

## **Cranfield University HR Excellence in Research Award – Report Summary July 2019**

### **Purpose**

The University was proud to have achieved the HR Excellence in Research Award in 2015; this report summarises the University's ongoing activities and commitment to the HR Excellence in Research Standard and the support and development of research staff. This summary report is based on a review of the 2017-2019 Action Plan and the new 2019 -2021 Action Plan.

### **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 group projects for Masters students through doctoral training programmes to researcher-driven programmes in collaboration with other universities and industry partners worldwide. Our worldwide community is a powerful professional network with students and learners from 169 countries. We are ranked in the top ten in the UK for commercial research, consultancy and professional development. According to the Research Excellence Framework 2014, 81% of our research is classed as world-leading or internationally excellent. We're number one in the UK for research income from industry per academic (*Times Higher Education*, 2017). Cranfield is a five-time winner of the prestigious Queen's Anniversary Prize. None of this would be achievable without strong support and development for our research staff who work together to achieve great outcomes.

The University's Corporate Plan provides a focus for effective engagement of the entire Cranfield community including Researchers and specifically incorporates research activity and impact within its themes, demonstrating the value the University places on the contribution of its Researchers.

Within the University it is recognised that ensuring a supportive environment for research staff is a shared responsibility that exists beyond the HREiR Working Group and that wider stakeholder engagement including the involvement of Research staff is key to establishing best practice.

Researcher development, research process best practice, responsible innovation, ethical review, equality diversity and inclusion, high quality research supervision and post-award research due diligence etc. are all firmly embedded within the universities' Schools and guided by HR Excellence in Research. Research governance, which guides these processes, and the HR Excellence in Research kite-mark are owned by the Research Committee which is chaired by the PVC Research and Innovation and reports into Senate and to Council. The Research Committee has Researcher representation from each School and relevant Professional Services as well as the student body. The HREiR working group, Joint Code of Practice working group and Research Academic Processes for Students working group are all formal sub-groups of Research Committee and report regularly into it. The University's Research Ethics Committee (CUREC) also reports to Research Committee and oversees our research practices and proposals for research which involve human participants or otherwise potentially raise ethical issues. All staff and students conducting research are required to submit their research proposal for ethical review.

### **Internal Review Process**

Evaluation of the University's progress against the HREiR action plan has been ongoing over the last 2 years. This has involved regular meetings of the HREiR Working Group (10 meetings) and regular reporting to the Research Committee (7 meetings). There has also been regular discussion between the HR Lead and the Director of Research and Innovation regarding progress and development of new ideas. Both have met (individually and together) with other key stakeholders, in particular the Directors of Research for each School. Data for the review has been collated into a collaboration site for the Working Group which has also been used as a source of best practice and sharing of ideas.

The HREiR Working Group includes an HR Excellence Lead for each School whose role is to work closely with Researchers in the School, the Director of Research and the School Executive to ensure buy-in at all levels, to ensure the Researchers' voice is heard, and to ensure data for the review has been captured. They also share

ideas through the HREiR Working Group. A good example is the establishment of an early career Researcher group at Cranfield Defence and Security which organises development activities such as “publishing skills” and “bidding for funding” which have been opened up to other Schools and resources shared through a virtual learning environment site. For 2 of the Schools, the Leads are early career academics which, in itself has provided a development opportunity for these individuals. In addition, to ensure the Researchers’ voice has been heard, Researchers have been encouraged to submit feedback in the form of evaluations and through the recent Researchers’ survey which is the primary formal source of data that underpins this review. However, communication is an ongoing process; Researchers are encouraged to discuss development opportunities through the Performance and Development Reviews (P&DR) and have recently contributed to ‘The Big Conversation’ which was an organisation wide project to develop a set of shared values for the University. Over 29 sessions were run and input gained from over 630 staff with further opportunities to comment and input at various stages as the project progressed. Significant effort was undertaken to ensure buy-in and input from stakeholders at all levels and to ensure a robust process informed by authentic staff voices. The resulting values ‘Ambition, Respect, Impact and Community’ were endorsed by Council on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2019.

Through close working with the Head of Diversity and Inclusion, the review has also taken into account progress against other initiatives such as the Athena Swan Action Plan, drawing on best practice and avoiding duplication. This activity is outlined in the actions and success measures included under Principle 6 – ‘Diversity and Equality’ e.g. policies and initiatives being introduced or updated related to flexible working and carer’s leave and ensuring a continued focus on the gender pay gap.

We have also been collecting evidence around researcher development and setting good research governance through our REF 2021 planning, in particular the Joint Code, which was developed by the pan-university REF team and which was submitted in June 2019.

### **Changes impacting HREiR progress since July 2017**

During the 2 years since re-recognition in 2017 the University has seen a period of significant change. Of major significance was the launch of a wide-ranging ‘Fit for the Future’ programme in September 2017 which aimed to strengthen the university’s resilience and make it fit for the future. In order to achieve this, a programme was implemented to reduce staff costs by 10% across academic, technical and professional service functions. The cost saving programme, which was achieved without the need for compulsory redundancy, impacted employees and initiatives across the organisation throughout the 2017/2018 academic year and whilst the programme has now concluded there was some impact on how we addressed HREiR due to sensitivities amongst staff.

The University has also experienced a number of changes to key stakeholders involved in HREiR at Cranfield with some impact on continuity of progress and review as follows:

In summer 2018 the Director of HR & Organisational Development left the University and a new Director of HR was appointed from the existing team. The new Director has re-structured the senior management team within the function, recruiting from within and then back-filling subsequent vacancies at lower levels. Whilst this has meant a period change this is also a very positive move in terms of promoting and progressing home talent, the benefit of which will be realised in the months and years ahead.

The Head of Learning & Development (and project lead for HREiR alongside the Director of Research and Innovation) retired at the end of June 2019 with her responsibilities subsequently shared amongst 2 members of the HR&D Senior Management Team and the Research Development Manager in the Research and Innovation Office. This has resulted in a transition period whilst the new stakeholders become familiar with HREiR and its aims at an important time for HREiR in Cranfield.

In May 2019 the Associate Director of Research and Innovation also left the organisation in a promotion to a senior role in another University. She had been instrumental in the success of HREiR, delivering the Researcher Development Programme and working closely with the Project Lead on the researcher Development Strategy and career paths. The subsequent recruitment campaign has been successful although the appointment has only recently taken effect during the month of our HREiR submission.

At University Executive level, The School of Aerospace, Transport and Manufacturing (SATM) recruited a new Pro-Vice Chancellor who joined September 2017. Cranfield Defence & Security (CDS) recruited an interim Pro-Vice Chancellor who had been their Director of Research (DoR) and the School of Management has also recently appointed a new Pro-Vice Chancellor to lead the School. These are all excellent appointments and we are excited about working with the new leadership team to deliver our action plan, but it does mean that there has been some slippage whilst they have got up to speed with requirements and elevated expectations.

There have also been 2 new appointees to the posts of Director of Research within the Schools. The School of Management (SoM) appointed a new DoR in 2018 as did Cranfield Defence and Security (CDS). These are key stakeholders in the delivery and review of the HREiR action plan so we have spent some time working closely with these new DoRs to ensure they are fully engaged with the delivery of the actions they are responsible for.

In January 2019 new Deputy Director of Research posts were introduced to the organisation structure in recognition of the importance of these roles and the breadth of activity they undertake. These roles are beginning to become established and a review of responsibilities is being undertaken to ensure focus on developing research staff. Ultimately they are intended to be helpful additions to the success and impact of HREiR at Cranfield.

### **Our Key achievements in HREiR since July 2017 (Alignment to Concordat Principle in brackets)**

Whilst there have been robust HR policies and processes 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 HREiR Working Group became a sub-group of the University's Research Committee, formally reporting progress at each meeting. The Working Group was strengthened with a new Chair, the Director of the Research and Innovation Office, and leads from each of the 4 Schools. The purpose being to ensure HREiR was not simply run from HR&D/centrally. Further changes are planned to the group composition to maximise the effectiveness of this group and the positive impact on we anticipate an increase in the positive impact on Researchers as we move forward. (All)
- Online Performance and Development Reviews (P&DR) have been introduced starting with a proof of concept pilot, followed by a wider pilot to ensure its acceptance in academic circles and is being introduced for all staff over summer 2019. Staff are empowered to lead on their P&DR and for the first time the process includes explicit discussions about career development. Completions, development requirements and career discussions can all be reported upon and therefore quality can be checked and content used for central planning purposes. In particular this should provide for the University to conduct a more informed training needs analysis and ensure the provision of development is aligned to the specific needs of individual staff. The P&DR requires objectives to be specifically linked to the Corporate Plan and will require individuals to say how they contribute to the University's new values. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- The University has introduced a staff career development platform so that there is access and support available for staff to address their career development 24/7. The platform has been used to direct Researchers towards Vitae resources improving awareness and focus on development opportunities. A Career Development Week was held in spring 2019 with specific sessions for Researchers. A member of the Executive (PVC Education) who is the Champion for Career Development led the opening session of Career Development Week. He was also interviewed on film discussing career progression at Cranfield and that film is now widely accessible.(1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- A Post-Doctoral Researcher Training Programme was introduced and has run twice to develop researchers in their personal and career development. This has led to numerous post-doctoral researchers applying for their first research funding grant e.g. New Investigator Grants and Fellowship applications. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- Over the last 2 years Researcher participation in development activities provided by L&D, RIO, the Library and Centre for Andragogy and Academic Skills (CAAS) has doubled from 505 to 1063 and 78% of Researchers reported in the questionnaire that they recognise the development opportunities available to them (43 out of 55 respondents). In this respect we have made good progress towards fulfilling some of our original aims of ensuring a more consistent approach to supporting Researchers. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

- Development of academic/research managers has been undertaken over the last 2 years and will continue via a 2 day School-based session covering Finance and HR responsibilities. We are beginning to cascade this to the next level of academic managers now with the intention of ensuring managers are focussed on their role as “an effective people manager” which includes the support and development of their staff. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)
- All new Researchers are allocated a mentor/buddy when they join the organisation. However an exciting development is the extension of the mentoring provision to all Researchers via the new University mentoring scheme. Specialist matching software now helps to provide staff with ease of access to a mentor for specific aspects of their work. The concept being that if they need support, for example, with writing for publication we can identify a mentor who has specific skills and who is enthusiastic about mentoring others. Although this programme is in its infancy there are already 24 academic/research mentors registered, 18 academic and research mentees registered and 10 mentoring partnerships successfully assigned. In addition, CDS has introduced a specific mentor programme to help academics who have fewer publications to publish in high quality journals to prepare them for REF 2021. (1, 2, 3, 4, 5)

### **Future plans 2019 to 2021 (see Action Plan for details)**

Cranfield University will continue to build upon our key achievements from 2017 to 2019. In order to further strengthen the HREiR working group, the Deputy Directors of Research, who are recent appointments at Cranfield will be invited to join, providing improved links with the schools and researchers. The aim of this is to better engage a wider group of staff and managers in managing, developing and supporting researcher career development.

Over the next 2 years the key areas of focus will be:

- Performance and Development Review e.g. B3-B7, B11, C8  
A new online P&DR system has recently been piloted at Cranfield with the full rollout happening in the 2019 PDR cycle. Over the next 2 years a key focus will be on engaging with the system and ensuring we embed its use amongst Researchers, such that at least 85% of all Researchers will have used the system and completed a PDR. This system will allow for richer and anonymised data to be collated in relation to a range of issues e.g. completion rates, career aspirations and training needs, and a number of initiatives are planned to ensure the best possible use of the data contained within e.g. through investigating the training needs identified by researchers to further strengthen our Researcher Development Programme. (2, 3)
- Equality and Diversity e.g. A2, A4-A5, A8-A10, B10, C9, E1-E9  
Significant activity is currently underway and/or being planned in relation to Equality and Diversity (E&D), which is reflected in the range of initiatives outlined in the HREiR and Athena Swan action plans. A particular focus is on maintaining the Athena SWAN institutional bronze award, embedding current policies (e.g. flexible working policy) and widening the E&D focus beyond gender to include considerations such as disability and ethnicity. (1, 2, 3, 6)
- Increasing Researcher engagement e.g. B3-B6, C4-C5, C11, D1-D6, F4-F5  
Whilst there has been significant increases in the engagement of Researchers in HREiR through representations of the 4 schools on the HREiR working group, it has been recognised that there are opportunities to strengthen this. Therefore, over the next 2 years the deputy Directors of Research will be invited to join the working group, thus providing senior researcher support to the working group. Additionally it is recognised, through discussions with Researchers and the staff survey as part of this review, that there is a need to further engage Researchers in their development. This is particularly relevant, and will be addressed, through pan-University initiatives, specifically in an environment of competing responsibilities being placed on Researchers. (2, 3, 4, 5, 7)

In delivering the future action plan, the launch of an agreed set of University values (Ambition, Impact, Respect and Community) will guide all staff to adopt positive and helpful behaviours at work. Following launch (August 2019), Researchers will begin to benefit from the behaviours being embedded across the University and throughout the employee lifecycle. It is anticipated that a number of initiatives will be aligned to the values project and that over time these will further improve the employee experience. (All)