



RESEARCH SOFTWARE DEVELOPMENT GOVERNANCE GROUP (RSDGG)

MINUTES

Date: Tuesday 6th January 2015
Time: 11am – 1pm
Venue: Room 104, Podium Building, 1 Eversholt Street, London NW1 2DN

Chair:
Anthony Finkelstein (AF)

Present:
Simon Arridge (SA); Erik Burman (EB); Matt Clarkson (MC); Peter Coveney (PC); Clare Gryce (CG); James Hetherington (JH)

Apologies:
Richard Catlow (RC); John Shawe-Taylor (JST)

In attendance:
Corrinne Frazzoni (CF) (Minutes)

1. Minutes of the last meeting and review of current actions [Chair]

The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 24th March 2014 were approved. The table of current Actions was reviewed and updated (see end page for detail).

2. Programming projects [CG/JH]

The Group was asked to consider medium term strategy for balancing grant-funded and free project work, and to provide guidance regarding priorities and any associated actions.

2014 had been a very successful year for the RSD in building collaborations for funded work with researchers across college. Over £400k had been won in grant income, creating three two-year grant funded research software developer posts.

UCL PIs collaborating with RITS enjoyed an above-average success rate in high-profile calls such as the ARCHER eCSE programme and EPSRC 'Software For The Future' Call. Anecdotal evidence indicates that grant review panels are now giving preference for software-focused grants to those involving dedicated research programming effort, (whether intradepartmental or in a central support unit), making the value to the university of a research software development team clear.

In 2014, RSD carried out three 'free' projects, with two such projects requesting to follow this up with collaborative grant applications, illustrating the success of a "Freemium" model where initial free work demonstrates to PIs the benefits of collaborating with research software engineers.

However, the rate at which RSD have been able to recruit staff against the new income has been such that it has only been able to issue one new free call for projects in 2014.

3. Staffing [CG/JH]

The Group was asked to consider current challenges and provide guidance regarding any modifications to recruitment strategy.

There was an issue with attracting the right staff, partly due to the competitiveness of commercial salaries but also in terms of career path offered to research software developers. Additional problems had been encountered with ability to recruit non-EU staff. There was a clear need to improve outreach to show research software engineers the potential benefits of joining the UCL career path.

The possibility of using lower-skills resources e.g. through internships, to provide more resource for 'free' projects was considered, perhaps with 2 streams: 'Call A' – professional skills needed, and 'Call B' – more routine work suitable for interns.

4. Training [CG/JH]

The Group was asked to discuss its role in relation to strategy development for research programming training and teaching at UCL, and to decide whether to open-source training materials developed by Research IT Services.

Action: SA to put Marta Betcke in touch with AF re MSc Scientific Computing proposal.

5. Infrastructure [CG]

Reports were issued regarding code management, automated testing infrastructure and the current Research Software Dashboard capital project.

6. Community Building [CG/JH]

The Group were asked to discuss and agree on further steps towards the development and building of a coherent scientific software development community and to consider how to encourage attendance at community events by members of their Faculties.

Funding from MAPS and Engineering had enabled the establishment of a one year (Feb 2014-Jan 2015) part-time post to develop and run a seminar series to support this effort, but although several interesting seminars had taken place, attendance had been low. It was agreed that there had been issues with the marketing and outreach of the series and that greater focus was needed on a cross-disciplinary, multi-faculty approach, perhaps featuring practical show-and-tell presentations of interesting technology and research that would appeal to post-docs and PhD students rather than eminent speakers who only presented their own research.

Action: JH to plan, organise and coordinate (with SDRAG members) delivery of short series of 'instrumentally focused' general-audience talks/events on tools and method.

Action: JH to draft email for approval by AF calling for members of new 'working group' to be set up in order to bootstrap establishment of website etc. for UCL Scientific Software Development community. All to assist in circulating agreed email and identifying possible members from their Department/Faculties.

7. Report from Research Software Development Resource Allocation Group (SDRAG) [MC]

MC gave a brief update on the activities of the SDRAG.

8. Governance [CG]

The Group discussed attendance issues and new membership.

Action: CF to poll member availability and set up next meeting (possibly two).

Action: CG to contact Melissa Terras with invitation to join group.

Action: PC to consider possible membership from SLMS and report back on recommendations.

Actions

Closed actions will be deleted after next meeting

No	Date	Minute	Owner	Action	Status	Notes
1	25.9.13	1.3.2	JH, AS	First year's activity Report – Design of report to be worked up for distribution to a wider audience.	Ongoing	CG is speaking with ISD Illustration about design. 24/3/14 Working up to 18-month report in time for June forum. Report could possibly take the form of a video, interviewing group leads using set of agreed questions, plus short downloadable report. CG/JH to talk to UCL Media Services. 06/01/15 Look at Institute of Making's report as potential template
2	25.9.13	1.3.4	CG, JH	EPSRC document – write 2 page document highlighting future work, collaborative engagement, strategies for scaling etc.	Closed	Pending. JH conversations with US funding bodies at Super Computing. Large difference between National labs and universities. 24/3/14 Document needs to cover career path, investment, infrastructure, training etc. To be ready by next meeting (7 May) 06/01/15 Completed.
3	4.12.13	4(b)	JST	Brainstorming group for Masters program – Set up a group to brainstorm on and discuss the new Masters program.	Ongoing	24/3/14 Awaiting JST's lead on this. Possible target for 15/16 academic year but will need to move quickly in order to produce proposal and take it through the teaching committees. Perhaps a 3-strand masters covering specialism, research and professional services. RITS keen to be involved. 06/01/15 Ongoing
4	06.01.15	4	SA	Training - SA to put Marta Betcke in touch with AF re MSc Scientific Computing proposal.	New action	
5	06.01.15	6	JH	Community Building (1) - JH to plan, organise and coordinate (with SDRAG members) delivery of short series of 'instrumentally focused' general-audience talks/events on tools and methods.	New action	
6	06.01.15	6	JH	Community Building (2) - JH to draft email for approval by AF calling for members of new 'working group' to be set up in order to bootstrap establishment of website etc. for UCL Scientific Software Development community. All to assist in	New action	

				circulating agreed email and identifying possible members from their Department/Faculties		
7	06.01.15	8	CF	Governance (1) - CF to poll member availability and set up next meeting (possibly two).	New action	NB Must take place before RIISG on 20 May
8	06.01.15	8	CG	Governance (2) - CG to contact Melissa Terras with invitation to join RSDGG.	New action	
9	06.01.15	8	PC	Governance (3) - PC to consider possible membership from SLMS and report back on recommendations.	New action	