



Research Staff Forum Meeting

Monday, 6 February 2023, 12.30-13.30
Room FW11, William Gates Building

Minutes

Present:

Jasmin Jahić (JJ) (Chair)
Celia Burns (CB) (Secretary)
Dr Andrew Caines (APC)
Helen Francis (HJF)
Dr Eva Kalyvianaki (EK)

Dr Saman Rizvi (SR)
James Sharkey (JPS)
Micol Spitale (MS)
Caroline Stewart (CS)

1. Chair

The Chair reported that he would be leaving his current position in the Department the following week to take up a position at Arm. He would continue his connection to the Department via his role as Director of Studies and as a Visiting Researcher. The committee congratulated Jasmin on his new appointment and thanked him for having chaired the committee.

The committee nominated James Sharkey as the new Chair. James noted that, as a Senior Research Software Engineer, he was not classed as “research staff” but he would be happy to chair the meetings. The committee felt that James had a breadth of knowledge and experience of research staff issues as he had been in the Department and a member of the Research Staff Forum for some time. It was proposed that James take the position of Chair until October, when someone from the research staff population may agree to Chair the meetings. James agreed to this and the Forum congratulated him on being the new Chair.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Angeliki Koutsoukou-Argraki and Dr Sergei Skorobogatov.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2022 were approved.

4. Forum Membership

Micol Spitale, a Postdoc in the Affective Intelligence & Robotics Laboratory, attended this meeting as a visitor. Micol introduced herself and noted that her contract would end in November this year, but she would be happy to join the Forum meetings until then. Micol

fills the gaps in representation from the Graphics & Interaction group and the Graphics, Vision, and Imaging Science theme.

The committee discussed the issue of low membership and lack of representation from several research groups, themes, and the group of Research Assistants who are not doing a PhD. Suggestions for how to encourage people to join or attend the meetings as a visitor included:

- adding information about the Forum to the induction information for new starters (**CS/CB** to action)
- posting on a media account
- posting something to the 'Cooler' email group (**JPS** to action)
- mentioning it at Wednesday meeting (**CS** to action)
- passing on information via word of mouth (**Forum members** to action)
- putting a poster in The Fishbowl and on the digital screen in The Street (**CB** to action)
- sending an email to new starters (**CS/CB** to provide starter information to the Chair, who will then send an introductory email)
- having a social event for research staff
- asking the Postdoc Academy if they would be willing to include a notice in the University Postdoc Bulletin (**CB** to action)

Action: CB, CS, JPS, Forum members

5. Report on Actions from the Last Meeting

i) Part II Project Proposals—UTO Involvement

The Chair reminded the committee that the policy for Part II Projects Marking had been attached for information to the minutes of the November meeting, and that the policy would be reviewed after the 2023 examinations. He hoped that the reassurance that a UTO would be found where necessary would continue beyond this year.

The Chair asked for clarification about whether the supervision arrangement must be agreed between the supervisor and the College. Dr Kalyvianaki confirmed that the supervisor has no responsibility to the College, but Directors of Studies are there to help the students make arrangements. Dr Kalyvianaki also noted that information included in a recent presentation she had done on the new PhD teaching initiative might be useful for research staff too.

CS afternote: Forum members may find the Part II project page interesting [Part II projects | Department of Computer Science and Technology \(cam.ac.uk\)](#). It also includes links to a briefing and lecture for students.

ii) Policy on Lecture Recording

Caroline Stewart reported that the policy on lecture recording had been amended and that she would circulate it to Forum members once it has been approved by Faculty Board. Caroline noted that the policy had been updated to include the Department's clarification on lecturers' rights to refuse lecture recording.

Action: CS

iii) Lecturing Opportunities

The committee noted that the 'Support for Research Staff' [webpage](#) had been updated to include contact details for enquiries about opportunities for offering a course for the Researcher Skills Programme. Dr Kalyvianaki noted various options for teaching opportunities including teaching assistance (where various actions, such as assisting with course work preparation, marking, and tutorials, for example, were currently being formalised and would need to be agreed by the Postgraduate Education Committee).

There was a discussion about the take-up of project proposals. Dr Kalyvianaki noted that there had been discussion at the Postgraduate Students Forum about this issue and suggested that Forum members could be invited to a presentation she is planning for PhD students. She also suggested that research staff could talk to their supervisors about what kind of projects to propose. The presentation Dr Kalyvianaki had mentioned under item 5i) would have more information about this.

iv) Process for Suggesting a Master Thesis Course

The committee noted that a proposed new policy for accepting new modules had been circulated and discussed at the Postgraduate Education Committee meeting in November and was currently being reviewed by the Heads of Department Team. Once approved, it would be circulated for information.

Action: EK to pass to CB

6. Postdoc Event

Helen Francis reported that she and Dr Kalyvianaki had met to discuss events for PhD students and Postdocs to encourage more of an entrepreneurial spirit in the department. They were looking at doing one event each year on general entrepreneurship. In addition, there would be networking events, where the plan was for companies founded by members of the Lab to come and talk about their start-ups. Cambridge Enterprise would be involved in the events, and Helen was keen to encourage not-for-profit enterprises too. The first event would probably be in the summer and would be open for PhD students and Postdocs.

Dr Caines asked if there could be an issue of research staff spending time on a start-up and specifically whether it was viewed as positive. Factors to consider around the time issue were the positive impact of creating start-ups alongside the contractual commitment to research projects. The committee noted there might be a fine line between those factors and the issue might need to be case-specific. Dr Caines suggested it would be useful for there to be some guidance and discussion about this from the department.

7. Wellbeing

i) Departmental Announcements

There were no departmental announcements.

ii) Input from Research Staff

Forum members again raised the issue of having a social event, noting the restraints around licensing for the provision of alcohol, and the difficulties with sponsorship and finding an event organiser. It was noted that Nicholas Boucher, a PhD student, had recently organised a social event sponsored by the Security research group. Dr Caines offered to contact Nicholas to ask if he had plans to organise another event this term.

Action: ACP

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

The B&EC had met on 18 January 2023. Dr Caines, RSF Representative on the B&EC, encouraged Forum members to look at the B&EC minutes since everything addressed at the meeting was relevant. In response to a question about the building heating, Dr Caines reported that nothing more could be done for some areas of the building and that the heating issue was being looked at from a long-term point of view. Dr Kalyvianaki reminded Forum members of the email about building heating sent from the Head of Department on 8 December, which she had found informative.

Dr Caines mentioned that the Committee had discussed the use of space in the building (specifically the perception that offices might be under-used). Dr Caines' take from the discussion at the meeting was that researchers might want to come into the building as much as they can to use their desks if they wish to prevent desks being reassigned for hot-desking.

In response to a question about the cafeteria area, Dr Caines noted that this issue had not been discussed at the meeting but that he could raise it at the next meeting (on 24 April). Forum members noted the very long queues for the Hub Café (exacerbated by the closure of the Cavendish canteen and the West Café not opening every day).

9. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Committee – Update

This committee is currently under review, with the last meeting held in March 2021. James Sharkey is interested in being the RSF Representative when the committee recommences activities. The Committee discussed the importance of having an EDI Committee, particularly with regard to the REF and Athena Swan. Helen Francis also volunteered to be a member of the EDI Committee when it recommences activities.

While the EDI Committee is under review, any feedback about equality, diversity, and inclusion can be sent to Celia Burns at faculty-admin@cst.cam.ac.uk.

10. Any Other Business

Cambridge Festival

Helen Francis reported that the Department Communications team was looking for volunteers to support a Cambridge Festival event on Saturday, 18 March, to help with activities such as supporting the Sonic Pi workshop and a technology competition, giving tours, and meeting and greeting. Rachel Gardner, Digital Communications Coordinator, will be posting a description of how volunteers can get involved and what they will gain from their involvement.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is to be decided by Doodle poll.