

New Centre to bring benefits of Regenerative Medicine to UK

Loughborough University is to host one of three prestigious new EPSRC (Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council) centres, which were announced on 7 January by Lord Mandelson, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.

The Loughborough-based EPSRC Centre for Innovative Manufacturing in Regenerative Medicine will carry out world-leading research, test and implement ideas in clinical and industrial settings, create next generation platforms for manufacturing regenerative medicines and inform business models, policy and public debate.

Investment from the EPSRC will total £5.33 million over a five-year period starting from September. Partners from industry and government will contribute a further £3 million.



One of the Centre's Laboratories

Regenerative Medicine (RM) is an emerging but fast-moving field of healthcare with huge potential to transform lives for the better. It covers a wide range of therapies designed to enable damaged, diseased or defective skin, bone and other tissue, and even perhaps organs, to work normally again.

The new EPSRC Centre will build on previous, highly successful EPSRC-funded work in this inspiring branch of medicine. It will be led by David Williams, Professor of Healthcare Engineering at Loughborough.

He comments: "Without doubt, RM has massive potential – especially for tackling chronic, debilitating conditions like heart disease and arthritis that will become increasingly prevalent due to our ageing population. Yet it's not enough simply to come up with clever ideas for curing such conditions. It's about translating ideas into safe, affordable, cost-effective treatments that combine life-changing impact for patients with maximum commercial value.

"Ultimately, the key to the success of the UK's RM industry will be its ability to address the right problem at the right time in the right way. Our EPSRC Centre will provide the capacity and the specialised expertise necessary to make this possible – and to enable the industry to build on its successes to date and fulfill its significant potential."

Among the key priorities for the EPSRC Centre for Innovative Manufacturing in Regenerative Medicine are to pinpoint commercially robust practices and processes that can be introduced in critical areas such as product innovation and development, and encouraging the take-up of RM therapies in the UK healthcare sector.

To deliver this agenda, Loughborough University will work with the University of Nottingham, Keele University and 28 partners from industry and the public sector.

The other centres announced in January will be based in Southampton and Brunel, and will focus on Photonics and Liquid Metals.

Business Secretary Lord Mandelson said: "A highly skilled, innovative manufacturing sector is vital to Britain's future economic growth. This £70million of Government funding will see universities and businesses working together to commercialise academic research. With more investment to bring these two sectors together we can strengthen our future innovation and growth."

Professor David Delpy, chief executive of EPSRC, the UK's largest government agency for scientific research and skills, said: "EPSRC's new manufacturing centres will focus on areas of pioneering research that have the potential to create new industries and new jobs for the UK."

He continued: "They will save lives through advances in regenerative medicine, develop recycled forms of metal which are environmentally friendly, and harness light to revolutionise the internet and telecommunications."

These three new centres are the first in a £70million investment EPSRC will make in this area over the next year. EPSRC has a strong tradition in investing in manufacturing research and has invested £120 million over the past ten years in 15 Innovative Manufacturing Research Centres which cover the breadth of UK manufacturing ranging from construction to healthcare technologies to innovation studies.

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For all media enquiries contact:

Hannah Baldwin

Head of PR

Loughborough University

T: 01509 222239

E: H.E.Baldwin@lboro.ac.uk

Notes for editors:

About EPSRC Centres for Innovative Manufacturing

The new EPSRC Centres for Innovative Manufacturing are part of a totally new approach to maximise the impact of innovative research for the UK, supporting existing industries, and more importantly, opening up new industries and markets in growth areas.

Each centre will receive five years funding to retain staff, develop collaborations, carry out feasibility studies, and support up to two research projects. There is a clear business need for each centre and EPSRC support will be used as a platform from which the centres can secure further investment from industry and other funders.

About the EPSRC

EPSRC is the largest UK government agency for funding research and training in engineering and the physical sciences, investing more than £850 million a year in a broad range of subjects – from mathematics to materials science, and from information technology to structural engineering. www.epsrc.ac.uk.

About Loughborough University

Loughborough is one of the country's leading universities, with an international reputation for research that matters, excellence in teaching, strong links with industry, and unrivalled achievement in sport and its underpinning academic disciplines

It was awarded the coveted Sunday Times University of the Year 2008-09 title, and is consistently ranked in the top twenty of UK universities in national newspaper league tables. In the 2009 National Student Survey, Loughborough was voted one of the top five universities in the UK, and was named winner of the 2006, 2007 and 2008 Times Higher award for the UK's Best Student Experience. In recognition of its contribution to the sector, the University has been awarded six Queen's Anniversary Prizes.

It is a member of the esteemed 1994 Group – a set of internationally recognised, research-intensive universities – and has a reputation for the relevance of its work. Its degree programmes are highly regarded by professional institutions and businesses, and its graduates are consistently targeted by the UK's top recruiters.

Loughborough is also the UK's premier university for sport. It has perhaps the best integrated sports development environment in the world and is home to some of the country's leading coaches, sports scientists and support staff. It also has the country's largest concentration of world-class training facilities across a wide range of sports