

<p><b>Institution: University of Bedfordshire</b></p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment: 29 - English Language and Literature</b></p>
<p><b>a. Overview</b></p> <p>All staff in this submission are based in the Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA), a leading research centre in the areas of language proficiency and language assessment. CRELLA was established in 2005 with the appointment of Professor Weir to the Powdrill Chair in English Language Acquisition. Since its foundation, CRELLA has built a significant research base, and made provision for future growth and sustainability, by appointing a judicious blend of experienced senior academics and early career researchers who show promise of achievement in the field. As a result CRELLA is now the largest specialist university research centre in language assessment in the UK, with nine full-time academic staff, two visiting professors, two research assistants, a full-time research administrator and 30 research students.</p>
<p><b>b. Research strategy</b></p> <p><b>CRELLA's research strategy since 2008:</b> CRELLA's RAE submission in 2008 outlined its research strategy for the future under four headings, summarised as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. to consolidate existing relationships with research arms of UK partner institutions;</li> <li>b. to develop further research cooperation with international partners;</li> <li>c. to extend research collaboration with UK academic institutions;</li> <li>d. to develop an international research network in the area of the assessment of academic literacy and hold seminars and convene a conference in this area.</li> </ul> <p>In each of these four areas CRELLA has made significant progress, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Our relationship with the research arms of UK partner institutions has gone from strength to strength. CRELLA's Case Studies 1 and 2 demonstrate how the links with Cambridge English Language Assessment and other exam boards (key research users in our field) continue to produce major research publications and research funding. Case Studies 1 and 2 show how our relationship with English Language Testing Ltd and with Trinity College London, to name two of the other UK examining bodies we have advised, has also achieved significant results. In terms of this strategic research objective therefore, CRELLA is demonstrably achieving and surpassing the target set in 2008.</li> <li>b. With respect to the second of our 2008 strategic aims, CRELLA's two impact case studies demonstrate the range and breadth of cooperation with international partners, including Japan's Eiken Foundation (formerly STEP), the Taiwanese national Language Training and Testing Center (LTTTC), the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), and Avant Assessment, USA.</li> <li>c. CRELLA has extended its collaboration in research projects with UK universities, recent examples being the University of Cambridge, the University of Oxford (OUP), the University of Nottingham, the University of the Arts, London, the University of Central Lancashire and Southampton Solent University. CRELLA has also collaborated with the University of Roehampton in researching and developing an innovative new placement test, the International Language Assessment (ILA), for British Council use in its teaching centres around the world.</li> <li>d. In terms of our fourth strategic aim, CRELLA has been active in developing an international research network on the assessment of academic literacy. Examples of work in this area include our hosting of the 2009 UK Language Testing Forum on the theme of Frameworks and Levels of Proficiency, and more recently our hosting of three international Research Seminars on Academic English (2012-13) and the 2013 BAAL Testing, Evaluation and Assessment SIG conference. We have been involved in the development and validation of national and international tests of English for academic purposes, including TEAP (Japan), GEPT (Taiwan), CET (China) and IELTS (UK/Australia), and worked on a number of academic literacy projects worldwide with the British Council. In particular, research into comparisons between students' reading-into-writing test performance and their academic course performance (the focus of the Taiwan GEPT project) is contributing to a better understanding of the academic literacy required to study successfully at English-medium universities. From 2013 CRELLA has been cooperating with Cambridge English Language Assessment on the development of a major new academic literacy test aimed at all new UK undergraduates.</li> </ul>

**CRELLA's future research strategy:** Building on these successes since 2008, CRELLA's research activity continues to be driven by an ambitious strategic plan for consolidating its position as one of the world's leading research centres in English language assessment. CRELLA aims to develop its research activities in order to ensure its own sustainability and make a significant contribution to the vitality of the discipline as a whole. Key strategic aims of CRELLA's Research Plan include the following:

- to widen our research funding base through applications for government research grants and to continue to publish and disseminate high quality research on assessment in world-class publications and international arenas, and to increase our influence on the global assessment community via an enhanced website;
- to continue to recruit and retain the best researchers in the field (both staff and students), to ensure comprehensive coverage in all the main areas of language assessment;
- to strengthen our pathways to impact with the world's leading examination boards and test providers by: 1) engaging in joint research and publication with their staff members; 2) encouraging proposals for PhDs in assessment from their staff members; 3) serving on the research/advisory boards of these organisations and international testing committees; 4) securing new and/or extended research agreements with exam providers; and 5) demonstrating to other examination boards and Ministries of Education the value of CRELLA's socio-cognitive approach for their test development and validation;
- to continue our work with the media, teachers' associations and other public bodies to ensure maximum impact within and beyond the profession, building on work already completed with, for example, the BBC, the Guardian, the EL Gazette and teachers' organisations worldwide.

### c. People:

#### i. Staffing strategy and staff development

CRELLA continues to attract and retain top researchers. Since 2008 CRELLA has built up the team by the addition of a further six full-time academic staff, a full-time research administrator, and two research assistants.

**Staff development strategy:** The University follows a formal annual review process during which all staff are reviewed towards the end of each academic year by a senior manager and more frequently in their first year. At review meetings development activities are jointly identified to support staff in areas where they feel they might benefit from short external courses or training. Objectives for the past year are evaluated, challenges in the past year considered and the ways development activities in that year have contributed to their practice discussed. Personal and departmental priorities for the coming year are established and ways to overcome possible obstacles talked through. As a small, coherent unit housed in adjoining offices, there are also frequent opportunities for informal consideration of staff development with the CRELLA directors (concerning research leave, training, conference attendance, promotion etc).

We also have a fortnightly staff development programme which provides a forum for the discussion of staff research papers, book proposals, research projects, forthcoming conference presentations and other developmental activities. The programme is designed specifically to enhance the research competence of all staff in the team, especially that of early career researchers. Staff are actively encouraged to present papers at national and international conferences, and £15,000 is currently budgeted annually to support this.

In May 2013, the university's institution-wide Concordat implementation plan was awarded the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research Award for its robust and public implementation strategy for improving the career development and management of researchers.

**Staff progression and leave:** At the Annual Review staff aspirations and the training/professional development they might pursue over the longer term to support these aspirations are established. A personal development plan for the next academic year is agreed on, as are opportunities for research and sabbatical leave, and for promotion, within University guidelines (*Special Leave and Time Off Policy and Procedure*). The University has clear, transparent procedures for career

progression of staff at all stages of their careers (*Organisational Development and People Strategy 2013*), which CRELLA follows. Since 2008, besides new recruitments, one staff member has been promoted to Senior Lecturer, one to Reader, and two to Professor.

**Support for early career and post doc researchers:** In addition to the CRELLA Staff Development Programme, early career researchers are supported in a variety of ways:

- a) Dr. Fumiyo Nakatsuhara took up her first university post at CRELLA as a Research Assistant in February 2009, was appointed as a Lecturer in Oct. 2010 and promoted to a Senior Lecturer in August 2012. With support from other experienced CRELLA members, she started providing lead consultancy services in the TEAP speaking test project in Japan, and carrying out research projects as a principal investigator, such as the IELTS listening/speaking projects and the Trinity speaking project. She has had learning opportunities in supervising PhD students as a second supervisor paired with experienced Directors of Studies. She has also been involved in PhD examinations as an internal examiner. Her teaching is limited to two hours a week.
- b) Dr. Sathena Chan began her work with CRELLA as a part-time research assistant in Oct 2010 whilst a PhD student here. She was given early opportunities to work with experienced members of CRELLA on a number of research projects, and then, with support from colleagues, successfully completed two test validation projects for the LTTC exam board in Taiwan on their GEPT test, and provided consultancy services in an integrated reading and writing project for Trinity College London. In Sept. 2013 she was appointed as a full-time post-doctoral researcher, and successfully applied for research funds, as well as working on new research opportunities with the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority. Her teaching is limited to two hours a week.
- c) Dr. Chihiro Inoue was appointed as CRELLA's first post-doctoral researcher in May 2013. She is receiving mentoring and support from senior colleagues in PhD supervision and in publishing her research, as well as working in teams on research projects for major international testing organisations. She has already been successful in several research funding proposals with colleagues, has published her thesis in book form, and has started writing research proposals as a principal investigator. Her teaching is limited to two hours a week.

**Equal opportunities:** The University of Bedfordshire adheres to an Equality and Diversity Policy which covers all areas of employment. It has an Equality and Diversity advisor. CRELLA recruits, employs and promotes staff strictly on the basis of their suitability for the position. To this end, we ensure that no applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, transgender, marital status, disability, creed, colour, race or ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, religion, faith or belief. CRELLA staff reflect this diversity: staff consist of 7 British nationals, 1 British and Canadian national, 1 Polish, 2 Japanese, and 1 Hong Kong Chinese. 5 of them are males and 7 females. CRELLA was successfully audited internally for its Equality and Diversity practices in 2012.

**Staff links with business, industry and the public sector:** As is clear from our case studies and impact statement, CRELLA has a strong and productive policy of liaising with business, industry and the public sector, drawing staff and students from industry and business, and in return seconding staff in the other direction. An example is our strong research and publishing cooperation with Cambridge English Language Assessment and CUP (see impact statement). Examples of staff exchanges include Green and Taylor, who joined CRELLA from Cambridge English Language Assessment in 2006 and 2011 respectively and Hawkey, who now works part-time for Cambridge English Language Assessment. As detailed below, 9 of our PhD students come from businesses and industries worldwide connected with language assessment.

## ii. Research students

**PhD Recruitment:** At the time of the 2008 RAE submission CRELLA had 6 registered PhD students. Since then our PhD recruitment has risen substantially, and stands at 39 in total in the current REF period, 9 of whom have completed, which in the current funding environment is testimony to our developing national and international profile. In terms of funding, many of these students are sponsored by a range of international or national funding bodies, including AHRC.

**Research Culture:** In line with our increased PhD student numbers, and the more than doubling of staff numbers, CRELLA's research culture has expanded in range and scope. In 2009 CRELLA set up the active *Research Seminar Programme* which meets regularly in term time and includes research-focussed talks and workshops from internationally renowned visitors, CRELLA staff, MA students and PhD students. Further details of CRELLA activities are available on: [www.beds.ac.uk/crella/seminars](http://www.beds.ac.uk/crella/seminars).

In addition, for our PhD students we hold a dedicated *Postgraduate Research Forum* which meets fortnightly, at which students present papers and workshops on their research for discussion and critique in an informal, encouraging atmosphere. All research students receive in-house tailor-made training workshops on SPSS and statistical analysis, and on other specialist software, as well as a free laptop from the Research Graduate School. Specialist courses on all areas of language testing and research methods are provided for all our research students annually with all CRELLA staff contributing sessions on their own specialism so students are exposed to a wide range of expertise. See: [www.beds.ac.uk/crella/seminars/pg-research-forum](http://www.beds.ac.uk/crella/seminars/pg-research-forum).

Central to CRELLA's research environment for research students and staff are the Spring, Summer and Winter Research Seminars. These events began as in-house seminars at which CRELLA staff, MA students and PhD students offered short research papers, but since 2011 the programme has expanded to invite attendance from across the UK and internationally to discuss matters related to language assessment, with prominent outside speakers at each event. These events therefore offer the opportunity for research students and staff to present and discuss their research in a congenial, supportive atmosphere, as well as to engage with acknowledged experts in the field, and network with fellow PhD students from other universities. The event is accessible via video-conferencing for students working off-campus. Students are also encouraged to present their research at national and international conferences, and funding is available annually to support each student in this.

**Equal opportunities:** Our student body is highly diverse, demonstrating our commitment to equal opportunities. Amongst our current students we have 15 part-time and 15 full-time students from 13 countries (UK, Georgia, Saudi Arabia, Australia, USA, Poland, Jordan, Pakistan, Netherlands, Greece, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Hong Kong). The ratio of males to females is 16:14. Completed PhD students (2008 to present) consist of 6 full-time and 3 part-time students from 8 countries (Turkey, Germany, China, Malaysia, Taiwan, UK, Thailand and Japan). The ratio of males to females in this group is 2:7. These figures indicate the level to which our students can access PhD study opportunities, regardless of nationality, gender, age and personal circumstances.

**Research student links with business, industry and the public sector:** Besides staff links with industry and business (see Section b above, *CRELLA's research strategy since 2008*, for details of organisations we work with), many of our PhD students come from, and work in business, mainly in examination boards: Nick Saville (Director of Research and Validation, Cambridge English Language Assessment) who was instrumental in embedding the socio-cognitive framework in the exam board's test development procedures; Daniel Waller (Senior Lecturer in EFL and Testing, University of Central Lancashire Examination Board (UCLEB); Jamie Dunlea (Chief Researcher, Eiken Foundation of Japan now with the British Council) currently taking his PhD; Rachel Wu (Projects Manager in the Taiwanese national Language Training and Testing Center – LTTC), who completed her PhD in 2011; Paul Tucker (Director, Avant Assessment, USA) Michael Corrigan (Association of Language Testers in Europe – ALTE), Mark Chapman (CamLA), Stefan O'Grady (British Council) and Tom Rogers (OUP).

**Monitoring and support mechanisms:** Postgraduate research students each receive a full two-week induction by the Research Graduate School, covering all aspects of research practice, ethics, progression, research training and so on. They then receive an individual briefing and induction at CRELLA, and at the same time are inducted onto the University and CRELLA's virtual learning environment, which is a central forum for communication and dissemination. The Research Graduate School facilitates and ensures regular contact between supervisors and students through a virtual environment which creates and stores records of learning and in addition provides a

platform for regular interaction between supervisors, supervisees and the Graduate School. Supervisors meet PhD students at least monthly, and outcomes are recorded. Each student has a second supervisor who joins the supervisory meeting at least once a term, and completes a formal panel process of upgrade from MPhil to PhD, which includes a public presentation and discussion.

**Preparing research students for future careers:** As well as personalised skills development in CRELLA (appropriate methodological and statistical training) and induction into the Research Culture (see above), the Research Graduate School offers regular training sessions on topics including 'Delivering oral presentations' and 'Academic writing and publishing'. As part of CRELLA's efforts to develop research students' profiles and experience, staff encourage them to publish their research and present at conferences. Staff actively work with students in the preparation and publication of research articles. Examples of students who have published jointly with staff during this research period include Yanagawa, Zhang, Devi, Chan, Bhatti and Ünalı.

#### **d. Income, infrastructure and facilities**

**Research income:** CRELLA's research income has risen dramatically. In the last RAE, with 3.4 FTE staff, CRELLA only attracted £175,000 in research funding. Since then, the increase has been substantial. In the financial year 2008-2009 CRELLA's research income was £60,734; for 2009-2010 it was 121,057; 2010-2011 it was 189,582; 2011-2012 222,588 and 2012-2013 310,448. Thus, a total of £904,409 research income has been generated in the period 2008-2013, an increase of 500%. Since 2008, CRELLA has received a total of £96,275 from Cambridge English Language Assessment; £99,100 from the British Council; £102,884 (2010-13) from the Eiken Foundation of Japan (formerly STEP) and £216,621 from English Language Testing (*Password*). This demonstrates the financial success of CRELLA's research activity and its growing recognition nationally and internationally. Income is used to support our research aims, to ensure greater impact and sustainability, to appoint new staff, as well as in staff and student development, and in maximising the student experience for our PhD students.

**Scholarly infrastructure:** To support research into language testing and assessment CRELLA has built up a specialised library of resources. This includes a substantial bank of research articles, specialist research and statistical software and CD-Roms, and an extensive range of specialist books financed by the research institute out of its own resources ([www.beds.ac.uk/crella/crella-student-resources](http://www.beds.ac.uk/crella/crella-student-resources)). In addition, CRELLA houses the prestigious Professor John Trim Archive, a collection of papers on language testing and assessment documenting the development of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). In 2009 CRELLA also benefited from the donation of an extensive archive of testing materials created over the last thirty years at Lancaster University. These resources contribute to the status of CRELLA as the UK's main research centre in the field, and are open to CRELLA and external staff and students. In addition students have 24/7 library/internet access on the university main campus.

**Organisational infrastructure supporting research:** From its inception in 2005 CRELLA has received exceptional support from the University, encouraging its growth and contributing to its long-term sustainability as a research-intensive centre focusing on a distinctive area of work. The fact that it is now the largest specialist university centre in the UK in the area of language assessment is testimony to the university's foresight and commitment.

Departmental support for research was recently assessed as 'excellent' by ESRC reviewers. Their comments noted that: "The organisational support is outstanding, full support is provided by the head of department for the research project, data collection, professional skills development, network building, and dissemination. The suggested mentor, Prof. Weir is an outstanding internationally recognised expert in the field who will give his full support. The institution CRELLA is well equipped to support the applicant in an excellent way."

CRELLA carries out its research within the structures established by the University to support research activity. The University has ten Research Institutes, whose role is to focus the research output of University staff, to increase and support research quality and to help to communicate research achievements more widely. Our research institute manages and supports CRELLA's PhD

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students, ensuring adequate provision of facilities. Our research environment is further supported by the University's Research Graduate School, which coordinates the quality assurance and administrative arrangements for all students on research degree programmes and liaises with students and supervisors on all aspects of research student progress.

CRELLA's contribution to postgraduate programmes in Applied Linguistics allows us to connect the research we do with areas of concrete application such as pedagogy and classroom testing. Regular interaction between researchers and practitioners ensures that the research environment in which we operate is not narrowly theoretical.

**Operational infrastructure supporting research:** CRELLA is located in a substantial country mansion at Putteridge Bury. This spacious and pleasant environment affords an atmosphere highly conducive to research and scholarship. A new research facility was completed at Putteridge in 2010, offering state-of-the-art technical and study facilities for research students, including workspace, PC suites, conference and seminar rooms, and catering facilities. It houses our specialist research library on language assessment. There is on-site support for photocopying, computing and technical assistance and video-conferencing for research students and staff. Every new PhD student receives a free laptop computer. The University has also recently purchased £19,000 of eye-tracking hardware and software for CRELLA research into reading and assessment. In 2013 the University's new £20 million Postgraduate Research Centre opened with further state of the art research and study facilities.

**e. Collaboration or contribution to the discipline or research base**

**Broader engagement with, and beyond, the world of language testing:** CRELLA staff have a long history of engagement with the profession and beyond, applying original research to real-world problems and disseminating ideas internationally, through the media, education, conferences and so on. Evidence of this engagement can be seen in these examples:

**Television and other media:** CRELLA staff have written articles and been interviewed for teachers' publications internationally (e.g., *Green* in Japan, *Weir* in Taiwan). They have developed materials for teachers and learners (e.g., *Bax* for the online BBC World Service for Brazil and Cambodia) and written for the UK national press (e.g. *Bax* has written two articles for Guardian Education). This work has international reach and large audiences. For example, *Bax* was interviewed by Sudan's Open University Radio, which has a weekly audience of 3 million listeners.

**Public lectures and educational conferences:** Since 2008, CRELLA staff members have delivered **27** invited plenary talks, **27** keynotes and **193** other papers at conferences and seminars worldwide. The total audience for these presentations was over **17,000** language teachers, testing professionals and members of the public. Notable examples included *Weir's* (2011) George Blue public memorial lecture at the University of Southampton, *Field's* guest lectures at Oxford University Press on psycholinguistics and language learning (2010), *Bax's* plenary presentation at the WorldCALL conference, Fukuoka, Japan (2008) and *Nakatsuhara's* plenary talk at the Japan Foundation, Tokyo, Japan, 2012.

**Evidence of contributions to the research base:** CRELLA staff have worked collaboratively with many researchers in the UK and abroad, on a wide variety of research and development projects, including:

**Work with UK and international exam boards:** We have worked closely with Cambridge English Language Assessment on the ongoing research and validation programme for its English language proficiency examinations. *Weir* and *Green* have worked with English Language Testing Ltd. on the *Password* test development project for entrance to University Foundation programmes. *Nakatsuhara*, *Field*, *Chan*, *Taylor* and *Inoue* have worked with Trinity College London Examination Board to validate and revise their language tests. CRELLA has an MOU with the British Council to provide a minimum of 35 days' research consultancy on its tests per annum and also one with the Eiken Foundation, Japan. *Weir* worked extensively with the LTTTC exam board in Taiwan on their GEPT test, and serves as an international member of their research committee. *Weir*, *Nakatsuhara*, *Green* and *Taylor* have worked with the Eiken Foundation of Japan researching a

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new university English language entrance test for Japan. *Green* and *Nakatsuhara* have also collaborated closely on research with Japanese universities, in Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and Nagoya Gakuin University, respectively. *Bax* and *Green* developed an online teachers' assessment portal at the Singapore Ministry of Education.

Work with other UK and international universities, language schools and publishers: *Weir*, *Bax*, *Green* and *Field* acted as consultants to Kaplan Language Centres on their new syllabus and examinations. *Green* has acted as advisor to five overseas universities. CRELLA has led a major EU TEMPUS project developing teacher training modules on assessment literacy in institutions throughout Russia (PROSET, European Union, €1 million), in cooperation with the Russian Ministry of Education and Science and a consortium of 11 Russian universities.

**Indicators of wider contributions to the research base and relevant esteem indicators:**

CRELLA staff have made considerable contributions to the wider national and international research base. Examples of our work are:

Editorial and other panels: CRELLA staff are represented on the editorial boards of many of the profession's top journals and series. Examples include: *Taylor* and *Weir* Language Testing; *Taylor* Language Teaching; *Field* System; *Green* Assessing Writing, and *Bax* Journal of Virtual and Personal Learning Environments. *Weir* is chairperson of the British Council's Assessment Advisory Board and the Series Co-Editor of CUP's Studies in Language Testing series. *Green* is Associate Editor of Language Assessment Quarterly. *Hamp-Lyons* has been editor of Assessing Writing since 2002, and is co-editor of the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. *Green* and *Weir* are Expert Members of EALTA (European Association for Language Testing and Assessment), and *Green* is Treasurer. *Green* is Vice-President of the International Language Testing Association (ILTA) and will become President in 2015. *Weir* was elected as an Academician of the Academy of Social Sciences in 2013. *Bax* is on the British Council's national English Language Advisory Group, and a panel member in 2013 on the Foreign Office triennial review of the British Council.

External Examining: CRELLA staff have acted as external examiners in numerous UK and international universities. Examples include Bangor and Roehampton (*Weir*), Edinburgh, Nottingham, Nottingham Trent, Exeter, Leicester, Brighton, Salford and Badajoz, Spain (*Bax*), Lancaster, Bristol, Reading, Nottingham and Edinburgh (*Green*), Cambridge, Leicester and Roehampton (*Taylor*).

Awards: CRELLA publications have won major awards. *Weir's* book *Examining Reading* (2009) with *Khalifa* was the runner-up in the Sage/ILTA triennial award for the best book on language assessment. *Field's* book *Listening in the Language Classroom* (2008 CUP) was winner of the 2009 Ben Warren International Prize. *Hawkey*, *Taylor* and *Weir* were each presented with Outstanding Contribution Awards at the Centenary Conference of Cambridge English Language Assessment in 2013.

**Summary: a dynamic, productive research environment**

This submission has offered extensive evidence of CRELLA's rapid development in recent years in terms of its research environment and research base. Since the 2008 RAE exercise CRELLA has tripled its staff numbers through the recruitment of both young and more experienced researchers, as well as increasing its PhD numbers five-fold and its total research income by 500%. More importantly, it has invested these human and financial resources so as to build a dynamic, internationally recognised research environment to complement its growing international profile for quality research and publications.