COUNCIL OF PROFESSORS AND HEADS OF COMPUTING

Minutes of the Committee meeting of the Council of Professors and Heads of Computing held on 
Monday 5 February 2024 as an online meeting

PRESENT

*Rob Aspin (Chair) Edmund Robinson *Nicky Danino
*James Davenport Steven Bradley Rebecca Strachan
Haris Mouratidis Parveen Samra *John Woodward
Paul Sant Jonathan Wallace Laura McDonnell (EPSRC)
Ben Scott (EPSRC) *Amir Hussain (UKCRC)

IN ATTENDANCE (Secretariat)

Maxine Leslie (BCS)

*joined for part of meeting

APOLOGIES

Austen Rainer

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair had been delayed by traffic, therefore S Bradley started the meeting in the Chair. Members were welcomed and apologies for absence were received as above.

2. CPHC COMMITTEE TERMS OF OFFICE – see website

Members noted that the terms of office of everyone on the Committee come to an end in 2024. This will need to be addressed at the next election in April 2024, so that it doesn’t happen again in three years’ time.

3. EPSRC/UKRI UPDATE [L McDonnell/B Scott]

B Scott thanked members for disseminating information about EPSRC reviews and those that have volunteered for panels. There were so many proposals in the first round that these were split into a May panel and the Fellowship panels in June and July. Strategic equipment has been moved to fewer panels, this is also over-subscribed. There will be a maximum of three proposals per institution for at least the next two rounds. There was to be a ministerial announcement at Southampton about funding at the same time as this meeting.

E Robinson asked about the new investigator awards and L McDonnell advised that this was still the most popular dedicated scheme and that EPSRC is looking to fund as many as possible.

4. SUBSCRIPTION UPDATE [CPHC/2024/02]

J Davenport indicated that the recent decision on written off subscription fees was being enacted and will appear in the YE2024 annual accounts, shown as debtors. J Davenport undertook to share the list of debtors with Committee members [action complete] and write
to CPHC members for which historical debt has been written off to advise them that their membership will be removed if it happens again.  

**ACTION: J Davenport**

5. **CPHC VALUE PIECE & BENEFITS OF DEVELOPMENT GROUPS**

Members had a broad discussion about the value and benefits of CPHC membership, focussing on the challenges facing member departments and what support is provided currently and support that could be offered in future.

The current benefits include the annual conference and Learning Development Group/Special Project Grants and the resulting report output such as the LLM report. It will continue to be important to come together with UKCRC and BCS to co-ordinate consistent messages, united as a guiding voice.

It is important for CPHC to provide a voice for the broad academic community in computer science. Also, the coordination and sharing of expertise and understanding about what is going on across different HEIs continues to be important with the increasing strain on HEI finances and particular exposure that HEIs have. There is much more in the press about how critical international students are to HEI finances and having a forum for discussing these kinds of issues is crucial.

Members went on to discuss funding and the cost of delivery. There are issues of competition vs cooperation and an institution’s ability to attract staff and keep PhD students. CPHC support helps as it is one of the fastest paced academic subjects and the annual conference can help with networking and sessions such as the new heads workshop. Some HEIs found that CS was less expensive or in the middle range compared with delivery of other subjects. P Sant indicated that the OfS offered top-up funding and certainty for 2022/23. CS was classed as high cost (about £1,000 per student top up of recurrent funding) however, it is not as costly as medicine, physics, chemistry etc. The funding requirements will alter according to the number of students on courses with specific needs. It would be helpful to access data on neurodiverse students on CS courses as HESA statistics did not have this level of detail. R Aspin undertook to draw up proposal for looking into the value of computing, the cost of CS course delivery and obtaining quality data on SEND in different departments.

**ACTION: R Aspin**

The Industry and Career Development Groups (IDG/CDG) were slowly getting moving. The aim was that the CDG will help with retention and maintaining talent. Schemes to share industry and academic time are valuable, providing a safe space to share ideas across the broad community – “not just me”.

A question was asked about academic mentoring and it was noted that Alan Hayes had set up a group working in this area to provide a clearing shop for those looking for mentors (see Computer Science Academics: Higher Education Community of Practice specialist group | BCS)

A clearing shop for external examiners may also be valuable as there is a current shortage.

6. **2024 JOINT SUMMIT**

The Chair introduced this item for the benefit of EPSRC colleagues. The plan is to stage thematic summits from now on with three strands to feed in (CPHC, BCS and UKCRC). The first will be held on 16/17 April and an impressive programme of speakers and workshop facilitators were being arranged. With further input from P Samra, members discussed promotion of the Summit, expenses reimbursements for speakers/contributors and securing contributors for the gaps in the agenda. B Scott and L McDonnell volunteered to deliver an EPSRC workshop on the second day of the Summit and the Chair expressed his thanks for this.
The Summit will be open to all, not just professors and heads of department and significant time was being built into the agenda for attendees to network. Summit promotion will begin in earnest once the booking system is set up. Committee members AGREED to delegate authority to the Planning Group and the Treasurer for the Summit cost sign offs.

[main items of business]

7. PROGRAMME of WORK

7.1 Learning and Development Group (LDG) and Special projects – S Bradley reported that since the last meeting, there had been five submissions and three re-submissions. The next deadline date is 31 March 2024 which falls on Easter Sunday, so the plan is to extend this to Monday 8 April.

A request had been received by the University of Glasgow (SPG awarded in March 2023) requesting an extension to their project timeline to the end of July 2024, to align with their other SPG. Members discussed the SPG rule about CPHC not normally funding more than one Special Project in any one department at any one time. It was agreed that this request should be granted on this occasion but the general rule flagged to the Institution for future reference and the Secretariat undertook to communicate this to Glasgow [action complete].

7.2 Industry Development Group (IDG) – H Mouratidis reported that Terms of Reference for the group were being drafted for discussion with R Aspin and would be shared with members shortly.

ACTION: H Mouratidis/R Aspin

7.3 Career Development Group (CDG) – P Sant reported that this group was at a similar stage of formation as the Industry Development Group. Several contacts had been sounded out on their willingness to contribute. It was noted that there was some overlap with the industry group and it might be helpful to combine both groups.

7.4 Workshop Programme (Pipeline; Coffee table meetings; Chair in 10 Years; Outreach Network) – it would be useful to have these workshop packages available for using in future as part of the CPHC value proposition. P Sant and N Danino are reviewing the coffee table meetings.

7.5 Special activities (if relevant) – see Joint Summit discussion (Item 6).

8. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING [CPHC/2023/32]/ UPDATE ON ACTIONS

The minutes of the last meeting held on Wednesday 6 December 2023 were accepted as a true record and approved for transfer to the website [action complete].

8.1 UK Honours nominations process proposal – Members discussed the benefit of liaising with BCS to make nominations from the CPHC community, although it may need a wider net to cover people that are not BCS members. P Sant asked about the remit for nominations and whether it would be helpful to have a systematic process in place to identify nominees against the criteria via subgroup or the whole Committee. M Leslie undertook to share the UK Honours criteria and request names with a deadline date of two weeks before the Summit, so that a list can be built up [action complete]. R Aspin undertook to liaise with Julia Adamson on the UK Honours nomination process with a view to making two nominations in the next six months. ACTION: R Aspin

8.2 CPHC Constitution – R Aspin reported that he had been unable to contact lain Phillips to discuss the proposal that the Chair’s term of office be amended. It was suggested that soundings could be taken from CPHC members at the Summit and R Aspin undertook to do this either informally or formally. ACTION: R Aspin
8.3 **CPHC branding and website review** [see test site] – N Danino reported that the content was in the background ready to migrate and the logistics for doing this were currently being worked out. It was noted that the website hosting had been moved from BCS to WordPress some years ago as CPHC had been unhappy with the restrictions being placed on it by BCS. The registrant contact would need to be changed from E Robinson and the domain name from MMU (Keith Miller). N Danino and E Robinson undertook to liaise on the detail of this offline [action complete].

9. **UPDATES**

9.1 **Chair’s Update** – R Aspin indicated that this is his last Committee meeting as Chair and J Davenport proposed a vote of thanks to R Aspin for all the work he had undertaken during the last 2 years. Members also thanked E Robinson for his work as Treasurer, Vice Chair, Chair and Immediate Past Chair during his 12 years of service to the Committee.

9.2 **Treasurer’s Update** – J Davenport reported that J Wallace had agreed to chase Ulster University’s overdue subscription. Members agreed the importance of not offering an online option to join the Summit as that would impact the income and the extent to which costs can be covered. It may be possible to offer the AGM (only) as an online event but a decision on this was postponed until there was a clearer idea of attendance numbers. P Samra undertook to decide this in consultation with the summit planning group [action complete].

9.3 **Secretary’s Update** – see LDG report above (item 7.1).

9.4 **EDI Lead update** – R Strachan and P Sant were putting together a session for the Summit. Members discussed including EDI as a standing agenda item but were unable to agree where on the agenda it should be: as the first item or the top of the updates section (item 9 on this agenda) or whether it should be threaded through all discussions. It would be important for the call for nominations and the new Committee to be reflective of the wider community in terms of equality, diversity and inclusion. R Strachan and P Sant undertook to give some thought to how the agenda should be framed in terms of EDI. **ACTION: R Strachan/P Sant**

9.5 **UKCRC Update** – there had been no meeting since the last meeting of CPHC Committee.

9.6 **NI HoS [J Wallace/A Rainer]** – members RECEIVED and NOTED the written notes for verbal update. As the Northern Ireland Assembly is back up and running, there may be better opportunities for CPHC to engage. J Wallace reported that the BCS Northern Ireland Computing Education Committee meetings have moved to being held twice a year, therefore there has been no meeting so far in 2024. N Danino reported that the next BCS Council meeting is due to be held in Belfast with Rachel Steenson as the link.

9.7 **Welsh HoS [representative TBA]** – nothing to report.

9.8 **Scottish HoS [representative TBA]** – nothing to report.

9.9 **Updates from Other Organisations & Activities** (IE/PICTFOR; Distinguished dissertations; IoC) – see relevant items above. There are a significant number of PICTFOR activities and many chances to get involved. These are listed in the Consultations & Events spreadsheet. M Leslie undertook to check with PICTFOR that N Danino is the Committee member contact and to invite PICTFOR representatives to the Summit [actions complete].
10. MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

February 2024 – Summit when booking system is live plus SPG announcement in same comms (R Aspin/S Bradley).

March 2024 – Summit (R Aspin)

April 2024 – call for nominations for Committee members and reflections on the Summit (N Danino/R Aspin). As last year, it would be good to include a letter from the conference chair in the swag bag.

11. AOB

B Scott undertook to circulate an email update to include the survey for semi-conductor strategy, asking for members to complete the survey and share it with others to do so.

The Chair thanked members and closed the meeting at 13:33.

FUTURE MEETINGS All commencing at 11:00am, unless otherwise stated

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*to be co-located with UKCRC Executive Committee meeting

Outstanding Actions from Committee Meetings – 5 February 2024, 6 December 2023, 4 October 2023, 26 June 2023, 11 May 2023, 6 February 2023 & 7 December 2022

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### OUTSTANDING ACTIONS FROM COMMITTEE MEETING – 4 OCTOBER 2023

| EPSRC update | 2 | Provide information to CPHC via the Secretariat for supporting EPSRC to potentially help with briefing CPHC members on application changes Liaise with L McDonnell on EPSRC’s EDI data for gender and emerging talent | L McDonnell | On-going |
| Workshop programme | 5.5 | Put together a plan for CPHC workshop activities that can be aligned with regional events and Conference | N Danino/ R Strachan | On-going |

### OUTSTANDING ACTIONS FROM COMMITTEE MEETING – 26 JUNE 2023

| EPSRC UPDATE | 4 | Provide a short note for the membership on EPSRC/UKRI activities for this and future meetings | B Scott | On-going |

### OUTSTANDING ACTIONS FROM COMMITTEE MEETING – 11 MAY 2023

| NEW MEMBER | 4 | Work on providing further guidance for applying institutions such as an application form template | Officers | On-going |
| CONFERENCE Feedback Q results | 6.1 | Use positive quotes from feedback in publicising future conferences | Conference Committee | On-going |

### OUTSTANDING ACTIONS FROM COMMITTEE MEETING – 6 FEBRUARY 2023

| EDI Lead | 4.4 | Contact ‘Decolonising the curriculum’ project lead at LJMU about leading a workshop for this workstream [Jun 2023 mtg: R Aspin to liaise with A Waraich and follow up with R Strachan] | R Aspin (A Waraich) | On-going |

### OUTSTANDING ACTIONS FROM COMMITTEE MEETING – 7 DECEMBER 2022

| UPDATE ON ACTIONS Strategic Plan Document (6) | 2 | Revise document in line with comments received earlier and re-circulate | R Aspin | On-going |