

Minutes of the 54th meeting of the UK Computing Research Executive Committee on Tuesday 30 June 2020 at 11:00 held online

PRESENT

Jane Hillston (Chair)
*David De Roure
Cliff Jones

Chris Johnson
*David Hutchison
m.c. schraefel

Ann Blandford
*Luc Moreau
Jie Xu

BY INVITATION

#Edmund Robinson (CPHC)
Rhys Perry (EPSRC)

James Dracott (EPSRC)
Andrew Rylah (IET)

Alastair Irons (BCS Academy)

IN ATTENDANCE

Maxine Leslie (BCS)

APOLOGIES

Ahmed Kotb (IET alternate)

Bill Mitchell (BCS alternate)

Jessica Bonham (EPSRC alternate)

*Executive Committee meeting only

#Joint UKCRC/CPHC meeting only

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed Members and in particular, Alastair Irons who would be representing the BCS Academy. Apologies were received as above.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10 March 2020 were APPROVED and are now ready for transfer to the UKCRC website.

ACTION: Secretariat/A Rylah

3. MATTERS ARISING

UKCRC meeting held on 10 March 2020

Item 4: Chairs report RS Sectional Committee nominations – The Chair reported that she had not heard from any Exec Committee Members volunteering to take over the Working Group chairship this year but Steve Furber had not been in contact and the Working Group not convened. Members agreed to put this on hold for this year, unless there was anyone keen to take it on. The Chair undertook to liaise with Steve Furber about picking this back up in 2021.

ACTION: Chair

Item 7.6 IET report – the action on circulating information on the 2021 IET "Internet of Things" conference being planned with the PETRAS National Centre of Excellence had been put back by the Covid situation. D De Roure reported that the PETRAS 2021 conference remains under discussion, but in the meantime PETRAS and the IET are running a Webinar series, one of which was on the date of this meeting with the next one being COVID-19: Lessons learnt with an international lens on 30 July.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

RECEIVED and NOTED the report. The Chair reported that for the REF SP11 Subpanel nomination call, which Morris Sloman chairs for UKCRC, the membership includes Exec Committee members Chris Johnson, Luc Moreau and the UKCRC Chair and that the invitation to become nominators or impact assessors had been circulated to UKCRC and CPHC Members the previous week.

Following the meeting with BCS to discuss interacting with, and influencing government, there had been no further progress although it was acknowledged that this could be due to a combination of the Covid situation and misunderstanding. A Irons undertook to follow up with BCS colleagues on this. **ACTION: A Irons/B Mitchell**

Some UKCRC Members had met with the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) to discuss the offer by UKCRC in response to an appeal to get more academic advice into government. After some discussion it was agreed that a directory of expertise available within UKCRC is built by circulating a call to Members to gauge their willingness to engage with government and asking for specific areas of expertise based on the ACM classifications. *[Post-meeting note: action complete]*

The list could then be published on UKCRC website and would provide a resource for assembling panels and providing advice/evidence to government and also raise the profile of Members, perhaps name-checking those that have contributed to responses.

ACTION: M Leslie/A Rylah

Once a directory is established, the Chair undertook to contact Anthony Finkelstein to offer a presentation at a CSA network meeting. **ACTION: Chair**

4.1 Potential UKCRC members from industry *(this item was taken at the start of item 4)*

The Chair reported that following circulation of the request for recommendations for industrialists that could be approached to apply for UKCRC membership, colleagues had suggested company names rather than contacts.

A query was raised about the appropriateness of approaching Huawei given the current sensitivities, but it was agreed that members join UKCRC as individuals and not representatives of their employer, so there should not be an issue, particularly in the context of promotion of diversity. It was noted that there is a serious amount of research being undertaken in industry, so it would be good to include companies with active research activities. It will also be crucial to encourage women applicants.

It was agreed that a document be shared to request names of researchers within the suggested companies to approach and M Leslie undertook to set this up and circulate the link in mid-August by which time the Membership Panel Chair should have been appointed. **ACTION: M Leslie**

5. CONSULTATIONS & SUBMISSIONS

[Taken after item 7.6 IET report]

RECEIVED and NOTED the report. C Johnson reported that there had been a hiatus between the election in December and now, but he thanked Executive Committee Members for helpful feedback on the ARPA consultation, which had now been submitted.

6. RESEARCH FUNDING AND POLICY

6.1 EPSRC Update

[Taken after item 7]

Members RECEIVED and NOTED the [report](#), which could be circulated to the full UKCRC membership *[action complete]*.

D De Roure reported (via the chat) that the EPSRC International Centre to Centre research collaborations call is for existing research investments and includes programme grants, the deadline for outlines is 8 September 2020 and D De Roure is in touch with PETRAS.

7. REPORTS

7.1 Membership Panel

There was nothing to report. However, with the end of the term of office of the previous Chair Kevin Jones, the Panel is yet to appoint a new Chair and this has become urgent as at least one membership application has recently been received. A Blandford undertook to approach Nadia Berthouze to ask if she will be willing to become the Chair. *[Post-meeting note: Nadia has agreed to Chair the Panel, action now complete]*

7.2 Open Publishing Working Group

C Jones undertook to follow up on progress with Edwin Hancock, Chair of the UKCRC Computer Science Publication Working Group and check whether Erol Gelenbe had joined the Group. **ACTION: C Jones**

7.3 International Matters inc IE

J Xu undertook to keep Exec Members informed of future Informatics Europe activities, following the delay of planned meetings, and also to liaise with the Chair if he intends to attend physical meetings in the future. It was noted that the annual meeting, to be held in October, has been planned as an online meeting. A Irons reported that he would be representing BCS at the October meeting and was happy to report back to UKCRC on this. **ACTION: A Irons**

7.4 CPHC

m.c. schraefel reported that further 'Chair in 10 Years' workshops were to be delivered online. The CPHC Chair had written to contacts at Oriel College, Oxford about the Rhodes statue and a series of informal catch-ups were being planned using Zoom for Heads of Departments and Directors of Teaching, on various topics of interest. A further goal was to produce a seminar series in virtual space to look at what success looks like in getting women and members of the BAME community into Computer Science (also see [Item 10](#) below).

7.5 BCS Academy – what the BCS Academy does

A Irons indicated that at his first meeting as Chair, he had initiated the task of looking at what the BCS Academy does and would welcome the Executive Committee's views on what the relationship should look like. There would be a press release later in the week on the accreditation review to look at the value of accreditation from a student and university perspective. There is also a group looking at whether specific CPD is needed for new Computer Science lecturers, led by Alan Hayes of Bath. A Irons thanked those that had given feedback on this and how it might relate to the current structures such as

FHEA and BCS membership. Other workstreams are reviews of BCS's Seoul Accord and IFIP memberships and what BCS membership means for community and society. The work that BCS does within the National Centre for Computing Education (NCCE) is reported to both the Academy of Computing Board (ACB) and the Computing at School (CAS) Board, which includes interesting activity in the Covid/post-Covid environment.

A Blandford is the UKCRC representative on ACB, but struggled with working out the relationship as so many of the issues are at school level or to do with HE teaching and it was therefore unclear whether there was a link to research. A Irons agreed, noting that there had been drift from the original purpose, as it has been subsumed in the CAS agenda. It is hoped that ACB can revert back to its original principles. C Jones indicated that he had participated in the research group at the beginning, but then the schools agenda had swamped this. He suggested it would be good to do something for early career researchers, as this is an area that is not really covered by UKCRC. The Chair agreed and indicated that the workshops that she had run had shown that early career researchers were more enthusiastic to participate than UKCRC members, particularly in discussing networking, seeking and applying for research grants and future careers.

Members also made a plea for BCS to continue as the UK representative on IFIP as it has a useful role to play. C Jones undertook to put A Irons in touch with Mike Hinchey from the Irish Computer Society, who is the IFIP president. **ACTION: C Jones**

7.6 IET report including UKCRC website review

A Rylah introduced the previously circulated documents describing the proposed webpage build for the UKCRC website, indicating that he would like to progress this by the end of July for commissioning in August. Feedback would be welcomed from the Executive Committee. L Moreau had raised the question of including a page or entry point for viewing Exec Committee members with a biography attached, as discussed at the March 2020 meeting. Also, for the expertise listings discussed earlier, to have the facility to capture this information on the Member list. A Rylah asked for comments to be included in the draft and sent to him. It wasn't clear whether members will be able to make changes to their entries on the new website and A Rylah undertook to check this. **ACTION: A Rylah**

Members agreed that there did not appear to be a demand for a secure members' area. It was further agreed that the older material could be archived (but not the Grand Challenge content) and Members would let A Rylah know what specific content needed to be retained. M Leslie undertook to check whether it was possible for BCS to hold archived documents for UKCRC. *[Post meeting note: action complete – BCS to hold archived UKCRC documents]*

8. DATES OF 2021 MEETINGS

Members RECEIVED and NOTED the 2021 meeting dates. m.c. schraefel proposed trialling more online meetings into the future. It was agreed that Executive Committee meetings would be held online for the next year and the format reviewed at the June 2021 meeting.

ACTION: M Leslie

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of any other business and the meeting closed at 12:51.

10. UKCRC-CPHC COLLABORATIVE WORKING (CPHC Committee members in attendance for this item)

This item was chaired by K Miller as the CPHC Chair E Robinson, had an unreliable connection. Members were welcomed and suggestions were made about how both Committees could work more effectively together, perhaps through more themed or regular meetings. It would be good if UKCRC and CPHC could co-host or co-attend workshops, such as 'A Chair in 10 Years' or the seminar series which m.c. schraefel is planning (see [item 7.4](#) above).

Members discussed the various options and agreed the following three collaborative activities (initially to be delivered online):

1. A jointly promoted variant of the 'A Chair in 10 Years' workshop which is research themed. **ACTION: N Savage/J Hillston/E Robinson**
2. Seminar series on diversity and equity for CPHC and UKCRC members. **ACTION: m.c. schraefel/J Hillston/E Robinson**
3. Informal coffee table discussion under Chatham House rules targeted at those in specific roles: Heads of Department, Directors of Teaching and Directors of Research followed up by a further session on ethics, perhaps keeping the detail to a minimum to encourage a wide ranging discussion on points of specific interest. J Hillston and E Robinson to liaise on possible research theme. **ACTION: N Savage/J Hillston/E Robinson**

It would also be useful to think of the CPHC Conference (currently scheduled to be held on Wednesday 14 to Thursday 15 April 2021, following cancellation of the 2020 conference) in the context of a narrative of a series of activities designed to retain engagement throughout the year (eg, ethics).

J Dracott was keen for EPSRC to be (at least) observers at any events in the areas of diversity and equality, ethics or sovereign capabilities as these areas are high priority in UKRI/EPSRC and he would be interested to hear of examples.

ACTION: m.c. schraefel/J Hillston/E Robinson

E Robinson indicated that there were a number of HEIs creating MSc programmes in AI and developing material in ethics (QMUL being one) and suggested using this as a lever to spread the message across communities. It could be a topic for one of the coffee table discussions. He would look to liaise with J Dracott on this. **ACTION: E Robinson**

For consultations, J Hillston and E Robinson had been involved in a couple of meetings, one of which was with BCS. There is a will to work together; however there is now a need for concrete proposals on what and when it is appropriate to collaborate to avoid duplicating effort (also, see [item 4](#) above).

m.c. schraefel raised a question about whether CPHC and UKCRC should be unified rather than two different organisations, perhaps with subgroups to cover the different interests. Although not necessarily a conversation for now, it could be useful to reflect on whether a consortium approach, such as that used by ACM, would be more effective.

Following on from this, A Irons reminded Members that the original Terms of Reference of the BCS Academy of Computing Board was to act as a conduit for different communities in Computer Science. He is currently looking at a review of the BCS Academy, as mentioned in [item 7.5](#) above and would welcome the chance to broaden the discussion and invite comments from CPHC. S Fincher felt strongly that the Academy Board is a committee of BCS, not UKCRC or CPHC.

A Blandford indicated that this was something that UKCRC struggled with, certainly from an Executive Committee perspective, one of points that can be made is that UKCRC membership is based on individuals, whereas for CPHC it is chiefly the computing department that is the member. Also the link with the BCS Academy suffers some of the same questions. Perhaps a way forward might be to take specific actions that have been implemented and use these as a basis for reviewing the structural arrangement.

J Hillston indicated that although UKCRC does not hold an annual conference, it does hold specific workshops to think about challenges and opportunities in the prevailing situation (eg, Brexit, funding situation). UKCRC members tend to be more established, having a lower appetite for discussions, but there is usually a huge interest from the early career academics and it would be good to think of opportunities to create spaces for early careerists to speak and network with each other, which may be is an area that the BCS Academy could support.

ACTION: A Irons

K Miller thanked all participants and the meeting ended at 14:28.

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2020 *Commencing 11:00 unless otherwise stated*
Tuesday 27 October – Online

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

COMMITTEE MEETINGS FOR 2021 *Commencing 11:00 unless otherwise stated*

Tuesday 9 March – Online

***Tuesday 29 June – Online**

Tuesday 26 October – IET Offices, London (TBC)

AGM

Friday 3 December 2021 at 14:00 – Online

*To be held on the same day as the CPHC Committee meeting, held in the afternoon

NB: Physical meeting rooms subject to availability



EPSRC Update for UKCRC June 2020

UKRI Coronavirus Hub

In our online Coronavirus Hub we gather all the key information you may need about how we at UKRI are responding to the pandemic: <https://www.ukri.org/research/coronavirus/>

UKRI has funded projects to address the key challenges of coronavirus, from understanding how the disease spreads, its impact on our bodies and how to treat it to the widespread consequences that everyone is experiencing - from isolation, mental health and economic consequences. Our research is informing the policy decisions being made, helping to limit the outbreak to protect life and also to shape our recovery and rebuilding for the future.

UKRI's funding call for short-term projects addressing and mitigating the health, social, economic, cultural and environmental impacts of the COVID-19 outbreak remains open. The programme is under regular review and we will shortly be implementing changes to the application process so please check this site regularly before submitting an application:

<https://www.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/ukri-open-call-for-research-and-innovation-ideas-to-address-covid-19/>

Costed Extensions

UK Research and Innovation has announced it will deploy £180 million of funding for organisations to sustain UKRI grant-funded research and fellowships affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Organisations will have the flexibility to target these funds towards research projects that are disrupted to ensure research can be completed. Within the framework set out by UKRI this could include supporting salaries of research and technical staff employed on grant-funded projects or supporting research infrastructure costs during this disruption. In addition, a permitted change in use for existing UKRI grant funding (for grants ending after FY2020/21) of up to £80m will give the sector further flexibility to redistribute likely grant underspends (reduced travel and expenditure on consumable) due to COVID-19 disruption. Individual allocations to organisations will be calculated based on the value of the UKRI grants held by an organisation whose funding finishes between 1 April 2020 and 31 March 2021. This is vital support for UKRI funded research but will not address all the challenges the sector faces. UKRI continues to work closely with the government on how best to support recovery. For more information:

<https://www.ukri.org/research/coronavirus/guidance-for-the-research-and-innovation-communities1/>

New UKRI Chief Executive

Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser will start her new role as Chief Executive of UKRI from 29th June, succeeding Sir Mark Walport.

UKRI Diversity Data

UKRI has published its first set of harmonized diversity data for all seven research councils for the past five academic years. It will continue to publish this data annually, replacing the that saw councils publish individual datasets. The data are being made available in [a range of formats](#) to facilitate access and analysis by the community.

The dataset contains data on four protected characteristics (sex, age, ethnicity, disability) for

- Principal Investigator (PI) and Co-Investigator grant applicants and awardees
- Fellowship applicants and awardees
- PhD studentship starts

UKRI Sustainability Strategy

On 1st April 2020 UKRI released the UKRI Sustainability Strategy, setting out its ambition to achieve 'net-zero' by 2040. The strategy sets out the organisation's priorities to lead the way in environmental sustainability across the research and innovation sector, following the UK government's commitment to end the country's contribution to global warming by 2050. As well as funding critical work that is essential in understanding and tackling environmental challenges, UKRI aims to reduce and mitigate all emissions from owned operations and create a funding sector that reduces its impact on climate change.

The strategy details an action plan for the next 5 years, from which actions include embedding environmental sustainability into the objectives and delivery plans of all the research councils, and each research council will now start working on a Climate Change Adaptation Plan. Other actions include reviewing the use of resources such as energy and water in UKRI facilities, removing single use items and reducing the environmental impact of businesses travel. UKRI will also introduce a sustainability score card into the new UKRI funding service and embed environmental sustainability across all our funding decisions. For more information:

<https://www.ukri.org/news/ukri-launches-its-environmental-sustainability-strategy-and-sets-a-path-to-a-net-zero-future/>

EPSRC SAT Recruitment

EPSRC are inviting applications for its Strategic Advisory Teams (SATs)

<https://epsrc.ukri.org/about/governance/recruitment/membershipsab/>. Successful applicants will be given the opportunity to provide advice across the breadth of EPSRC's portfolio and the portfolios of other Councils where appropriate. Individuals from industry, academia, users of research and those working in the third sector and government organisations are eligible to apply. The closing date for application is 16.00 31 July 2020. Vacancies specific to the ICT theme are as follows:

- Vacancy 1/2: Industrialist with expertise in ICT research and development (two vacancies)
- Vacancy 3/4: Up to two vacancies for researchers with expertise in either Artificial Intelligence, Quantum devices, responsible research and innovation and/or ICT research for overseas development (**we encourage applications from early career researchers**)

Review of EPSRC Doctoral Support

EPSRC's review of doctoral education support is ongoing and remains a priority for EPSRC. The original timeline was for the community engagement to occur during the spring period. While we were able to successfully hold the workshops, with some being virtual, other aspects of the community engagement are being delayed by the pandemic. EPSRC is working with its SAN advisory group and Council to determine an appropriate timeline that ensures the community is able to fully engage with the review and allows EPSRC to carry out as in depth a review as originally intended. Information on the review will continue to be shared when available.

Live Calls:

- **Hardware for efficient computing:** It is recognised that "conventional" digital computing systems based on the Von Neumann architecture are restricted by a data transfer bottle neck. This limits further increases in computing efficiency, which could prevent computing systems from meeting demand requirements from increasingly complex problems and increased global energy demand. Coupling this with a reduction in return on investments in Moore's law and an increase in global demand for computational capacity, there is a

need to develop new hardware solutions beyond the Von Neumann architecture to achieve greater computer efficiency. A total of £3 million of funding is available to support 4-6 projects (18–36 months in length) under this call. The closing date for applications is 23 July. For more information, including a recorded webinar to provide information about the scope of the call: <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/calls/hardware-for-efficient-computing-call/>

- **Digital Health Sandpit:** To bring together diverse communities in the area of Digital Health, EPSRC on behalf of UKRI will be delivering a Sandpit through which £1.2million of UKRI funding will be made available, in order to address research challenges associated with novel technologies for improved self-monitoring and health management. Full details and the application form for participation can be found on the EPSRC website: <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/calls/call-for-participants-in-a-three-day-sandpit-focused-on-digital-technologies-for-health-and-care/>
- **International Centre-to-Centre Research Collaborations:** This call is the second round of a new EPSRC funding initiative which aims to provide opportunities for leading UK research groups to work in partnership with the best international researchers, with projects to start from summer 2021 onwards. For more information: <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/calls/international-centre-to-centre-research-collaborations1/>
- For more EPSRC funding opportunities see: <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/calls/> and for wider UKRI opportunities: <https://www.ukri.org/funding/funding-opportunities/>

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