

Minutes of the 67th meeting of the UK Computing Research Executive Committee on Tuesday 8 October 2024 at 11:00, BCS Offices, Ground Floor, 25 Cophall Avenue, London EC2R 7DN and online

PRESENT

Julie McCann (meeting Chair)
Amir Hussain

*Simon Dobson
*Jie Xu

Michael Fisher

BY INVITATION

*Nadia Berthouze (Membership
Panel Chair)

Rob Aspin (CPHC)

Ben Scott (EPSRC)

IN ATTENDANCE

Maxine Leslie (BCS)

APOLOGIES

Kevin Jones (Chair)

David Hutchison

Andy Gordon

Alex Frangi

Nicky Danino (CPHC)

Laura McDonnell (EPSRC)

Alastair Irons (BCS Academy)

Julia Adamson (BCS)

**Joined online*

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed Executive Committee members to the meeting, explaining that K Jones had an unfortunate diary clash that meant that he was overseas. Given the joint nature of the meeting, it was important not to postpone the meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (UKCRC/2024/06)

The minutes of the last meeting held on Tuesday 11 June 2024 were APPROVED and are now ready for transfer to the UKCRC website.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

- 3.1 **RS0 Sectional Committee nominations Working Group (UKCRCEC/2024/08)** – it was noted that each year the Executive Committee initiates formation of a subgroup to make suggestions to the Royal Society Sectional Committee 0: Computer sciences to contribute to their process of selection of a shortlist of candidates for consideration by the RS Council for election to the Fellowship (see <https://royalsociety.org/about-us/committees/sectional-committee-0-computer-sciences-193/>). The deadline for submission of names to the Chair of the Sectional Committee is 1 July each year so that there are three months to find nominators and seconders for those candidates selected to be nominated (by the end of September). The time commitment for this work is minimal: a few email exchanges and a one-hour online meeting.

Executive Committee members were invited to volunteer for this working group and/or suggest possible UKCRC members to approach for this by contacting M Leslie.

Nominees can be from within and outside of the UKCRC membership.

ACTION: Members

UKCRCEC meeting held on 11 June 2024

Matters arising: Consultations & submissions (item 3) – for the action for A Hussain to catch up with K Jones and Chris Johnson for a briefing on consultations & submissions co-ordination, A Hussain reported that this was complete.

Matters arising: Consultations & submissions (item 3) – for the action for M Leslie to set up an initial online meeting with K Jones, A Frangi, N Berthouze & J Adamson to discuss UKCRC mission & contacts, it was confirmed that the initial meeting to discuss this is scheduled for 11 November. One possible contact that had previously been discussed was a contact of A Hussain's at the Turing Institute. N Berthouze suggested adding discussing issuing an open call for new UKCRC members with the refreshed mission statements.

4. CHAIR'S REPORT

K Jones had provided a written briefing note, thanking J McCann for stepping in to chair the meeting at the last minute.

As was mentioned in the last meeting, there is activity centred around the re-establishment of the relationship between the UKCRC and its "parent" organisations: the BCS and the IET. Discussions have resulted in the agreement to recognise the BCS as the primary sponsor and host of the UKCRC going forward, with the IET remaining an interested partner. This will result in a number of pragmatic changes, phase 1 of which is a relocation of the UKCRC website on the www.bcs.org website. This work is on-going, and an announcement will be made to UKCRC members once the privacy statement is finalised and the website migration is complete. Discussions will commence on phase 2 and the next steps.

Exec members were asked to note that A Hussain has acted following the discussion at the last meeting and has taken on the role of consultation coordinator for UKCRC (see also item 5 below). Hopefully, this will enable greater representation from UKCRC in future consultations of relevance to our Committee. A volunteer from Exec is still being sought to take on the role of BCS Academy Board representative. Interested parties to contact [M Leslie](#).

ACTION: Members

Finally, for those that had not seen them, it was noted that a collection of essays had recently been published in honour of Cliff Jones, long time UKCRC advocate and previous member of the UKCRC Exec: The Practice of Formal Methods

<https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-66676-6>

5. CONSULTATIONS & SUBMISSIONS

Following his briefing meeting with K Jones and Chris Johnson, A Hussain invited Exec members to flag any relevant consultations for bringing to the membership's attention.

ACTION: Members

6. RESEARCH FUNDING AND POLICY

- 6.1 EPSRC Update** – B Scott reported that EPSRC is currently in the throes of the Spending Review and therefore there is little to report. There should be more information for relaying at the end of October. It currently looks like a 1 and 3 deal, but this could change. The standard mode has quietened down, and B Scott thanked members for the support

on this. There are active open and closed calls, with the telecoms for India just having closed. There is a [neuromorphic call](#) for which an webinar will be open on the website soon and also a [terahertz call](#), details of which are also on the website.

7. REPORTS

7.1 Membership Panel – N Berthouze reported that David Hutchison had nominated a researcher for UKCRC membership the previous day and the application was with the Membership Panel for consideration.

7.2 International Matters inc Informatics Europe – J Xu updated members on the following:

Informatics Europe (IE) CV Repository Now Open to All – IE has opened its CV Repository to everyone. Students and recent graduates from non-member institutions can also register as applicants for a limited time. This is especially valuable for early-career professionals, including final-year Bachelor's students, Master's and PhD students, as well as graduates in informatics and related disciplines. You can access the CV Repository here: [Informatics Europe - CV Repository](#).

Joint Workshop at ECSS 2024 – IE and the National Informatics Associations (NIA) will host a joint workshop during the annual ECSS meeting in Malta from October 28-30, 2024. The theme for this year's workshop is "AI in Informatics Education and Professional Practice," with a focus on bringing industry perspectives on the competencies needed in AI. For more information, visit the [ECSS 2024 website](#).

IEEE International Conference on Artificial Intelligence (IEEE CAI) – this is an industry-organized conference and exhibition focusing on AI with specific industry applications. Adam Sobey (Alan Turing Institute) and Jie Xu (University of Leeds) were involved in organizing IEEE CAI 2024 in Singapore and will co-lead the organization of IEEE CAI 2025, which will take place in Santa Clara, California from May 5-7, 2025.

7.3 CPHC – R Aspin reported that the CPHC Committee would be meeting later the same day and therefore there was nothing to report.

7.4 BCS Academy – No report as A Irons and J Adamson were in attendance at the parallel BCS Academy Board meeting, therefore the update was deferred to the next meeting.

8. 2024 Computing Summit – feedback from wash up meeting with CPHC and BCS Academy

J McCann introduced this item, inviting members to discuss the feedback from the 2024 Summit and consider future involvement, potentially in a joint Summit provisionally to be held at Sheffield Hallam University in April 2025.

R Aspin was keen to include EPSRC, NCF and GCHQ in future summits with a broader consideration of the research environment. M Fisher asked about the aims of the Summit and R Aspin explained that the 2024 event grew out of the CPHC annual conferences, to bring Heads of Departments/Schools together with the aim of supporting these leaders to build a research culture where CPHC crosses over with UKCRC. The UKCRC, CPHC and BCS Academy Chairs have been meeting regularly over the last couple of years to see how to bring the three bodies together and "fly in formation". The plan is to build a summit which is reflective of the interests of all three bodies: for CPHC how to organise the HE teaching environment, for BCS to explore the views of industry and for UKCRC leadership around research.

Members discussed incentives for academic staff such as Directors of Research to participate. Rather than a showcase, perhaps considering the future and context of computing would be of interest, eg what is computing in the context of Artificial Intelligence with examples. R Aspin raised the crisis in recruitment and retention of computing academic staff, either due to poaching by other institutions or moving to jobs in industry with much better pay and terms and conditions. The 2024 Summit started the conversation on this and perhaps it could be continued at the 2025 Summit. Members agreed that it could be most effective to target Directors of Research in HEI computing departments. CPHC may have data that could help with this. It would also help to find out what research colleagues are interested in before building an agenda.

9. DATES OF 2025 MEETINGS INCLUDING AGM (UKCRC/2024/09)

Members noted the dates and M Leslie undertook to send out Outlook diary invitations for these meetings. **ACTION: M Leslie**

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items of other business.

AGM 2024

Friday 6 December (12:00-13:00) – Online

2025 Executive Committee meetings

Tuesday 25 March (11:00-13:00) – Online

Tuesday 10 June (11:00-13:00) – Online

*Tuesday 14 October (11:00-14:30) – BCS London

**to include networking lunch and joint meeting with CPHC Committee*

AGM 2025

Friday 5 December (12:00-13:00) – Online

UKCRC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TAKEN AT MEETINGS 2022-4

Outstanding Actions in Red

| No. | Item | Item No. | Decision/Action | Responsibility | Complete |
|--|---|----------|--|---|----------|
| UKCRC Executive Committee Meeting ACTIONS from 8 October 2024 | | | | | |
| 3 | MATTERS ARISING: RS0 Sectional Committee nominations Working Group | 3.1 | Volunteer to participate in working group to make suggestions to the RS Sectional Committee 0 for CS for possible nominations to RS Council for election to the Fellowship | Members to contact M Leslie | On-going |
| 4 | CHAIR'S REPORT | | (First raised at June 24 meeting) Consider volunteering to represent UKCRC on the BCS Academy of Computing Board | Members to contact M Leslie | On-going |
| 5 | CONSULTATIONS & SUBMISSIONS | | Forward any consultations that would benefit from a UKCRC-wide response to A Hussain | Members | On-going |
| 9 | DATES OF 2025 MEETINGS INC AGM | | Send meeting invitations to members | M Leslie | On-going |
| UKCRC Executive Committee Meeting ACTIONS from 11 June 2024 | | | | | |

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|---|--------------------------------|-----|---|-------------------------|----------|
| 4 | Chair's report | | Circulate call for a volunteer to represent UKCRC on the BCS Academy of Computing Board | M Leslie | On-going |
| UKCRC Executive Committee Meeting ACTIONS from 24 October 2023 | | | | | |
| 7 | REPORTS: Membership Panel | 7.1 | Liaise on the composition of the UKCRC Membership Panel <i>[added 25 Mar 24: look to co-opt an industrialist from the membership]</i> | N Berthouze/ K Jones | On-going |
| UKCRC Executive Committee Meeting ACTIONS from 26 June 2023 | | | | | |
| 5 | CONSULTATIONS & SUBMISSIONS | | Forward any consultations that would benefit from a UKCRC-wide response to either K Jones or M Leslie | Members | On-going |
| UKCRC Executive Committee Meeting ACTIONS from 7 June 2022 | | | | | |
| 7 | REPORTS | 7.1 | Exec to think about potential members and communicate names to N Berthouze | Exec members | On-going |

(A) CPHC-UKCRC-BCS ACADEMY COLLABORATIVE WORKING (CPHC Committee members and BCS Academy of Computing Board members in attendance for this item)

UKCRC Executive Committee member in attendance: Amir Hussain

BCS Academy of Computing Board members in attendance: Alastair Irons (Chair, session Chair), *Anthony Cohn, Tom Crick, Oliver Kerr, Sue Sentance, Jane Waite, Ian McChesney

CPHC Committee members in attendance: Nicky Danino (Chair), Kevin Chalmers, Paul Sant, Rebecca Strachan, Haris Mouratidis, Silvester Czanner, Damien Foster, Funmi Obembe, Kate Hone, Dharam Shadija

Guests/observers: Daniela Tresoldi (EPSRC), Ben Scott (EPSRC), Yanguo Jing (Leeds Trinity), Adam Wyner (Swansea), Mairéad Pratschke (Manchester), Catherine Mulligan (Imperial)

BCS staff in attendance: Laure Barker, Maxine Leslie
*Joined online

Apologies: Kevin Jones, Julie McCann, Julia Adamson

Introduction & key responsibilities/activities [See slides]

A Irons welcomed attendees to the meeting and apologies for absence were received as above. A Irons outlined the aims for the meeting: to share and discuss plans for UKCRC, CPHC and BCS Academy Board and how to work together to promote computing and computer science and associated disciplines; consider how we interact and collaborate; discuss the aspiration to have a shared vision and speak with voice in policy and strategy development; give colleagues the opportunity to discuss opportunities and challenges; consider the opportunity and objectives of a computing summit in 2025.

A Irons and N Danino talked through the respective overviews, key responsibilities, 2024/25 activities for the three organisations culminating in the combined objectives and environment (the Venn diagram). The group was invited to consider the following topics as well as asking any other questions:

- What are our combined objectives?
- What are the subjects for the 3-way overlap on the Venn Diagram?
- What are the joint activities and how do we further them? (Eg, mentoring, staff development, environment and culture)
- How do we create a platform for this combined voice?

Discussion

For the Venn Diagram, P Sant suggested moving 'Professionalism' into the intersection as it is an area for all three organisations eg, for early/established researchers.

The appointment of T Crick as Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) to DCMS and Chris Johnson as CSA to DSIT was noted. T Crick flagged that computing is different to many other subject areas, as it is fragmented and consequently has several bodies advocating on behalf of the discipline. Most subject areas have only one advocacy body and government usually will only wish to speak to a single body. However, computing advocates are pushing against an open door with government departments and should be able to drive expertise towards a one-stop-shop to assist with this. This is happening but we are not there yet; we will need a consistency of voice and an agreed vision/advocacy piece eg, what does artificial intelligence's combined environment mean for us? There are challenges around structure and entity but BCS has the advantage of being able to leverage its Royal Charter. Some of the community are apathetic but if members worked to make BCS better, there would be fewer criticisms – we are in a very different position than we were a few years ago.

A Wyner queried whether it is apathy or more that members of the community are unaware of BCS activities other than academic accreditation. Maybe it would help to have a designated representative for every CS department in the country to channel communications.

N Danino asked about the value of BCS outside of academia such as a register of experts – would this help or hinder the mission? T Crick indicated that a 'Licence to practice' will not happen as it is not a priority in the next 5 years. The UK's USP for AI research is a citizen-centred solution for which we are not beholden to tech companies to implement. It was noted that F-TAG is interested in some sort of registration, but that BCS is thinking of working towards some sort of recognition but without any liability. T Crick observed that BCS had become more authoritative in the eyes of government and the media with a number of Fellows being quoted which improves BCS's visibility and enables more advocacy. The view of industry was raised including its view of academic accreditation. This links to the HE staff recruitment and retention situation resulting from the discrepancy in terms & conditions and pay.

For the Venn Diagram, K Chalmers suggested using physics as an example as they have 5-6 trade bodies, we could determine who we are talking to and whether there is something missing. There are a different set of questions for different stakeholders such as the NHS and civil service, both of which are big computing employers.

Members discussed holding the joint meeting more than once a year in order to keep this conversation going. It was noted that the three chairs meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues and challenges and each body also has representation on each others' boards/committees, it may be that reps need to challenge more in these forums and side step any 'group think'.

In terms of public engagement, the original Grand Challenges (learning and teaching, the subject and research) archived on the [UKCRC website](#), were very old, but a lot of

what was being said is still true today. Y Jing liked the idea of a unified identity, there are already differently focussed groups across the sector having regular meetings and speaking to government which is very positive. It is important to listen to voices from primary level upwards. The devolved nations have looked at this (eg the Scottish Informatics and Computer Science Alliance – SICSA) from school up to HE/industry.

It is crucial to ensure we are public/citizen facing, the Nobel Prizes just announced were an example of this, machine learning/AI playing a part in both the physics and chemistry prizes.

A Irons thanked participants for a very useful discussion. It was agreed that the group should aim to meet again before the next joint meeting in October 2025, either online or F2F and BCS staff undertook to set this up.

Actions from Joint UKCRC/CPHC/ACB meeting 8 October 2024

| Min | Item | Action | Who | Status |
|------------|--|--|------------|---------------|
| (A) | CPHC-UKCRC-BCS Academy collaborative working | Set up a joint meeting, either online or F2F in between October 2024 and the next F2F meeting on 14 October 2025 | BCS staff | On-going |