UK COMPUTING RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the 55th meeting of the UK Computing Research Executive Committee on Tuesday 27 October 2020 at 11:00, held online

PRESENT

Jane Hillston (Chair)	Chris Johnson	Ann Blandford
David De Roure	David Hutchison	Cliff Jones
Kevin Jones	m.c. schraefel	Jie Xu
Bashar Nuseibeh		

BY INVITATION

Edmund Robinson (CPHC)	James Dracott (EPSRC)	Alastair Irons (BCS Academy)
Rhys Perry (EPSRC)	Andrew Rylah (IET)	

IN ATTENDANCE

Maxine Leslie (BCS)

APOLOGIES

Luc Moreau	
Ahmed Kotb (IET alternate)	Bill Mitchell (BCS alternate)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed Members and in particular, newly elected Executive Committee Members Bashar Nuseibeh and Kevin Jones. Apologies were received as above.

The Chair flagged to Members that this was C Jones's last meeting and expressed gratitude on behalf of the Executive Committee for all the work he had done over many years. J Hillston recorded her own deepest thanks in particular helping with her transition to UKCRC Chair. It was also L Moreau's last meeting and the Chair recorded the thanks of the Committee to Luc in his absence, particularly for his work on the new website.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 30 June 2020 were APPROVED and are now ready for transfer to the UKCRC website. *[post meeting note: action complete]*

3. MATTERS ARISING

UKCRCEC meeting held on 30 June 2020
Item 4: Chairs report meeting with BCS – for following up on the BCS/UKCRC meeting on interacting with and influencing government, proactively developing policy decisions, A Irons listed the following topics with an invitation to discuss and add any comment:

- Accreditation – links into value of Profession Statutory and Regulatory Bodies/competences of learned society
- Impact of algorithms on society especially track and trace/A Levels
- AI and ethics, may include data science especially as DCMS is interested in this area

- Support for new CS academics – mentoring, with a particular focus on those from BAME backgrounds.

Item 4: Chairs report discussions with NCSC – this action related to building a directory of expertise available within UKCRC and gauging the willingness of members to engage with government. It was noted that there was still more to do on this. Once a directory is established, J Hillston asked for help with developing a plan before contacting Anthony Finkelstein (a CSA until next June) to offer a presentation at the CSA network meeting.
ACTION: Members

CPHC-UKCRC collaborative working meeting held on 30 June 2020
Item 1: Workshops – this action related to liaising on planning a jointly promoted variant of the 'A Chair in 10 Years' workshop which is research themed. It was reported that the first workshop had been delivered and a second workshop was planned in November.

m.c. schraefel reported that the third seminar in the series *'Building the UK Women into Computer Science Experience'* would be the following day, looking at how to better engage women in the UK in CS especially at undergraduate level. It was hoped that the seminar series would not be the end point but that discussions and actions would continue into a second phase involving UKCRC, looking at what could be put together in terms of national strategies. A further series in spring 2021 was a possibility if colleagues think it is a good idea.

In response to a question from A Blandford, R Perry indicated that there had not been much progress on the EPSRC EDI initiative undertaken 3 years ago. This was due to a shift in priorities for resources. The Chair reported that Wellcome had published a strategy the previous week in this area and more funding appeared to be available for this type of work.

The CPHC and UKCRC Chairs undertook to liaise offline on creating research themed coffee table discussions and reaching out to both memberships. **ACTION: E Robinson/J Hillston**

EPSRC undertook to involve the UKCRC Chair/Exec Members as observers at any equity-themed workshops.   **ACTION: R Perry**

Item 1: BCS Academy Board liaison – this item related to considering the role of BCS Academy Board in supporting UK research in liaison with UKCRC. A Irons reported that he and A Blandford had discussed the topic of building links. The BCS Academy is currently very school-centric and it will be important for someone to take over from A Blandford as the UKCRC rep on the BCS Academy of Computing Board (see item 8.2 Committee roles below). The plan for the February Academy Board meeting is to hold a combined BCS/UKCRC workshop inviting the whole of the Exec Committee to look at what each board/committee does and hold an open discussion on how both can work together better. A Blandford noted that there were multiple groups that represent research in computer science and there should be two-way links working together. It is very fragmented across the different organisations, with all having a role, but should not just send representatives to each other's meetings all the time.

UKCRCEC meeting held on 10 March 2020
Item 4: Chairs report RS Sectional Committee nominations – the Chair reported that she had not heard from Steve Furber on this and it was agreed to take a view next year on how to take this forward.   **ACTION: Members**

CPHC-UKCRC collaborative working meeting held on 29 October 2019
Item 3: Ethics – this action related to the possibility of staging an ethics workshop at the CPHC conference; however, this had been put on hold due to the Covid crisis. E Robinson reported that Rob Aspin was coordinating 2021 conference activities, which would either be a F2F event much later in the year or a series of online events. It was agreed that online

events can push forward debates as m.c. schraefel's seminars have shown, especially if they are spaced out over weeks, encouraging attendance and engagement.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

Members received and noted the report. The Chair reported that there had been less activity since June due to commitments for online teaching etc.

Interaction with NCSC for Digital Skills – nothing had been heard back from them as yet. D De Roure volunteered to help with any NCSC work and D Hutchison indicated that if we wanted to pursue this, we would need to undertake the work as NCSC staff were very busy. It was agreed that this would be moved forward in a small group.   **ACTION: D Hutchison**

Increasing industrial membership – the Chair shared the spreadsheet showing the list of companies for individuals to approach for membership, reflecting the trend that industrial research is moving closer to academic research as there are aligned objectives. There had not been many suggestions following the circulation of the list. One suggestion was to invite further members from companies that are already represented. The secretariat undertook to de-dupe and alphabetise the listing and circulate to the Exec with a deadline of mid-November. The criteria on the website still hold and it remains important that members should be active. Anyone suggesting names would ask the nominee first, making clear that there was no guarantee to being appointed. As a former Membership Panel Chair, K Jones indicated that there were two separate aspects to appointments: those that have the ability to contribute to the agenda and those that have time and energy to contribute more fully. Members agreed that it would be useful to have a discussion with Membership Panel members on how to judge who would be good members. The secretariat undertook to invite the MP Chair, Nadia Berthouze to the next and future meetings for the MP item only.

ACTION: Secretariat

New webpages – the Chair recorded her thanks to everyone who had been involved in getting the new webpages up. There was still some work to be done, but that falls on all Exec Members. Members discussed the ACM classifications listed on the Members page, how they relate to expertise in giving evidence to parliamentary committees and whether it would be useful to have a searchable database/spreadsheet in the background. It also might encourage engagement if those that helped with responses were listed on the website. A Blandford undertook to liaise with A Rylah on whether a searchable resource is feasible in order to identify expertise.   **ACTION: A Blandford/A Rylah**

5. CONSULTATIONS & SUBMISSIONS

Members received and noted the report. C Johnson thanked all for helping with the Directory of Expertise, now live. It would be good to have a way of classifying consultations by topic and develop links between topics when engaging with government departments. It was proposed a small group be formed including D Hutchison, D De Roure and C Johnson to do this.   **ACTION: D Hutchison/D De Roure/C Johnson**

The joint UKCRC/UKCRC online training event/masterclass on consultations and support for policy makers is now arranged for 15 January 2021. It was noted that the forthcoming spending review is likely to have an effect and R Perry undertook to check if an EPSRC representative will be able to attend. *[post meeting note: action complete]*

6. RESEARCH FUNDING AND POLICY

6.1   EPSRC Update

Members RECEIVED and NOTED the report, which could be circulated to the full UKCRC membership *[post meeting note: action complete]*.

R Perry reported that UKRI is looking to streamline its processes, including consolidating onto one UKRI website in the next few months. Feedback will be welcome before and following the changes. There will be changes in funding processes in the next few years, but nothing major.

The Chair asked if there would be a move to harmonisation or whether the more ad hoc but tailored EPSRC panels would be retained. R Perry indicated that this will be explored over next year and Members discussed the relative merits of both systems. There was some support for the adoption of standing committees, which provide stability bearing in mind what has received funding before, particular when there are changes in EPSRC staff and frequent changes in reviewers. It was noted that ESRC uses ad hoc panels which help with corporate memory as there were some members in common. R Perry indicated that the confidence ratings had not indicated that the process was inappropriate and training of new staff/reviewers was prioritised. R Perry undertook to pass Members' comments onto the team at EPSRC.

It was further noted that the gender report had made sobering and disappointing reading.

7. REPORTS

7.1 International Matters inc IE

The Chair noted that the European Computer Science Summit (ECSS) was ongoing at the time of the meeting. B Nuseibeh reported that he had attended on the previous day to give a talk. There had been good UK representation on the panels but not in the audience and it was acknowledged that there were challenges in engaging the community. The Chair indicated that she had attended the Summit in the past, and it had been very stimulating with a good mix of technical and strategic talks especially with Brexit looming and the step change in informatics. There is an expanded membership and therefore IE is doing more to lobby governments etc. It was agreed that IFIP should be included as a regular item in this section of future meeting agendas.

ACTION: Secretariat

7.2 CPHC

See item 3 above for report on *Building the UK women into the CS experience* seminar series. In addition, CPHC was running a series of online coffee table discussions for Heads of Department and Directors of Research/Teaching to talk about issues faced and share good practice in the current situation. This has been well received and will be repeated towards the end of this semester.

7.3 BCS Academy

Also see item 3 above. A Irons reported that one of the big pieces of work was to look at the BCS membership offer and value for students. There has been a call for BCS to provide set piece lectures to cover, for example, ethics and professional attributes. A Irons invited Exec Members to approach him if they wish to get involved in this work.

There is good progress on the review of BCS accreditation and how it links to employability, with contributors split into workstreams.

For schools, it has been intriguing to see the Logan report in Scotland, particularly around the pipeline and the link between schools and universities. The Chair explained that the Logan report had been commissioned by the Scottish government and was really well written with clear recommendations (see https://www.gov.scot/

publications/scottish-technology-ecosystem-review/. It will be interesting to see how its recommendations are taken forward. A Irons noted that it links the digital skills agenda into Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and there is an opportunity for CS to be an enabler/ leveller but it may also be the opposite. There is a growing agenda around digital equality and inclusivity.

7.6 IET report

See item 4 Chair's report above.

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8. COMMITTEE ROLES

8.1 Annual election of Chairperson

[J Hillston left the meeting for this item]
Members considered and APPROVED the election of J Hillston as Chair of the Executive Committee and the full UKCRC.

8.2 Other Committee roles [UKCRCEC/2020/20]

The following Committee roles were agreed by Members:

Committee Members
Consultations and responses – Chris Johnson (QUB)
UKCRC Observer on CPHC Committee – m.c. schraefel (Southampton)
BCS Academy of Computing Board Member – Kevin Jones (Plymouth)
Royal Society Nominations Working Group – Ann Blandford (UCL)
Open Publishing Working Group – David De Roure (Oxford)
NCSC/Government Liaison Working Group – David Hutchison (Lancaster)
JISCMail Administrator for EC list (primary) – David Hutchison (Lancaster), Jane Hillston (Edinburgh)
JISCMail Administrator for Member list (primary) – David Hutchison (Lancaster), Jane Hillston (Edinburgh)
Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity rep – Jie Xu (Leeds)
Responsibility for reporting on Informatics Europe (IE) activities – Jane Hillston (Edinburgh)
Communications/website content – TBC

Non-Committee Members
Observer from CPHC – Edmund Robinson (QMUL)
Observers from EPSRC – James Dracott/Rhys Perry
Observer from BCS – Alastair Irons (BCS Academy of Computing Board), Julia Adamson or Bill Mitchell (Executive Directors)
Observer from the IET – Andrew Rylah, Ahmed Kotb
Open Publishing Working Group – Edwin Hancock (York)
Help with constitution issues (informal role) – Anthony Cohn (Leeds)
Secretariat Support – Maxine Leslie (BCS), Andrew Rylah (IET inc website support)
JISCMail Administrator (supporting) – Cliff Jones (Newcastle, Member list), Maxine Leslie (UKCRC Secretariat, Exec & Member lists)

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

9.1 Potential Members from industry

See item 4 Chair's report above.

There were no items of any other business and the Chair thanked Members and the meeting closed at 13:03.

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

*Includes a joint meeting with the CPHC Committee
NB: Physical meeting rooms subject to availability

EPSRC/UKRI Update for UKCRC November 2020

Coronavirus updates

The UKRI Coronavirus Hub gives you the latest information on the vital work of UKRI and our community in response to the crisis, what grants and awards we have made, and our continuing call to fund your ideas to limit the outbreak and protect life.

Please see an update from UKRI Talent and Skills Director Professor Rory Duncan on extensions for doctoral students impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

UKRI Reducing Unnecessary Bureaucracy

UKRI is implementing a set of major changes to how it interacts with applicants following plans laid out in September in a speech by Universities Minister Michelle Donelan to Universities UK. The changes build on work already underway across UKRI to streamline and simplify its processes and the lessons learnt during UKRI's rapid response to the coronavirus pandemic. Further information can be found here.

National Quantum Computing Centre

In September, Science Minister Amanda Solloway launched the UK's National Quantum Computing Centre (NQCC) to place the UK at the forefront of this transformative new technology. The centre is being established with a £93 million investment by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) to bring together academia, business and government to address key challenges to quantum computing, such as its scalability.

Building a Diverse and Inclusive Research Environment

The UK's engineering and physical sciences community is being encouraged to take part in a series of surveys to inform plans to foster a diverse and inclusive research environment.

The recent **Understanding our Portfolio: a Gender Perspective** report focuses on applications and grants awarded by gender in EPSRC's portfolio. Members of the community are encouraged to take part in a 'have your say' survey on the findings of the report to provide personal experiences of applying for large grants as well as views on potential causal factors for the trends seen. These views will increase understanding of the aspects that influence the inclusion of researchers in our grant portfolio and across the landscape. The **Understanding our Portfolio: a Gender Perspective survey is now available** and the deadline for participation is 3 December.

Later in the year, EPSRC will launch three additional 'have your say' surveys aimed at respondents from different career stages that will focus on racial diversity and inclusion in the research system

Update on the EPSRC Review of Support for Doctoral Education

The review timeline has been extended to allow EPSRC and the community to respond to immediate doctoral education issues highlighted by the pandemic. EPSRC will resume phase one stakeholder engagement activities from September until the end of 2020. The principles developed in phase one will be shared in spring 2021, with phase two activities taking place after this. Outputs of the community workshops have been compiled and they are available here. There is an opportunity for members of the community to provide input to the review by providing comments on the outputs.

EPSRC launch new Fellowships Scheme

A new, more flexible fellowship scheme has been announced by EPSRC. 'Open' Fellowships will offer a new vision which enables researchers to design a fellowship to fit their research ideas, their career stage, development needs and leadership aspirations. The scheme will be open for all EPSRC remit areas, including multi-disciplinary work. Applications that are already under development can continue to be submitted under the existing scheme until 14 December 2020, should candidates wish to do so. Applications under the new scheme will also be accepted from 30 November 2020 onwards. A new guidance document is available to provide more details.

Live Calls:

- **Digital Economy Telling Tales of Engagement:** It is anticipated that three TTE awards will be available, each worth £10,000 and spanning 18 months. These awards are designed to help capture the wider impact of DE research and to provide researchers with the opportunity to tell their story of research impact in an interesting and engaging way to a wider audience, including the general public.
- Future Leaders Fellowships Round 6: This fellowship is open to researchers and/or innovators with outstanding potential, who are transitioning to or establishing independence. Closing date for outline proposals is 10 December 2020.
- All UKRI funding opportunities can be accessed through the funding finder following updates to the website: https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/

Back to Item 6.1 EPSRC Update