



**Department of Computer Science
HEADS OF RESEARCH GROUP MEETING**

Thursday 5th February 2015

14pm – 16pm 6.12 Malet Place Engineering

MINUTES

Present: Olivier Delacroix (OD), Anthony Steed (AS), John Shawe-Taylor (JST), Danny Alexander (DA), Simon Arridge (SA), David Pym (DP), Mark Harman (MH), Tania Green (TG), Paul Marsall (PM)

Apologies for absence: Graham Roberts, Massi Pontil (MP), Anthony Hunter (AH), Brad Karp (BK), Philip Treleaven (PT) Jane Butler (JB), Yvonne Rogers (YR), Angela Sasse (AS), Tomaso Aste (TA), David Jones (DJ), Ingemar Cox (IC)

1. Apologies for absences.

DA made apologies for Massi who is now on sabbatical.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting (20th November 14)

Approved.

3. Matters arising from the previous meeting

No matters to be discussed.

4. Notice of any other business

None.

5. REF2014 Feedback (Mark Harman)

This year there was 89 universities that submitted to the REF which is more than the 2008 REF and you will see from APPENDIX 1 and the various media outlets that we came 1st. The main reason we did so well is because we are a great department that has hired and retained tremendous staff. Colleagues contributed not only through their excellent research papers, but also everyone had their own role to play in many other ways such as attracting funding, graduating PhD students, producing impact and through other activities listed in the environment statement.

In order to continue being a leading department and producing high results as reflected in the REF the following points need to be taken into account for the next REF:

1. As we develop and expand the department, we need to be mindful that, should we wish to retain our REF lead, then we can only expand as much as the existing staff can provide impact case studies to support such expansion. Loosely speaking, and assuming similar rules in the next assessment, then every 10 new hires will require an additional impact case study from existing members of staff. We also did well because of our exceptionally high staff retention. This makes staff retention, particularly those staff with high impact, very important.
2. Our PhD completion rate per FTE over the assessment period is approx. 2. This is notably on the low side by comparison with our competitors. This may not have a major influence on the outcome, but it is something we might want to pay attention to, since we won by getting a large number of such minor details "right".
3. We were right to emphasise 100 words and need to continue training and awareness of this critical text. There was evidence that the panel were quite tough assessment of

outputs (research papers); publishing in a first-tier venue may not be sufficient to attract a 4* rating, without the backing of a compelling 100 word statement. Approx. 60% of our papers were in unequivocally first tier venues, yeah we scored 50% 4* star.

4. There may be some tentative feedback (from discussions with panel members) to suggest that focusing solely on the monetary value of impact as a copper-bottomed and irrefutable measure/assurance of impact may be sub-optimal. We are still trying to understand why our score for impact was less than we hoped. Although very good, we were ranked in 5th place for impact, whereas the assessment of our outputs was ranked second (behind Warwick, which appears to be much more selective than us any case). We strongly believe we had absolutely outstanding impact cases studies that were exceptionally well written up. Therefore, there could perhaps be a tactical strategic lesson to be learned regarding our "positioning" of the case studies.

6. Forthcoming away day (Daniel Alexander (DA) and Jill Saunders(JS)

The away day is scheduled for 10th March. A rough plan for the day is as follows: Gather at 9:30am at the Montague Hotel where the away day will be held. The first half of the day will consist of a talk within groups to see where improvements are needed or where we want to improve such as the branching out of research areas. There will also be a discussion about the new institution chosen and how to improve for the REF.

The second half of the day will consist of S.W.A.T actions looking at what can be done better and how research groups will grow in terms of students and staff. The quantum information group was brought up during the REF and will be discussed during the SWAT.

7. KPI (Danny Alexander (DA)

The Directors of Research Meeting was cancelled the previous week and has been rescheduled for the week commencing 9th February. DA unable to report any new information about the KPI's except the following: We signed up for the San Francisco Committee who have said they do not like the current matrix and it will need to be looked at.

8. Recently awarded research grants (Olivier Delacroix (OD)

OD reported that 2.5 million has been awarded in new awards since the last meeting in November, APENDIX 2. There was a slight downward trend in the number of grants awarded which is slowly now being reversed and numbers are going up. David Jones is doing well bringing in just under a quarter of a million in grants. George Danezis has gone up bringing in near to 180K.

9. Recently awarded research students (Tania Green (TG)

TG provided a list of students that graduated for between October 14 and January 15, APENDIX 3. There was a total of 10 students that graduated, with 60% graduating within 4 years. JST noted that some students may have had minor corrections to make which is not reflected in the figures. TG to add in a column for minor corrections and final submission date, 2nd tab within APENDIX 3.

10. Any Other Business

JST gave an update as to the prospect of a new MRes course as discussed briefly in the previous meeting. JST is looking into setting up a general MRes for the CS department where students then progress to a PhD. JST and JS have discussed the possibility of funding those that progress from the new MRes to the PhD, estimating that 1 in 7 students could receive full funding to do the PhD. JST also stated there is a possibility the MRes could be 1.5 years, however this is not part of the regulations so is still being looked into. It is important to look at the projects submitted/grades for MRes' as this will help to determine potential for the PhD. If a student does well on the project then they will be upgraded to the PhD but only after the MRes end date. If a supervisor is in doubt about a student's ability to complete the PhD once admitted from the MRes they should be quite vigorous during the 1st year viva. It was noted that some supervisors are not present during the viva examinations in some departments and maybe this should be adopted for CS viva's, as it stands this is only the case for transfer viva examinations.

MH noted that an item for the next meeting should include a review of the move to the new building 66-72 Gower Street with the possibility of holding the next meeting in the new building.

11. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Thursday 14th May 2015, 2-4pm in 6.12 MPEB**