Minutes of ICSS/HCRC Staff Meeting

Wednesday 8th February 2012, 12.30 pm

Attendance
Steve Renals (Chair), Bonnie Webber, Alex Lascarides, Colin Matheson, Gregory
Mills, Barry Haddow, Henry Thompson, Claire Grover, Fergus McInnes, Simon
King, Johanna Moore, Jon Oberlander, Helen Pain, Mike Fourman, Myrosia
Dzikovska, Caroline Hastings, F Max-Lino, Ewan Klein, Hiroshi Yamagishi, Robin
Hill, Philipp Koehn, Charles Sutton, Sharon Goldwater, Nicola Drago Ferrante

Apologies: Mark Steedman, Miles Osborne

1   Research Presentation: Simple4ALL (Simon King)
This is a 3 year EC collaboration project in partnership with Aalto University,
University of Helsinki, University Politecnia de Madrid and Technical University of
Cluj-Napoca. The project aims to create speech synthesis technology that learns from
data with little or no expert supervision and continually improves itself simply by
being used.

2   Finance Report
F Max- Lino reviewed the table showing submissions and awards since the last
meeting. Since November 2011, there have been twelve proposals submitted and two
awards, totalling £171,709.
It was noted that some students are now being funded through grants. However, more
help is needed to prevent us from having to use the reserve funds.

3   New Staff/ visitors
Staff are reminded to inform the admin team as far in advance as possible when they
have a visitor. Desk allocation is now dealt with by the HR team on Level 4 and there
is currently a shortage of desk space in the Forum. Visitors may be asked to vacate a
desk if it is needed for an incoming RA.

F Max-Lino briefed the group on the Informatics policy regarding visitors to the
school. Visiting PhD students (not obtaining credits) must pay a fixed fee of £675.
Other aspects of the policy are unclear.
Action: Steve Renals to raise at the next strategy committee meeting.

4   PhD recruitment and funding
Hiroshi informed the group that there have been 70 PhD applications this year, 50%
of which are for CSTR. The total number of applications is lower than last year, but
this could be due to the earlier deadline for International applicants.

Scholarships are available through PCD (3) and EDR (2).
Alex Lascarides pointed out that there are scholarships for Chinese students available
through CSC. The School of Informatics may get 2-3 places in total. The school is
liaising with College for the chance to apply for another 1 or 2 more. The outcome
depends on the calibre of applications from other schools in the college.

5   Update on Chancellor's Fellowship
Frank Keller informed the group that the University intends to appoint up to 100 Chancellor's Fellowships. Informatics hopes to get four of these awards. The area of high priority relevant to ILCC is Computational Cognitive Science, which also encompasses Neuroscience. There have been 170 applications for the first round. These will be short listed to about 12 with interviews to be held at the end of March / early April.

6   Response to EPSRC evaluation
Johanna Moore provided an update on the EPSRC evaluation. The group were informed that Diane Howard is now in charge of NLP.   She is reviewing research areas as part of the 'shaping capability' exercise. Jon Oberlander briefed the group on the HCI review. One outcome is that HCI is now viewed more broadly with a greater overlap with ILCC research areas.

7   Report back on ESRC visit
Helen Pain briefed the group on the recent ESRC visit, which involved a presentation followed by a round table discussion on the 2011-15 delivery plan. The main priority of the plan is to improve collaboration with industry. The ESRC has phased out funding for small grants and are proactively focusing on longer / larger grants. PhD funding will be dealt with through the ESRC doctoral training centre.

8   Any other business
Bonnie Webber mentioned that she is putting together a proposal for an Erasmus Mundas programme in conjunction with the consortium from last year. Volunteers are sought to help decide on a 'theme' to recommend to the other universities as last year's proposal was too vague. The proposal is due at the end of April.

Johanna Moore referred to the lack of space of space available for experiments or transcribers in the forum. The transcribers involved with the Toyota project had been forced to sit in hot desk areas, which is not suitable.
Action: Steve Renals will find out if the open area on Level 4 can be used. F Max-Lino to speak to the ITO with regards to using 5.09/5.10 in Appleton Tower

9   Date of the next meeting
The date for the next meeting has been provisionally agreed as Thursday 8th March in 4.31/4.33 at 12.30.