# Graduate Students' Forum
## Minutes: 12th December 2012

**Attending**: LG    Lise Gough (GEM) [Chair]
DT    Daniel Thomas (DTG) [Secretary]
SB    Simon Baker (MPhil)
DB    Andres Koltes (CompArch)
SMB  Sandro Bauer (NLIP)
VI     Vaiva Imbrasaité (Rainbow)
IT     Ivo Timoteo (AI&B)
MG  Matthew Grosvenor (SRG)
KS    Kumar Sharad (Security)

## 1. Apologies

Andrew Rice (AR), Ramana Kumar (RK), Jon Crowcroft (JC).

## 2. Departmental Announcements (LG)

i.    75th Anniversary celebration

On the 24th April 2013 there will be a celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the Computer Laboratory - the oldest computer science department in the world. There will be many famous speakers and events. Andrew Rice is organising a poster competition for all the PhD students to be co-located.

ii.    Broken window in hangout room

One of the windows in the hangout area was broken, probably by an excessively vigorous pool ball, please could people take more care.

## 3. Staff-Student Consultative Forum (DT)

i.    Café

The fish is sustainably sourced according to the Marine Stewardship Council. Details on the contract and tendering arrangements for the Café are not forthcoming from the department and should be taken on trust.

ii.    Defibrillator

This will be moved to the street

iii.    Locks on PhD student offices

As the department cannot handle cash deposits cannot be taken and keys are expensive, however if the student's supervisor contacts the departmental secretary giving a reason then keys can be obtained

iv.    Ergonomics

Differently ergonomic furniture is available on request. There is a shortage of adjustable height desks, particularly in SE35 and SE32 which the department is trying to address -

a new supplier is required.

v.  Part IA

The department is considering reworking Part IA and so DT would like to hear any feed-back on how it might be reorganised so that he can give this to Robert Harle for SSCoF.

## 4. Research Development

i.  PhD students lunches

We need someone to organise these, IT indicated he might be interested but had another idea to bring up in AOB which if he did then he would not be able to so no volunteers at present.

ii.  Christmas Quiz

Thank you to Vaiva Imbrasaité and Andra Adams for organising this and to Tadas Bal-trusaitis, Chris Elsmore and William Denman for help with setup and clearing up. It was a very successful event. There were over 60 people in 11-12 teams with PhD students, MPhil, RAs and lecturers in attendance. There was the right amount of food and drink and good participation. We might try and run another quiz at the end of Lent term.

## 5. Minutes of last meeting

Correction to 6)e) from the Degree Committee: it is the government not the university which makes taking internships difficult. Approved with that correction.

## 6. Matters arising from the minutes

i.  Kitchen utilities.

**Action**: MG to check status of utensils (is there a lack?) and ask Building Services whether they might be being taken for the café. MG apologised for not having had time to do this yet.

ii.  School of Technology research survey.

a.  CL-specific results

Since the survey was confidential the data set for the CL cannot be given to us exactly but if we have particular questions then those can be asked after being checked for statistical disclosure issues. **Action**: ALL what of questions do we want to ask?

b.  October-start bias

**Action**: MG to check for an October start bias.

c.  Feedback about information for making college choices

Applicants do not know what colleges are or why choosing colleges is important

and are wrongly informed by the university that all colleges are the same.

Those who choose an open application frequently end up at sub-optimal colleges located a long way from the department.

Practical information is the most useful for making a decision, pretty buildings and prestige are less important.

Location, quality and price of accommodation are important as is whether family accommodation is available.

Whether a college is grad only or not is important.

Some college accommodation is off-site and this is not clear when applying.

Available funding is very important and hard to determine.

Whether college staff are helpful and competent is important but very hard to find out.

The number of years accommodation is available for varies.

The price of food varies between colleges (some require 600GBP/year from students).

Much information on college websites is just marketing and unhelpful.

CUSU has a colleges database http://www.cusu.cam.ac.uk/database/ however this is not currently available outside of JCR/MCR/CUSU committee people **Action** MG to investigate whether this can be made accessible.

Information on online forums is useful but not reliable.

Some years some colleges only accept their own undergraduates but this is very variable and so hard to advertise in advance.

It would be useful to have a paragraph on each college and the acceptance ratio for that college to allow for making decisions. LG says that the graduate student tutors are working on this **Action** LG investigate whether they have finished this.

iii. Electronic submission of MPhil work (LG)

This has been discussed with Graham Titmus who suggested CARET, LG has talked to CARET but has not had a response. This will be brought up at the Advanced Taught Courses Management Committee. However Cambridge does things differently and submission in person has advantages in allowing GEM to see students faces and detect problems early on when intervention is easier.

iv. Website updates (DT,LG)

LG has contacted Markus Kuhn about arranging access for DT and MG but we have not yet heard back. **Action** DT to follow up with Markus about this.

v. Machine/resource policy

Better machines are available on request, DT intended to mention this on his recent email, **Action** DT to mention this in his next email.

vi. DTG fridge door: fixed the day after being raised

## 7. Student feedback

(a)   Comp Arch: No feedback

(b)   Security: No feedback

(c)   MPhil: No feedback (despite much soliciting)

(d)   SRG: No feedback

(e)   NLIP: Question about printing posters: answer talk to Chris Hadley. Appreciated visit from Graham Titmus recently explaining sys-admin policies and taking feedback

(f)   Rainbow: Lack of lab computing resources for large jobs, Condor not up to the load and hard to use. Suggested that Neil and Peter should talk to sys-admin about this.

   It was noted that the interface with sys-admin is difficult though Graham is going a good job at improving that.

   Rainbow is much to cold and tickets raised with building-services have not resulted in the problem being alleviated, suggested that supervisors be used to try and encourage motion on this. However this is a general problem that comes up repeatedly and so needs solving at a departmental level.

   The Café has stopped serving sushi and so needs lobbying to do so again, it also runs out of change every day and so needs to get more change in.

   Greater care is required from people putting plastic in the microwave to avoid evacuations like we had recently.

(g)   DTG: Switches are configured to only give machines 100Mbit connections to the switch when they could give 1Gbit even though the switches only have a 1Gbit backplane reasons given by sys-admin for not doing this (that this would unfairly advantage machines which were configured to be allowed 1Gbit) considered invalid (MG says he has measurements which show this). Perhaps Graham might be able to help with this.

   The default quota on filer is too small to be useful and so default allocations to bigdisk or similar of 50GB or so might alleviate the problem of everyone having to use scratch.

   Default partitioning setups which split the disk into many small pieces such that resizing is almost always required and also very difficult are unhelpful and the reasons for doing so our outdated for modern file systems.

   New machines are being given SSDs which is good but they are not being given RAID which is very bad as SSDs have a higher failure rate than HDs and due to filer quota people have to use scratch.

(h)   **Action** DT to coordinate production of document by GSF on sys-admin issues raised by Rainbow and DTG with the aim of improving the situation. The problems are mainly with Linux issues and hopefully the new Linux admin starting in January will alleviate the problems by providing more sys-admin resource.

## 8. Date of next meeting

January.

Poll for date: http://doodle.com/khsast9txddqu9a4

## 9. Any other business

(a) Hackathons (IT)

This might be a good way of students to get to know each other. DT suggested IT talk to AR as AR is intending to organise one for the start of Lent and Easter terms but needs some help with organising due to little time.

(b) Pot luck lunch (LG)

LG suggested that a pot luck lunch might be a good way of getting students to socialise. **Action** DT to investigate whether we can do this in the CL or if H&S concerns mean that it needs to happen in privately owned buildings.

End of meeting: 14:12.

## 10. Actions arising

a. ALL: SSCoF IA feedback, questions for survey data

b. MG: Kitchen utensils, October start bias, colleges database

c. LG: colleges paragraphs

d. DT: Website updates, machine resource policy, sys-admin policy document coordination, check whether H&S actually an issue with pot luck lunch.