



Outreach Committee Meeting

10:00 - 11:30, Monday 4 March 2024

William Gates Building, Room GC22

Minutes

Present:

Tim Jones, Deputy Head of Department (Chair, TMJ)
Aga Niewiadomska, Outreach Administrator (Secretary, AN)
Celia Burns, Faculty Administrator (Note taker, CB)
Carl Henrik Ek, UTO (CHE)
Laurie Gale, PhD Student (LPG)
Rachel Gardner, Communications Manager (RG)
Lise Gough, Graduate Education Manager (LMG)
Neel Krishnaswami, UTO (NK)
Peter Ochieng, DeepMind Academic Fellow (PO)
Sue Sentence, Academic Advisor to Women@CL (SS)
Becky Straw, Undergraduate Teaching Manager (RS)

1. Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies.

2. Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2023 were approved.

4. Updated Terms of Reference

The Committee approved the updated terms of reference for consideration by the Head of Department Team and then Faculty Board.

5. Updates on Current Outreach Projects

i. DeepMind Internships

Aga reported that just under 100 applications had been received by the deadline in February. A selection meeting would be taking place soon, after which the projects would be allocated. Aga reminded the committee about the programme, which will run for 8 weeks, with students working with a researcher in the Department on a project related to AI. Students will also be assigned a PhD student mentor and will attend talks and workshops. There will also be opportunities to attend regular social

events to get to know other interns in the Department as well as interns on different programmes at the University. Applicants may already have graduated or be studying currently for their undergraduate degree.

ii. STEM SMART

Aga reported that the programme is running well. Quite a few PhD students have expressed an interest in being a supervisor and a few undergraduate students are helping through mentoring. Aga reminded the committee about this programme for different subjects including, from this year for the first time, computer science. The programme runs for over a year and supports Year 12 in three phases: support through mentoring and online tutorials; a summer school for the most engaged students, where they will have an admissions talk and a fun activity, and receive support with their UCAS applications; and then support to help the students get the grades they need.

iii. Women in CS

Aga reported that this programme had begun two weeks ago with an online session for 20 participants. The online session had been followed by a discussion group one week ago, which had gone very well, with students engaged and asking lots of questions.

Sue (Academic Advisor for Women@CL) suggested that if the programme were to be repeated, it might be useful to engage Women@CL in the design so that they have more ownership. Aga agreed, noting that Women@CL's suggestion to open up the call for volunteers outside of Women@CL had generated a lot of volunteers (and finding volunteers had been the biggest hurdle). Support would also be needed for the residential event at Corpus Christi College on 30 June, and Sue suggested forming a working group with Women@CL for this.

Sue also asked whether there was overlap with the STEM SMART programme. Aga thought that participants could probably be in both programmes and thought that this would be worth looking at for future years.

Aga reported that she had spoken to the central outreach team about evaluation of the programme, which had been very useful.

iv. Cambridge Festival

Rachel reported that, as part of this year's Festival, the Department would be doing an open day on Saturday 16 March, followed by participation in the two school days on Monday, 18 and Tuesday, 19 March. The open day will involve hands-on escape-room type activities, which could be leveraged for other audiences in the future.

v. Physics at Work

Aga reported that the provisional date for the next Physics at Work is September, but there is uncertainty about the venue as Physics usually host this three-day event, but they will be moving to their new building.

vi. Sutton Trust Summer School

Aga reported that she had not started on the planning for this yet, but it will be similar to previous events, with a few new things.

There was a brief discussion about volunteers needed for the four summer events. STEM SMART and the Sutton Trust Summer School are organised by the central university. There might be some overlap with the need for demonstrators for the DeepMind Internships and Women in Computer Science, but this should not be a problem.

6. Discussion on Outreach Strategy

Tim introduced this topic, noting that he planned to write up a general strategy document for the next meeting for which he would welcome any comments.

- **Widening diversity of postgraduate students.** Lise raised the issue of widening diversity of postgraduate students, noting that there was a need for a way of reaching students in developing and third-world nations and providing them with information about applying to Cambridge, particularly regarding postgraduate education. It is important that these students know that they need to have a first-class honours degree in order to apply for a Master's degree and the need to do some research before they start their application.

The Committee discussed this issue, including the suggestion to provide videos, trainings or talks, and mobilise students to attend or view these resources. The timing would be important to fit with funding competitions and scholarships, with August probably the ideal time when students do not have lectures or exams. In terms of getting the message out to students, Lise suggested that current students could use Student Room, an online student forum.

The interviewing process for candidates from these nations was also discussed, noting the need to educate interviewers about how to compare students' experience between different nations, e.g., internships at companies that are not well known versus companies in European and US countries. The awareness of cultural differences in how reference letters are written was also noted. Carl Henrik noted that massive impact could be achieved quickly by addressing these issues.

Criteria imposed by the University was also noted.

- **Outreach with primary schools.** Sue brought up outreach with primary schools, noting that Laurie volunteers at a school, helping with younger children, and Sue has a project involving 20 primary schools in the UK. Rachel noted that the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust, a large group of primary schools around Ely, had approached the Department. This is the beginning of a good connection, but the key thing is how to work with the schools in terms of time and budget.
- **Outreach for teachers.** Sue noted the model used by the Institute of Imagination, which runs online events that thousands of schools can watch at the same time. Sue also noted that by directing programmes at teachers, there is the potential to reach many students. Sue also noted that when she was at Lancaster, teachers had a visiting status with the university. Sue also suggested having an external advisory board of teachers.

- **Resources and evaluation.** Tim noted that we have to be able to deliver on our strategy in terms of resources, and also to evaluate our targets—evaluating individual projects as they happen and the strategy itself every three years.
- **Fundraising.** Fundraising was briefly discussed, noting that we could investigate possible sources of funding.

7. Collaboration with External Groups on Outreach Activities

Aga introduced this issue, noting that she had received an email from a local company who are very interested in collaborating with the Department or the University on outreach. Suggestions on how we could collaborate with requests such as these included saying no when the roles and responsibilities are not clear and ensuring that the offer fits with our strategy. Collaboration with Colleges was also noted.

8. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place in the Easter term and will be arranged by Doodle poll.