**UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**
Department of Computer Science & Technology

Athena SWAN
**Bronze Award**

# Research Staff Forum Meeting

## Wednesday, 22 November 2023, 12.00-13.00
## Room GC22, William Gates Building

# Agenda

**Forum membership:**
James Sharkey, Senior Research Software Engineer (JPS) (Chair)
Maliha Ashraf (MA)
Celia Burns, Faculty Administrator (CB) (Secretary)
Dr Andrew Caines (APC)
Helen Francis, Research Strategy Manager (HJF)
Dr Sadiq Jaffer (SJ)
Dr Guy Laban (GL)
Dr Challenger Mishra (CM)
Dr Ajay Shankar, Research Associate (ASh)
Caroline Stewart, Departmental Secretary (CS)
Dr Alejandro Sztrajman (ASz)


**1.  Apologies**
Apologies have been received from Dr Andrew Caines and Dr Ajay Shankar.

**2.  Minutes of the Last Meeting**
The minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2023 are attached for approval.

**3.  Forum Membership**
The Forum welcomes four new members: Maliha Ashraf, Dr Sadiq Jaffer, Dr Guy Laban, and Dr Alejandro Sztrajman.

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

**i)  Process for suggesting new MPhil modules**
A new policy for proposing new MPhil modules had been approved by the Head of Department Team and subsequently posted to Moodle but restricted to UTOs and other relevant teaching staff. CS was going to follow this up with the Director of Postgraduate Education. CS to report.

**ii)  Forum membership**
It was agreed that CB would update the webpage to show what categories of staff are eligible for Forum membership. This action is complete.

An induction/social event for research staff in lieu of an October Forum meeting was planned in order to generate interest in the Forum. This action is complete: an event was held on 20 September, and we now have four Forum new members.

**iii)     Research staff email lists**
CS was going to check that relevant email lists included all research staff. CS to report.

5.     **Funding for Cross-Departmental Researcher Events**
Funding is available for cross-departmental researcher events to be held at West Hub, and a call for event proposals (attached) has been circulated to West Cambridge Heads of Institutions. To discuss.

6.     **Faculty Board**
The Chair of the Research Staff Forum has observer status on Faculty Board. JPS to report.

7.     **Wellbeing**
     **i)     Departmental Announcements**
     **ii)     Input from Research Staff**

8.     **Buildings and Environment Committee (B&EC) – Update**
The latest B&EC meetings were held on 20 June and 12 October 2023. Dr Andrew Caines, RSF Representative on the B&EC, to report on anything of relevance to the Forum.

9.     **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (ED&I) Committee – Update**
The ED&I Committee has reconvened and held its first meeting on 1 November 2023. James Sharkey, a member of the ED&I Committee, to report on anything of relevance to the Forum.

10.     **Any Other Business**

11.     **Date of Next Meeting**

# Research Staff Forum Meeting

## Tuesday, 2 May 2023, 12.30-13.30
## Room FW26, William Gates Building

# Minutes

**Present:**
James Sharkey, Senior Research Software Engineer (JPS) (Chair)
Celia Burns, Faculty Administrator (CB) (Secretary)
Helen Francis, Research Strategy Manager (HJF)
Dr Eva Kalyvianaki, Deputy Director for PG Education (Researcher Development) (EK)
Dr Ajay Shankar, Research Associate (AS)
Caroline Stewart, Departmental Secretary (CS)

1. **Apologies**
   Apologies were received from Dr Andrew Caines, Dr Angeliki Koutsoukou-Argyraki, Dr Challenger Mishra, and Micol Spitale.

2. **Minutes of the Last Meeting**
   The minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2023 were approved.

3. **Report on Actions from the Last Meeting**
   **i) Forum Membership**
   The Chair reported the following:
   - JPS had posted an email to the 'Cooler' email group, to which he had received one reply, asking about membership eligibility (see item 4 below).
   - Posters advertising the Forum had been put in The Fishbowl and on the digital screens in The Street.
   - JPS had not yet contacted new research staff (though it was felt this would probably not have made a difference to getting new members anyway).
   - It had been decided not to ask the Postdoc Academy to include a notice in the University Postdoc Bulletin after all, since the Bulletin does not appear to include department-specific notices.

   **ii) Policy on Lecture Recording**
   The updated policy, which includes the Department's clarification on lecturers' rights to refuse to be recorded, had been circulated to Forum members.

### iii) Process for Suggesting New MPhil Modules

CS reported that a new policy for proposing new MPhil modules had been approved by the Head of Department Team and subsequently posted to Moodle but restricted to UTOs and other relevant teaching staff. Dr Kalyvianaki noted that the restriction was probably an oversight. It was agreed that CS would follow this up with the Director of Postgraduate Education.

**Action: CS**

### iv) Wellbeing – Social Events

At the last meeting, APC had agreed to contact Nicholas Boucher, a PhD student who had organised a social event, to ask if he had plans to organise another event. APC (who was not present for this meeting) had since reported the following.

- He had contacted Nicholas Boucher, who was very keen to organise more free-of-charge events when sponsorship is available.
- APC had found a few potential sponsors among the UTOs on the Wednesday email list.
- There had been an end-of-Lent-term event held on Friday 17 March, sponsored by Ferenc Huszár. The event had coincided with an ACS one-minute madness event, so the Postgraduate Office had contributed funding too.
- Nicholas had lined up 12 May for the next event.

### 4. Forum Membership

Since the last meeting, there had been no new interest shown from research staff to join the Forum. One member had left the Department in March, and two others would be leaving in August and October. This would leave gaps in representation from several groups and themes, in addition to the groups and themes already not represented.

The following numbers of research staff employed (as of 13 April 2023) were provided for information.

| | |
|---|---|
| Research Assistants not doing a PhD | 20 |
| Research Associates | 41 |
| Senior Research Associates | 20 |
| Senior Research Engineers | 6 |
| Fellows | 5 |
| **Total** | **92** |

The Forum discussed membership of the Forum. JPS noted that the one comment he had received in response to his email to the Cooler group (item 3i above) had asked about the membership eligibility for (Senior) Research Software Engineers. JPS had replied to say we should update the forum webpage to be clearer about who was welcome. It was agreed that CB would update the webpage to show that the following categories of staff are eligible: Research Assistants (including those who are doing a PhD), Research Associates, Senior Research Associates, Research Software Engineers, and Fellows.

**Action: CB**

In relation to the low turnout of RSF members at this meeting, it was noted that the Doodle polls for meetings may have been circulated too early and it would be useful if in future they could be circulated just two or three weeks in advance of a meeting (when, for example, conference travel plans are known). Voting for reps, as is the case with the

Postgraduate Student Forum (PSF), was suggested but it was thought that membership of the Research Staff Forum was different. For instance, membership of the PSF awards credits on the tally sheet for when students request additional funding. It was also suggested that influence and/or expectations from academic staff might affect RSF membership.

The Forum discussed having an induction/social event for research staff in lieu of an October Forum meeting. The event would comprise a brief introduction by the Forum Chair followed by four 10-minute talks from the Deputy Director for Postgraduate Education, the Research Strategy Manager, and representatives from Cambridge Enterprise and the Postdoc Academy. Attendees would be asked to fill in a questionnaire during the event, with questions around how the Forum could be more effective, etc. JPS agreed to think about some questions for the questionnaire.

**Action: CB and Committee Members**

5. **Faculty Board**
The Forum received the following excerpt from the minutes of the 28 February 2023 Faculty Board meeting, which the Chair of the Research Staff Forum attends as an observer.

> **20. Research Staff Forum**
> **i) Minutes of the recent meeting**
> *Received: minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2023 (2023-02-20).*
>
> **ii) Report from Chair of the Research Staff Forum**
> *James Sharkey, Chair of the Research Staff Forum, reported that the main issue at the February meeting had been about Forum membership, which had been low for some time. Professor Copestake noted that the Forum was for all staff involved in research (other than UTOs) and that it was an important group which is taken very seriously. As an example, the Forum would be particularly important during consultations about space in the department.*

JPS noted that he had attended the April Faculty Board meeting the previous week. He had nothing to raise here about that meeting and noted that the Faculty Board minutes would be available soon.

6. **Wellbeing**

   i) **Departmental Announcements**
   There was nothing to report.

   ii) **Input from Research Staff**
   There was nothing to report.

7. **Buildings and Environment Committee (B&EC) – Update**
The latest B&EC meeting was held on 24 April 2023. Dr Andrew Caines, RSF Representative on the B&EC, had sent his apologies for this Forum meeting and was not therefore available to report.

The Forum discussed room occupancy, noting that some corridors seemed to be very busy, while others were empty (due to staff working remotely, some having moved out of Cambridge). The issue of consolidating hybrid desks was raised, as well as the possibility of making the Forum meetings hybrid in an effort to achieve better attendance. JPS noted that he could include a question about hybrid Forum meetings on the questionnaire for the October introductory/social event (see item 4 above).

8.  **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) – Update**
    This committee is currently under review, with the last meeting held in March 2021. James Sharkey has registered his interest in being the RSF Representative when the committee recommences activities, at which time he would report on anything of relevance to the Forum. 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).

9.  **Any Other Business**

    **Entrepreneurship Event**
    HF noted that the Research Strategy Team and EK had organised an entrepreneurship event on 14 June 2023. The event was being organised with support from Cambridge Enterprise and would be a chance for networking and to hear from former and current members of the Department who have founded a company.

    JPS raised a question about inclusion in the various email lists for receiving information that would be relevant for research staff. CS agreed to check the lists in this regard.
    **Action: CS**

10. **Date of Next Meeting**
    It was agreed that an induction/social event for all research staff will be held in lieu of a meeting in October. See the discussion (item 4) above for more information.

**Call for Cross-Departmental Researcher Event Proposals**

Request for West Cambridge Heads of Institutions:

The West Hub Steering Committee requested a budget from the RMC for a program of events at the West Hub and would like your help in disbursing funds fairly across researchers located in West Cambridge.

Part of the description from the proposal is here:

"The West Hub Steering Committee proposes an exciting series of programming, including events and activities, to promote the West Hub on the West Cambridge site to both University and external audiences. These events and activities are centred around key themes for the Hub related to Learning, Collaboration, and Socialising. The West Hub is proposed as the engine to drive the West Cambridge Innovation District."

The Steering Committee would like to invite postdoc societies and graduate student societies in departments wholly or partially located in West Cambridge to propose events that could fall under the category of "researcher café" (or similar), to be hosted at the Hub. Approximately 6 for postdocs, 6 for graduate students, with a total budget of around 20k.Likely costs could be related to catering or acquisitions or speakers. Costs related to use of the facilities would of course not be applied.

There is also a smaller budget for wellbeing events that could be aimed at all-staff/ students, if you have a wellbeing committee or similar. Events such as walking at one, or meditation sessions etc. could be proposed.

Please help us to spread the word in your department. To encourage mixing, we would like to propose that at least two departments at least, be represented by each event or proposal, and would value your help in helping us to achieve this.

Queries can be addressed to Roisin Owens (rmo37@cam.ac.uk), Chair of the steering committee, or to sfhevents@admin.cam.ac.uk