

**THE RELIGIOUS STUDIES PROJECT  
ASSOCIATION [SCIO]**

**SC047750**

**ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL  
STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED  
31 AUGUST 2018**



## **TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT**

### **For the year ended 31 August 2018**

The trustees have pleasure in presenting their report together with the financial statements for the period from incorporation on 17 September 2017 to 31 August 2018.

### **Reference and Administrative Information**

#### **Charity Name**

The Religious Studies Project Association [SCIO]

#### **Charity Number**

SC047750

#### **Address**

16 (2F1) Chapel Street, EDINBURGH, EH8 9AY

#### **Current Trustees**

■■■■■■■■ ■■■■■■ (CEO)

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## **STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT**

### **Constitution**

The Religious Studies Project Association is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). It was registered in its current legal form on 17 September 2017. It has a single tier structure and as such the trustees are the members of the charity.

### **Appointment of trustees**

The individuals who signed the charity trustee declaration forms which accompanied the application for incorporation of the organisation shall be deemed to have been appointed by the members as charity trustees with effect from the date of incorporation of the organisation. The board may at any time appoint any person to be a charity trustee - by way of a resolution passed by majority vote at a board meeting. The minimum number of trustees is 3 and the maximum is 10. Please see the constitution for more information: <https://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/constitution/>

## **OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES**

### **Charitable purposes and activities**

Our purposes fall primarily under the 'advancement of education' category, as set out in the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005. The organisation's purposes are:

1. To disseminate contemporary issues in the academic study of religion/s ('Religious Studies') to a wide audience and provide a resource for students across the globe engaged in such study, their teachers, and interested members of the public.
2. To provide engaging, concise, reliable and accessible points of entry to the most important concepts, traditions, scholars and methodologies in the contemporary study of religion/s, without pushing a confessional or apologetic agenda.
3. To pursue these aims principally through the maintenance of the Religious Studies Project website, and supporting an associated editorial team in the production, dissemination and archiving of regular audio podcasts and written features, in the maintenance of a social media presence and email list, and in editorial duties for the associated journal "Implicit Religion".

### **Achievements and Performance**

Over the past year, the Religious Studies Project has continued going from strength to strength, producing 36 high-quality audio podcasts involving 60 scholars, connected to 37 universities in 11 countries, on a diverse range of topics, accompanied by 26 written features, and weekly opportunities digests. RSP podcasts were downloaded a total of 216,190 times during this period. These are augmented by our growing social media audience, the production of podcast transcriptions, and our growing YouTube channel.

The biggest institutional development of the year was becoming a SCIO. This has enabled us to explicitly appeal for donations and develop a Patreon subscriber scheme – both of which should see increased contributions going forward. This has also necessitated the production of this Annual Report, and Independent Examination of our accounts.

Our relationship with national and international bodies in the study of religion remains strong, with continued sponsorship arrangements with the British Association for the Study of Religions, North American Association for the Study of Religion, International Association for the History of Religions, and Australian Association for the Study of Religion. Furthermore, the European Association for the Study of Religions have kindly committed to providing one bursary for an RSP representative to attend the annual EASR conference and record podcasts in future years.

Upon receipt of a large donation from the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, we embarked upon a complete redesign of the RSP website – our main hub. Minor work on this is ongoing, but feedback has been very positive, with searchability and accessibility improved. We also elected to change hosting provider from Digital Ocean to Dreamhost. This resulted in changeover costs but should see lower costs going forward and a more stable platform. We have also begun to pay a small fee for regular maintenance on the website which should, again, result in greater stability.

Several additional volunteer interviewers have joined the team towards the end of the period covered by this report, and the editors-in-chief have developed a streamlined system for their training. We therefore look forward to an even better 2018-2019, with a greater range and diversity of topics covered in RSP outputs, more professional presentation of content, and continued expansion of our international audience.

## **Financial Review**

The SCIO finances are in good health, with this accounting period seeing income of approximately £8200 (up £5000 on 2016-17) and expenditure of approximately £6500 (up £4500 on 2016-17). These large increases reflect the receipt of a one-off large donation, and spending on web design and transcription. The web design was a one-off expense, but the trustees would like to continue producing transcriptions going forward, because of benefits in terms of accessibility, use in the classroom, and use by those for whom English is not a first language. Ensuring that this can be continued in a financial responsible manner is a top priority and shall remain under review in 2018-19

Our financial relationship with headline sponsors continued as in 2016-17, with an additional one-off sponsorship of £450 for series on Religion and NGOs, and a new recurring relationship with the University of Alabama. The trustees would like to develop departmental sponsorships going forward, as well as boosting our growing body of Patreon subscribers. All other income was in keeping with patterns from previous years.

Most of our expenses were also in line with previous years, focusing upon the maintenance of the RSP website, purchasing of new equipment, audio mastering, advertising, and travel. There were three major new expenses, including the transcriptions and web design already discussed. The third was a one-off honorarium payment of £500 to Tommy Coleman in recognition of five years' service in various roles, but most recently as Managing Editor.

Including all income and expenditure, the RSP ran at a surplus of £2059 in this financial period. Removing the large one-off donation, and the one-off payments for web design and the honorarium, the RSP ran at a deficit of £164. Careful attention is needed to ensure that 'standard' running costs do not exceed 'standard' income. For more information, see the statement of receipts and payments, accompanying notes, and charts in the appendices. In the statement we make a distinction between Donations (one-off, 'anonymous'), Sponsorship (ongoing, public) and Advertising (one-off, public). The statement represents combined receipts and payments from our main HSBC bank account (GBP), and two PayPal currencies (GBP and USD), with USD amalgamated at 1GBP = 1.3USD.

## **Plans for future period**

The trustees are very happy with the way the RSP is being run. However, we also recognize that much more could be done. An area for development in the RSP is diversity and representation. Although great strides have been made in diversifying the academic content of RSP outputs, we are aware that our coverage of the world beyond 'the West' is lacking, and that the core RSP team is predominantly male, and exclusively white. In order to address this issue, we would like to appoint an additional trustee (or trustees) to explicitly work to expand our team and broaden our scope to be more inclusive of the range of subject positions associated with the category 'religion'.

Regarding the archive of podcasts, we have had discussions about how to make the podcasts more attractive in terms of teaching and learning (class usages) and how to optimise the use of the archive and to improve the use of images in the marketing of the RSP. The development of a "How I Use the RSP in The Classroom" series, and the curation of smaller segments of content has been discussed. And now that the RSP is a SCIO, applying for teaching and learning grants or research grants is possible and should be investigated going forward. These priorities are in addition to 'carrying on with the day job' and attempting to increase revenue streams as outlined above.

**The Religious Studies Project Association [SCIO]**  
**Statement of Receipts and Payments**  
**Period from incorporation on 17 September 2017 to 31 August 2018**

	£
<b>Receipts</b>	
<b><i>Voluntary Income</i></b>	
Sponsorship	1,925
Donations	<u>5,307</u>
	7,232
<b><i>Gross receipts from charitable activities</i></b>	
Advertising	977
<b><i>Other income</i></b>	
Bank balances transferred from previous unincorporated entity	<u>314</u>
<b>Total receipts</b>	<u>8,523</u>
<b>Payments</b>	
<b><i>Charitable activities</i></b>	
Web design, hosting and maintenance	2,616
Transcription services	1,750
Podcast editorial and production costs	766
Travel and administration costs	924
Advertising	341
Financial fees and charges	<u>68</u>
<b>Total payments</b>	<u>6,464</u>
<b>Surplus of receipts over payments</b>	<u><u>2,059</u></u>

**Statement of Balances**

**As at 31 August 2018**

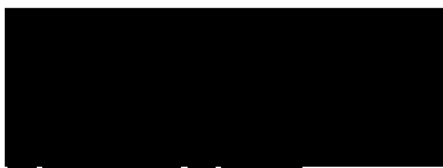
	£
Bank balances of SCIO on incorporation	-
Surplus of receipts over payments	<u>2,059</u>
Bank balances at 31 August 2018	<u><u>2,059</u></u>

**Note:**

- 1 No remuneration was paid to any trustee or to any person connected with a trustee. Travel expenses include £36 paid to Dr Cotter. No other trustee claimed expenses, other than in relation to reimbursement of charitable expenditure made on behalf of the SCIO.

**Signed**

**Date**

A large black rectangular box redacting the signature of the trustee.

20 May 2019

On behalf of the trustees of the Religious Studies Project Association [SCIO]

## **Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of The Religious Studies Project Association**

I report on the accounts of the charity for the period from incorporation on 17 September 2017 to 31 August 2018 which comprise the Receipts and Payments Account, Statement of Balances and Note on pages 6–7.

### **Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner**

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (d) of the 2006 Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1) (c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

### **Basis of independent examiner's statement**

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

### **Independent examiner's statement**

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
  - a. to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations; and
  - b. to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 9 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations have not been met, or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

■■■ ■■■■■

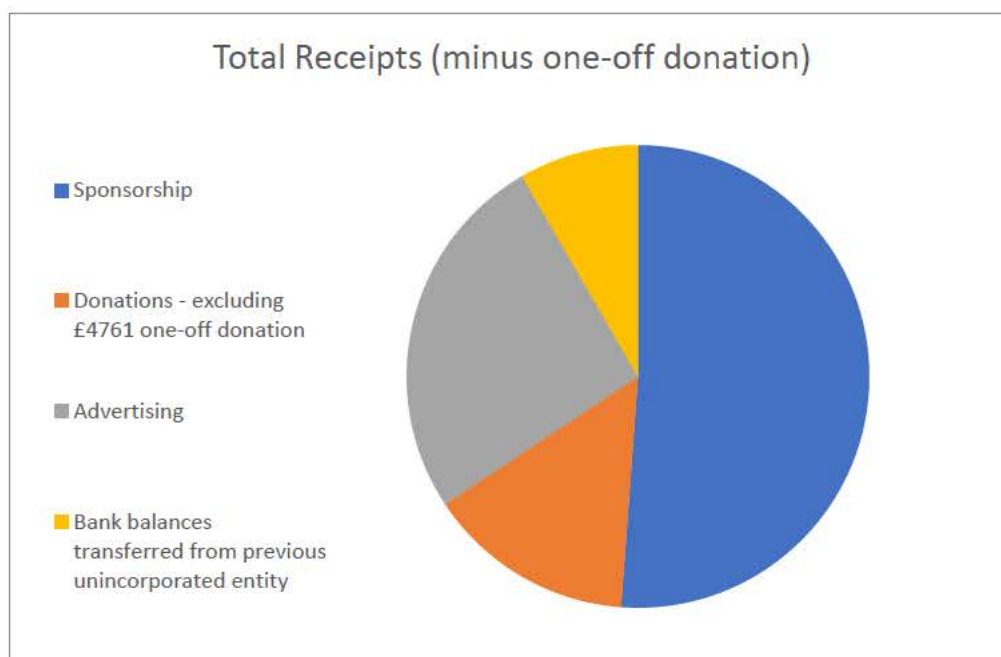
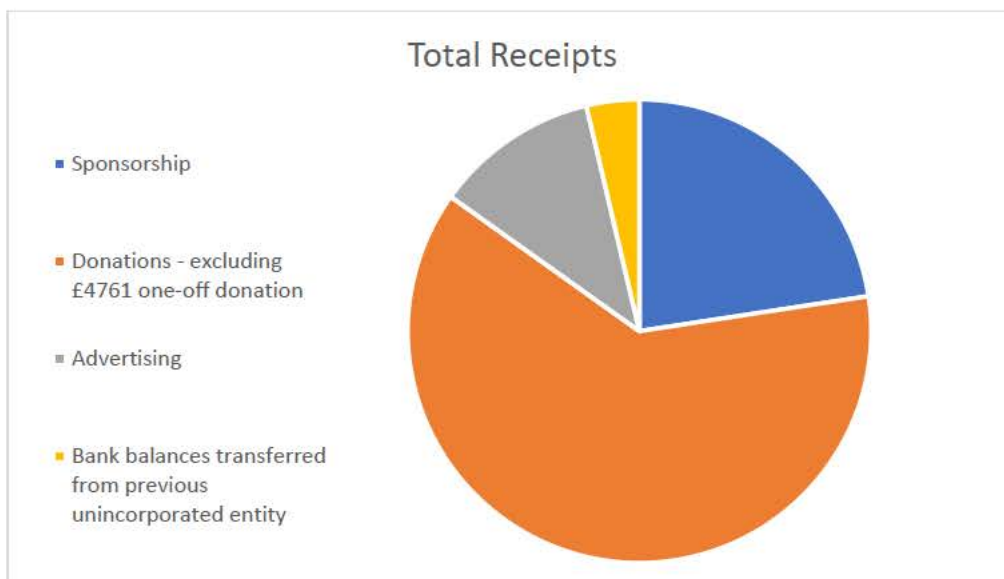
A member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland

Address: ■■■■■ ■■■■■ ■■■■■ ■■■■■ ■■■■■

Date: 20 May 2019



## Appendix 1: Pie Charts of Receipts



## Appendix 2: Pie Charts of Payments

