UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Department of Computer Science & Technology

Outreach Committee Meeting

14:00 - 15:00, Tuesday 28 April 2026
William Gates Building, Room GC22

Minutes

In attendance:
Jeremy Yallop (Chair)
Aga Niewiadomska, Outreach Administrator (Secretary)
Celia Burns, Faculty Administrator (Notetaker)
Rachel Gardner, Communications Manager
Jamie Vicary

1. **Apologies for Absence**
Apologies were received from Laurie Gale, Sue Sentance, and Becky Straw.

2. **Conflicts of interest**
Members were invited to declare conflicts of interest as they arise.

3. **Updates on current outreach projects**
Jeremy noted that this meeting comes at a point of transition, as Aga will be leaving the Department in July. Aga reported that recruitment for her replacement is underway, with interviews having taken place the previous week. In the meantime, the intention is to continue existing outreach activities without making major structural changes.

   a. **Women in CS**
   Aga reported that this year's programme has required significant changes due to her departure at the end of June and capacity constraints.

   The online seminar series ran as usual and concluded in March; however, the mentoring and independent research project element, which normally runs between the seminar series and the residential, will not take place this year. This decision was taken due to capacity limitations and ongoing difficulties in consistently recruiting and retaining sufficient mentors in previous years.

   Aga noted that approximately 15 mentors are normally required, and that the extended time commitment (often spanning several months) appears to deter some potential mentors. There have also been challenges where mentors initially signed up but did not respond consistently to mentees.

   The Committee discussed possible future alternatives, including replacing one-to-one mentoring with more online group sessions, to which students could be invited to contribute occasionally without relying on sustained individual commitments.

The residential component will still take place, in partnership with Trinity Hall, and is planned for August.

To date, approximately 80 applications have been received for 20 places, with applications still open.

Aga observed that fewer seminar attendees progressed to residential applications than in previous years. Possible contributing factors discussed included eligibility criteria, particularly the requirement to attend a non-fee-paying school; the introduction of Further Mathematics as a prerequisite; and changes to programme timing and advertising this year.

The Committee discussed whether clearer early messaging about eligibility might improve conversion rates, while recognising the value of keeping the seminar series open and accessible.

Rachel commented on the long-term value of the programme, noting that some mentoring relationships have developed into lasting academic connections and that participant outcomes continue to be very strong.

b. DeepMind Research Ready placements

Aga reported that planning for the DeepMind programme is progressing as expected.

Due to reduced funding, the programme will host five students this year, compared to higher numbers in previous years. These funding reductions appear to be linked to the RAEng distributing support across a wider range of universities.

Despite the smaller cohort, the programme structure will remain largely unchanged. Students will be accommodated at Hughes Hall, with a welcome dinner and a programme of activities planned. Hughes Hall will also be accommodating outreach students from the School of Technology at the same time, resulting in a combined cohort of approximately 15 students.

Offers have been made and accepted, with one withdrawal subsequently filled from the reserve list.

c. Sutton Trust summer school

Aga reported that planning is progressing well, with the programme largely following the same structure as in previous years. One additional contributor is still being sought to deliver a taster lecture, as several potential contributors will be on leave.

d. STEM SMART

The programme will run as in previous years. Aga noted a logistical challenge this year, as the half-day STEM SMART residential visit to the Department falls on the same day as the Sutton Trust visit. While this will result in higher activity levels in the building, the Intel Lab is expected to accommodate both groups.

e. **Cambridge Festival**

Rachel reported that this year's Cambridge Festival was a significant success.

Visitor numbers increased from approximately 1,000 to 1,500, representing a 50% increase on previous years. A major contributing factor was the introduction of a West Cambridge site-wide day, supported and promoted by the Festival team. Eight departments participated, with trail maps and prizes encouraging movement across the site.

Unlike previous years, attendance was steady throughout the day rather than concentrated around lunchtime. The Department hosted a mixture of research demonstrations and interactive activities, including five escape rooms, which were consistently in high demand.

Rachel noted that the success has helped build strong momentum across West Cambridge, although the West Hub building was not open on the day. She commented that discussions will continue to encourage its participation in future years.

Additional observations included:

- Strong attendance from alumni, many attending with their families
- Positive feedback from Schools Days linked to the Festival
- Very positive engagement with hands-on activities, including robot car programming workshops

4. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**

Members were invited to raise any relevant issues; none were raised at this meeting.

5. **Any Other Business**

Jeremy noted that this would be Aga's final Outreach Committee meeting and formally recorded the Committee's thanks for her exceptional contribution to outreach over recent years.

Committee members expressed their appreciation for Aga's work, noting the scale and impact of initiatives developed during her time in post. Aga thanked the Committee and said she had greatly enjoyed working with the team.

It was also noted that Laurie Gale has submitted his thesis and Carrie Anne Philbin has been recruited as the new student representative and is keen to contribute.

6. **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be confirmed in due course. Jeremy noted that the Committee's constitution will change as, in addition to Aga leaving, he will be on sabbatical leave at the time of the next meeting.