

YORKSHIRE CHAMPIONS GROUP



Professor Zahir Irani PhD, MPhil, BEng (Hons)

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of Bradford

Background Information:

Professor Zahir Irani studied Manufacturing Systems Engineering at the University of Salford before working as a Project Engineer in Bolton. He then secured a scholarship from Brunel University London, where he undertook and completed a PhD in Investment Decision Making. His professional development has seen him complete his leadership and financial management training at Harvard Business School (HBS) and University of Cambridge, respectively.

He started his academic career in the Department of Computer Science at Brunel University London. Five years later becoming the youngest Professor in the UK, followed by a period as Head of Department, where he championed industry-academia partnerships.

A move to a more senior management position saw him lead the Brunel Business School, where his research interests broadened, along with changes in his methodological approaches to include techniques such as Fuzzy Cognitive Mapping (FCM), which is an Artificial Intelligence (AI) based technique. His interdisciplinary background has allowed him to publish across: Engineering, Information Systems, Operational Research and Business related journals. Much of his work is now considered normative and evidenced with sector leading citations and, a H-index of 87. He has attracted much funding throughout his career, from the UK research councils (ESRC, EPSRC), industry, EU as part of FP-6, 7 and H2020, Australian Research Council (ARC) and Qatar Foundation (NPRP-6, 7 and 8). In 2014 and again later in 2021, contributed to two Impact Case Studies in the UK Research Excellence Framework (REF). Internationally, he is an adjunct Professor at Qatar University and, a Hooke Distinguished Scholar at McMaster University, Canada.

After completing a 7-year tenure as Head of the Brunel Business School, where he won the prestigious Times Higher Education (THE) Business School of the Year award, he accepted an invitation to work in Central Government, where he was seconded to Whitehall as a Senior Policy Advisor in the Cabinet Office during the UK coalition Government. On completion, he returned to academia, as Founding Dean, of the newly established College of Business, Arts and Social Sciences at Brunel University London; an amalgamation of four previous Schools – Business, Law, Social Sciences and Education.

In 2016 the University of Bradford appointed Professor Irani as Dean of Faculty (Management and Law), where he led a successful merger with the Faculty of Social Sciences before then assuming the role of a Founding Dean of the new Faculty.

Professor Zahir Irani has remained an active researcher throughout his career, graduating 31 PhD students to date and, was featured in 2020/21/22 by Guide2Research in their top 30 UK computer scientists.

As a senior academic leader, Professor Irani expanded his portfolio when appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor at the University of Bradford, where he is accountable for: Four academic Faculty's, Directorate of Outreach,

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Recruitment and Marketing (DORM), Directorate of Student & Academic Services (including registry, library, career services, counselling, etc), Directorate of Learning, Teaching and Student Experience.

Professor Irani also leads the transformation and growth of the University's undergraduate, postgraduate (taught and research) educational portfolio through Faculty and Professional services, where he leads on innovation and enhancing the quality of the student experience, teaching practice, curriculum development and support for student learning and success.

He continues to enjoy a long and successful career in academia, combining wide-ranging research interests, consulting work for leading companies and overseas governments. He has consulted with and for numerous multinationals throughout his career, including BMW, Shell, Deloitte, KPMG, QinetiQ, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), DEFRA to mention but a few.

Professor Irani is values driven and, deeply anchored in the Bradford District community, where he supports charities such as Age UK (Bradford and District) and the Volunteering Interfaith Partnerships (VIP) that help vulnerable communities. Professor Irani is also a Governor on the Bradford District Care NHS Foundation Trust. He has received the district governor's award from Rotary International for services to the community.

He is also passionate about leading social, economic and cultural value creation, having been appointed by the Bradford Metropolitan District Council as the Chair of the Bradford Covid-19 Economic Recovery Board that developed a 5-year economic recovery plan (2021-2025); approved in 2021 by the council executive and elected officials. At a national level, appointed by the NHS (Health Education England) to Chair a Blended Learning Advisory Group that will re-vision the future of medical and health clinical placements. He is also a Higher Education representative on a Cyber Security Steering Group for the Department of Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, with a focus on skills development in West Yorkshire.

Professor Irani was named by the Sunday Times as a leading Bradford influencer.

Sectors worked in and routes taken:

Government	Cabinet Office
Education	University – teaching, research

What I would like to get involved in: (please tick)

Inspirational Talk	Visits to my place of work	Mentoring / Coaching young people	Other (please state)
✓	✓	✓	