

Minutes of the 50th meeting of the UK Computing Research Executive Committee on Tuesday 5 March 2019 at 11:00 at BCS, 5 Southampton Street, London WC2E 7HA

PRESENT

Jane Hillston (Chair)
Cliff Jones
Jie Xu

Chris Johnson
Ann Blandford

Luc Moreau
Derek McAuley

BY INVITATION

Edmund Robinson (CPHC)
Luke Ong (IE)

Samantha Francis (EPSRC)
Bill Mitchell (BCS)

Rhys Perry (EPSRC)
Ahmed Kotb (IET)

IN ATTENDANCE

Maxine Leslie (BCS)

APOLOGIES

David De Roure
James Davenport/Tom Crick (BCS Academy)

m.c. schraefel

Amber Clabburn (IET)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed the meeting participants and introductions were made. Apologies for absence were received as above.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 30 October 2018 were APPROVED for transfer to the UKCRC website. **ACTION: Secretariat/A Clabburn**

The Chair also extended Members' formal thanks to Anna Angus-Smyth (EPSRC) for the great work she had done in supporting the Executive Committee.

3. MATTERS ARISING

UKCRCEC meeting held on 30 October 2018

Item 6.1 EPSRC contact list: E Robinson reported that he had circulated information on EPSRC contacts to the CPHC Members' list and the Chair undertook to do the same for UKCRC [*post meeting note: action completed by R Perry*]

Item 7.4 Suffrage Science Scheme: A Blandford reported that she had attempted to follow up on this action and undertook to try again. In addition, S Francis indicated that she had not been able to find anyone at EPSRC that had been involved.

Item 9 Ethics/Machine Learning annual event: D McAuley informed Members that he was due to meet Bernd Stahl from ORBIT the next day to talk about the annual event.

UKCRCEC meeting held on 13 March 2018

Item 3 Deadlines for calls: This action related to writing a letter about the discriminatory nature of short deadlines for calls. At the last meeting it had been agreed that it was not an optimal time for doing this at the moment but it was further agreed that this should be retained on the action list as a 'Deferred' action to ensure it was addressed when the time was right.

Item 7 IET events: A Kotb re-iterated that IET events were detailed on their website on the Events tab <https://events.theiet.org/>.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

4.1 Nomination process for CS Fellows to CS0

The Chair reported that the establishment of a Sectional Committee for Computer Science was a good step forward. Steve Furber as Chair was keen to secure a good number of nominations and preferably for it to be oversubscribed to justify a separate process to the Royal Society. In 2018 a UKCRC Working Group had been set up to deal with nominations, some of which were ready and other for future years. The validity of RS nominations is 7 years. The Chair asked Members if they would recommend using the same process this year and in future and whether there should be a standing committee or a more ad hoc working group. Members felt that, as was the case with REF, an ad hoc working group would ensure there was no issue of conflict if members of the group were nominated themselves. It was confirmed that such a group could make nominations that were not UKCRC Members.

It was agreed that the process should be given better visibility and listed as a UKCRC activity on the website. The Chair undertook to liaise with the Secretariat on such a listing. **ACTION: Chair/Secretariat**

Steve Furber had valued the input that UKCRC had given. 6-7 had been nominated with 5 on the 'watch list' and the new ideas had been welcomed. The results of the election process will be announced in June of each year, almost a year after nomination. The deadline for nominations was the end of September. The Chair would welcome suggestions for nominations and/or volunteers to be part of the Working Group and would be approaching contacts in the next month or so. **ACTION: Chair/Members**

4.2 New call for UKCRC Member nominations

The Chair reported that new nominations had dried up and felt that there was a general problem in that Members are not engaged which might be due to the lack of interest in activities. It was crucial to ensure that there was a diverse and representative membership. A concerted effort from the Executive Committee to invite colleagues would help, in particular women and/or colleagues from abroad. Members undertook to seek to invite one colleague to be nominated as a UKCRC Member in advance of the next EC meeting in June. **ACTION: Members**

4.2.1 Informatics Europe: (also see item 7.2 below). L Ong tabled three recent Informatics Europe reports for Members' review as exemplars of Informatics Europe activities and in order to consider possible joint UKCRC/IE future activities (reports are published on the IE website at <http://www.informatics-europe.org/publications.html>). He explained that IE seeks to represent informatics across Europe. Over 130 university department/institutions are members of IE including research institutes, national institutes and also membership bodies such as CPHC. The mission of

IE was to have a strong voice, in the same way that Computing Research Association (CRA) has in the US. There is an Executive Board of 16 members from a wide mix of countries. There were plans early on to include representation from leading research Computer Science departments but now IE wanted to give a voice to East European countries too.

There were five types of membership depending on department size and national income. IE holds an Annual European Computer Science Summit (ECSS) which in 2019 will be in Rome. Its aim, similar to that of Snowbird, is to look at strategic issues and emerging trends. This year's theme will be *Social Responsibility of Informatics*. In addition there are six working groups focussing on a variety of topics. These reach out to IE members to shape the future of informatics and research. The output takes the form of reports.

J Hillston reported that the IE Chair, Enrico Nardelli, in organising a workshop on *Informatics for All*, had reached out to UKCRC about sending a representative to the workshop. As UKCRC is not really set up for this, it was passed to BCS. IE is an organisation for departments whereas UKCRC is for individuals. As such, the most appropriate role for UKCRC could be in passing on information. Members were invited to comment.

There was no financial basis for UKCRC to join IE but if there were Working Groups with non-IE membership, perhaps UKCRC could contribute. There was a monthly newsletter for IE Members from which L Ong could provide regular news digests to the UKCRC Membership via JISCMail. Exec Committee Members felt this would be seen very positively if it came from L Ong rather than through the UKCRC Chair or Secretariat. L Ong undertook to provide news digests for UKCRC Members and the Chair thanked him for his interesting input. **ACTION: L Ong**

4.2.2 CRA Snowbird Conference: The Chair introduced the Snowbird Conference report which had been jointly written with C Johnson. The Conference had been interesting but depressing with a lot of problems being raised but few solutions. C Johnson indicated that this links to the value of membership and that communication is essence for this. He undertook to circulate an edited version of this report to the UKCRC membership. In addition, other reports may be of interest to the membership.

ACTION: C Johnson

4.3 Future Activities

The Chair indicated that a few future activities were discussed at the AGM in December, which could again be a function of the value of UKCRC. The consultations were visible and the EPSRC liaison, although less visible, was very valuable. It was suggested that short reports could be produced, whilst ensuring that these were complementary to the activities/reports being produced by CPHC. This should be mitigated against by the continuous dialogue, cross-meeting representation and annual joint meetings.

Currently the membership will only see Executive Committee minutes once they are approved at the subsequent meeting at which time they are posted to the website. It would be good to have a digest or headlines to go out to the membership. S Francis additionally suggested that she and R Perry could compile a summary of points made during the EPSRC update to go out with the minutes. **ACTION: S Francis/R Perry**

5. CONSULTATIONS & SUBMISSIONS

RECEIVED and NOTED the report.

C Johnson reported that consultation and submission activity had been really busy; however it was disappointing that the membership was not engaging more on consultations, occasionally supplying feedback that had not been requested. The UKCRC contribution to consultations is often close to zero, although a couple of Members give really good quality feedback.

C Johnson had recently given evidence to the Commons Select Science and Technology Committee which had resulted in contact with Shadow Cabinet as well as Cabinet Ministers.

D McAuley suggested putting out a short note to the membership on how to respond to consultations eg, a short tutorial on how to submit evidence. There are some examples of this but not in a Computer Science context. Committee Members agreed that it was really important to comment as consultations at the moment will shape the industry and it was key to ensure that the UKCRC membership was aware of this. It was suggested that a summary of consultations could be circulated to Members and that way the enquiries could be threaded together. *[Post meeting note: action complete]*

B Mitchell was keen to ensure that responses were co-ordinated, not just with BCS and the IET but also with the RAEng. C Johnson agreed and indicated that responses were often joint with BCS, CPHC and with the RAEng (Jon Crowcroft), an example being Brexit reports from the RAEng.

6. RESEARCH FUNDING AND POLICY

6.1 EPSRC Update [Samantha Francis/Rhys Perry – verbal]

EPSRC representatives reported on the Strategic Delivery Plan, changes in the EPSRC team and coming events. See Appendix for further details.

6.2 Network Proposal [Derek McAuley – verbal]

D McAuley introduced this item by reminding Members of the progress at the last meeting. A workshop to facilitate this would need approximately £5-6k of funding, but this would be too small an amount to necessitate a formal bid. It had been agreed that discussions with EPSRC about funding this would be best arranged on an ad hoc basis. S Francis agreed, as EPSRC would not necessarily be able to commit to it every year. There was a case to hold a workshop this year on an area such as Big Ideas. There was a SAT meeting in the week following the EC meeting and S Francis undertook to raise it then and get back to D McAuley. **ACTION: S Francis**

The event last year had been successful and D McAuley indicated that he was happy for Nottingham to host it again but that it might be better for it to be held at a different venue with a different leader this year.

The Chair was speaking at the CPHC Conference at the end of April and undertook to promote the workshop then. S Francis suggested June as a good time to fit in with the Strategic Delivery Plan and spending review. C Johnson suggested it would be important to ensure that attendees are clear about the next step when leaving the meeting and that following up with a telephone conference to sustain this would help.

In terms of a title for the workshop, Members preferred Big Ideas to Grand Challenges and were keen to ensure that there were not too many mission objectives that might

put off early career colleagues. S Francis suggested thinking ahead 2-3 years. E Robinson informed Members that Sally Fincher's idea of assisting one workshop, and then leading the next was working well. The Chair undertook to check room availability at the University of Edinburgh and liaise with D McAuley and C Johnson on the arrangements for running it. **ACTION: Chair/D McAuley/C Johnson**

7. REPORTS

7.1 Membership Panel *[also see Chair's report above]*

ML reported that the only Panel Member whose term of office expires in March 2019 was Brian Randell, who had been co-opted by UKCRC in August 2017. Brian had agreed to his continued co-option up until March 2020. See item 4.2 above about new nominations.

7.2 International Matters [Luke Ong (IE) – verbal]*[also see Item 4 above]*

In addition to the discussion above, L Ong indicated that the IE work plan builds on two Royal Society reports and a survey in 2017 about state of computing education in the UK. This was focussed not just HE but on schools too. A Workshop was delivered in Brussels in February with 50 people invited. Five key challenges were identified and a follow up meeting had been organised. This was an example of an IE consultation activity and there were usually 5-6 consultation groups covering relevant areas. L Ong informed Members that he was happy to circulate this type of information and, in particular, calls for participation.

7.3 CPHC [Edmund Robinson – verbal]

E Robinson indicated that preparations were continuing for the Conference on 29/30 April at Middlesex University and he would be happy to answer any questions on this from Exec Committee Members.

The CPHC Workshop programme was continuing following the first iteration of 'A Chair in 10 Years' in Sheffield for early career academics, focussed on women and led by Simon Thompson (Kent). E Robinson had assisted Simon with a view to leading the next iteration in Edinburgh in May 2019. The participants provided very positive feedback and have continued communicating via social media channels. In addition the first iteration of 'North of 300' was held at QMUL in January. This had been more exploratory than the previous workshop and a lot had been learned about concerns when dealing with large cohorts and the differing approaches of HE institutions in using TAs. There was no report output expected but a brief is planned for the next set of iterations.

S Francis was interested in attending the spring workshop and would liaise directly with E Robinson on this.

7.4 BCS Academy [Bill Mitchell – verbal]

B Mitchell indicated that the lecture by the winner of the 2018 Lovelace Medal had been delivered the night before the meeting. The new UK Cyber Security Council was due to take over the Cyber Body of Knowledge work. This had been very contentious so far but it was hoped that the Council would harmonise activities and views across a wider spread of industry and education. Pathways in CPD and qualifications were also being explored.

The consultation on the Office for AI was getting a good response. The next stage was to look at how it can be scaled up following its launch. There was a need to

support IT professionals in AI and ethics, and advice about this was currently very confusing and contradictory. Discussions were being held with Roger Taylor and DCMS on how to do something practical in addressing this. There was concern that there was an emphasis on the philosophical aspects of ethics rather than the practicalities; it would be good to have more specific guidance on how to interpret the rules and legislation on this. D McAuley offered to liaise with B Mitchell on ethics and cyber security.

It was uncertain where UKCRC could fit into the debate but B Mitchell was keen to capture all comments. One suggestion for each Member of the Executive Committee to cover a particular area (eg, ethics). Members undertook to feed back to BCS on how UKCRC could help with the cyber security consultation. **ACTION: Members**

B Mitchell further reported on the new National Centre for Computing Education (NCCE) which was now starting to build momentum, training 8,000 teachers through CPD and active recruitment of hubs within secondary schools.

For the action from the last meeting on EC UKCRC role gaps, the Chair undertook to circulate information to Members in advance of the next meeting when it would be an agenda item. **ACTION: Chair/C Jones/Secretariat**

7.5 IET [Ahmed Kotb – verbal]

A Kotb reported that the brand change, including a new website, had now been launched with a separate section on Impact & Society. For Applied Visualisation a third annual event had been held which had been very successful, producing a 10-12 page insight report as a result. There was a community for comments/sharing views designed for IET and non-IET Members which included a one-minute video.

The next step for the Steve Schneider working group was to look at the technical and societal focusses at a roundtable in the summer. A Kotb indicated that he could share details with Members who were interested. There was a short video on this as well and would be a journal issue going forward.

For the 5G consultations, there were two to Ofcom and one to DCMS, which had been pulled together by volunteers and details would be available on the website after the consultation closes.

7.6 CRA Snowbird Conference [See Item 4 Chair's Report above.]

8. UKCRC EC 2020 Meeting Dates

RECEIVED and NOTED the meeting dates.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of any other business and the Chair thanked Members and closed the meeting at 13:04.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019

The next EC meeting would be held at the IET offices, Savoy Place on Tuesday 4 June 2019 (see below for other dates) and the 2019 AGM on Friday 6 December at 14:00 – virtual meeting.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2019 *Commencing 11:00 unless otherwise stated*
Tuesday 4 June – IET Offices, London
***Tuesday 29 October – BCS Offices, London**

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR 2019
Friday 6 December at 14:00 – virtual meeting

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2020 *Commencing 11:00 unless otherwise stated*

Tuesday 10 March – IET Offices, London
***Tuesday 30 June – BCS Offices, London**
Tuesday 27 October – IET Offices, London

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING FOR 2020
Friday 4 December at 14:00 – virtual meeting

*Co-located with the CPHC Committee meeting to be held in the afternoon. Opportunities to network will be available over lunch at 1pm.

NB: BCS and IET rooms subject to availability

EPSRC Briefing for UKCRC

05/03/2019

Strategic Delivery Plan

All Councils within UKRI will have a strategic delivery plan which will contribute to UKRI's overall strategy. Last year we held a number of engagement activities e.g. regional workshops to help us gather input and evidence. We have built on that input and have developed a priority framework. Publication and launch is scheduled for early summer.

Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund

The shortlist of challenges for the third wave has been selected and the challenges being taken forward to the final approval stage have been announced. For more information on the shortlisted challenge please see the following blog from Mike Biddle of Innovate UK:

<https://innovateuk.blog.gov.uk/2019/02/05/industrial-strategy-challenge-fund-wave-3-shortlist/>

ICT Programme Grants

In ICT we will be moving from two programme grant interview panels a year to one. We will be combining the two panels together and therefore maintaining the proportion of funding on programme grants. We currently fund between 2-3 programme grants a year. This change is being made to address varying demand and subsequent success rates between interview panels. This change will facilitate ICT theme to batch and tension all programme grant applications at a single panel enabling effective decision making and ensuring EPSRC are supporting the highest quality programme grants.

Centres for Doctoral Training

EPSRC CDTs: 75 CDTs have been supported, with a total investment from EPSRC of £446m. The CDTs are spread across 31 lead research organisations though 48 universities are involved in the CDT partnerships overall. 1,400 project partners are involved with the funded CDTs and there is a total of £508m leverage investment. We expect approximately 4600 students to be supported through these centres.

UKRI AI CDTs: There has been 16 UKRI AI CDTs funded with a total investment of £101m from UKRI. The CDTs are spread across 14 lead research organisations though 18 are involved in the CDT partnerships overall. We expect approximately 985 students to be supported through these centres.

Future Activities

- Following the Future Challenges in Software Engineering workshop last summer, the ICT theme is planning to run a call in this area this year. The call will open in late spring/early summer with up to £4 million available.
- The ICT theme is also currently planning a call in Natural Language Processing this financial year.
- EPSRC expects to put funding of around €1M into the CHIST-ERA scheme in the topic 'Explainable Machine Learning-based AI'. There will be a call development workshop in June 2019 for the call to be launched October 2019. (For more info.: <http://www.chistera.eu/>).
- The call for outline proposals for round 3 of the UKRI Future Leader Fellowships will open on 2nd April 2019.

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