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## Research Staff Forum Meeting

Tuesday, 15 November 2022, 12.30-13.30  
Room FW11, William Gates Building

### Agenda

#### Committee Membership:

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

Dr Angeliki Koutsoukou-Argraki  
James Sharkey (JPS)  
Dr Sergei Skorobogatov (SS)  
Caroline Stewart (CS)

#### 1. New Chair

Welcome to Jasmin Jahić who has taken up the position of Chair.

#### 2. Apologies

#### 3. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2022 are attached.

#### 4. Forum Membership

- *Research Staff Representation*: the Forum is still seeking to increase its membership.
- *Buildings and Environment Committee (B&EC)*: the B&EC is seeking a committee member to represent the research staff community. Further information about the B&EC can be found [here](#). See also item 12 below.

#### 5. Report on Actions from the Last Meeting

- *Support from Researchers from Industry*. At the last meeting, JJ proposed having an annual event to present the Lab's research to the industry community, which he was going to discuss further with HJF/the Research Strategy Team. JJ to report.

#### 6. Part II Project Proposals—UTO Involvement

To discuss: new rules about the need to have a UTO on Part II project proposals (survey results are attached).

#### 7. Guest Lectures

To discuss: possibilities for Postdocs to give guest lectures (survey results are attached).

**8. Process for Suggesting Master Thesis Course**

To discuss: rules and handling complaints.

**9. Policy on Lecture Recording**

To discuss: the Department's policy on recording lectures in the 2022/23 academic year given the tension between the University's statutory duty to provide lecture recordings and individual lecturers' rights to withhold consent to record lectures (policy attached).

**10. Wellbeing – Departmental Announcements**

**11. Wellbeing**

- Social Events and Wellbeing
- Inflation and Salaries

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

As noted in item 4 above, the B&EC is seeking a representative from the research staff community. Such a representative (if a RSF member) would provide a brief update at each RSF meeting under this standing item.

**13. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) – Update**

This committee is currently under review, with the last meeting held in March 2021. A RSF representative on the EDIC would normally provide a brief update at each RSF meeting under this standing item. In the meantime, any feedback about equality, diversity, and inclusion can be sent to Celia Burns at [faculty-admin@cst.cam.ac.uk](mailto:faculty-admin@cst.cam.ac.uk).

**14. Any Other Business**

**15. Date of Next Meeting**



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## Research Staff Forum Meeting

Tuesday, 24 May 2022, 11.30 a.m.  
(videoconference)

### Minutes

**Present:**

Dr Matt Danish (MRD) (Chair)  
Dr Franck Courbon (FRC)  
Mrs Helen Francis (HJF)  
Dr Jasmin Jahić (JJ)  
Dr Eva Kalyvianaki (EK)

Mr James Sharkey (JPS)  
Dr Sergei Skorobogatov (SS)  
Mrs Caroline Stewart (CS)  
Celia Burns (CB) (Secretary)

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Dr Andrew Caines.

**2. Researcher Promotions**

Prof Copestake gave an overview of career paths for Postdocs, noting the precarious nature of Postdoc positions due to funding issues, and that the University is trying to support Postdocs, for example by helping them to improve their CVs so that they can go on to the next career stage (typically moving department or going into industry).

Prof Copestake outlined the University's grading structure, noting the jump between Research Associate (RA) at Grade 7 and Senior Research Associate (SRA) at Grade 9, as well as the big leap to the professorial level positions of Principal Research Associate at Grade 11 and Director of Research at Grade 12. The primary criteria for moving to SRA is research independence, which is possible to meet (if things are going well) at around three years after a PhD.

Prof Copestake also talked about the funding situation (where SRAs currently need confirmation there is funding available for their promotion) noting that one of the Department goals is to do more philanthropic fund raising so that it can provide top up funding for SRA promotions when needed.

In response to a question from an RA whose PI didn't have funding for their promotion, Prof Copestake noted that the Department would like to be in a position (though it's not there yet) where it has sufficient unrestricted funds to support promotion for someone in that position.

In response to a request for clarification in research independence, for instance, where someone's research was not going well but who is supervising students who are

publishing, Prof Copestake noted that there are no hard and fast rules, however evidence is required of leading a piece of research (either as a lead author or in some other way), and that the referees for promotion applications need to support this evidence. She noted that supervising at Master's level, is often an effective way of achieving this.

Prof Copestake also offered to talk about how Postdocs can get more involved in teaching. In response to a question about creating a Master's level course, she noted that because research staff often leave the Department with relatively short notice, this is why courses need to be supported by a Faculty member. Prof Copestake also noted that the primary objective is to have modules that form a coherent part of the offering for the students taking ACS and Part III, so some proposals for modules may be rejected just because they don't fit. There was an individual query about the creation of an MPhil module, which Professor Copestake agreed to look into further with the postdoc concerned.

Dr Kalyvianaki noted that she is preparing a document outlining teaching opportunities and hopes to have something available in the next few months.

**3. Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 March 2022 were approved.

**4. Report on Actions from the Last Meeting**

*Sponsor for social events:* Helen Francis reported that she and Ben Karniely have been discussing sponsorship for the Friday Happy Hours with The Supporters Club and that Ben would be getting back to Matt Danish about this shortly.

**5. New Chair**

Matt Danish noted that his contract ends in September and therefore a new Chair is being sought. Caroline Stewart noted that we need to push for more committee members as well. Jasmin Jahić noted his interest as Chair and requested more information about what is involved. Matt suggested they talk more about this outside of the meeting.

**Action: MRD/JJ**

**6. Support from Researchers from Industry**

Jasmin Jahić introduced this topic, noting that many companies are interested in the Lab's research and might be interested in supporting PhD and Master's students. Jasmin suggested having an annual event to present research to the industry community. Helen Frances noted that her Research Strategy Team could help with such an event and suggested that Jasmin discuss this further with her outside of the meeting.

**Action: JJ/HF**

**7. Wellbeing – Departmental Announcements**

Caroline Stewart reminded committee members of the Book Exchange event taking place in The Street on 27 May. Matt Danish noted that since there was no funding or resources, there would be no Friday Happy Hour events for the time being. Caroline noted the recent opening of the Café Bar in the West Hub and encouraged people to use it. Matt said he would check it out and send an email to building-users.

**Action: MRD**

**8. Wellbeing – Report for the HR Strategy Committee**

Caroline Stewart noted that the Wellbeing Committee has been taken over by the new HR Strategy Committee, and that any feedback about wellbeing could be sent to Celia Burns at [faculty-admin@cst.cam.ac.uk](mailto:faculty-admin@cst.cam.ac.uk).

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

MRD, Postdoc representative on the B&EC, noted that works to the bicycle racks and shelter would be taking place from 5 July for a few weeks. A question was raised about where to park bicycles while the works are ongoing. It was thought that temporary or new racks would be installed on the south side of the building. Caroline Stewart said she would find out and ask Martin McDonnell to circulate relevant information.

**Action: CS**

**10. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) – Update**

This committee is currently under review, with the last meeting held in March 2021. Caroline Stewart noted that the committee may become part of the new HR Strategy Committee. In the meantime, any feedback about equality, diversity, and inclusion can be sent to Celia Burns at [faculty-admin@cst.cam.ac.uk](mailto:faculty-admin@cst.cam.ac.uk).

**11. Any Other Business**

James Starkey reminded the Committee that, although he retained his Committee membership when his status changed from Research Assistant to Research Associate, there is still a vacancy for a Research Assistant representative; and that this vacancy might be added to the call for a Chair and new members (see item 5 above).

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be arranged by Doodle poll for some time in the Michaelmas term.

Caroline thanked Matt for having chaired the Committee, and for so long.



## Part II Project Proposals—UTO Involvement

"What: Part II projects will need to have an associated UTO since we are planning to move to a model of supervisor co-marking.

The proposal going to Faculty Board is to move to a model similar to the ACS dissertations, Each project will then have two markers: the supervisor and an examiner. This will ensure each project has assessment from an expert in the area and that the supervisor understands the final mark. This helps supervisors to calibrate and, crucially, for them to act as the source of feedback on the work.

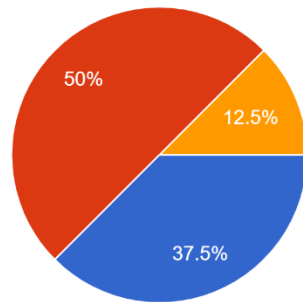
This approach requires UTOs to assign marks, while we have many PhD or Postdoc supervisors. Therefore we **need to associate each project to** a named supervisor and **a named UTO** from the outset. The same person can serve both roles (i.e. UTOs can still supervise!). The named UTO will be responsible for submitting a mark and a rationale, although these may both be drafted by the supervisor. Although this is a new responsibility we do not envisage this taking up much UTO time beyond checking for agreement with the supervisor."





Suggested rule to associate each project to a named UTO is

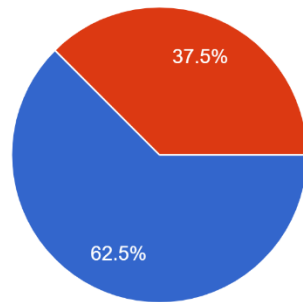
8 responses



- positive
- negative - it will create new limitations to already limited number of teaching opportunities
- (unsure)

Were you aware of the discussions around this rule?

8 responses



- No
- Yes, but I did not participate in the discussions
- Yes, and I actively participated in the discussions

Any other comment? 5 responses

I agree that the previous marking system was too opaque for students and needed improving: now the supervisor is to be the key source of feedback for the student. This is another negative development for postdoc supervisors: they are made responsible for feeding back what was good and bad to the undergrad student, who might then make an appeal or feel unfairly treated. The problem for postdocs is that they may not have the long-term experience of marking / the Cambridge system, and they certainly won't have the overall cohort view of the standard across the year group, as the examiners did in the previous system. If the 'associated UTO' system is going to stay, then the UTO should be the main source of feedback for the student project.

I have had my opinions as a post-doctoral (senior research associate) supervisor solicited from a UTO when assigning marks. This approach can help alleviate the issue.

I think project student's experience could suffer quite a bit if spread more thinly among UTOs. One of the best experiences for a student project is to perform some exploration that is attached to an active research area. Post docs are often up-to-the-neck in research problems that are fertile areas for student projects, and projects of this kind are likely to receive a large amount of active support as they contribute to the field of the supervisor. Eliminating this

possibility in favour of spreading students more thinly among less focused UTOs for the sake of assigning a number at the end seems to be a bad tradeoff.

Previously, there was an "Overseer" role. Is the new proposal meant to replace that? If so, I don't see any problem. If not, I don't understand why these should be two different roles.

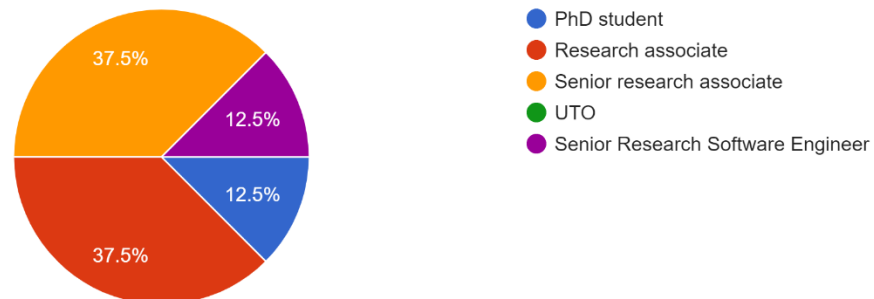
I would recommend expanding the co-marking supervisor pool to include experienced Senior Research Associates. They will have often supervised many Part II projects in the past and their inclusion would likely increase the range of projects students can choose from and decrease UTOs' workloads.

In its current form this is a negative step. If the definition of UTO was extended to include staff who hold a PhD (and perhaps have supervised projects previously) rather than just a UTO this would support more experienced colleagues on the research track in being able to be involved without trying to find a UTO within the precise field of their research.

If the purpose is to allow someone to co-mark the dissertation perhaps rather than 'finding a UTO' the department should assign an examiner / assessor and they can work with a supervisor for the purpose of independent assessment.

#### Your position at the department

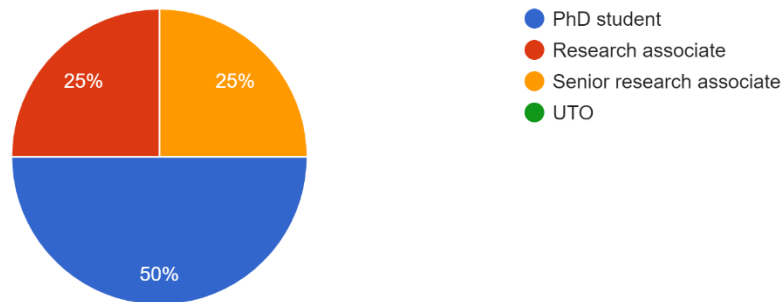
8 responses



## Guest Lectures – Survey Results

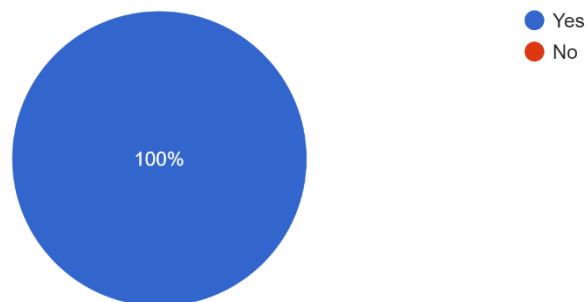
### Your position

4 responses



We would like to suggest professors to offer possibilities for 1-2 guest lectures in their courses, to be delivered by PhDs/PostDocs, with the focus on ...est lecture, should you have such an opportunity?

4 responses



If your answer on the previous question is yes, could you broadly specify domain of a potential lecture you would give, including, if possible, a matching course?

3 responses

Unconventional approaches to AI  
Software engineering and architecture  
Cybercrime R254



# Policy on recording lectures

## Background

The General Board Education Committee (GBEC) issued a [Statement of Expectation for lecture capture recording](#) on the 8th July 2022, which outlined the aim of providing recordings of all lectures in the 2022/23 academic year. On the 26th July 2022, they issued [an addendum](#), which provided further guidance on the requirements to provide lecture recordings for disabled students. The first document is for guidance only and there is no requirement to record lectures; indeed, individual lecturers retain the right to withhold consent to make a recording. However, as the second document describes, there is a legal duty on the University to ensure that reasonable adjustments, such as lecture recordings, are made for disabled students without students having to request them. Disabled students who do make recordings must comply with the [rules and restrictions issued by the Accessibility & Disability Resource Centre](#), which state that the student can only use recordings for their own private study and may not share them with others.

Given this tension between the University's statutory duty to provide lecture recordings and individual lecturers' rights to withhold consent to record lectures, this policy describes how the Department of Computer Science and Technology will approach lecture recordings in the 2022/23 academic year. Lecturers should note that, in the event of a strike, they may withdraw their consent to use any lecture recordings made this academic year, or in the past, and the Department will not use those recordings as a substitute for missed lectures.

## Lectures

*This section describes the policy for lecture courses, which are currently the majority of courses in Parts IA, IB and half of Part II of the Computer Science Tripos. It will also apply to any units of assessment or ACS modules that are run as standard lecture courses.*

GBEC's [guidance on lecture recordings for disabled students](#) makes it clear that:

- Approximately 20% of the total student population fall under the legal definition of disability;
- A large number of those students require lecture recordings;
- Since the University is already aware of this, then it would be failing in its statutory duties if it didn't provide lecture recordings for these students without placing an additional time burden on them;
- Students should not have to apply for these recordings.

Lectures are very suited to recording since they usually involve the lecturer alone delivering material, rather than expecting any input from students. In addition, lecture capture places very little extra work on the lecturer, since it can be scheduled in advance, meaning the lecturer does not even have to start or stop the recording<sup>1</sup>. It's also worth noting that

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<sup>1</sup> If the lecture is in a room that has lecture-capture facilities, currently, in the rooms we use, LT1, LT2 and FW26 in the William Gates Building, Lecture Theatre A in the Arts School (New Museum Site).

pre-COVID some disabled students had the right to record lectures for their own personal use if recordings were deemed necessary in their student support document.

However, we recognise that some lecturers have valid concerns about recording their live lectures. To meet the needs of disabled students, help fulfil the University's statutory duties and, at the same time, respect these concerns, we will adopt the following protocol:

- All lectures should be recorded as standard;
- The lecturer decides whether lectures should be released to the relevant disabled students only, or whether they can be made available to all students in the year group;
- The Department will respect the lecturer's wishes and release each recording to the relevant group of students;
- The Department will delete all lecture recordings shortly after the final exam in June 2023, and certainly no later than the end of the academic year<sup>2</sup>, unless the lecturer explicitly asks for the recordings to be preserved.

We acknowledge that this requires the lecturer to trust the Department to carry out their wishes as requested and the Department will provide written assurances to any lecturer who feels concerned about this.

Many lecturers will have purpose-made recordings of lectures from previous years (i.e. pre-recorded videos rather than live lecture capture). Although these recordings could be made available to students (and we encourage this, where lecturers feel comfortable sharing them), these are not a substitute for disabled students for recordings of the lectures as given in the coming 2022/23 academic year. This is because lecturers may say something different in a live lecture compared to its previous recording and, unless the lecturer says almost exactly the same thing with the same order and timing in both, students will have to watch a significant proportion of the recording to find any parts that were unclear when presented live. There may also be discussions between lecturers and students in a live lecture, which might lead to new insights and perspectives that would not be conveyed in the pre-recorded lectures. All this means that pre-recorded videos cannot be considered a reasonable adjustment to ensure that the experience of disabled students is equivalent to that of students who are not disabled, as is required by the Equality Act 2010.

## Seminars

*This section describes the policy for courses not run via lectures, which are currently most ACS modules and Part II units of assessment.*

Across the ACS and Part II units of assessment there are a wide variety of teaching methods beyond traditional lectures. We think that individual module convenors are best placed to decide whether they can or should make recordings for their courses, in line with these general principles:

1. Disabled students, if present, always have the right to make their own recordings for their own private use. We will ask students, as a courtesy, to let module convenors

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<sup>2</sup> In the very specific case of a student being given leave to take a single year of the Tripos over multiple years, we would have to discuss the situation, but we currently have no such students.

know in advance if they intend to make recordings, but module convenors should be aware that students do not have to and will not be asking permission to make the recordings and cannot be told that recordings should not be made;

2. Recordings are encouraged where the seminar is easy to capture and where making a recording will not alter the nature of the activity or inhibit participation;
3. Recordings are important to provide when students have to miss a seminar through illness, so that students feel more comfortable staying away rather than struggling to come in. We do not want students with an infectious disease passing it on to others. However, principle 2 above should be borne in mind, since supporting participation in class should not be compromised in order to make recordings.
4. Module convenors who will not make recordings for absent students under principle 3 above should provide a single-paragraph justification to be displayed on the module website;
5. If module convenors will not make recordings of their seminars but a disabled student wants to make a recording, then the student may make a recording in a manner that suits their own needs and in line with the [rules and restrictions issued by the Accessibility & Disability Resource Centre](#).

Recordings of discussion elements within seminars (i.e. anything that is not content delivery by the module convenor) require that all participants give permission to be recorded. To address this, we will be asking students for consent to record them in advance and module convenors will be made aware of those who have withheld this permission. In addition, students are able to withdraw consent at any time, so requests during a seminar not to record their contributions should be respected by anyone making a recording (module convenor or disabled student).

## Practicals

*This section applies to all practical labs on both the Computer Science Tripos and ACS.*

Practical sessions do not need to be recorded. However, if a disabled student wishes to record anything that is said to them, they have the right to make it themselves. We will ask students, as a courtesy, to let anyone who is being recorded know about this in advance.