Minutes of ILCC/HCRC Staff Meeting

Wednesday 2ⁿᵈ December 2015, 1.00 pm

Attendance
Jon Oberlander, Frank Keller, Kenneth Heafield, Caroline Hastings, Sharon Goldwater, Helen Pain, Henry Thomson, Bea Alex, Hiroshi Shimodaira, Lexi Birch-Mayne, Chris Lucas, Alex Lascarides, Adam Lopez, Steve Renals, Nathan Schneider, Pim Totterdall, Colin Adams, Kami Vaniea, Mirella Lapata, Markus Guhe, Barry Haddow, Rico Sennrich, Matthew Aylett, Bonnie Webber, John Lee, Diana Dalla Costa

Apologies were received from Robin Hill, Helen New, Ron Petrick, Simon King and Shay Cohen

1. Matters arising from previous meeting

1.1 Alumni destinations-
Action: HT to follow up by contacting existing staff to record destinations of students upon graduation.

1.2 Follow up to reflection event was held on the 5ᵗʰ of October along with the doodle poll

1.3 At the last committee meeting it was felt that there should be a conferencing or 'go to' skype facilities in every meeting room. The building committee where this issue is an agenda item was postponed to this Monday so it will be discussed then.

1.4 Grant writing support
PT will be discussing possibility of grant information repository for item 5 of this committee meeting.

CH contacted ERI to ask if they will run an institute writing workshop. A workshop is now scheduled to be held at the beginning of February 2016 on how to write an impact statement. AL suggested this workshop could be held as an induction activity.

2. Director's report

JO informed the group that Colin Matheson has now left Informatics and expressed his gratitude for all his help. It was also pointed out that there is always the possibility that he may re-join us if the opportunity arises in the future. JO advised the committee that they are now encouraged to be actively recruiting new members of staff so as to add to the institute's strengths.

JO asked the committee to think of areas that require growth. A discussion took place where a number of areas were mentioned that are felt are currently lacking in both support and staff:

2.1 Data science and information retrieval

2.2 Multimodality, including computer vision

2.3 Human Robotics Interaction

2.4 Education & Design informatics

2.5 Data and media visualisation

2.6 Dialogue Systems

HT noted in particular that at the moment there isn't any member of staff in Information retrieval which is a problem that needs to be addressed.

JO encouraged the committee to work with other institutes to assist with recruiting. JO advised the committee that recruitments can be brought forward at any time, however every case brought forward must also have a business case attached, but proposers will not have to develop this themselves.

3. Finance and Funding Proposal

CH reported that there has not been much activity since October 2015. One proposal that has been submitted is the Edinburgh Global Innovation Fund by Paul Schweizer. We are currently still waiting to hear back on the outcomes of the remaining proposals.

KH advised the committee that he has applied for the Google and Amazon Grant which would fund 1 PhD student for 1 year. MS has applied to Google and Bloomberg. ML is waiting to hear back regarding the EPSRC fellowship. JO is waiting to hear back regarding the Microsoft PhD Studentship Grant. JO informed the committee that he has been awarded a small part of an EPSRC Internet of Things – hub grant.

SR reported on Alan Turing – there have been a number of scoping workshops taking place. There is an open call for fellowships but these will be largely based in London, however we should still apply as this may show a clear demand to the ATI for posts outside of London. AL raised concern that PhD students will be spending more time in London. This may cause problems and should be looked into.

4. Talent Attraction Program (Colin Adams)

Goal of this program is to change existing practises in Informatics and to provide a better experience for PhD Students. CA advised the committee that there is a large demand for talent but a huge skill shortage. That industry partners are finding it difficult to hire students and 26.5% of posts filled are by students who have a previous relationship with the industry partners. Industry is willing to pay £10,000 a head to acquire staff at student level.

The idea behind this program is to provide businesses who are willing to pay an annual subscription to the university with opportunities to meet students, PIs and supervisors. This will be beneficial to all parties involved as students are given the opportunity to meet potential employees, Industry partners can learn about areas of research from PI they meet and they in turn are able to promote their company. It could be seen as a long hiring interview where both sides are given the opportunity to sell themselves. There would be

different tiers of membership – Gold Class, Platinum Class depending on the subscription level. Other universities, Manchester, Oxford and Cambridge are also taking part in similar programs. This provides a good opportunity for collaboration – where industry partners could act as co-supervisors for students.

Discussion took place regarding this proposal and the feedback from the committee members was very positive. AL felt this to be a wonderful idea but queried whether there would be a vetting process put in place for companies who wished to subscribe. CA advised this had not been thought of yet but it is definitely something that will be debated. AL suggested a committee could be set up to help make these decisions

BA queried what would happen to the money that was received through this program, SG suggested it could be used for overseas PhD studentships.

The general consensus was agreement for this proposal.

5. **Knowledge management – grant information and alumnus tracking (Pim Totterdell)**

   5.1 The last committee meeting discussed whether a repository could be created to allow people to view copies of successful grant applications. PT advised that the ERI does provide this sort of information but he will get in touch with them to see where this information comes from. However, it would be useful to have something more local that allows information concerning successful applications to be shared. A central wiki service could be used for this. All information provided would of course be voluntary. PT asked for any feedback from the committee regarding what they want as well as how they would prefer to access this information.

   AL advised PT that proposals and reviewer comments would be informative to have access to. HT recommended that the responses to reviews would also be useful. One idea could simply be a list of applications by title and author, that you could then request more information on an individual basis.

   PT advised the committee that it would be up to those who wrote the proposal how much information they would be willing to share. Unsuccessful proposals would most probably be less likely to be shared. PT is hoping to have something set up and running at the start of the year.

   5.2 PT asked the committee what they would be looking for in alumnus tracking.

   AL suggested we could encourage students to create links to their Linkedin profiles so that every time they update their information this is automatically updated on our website. This way we can keep track of all students. NS advised that urls could be also used instead of Linkedin.

   Action: PT will look into this in more detail.

6. PhD Environment

6.1 Provision of Compute Servers - FK brought to the attention of the committee that students are experiencing problems accessing GPU servers, which are crucial for training neural network models. Some have access to project machines, but most don't. Last year 4 CPU servers were bought, in which 2 were funded from pooled projects funds, and 2 were paid for by the institute. He suggested that a similar model could be adopted for purchasing GPU servers.

It was decided to refer this matter to the next strategy committee meeting.
Action: To be proposed to the strategy committee

6.2 Survey conducted highlighted that PhD students in ILCC feel lonely and that there is not enough collaboration occurring. JO has asked the committee to think of activities to help the PhD cohorts in ILCC, suggest items/events by email.
Action: Committee to email potential activities for PhD students

7. Publicity

At the last meeting it was felt that there should be more information on the ILCC web site, in particular the people page should contain more information about current students, including their research title, research interests and name of supervisor. SC has begun to implement this by encouraging students to update their information page so as to inform others of their research activities.

PT advised the committee of a website redevelopment taking place which ILCC will take part in. This is scheduled for some time in Spring 2016.

8. Other Matters and Date of next meeting

HT advised the committee that there will be less money centrally for PhD studentships in 2016.

The date of the next meeting has been set for Wednesday 13th of January at 1pm in 4.31/33.

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