

Minutes of ILCC/HCRC Staff Meeting

Tuesday, 5th September 2017, 10.30am in Room G.07, Informatics Forum

In Attendance: Jon Oberlander (Chairman), Beatrice Alex, Benjamin Bach, Uli Germann, Dorota Glowacka, Sharon Goldwater, Caroline Hastings, Robin Hill, Simon King, Alex Lascarides (AL), Adam Lopez (ALz), Chris Lucas, Walid Magdy, Helen New, Helen Pain, Rico Sennrich, Mark Steedman, Bonnie Webber

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Kenneth Heafield, Mirella Lapata, John Lee, Steve Renals, Henry Thompson, Kami Vaniea and Oliver Watts.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

In item 2.4: a spelling correction: Lopaz replaced with Lopez.

No matters arising.

3. Funding Update

3.1 CH announced 5 new grant awards: three for KH and one each for RS and JL. There are also 7 notifications of successful awards awaiting final confirmation including two for SR, two for WM, one for ML, one joint for SR/KH and one for SG.

3.2 SG shared her successful story of ESRC application: due to the non-standard processes there are significant paperwork delays but this is balanced by the pleasant reviewing process.

3.3 Applications in progress:

RH and CL are both through to the development stage of Human Like Computing proposals.

BA has an EIT proposal (similar to ML award mentioned above) that is most likely to be funded for one year.

Also WM and RL will submit their Transport in Social Science proposal to ESRC by the end of September.

3.4 New appointments:

JO welcomed two lecturers in Machine Learning: Dorota Glowacka and Rico Sennrich.

3.5 Future arrivals: (from slides)

Sam Ribeiro
Liane Guillou
Marek Strelec
Alexander Johnson
Desmond Elliot
Asaad Baksh
Proyaq Pal

JO has noted that some of the above are former ILCC staff, and welcomed their return as evidence of positive experience working within the School.

4. Doctoral Training Centre in NLP/AI

JO outlined the CDT timeline that JH had provided: call Jan 2018, final closing date July, an announcement in November for January 2019 start.

Renewals in CDTs could be augmented by Design Informatics and NLP

Discussion was held on whether to extend Data Science to ML or AI more broadly, and how to ensure clear distinction from NLP/speech?

"ALz, the deputy director of DS CDT, reported that (DS CT director) Amos intends to apply for 5 year renewal. He also reported that the External Advisory Board noted that the CDT shows good progress and could expand to 20 students."

Improvement suggestions:

ALz proposed that ILCC could support the exceptionally good MSc level students to encourage them to continue to PhD level.

BW suggested that some Institute funds could be invested into a one year internship.

SG and DG both presented their success story where students on internship programme helped to relieve the work allocation of teaching staff.

The problem of teaching stresses should be addressed first, and could be resolved by new types of teaching courses.

BW also pointed out that for best results the teaching duties should be allocated to early years of PhD studies and avoid the last year that should be focused on dissertation.

Action: ALz will present the view to the Research Committee on Monday 11 September 2017.

5. Future academic recruitment

5.1 Feedback from Strategy Committee

- Committee is asking for a proactive report on areas that are likely to recruit or require new staff.
- Currently in 2017/2018 period there will be 2-4 vacancies advertised.
- The School acknowledged the guidance on the naming the vacancies to attract the right people.
- In the past year there were several vacancies that were advertised but not filled. Those can be re-allocated elsewhere.
- If the Institute decides to recruit please allocate a person to prepare a supporting paragraph describing the posts and area where staffing is required and forward it to Martin Wright by 21 September.

5.2 Discussion:

BW suggested that the funds should be utilised in other areas backing current staff, focusing on studentships, travel and teaching support.

Not all the funds should be directed to Graduate School, since current rules do not allow refunds of student travel expenses.

AL: The funds should be invested in the improvement of teaching support; in particular managing ITO.

JO pointed out that the City Deal emphasises Data Science and Technology teaching and research, and this offers both opportunities and challenges for the institute.

AL summarized that ILCC offers enough variety of courses but must focus on support of existing staff.

SG also backed the above, with Curriculum Review report identifying at least these issue areas:

- Good ideas but not possible to deliver
- Need to identify enthusiastic people to deliver pre-honours courses

Action: JO will consult Stuart Anderson for ideas. AL will consult with Martin Wright on the budget and provide feedback to All.

6. Director's report

JO presented slides on City Deal's data driven innovation agenda, covering:

- 1) Bayes Centre (Digital Technologies and Satellite and Space)
- 2) Usher Institute (Health and Social Care)
- 3) Edinburgh Futures Institute (FS and FinTech, Tourism & Festivals, Public Services).
- 4) Easter Bush (Agriculture).
- 5) National Robotarium

It is important to consider City Deal and investigate how:

- ILCC can engage in interdisciplinary collaboration within University
- Especially, to deepen Social Science collaboration; and
- To address new opportunities under knowledge exchange.

The business cases should be submitted by the end of this year. The expected award period starts in March/April 2018.

7. Date of the next meeting 8th November 2017