



Research Staff Forum Meeting

Friday, 6 November 2020 at 10.00
Meeting held remotely via Teams

Minutes

Present:

Matt Danish (MRD) (Chair)
Daniel Bates (DB)
Celia Burns (CB) (Secretary)
Andrew Caines (AC)
Heidi Howard (HH)
Jasmin Jahic

Angeliki Koutsoukou-Argyraki (AKA)
Zohreh Shams (ZS)
James Sharkey (JPS)
Sergei Skorobogatov (SS)
Caroline Stewart (CS)
Meurig Thomas

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Eva Kalyvianaki (EK).

2. RSF Discussion Topic

Andrew Caines gave a presentation on the projects he is involved in: The ALTA Institute, CCC-NLIP, and Pandemic MT.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2020 were approved subject to a correction to one of the item headings.

4. Committee Membership

The Committee is still looking for a representative from the Rainbow Graphics & Interaction Group.

5. Report on Actions from the Last Meeting

i. Representative for Research Assistants

The Committee is still seeking a Research Assistant who is not doing a PhD.

ii. Lecturing Opportunities for Research Staff

EK had agreed to raise the issue of guest-lecturing opportunities for research staff with the TMC. If the TMC are content, we would come up with a structure to both help lecturers and provide research staff with opportunities to get involved. EK was not at this meeting, so will report at the next meeting.

iii. Statistics Request from the Equality and Diversity (E&D) Committee

It is now thought that this data (relating to research staff members' country of origin and the country in which they lived prior to taking the Computer Lab role) can be

obtained from the University. The Head of Department hopes to receive this data in February 2021.

iv. **Mentoring and Teaching Opportunities for Postdocs**

At the last meeting, it was noted that mentoring one-to-one meetings could still be carried out via Teams chats. CS reported that the HR Manager would circulate another request for mentors when his currently very heavy workload allowed.

6. Wellbeing – Departmental Announcements

MD reported that he is leaving the soft drinks that are not being used for Happy Hour in the kitchen fridge, along with crisps on the table, for people to help themselves. He also reminded Committee members that the vending machine drinks are currently free.

7. Wellbeing – Suggestions for the Wellbeing Committee

Forum members discussed the Wellbeing Committee's request for suggestions for the Committee's consideration.

Mindfulness taster sessions: ZS asked about the mindfulness programme offered in the past and suggested that it might be worth offering taster sessions rather than a whole 10-week course (which had had a very low completion rate). Another suggestion was to try a different trainer. ZS subsequently talked to her fellow meditators and offered the following recommendations for the Wellbeing Committee:

- Offer wellbeing taster packages: people sign up for say 8 weeks, during which they have two weeks of Tai chi, two weeks of mindfulness, two weeks of yoga, etc. People who then decide to stick to each of these are probably going to be more consistent if the classes are to be run on a long-term basis.
- As for the mindfulness: timing can make a big difference. Lunch times can be tricky, because creating that separation from work is more difficult. Maybe 5pm or sometime after work can work out better. It can also be shortened to 8 weeks, but shorter than that would be more like a taster as explained above.
- ZS can help with finding meditation and mindfulness instructors if the need be.

Happy Hours and Wellbeing Teas: Committee members discussed these events, noting that there was not much take-up for these events, possibly because people are doing events within their own groups. HH noted that she had not seen any notification about the Wellbeing Teas since June and was concerned that new people may not be aware of this initiative. CS agreed to check who the last notification had been sent to, and to send another notification. **Action: CS**

Mental health first-aiders: HH suggested this initiative, where people are trained to recognise the signs and symptoms of common mental health issues and effectively guide a person towards the right mental health support. HH provided further information, available [here](#).

8. Buildings and Environment Committee (B&EC) – Update

The B&EC met on 28 May 2020. MD, Postdoc representative on the B&EC, reported that the building was now being unlocked during the day and, with capacity no longer being captured by entry card swipes, it was now up to groups to monitor numbers.

CS noted that the University was now encouraging the use of face coverings even if you can maintain 2m distancing and HH noted that several students, especially near the vending machines, have not been doing so. CS said she would send an email to students about this new guidance.

Action: CS

9. Equality and Diversity Committee (E&DC) – Update

The E&DC met on 29 May and 24 September 2020. HH, Postdoc representative on the E&DC, noted that there was nothing to report of relevance to the Forum.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that CB would circulate a Doodle poll for a meeting in Lent term.