

**CARDIFF**  
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL  
CAERDYDD

College of Biomedical  
and Life Sciences

Coleg y Gwyddorau  
Biofeddygol a Bywyd

**Wellcome Trust Institutional Strategic Support Fund (ISSF3)**

# Institutional Strategic Support Fund

2nd Edition



ISSF Newsletter January 2020

# A new £7M ISSF Award

Cardiff has successfully secured £3.5m over five years (2016-2021) from the Wellcome Trust, with the College of Biomedical and Life Sciences (BLS) providing £3.5m match funding to this award. The Wellcome Trust noted that our application “comprised a good set of new and flexible activities embedded in a well thought out careers framework, clearly linked to university strategy”.

## Our new award focuses on:



**Enabling** researchers to transition to the next career stage, catalysed by the successful delivery of innovative new science and public engagement.



**Building** new cross-disciplinary research opportunities and teams across the College, and driving cultural change across the academic career pathway.



**Supporting** talented individuals to come back to the University, whether from other Institutions or after a career break.



**Providing** our early career researchers with skill enhancement, engagement training and career-enabling network opportunities.



**Delivering** innovative engagement activities which deliver high-quality experiences for the recipient, as well as the researcher.

## Alignment with BLS and Wellcome Trust Research Strategy

The new Wellcome Trust ISSF award aligns to three strategic priorities of the College:



**Growing** our research excellence, focusing on greater coherence and scale alongside the delivery of interdisciplinary collaborations and Centres of Excellence;



**Fostering** the talents of our researchers, from early career through to senior academics;



**Enhancing** the translation of our research, leading to societal benefit with global health, environmental and economic impact.

**The Wellcome Trust aims to support great ideas, from discovery to impact, connect experts from different fields, and help researchers deliver high-quality and effective public engagement.**

# Enhancing career transitions

The core principles of our ISSF award include:

1. Facilitating a researcher-driven strategic approach to career planning,
2. Providing dedicated funding and mentorship for early career researchers (ECRs),
3. Embedding equality and diversity across management, panels, awards and monitoring,
4. Developing and delivering a new College Engagement strategy, with public engagement at its core,
5. Boosting support for cross-disciplinary and translational projects, including linkage with other Colleges.

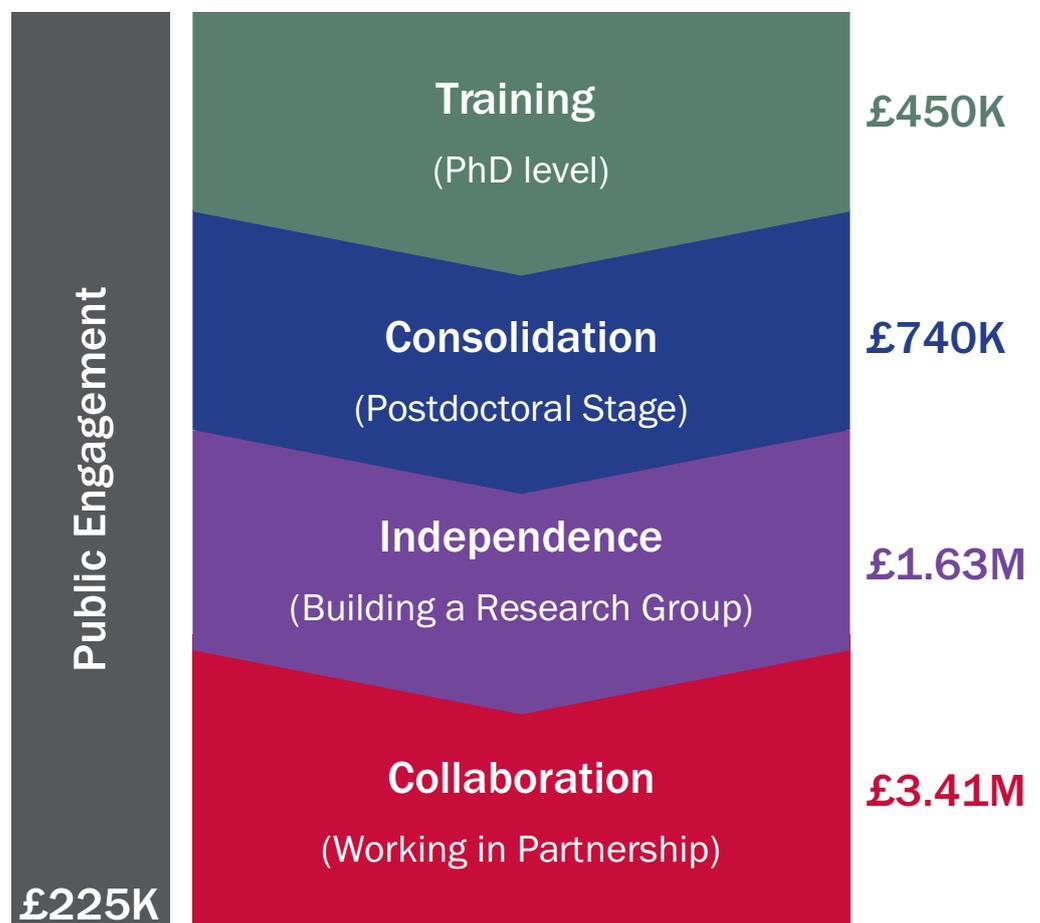
For example, our new Consolidator Awards help outstanding just-completed PhD students prepare applications for WT Henry Wellcome Postdoctoral, MRC

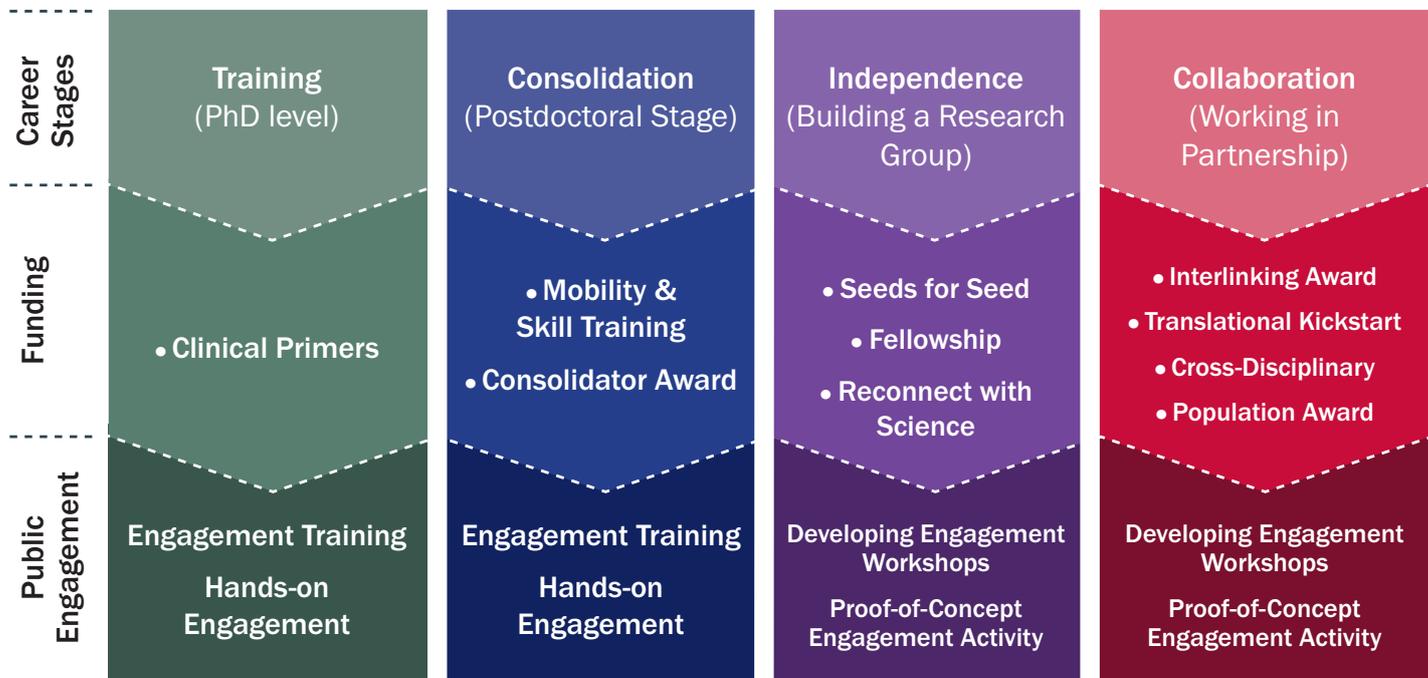
Skills Development or BBSRC Discovery Fellowships.

At the next career stage, our Fellowship and flexible Reconnect with Science Schemes (the latter for those coming back from a career break) provide tailored salary, resources and mentorship, enhancing competitiveness for WT Henry Dale and the Royal Society Dorothy Hodgkin Fellowships, or a MRC New Investigator Research Grant.

Our Interlinking Award focuses on the next career stage helping cross-disciplinary research teams' evidence feasibility of new cross-cutting research partnership, supporting application for collaboration grants (e.g., WT Collaboration Award, MRC Partnership Grant, BBSRC SLoLas) or even Centre status.

To facilitate this, ISSF3 is founded on a Career Stages Framework, focusing activity in four areas:





## Award scheme adjustments

### Consolidator Award

Budget increase to 50K, this includes 5k specifically allocated to consumables (to ensure all applicants begin at a grade 6-post doc level).

### Seeds for Seed Award

Eligibility changed to applicants being within 3 years of starting their first lectureship and clinicians are also encouraged to apply with an adjustment of the criteria..

### Cross-Disciplinary Award

During our fourth round, a mandatory requirement was introduced for applicants to collaborate with another college within Cardiff University.

### Translational Kickstart Award

The Tech Transfer (TT) team are embedded in the review process and attend all relevant panels.

### Interlinking award

Scheme changed to an always open model and an expression of interest (EOI) process has now been formulated to help guide applicants prior to submitting an application for full panel review.

### Public Engagement Award

Award budget increased to 7.5K maximum per project.



**Career stage:**  
Collaboration

**Name:** Jennifer Wymant,  
School of Pharmacy

**Funding award:** Cross Disciplinary Award

**Project title:** Breast cancer eSPIONage: developing targeted multifunctional SPION platforms for theranostics.

"I'm so grateful for the ISSF award which has undoubtedly made me a more multidisciplinary and more competitive researcher. It afforded me with a fantastic opportunity to branch out into a new field, to build a local collaborative network and to produce solid preliminary data which will form the basis of future grant applications."



# Early Career Researchers (ECRs): Support and training

ISSF3 has dedicated ECR funding aimed at supporting;

1. Scientific skill enhancement
2. Work experience outside of the Institution, including with pharma, industry, or government,
3. Networking opportunities
4. Preliminary data collection to support first grants and
5. Public engagement training and delivery.

Feedback will be provided to ECRs applying for schemes, as well as grant mentorship to help boost successful ISSF3 outcomes. Engagement training will build confidence, understanding and experience, generating scientists who, from very early on in their careers, can act as ambassadors for public engagement.

ECRs will also have the opportunity to observe our panel meetings to learn about grant review, scoring and decision making. This experience has been viewed very positively by our attending ECRs.

ECRs are being supported to enhance their success in obtaining awards, experience funding panels and translating outcomes into external funding.

## Measures of success:

- New self-sustaining research collaborations
- ECR research skill development, including experience outside academic (e.g. industry, internationally)
- Obtaining a first independent or skill enhancement fellowship, or a first independent grant
- Increased ECR involvement in, and delivery of, engagement activities

## ISSF3 Early Career Researchers feedback



**Name:** Martin Scurr,  
School of Medicine  
**Panel Observed:**  
ISSF3 Collaboration Panel

I found the ISSF panel meeting really useful, I came out feeling far more confident about my own upcoming grant applications as a result. In particular, it was interesting to hear what panelists deemed positive and negative about each application, including not only the scientific merit of the proposal, but also an assessment of the personnel involved and the probable deliverability of the project.

# Funding schemes

(awards made via competitive application)

Career stage	Funding scheme	Maximum duration of each award	Maximum amount (£) of each award
Training	<p><b>Clinical Primer Award</b></p> <p>Aligned to our GW4 WT Clinical Academic Training Programme, ISSF3 Clinical Primers will support research-naïve medical/dental trainees to gain laboratory experience and prepare applications for GW4-CAT and other PhD funding opportunities.</p>	Up to 6 months	30K
Consolidation	<p><b>Consolidator Award</b></p> <p>Providing support for outstanding postgraduates, to prepare applications for early career awards (e.g., Henry Wellcome Postdoctoral or MRC Skills Development Fellowships). Successful applicants will be expected to publish papers from their thesis and undertake a small research project, with a new mentor, thereby enhancing their research skill-set.</p>	12 months	50K
	<p><b>Mobility &amp; Skills Training Award</b></p> <p>Supporting our early career researchers by enabling acquisition of new research skills, visits to external laboratories for small-scale data collection, secondments to industry, government or other key stakeholders and engagement training.</p>	Variable length	10K
Independence	<p><b>Reconnect with Science Award:</b></p> <p>Designed to support the return to the University of excellent postdoctoral researchers who have taken a career break. Awards will pay salary initially, including part-time, but researchers will also be able to request research funding for a project or travel to visit other labs as their skills and confidence develop.</p>	Flexible up to 18 months	55K
	<p><b>Fellowship Award</b></p> <p>Designed to retain and recruit excellent early career researchers and support their transition to independence. Up to eighteen months of funding is designed to provide time to collect proof-of-concept data, build new scientific networks and work on submission of an independent funding application.</p>	18 months	75K
	<p><b>Seeds for Seed Award</b></p> <p>This scheme is designed to help early career researchers collect pilot data to support a Research Council New Investigator award for example. Mentors will help applicants navigate idea generation, grant writing and delivery of a successful funding outcome.</p>	Variable length	20K

Career stage	Funding scheme	Maximum duration of each award	Maximum amount (£) of each award
Collaboration	<b>Population Award</b> Returning in a slightly meatier form than in ISSF2, this scheme aims to catalyse population-scale research aligned to the strategic goals of our College Research Themes.	Variable length	50K
	<b>Cross-Disciplinary Award</b> Funding designed to promote research innovation aligned to new interdisciplinary research, including collaboration with researchers from other Colleges in the University around strategically important biomedical research questions.	Variable length	50K
	<b>Translational Kickstart Award</b> Benefiting from our experience with the MRC Confidence in Concept and Proximity to Discovery awards, this new scheme will trial provision of starter funding for collaborative projects with industry, government and other key stakeholders on health-related life sciences projects, including environmental impacts on health, a strategic priority of the WT.	Variable length	50K
	<b>Interlinking Award</b> To promote a team science approach in the College and help evidence a track-record of collaboration, these awards, developed via workshops, will fund 2-3 thematically linked interdisciplinary projects addressing key health and environmental grand challenges. Cross-College, UK or international collaborations are encouraged, especially where new methods / scientific approaches will be brought to Cardiff.	Variable length	145K
Public Engagement	<b>Engagement Training and Hands-on Engagement:</b> Working with the University Engagement Team, the College Engagement Officer will deliver a new public engagement training programme for researchers in the College, with a particular focus on early career researchers. An Engagement newsletter will be provided to help demystify 'Engagement', with face-to-face training provided via an Engagement Masterclass, and a Monitoring and Evaluating Engagement Course. By maintaining a list of trained individuals we will also help researchers obtain hands-on engagement experience, placing them in a competitive position to apply for ISSF3 proof-of-concept engagement funding.	Variable length	
	<b>Developing Engagement Workshops and Delivering Proof-of-Concept Engagement</b> Engagement workshops will allow researchers to present and discuss their engagement ideas, and develop an approach that facilitates bi-directional dialogue with the public and evaluation methods to ensure the engagement activity has benefited the public's perceptions/engagement with the topic. Once fully matured, applications for small-scale proof-of-concept public engagement will be considered by the College Engagement Panel, working collaboratively with the University Engagement Team.	Variable length	7.5K

# Application process and procedures in ISSF3



Fellowship and Reconnect with Science schemes follow a separate process, advertised externally via Cardiff University job opportunities.

# Application and panel improvements

Our application and panel review process has been revised to manage the composition and skill set of grant panels and enable us to achieve our aims of an inclusive approach to the administration and awarding of ISSF funds.

## Grant applications

### **Equality and Diversity**

Applicants are asked how they will address equality and diversity in relation to involvement of staff, project management and data related to their award.

### **Early Career Researchers**

Applicants are asked how their award will benefit early career researchers, such as those employed on the award (e.g., via exposure to new research approaches, skill enhancement).

### **Lay Summaries**

We now ask all applicants to provide a lay summary. Lay summaries of awarded projects are then published on our Cardiff University website.

## Panel development

### **Promoting insight and career development**

ISSF 3 Panels are recognised as an opportunity for staff development and we are enabling early career researchers to observe ISSF3 panels to facilitate learning about grant reviewing.

### **Promoting College-wide inclusion**

We currently advertise the opportunity to join a panel across the College, appointing junior to senior colleagues into larger assessment panels.

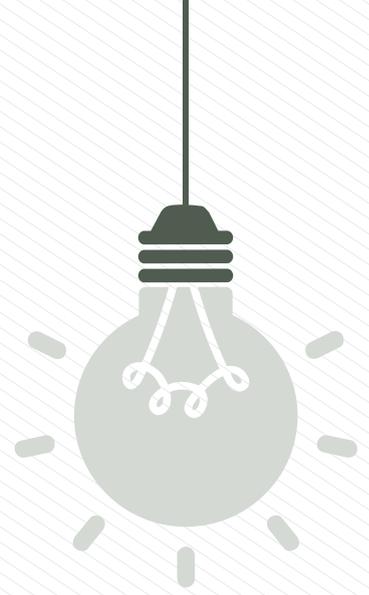
### **Fostering culture change through action**

All panellists are required to complete two mandatory HR approved training courses prior to reviewing the applications: Equality, Diversity & inclusion training and Unconscious Bias training.

### **New appointed chairs**

Each panel as an appointed chair with expertise in the relevant career stage, in addition to appropriate diversity and interdisciplinary expertise across panel members.

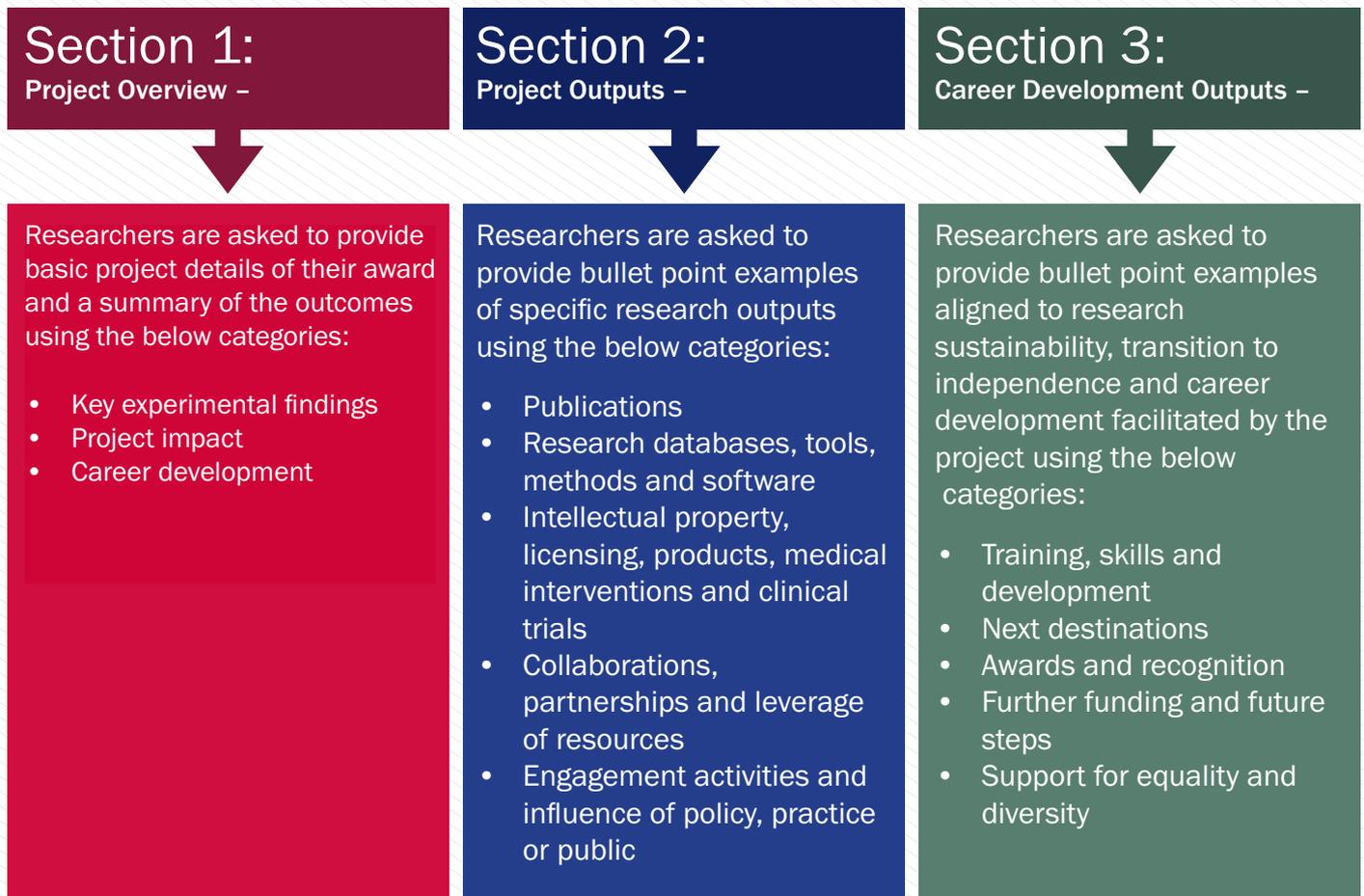
# End of project report



As part of Cardiff University's Wellcome Trust ISSF programme, we are required to report outcomes from our funding to the Wellcome Trust. To facilitate this, we have developed a new online system for ISSF awardees to use to report their outcomes, both within a month of finishing the award, but also beyond that as required.

The system includes data capture categories aligned with the Researchfish® system\*. This approach allows us to collect information in a form aligned to external reporting approaches, but also gives early career researchers experience of how major funders typically capture grant outputs.

The report is split into three sections, all of which are completed by researchers:



For further information please download our end of project guidance document located on our ISSF webpage.

\*Researchfish® is an online system which enables researchers to report their research outcomes to funding organisations. It is used by all the UK's Research Councils to capture the outcomes and longer-term impact of research.

# Communication

We have enhanced our communications both internally and online via our ISSF newsletters. The newsletters provide core information about our ISSF schemes, funded academics and project outcomes to act as a guide and inspiration to potential applicants to our schemes.

**ISSF 2nd edition newsletter:** Provides details of the ISSF scheme including the career stages framework, individual schemes and ISSF developments.

**'Changing careers and Culture' newsletter:** Highlights the feedback and experiences from our awarded projects holders, panellists and ECR observers. Statistics of awarded projects, panellist/panel meetings and ED&I analysis are also provided.

**Quick guide leaflet:** A quick reference guide to our individual ISSF schemes presented by career stage.

**ISSF3 Public Engagement newsletter:** Introduces the ISSF3 Public Engagement scheme with examples of previously funded projects and details of the public engagement training programme. An update of the newsletter will continue to showcase new and innovative small-scale proof-of-concept projects and how public engagement has been integrated within the College and wider university involvement.

Information about ISSF and our newsletters can also be found online at our recently updated web pages accessed via the Cardiff University website, this includes:

- **About the scheme:** General information relating to the ISSF scheme
- **Current opportunities:** Details of our schemes and current open calls
- **Currently funded projects:** Details of our awarded projects and their lay summaries
- **Feedback quotes from our current award holders to inspire future applicants**

We have created a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document relating to each scheme, this is regularly updated to ensure sufficient information is provided to individuals who are interested in applying to ISSF. This can also be found online on our webpages.

The Twitter social media account (@CUBLSResearch) and wider Cardiff University communications (Yammer, BLAS, news items) actively promote the ISSF3 programme to our early career researcher community.



@CUBLSResearch



# Public Engagement



**Dr Jeremy Segrott**

ISSF College Academic Lead for Public Engagement

'The Wellcome Trust ISSF scheme is committed to undertaking high quality public engagement that brings tangible benefits for members of the public and quality and impact of our research.'

Our ISSF3 public engagement will be delivered as an embedded career activity, supporting enhanced engagement skills across the academic lifespan, mirroring the approach implemented for research.

Our Academic Public Engagement Lead, Jeremy Segrott, has been appointed for ISSF3 to develop a cohesive College Public Engagement Network and Strategy working with the College Engagement Officer, Carl Smith.

Our College Engagement Officer provides tailored training designed to boost skills and knowledge in developing, delivering and evaluating high quality public engagement. Our ambition is to unite researchers around synergistic engagement goals, encourage a dialogue-based approach and enhance the quality and value of the engagement experience for the recipient, as well as the researcher.

## Measures of success:

- Delivery of a new College Engagement Strategy
- Significant increase in the number of skilled engagement researchers within the College
- New innovative proof-of-concept engagement activities
- Increased success obtaining external public engagement funding



**Name: Sharifah Agha**  
School of Medicine

**Funding award:** ISSF3 Public Engagement Award  
**Project title:** Developing a short animation on what it means to have ADHD

I found the training useful, as it not only confirmed some of the approaches we used with previous events but also helped enhance my knowledge to manage a public engagement event. Developing the visual representations for the project, such as a logic model, stakeholder map and Gantt chart helped with the planning process and additionally in answering the different sections of my application.

## Public Engagement Development Programme

Three courses are available as part of the programme and in addition, Public Engagement Drop-in sessions take place within the Schools of the College:



# Innovative approaches to supporting Public Engagement in ISSF3

ISSF3 have facilitated the creation of a new Public Engagement Network in the College, this group are working on data that will shape and inform our Public Engagement Strategic Plan.

The initial priorities of the BLS PE Network have been to establish key aims and objectives, set out terms of reference, agree quorum and frequency of meetings. The working group have also explored the purpose and benefits of a public engagement network.

The network will enable the College to explore public engagement approaches across the College to identify best practice, barriers,

challenges, outcomes and impact. This method will ensure a connected, joined up approach across the College so that activities can contribute towards the high-level KPIs of the University's Civic Mission.

A PE framework such as a logic model will be developed to monitor the networks outcomes and impact.

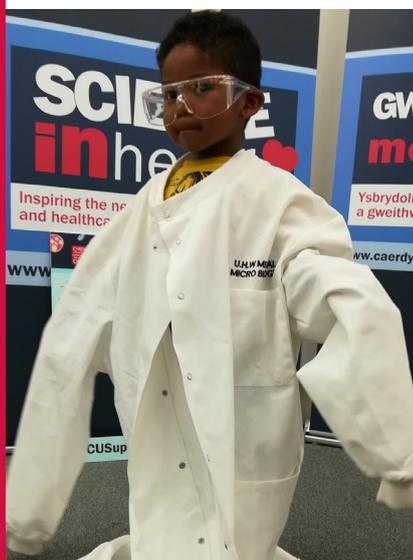
A public engagement event is planned in 2020 to showcase our ISSF funded projects. The Showcase event will highlight the projects, the public communities and the societal benefits initiated through the proof-of-concept award.

## Public Engagement Proof-of-concept Projects

The Public Engagement Development Programme enables researchers to present and discuss their engagement ideas, and develop an approach that facilitates a two-way dialogue with the public. We support individuals to develop a proposal to the ISSF3 Public Engagement Proof-of-Concept Award. Some examples of successfully funded projects below:

### Superbugs:

Cardiff University scientists took their research to the heart of the Welsh capital, repurposing a shop with an interactive lab in the busy St David's Dewi Sant shopping centre. 6,500+ participants engaged with the interactive lab on microbiology, antibiotics and antimicrobial resistance over the two week pop-up period.



### The 'Brain Box':

The 'Brain Box' is designed for secondary schools delivering A-level Psychology and Biology to enable them to conduct their own lessons surrounding neuroscience and the brain! The 'Brain Box' is linked to in-depth online resources to deliver the activities contained within the box.

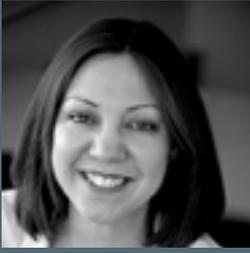


### Science Pirates:

Muscles respond to exercise by getting bigger and stronger, but how do bones respond? Scientists from the College of Biomedical and Life Sciences used the contemporary escape room style activity model to develop a mental and physical adventure-based game to help participants figure out the answer.



# Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (ED&I)



**Dr Katherine Shelton**

ISSF College Academic  
Lead for Equality,  
Diversity and Inclusion

'Our efforts to champion best practice in relation to equality, diversity and inclusivity for the Wellcome Trust ISSF scheme at Cardiff reflects our commitment to supporting and enabling a fair and merit-based approach to application processes, distribution of grant funds and success rates.'

Equality, diversity and inclusion is embedded in the delivery of ISSF3 ensuring that we include and represent all researchers in the College. Our E,D&I Lead, Katherine Shelton has been appointed to support EDI analysis and monitoring of panels, applications and awards.

## The key developments of E,D&I include:

- An HR approved ED&I form collected to enable monitoring of applications and success by protected characteristics
- Gender balance of panels managed, where possible, across application reviews and introducing members
- Requirement for all ISSF panellists to complete two HR approved ED&I training courses.

As part of ISSF3, we are also looking to boost engagement in the scheme from individuals who have taken a career break, and who need time – back in the research environment – to develop their confidence, knowledge and research skills to be competitive for postdoctoral, fellowship or lecturer positions.

## Catalyst for Culture Change

### Culture Change Ambitions:

- Higher quality projects and applications, greater funding for ECRs and new opportunities for those returning to science and translational work
- More trained panellists and reviewers across the College and increasing ECR's knowledge about the grant reviewing process.
- Embedding ED&I and unconscious bias training within grant assessment procedures across the University.
- Increased ECR involvement in, the delivery of, public engagement activities and developing a skill base in Public Engagement via training and proof-of-concept funding.

## Measures of success:

- Greater diversity in ISSF3 panels and funding success, as well as enhanced cultural understanding of equality, diversity & inclusion across the College.
- Move the production of an inclusive culture to the forefront of decision-making.
- Make the generation of diverse research communities everyone's responsibility.
- Increase the number of high quality applications received from women and early career researchers across all Schools in the BLS College.
- Cascade lessons learnt across the BLS College to create a legacy of best practice.



# Future plans

We are continually reviewing our approach, processes and procedures for the improvement in delivery of the Wellcome Trust ISSF scheme. We welcome your feedback and any suggestions can be sent to ISSF Admin at [ISSFadmin@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:ISSFadmin@cardiff.ac.uk).

We have made changes to the Cross-disciplinary scheme to address our wish to see and fund more applications involving Art, Humanities and Social Sciences (AHSS) and Physical Sciences and Engineering (PSE). These include mandating inclusion of a Cross-College collaborative partner, informing about ISSF schemes through workshops and looking to involve more reviewers with expertise in humanities, social science, physical sciences and engineering research.

To ensure visibility, influence current practice and to drive cultural change, the Cardiff ISSF team have secured seats on various internal and external strategic meetings. These include CITER engagement and research committees, Civic Mission operational group and GCRF meetings. As more of our ISSF projects complete, we aim to increase the support for those researchers to help them with their next steps and future projects.

## Wellcome Trust ISSF Management Board



## BLS College Research Committee



The San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) is a declaration universities and other organisations (publishers, funders) can sign to commit to supporting and promoting the responsible use of metrics and quantitative indicators of research. Notable signatories include funders such as all seven UK Research Councils and The Wellcome Trust as well as half of all Russell Group Universities. We are pleased to announce that Cardiff University signed DORA on 13th November 2019.

Signatories commit to making assessments of research performance based primarily on the quality of the content of the research, judged through peer review, and not giving undue regard to publication metrics based on the journal in which the research was published.

UEB and Senate in 2018 agreed to convene a working group to support Cardiff University's alignment with the principles of DORA prior to signature. The newly appointed University Dean for Research Environment and Culture, Professor Claire Gorarra, chairs the DORA Working Group and leads on the institutional implementation of the DORA action plan, acting on behalf of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, Innovation and Enterprise, Professor Kim Graham.

The Wellcome Trust are strongly committed to DORA and are encouraging Institutions with ISSF funding to positively drive forward change in this area. Agreement has been provided by the Wellcome Trust to use ISSF funding to support the appointment of our new University 'Responsible Research Metrics Officer' Karen Desborough, who will ensure targeted and timely support for DORA implementation in the early accelerated stages of developing new policy and practice, as well as training approaches, at the University.

## ISSF3 Governance

The ISSF Board will continue to be chaired by Professor Gary Baxter (BLS Pro-VC). It will include appointed leads for E,D&I and public engagement, as well as panel representatives appointed, responsible for funding allocations at each career stage. Board meetings will be held to enable monitoring of spend and success of new initiatives.

Details of board meetings will be provided to the College research committee to ensure input from Directors of Research (DoRs), University Research Institutes (URI) Directors and College research Theme Leads.

# ISSF3 Team



**Professor Kim Graham**  
ISSF Principal Investigator and  
Pro-Vice Chancellor

Kim is the ISSF Principal Investigator and the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Enterprise at Cardiff University.



**Professor Gary Baxter**  
Chair of the Wellcome Trust  
Management Board

Gary is the Chair of the Wellcome Trust Management Board, as well as Pro Vice-Chancellor in the College of Biomedical and Life Sciences.



**Dr Katherine Shelton**  
ISSF College Academic Lead for  
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Katherine is responsible for all aspects of Equality and Diversity in ISSF3. She reports to the University Equality and Diversity Committee.



**Dr Jeremy Segrott**  
ISSF College Academic Lead for  
Public Engagement

Jeremy will work closely with the Engagement Officer to ensure the College ambition to unite researchers around synergistic engagement goals.



**Hasnae Khamlichi**  
ISSF Administrative Officer

Hasnae is the ISSF Administrator and Research Support Officer in the College. Hasnae manages the day-to-day running of the ISSF scheme.



**Carl Smith**  
ISSF College Engagement Officer

Carl can provide advice and guidance on all aspects of public engagement, training and the application process for Proof-of-Concept funding.



**Dr Amanda Roberts-Jones**  
Acting Head of Research Development,  
Research Innovation Services

Amanda manages the professional team (based within Research Innovation Services and the College) responsible for delivery of the ISSF Awards.



**Dr Andrew Staphnill**  
Research Development Officer

Andrew is responsible for managing appropriate use of the ISSF grant in alignment with the College match funding, and providing support in identifying opportunities for grant funding.



[ISSFadmin@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:ISSFadmin@cardiff.ac.uk)



[@CUBLSResearch](https://twitter.com/CUBLSResearch)