

Graduate Students' Forum

Minutes: 24 October 2013

Attending: SMB Sandro Bauer (NLIP)
JC Jon Crowcrowft
LG Lise Gough
MG Matthew Grosvenor (SRG)
VI Vaiva Imbrasaite (Rainbow)
AK Andreas Koltes (CompArch)
RK Ramana Kumar (PLS) [Secretary]
AR Andy Rice (GEC) [Chair]
DT Daniel Thomas (DTG)

1. Apologies

Kumar Sharad (KS), due to scheduling conflict with Voice Projection class. Ivo Timoteo (IT) was likely attending the same class.

2. Minutes of last meeting

Approved.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

i. Health and Safety.

LG: Piete Brooks (Health and Safety Officer) needs to know about people acquiring Food Safety qualifications.

AR: Actually, he only needs to know for each specific event that is run, and will be so informed.

ii. Unofficial PhD Guide.

VI: No updates made yet.

SMB: Has made some more fixes, but yet uploaded them to filer.

AR: It would be good to aim to have an updated version ready for the next batch of incoming students in January.

Action: VI and SMB to make and upload their updates.

iii. Pizza Lunch.

VI will provide pictures shortly.

Action: VI to send the pictures to DT, who will make them available online.

AR: Follow-up event: someone wants to run a “scrum” event, roleplaying the development cycle for a client with lego.

iv. Lab Credit Card.

AR: No progress yet.

Action: AR to bring updates on raising the credit card limit etc. next meeting.

v. Food Event Ideas.

DT: As it is getting cold, outside events are less appealing. AR: The hot plate must be used in the courtyards. LG: Could do something for bonfire night? And possibly proceed to fireworks on Midsummer Common afterwards.

Action: DT to organise something and find out what's needed.

4. New Secretary

RK has announced his intention to resign as secretary after a year of service. He will stay on as representative for PLS.

AR: The first item of next meeting's agenda will be to choose a new secretary, who will then proceed to take that meeting's minutes.

5. Per-diem Expenses

JC notes that the possibility of per-diem expenses should be based on the funding body. RK notes that Accounts has said only US funding might be eligible for per-diem expenses, and that the university has regulations regarding travel expenses, requiring receipts. DT asks whether there is somewhere we can push the issue to, for example CUSU/GU. JC says to be careful since per diems can end up being too low. MG and JC both suggest that not enough people know that filling out multiple partial expense forms for the same trip is allowed, which can ease the burden of holding onto receipts.

Action: VI to add a note about multiple partial expense forms to the Unofficial PhD Guide.

DT mentions that another tedious aspect of expenses is that reimbursements come as cheques rather than bank drafts or other methods. JC notes that there is no way around using cheques, because people claiming expenses are categorised as suppliers rather than employees. To be changed it would need to be raised at the university level.

Action: DT to raise the issues of per-diems and cheques at CUSU/GU.

6. Payment for Supervising and Tax

DT is worried people who supervise/demonstrate may be paying tax that they do not need to. AR and LG note that CamCORS takes National Insurance Numbers in order to ensure that you do *not* pay national insurance. AR states that if you earn under the threshold of £9000, you do not have to do anything. AR also notes that the CL is an outlier department for having so many PhD students supervising, since it is usually done by university teaching officers.

DT mentions that another tedious aspect of supervising/demonstrating is the need to fill out the same forms every year. MG reminds us that information can change and needs to be periodically resampled. DT is also slightly annoyed that each college sends a separate letter with details about remuneration, but we realise that the chances of that changing are very slim.

Action: AR to raise with Researcher Development that supervision training must give some

official advice on taxation.

7. CL Bootcamp: LaTeX

DT suggests skill-sharing about using LaTeX would be a good topic to try the “CL Bootcamp” idea out. AR asks whether bootcamps are timetable-able. LG suggests Wednesday afternoon 4pm (after the Wednesday Seminar). AR suggests making a talks.cam list for CL Bootcamps. All agree that they would need to be more structured than just discussion, that is, someone needs to prepare material to present. RK asks about whether topics will be repeated or recorded, and whether notes and materials could be made available.

Action: SMB to organise CL Bootcamps (temporarily), namely, to set up the talks.cam list and do the room booking. AR to help.

8. Beer Glasses

VI: Beer glasses from the common kitchen, and as used for Happy Hour, are disappearing. DT suggests getting glasses for each group. AR is not happy about having to spend money on spoons and glasses. JC suggests asking for sponsored glasses instead. VI says from the Supporters’ Club, for example. MG points out that this could be more useful than all the other stuff they usually try to give us. AR instructs MG to ask Microsoft about that, and VI to ask Google (since they had internships there) (VI strongly suspects Google will not do it).

Action: VI to talk to Jan Samols to make sure the Supporters’ Club knows what sponsored stuff would be useful (namely, glasses).

Action: AR to email and ask Red Gate about this.

9. Football Table

RK (carrying forward an old request from someone in PLS) suggests that the Table Football Table be given a sign indicating that it was purchased by the GSF, and that we procure new balls and rod lubricant to keep it in top shape. AR says he would struggle to justify the spend. LG suggests asking Ian Burton-Palmer about the sign. MG notes that it is just a matter of printing and laminating a piece of paper. AR suggests asking Mike Gordon about the Industry Fund, which may be a good source of money for things like this.

Action: MG to put the sign up.

Action: RK to get quotes and ask Mike Gordon about purchasing, then follow up with AR.

10. Departmental announcements (LG)

Students can make many changes to their status (for example, for intermission) through their Self-Service webpage (as opposed to by using paper forms).

There will be an event given by the Careers Service for research students, mainly PhD students in their 3rd or 4th year, on November 14th.

We need a nominee representative for the SSCoF. DT nominates himself and is unanimously

approved.

The School of Technology came out all right in the Cambridge Research Experience Survey, but not as good as the Arts and Humanities. Possibly because we are bunched together with the business school and others. Issues arising from the survey include: students don't know that their supervisors' reports are available through Self-Service; and students don't know about the Code of Practice, which is linked from the CL's PhD resources webpage. (Of course, it is possible that the majority of CL students simply don't need these things.)

11. Staff Student Consultative Forum (DT)

DT: Not a lot happened over the summer. LG: We need more Part II Supervisors desperately. JC: People in other departments may be quite capable of supervising here. AR: Timetabling has been part of the problem. DT: Are there people who are not doing any supervising? MG: Often supervising is sold as "you earn so much money", but that is not always true when the hours are totalled; perhaps it should be sold with the focus on "you'll get to do some teaching".

12. Researcher Development (AR)

Not many updates over the summer.

Microsoft Research Summer School went far over budget. Will need to investigate why and what to do about this.

Researcher Development continues as usual this year.

13. Student Feedback

(a) Rainbow (VI)

Nothing to report.

(b) PLS (RK)

Nothing to report.

(c) SRG (MG)

There have been many reports of bicycle theft, in particular of parts (for example, brakes) getting robbed after 8pm. AR: Also, the staff bike shed is over-full. JC suggests we just need a motion sensor that turns on lights, and possibly surveillance tape. Enclosing the bike area is also a possible solution.

Action: MG to put these suggestions in an email to Building Services, Caroline Stewart, and the GSF.

(d) CompArch (AK)

- i. People would like to know where the results of the survey of happiness with sys-admin services are published.

Action: AR to find them.

- ii. LP Can the RT ticketing software be updated?

Action: AK to raise a ticket about this, and include the GSF.

JC notes that Graham Titmus is keen to know what people want and is going around asking.

- iii. The postage (franking) machine balance limit is too low (£3). LG: the issue is not wanting it to run out. AR suggests that a different limit formula could be used.

Action: AK to email Caroline Stewart about this.

(e) NLIP (SMB)

- i. Some people would like to know how to increase the ventilation in their office space. Is there an official solution? DT says to ask Building Services, who can install ventilation squares in the floor. AR notes that an unofficial solution might involve asking your supervisor.
- ii. The NLIP kitchen cutlery is disappearing from the dishwasher. DT suggests to buy more and expense it through the GSF. As per previous GSF discussion, buying distinctively styled cutlery is recommended.

(f) DTG (DT)

- i. People sometimes have avoidable accidents when cycling to the department. Should we perhaps put on a road safety event? AR suggests adding cycle safety to the Induction Day schedule.
- ii. Some emails about DreamSpark went around that look like phishing, but actually are not. Microsoft has been informed.
- iii. Some people have asked about what happens to 4th year PhD students, and the relevant information about this date cutoff.

Action: LG to add more information about the 4th year to the PhD Resources web page.

14. Date of Next Meeting

Near End of Term: Early December.

Want time to organise the Christmas Quiz.

15. Other Business

- i. New Representatives for GSF Required.

A new representative is required for the Computer Architecture group, to replace AK.

SMB is on the lookout for a replacement representative for the Natural Language and Information Processing group too.

ii. Research Students' Lecture Course.

LG: A course on "How to Lecture" for PhD students, to be run by AR, is planned for Easter Term. VI asks whether this could be covered in the existing Research Skills course. LG replies that there is too much material in that course already.

Action: LG to send out a recruitment email for the Lecture Course.

iii. Athena Swan Awards.

RK asks whether the CL is working towards getting some Athena Swan Awards, and what can be done to help. LG says work is in progress, primarily by the people behind women@CL.

iv. Google Fellowships.

MG notes that there are only a few Google Fellowships available to the university. JC says Mike Gordon is going to coordinate some process by which CL members might make applications. Students wanting to make an application should talk to their supervisor first.

v. Christmas Quiz.

We shall have another Christmas Quiz event this year, run by VI.

vi. Steve Hand Leaving.

Steve Hand is leaving, with a leaving party on November 8. JC observes that he has current students, and we might need to think about the impact on students of supervisors leaving in general.

Action: MG to check whether and how the affected students are coping.

vii. New Filer is Up.

The new filer is available, with a new default quota of 50GB. Also, Big Disc has got bigger.