



Leadership the key to a secure future: Business and Strategic Leadership MSc for security professionals

Cranfield University

Security sector professionals know time may be the only thing between many businesses and an incident with potentially devastating consequences. As technology develops the threats companies face are darker and more difficult to overcome than ever before, as criminals increasingly shun physical attacks in favour of sophisticated cyber-crimes.

The sector faces its biggest challenge yet: how do we get the shadowy, intangible threat of a cyber-attack at the top of the agenda, when we make up just one part of a wider business with competing priorities? We talk about “security by design”, but how do we encourage our colleagues to put it at the top of the list?

For Dr Jane Trinder, Director of Cranfield University’s new Business and Strategic Leadership MSc for security professionals, effective leadership is key.

She said: “Big security concerns are becoming more prevalent, but we know from speaking to security professionals that, for many, it can be a challenge to ensure these issues have the right focus and priority within their business. When companies are working hard just to survive it can be difficult to get people to think about issues that don’t seem to add value in terms of more customers. But, for a business to be protected against future threats a discussion about security needs to be built into every part of everyday business. That’s not top of the agenda for a lot of people at the moment, and we need effective leaders to bring it through.”

As a world-renowned provider of post-graduate education, Cranfield University has been training the next generation of senior leaders for more than 50 years.

In partnership with the Security Institute, academics from the University’s School of Management have developed a Business and Strategic Leadership MSc aimed at security industry professionals. The year-long course is tailored towards the issues that dominate the sector, and open to members of the Security Institute.

Dr Trinder said: “The course is focused on developing leaders to handle strategic challenges in their organisation, including putting cybersecurity at the forefront of policies, procedures and culture.

We help participants to understand their broader business context and how to lead the change they need to see, then support them to apply that learning back in their own organisation.

We teach them how to provide themselves with the space to lead through delegating, engaging and empowering others, and handling conflict more effectively. Participants gain the knowledge, skills and behaviours to set strategy, direction and vision; provide a clear sense of purpose and drive strategic intent; identify longer-term opportunities and risks; develop a learning practice to enable sustainable leadership; and deliver as a leader rather than as a manager.”

Cranfield's Business and Strategic Leadership MSc meets the requirements of the Level 7 Senior Leaders Master's Degree Apprenticeship Standard, and organisations can use up to £18,000 of their apprenticeship levy to fund participation.

Chief Executive of the Security Institute, Rick Mounfield CSyP FSyI, hailed the course as leading the way in business education for the sector.

He said: "It is well recognised that security leaders today must be able to articulate the value security can offer to business. Global and strategic security concerns taught alongside business administration in a Masters-level degree is revolutionary. The Institute is delighted to partner with MBA triple-accredited Cranfield University to support strategic security leaders in their professional development."

For Dr Trinder, it's also about the personal journey participants undertake during the course.

She said: "We know from speaking to them afterwards that the people that go through the MSc get tremendous benefit from it, not just in their working life but in their lives generally.

It can be life-changing for people in a positive way. A lot of people grow immensely. They find that the things they once worried about or found difficult either go away completely or are mitigated.

I'd encourage anyone thinking about it to give it a go. We will work you hard but you will have fun too, and what's more you'll be embarking on the journey that you want and need to go on."

