

Minutes of the 64th meeting of the UK Computing Research Executive Committee on Tuesday 24 October 2023 at 11:00, held online

PRESENT

Kevin Jones (Chair)
Simon Dobson

Andy Gordon
Michael Fisher

Julie McCann
Amir Hussain

BY INVITATION

Nadia Berthouze (Membership
Panel Chair)
*Rob Aspin (CPHC)

Alastair Irons (BCS
Academy)
Ben Scott (EPSRC)

Alex Taylor (IET)

IN ATTENDANCE

Maxine Leslie (BCS)

APOLOGIES

David De Roure
Julia Adamson (BCS)

David Hutchison

Jie Xu

**Joined for part of the meeting*

1. WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed Executive Committee members to the meeting, and expressed his regret that it had not been possible to hold the meeting at the University of Edinburgh as originally planned. Apologies were received as above and it was noted that the elections to appoint new members in November were underway.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING (UKCRC/2023/10)

The minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 26 June 2023 were APPROVED and are now ready for transfer to the UKCRC website. *[Post meeting note: action complete]*

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

UKCRCEC meeting held on 26 June 2023

Consultations & Submissions (item 5) – the Chair reported that there was still no volunteer to co-ordinate UKCRC member responses to consultations. Exec members that noticed any relevant calls were once again invited to forward them to the secretariat or to the Chair for onward circulation and collective response.

UKCRCEC meeting held on 25 October 2022

REF results (item 8) – K Jones asked B Scott whether there was current capacity for meeting with the Exec to discuss REF results. B Scott indicated that there was not due to oversubscription of recent calls but invited UKCRC to maintain contact on this issue and that he would continue to forward regular written updates on EPSRC/UKRI activities.

UKCRCEC meeting held on 7 June 2022

REPORTS – Membership Panel (item 7.1) – for the action for Exec members to think about potential members and communicate names to N Berthouze, it was noted that there had been no new membership applications since the last meeting when it had been suggested that one

person be nominated by each Exec member. The Chair had approached three potential members but all had declined saying that even a very small time commitment would be a problem. It would be important to phrase any invitations emphasising the benefits of membership and linking it to the new mission statement once drafted and agreed. It will be important to include N Berthouze in the UKCRC mission task and finish group.

ACTION: M Leslie

4. CHAIR'S REPORT [K Jones – verbal]

The Chair raised the issue of UKCRC activities and how actions can be moved forward in the context of everyone's busy post-covid work commitments and the effect this has on volunteer activities. A Taylor indicated that the IET is finding a similar situation with volunteer activities and are trying to find a way of using the dwindling time of volunteers to better purpose. There is value in bringing together different volunteers to talk about aspects that they do not normally talk about. For meetings, instead of asking for a commitment of 3 years or more, asking people to join and do a specific piece of work with a finite timescale may help. In addition, being part of a committee which only has a vague purpose is probably unhelpful.

K Jones agreed that a clear mission statement is vital and proposed that the task and finish group of approximately 6 to 8 members be set up before the end of 2024 Quarter 1. It could be that a UKCRC member outside of the Exec could contribute to this and Exec members were asked to a) consider volunteering and b) think about nominating UKCRC member colleagues to help.

ACTION: Members

For the mission statement, it will be important to identify the target audience (eg, academics, government, donors, researchers in industry). The work undertaken in the run up to the joint meeting in June 2023 had been helpful in clarifying where UKCRC differs from CPHC and BCS and the BCS Academy.

A Irons cited the research community outside of academia as an interesting area spanning those that are very engaged with sharing their findings to those that are very protective of their research (as in commerce). There may be something that can be added to the Venn diagram about how to engage corporate research communities and support SMEs that are more protective. K Jones noted the challenge of achieving such engagement. There are similar challenges for both CPHC and BCS in that people are not as engaged as we would want them to be. J McCann noted that industry researchers are often located in the US and are not aware that there is an equivalent to the ACM in the UK, therefore selling the benefits of UKCRC membership becomes key. A Gordon asked if UKCRC could help with one aspect which is building relationships between professionals and prestigious departments to build a pipeline for postdocs, internships etc, in particular as industrial labs are thinking how to spend money to attract individuals. Another area to consider is AI safety and concerns about legislation – Microsoft have a full time policy team thinking about how to present the company's views to the UK government.

K Jones suggested reaching out to research labs that do not already have links to UKCRC once the mission statement is in place. M Fisher noted that often people are not aware that AI is related to computing and perhaps clarification is needed of that link and the important role for computing research. It might be helpful to represent the links between computer science, data science and Artificial Intelligence diagrammatically.

5. CONSULTATIONS & SUBMISSIONS [TBA]

As discussed earlier, a volunteer to co-ordinate consultations and submissions was still needed. A Hussain asked about engagement with the Turing Institute and Artificial Intelligence academia links. Up to now, engagement at the individual level, but K Jones undertook to write to [A Hussain's contact at the Turing Institute](#) to initiate UKCRC-level engagement.

6. RESEARCH FUNDING AND POLICY (UKCRC/2023/12)

6.1 EPSRC Update – as mentioned earlier, round 1 of The Funding Service (TFS) has closed and is massively oversubscribed. It would be really helpful if colleagues asked for reviews but are unable to help can let the ICT Theme team know as soon as possible. As a result of the interest in round 1, round 2 has been delayed and interview panels for Fellowships will therefore be held 6 weeks later. Those interested in being panel members were invited to [contact](#) B Scott or Laura McDonnell. The benefits of getting involved in reviews were the chance to share the expertise gained with the community. One concern was the peaks and troughs in activity which doesn't help with the time commitment. B Scott indicated that Exec members with any questions were welcome to contact him.

7. REPORTS

7.1 Membership Panel [N Berthouze] – in addition to the discussion above, N Berthouze suggested an online discussion on the composition of the UKCRC Membership Panel and undertook to liaise offline with the Chair on this. **ACTION: N Berthouze/K Jones**

R Aspin joined the meeting at this point

7.2 International Matters inc Informatics Europe [J Xu] – J Xu had sent apologies but provided the following report in advance of the meeting by email.

A meeting is scheduled with the IE European Computer Science Summit delegates on the same day as this Exec meeting when there will be an opportunity to engage with them on any shared concerns and explore potential avenues for future collaboration. J Xu also highlighted that Professor Pekka Orponen, Professor of Computer Science at Aalto University School of Science, is the key contact point for Informatics Europe, leading IE's activities, which include support for Open Access and the formulation of European policy recommendations on open data and research data management in the field of Informatics.

A Irons noted that the delegate list for ECSS comprised very few UK academics, mainly academics from mainland Europe and asked if any discussions are underway with EQANIE (European Quality Assurance Network for Informatics Education) or with IFIP (International Federation for Information Processing). It was easy to see the link between BCS and IFIP but A Irons asked if there are any links between the UK research community and the Seoul and Washington Accords. Given the recent opening up of activities between the UK and the EU, the Chair suggested reviewing UKCRC's international engagement activities and undertook to liaise with Jie Xu on this. **ACTION: K Jones**

7.3 CPHC – R Aspin indicated that the joint conference was the most significant activity with the conference committee starting to move through the organisational processes. The 2023 CPHC conference agenda is being used as a template and it is hoped that two representatives from UKCRC can contribute to the organisation and join the forthcoming conference committee meetings (also, see item 8 below).

CPHC is also looking at its constitution to ensure it still accurately reflects the changing nature of UK computing departments in HE including the different types of staff member plus the imperative for inclusivity. In addition, the Committee is reviewing Officer terms of office and the fee structure for 2024/25. The September 2023 round of CPHC Special Project Grant applications are being considered by the review panel and an Industry Development Group (IDG) is being established to address the divide that has developed between HE and industry.

7.4 BCS Academy – A Irons reported that a review of the Academy Board terms of reference was underway and, in particular how the BCS School Curriculum and Assessment Committee can better represent the community including all four nations of the UK. There is work in hand to introduce positive actions to ensure adequate representation in the context of EDI. There had been negative feedback on the existence of ‘manels’ and addressing the imbalance, particular in terms of gender is a priority. Government funding for CAS, via the NCCE has now finished following the awarding of funding for NCCE2 to STEM Learning. However, new funding sources have been secured and there are a number of developments underway on how BCS and CAS engage with schools. Work is continuing on the academic accreditation review and also the academic support group which provides support for (mostly) new academics through a mentoring scheme. Discussions are taking place on starting a new journal in the area of CS education and it is hoped that UKCRC will be interested in any pedagogic research aspects. A new body, the BCS Foundation has been established which looks to bring computing opportunities to different (hard to reach) parts of the community through fundraising. A Irons is a BCS Foundation trustee and will give further updates as this work (eg, on the [Digital Divide](#)) develops. A Irons is also the UK representative to IFIP and offered to take any UKCRC issues to IFIP, the Working Groups or Technical Committees. There are a number of useful publications issued by IFIP and also conferences such as the TC11 event in Scotland in May 2024.

7.5 IET [A Taylor] – A Taylor reported that the IET is undertaking a re-structure and there will be greater clarity on how the IET can support UKCRC when this is complete. An example could be in the area of policy and being more pro-active in reaching out to government. A Taylor undertook to liaise with the Chair on this in the next couple of months.

ACTION: A Taylor/K Jones

8. JOINT 2024 CONFERENCE WITH CPHC AND BCS ACADEMY

As discussed at the joint meeting with CPHC and the BCS Academy Board on 26 June, the joint conference has been confirmed and will be held on **Tuesday 16 to Wednesday 17 April 2024 at Coventry University** with the theme ‘Shaping Computing’s Visions Challenges & Opportunities’.

The Chair indicated that he was on the 2024 Conference organising committee and that a second representative of the UKCRC Exec was still needed to ensure that the interests of the research community are adequately reflected in the conference agenda and planned sessions. A Irons emphasised the need for all three organisations to speak with one voice and it would be good to get as many members of the three communities as possible around the table to talk about the computer science agenda. R Aspin agreed that this was a great opportunity to fly in formation, avoiding any tendency for the event to be a CPHC conference with bolt-ons and ensuring that the DNA of all three groups threads through. As mentioned at the previous meeting, interested members were invited to contact M Leslie in the first instance.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A Irons asked if the Exec members had any awareness of the trusted research situation. This is a very complex piece of legislation and the penalties for getting it wrong are severe. One aspect is research coming under export control, sanctions and dual use of research outputs. There appears to be concern that HEIs are not taking security seriously. The Chair agreed that this is an important topic with HEIs needing to consider international security for every visitor and every research proposal. Export licenses may be problematic with implications for research. J McCann flagged that this is already becoming a problem with loss of funding and PhD students. As well as security, it could also be to do with economic advantage. There is major concern in how integrity and academic freedom is affected. It was suggested that someone from government be invited to give a view to the UKCRC Exec. B Scott had just been on visits to Liverpool and Manchester where the issues raised by this were rehearsed

and undertook to share the slides used at these sessions. UKRI principles are being updated and work is being undertaken with key international partners on knowledge sharing and risk assessment/mitigation. *[Post meeting note: action complete]*

Members shared some links on this issue via the chat:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/research-collaboration-advice-team> Research Collaboration Advice Team – providing advice to research institutions on the national security risks linked to international research. RCAT is part of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT)

<https://www.gchq.gov.uk/information/nwpst> North West Partnership for Security and Trust

It was agreed that this topic be included on the agenda for Exec to further discuss ways to address this issue and consider ways to influence DSIT to give it adequate attention.

ACTION: M Leslie

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

AGM 2023

Friday 1 December 2023 (14:00-15:00) – Online

2024 Executive Committee meetings

Tuesday 5 March (11:00-13:00) – Online

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

*Tuesday 8 October (11:00-14:30) – BCS London

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

2024 Joint Conference (CPHC/UKCRC/BCS Academy)

Tuesday 16 and Wednesday 17 April – Coventry University

AGM 2024

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

UKCRC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE SUMMARY OF ACTIONS TAKEN AT MEETINGS 2022-3

Outstanding Actions in Red

No.	Item	Item No.	Decision/Action	Responsibility	Complete
UKCRC Executive Committee Meeting ACTIONS from 24 October 2023					
3	MATTERS ARISING: Membership Panel report (7 Jun 2022)	7.1	Include N Berthouze in membership of mission statement task and finish group	M Leslie	On-going
4	CHAIR'S REPORT		Consider volunteering and/or nominating UKCRC member colleagues to help with UKCRC Mission Statement task and finish group	Members	On-going
5	CONSULTATIONS & SUBMISSIONS		Write to A Hussain's contact at the Turing Institute to initiate UKCRC-level engagement	K Jones	On-going
7	REPORTS: Membership Panel	7.1	Liaise on the composition of the UKCRC Membership Panel	N Berthouze/ K Jones	On-going
	International Matters inc IE	7.2	Liaise with Jie Xu on reviewing UKCRC's international engagement activities	K Jones	On-going

	IET	7.5	Liaise on how the IET can support UKCRC in future eg, in the area of policy and reaching out to government	A Taylor/K Jones	On-going
9	AOB		Add Trusted Research to the agenda for the next Exec meeting to discuss how to address this issue and influence DSIT to give it adequate attention	M Leslie	On-going
UKCRC Executive Committee Meeting ACTIONS from 26 June 2023					
3	MATTERS ARISING: Chair's report (8 Mar 2022)		Establish a task and finish group to draft a new UKCRC mission statement for circulation to the Exec and then members <i>[added 24 Oct 23: set up in 2024 Q1 with 6-8 members]</i>	M Leslie/K Jones	On-going
5	CONSULTATIONS & SUBMISSIONS		Forward any consultations that would benefit from a UKCRC-wide response to either K Jones or M Leslie	Members	On-going
8	JOINT 2024 CONFERENCE WITH CPHC/BCS ACADEMY		Contact K Jones or M Leslie if interested in contributing to Conference arrangements	Members	On-going
UKCRC Executive Committee Meeting ACTIONS from 7 March 2023					
3	MATTERS ARISING: International matters (25 Oct 2022)	7.2	Provide any points of contact which might help to improve the visibility of UKCRC, especially in government	Members	On-going
4	CHAIR'S REPORT		Consider volunteering for the role of consultations & submissions rep, which will be more of a co-ordinating/overseeing than previously was the case; call to be circulated <i>[26 Jun update: look at synchronising the BCS Technical Advisory Group and the IET Policy & Insight team]</i>	Members/ M Leslie	On-going
UKCRC Executive Committee Meeting ACTIONS from 25 October 2022					
3	REF results	8	Contact Secretariat if interested in meeting with EPSRC to discuss REF results	Members	On-going
	Strategy day	10	Arrange online strategy day for all of Exec and invited parties <i>[24 Oct update: to be held early in 2024]</i>	M Leslie/K Jones	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