Outreach Committee Meeting

13:30 - 15:00, Tuesday 11 June 2024
William Gates Building, Room GS15

Agenda

Committee Membership:
Tim Jones (Chair, TMJ)
Aga Niewiadomska, Outreach Administrator (Secretary, AN)
Celia Burns, Faculty Administrator (Notetaker, CB)
Carl Henrik Ek (CHE)
Laurie Gale (LPG)
Rachel Gardner, Communications Manager (RG)
Lise Gough, Postgraduate Education Manager (LMG)
Neel Krishnaswami (NK)
Peter Ochieng (PO)
Sue Sentence (SS)
Becky Straw, Undergraduate Teaching Manager (RS)

1. **Apologies for Absence**

2. **Conflicts of interest**

3. **Updates on current outreach projects**

    a. **Women in CS**

    b. **DeepMind internships**

    c. **Sutton Trust summer school**

    d. **STEM SMART**

4. **Discussion on outreach strategy**
   To review the attached strategy document.

5. **Future outreach events**
   To discuss possible outreach collaborations with NCCE and Trinity college. A description of these events is attached below.

6. **Future membership of the committee**

7. **Any Other Business**

8. **Date of Next Meeting**

Outreach strategy

The Outreach Committee Terms of Reference state:

> '*The Outreach Committee aims to promote Computer Science at Cambridge, and the subject more broadly, to a diverse range of potential applicants to our undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. The overall goal is to improve diversity in the student population, raising aspirations and encouraging participation from all applicants, in particular those from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds.*'

Undergraduate and postgraduate outreach require different strategies, so we distinguish between these two types of programme in our outreach strategy. At both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, the key cohort from underrepresented backgrounds are female students, so one component of our outreach strategy targets this group, with another focusing those from disadvantaged backgrounds more generally.

The Department admits postgraduate students and it is natural for them to visit the Department's website for information about admissions. Whilst undergraduate students are admitted by colleges, they will also typically look at the Department's website to find out about their course and admissions more generally. The website should therefore be seen as a strategic asset to further outreach aims for all groups of students.

Undergraduate students

It should be noted that not all outreach programmes need to target students directly and that providing outreach activities and classroom resources for teachers can be a cost-effective method (both financially and in terms of time) to reach a large number of students.

Students from disadvantaged backgrounds

Our strategy for outreach to this cohort aims to raise aspiration. This could mean giving students the confidence to apply to Cambridge by demystifying the university or providing them with the tools to make competitive applications to university more broadly.

Within this category could be programmes that give students experience of university life, alongside learning Computer Science concepts and especially those that provide opportunities to find out more about the University of Cambridge.

Female students

Our belief is that female students in the UK lose interest in Computer Science early in secondary education, and thus our strategy here aims to maintain interest in the subject by targeting outreach activities to cohorts of students at a point where they are still interested. This could mean starting to work with primary school pupils, or those in years 7 & 8. It also implies that there needs to be regular interaction with students engaging with the outreach programmes, so as to continuously reaffirm interest in the subject and provide positive role models.

Postgraduate students

Outreach programmes for postgraduate students aim to diversify the student population in postgraduate degrees, both at Master's level and PhD. Aside from programmes that we run ourselves, there may be opportunities to work with non-research universities to target certain cohorts of students. Funding postgraduate study is of particular concern given high course fees and the lack of student loans and thus information should be provided on funding sources, to avoid costs being a barrier to applicants.

The main aim of outreach for this group of students is to provide opportunities for them to consider further study and research as a realistic career choice beyond their undergraduate degrees. This may mean introducing students to research and what life as a research student entails, or it may mean giving them greater opportunities to experience a research environment and advanced topics they may not have already had access to. For female students, in particular, there is a need to provide role models whose stories can show potential applicants that postgraduate study could be an option for them.

Funding and partnerships

While many activities can be delivered on the Department's outreach budget, we need to recognise that funds are limited. We should, therefore, pursue opportunities for additional funding where that will increase the reach or quality of our programmes, or make them viable in the first place, provided that the time and effort spent obtaining funding is commensurate with the benefits that the extra funding brings. This may mean seeking donations for specific programmes through the Department's contacts (such as alumni or industry, both in conjunction with CUDAR) or applying to advertised funding streams from third parties, provided that any conditions attached are acceptable to the Department and aligned with this outreach strategy.

In a similar vein, partnerships with outside organisations can provide additional capacity for outreach programmes or an opportunity to leverage their links with target groups of students. There may be times where organisations approach us to run joint activities or, in contrast, there may be situations where we wish to engage with others to help deliver a programme. In either case, as with additional funding streams, any activities delivered with third parties should be aligned with this strategy, be acceptable to the Department and their viability evaluated alongside all other activities given the Department's capacity to run and set priorities for outreach programmes.

Future outreach events

- **I belong** - This event is being organised by NCCE's (National Centre for Computing Education) Cambridge Computing Hub for 96 girls in Year 8 designed to encourage them to take up GCSE Computer Science.
  - It involves a whole weekend of CS workshops delivered at the Cambridge Maths school.
  - They've asked us if we'd be willing to give the girls a tour of the Department and a few talks about studying Computer Science at university. Since they are hoping to get university students to help run the workshops that make up the main event, they've also asked if we'd be willing to advertise this opportunity to our students.
  - This event is provisionally set to be on Saturday 16th November, 12-2pm.

- **Trinity STEM events** - The School Liaison Officers at Trinity are keen to work with us on the two similar events. The first would involve inviting primary school students to Trinity to do some fun, hands-on subject sessions followed by a tour of the college. The second would be for female students in Year 12 to encourage them to study STEM subjects at university - this event would involve subject workshops as well as sessions about university life and applications. We've been asked if we could plan and run Computer Science workshops for both events.