuring the dissemination and impact of theological insights. Below is a proposed framework for LST’s research strategy, structured around several key pillars: research focus areas, infrastructure, training and development, collaboration, dissemination, and impact. LST aims to make distinctive contributions in the following areas that also signal scholarly excellence.

1. Areas of Research Excellence

LST’s research strategy prioritizes theological disciplines that are both deeply rooted in its tradition and responsive to the needs of the Church, society, and the global theological community. The School produces research and scholarship within the classical sub-disciplines of Theology, namely Biblical Studies (Old Testament and New Testament), Church History, Historical and Systematic Theology, and Practical Theology, as well as innovative interdisciplinary approaches between theology, the humanities, social science and science.

It focuses on four main research themes:

A. Church and Society

The church is a major agent of influence in societies around the world. Therefore, the relationship between church and society is a matter of significant importance for theology. This theme asks how the church, informed by rigorous theological investigation and reflection, can engage with issues in society for the sake of the common good of all people. Areas of focus include:

- Early Christian ethics and their implications for today
- Theological reflections on justice, poverty, and inequality, particularly in the context of global poverty and human rights
- Environmental theology, particularly the Christian response to climate change and ecological sustainability
- Theological engagement with political theory, particularly regarding Christian participation in democratic and pluralistic societies
- Pentecostal public theology
- Science-engaged theology

B. Evangelicalism and Ecumenism

Evangelicalism is a hugely significant constituency within global Christianity. Its influence can be seen across time and place. Its relationship with other Christian traditions is of great importance. This theme asks how this tradition can be quarried for the sake of contemporary ecumenical relationships. Areas of focus include:

- Historical approaches to Evangelical biblical interpretation
- The history of British and Global Evangelicalism
- The development of LST's archive in British Evangelical history
- The relationship of Evangelicalism to Pentecostalism
- Bilateral ecumenical dialogues

C. Theology, Spirituality and Formation

Spirituality of all varieties permeates society and culture. How Christian theology informs spirituality, and how spiritual practices shape theological reflection are central elements to this theme. LST is committed to the integration of theology and spirituality in the whole of life, including research. It also sees many of its theological themes and approaches informed by the study of Christian spirituality broadly and within Evangelicalism in particular. Specific areas of interest include:

- The role of spiritual direction
- Biblical texts and spirituality, for example the use of Old Testament texts such as wisdom literature and the psalms
- Historical studies of spirituality
- Theological interpretation of Scripture and its use within traditions
- Music and the arts in worship
- The role of spirituality in counselling
- Character and virtue ethics in theological education

D. The Gospels and Jesus

The person and work of Jesus Christ is central to Christianity. LST has a rich history in biblical scholarship over the decades, especially the study of the gospels. We aim to build on this heritage and focus in particular on the Gospels and the person of Jesus Christ.

- Synoptic and Johannine studies
- Jesus Christ in history and theology

- The use of the Old Testament by the Gospel writers
- Theological interpretation of Scripture and its use within traditions

2. Building Research Infrastructure

To foster a thriving research culture, LST must invest in the infrastructure that supports both faculty and student research. This includes providing access to resources, developing research facilities, and fostering an academic environment conducive to scholarly enquiry.

A. Library and Digital Resources

LST's library will continue to expand its collection of both print and digital resources. Key investments include:

- Expanding access to online databases, journals, and e-books.
- Developing a robust digital archive to house faculty research, student dissertations, and conference proceedings.
- Developing and enhancing our archive on British Evangelicalism and especially the role of London Bible College / London School of Theology, potentially in collaboration with others.

B. Research Training and Development

LST will offer comprehensive support for faculty and students engaged in research. This involves:

- Providing expert team-based supervision of students
- Enhancing existing conference funding for research active faculty, to share their scholarship and enhance their contributions to the wider academy and church
- Training programmes on research methodologies, academic writing, and publishing for both faculty and students.
- Mentoring opportunities for early-career researchers to support their academic development.
- Embedding skills for employability in the supervision process. For example, through the following:
 - UG teaching opportunities at level 4
 - Research assistant opportunities with experienced scholars
 - Presenting conference papers
 - Submitting an article for publication

- Encouraging faculty to apply for research grants and fellowships to fund their projects.

C. Research Seminars and Events

LST aims to develop a stronger research culture, which focuses on its research themes. Key objectives include:

- Expanding the current, regular programme of research seminars, and the annual research conference, to add in special colloquia, webinars and forums to foster a richer and more extended academic research community at LST
- Developing structured Residential Research Weeks for all PGR students, which are especially useful to those who need to fulfil residence requirements.
- Holding the annual Laing Lecture, which ‘showcases Evangelical scholarship for a public audience’
- Arranging one-off special events that promote individual research, such as ‘celebrations of achievement’ and book launches
- Hosting international conferences, linked to established societies and networks.

3. Collaboration and Engagement

One of the strengths of any theological institution is its ability to collaborate both within the academic community and with external partners, including churches and global theological networks.

A. National and International Collaboration

LST seeks to build partnerships with national and international theological institutions, seminaries, and universities. This could include student and faculty exchange programmes, collaborative research projects, and co-hosting conferences, seminars and workshops.

B. Engagement with Church Leaders and Practitioners

Collaboration with church leaders, pastors, and ministry practitioners will help ensure that LST’s research addresses real-world ministry needs. LST will regularly consult with church leaders to understand their theological and practical concerns, ensuring that research is relevant to current ministry challenges.

4. Dissemination and Impact

Research should have a broad impact, influencing not only academic communities but also the wider church and society.

A. Publishing and Academic Contributions

LST expects faculty to publish their research in respected academic journals, monographs, and edited volumes. Faculty should be supported in securing book contracts, and LST should actively promote its scholars' work to wider audiences.

B. Public Engagement

LST's research should be made accessible to non-academic audiences. This could include hosting public lectures (e.g. our annual Laing Lecture), offering online courses, and engaging with social media platforms. Digital platforms such as blogs, podcasts, and webinars could be used to discuss theological issues and to highlight key research areas at LST. Faculty are encouraged to engage with appropriate media outlets to make their academic work accessible to a public audience. Research conferences can also provide opportunities to engage public audiences.

C. Social and Societal Impact

LST aims to produce research that contributes to societal well-being. This might include engaging with public policy on issues such as climate change, human rights, and social justice. Research should be directly applicable to church ministry, offering practical insights that can help leaders navigate complex challenges in their congregations. LST will identify a small number of wider stakeholders with whom it can collaborate to increase its social and societal impact.

Summary

A research strategy for the London School of Theology will balance academic excellence with appropriate relevance, fostering a research culture that is both rigorous and engaged with the real-world concerns of the Church and society. By focusing on key theological disciplines, investing in infrastructure, promoting collaboration, and ensuring broad dissemination, LST will strengthen its position as a leading institution for theological education and research. Ultimately, this strategy will contribute to the development of theological scholarship that is deeply rooted in faith, yet responsive to the challenges and opportunities of the contemporary world.