

Institution: University of Bedfordshire
Unit of Assessment: 27 - English Language and Literature
<p>1. Unit context and structure, research and impact strategy</p> <p>a. Overview</p> <p>CRELLA (Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment) is recognised by the global language testing and assessment community as a world-leading research centre. It is known as the source of the Socio-Cognitive Framework for test development and validation that underpins the work of both well-established and emergent language test providers around the world (e.g., from Cambridge Assessment English in the UK to Centro Ceibal in South America and Eiken Foundation in East Asia: see Case Studies).</p> <p>CRELLA's core mission is to advance the field by ensuring that assessments reflect and keep pace with contemporary language use. Our staff are directly involved in the creation, evaluation and significant revision of language assessments. We foster positive impact by building capacity for stakeholder groups (see for example the large-scale teacher training projects in Eastern Europe referenced in Section 1b). We safeguard professional standards and advocate for ethical approaches to language assessment, serving executive and advisory roles in the professional organisations that represent our field: <i>Green</i> serving as President of the International Language Testing Association (ILTA) and <i>Chan</i> serving as Convenor of British Association for Applied Linguistics Testing Evaluation and Assessment Special Interest Group (BAAL TEASIG) (see Section 4).</p> <p>As a research institute in the School of Education and English Language within the Faculty of Education and Sports, CRELLA is well-placed to offer research insights, expertise and support to the School's English and TEFL programmes and the Faculty's training programme for research postgraduates as well as profiting from these exchanges. Externally, CRELLA has established close links with world-leading test providers through funded research projects, collaborative publications and presentations with their staff, offering staff development through training courses, MA and PhD programmes.</p> <p>The CRELLA team is small and highly focussed with six full-time and two part-time academic staff (including a post-doctoral research fellow), three visiting professors, and a part-time research administrator.</p> <p>With only 7.2 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff members in this submission, CRELLA has achieved outstanding research impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The 61 research projects funded in this period brought income of GBP1,144,531.27: an increase of over 60% for each FTE researcher submitted. GBP100,000 each in REF2014: over GBP160,000 each in REF2021. ● Staff have published: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Seven monographs and two edited volumes ❑ 33 articles in prestigious high impact journals such as <i>Language Testing</i>, <i>Language Assessment Quarterly</i>, <i>Assessing Writing</i>, and the <i>Modern Language Journal</i> ❑ 21 chapters in edited volumes and 23 freely available downloadable research reports ● Talks, conference presentations, seminars and training workshops by CRELLA staff have reached a total audience of over 13,600.

- **25 PhD students** completed their studies at CRELLA during this REF period (9 in REF2014).

b. Research and impact strategy

i) Achievements in the current assessment period:

CRELLA's overall strategy is to grow its role as a world leading research centre in English language learning and assessment. Underpinning this strategy are key objectives summarised from REF 2014. CRELLA has made considerable progress towards each:

To widen our research funding base

Since August 2013 CRELLA has secured 61 new research projects with more than 20 different funding organisations. This has, in part, involved building on our existing relationships with partners in the UK e.g., the British Council (BC) and Cambridge Assessment English (CAE) and internationally e.g., Eiken Foundation of Japan and the Language Training and Testing Center in Taiwan. We have also worked to extend our reach and funding base by collaborating with over 10 new partners. These also include both UK organisations (e.g., EnglishScore, LanguageCert, Oxford University Press (OUP)) and international organisations (e.g., Educational Testing Service, USA; Liulishuo, China; Centro Ceibal, Uruguay; and the Cambridge Malaysian Education and Development Trust). Moreover, we have extended our research to embrace new areas including digital assessment and the assessment of young learners.

To continue to publish and disseminate high quality research on assessment

- Across the current REF period, CRELLA has strengthened its publications record with 33 peer-reviewed articles in journals such as the *Modern Language Journal* (Impact Factor (IF)=4.08), *System* (IF=2.46), *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy, and Practice* (IF=2.26), *Language Testing* (IF=2.01) and *Assessing Writing* (IF=1.90). This represents a 52% increase on the REF2014 period.
- CRELLA staff have authored seven monographs and edited two volumes with leading academic publishers such as OUP, Cambridge University Press (CUP), and Routledge.
- **21** chapters have been contributed to edited volumes. In addition, CRELLA's **23** funded research reports are disseminated on funders' websites with open access. Examples include:
 - ❑ *Taylor and Chan's* (2015) research on the suitability of English language tests for giving evidence of doctors' English proficiency, available on the General Medical Council's website¹
 - ❑ *Bax and Chan's* (2016) report on the cognitive validity of GEPT, available on the LTTC website²
 - ❑ *Nakatsuhara, Inoue, and colleagues'* series of research reports (2016-2018) on the use of video-conferencing technologies in the IELTS speaking test, available on the IELTS website³.

¹ <https://www.gmc-uk.org/about/what-we-do-and-why/data-and-research/research-and-insight-archive/the-suitability-of-english-language-tests-for-giving-evidence-of-doctors-english-proficiency>

² <https://www.ltcc.ntu.edu.tw/ltcc-gept-grants/RReport/RG07.pdf>

³ <https://www.ielts.org/research/research-reports>

To increase our influence on the global assessment community

- In contrast to REF2014, CRELLA members have served in leadership roles that determine the strategic direction of national and international language assessment associations. For example, *Green* as President of ILTA (2015-16) and *Chan* as Convenor of the BAAL TEASIG (2019-present).
- CRELLA members have served as committee members in different capacities for BAAL TEASIG (*Chan, Inoue, Khabbazzbashi, Nakatsuhara, Latimer*) and the UK Association of Language Testing and Assessment (UKALTA) (*Inoue, Khabbazzbashi*) – see 'professional and advisory roles' in Section 4 for details.
- Members of CRELLA have been active in delivering assessment workshops and webinars on different topics for **24 international institutions**, such as the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), the International Language Testing Association (ILTA), and the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL). These events have attracted over **5,500 participants** from around the world including:
 - ❑ *Nakatsuhara's* (2019) MOOC for the British Council on *Speaking Assessment in the Classroom* (2,900 participants)
 - ❑ *Field's* (2016) webinar on *Perceptual Processing in Listening Skills* for TESOL International Association (150 participants)
 - ❑ *Green's* (2015) webinar on *Assessing Languages for Specific Purposes and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* for IATEFL's English for Specific Purposes Special Interest Group (250 participants)
- CRELLA has invested resources to enhance its website with a more user-friendly interface, giving greater prominence to CRELLA's innovative Socio-Cognitive Framework (see our Case Study on Refining English language proficiency assessment for the digital age). Success stories from former PhD students have been added, along with an introductory video for prospective research students. CRELLA is active on social media, with weekly Twitter updates, also embedded within CRELLA's website, disseminating the latest news and research.

To recruit and retain the best researchers in the field

- Since 2014, we have made three appointments covering diverse areas of expertise, including *learning oriented assessment* and *conversation analysis* (*Lam* in 2016 from University of Edinburgh), *automated approaches to assessment* and *impact research* (*Khabbazzbashi* in 2017 from University of Oxford and Cambridge Assessment English) and *integrated reading-into-writing and use of eye-tracking technology* (*Latimer* in 2019; former PhD student at CRELLA). These appointments complemented the areas of expertise already available at CRELLA, including: test development and validation (all staff); listening assessment (*Field, Nakatsuhara*); speaking assessment (*Inoue, Nakatsuhara*); reading assessment (*Chan*); writing assessment (*Chan, Green*); integrated skills assessment (*Chan, Inoue, Latimer*); cognitive processing in assessment (*Field, Chan*); social parameters of testing (*Inoue, Nakatsuhara*); the influence of tests on teaching and learning (*Green*); task-based assessment (*Inoue*); assessment literacy (*Green*); and use of digital technologies in test development and validation (all staff).

To ensure comprehensive coverage in all main areas of language assessment

- Complementing the range of expertise in the centre, CRELLA has collaborated on multiple research projects, leading to **16 joint publications** with universities in the UK (e.g., Cambridge, Oxford, and Reading) and abroad (e.g., Waseda, Japan;

Queensland University of Technology, Australia; and Isra, Jordan). Examples of joint publications include *Green* with Boyd (UCL), Hopfenbeck, and Stobart (Oxford) (with 14,371 downloads); *Nakatsuhara* with Seedhouse (Newcastle); and *Hamp-Lyons* with Jin (Shanghai Jiao Tong).

To strengthen pathways to impact

- A cornerstone of our impact strategy has been CRELLA's long-term research partnerships. CRELLA has been actively involved in the development, validation, and revision of a number of international examinations. For example, in collaboration with the British Council, Cambridge Assessment English, BC EnglishScore (see Case Study on Refining English language proficiency assessment for the digital age), the IELTS Partners, Trinity College London, Password (see Case Study on assessment of Academic English proficiency) as well as others, such as OUP and Pearson English Assessment.
- A novel pathway to impact during the REF2021 period has been the research-led consultancies that we have started offering for commercial and educational partners. Recognising the contribution of CRELLA's research to commercial success, these have brought the centre an income of **GBP245,000**. Examples include
 - a project commissioned by Waseda University in Japan. CRELLA advised on the alignment of a new communication-focused English curriculum to international standards. This included training teachers to deliver the new curriculum, offered to 6,000 students annually.
 - a project commissioned by the British Council (China) where we advised on the development of a digital app to promote primary and secondary school learners' spoken English proficiency.

Additionally, we have:

- worked with ministries of education, local and international partners to develop large-scale assessments. These include Centro Ceibal (Uruguay), LTTC (Taiwan), and Eiken Foundation of Japan, amongst others. CRELLA members have served on the steering groups and/or advisory boards of examination boards that direct the work of these organisations; e.g., *Weir* chaired the British Council Assessment Advisory Board; *Green* chaired and *Field* served on the OUP Assessment Steering Group.
- engaged in joint research and publications with the world's leading examination boards and test providers (a total of **18 publications** in this REF period). Examples include:
 - joint research and publications with two key IELTS Partners in the UK – BC and CAE – on the use of video-conferencing technology to deliver the IELTS Speaking Test. This informed the online delivery of the speaking test in IELTS Indicator, launched in April 2020 (*Nakatsuhara, Inoue, Berry & Galaczi, 2016, 2017a, 2017b; Berry, Nakatsuhara, Inoue & Galaczi, 2018* – Case Study on assessment of Academic English proficiency).
 - *Khabbazzbashi* co-authored two papers with colleagues at Cambridge Assessment English on the comparison of different marking models in speaking assessment and automated approaches to speaking, respectively. These have informed the choice of marking model for a large-scale online speaking test and the evaluation criteria for an auto-marker (*Khabbazzbashi & Galaczi, 2020; Khabbazzbashi, Xu, & Galaczi, in press*).
 - *Green* recently co-edited with van Moere (Metametrics Inc, USA) a special issue of the journal, *Language Testing* on repeated test taking, an increasingly significant aspect of professional assessment practice in the digital age.

- been active in developing an international research network on language assessment. Examples include our hosting of the 2018 Language Testing Forum on the theme of 'Assessing Languages across General and Specific Contexts', and the 2017 annual conference for the International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language: Testing, Evaluation and Assessment Special Interest Group (IATEFL TEASIG) on the theme of 'Building Practical Assessment Skills for Teachers'.
- been instrumental in establishing new associations for teachers, researchers, and other practitioners in language assessment in both the Russian Federation (NATE Testing Special Interest Group) and Ukraine (Ukraine Association for Language Testing and assessment) as well as consolidating our network in Europe by serving as expert members and regular specialist instructors for ALTE and the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment (EALTA).

To extend our work in public engagement

We have consistently sought to engage teachers, policy makers, and the wider public through a variety of channels:

- The EU Tempus ProSET teacher training project (2011-14) involving the Ministry of Education and Science and 11 universities across the Russian Federation (517114-TEMPUS-1-2011-1-UK-TEMPUS-SMHES (2011-2505/001-001) led to the publication in 2013 of a free course and handbook in language assessment for teachers in schools and colleges that has been widely used in the current REF period and improved the quality of test item writing for the national matriculation test, the EGE (Case Study on Refining English language proficiency assessment for the digital age). (https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/kmriwwzw/proset_Ita-course-brochure_en.pdf)
- The Erasmus+ Teachers Assessment Literacy Enhancement (TALE) project (2015-18) (2015-1-CY01-KA201-011863, Case Study on Refining English language proficiency assessment for the digital age) involved collaboration across six European countries (Norway, Germany, UK, Greece, Cyprus, Hungary) and provides English Language Teachers across Europe and beyond eight free online courses in language assessment, including three authored by CRELLA. The project was awarded the British Council's 'Innovation in Assessment' award in 2019. *Green's* textbook for teachers, *Exploring Language Assessment and Testing* (Routledge), was published in its second edition in December 2020. The first edition, published in 2013, achieved sales of 2,025 copies and is used on at least seven teacher training programmes at UK universities.

We have achieved a wider audience by disseminating our research through mainstream and specialist media. Examples include:

- *Bax* on the BBC on 17 February 2014 (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-beds-bucks-herts-26198471?print=true>).
- *Inoue's* fortnightly column in *The Japan Times Alpha* – Japan's best-selling bilingual newspaper (60,000 paper copies per week; 550,000 online views per month) on the usage and history of English language, where she answers questions posted by readers (<https://alpha.japantimes.co.jp/ad/>).
- *Green's* webinars and blog entries on language assessment issues through OUP (e.g., <https://oupeltglobalblog.com/tag/anthony-green>). He has been interviewed online for teachers' associations such as BALEAP (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wHJi9KPt0D4&t=1s>). On 13 April 2015, *Green* engaged in a public debate with Smith (University of Warwick) on the topic, 'Language testing does more harm than good'. The debate reached a live audience of 300 and was disseminated online.

- *Field's* 2018 YouTube interview for International House, the leading training institute for teachers of English, is publicly available online and has attracted 1,430 views (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=meduZHznkIQ>).
- *Green, Khabbazbashi, and Lam* featured in the national press in Ukraine (April 2018) including coverage by *Osvita Ukrainy* (Education in Ukraine), the newspaper for the Ministry of Education and Science.

ii) CRELLA's future research and impact strategy:

Building on successes since 2014, CRELLA's research activity continues to be driven by an ambitious strategic plan to cement its position as a world-leading research centre. CRELLA aims to develop its research activities to ensure its own sustainability and make a significant contribution to the vitality of the field.

Key strategic aims include:

1) Advance the field of language assessment, research and practice

- **Research agenda:** Building on our strength in learning-oriented assessment, we will continue research that advances understanding and informs innovation in the design of assessments that help people learn languages more effectively. We will study the evolving contexts, roles and nature of language use in the digital age (e.g., integration of language and other skills, multimodal language use, language for mediation). This research will inform task design and assessment criteria that reflect useful learning targets or outcomes, in step with the evolving nature of language use.
- **Theoretical development:** We will strengthen and extend the theoretical robustness of the Socio-Cognitive Framework for test development and validation, to capture new parameters and interactions in digitally based language assessments.
- **Methodological development:** We will continue to exploit and explore the affordances of (digital) technologies (e.g., keystroke logging, eye-tracking, automated text analysis tools) in researching target language use, assessed performance, and test-taking processes. One effort already underway is to associate Text Inspector more closely with the Socio-Cognitive Framework, developing more contextualised and meaning-focused methods for analysing texts.
- **Research dissemination:** We will broaden the range of target journals in which we publish, extending the reach of our research beyond the field of language assessment, but also to share insights and instigate changes in related fields such as applied linguistics, and language and learning in education.

2) To diversify our research funding base

- We will continue to broaden the range of testing organisations and other funders to which we submit research funding bids. As an example, in 2020 we have submitted proposals to several providers of mobile-assisted language assessment.

3) Consolidate and expand our coverage of expertise in different areas of language assessment

- **Staffing:** We will maintain our staffing strategy to include the judicious blend of experienced academics and promising early career researchers that has proven effective since the inception of the centre in 2005. We will continue to recruit, retain, and develop the best researchers in the field.

- **Research students:** We will recruit promising students with the potential to complement the staff team.
- **External collaborations:** We will forge links and build networks for interdisciplinary collaborations with other universities, exam boards, and testing organisations, capitalising on their expertise to achieve our research goals and break new ground.

4) Strengthen our pathways to impact

- **Capacity-building:** We will pursue a distinctive capacity-building approach to impact, empowering our research beneficiaries and stakeholders. This approach, unique to CRELLA, goes beyond generating validity evidence through research. It prioritises equipping test provider personnel and teachers around the world with the knowledge and competence to create and sustain assessments, using them to benefit learning. Building on our work in the current REF period, we will help small start-up businesses (e.g., English Language Testing, EnglishScore and Text Inspector), recruit PhD students from test providers, collaborate with partners in countries and regions with less developed assessment systems (e.g., Uruguay, Russia), and upskill teachers and teacher-trainers with assessment literacy courses.
- **Bridging theory & practice:** We will continue to benefit language assessment practitioners and their stakeholders with state-of-the-art research findings and methodological advances, while communicating the needs of the industry back to the research community.
- **Public engagement:** We will continue to engage the wider public with updates and new research findings in language assessment through our open-to-all online research seminars and social media presence; and promote language assessment literacy through free resources published on our website.

2. People

a. Staffing strategy and staff development

Staffing strategy

CRELLA's objectives in this REF period included contributing significantly to key research areas, widening its research funding base, and broadening areas for research supervision. These objectives were met in the following ways:

- *Lam* was recruited from the University of Edinburgh in 2016 to enhance research in Learning Oriented Assessment and to strengthen methodological expertise in conversation analysis.
- *Khabbazzbashi* was recruited from CAE in 2017 to add research expertise in automated approaches to assessment. Her previous experience in industry and of large-scale assessment projects added to our connections with examination boards and potential funders.
- *Latimer*, formerly a doctoral student at CRELLA, was appointed in 2019, adding expertise in the use of eye-tracking technology in reading assessment. Her appointment supported the work of CRELLA on the development of the innovative Bedfordshire Academic Reading and Reading-into-Writing (BART) tests, further enhancing CRELLA's appeal to funding bodies.
- CRELLA champions equality and diversity in its staffing strategy and individuals are recruited, employed, and promoted strictly based on suitability for the position. To this

end, we ensure that no applicant or employee receives less favourable treatment on the grounds of gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership status, pregnancy/maternity, disability, creed, colour, race or ethnic origin, age, sexual orientation, religion, faith or belief.

- CRELLA staff reflect this diversity. Over the current REF period, eligible staff employed by the institute have included nine females (61.6% FTE) and five males (38.4% FTE) with the following ethnicity groupings: Asian (16.6% FTE), Chinese (16.6% FTE), Other (16.6% FTE), and White (50% FTE). Diversity practices are monitored and ensured at every recruitment and appraisal opportunity. To illustrate, all CRELLA researchers have been entered into the REF. Members of CRELLA attend equal opportunity training and workshops. Staff in CRELLA have benefitted from full-time maternity leave cover. CRELLA adheres to UoB's Equality and Diversity Policy that covers all areas of employment (<https://www.beds.ac.uk/media/270348/ed-policy-and-strategy-2012-2017-under-review.pdf>) and is fully committed to the provision of equality of opportunity for staff and students. CRELLA also fosters a culture of listening to, and acting on, diverse perspectives with decision-making practices that embody respect and openness to ideas.
- CRELLA's staffing strategy also involves the development of research links with organisations outside academia, supported by UoB's Innovation and Enterprise Service and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships. CRELLA's exchanges with business, industry, and the public sector are evidenced in our case studies and impact statement with a productive policy of drawing staff and students from industry and business. For example, we have a strong research and publishing cooperation with BC, CAE, and CUP. *Green* and *Khabbazzbashi* are both examples of staff movements, joining CRELLA from CAE in 2006 and 2017, respectively.

Staff Development

At the institutional level, in 2013, the University's Concordat implementation plan was awarded the European Commission's HR Excellence in Research award, and its action plans have since then been consistently approved. Training and development activities to support both staff and research students are mapped to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework, facilitating needs analysis and systematic provision of training and support.

Within this institutional framework, there is a formal annual review system in place at CRELLA to monitor and set research objectives. All staff are appraised towards the end of each academic year by the Director of CRELLA (who is appraised by the Dean of Faculty). Staff in the first year of appointment have regular meetings with the Director to provide more support as individuals transition to their new roles. At review meetings, development activities are jointly identified. These enable staff to benefit from external courses/training and ensure alignment with CRELLA's research strategies. Objectives for the past year are evaluated, any challenges encountered are considered, and the contributions of development activities to research practices are discussed.

As a small, coherent unit housed in adjoining offices, CRELLA staff benefit from frequent opportunities for informal consideration of staff development with the CRELLA director; for example, concerning training, conference attendance, and promotion. Additionally, a mentoring and 'buddy' system is in place for the socialisation of staff to CRELLA providing both academic and collegial support. Staff are actively encouraged to disseminate their research at national and international conferences, and GBP15,000 is currently budgeted annually to support this. Staff are also supported in their applications to the Higher Education Academy fellowship in a category most appropriate to their practice and professional experiences.

Procedures for career progression are outlined by UoB's Human Resources department, with annual promotions advertised through all-staff emails and notifications. Promotions at

CRELLA have ensured continuity, staff retention, and have rewarded research performance. On their retirement as full-time members of staff, *Taylor* and *Hamp-Lyons* were appointed as visiting professors. This has allowed CRELLA to continue to benefit from their expertise in mentoring junior staff and students. For example, as an experienced editor, *Hamp-Lyons* mentored *Chan* when she acted as guest editor of a special issue of the journal, *Assessing Writing*.

On *Weir's* retirement from the role of Director of Institute in 2015, he was succeeded by *Green*, ensuring a smooth transfer of leadership. *Weir* continued as Professor of Applied Linguistics until his death in 2018. *Nakatsuhara* and *Field* were promoted to Reader in 2016; *Chan* to Lecturer in 2015 and to Senior Lecturer in 2017; *Inoue* to Lecturer in 2015 and to Senior Lecturer in 2017; and *Lam* to Lecturer in 2019. CRELLA staff benefit from its policy of flexible working hours and remote working, including options for part-time employment. *Chan*, *Nakatsuhara*, *Latimer*, and *Inoue*, for example, have been able to balance work commitments with caring responsibilities. *Field*, *Taylor*, *Hamp-Lyons*, and *Latimer* have all elected to work part time. The equal commitment to rewarding excellence is evidenced by *Field's* promotion to Reader despite being employed at 0.6 FTE.

Supporting Early Career Researchers (ECRs):

CRELLA provides support to early career and postdoctoral researchers to advance their careers.

- CRELLA provides an internal peer-review system whereby senior colleagues offer feedback on ECRs' manuscripts based on their doctoral research, prior to journal submission.
- CRELLA scaffolds ECRs' development as independent researchers by progressively advancing them from co-researcher to project manager, and eventually Principal Investigator roles. Accordingly, senior staff develop ECRs' competence in securing competitive research grants by sharing examples of successful funding bids as well as offering support and guidance, e.g., by reviewing proposal and budget drafts for their new funding applications. Moreover, working with senior staff on diverse research projects allows ECRs to broaden their knowledge and skills base.

Research income has allowed CRELLA to employ three postdoctoral researchers in this REF period: *Lam* (2016-2019), *Heydari* (2018-2019), and *Latimer* (2019-present). All three have participated fully in research and impact-generating activities, helping to enhance CRELLA's research environment. CRELLA has provided each of these individuals with appropriate support. For example:

- *Lam* received support through pre-submission reviews from senior colleagues and has published three articles in leading journals. His 2018 *Language Testing* article was among the 10 most cited articles in the journal in 2019. Feedback and mentoring throughout the submission and revision process by *Khabbazzbashi* was also instrumental to *Lam's* success in having an article accepted by the top-tier journal, *Applied Linguistics*. *Lam's* development towards becoming an independent researcher is reflected in his progression from co-researcher (Cambridge English, 2016-17; IELTS, 2016-18; TOEFL iBT, 2017-20) to securing three competitive research grants as Principal Investigator (Cambridge English, 2017-18; IELTS 2019-20, 2020-present).
- Through her involvement in CRELLA projects and under the guidance of *Nakatsuhara*, *Heydari* learnt the use of automated text analysis tools and the basics of item writing, test production, and standard setting – essential skills that facilitated her joining Buckingham University to work on the Buckingham English Language Test.

- In the first year of joining CRELLA, *Latimer* collaborated closely with *Chan* and *Lam* as co-investigator on two research projects. Building on this experience, she has recently submitted research bids as Principal Investigator. *Latimer* has co-authored a book chapter following feedback and advice from *Chan* and *Taylor*. Guidance from *Chan* has been instrumental in *Latimer* assuming professional roles outside the university, e.g., joining the BAAL TEASIG committee. Working on projects with senior colleagues such as *Chan*, *Nakatsuhara*, *Inoue*, and *Khabbazzbashi* has also helped *Latimer* expand her skills (learning Item Response Theory and the use of statistical software).

b. Research students

Overview

In the current REF period, 25 PhDs have been awarded (compared to 9 in REF2014). A further 11 PhDs and one MPhil are currently registered. Many of our completed research students have been part-time students, either working as employees of major language test providers or as university language teachers. Many of these students are sponsored by examination boards (four by CAE, two by the BC, one by the Eiken Foundation of Japan, one by ALTE, one by Pearson English Assessment, one by Cambridge-Michigan Language Assessment, and one by the University of Central Lancashire Examination Board). Others have received scholarships from a range of international or national funding bodies (six from BC, one from the Educational Testing Service, USA, one from Trinity College London, and one from the World Bank).

Equality and diversity

Our student body is highly diverse, demonstrating our commitment to equal opportunities. Completed research students consist of 12 full-time and 13 part-time students from 13 countries/regions (Australia, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Jordan, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Poland, Sri Lanka, Thailand, UK) with a male to female ratio of 13:12. These figures indicate the extent to which our students can access PhD study opportunities, regardless of nationality, gender, and personal circumstances (e.g., two PhD students have taken maternity leave during this period). Amongst our current cohort, we have students (all part-time) based in Japan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Oman, Portugal, and the UK. The male to female ratio in this group is 6:5. In consideration of our student cohort based in different time zones, and often studying in part-time mode while in full-time employment, CRELLA has adopted a range of measures to cater to student needs and offer flexibility in supervision, training and support as detailed below.

Links with business, industry and the public sector

In addition to staff links with industry and business (Sections 1b and 2a), many of our research students come from businesses connected with language assessment worldwide. For example, our PhD cohort in the current REF period includes three students working at, and supported by CAE, four at the BC, one at the ALTE, one at OUP then Pearson English Assessment, one at University of Central Lancashire Examination Board, and one at Eiken Foundation of Japan. Moreover, many of our graduates have successfully developed their careers in the industry. For example, Westbrook joined BC as a Test Development Researcher; Dunlea became the manager of the Assessment Research Group at BC, and Chapman became Director of Test Development at WIDA (World Class Instructional Design and Assessment Consortium, USA).

Induction

CRELLA research students each receive a full one-week induction at the University's Research Graduate School, covering all aspects of research practice, ethics, progression, and research training. During this week, students attend an induction day at CRELLA that introduces students to CRELLA staff, CRELLA research activities, disciplinary features and expectations of PhD research in language assessment, and the training, support and resources available to them. On the final day, students have their first supervision meeting.

Supervision

In accordance with UoB policy, supervision meetings are arranged at least once per month for full-time students. CRELLA staff often arrange additional supervision meetings to provide enhanced support at key stages (e.g., fortnightly meetings for new full-time students and monthly meetings for new part-time students; fortnightly, or more frequent meetings with students submitting their progression point examination documents). Each student is assigned a second supervisor who joins the supervisory meeting at least once a term. Supervision records are logged onto an online system by the students, encouraging them to take the initiative in summarising key issues discussed and action points.

Research training, support and progression

There are two formal progression point assessments, where students are required to submit documents demonstrating their research progress. At each progression point, there is a viva voce examination by two examiners that serves both summative and formative purposes, offering opportunities for students to practise towards their final examination. With two supervisors, two internal progression point examiners, an internal thesis examiner, and individual consultations ('PhD clinic'), by the time they complete, each research student is likely to have received guidance and feedback on their work from most members of CRELLA.

CRELLA research students are provided with a comprehensive research training programme, coordinated between departments:

- The University's Research Graduate School offers general research skills training courses.
- Within the Faculty of Education and Sports, three research institutes (including CRELLA) jointly provide a structured research training programme for all major stages of research (e.g., theoretical paradigms and research design, research ethics, literature review, methods for data collection and data analysis, viva preparation). As part of this programme, there are further opportunities to enrol in research methods modules in taught programmes.
- Our students have access to MA modules and CRELLA also offers specialist in-house training on the foundations of language test development and validation, and the research methods used to support these (e.g., classical and Rasch approaches to test item analysis).
- Finally, CRELLA offers regular 'PhD clinic' and group study sessions to provide students with individual consultation/feedback on targeted areas as well as peer support.

The training and support mechanisms offered by CRELLA have taken an increasingly adaptive approach that recognises the needs of research students from diverse backgrounds and at various stages of their study. A training needs analysis is conducted between the students and their supervisors at each key stage, and this is reviewed at each of the progression point examinations. End-of-year student surveys have been conducted to collect views on training provision and study support in the current year and to identify needs for the forthcoming year. There are opportunities for staff-student liaison in study groups, and

student representatives collect and share student views at CRELLA's tri-annual Research Institute meetings. Through these means, the training programmes are fine-tuned, and added support mechanisms have been implemented as appropriate to cohort characteristics (e.g., shifting face-to-face training to online delivery, provision of training recordings and other self-access resources in an online database).

Integration into CRELLA's research culture

CRELLA hosts a one-day research seminar three times a year (Spring, Summer, Winter seminars). These events provide a regular forum for staff and research students to present their research, including work-in-progress. In the current period, we also welcomed 24 visiting scholars to the centre, some of whom have presented their work at CRELLA research seminars. The seminars have always been attended by representatives of test providers, and language teachers and assessors from UK universities. Since July 2020, they have moved online, and we have seen a fourfold increase in attendance. Registration has consistently exceeded 250 participants. The last two seminars reached audiences across 6 continents, demonstrating our global reach. Through the CRELLA research seminars, our students are immersed in a vibrant research environment, having the opportunity not only to present their work and receive feedback from established researchers in the field, but also to network with the stakeholders and/or beneficiaries of their research, or to establish connections with the language testing industry.

Preparing research students for future careers

Students are encouraged to present their work at national and international conferences. Once they have passed the first progression point, funding support is available to contribute to conference registration, travel and accommodation. As part of CRELLA's effort to develop research students' profiles and experience, staff work with students in a) the preparation and publication of research articles (e.g., *Chan* with *Latimer*, *Hamp-Lyons* with *Bruce*, *Green* with *Westbrook*, *Nakatsuhara* separately with *Jaiyote*, *Dunlea*, and *Waller*) and b) delivering joint workshops and training courses (e.g. *Bruce* and *Hamp -Lyons*; *Bax* and *Latimer*; *Green* and *Lloyd*).

3. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Research income

Demonstrating the financial success of CRELLA's research activity and its growing recognition nationally and internationally, CRELLA's research income has risen substantially from GBP904,000 in the previous REF period to a total of GBP1,144,531 in the period 2014-2020. 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 maximising the student experience for our PhD students.

Scholarly infrastructure

CRELLA has built a specialised library of resources. This includes over 500 books on language testing and assessment, books on related disciplines such as general linguistics, applied linguistics and language learning and books on research methods and statistical techniques. There are also journal collections, research reports, sample test papers and other resource items financed by the research institute out of its own resources. In addition, CRELLA holds a) 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 for Languages (CEFR); b) an extensive archive of testing materials created over the last thirty years at Lancaster University and c) subscriptions to data collection and analysis software packages (e.g., Survey Monkey, Facets, Winsteps, and TextInspector).

for staff and students to use. These resources contribute to the status of CRELLA as the UK's leading research centre in the field.

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 for language assessment is testimony to the university's foresight and commitment. Support at university level includes the following:

- **Funding:** The university allocates a proportion of the QR funding to support CRELLA research development.
- **Bid support:** The Bid Support Unit provides an online bid support and approval system, offers assistance for preparing bids as well as financial and legal advice on research contracts, and sends regular email alerts about funding opportunities.
- **Library resources:** The Learning Resources department provides support on library resources such as ordering new books and journal subscriptions.
- **Research student matters:** The Research Graduate School coordinates the quality assurance and administrative arrangements for all research degree programmes and liaises with students and supervisors on all aspects of research student progress.
- **Impact and public engagement:** The university's media centre and marketing team provide support for disseminating CRELLA's research; and the website team offers advice and technical support for publishing contents and updates on CRELLA's website.
- CRELLA and teaching departments at the university have established close collaborative links, offering mutual support and benefits to one another in teaching and research. CRELLA has, over the years, received significant support for recruitment of research participants from the Centre for English as a Foreign Language (CEFL, pre-sessional courses provision) and the School of Education and English Language.

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. Putteridge Bury offers high-quality technical and study facilities for research students, including workspace, PC suites, conference and seminar rooms, and catering facilities. The conference facilities have been used regularly for hosting the tri-annual CRELLA Research Seminars and the Language Testing Forum 2018 conference, and the hospitality staff and services contributed to the exceptional feedback from participants at the conference. There is also on-site IT support for photocopying, computing and technical assistance and videoconferencing for research students and staff. The University has also purchased GBP19,000 of eye-tracking hardware and software for CRELLA research into reading and assessment.

In recent years, the University has invested substantially in state-of-the-art research and study facilities. Following the opening of a GBP20 million Postgraduate Research Centre in 2013, a new GBP46 million university library on the Luton Campus also opened in 2016. The new library building, which won a Royal Institute of British Architects East award, has increased study space by 30%, provides more than 500 new PCs, has introduced a system for loaning laptops, and offers an expanded 154,000 stock of books. Staff and students have 24-hour library and Internet access on the university main campus and have free access to major research and referencing software, such as SPSS, NVivo, and RefWorks. Most recently,

CRELLA has also benefited from the facilities and services of the university's radio lab for a listening test development research project.

4. Collaboration and contribution to the research base, economy and society

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 public talks and training workshops, as well as engaging in teaching and research mentoring. Evidence of this engagement can be seen in these examples:

Public talks, presentations, and training workshops

Since 2014, CRELLA staff members have delivered **25** invited talks and **68** other papers at conferences, as well as **31** seminars and **51** training workshops worldwide. The total audience for these events was over **13,600** language teachers, testing professionals, and members of the public. Notable examples included:

- *Field's* invited webinar on *Perceptual Processing in Listening Skills* for TESOL International Association (2016)
- *Chan's* invited webinar on *Developing Rating Scales for Integrated Assessment Tasks* for the European Association for Language Testing and Assessment (2017)
- *Nakatsuhara* and *Khabbazzbashi's* invited webinar on *Speaking Assessment and Digital Technologies* for the ALTE (2019)
- *Green, Lam,* and *Khabbazzbashi's* invited plenary talks at Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv (2018)
- *Nakatsuhara's* plenary talk at Modern Language Teaching and Learning conference, Leeds (2017), a public lecture organised and disseminated by Macmillan Education for their editors worldwide (2017), and BC MOOC talk on Speaking Assessment in the Classroom with a global live audience of 2,900 (2019).

Teaching and research mentoring

During the current REF period, CRELLA has continued to contribute to postgraduate teaching at the university in areas such as research methods and language assessment and has expanded its contribution to undergraduate teaching and to the faculty-wide research skills training programme. This enhances the university's delivery of research-informed teaching in line with the professional framework set out by Advance HE (formerly Higher Education Academy) and the university's own teaching framework. CRELLA also offers research mentoring support to other departments through regular staff meetings with neighbouring departments within the faculty. Moreover, *Green* has mentored CEFL staff on their research; and CRELLA staff (e.g., *Green, Nakatsuhara* and *Khabbazzbashi*) regularly present their research at the university's staff conferences.

Collaborations and 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 CAE on the ongoing research and validation programme for its English language proficiency examinations.
- *Weir, Green, Nakatsuhara, Field, Taylor* and *Inoue* 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. During the current REF period, CRELLA had an MOU with the BC to provide a minimum of 35 days' a year research consultancy on its tests and another with the Eiken Foundation of Japan.
- *Weir* worked extensively with the LTTC exam board in Taiwan on their GEPT test and served as an international member of their research committee.
- *Weir, Nakatsuhara, Green* and *Taylor* have worked with the Eiken Foundation of Japan researching a new university English language entrance test for Japan.
- *Green* and *Nakatsuhara* have also collaborated closely on research with Japanese universities, at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies and Waseda University, respectively.
- *Bax* and *Green* developed an online teachers' assessment portal at the Singapore Ministry of Education.
- *Inoue, Nakatsuhara, Khabbazzbashi, Chan, Green* and *Field* worked closely with Centro Ceibal and other governmental bodies in Uruguay to develop an English test that is now taken by over 70,000 primary and secondary school students.

Work with other UK and international universities

CRELLA has collaborated extensively with universities in the UK and abroad in research projects and joint publications to utilise research expertise in strategic areas (see Section 1b). CRELLA provided expertise to complement that of staff in other institutions. A representative example is *Nakatsuhara's* collaborative research with Tavakoli (Reading) and Hunter (St. Mary's), which examined fluency in the Aptis speaking test from the perspectives of both language assessment and second language acquisition. The research project has led to an output published in the esteemed *Modern Language Journal* (5th in linguistics, 2019, Clarivate Analytics). CRELLA also collaborated with researchers from Waseda University, Japan, leading to a reformed English language curriculum aligned to the CEFR.

CRELLA has also actively sought opportunities for joint research projects that draw on the expertise of UK and international collaborators. Recently, for example, *Lam's* research project on the use of IELTS scores for university admissions benefitted from the expertise of Murray (Warwick) and Gayton (Cambridge, Glasgow) in the internationalisation of higher education. An example of CRELLA's long-term international collaborative partnership is with May at Queensland University of Technology, Australia, drawing on her expertise in rater protocol studies and qualitative data coding. CRELLA staff members have collaborated with May in multiple research projects (*Nakatsuhara* and *Lam* on Cambridge B2 First, 2016-17; *Chan* on Pearson Test of English, 2018-19; *Nakatsuhara* and *Khabbazzbashi* on IELTS, 2019-present). The research on Cambridge B2 First has been published in *Language Testing* and became the article with the 3rd highest Altmetric score in the journal (September 2020).

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 include:

1. Editorial panels

CRELLA staff are represented on the editorial boards of many of the profession's top journals and book series. Examples include:

- *Green* (2016-present), *Nakatsuhara* (2014-present), *Taylor* (2013-2016), and *Weir* (2007-2018) on *Language Testing*.
- *Field* (2010-present) on *System*.
- *Green* (2008-present) on *Assessing Writing*.
- *Inoue* on *Language Education and Assessment* (2018-present).

Weir was series editor (2001-2018) for *Studies in Language Testing* (Cambridge University Press). *Green* has been Executive Editor for *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice* (2015-present), and was Associate Editor for *Language Assessment Quarterly* (2012-18). *Hamp-Lyons* was Editor of *Assessing Writing* (2002-2016), and Co-Editor of the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* (2002-2015).

Several staff members have served as Guest Editors for special issues:

- *Green* (2019-20) on *Language Testing*
- *Nakatsuhara* (2019-present) on *Assessment in Education*
- *Chan* (2017-18) on *Assessing Writing*

2. Professional and advisory roles

CRELLA staff actively contribute to the wider community of language testing and assessment through serving various roles in relevant professional bodies. Examples of professional bodies in which CRELLA staff members have served include:

- The International Language Testing Association (ILTA) – *Green* as President (2015-16)
- The European Association for Language Testing and Assessment (EALTA) – *Green*, *Weir*, *Nakatsuhara* as Expert Member
- UKALTA – *Taylor* as President (2020-present), *Inoue* (2016-18) and *Khabbazzbashi* (2018-present) as Treasurer (2016-18), and *Nakatsuhara* as steering committee member (2015-16)
- The British Association for Applied Linguistics, Testing, Evaluation and Assessment Special Interest Group (BAAL TEA SIG) – *Chan* as Convenor (2019-present), *Inoue* (2015-17) and *Chan* (2017-19) as Communications Officer, *Khabbazzbashi* as Treasurer (2016-18), and *Latimer* as Extra-ordinary Committee Member (2019-present)

Members of staff have also served in advisory roles for language test development and research: *Green* serves on the OECD Technical advisory group for the PISA 2024 tests of foreign languages, *Weir* as Senior Consultant to Eiken Foundation, Japan, for the Test in English for Academic Purposes (TEAP, 2010-18), and as Chair of the Assessment Advisory Board of the BC (2012-18); and *Field* and *Green* as Advisors to the OUP project to create skills syllabuses and guidelines for materials writers (2016-present).

In addition, *Green* has served as assessor for grant applications to the Swiss National Science Foundation, the FWO Research Foundation Flanders, the Education University of Hong Kong, and the IELTS Joint Funded Research Programme, and as a reviewer of applications and completed research reports for the British Council Assessment Research Grants (since

2017). *Nakatsuhara* has acted as a grant application reviewer for the TOEFL Committee of Examiners (COE) Research Program (2018), and as a reviewer of funded research reports for the British Council Assessment Research Grants (2019).

3. External Examining

CRELLA staff have served as external examiners for numerous universities in the UK and overseas. Examples include:

- *Green*, for Lancaster (2016, 2020), Leicester (2018), the Open University (2019), Bristol (2020), and the universities of Queensland (2019) and Melbourne, Australia (2020)
- *Weir* for Leicester (2016)
- *Nakatsuhara* for Macquarie University, Australia (2014), Newcastle (2019), Auckland, New Zealand (2019)
- *Inoue* for Sheffield (2017)
- *Chan* for Roehampton (2017-2020)
- *Khabbazzbashi* for Southampton (2019)
- *Lam* for University College London (2018)

4. Awards

Weir received the Cambridge/ILTA distinguished achievement award for language testing in 2014 and was awarded an OBE in 2015 in honour of his services to English language assessment. *Weir* was conferred as a Fellow of Academy of Social Sciences in December 2013. In 2019, *Green* received the British Council's Innovation in Assessment Prize for the Teachers' Assessment Literacy Enhancement (TALE) project.

Summary

With a 7.2 FTE workforce, CRELLA has strived for excellence in research and impact, bringing in promising researchers and building on our success in the previous REF period. This has been achieved through consolidating our strong links and forging new ones with both national and international test providers. We have:

- generated **30% more research income** than in the previous period and have broadened our research funding base with more than 10 new partners globally;
- increased the number of **peer-reviewed publications** in high impact journals by **57%**: from 21 (REF2014) to 33 (REF2021);
- reached a **global audience of 13,600** through invited talks, conference presentations, seminars and training workshops; and
- cultivated a new generation of language assessment specialists, with **PhD completions increasing** from 9 (REF2014) to **25** (REF2021).