



HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

## Cranfield University HR Excellence in Research July 2017

### Background

Cranfield is a wholly post-graduate, research-intensive University and has pioneered the development of education programmes that enhance the careers of professional learners and the businesses sponsoring them. As the largest UK provider of Masters-level graduates in engineering with a flagship MBA and extensive customised Executive Education and Professional Development programmes, Cranfield's education portfolio is renowned for its relevance to business and government. Research and innovation informs all of our activity – it is part of Cranfield's 'corporate DNA' from research projects for Masters students through doctoral training programmes to researcher-driven programmes in collaboration with other universities and industry partners.

### Our Key achievements in HREiR since March 2015

Whilst there have been robust HR policies in place for some time covering all staff, HREiR has given us the opportunity and impetus to ensure that there is a more consistent approach taken for researchers across the University.

The Research & Innovation Office (RIO), set up in 2015, is now well established and has recently achieved a prestigious award from ARMA for 'Best Research Management Team of 2017'. It facilitates high-quality academic research through leading the development of a research strategy and policy, ensuring compliance with research governance requirements, supporting researchers to access funding and form new collaborations, providing guidance on the management of Doctoral Communities, engaging with the development of research information systems and advising on the contracting process. It also oversees key strategic partnerships with both public and private sector corporate clients to maximize their effectiveness and works with a range of stakeholders to identify and bring to fruition new research opportunities.

(Principles 2, 3, 6) Specifically, it has:

- Reviewed and revised the research strategy following staff consultation, re-affirming support for funding bids, new PhDs and research publications
- Supervisor training is now mandatory for anyone undertaking a supervisory role. Experienced supervisors are required to update their skills every 4 years
- Developed a new knowledge exchange strategy with a generous Intellectual Property policy
- Established and/or reaffirmed strategic partnerships with BAE Systems, AWE and Rothamsted Research to open up new opportunities for research. Some examples from press releases  
<https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/press/news-2017/new-centre-to-spearhead-uk-research-in-digital-aviation-technology>  
<https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/press/news-2016/cranfield-university-and-rothamsted-research-establish-new-partnership>
- Supported the submission of major funding bids worth in the region of £100m comprising funding for Dartec and the following relates to specific support from RIO <https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/press/news-2016/new-agricultural-technology-centre-will-allow-cranfield-to-guide-farming-into-the-future> ; this has raised our research ambition and would not have been possible without central support
- As part of a service for all staff and students, supported one of Cranfield's PhD students to win a Women in Innovation grant, worth £50,000, allowing her robotics start-up to transition from a part-time project into a business with full-time R&D capabilities
- Increased the success rate of first grant applicants to the Engineering and Physical Science Research Council from under 17% up to 33%
- Established a Researcher Handbook to guide staff through how to engage with the Professional Service Units
- Put in place a number of guidance documents for staff wanting to access research funding
- Established weekly drop-in sessions for researchers to receive individual funding advice and a bespoke service for Knowledge Transfer Partnership proposals, which have increased from 1 to 9 over the last two years
- Established a Research Excellence Framework (REF) Strategy Board and REF leads in each School to ensure staff are provided with appropriate guidance on REF
- Established a REF support week for all staff to learn more about REF and how to make sure they are well positioned for REF 2021. 8 events were held for 27 academic staff, 30 students, 7 PSU staff, 62 Research Assistants/Research Fellows



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- Delivered a publications seminar series for staff and students to share experiences in how to publish research results, running 8 events for 173 people
- Established an impact capture tool to make it easier for staff to record the impact of their research
- Delivered an Impact Showcase for c70 staff to share their research impact good news stories and share best practice
- Upgraded our research information system (CRIS) to make it easier for staff to use, and provided support to upload publications so that the majority of publications now meet open access requirements, which will be important for REF 2021
- Organised a successful international (EU) Partners meeting to provide ongoing opportunity for our staff to interact and collaborate with EU. Direct outcomes from this meeting include a Bilateral Research Meeting to be held in October 2017 at Polytech Montpellier with c12 members of staff
- Launched Cranfield funded PhD schemes for industry and international partnerships with specific support for early career researchers allocating 10 per School. There has been 50% take up
- The Research Committee of the University drives implementation of the HREiR action plan and monitors progress as part of its regular meeting schedule. The HREiR Working Group reports progress to the Research Committee. Committee members and Directors of Research are now reminded at each meeting of their duties in consulting members of staff regarding key items of business. This consultation will be achieved through: School Executive Meetings, Theme Executive meetings, Research-specific meetings in each School and sub-groups of the Research Committee. (Principle 7)

We have achieved the majority of actions within our 2015 HREiR Action Plan. In order to assess progress against it we created a questionnaire based on the Concordat, inviting all researchers, research-active staff, Directors of Research, HR Business Partners and managers to respond. From this we identified the difference in responses from staff between 2015 and 2017 to determine progress. In addition the HREiR Working Group reviewed progress against the action plan throughout the two years from 2015, providing and receiving updates from the Directors of Research and Research Committee. The HR&OD SMT produced a consolidated action plan drawing together the 2015 HREiR Action Plan, Athena Swan Action Plan, Diversity Monitoring Action Plan, IIP Action Plan, and Recruitment Review Action Plan so that we ensured we co-ordinated effort and addressed all important actions just the once. The outcomes from this reviews enabled us to identify progress against our 2015 action plan and to determine many actions needed over the next two years.

#### Key achievements since 2015:

- Our overarching aim was to bring consistency to the support provided to our researchers and research active staff. This is a major undertaking as the structure of the University in the past meant independent working within Schools leading to a variety of approaches being used. It is therefore still a work-in-progress; it will be a continuing feature of the work we do over the next 2-4 years. (Principle 7)
- In 2015 we recognised that our research and research-active staff are often unaware of the support available to them. To address this we designed and ran a series of roadshows within each of the 4 Schools covering: an introduction from the School Director of Research (DoR), an overview of the external support available (Vitae, LFHE etc.), School level support from the DoR and School HR Business Partner (SHRBPs) covering arrangements for performance and development reviews (P&DRs), promotions and progression, university central support via RIO and Learning and Development, Diversity and Inclusion, followed by a Q&A. Also involved were: the Centre for Andragogy and Academic Skills (CAAS) providing information about the Post-Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) and the Library providing information on Research Data Management and how the Library supports research in Cranfield. The participation rate was lower than we had hoped for at 49, but those who attended reported via evaluation questionnaires that the events were valuable. Our plan for the next two years is to incorporate this into a focussed induction programme for new researchers four times a year also open to existing researchers and research-active staff. (Principle 2, 3, 4, 5)
- All members of staff within Cranfield are expected to have an annual Performance and Development Review (P&DR). In 2015 a number of researchers had reported via Focus Groups that they didn't have annual reviews and many others had no interim follow ups. Part of the review of progress for HREiR was a questionnaire to research and research-active staff including a question relating to P&DRs. In general we received a very positive response about P&DRs. However we will need to review and address the low level of interim discussions as well as



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strengthen discussion about and support for individual's career development. This will form a key part of our action plan going forward. Responses to this question were: **(Principle 3, 4)**

- 89/90 have P&DRs annually – a much higher percentage than in 2015. Of those 82 discuss previous work performance and receive feedback and 87 discuss objectives and targets for the forthcoming year and 72 have discussions about personal and career development. 33 never have interim discussions about personal and career development between P&DRs. These tend to be at levels 6 and 7, spread across all Schools. 6 have monthly discussions, 3 have discussions every 2 months, 21 have discussions quarterly, 27 have discussions every 6 months.
- We reviewed and re-designed local School induction for new researchers. This is now in place and being administered within the Schools via local embedded HRBP teams. **(Principle 1)**
- We were successful in being awarded Athena Swan Bronze in April 2017. Many more people within Cranfield are now aware of the Award.
- The University's Diversity Manager, the Director of Human Resources & Organisational Development (HR&OD), the Head of Learning & Development (L&D) along with other senior colleagues in HR&OD have brought together the 2015 HREIR action plan, Athena Swan action plan, outcomes from the Cranfield Employee Engagement Survey (2014) and interim Pulse Survey (2016), along with our actions for Investors In People at Cranfield Defence and Security (CDS) so that we have one consolidated action plan, removing duplications. **(Principle 6)**
- A major achievement over the last 2 years has been the collaborative work developing a researcher development strategy, a career pathway for researchers and an associated researcher development programme. The Head of L&D led a working group of research representatives from each School, representatives from CAAS, RIO, and the Library. We identified the expectations of a researcher at each level (from level 5 (Post doc) to level 8 (Professor)) and the development they might be expected to undertake to enable them to achieve each level. It was mapped against the Vitae RDF to identify gaps and addressed. The Researcher Development Strategy, Career Pathway and development programme was endorsed by the University Executive on the 19<sup>th</sup> July 2016. Throughout the process we sought input from members of the Research Committee, HR/OD colleagues, researchers and research-active staff, and colleagues from RIO via various consultation activities. **(Principle 2, 3, 4, 5)**
- To develop our research environment and research community, RIO introduced a Doctoral Network for staff and students (<https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/research/research-degrees/cranfield-doctoral-network>). The Cranfield Doctoral Network brings together our research institution, of both research students and staff, providing a platform for sharing research ideas, opportunities for internal collaboration and networking. It comprises of eight Thematic Doctoral Communities, aligned with the University's sector specialisms. The network delivers an annual event and a schedule of events unique to each Thematic Doctoral Community throughout the year. Each community offers seminars, lectures and other initiatives, offering researchers a chance to meet, discuss and be part of the network. The network enhances and enriches the experience and development of researchers whilst at Cranfield. Researchers based off-site are encouraged to engage. New ways of using technology are considered and actioned where possible in order to ensure maximum involvement. **(Principle 3, 4, 5)**
- The university is taking a proactive approach to supporting women in science and engineering. As part of this strategy, this year, for the first time, we are supporting Women in Engineering Day (<http://www.inwed.org.uk/>) **(Principle 6)**
- The Cranfield Senior Management Team (SMT) received a development session from Mills & Reeve (our legal providers) on Charing Recruitment panels. Members of SMT are the people who chair the majority of recruitment panels for academics/researchers enabling us to improve our approach to fair and high quality recruitment. We have also provided SMT and most recruiting managers with Unconscious Bias development over the last 18 months. Senior HR Business Partners coach recruiting managers in their recruitment role. As part of our plans for the next two years we will ensure that all Chairs of recruiting panels receive appropriate effective recruitment development. **(Principle 1)**

#### **Future plans 2017 to 2019 (see Action Plan for details)**

We will continue to build upon our key achievements from 2015 to 2017 and address the areas we didn't manage to achieve (e.g. developing a more robust approach to mentoring). The HREiR working group will become a sub-group of the Research Committee, chaired by the Director of Research and Innovation, with representation from all Schools and relevant PSUs, giving it improved status and creating a more formal approach to reporting and monitoring the HREiR action plan.



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This new sub-group will ensure the implementation of the 2017 action plan and track progress. Our broad measure of success will be to engage a wider group of staff and managers in the managing developing and supporting researcher's career development, addressing as many of the actions as possible during what looks to be a challenging period for the University.

With the ongoing development of our central Research and Innovation Office, the work being undertaken to prepare for REF 2021 alongside our actions for HREiR the University will ensure that we have a critical mass of high achieving, highly motivated, fully supported research staff and students. Together we will achieve our collective vision to be recognised for outstanding transformational research that meets the needs of business, government and wider society. We also aim to be renowned for our impact and influence - regionally, nationally and internationally, being recognised as 'closest to business'.