



A meeting of the Graduate Students' Forum was held 21st November 2018, 13:00, in FS09 at the Computer Laboratory, William Gates Building

Present:

- Dr Andy Rice, Researcher Development Coordinator
- Ms Lise Gough, Graduate Education Manager
- Marketa Green, RSP Organiser
- Andrej Ivaskovic, PLS
- Boty Dimanov, AI
- Aida Miralaei, Comp Arch
- Ilia Shumailov, Security
- Kevin Heffernan, NLIP
- Jovan Powar, DTG
- Kritika D'Silva, SRG
- Nikhil Churamani, Rainbow
- Indigo Orton, MPhil in ACS
- Mariana Marasoiu, Women@CL

Apologies: None

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2018 were approved.

2. Matters arising from last meeting

(a) Overleaf subscription

LMG reported that only those users who had Pro accounts during the 1-year trial now get a free account unless they choose to pay (ref Richard Boughey from UIS). Some of the student reps pointed out that the free version does not suffice: ACR suggested to run a survey using the teaching admin mailing list to prove this - **JP** will run a survey of PhD students to gauge interest. This will then serve as a basis for a potential funding application.

Action: JP

(b) Temperature in rooms SW01 and SW02

The temperature has been fixed, concerned students are happy with the updates.

(c) Printing problems in SW02

The department is aware of these issues and has posted substantial signage in the room for troubleshooting.

(d) Microwave in the first-floor kitchen

ACR: a request for a new microwave was not approved. Most of the student reps agreed that one microwave is not sufficient as there are long queues on a daily basis. ACR suggested to put another request in, this time to the Building Services Committee and to discuss this properly.

Action: ACR

(e) Childcare facilities in the CL

Some members of the computer lab would like childcare facilities present in the computer lab for their young children. There have been a number of proposals regarding how this could work on a volunteer basis. LMG reported that this is currently under discussion between Dr A Madhavapeddy (Women@CL Academic chair and a member of the Equality and Diversity Committee, previously known as the Athena SWAN Panel) and the Department secretary Caroline Stewart.

Action: AM / CS

(f) New cues for the pool table

New cues for the pool table would be appreciated, a new surface for the table would be particularly useful (estimated cost around £400 which is beyond our budget but ok for new cues). **JS** is looking for sponsorship for the games room. ACR commented that the games room gets equally used by undergrads – could LIF or similar fund cover (some of) the cost?

Action: LMG

(g) Cleaning floor boxes

Floor boxes will not be cleaned by the facility cleaners. Members of the computer lab will have to clean the floor boxes themselves but must take reasonable care.

(h) Regulations on keeping old machines

There are some offices which are cluttered with old machines causing headaches for some occupants. Department cannot force removal of old machines, especially if they are privately owned: this is a group level issue and group members need to give permission to remove old machines – regular clear outs might be a good idea. Students should talk to their supervisors to arrange this. The department can support this by providing a skip to dump the machines in.

If the machines are not privately owned, students should send a notification email to sys-admin@cl.cam.ac.uk who should remove any redundant IT equipment.

(i) Security seminars overlapping with RSP seminars

MG reported that there is only one such conflict this academic year, and it will only affect the CPGS students because the session is a core unit. However, we do heavily depend on the restrictions of the MPhil in ACS timetable and as such some years might not be as accommodating as others.

3. Reports from research group representatives**1. AI**

1. More computing resources requested. Currently supervisors have to ask sponsors directly for computing resources for students.

see item 4 (a) below for more notes on the topic

2. SRG

1. Better chairs and/or standing desks for student offices. Some existing desks have the ability to adjust height, Building Services can help with this process. If different chairs /

tables are needed due to medical problems, students should contact university's Disability Resource Centre (DRC) – please note a medical certificate will be required to support the claim.

2. A first aid freezer for storing medical ice packs would be useful for some members of the computer lab. LMG to check with the Department secretary whether there is one available in the First Aid room. **Action: LMG**
3. Mindfulness courses and yoga classes. Yoga classes: go to the sports centre in West Cambridge. Mindfulness: BT to find a room with reception for weekly mindfulness classes. Suggested slot: 8am or 9am on Mondays. **Action: BD / ACR**
3. Rainbow
 1. Nothing to report.
4. PLS
 1. Some student supervisors currently have to generate exercises for their students. This should be handled by the lecturers. Supervisors should report to the teaching committee when a course does not have standard exercises.
 2. A table tennis table would be nice. Has been previously considered. LMG to ask HH how this effort concluded. **Action: LMG**
5. MPhil in ACS
 1. Students are confused about how late penalties are calculated. GEO will email all students. **Actioned: MG**
 2. Not all NLP projects are listed on the cst.cam.ac.uk website. **Actioned: JLR**
 3. Mentioned a need for a 'central place' where all information about the MPhil in ACS is held. MG to email all students. **Actioned: MG**
 4. Regarding MPhil, AI suggested it would be useful to have more guidance on what is and is not a self-proposed project.
6. Security
 1. Asked about PhD students co-supervising MPhil projects: Yes but will need a UTO to overlook the project.
 2. SSCoF elections – undergrads were given reasonable notice of elections, PhD students were given 4 hours' notice before close of elections. Many did not get to vote as a result. Emails to those responsible were not returned. LMG to talk to DP in the Teaching Admin office who were handling the elections. **Action: LMG**
 3. Some Wednesday seminars not directly related to computer science – IS to get specific feedback from concerned students and pass it on to the Wednesday seminar organiser. **Action: IS**
7. Women@CL
 1. Some games in the games room are broken (such as broken chess pieces). ACR suggested talking to the Department secretary about the state of the games room as undergrads have been using it as well. Suggestion was also put forward to lock the games in a cabinet which could only be open with a university student card. In the meantime, students can use first-floor common room as fewer people have access and is thus in better condition. **Action: LMG**
8. Comp Arch
 1. Nothing to report.
9. NLIP
 1. Some requests for computer screens upgrade: There is, unfortunately, no scope for upgrading existing student screens. However, if any student has physical issues with their workspace they should let building services, sys admin, or the relevant support group know.

10. DTG

1. The air conditioning and heating system was broken for some corridors over the summer. This caused the environment to be so unpleasant that some students stopped coming into the lab. LMG to ask IBP to send all building users an update on the current situation, and whether the heating has now been fixed.

Action: LMG

4. Matters for discussion**(a) Computing resources**

Due to a growing number of people doing ML, there is a bigger demand for resources. In order to gain an access to a GPU, email Chris Hadley – each request must be supported by the student's supervisor. There are several GPUs available: NLP group have recently acquired machines called 'Bubbles'. Another GPU source is 'Cloud' – apply to Google / Amazon etc to gain access. These are relatively low-cost and good for a short-term projects, although likely to have restrictions. One particular issue with the Wilks2 cluster is the lack of interactive computing support. This is a generally difficult problem without a simple solution. Many PhD students are researching machine learning but their workspaces do not have GPUs. It was suggested to ask IT strategy if they could provide new machines with GPU already included. Note: New students seem to be able to request this as long as they complete an appropriate form.

Actions:

1. Computing resources should be written into grants.
2. Apply to cloud services for grants, if research permits.
 - o LMG to talk to IT strategy for PhD machines' GPUs and approach for interactive usage.
3. Students should talk to their supervisor regarding extra funding for hardware if required.
4. Computing resources to be a standing item for future GSF meetings.

Action: LMG

(b) Departmental announcements

a) Announcements

Wiseman awards in 2017-18 given to the following GSF members:

Mark Wassell, former PLS rep

Botty Dimanov, AI

Kevin Heffernan, NLIP

Stephan Kollman, former DTG rep

Krittika D'Silva, SRG

Mariana Marasoiu, Women@CL

b) Outreach

- a. IS to produce a video interviewing people around the computer lab.
- b. The committee is looking for graduates willing to go out and talk to students in UK primary schools. Contact Cambridge Admissions Office to find out what local schools are in the area. MM to send an email to PHD students regarding this outreach initiative.

Action: MM

(c) Christmas / New Year's quiz

Quiz to be held on one Thursday towards the end of January, 17/1 or 24/1. Volunteers: JP, NC, AI to write and mark the quiz. KDS volunteered to be the quiz master.

Still needs to be organised: Setting up, Catering (burritos from Nana Mexico - MG), Drinks (Happy hour crew – currently down to 2 people, volunteers welcome)

Action: Everyone

(d) Volunteers for One-minute madness

The lab needs volunteers for one minute madness - LMG encouraged everyone to ask in their cohorts. Students can ask Botty Dimanov for pointers.

Action: Everyone

5. Any other business

a) Mentors for CPGS students starting in January

Volunteers requested for PhD mentoring. Students to register their interest in being mentors with Lise Gough.

Action: Everyone

6. Date and time of next meeting(s)

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 20th of February 2019.