

RAE Press Release: University Alliance

The 24 University Alliance members welcome the release of the RAE results. The results show very strong and widespread excellence in research across the Alliance, and particularly demonstrate the success of selective investment in a wide range of research activities. The University Alliance includes pre 1992 universities with significant strengths across a range of units of assessment, specialist institutions that are research leaders in their own fields, and post 1992 institutions who have invested selectively to build excellence over the last sixteen years. Successive RAEs have given external validation of the success of the strategies of Alliance institutions.

The Chair of the Alliance, Professor John Craven, said "I am delighted that our members have performed so well. We call on the funding councils to continue to support excellence wherever it is found. The Alliance results show that any policy move to concentrate research and postgraduate activity in a small number of universities would be detrimental to the overall profile of research in the UK, and would stifle the emergence of the excellent research shown in this RAE."

"We believe that a strong research culture is vital both for the future prosperity of the UK and to maintain the excellent experience of students in our institutions. Alliance members also have strong track records in engaging in near market research and development work, which is often underpinned by the excellence revealed in these RAE results."

Alliance members support international quality research in traditional areas of Science and Technology, in Business, in the Social Sciences, in the Arts and Humanities'. They also demonstrate excellence in non-traditional areas relating, for example, to the growing importance of the creative industries.

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Examples of Alliance success include

Unit 12 Allied Health Professions and Studies West of England's Institute of Bio-sensing is the first of its type using Bio-sensing technology in non-invasive detection of disease, healthcare (being able to detect metal fatigue in hip replacements before they hurt!), security and many other applications. This attracts inward investment from overseas.

Unit 19 Physics Hertfordshire is delighted with the outstanding performance of its submission which includes 28 staff. The submission incorporated two Research Centres within the University's Science and Technology Research Institute, namely the Centre for Astrophysics Research and the Centre for Atmospheric and Instrumentation Research. Physics and Astrophysics Research has been strongly supported at the University of Hertfordshire for over 30 years and it attracts a large amount of research income from organisations including the Research Councils, Royal Society, Leverhulme Trust, Nuffield Foundation, Meteorological Office, Defence Science and Technology Laboratory and NASA. The two Research Centres have a balanced portfolio of research in fundamental physics, astrophysics and atmospheric physics including both observational and experimental work, together with knowledge transfer and exploitation. In addition, the two Centres embrace interdisciplinary work in the development of instrumentation to measure light-scattering in situations ranging from extrasolar planets to dust in the Earth's atmosphere.

Unit 21 Applied mathematics Portsmouth's Institute of Cosmology and Gravitation has achieved an RAE result in which 75% of the work was judged as 4* or 3*, a proportion not exceeded by any other institution. The Institute works in fundamental areas of cosmology and astrophysics, supported by Research Councils, the European Union and other international funding bodies. Its areas of expertise include The Cosmic Microwave Background, Galaxy Surveys, Dark Energy, Brane-world Cosmology and String Cosmology, Relativistic Dynamics and Geometry, Relativistic Astrophysics and Gravitational Waves.

Unit 23 Computer Science and Informatics Lincoln's Centre for Vision and Robotics Research exemplifies the rapid research progress that can be made by small, ambitious and flexible University Departments. Founded in 2004, the Centre has grown in just four years to nearly twenty members with around £750k external funding, more than seventy publications, and an international reputation in people tracking, medical vision, autonomous robotics and neural vision. The first three postgraduate students graduated in 2008. Dean of Research, Professor Andrew Hunter, said, "We have already established a strong and enthusiastic group and are looking forward to growing further over the next few years, to compete with the best in the rest of the world."

Unit 25 General Engineering and Mineral and Mining Engineering. The excellent result at Nottingham Trent includes a major breakthrough in airport security systems which will help identify suspect packages more quickly and efficiently. Nottingham Trent University is working on the world's first 'scatter-enhanced' 3D x-ray security scanner to identify contraband substances. The hi-tech equipment combines a novel x-ray diffraction technique with high-resolution 3D x-ray imaging capability to create an impression of an object's depth, partially rotate it, and even see around or behind it. The system will speed up security checks and reduce false alarms. Experts in the University's School of Science and Technology have patented the scanner in conjunction with Cranfield University and are working closely with the Home Office Scientific Development Branch and the US Department of Homeland Security.

Unit 25 General Engineering and Mineral and Mining Engineering Glamorgan's very successful engineering research focuses on multi-disciplinary approaches to key issues facing society, including sustainable energy generation and clean technologies for power systems and vehicles. It brings together staff with expertise across areas of engineering and links them with applied sciences to work with users to create holistic, innovative solutions

Unit of assessment 30 Architecture & the Built Environment Salford is a world-leading university in this area. Its Research Institute for the Built & Human Environment specialises in research across the broad themes of the environment, management and ICT. The University's return constituted by far the largest submission to this unit of assessment, and the results reflect the fact that the university produces the highest volume of world-leading and internationally significant research in this area.

Unit 45 Education The Institute of Education (IOE) has achieved an outstanding quality profile. The field of education as a whole recorded a large increase in the volume of work of international quality. The IOE achieved the highest quality profile in this field, with nearly all of its research of international quality and over a third regarded as world leading (4*). This is based on one of the largest submissions in any field of well over 200 staff (218.03 Category A FTE). It is also among the highest quality profiles across the social sciences and humanities and compares very well with other leading specialist institutions in different areas of research. The IOE's submission included wide ranging research of international

quality under the general themes of disciplines of education; the organization and improvement of learning; curriculum, culture and knowledge; children, families and early learning; and longitudinal and social research in education.

Unit 63 – Art and Design A joint submission was made by two University Alliance members; the University of Wales, Newport and the University of Wales Institute Cardiff under the aegis of the Wales Institute of Research in Art & Design (WIRAD: the Newport School of Art, Media & Design, the Cardiff School of Art & Design and the National Centre for Product Design & Development Research). The research cultures in Art & Design at Newport and UWIC are long established and the 2008 RAE success was built on strong performances in the 2001 RAE of 5 and 4 for Newport and UWIC respectively. The structure of the research in WIRAD comes under four over-arching themes where a broad range of exciting and internationally leading research is carried out: Design Enhanced Human Futures, Fine Art & Ceramics, Design Policy & Practice, Film, Photography & Screen Media.

Unit 63 Art and Design West of England's excellent outcome includes work Centre for Fine Print Research has enabled improvements in wide format digital print for HP , developed 3D printing techniques for rapid prototyping and made safer water based techniques for paints.

Unit 63 Art and Design Bournemouth's National Centre for Computer Animation is working with the University of Bath to create the first Industrial Doctoral Centre for the Computer Animation industry. This pioneering project has been awarded nearly £6 million by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). With an annual turnover of approx £7 billion the computer animation industry is of increasing importance to the UK economy. The Centre aims to improve knowledge transfer between academia and industry and provide training in the technical, artistic, research and management skills needed by the next generation of industry leaders. For the past two years, 3D World magazine has rated the NCCA as the best place to study computer animation in the UK. The publication also rated the Centre as number eight in the world.

Other recent grant successes include £290,000 over three years from the EPSRC to improve the realism of animated virtual humans. These characters will be used by partners Lancaster, UCL and the Metropolitan Police to study psychological responses to street violence. Virtual environments enable researchers to study scenarios that are ethically or practically impossible in the 'real' world, by improving the quality of the immersive experience.

Unit 66 Communication, Culture and Media at Nottingham Trent University is organised through the Institute for Cultural Analysis (ICAn). An informing perception of ICAn is that problems in contemporary cultural analysis have become organised into four broad themes: (1) the impact of globalization; (2) the increasing imbrication of culture, economy and technology; (3) cultures of everyday life; and (4) strategy in communication. ICAn's core research 'mission' is thus the development of research focussing on: cultural globalization and the constitution of global knowledge, transnational and diasporic cultures, the cultural implications of new (particularly media) technologies, the role of language and discourse in the constitution of identities, cultural experience and identity in everyday and domestic settings. The Institute's role is to co-ordinate and facilitate research expertise in the School of Arts and Humanities at Nottingham Trent University so as to engage with these fields and give new

direction to cultural, communication, and media research and teaching.

Notes for Editors:

The University Alliance is a group of 24 Higher Education Institutions in England and Wales (see www.university-alliance.ac.uk).

The members are: Aberystwyth University, Bournemouth University, University of Bradford, De Montfort University, University of Glamorgan, University of Gloucestershire, University of Hertfordshire, University of Huddersfield, Institute of Education, University of Kent, University of Lincoln, Liverpool John Moores University, Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Wales, Newport, Northumbria University, Nottingham Trent University, Open University, Oxford Brookes University, University of Plymouth, University of Portsmouth, University of Salford, Sheffield Hallam University, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC) and University of West of England.

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