**Cranfield academics shortlisted for the 2017 Women in Defence UK awards**

Professor Jackie Akhavan and Dr Laura Cleary from Cranfield University’s School of Defence and Security, based at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Shrivenham, have both been shortlisted in this year's Women in Defence UK Awards. Cranfield is the only University to have staff shortlisted alongside military personnel and staff from civil service and industry organisations.

Professor Akhavan has been shortlisted for the Inspirational Award and Dr Cleary is on the shortlist for the Outstanding Contribution Award.

Professor Akhavan, who is Professor of Explosive Chemistry, and Head of the Centre for Defence Chemistry, was nominated by her colleagues for being an inspiration for women to enter the defence and explosives field over a long and continuous career.

Dr Cleary, Senior Lecturer in International Relations and Head of the Centre for International Security and Resilience was nominated for her ongoing and tireless work over the last 15 years in supporting the UK Government and Ministry of Defence in international engagement activities, and overseas work with transitional states.

Dr Simon Harwood, Director of Cranfield Defence and Security said: “We’re delighted to have Professor Akhavan and Dr Cleary shortlisted for the Women in Defence Awards, both are an inspiration to their colleagues, our students and the wider defence and security community.

“Jackie has supported UK explosive and energetic programmes and UK national security through her research, development and consultancy work, and led the way in recruiting female members of staff, research and postgraduate students at Cranfield.

“Laura has made an outstanding contribution to the promotion of peace and democracy around the world through her leadership of the Centre for International Security and Resilience, which has enabled the development of more secure and resilient societies through the provision of high quality research, education, training, and consultancy.”

A shortlisting event follows on 21 September and winners will be announced later this year.

The full Shortlist for the Women in Defence UK Awards 2017 is available [here](http://www.womenindefenceuk.com/).

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**Notes to editors:**

**About Professor Jackie Akhavan**

Professor Akhavan has been a trailblazer for the recruitment and development of female colleagues at Cranfield University and the promotion of female colleagues in the explosives field around the world.

In 2016, Prof Akhavan established the Abel Building, a new state-of-the-art chemistry facility and centre of excellence for R&D in energetic materials. She has also been the inspiration behind the Centre of Excellence in Energetic Materials, working with the Ministry of Defence and other agencies to deliver this new UK national capability.

Professor Akhavan is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Chemistry. She was the February speaker as part of their 175th anniversary in 2016, and was one of the Society’s 175 Faces of Chemistry, celebrating diversity in science, in 2015.

She is also a Fellow of the Institute of Explosives Engineers and a Trustee of the Explosive and Research Education Trust, providing grants and awards for females to attend academic conferences. She has written multiple research papers and books for A Level and higher education chemistry and explosives students.

Further information about Professor Jackie Akhavan is available here <https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/people/professor-jackie-akhavan-776315>

**About Dr Laura Cleary**

Dr Laura Cleary is a Senior Lecturer in International Relations and Head of the Centre for International Security and Resilience (CISR) at Cranfield Defence and Security (CDS), part of Cranfield University, based at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom.

Dr Cleary joined Cranfield in 2002 with responsibility for the development of the MDWSC (Managing Defence in the Wider Security) programme. Dr Cleary has taught over 5,000 students from 147 countries and worked with representatives from across the security sector, including members of foreign parliaments. The programme is a principal element of the UK’s Defence Engagement strategy, and viewed as an effective means to engage with countries seeking to extricate themselves from conflict or authoritarianism.

Dr Cleary’s teaching has helped to create the conditions in which security and good governance can prevail and she regularly visits Ghana, Chile and the Ukraine. Her research is closely related to her teaching: she established a horizon scanning capability for the British Army, and is currently working on the evolution of the UK’s Defence Engagement Strategy and defence transformation in the Ukraine.

She has also advised in Kosovo, on the Nepal peace process, the Scottish Government, the Irish Defence Forces, and the Ukrainian Ministry of Defence.

Further information about Dr Laura Cleary is available here

<https://www.cranfield.ac.uk/people/dr-laura-cleary-570415>

**About Cranfield**

Cranfield is an exclusively postgraduate university that is a global leader for education and transformational research in technology and management.

Cranfield University is one of the world's leading universities for defence and security education, research and consultancy.

Our staff and facilities are at the forefront of their fields, offering a diverse range of capabilities from energetics and forensic sciences to international stabilisation and cyber security.

Cranfield provides specialist knowledge to industry, security and emergency services, military, governments and NGOs, underpinning defence and security sector reform around the world. As the postgraduate academic provider to the UK’s Ministry of Defence, we offer a unique gateway to delivering practical education and solutions that make a real difference to the lives of military, security and civilian personnel.

Further information about Cranfield Defence and Security is available at [www.cranfield.ac.uk/defenceandsecurity](http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/defenceandsecurity)

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**About Women in Defence UK**

Women in Defence UK exists for a community of people who wish to promote the value of women in defence. We aim to encourage women to succeed authentically, share experience, build networks and encourage talent at all levels to join the defence sector.

Further information about Women in Defence UK is available at

<http://www.womenindefenceuk.com/>