University of Warwick
Department of Computer Science

Minutes, Postgraduate Research Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC)
H0.44, CS1.02 2-4pm Wednesday 9th May, 2018

1 Present

Richard Kirk 2nd Year PhD Representative, CS (SSLC Chair)
Jasmine Grosso 1st Year PhD Representative, CDT (SSLC Secretary)
Matthew Bradbury 4th Year PhD Representative, CS
David Purser 2nd Year PhD Representative, CDT (present until point 6)
Ruqayya Awan 1st Year PhD Representative (International Representative)
Dr. Florin Ciucu Head of PGR studies
Prof. Nasir Rajpoot SSLC Convenor
Dr. Claire Rocks STP Coordinator (present after point 5.2)
Ruth Cooper Departmental Administration (present after point 5.2)
Sharon Howard Departmental and PG Secretary
Nathalie Key Academic Voice Coordinator (Postgraduate)

2 Absent

Isabella Slattery, Eleanor Davies, and Prof. Mike Joy were absent with apologies.

3 Corrections and Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting
   Held on 23rd October 2017

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as a true and accurate record with no amendments.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes

4.1 Technical Gatherings Wanted Outside of WPCCS

Richard Kirk will investigate the type of gatherings are wanted by PhD students, and who would be interested in running these events.
4.2 Action Items from last Meeting

Discussion into teaching will take place later in the meeting (Section 5.4)

Richard Kirk will investigate whether automatic creation of a default webpage could be implemented and get clarification on the process.

An email has been sent out about construction noise.

Richard Kirk will do further research on what type of technical workshops are wanted by PGR students.

5 Issues Raised in Staff Meeting

5.1 New Staff Members

Several new staff members are to be appointed. These are three new assistant professors and a senior teaching fellow.

5.2 Visa Issues

There will be checks from the Home Office for those students under Tier 2, 4, and 5 visas. The Home Office selects 100 students from the university and will check monitoring points. If any discrepancies are found, further interviews may take place.

As such, monitoring points must be recorded within one week of the meeting that has taken place.

Action (Richard Kirk) Investigate whether it is possible for tabula to send email notifications for this.

5.3 GDPR

There are new data protection regulations being put in place, with some implications for PGR students. Portable devices should be encrypted by Friday Week 5. Mike Joy has sent an email about this.

Warwick email is the only email that should be used, not other providers such as Gmail.

It may be necessary to download the Education version of Windows for encryption features.

These rules apply to PGR students that have student data, for instance teaching support information.

5.4 Issues with Teaching and Marking

A discussion was held regarding the "Issues with Teaching and Marking" document in the staff meeting. Many felt that the issues were valid but the recommendations for solutions could be adjusted.

There has been a number of students complaining that there is a lack of guidance for marking.

It is felt that an increase in undergraduate students will lead to early PGR student burnout, and there is a concern that PGRs will refuse to teach with higher student numbers.

The STP coordinator should be the first person PGRs should talk to about teaching issues. However, the paper being discussed was asked for by Ranko Lazic specifically.

Action (Ruth Cooper) will look into how this communication happens.

There was not much resolution to the paper in the Staff Meeting. There needs to be a wider review of teaching practices within the department, including the scalability of coursework and other teaching.
Many PGRs have said that they no longer wish to teach. As such, **Richard Kirk** will survey the PGRs. This survey will include a welfare perspective, such as how many hours they are working and how they feel this impacts upon their research and general wellbeing. **Ruth Cooper** adds that STP can provide the number of hours worked that has been recorded, so it is not necessary to ask this in the survey. The focus will be on their feelings about the number of hours worked. Additionally, the PGRs should be surveyed in regards to the technical skills they have that could be applied to teaching, as well as how many hours they would like to work.

**Action (Richard Kirk)** will survey the PGR students and get information from STP about hours worked.

It was suggested to talk in the STP forums about general teaching plans for next academic year. It was discussed that the survey performed by **Richard Kirk** could be combined with the term 3 forum.

A suggestion was made that module organisers are assigned a predetermined number of PGR teachers and the organiser should plan their course appropriately around this.

Another issue brought up was the lack of mark schemes for essays. A suggested solution to this was to use the 17 point mark scheme provided by the University. Many academics may not know about this, but as many essays are technical reports it may not be an appropriate fit. The replacement to the 17 point mark scheme, the 20 point mark scheme, is available at [https://warwick.ac.uk/services/aro/dar/quality/categories/examinations/markings/ug2017/](https://warwick.ac.uk/services/aro/dar/quality/categories/examinations/markings/ug2017/)

A general issue raised was the increase in undergraduate student numbers; there have been more offers this year than last year. No solution was offered.

### 6 PhD Issues

Issues have been raised by email and anonymous feedback.

**Note:** During this section **David Purser** and **Nathalie Key** leave.

#### 6.1 Coffee Club

The PGR Community prefer the older system.

There are issues with some people only needing milk and not tea or coffee, or vice versa, and so it feels like bad value. A suggestion was raised to have a milk only club.

Part time staff and PGR pay £2.50 a month, as opposed to the £5 a month normal fee.

As the department runs with a surplus, it was suggested that coffee and tea be provided at no cost to the stuff. As an example, the Urban Science CDT provide tea, coffee, milk, and biscuits for free to PGR students.

It is claimed that there has been no direction put forward to make the tea and coffee complementary. The monthly charge was put forward as it is easier to organise than individual costings.

A solution was not found.

#### 6.2 Cleanliness of labs and offices

An issue was raised about the cleanliness of labs and offices for PGR students.

It was discussed that students should ask the cleaners to clean certain areas or to borrow equipment, however cleaners often have limited supplies and may not be able to lend them out.

Students could also speak to **Sharon Howard** who could request cleaning of a specific office with the cleaning supervisor.
It was pointed out that cleaners are not allowed to clean desks with items on them, as this may impact any work that is being done on the desk.

Alternatively, it would be possible to order a limited number of cleaning supplies for PhD student use.

7 WPCCS

Few PGR students have submitted abstracts; so far there has been three poster submissions and four presentations.

**Action (Richard Kirk)** will contact supervisors so they can encourage their students to submit. He will also clarify with first years that they still have to submit an abstract, and look into putting reminders on the TV.

There are currently two guest speakers confirmed, Micheal Gale (DCS department) and Suhaib Fahmy (Engineering department). Jonathan Hatchett is also a possibility.

The structure of WPCSS will be similar to previous years. **David Purser** would like a DIMAP track.

**Action (Richard Kirk)** will get pictures from Claire to put in the booklet for the 50th anniversary. Other possibilities for the anniversary includes a branded cake.

**Action (Richard Kirk)** will check if a license is required to serve alcohol.

**Action (Jasmine Grosso)** will look into if the CDT would like to host a bakeoff at the event.

PGRs who have started late will not be required to present, but will be encouraged to attend.

8 Annual Review

Annual reviews are happening soon and there has been a meeting on it.

Note: at this point the meeting changed locations and **Claire Rocks** leaves.

8.1 Annual Review Documents

WISC has produced two documents for annual reviews. The first document outlines the whole PhD process from the student perspective. This document is aimed at the CDT but would be helpful to adapt for Computer Science. The second document is a new Annual Review form which outlines what the advisors will assess the project on.

**Action (Richard Kirk and Jasmine Grosso)** to attend a meeting about these documents.

Both of these documents are currently under review but would be useful to adapt for Computer Science.

It was discussed that these documents may be adopted starting with the next annual review, with the CDT running it this year as a pilot. There will be a two week window towards the end of term when all the meetings for annual review will be booked (similar to MSc presentations). For this meeting, three quarters would be devoted to the meeting and the last quarter being when the academics discuss the results.

**Yvonne Colmer** will look into whether it is feasible to use Tabula could be used for submissions. This could help with keeping records if issues are raised later on, for instance with extensions.

The CDT has a fixed schedule for start dates and annual reviews but Computer Science isn’t as fixed, so may have to look into doing two annual reviews a year.

The PGR committee will meet to review the forms in September.
8.2 Skillsforge

There is a professional development program run by the university, which currently is approved but not mandatory. There are some helpful modules as part of the program, for instance academic writing and networking. It was discussed to add some of these modules as a condition to the review form, in addition to attending at least two or three seminars as part of the annual review.

It would also be helpful to have research methodology modules on improving research skills, and proof reading modules for students who first language is not English.

It may be useful to PGRs to arrange with Tracy Horton to present how to use Skillsforge correctly.

Many Skillsforge modules are not specific to Computer Science, and it would be better to arrange more Computer Science specific modules.

It would be helpful for PGR students to attend seminars on academic writing, for example two weeks after induction.

It was discussed that generally seminars such as this need to be more regular and structured throughout the first year. The possibility of having senior PhD students, post docs, or staff members present these seminars to make them more CS specific.

PGR committee should come up with a proposal of what that training year might look like and where that will happen, possibly encapsulating this into a 7.5 CAT module.

Note: at this point Ruth Cooper and Prof. Nasir Rajpoot leaves.

9 STP Update

No matters to discuss.

10 Welfare and Communication Committee Matters

The Athena Swan admission date has been moved to 18th May.

Dr. Claire Rocks and Ruth Cooper are putting this together and are almost finished.

11 Any Other Business

The suggestion was put forward to display modules on offer on the TVs downstairs.

It was brought up that students often don’t know when SSLCs are actually happening.

Action (Richard Kirk) will look into creating a message on the screens downstairs for the next meeting.

A student has brought up issues with parking on campus beyond 9am. This problem has been brought up at the Science PGR meeting which has led to a freedom of information request. The problem is being raised with the head of science.

Thesis printing is expensive, causing hardship for student. There is a PhD hardship fund which may cover this, and also each student has a £1500 budget for travel and conferences, which could be used. Other solutions include printing and binding with the department machines or approaching the SU.

Action (Richard Kirk) will contact the SU about solutions for thesis printing.

12 Time and Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held one week after the next staff meeting.