

Contents

News from HoS

This Week

School Events

External Events

Funding Opps

Prize & Award Opps

Research Awards

Staff News

Vacancies

Links

News Submissions

[Newsletter Archive](#)

School Strategy

School Intranet

School Seminars

ESNW Seminars

NaCTeM Seminars

News from Head of School

Signing Off

This is my last newsletter (indeed, my last day) as Head of School. The school has had a deserved reputation for contributing significantly through its research and teaching for many years; I hope that my tenure has helped at least to nurture what is good, in a setting where there has necessarily been some battening down of hatches.

As Head, you quickly realise that you don't actually *do* very much – there is a fair amount of planning, discussing and meeting; there is some prioritising and politicking; and there are lots of little decisions to make ... but in practice most responsibility is shared, and most real work is devolved. As such, I would like to thank those who have shared the responsibility (this is mostly Ursula and Allan at the centre of the school) and the many to whom responsibilities have been devolved. Lynn has also been key to keeping office-level activity from dominating too many days. I have been consistently impressed by the commitment and professionalism shown by colleagues, and have rarely felt let down.

High point as head: the school winning the EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training – this was a good team effort.

Low point as head: announcing the death of someone who was still alive! Anyway, I am sure my embarrassment made a lot of people very happy!

Jim has been warming up for some time now; I hope that the school is being passed on in reasonable shape, and I am confident that it will be in capable hands.

... from tomorrow my office will be 2.20!

State of the Nation

The pending change of editor for this section of the newsletter is perhaps something of a landmark (at least for me), and seems to justify some reflection on the school, changes therein over the last three years, and pending issues and opportunities.

The environment in which the school operates is significantly influenced by economics and politics, and the external environment has set the tone for a fair measure of school policy in recent years. Northern Rock sought financial support from the treasury on 14th September 2007, and Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy on 15th September 2008, but the consequences of these and associated events have been surprisingly slow to come home, and the principal risks to our financial stability still lie ahead: the impact of fees on UK and EU student numbers at undergraduate and postgraduate taught level, and the impact of reducing budgets and changing priorities in the research councils. The position with respect to fees will be much clearer from September 2012, and any impact from research council changes will most likely be incremental and over a longer period.

This context has caused the school to take certain actions. We have:

- *Carried out a managed reduction in the size of the school.* In essence, we will have

reduced the number of academic staff by 6 and the number of administrative staff by 4 from 2008 to 2011 (when all currently open posts have been filled), which is a reduction of around 10%. Overall, subsequent to the partial merger of Informatics with Computer Science, there did not seem to be a strong enough student market to support such a large school. The winding up of the Information Systems Division in the Business School is further evidence that the university had more informatics activity than it could sustain.

- *Completed the revision of our undergraduate programmes.* Although numbers admitted have been broadly flat in recent years (2008 – 249, 2009 – 216, 2010 – 245, 2011 – 247), entry grades have improved year-on-year (average values are: 2008 – BBC, 2009 – BBB, 2010 – ABB, 2011 – AAB), and there have been substantial improvements in retention. Thus the near crisis in undergraduate recruitment that followed the .com crash seems to be behind us, and we have a strong base of good quality home and overseas undergraduate students. Perhaps the main risk to numbers here is that we have met “home” targets in recent years partly by recruiting non-UK EU students at home fee rates.
- *Carried out a complete revision of our postgraduate taught programmes.* Following on from the school merger, our masters offerings were fragmented and included several small programmes. The revision has certainly resulted in a fully integrated and more coherent programme offering. It looked like this was also likely to do us significant good in terms of recruitment, but there has been a significant drop in overseas numbers in 2011; total cohort sizes are (2008 – 129, 2009 – 148, 2010 – 172, 2011 – 133).
- *Sought out new educational income streams.* The two principal innovations here have been: the signing of a 2+2 agreement with the Communication University of China, which should be admitting students into our second year from 2012; and expansion of our distance learning masters offerings on the back of the revised masters programmes. The new income streams from these developments are principally in the future.
- *Started a comprehensive revision of our postgraduate research programmes.* Following our success in winning the EPSRC Centre for Doctoral Training in Computer Science, we are in a position to blend increased training with research in a four-year integrated model, and have the funding to establish this model with a significant cohort over a 5 year period. Given the increasingly competitive research environment in which we operate, the hope must be that the revised format increases the fraction of our doctoral students whose results can compete at the top level internationally.
- *Sought to grow research income from the EU.* The principal objective here has been to ensure that engagement with EU funding is well understood and supported. There is evidence that our EU income is growing, but it is easy to draw overly bold conclusions building on timing quirks, so it is probably not yet appropriate to conclude that there has been a sustained change in practice. In addition, my take is that we are still a long way from maturity in terms of our engagement with EU funding – for example, we rarely lead proposals.

Thus, after a period where the focus was perhaps principally on research, in recent years more of the focus at a school level has been on the redevelopment of teaching programmes. While these will need some refinement in the light of experience, development costs should be significantly less in the next few years than in the last few. However, reducing staff numbers does mean that we will need to think carefully about efficiency, for example by focusing on levels of choice offered and the amount of assessment.

In terms of research, the school does not plan or manage research in the way it does teaching – the goal is to provide an environment in which academic staff have both the time and the resources required to set and address their own objectives. Overall, the fraction of research active academic staff is increasing with time, and recent figures show that our research is the most cited of any computer science department in the country. Reviewing publication outputs for REF shows that there is a lot of excellent work underway in the school, but of course the quality threshold for HEFCE funding is high, with the current ratio of 9:3:0:0 funding for 4* to 1* outputs. This focus on strong rewards for excellence

encourages organisations to play to their strengths in recruitment; this is good for developing critical mass, but potentially leads to conservative appointments and to a weak alignment of teaching and research. In recent years academic posts in the school have been in areas of established research strength (architecture/engineering, nanotechnology, automated reasoning), and future appointments will also need to be accompanied by compelling cases that excellence will result.

Computer Engineering Lectureship

I am pleased to pass on the news that Vasilis Pavlidis will be joining us as a Lecturer in Computer Engineering from September 2012. He works mostly on 3D circuits, and should bring strong, complementary experience to our Computer Engineering activity. More details on Vasilis are at: <http://si2.epfl.ch/~vpavlidi/>

Student mental health policy

The Student Mental Health Policy has recently been re-launched along with new and improved guidance for staff.

The policy can be accessed [here](#).

Events

CDT seminar: The Fun & Science of Computer Reasoning 2 Nov 11

Professor Andrei Voronkov, University of Manchester

17:30 Registration, 17:30 Lecture. Lecture Theatre 1.1, Kilburn Building.

This is a free event, but we ask that you [register here](#) to reserve your place.

CS Away Day 4 Nov 11

Away day for all academic staff and a number of PSS staff in CS on 4th November 2011. This is the last day of Reading Week and the day after the CS Research Symposium.

Timetable:

11:30 – 12:00 Welcome, coffee

12:00 – 12:30 Introduction (JJM)

12:30 – 1:30 Lunch

Afternoon – group discussion topics:

1:30 – 2:15 Research (RDS, JLS)

2:15 – 3:00 External (AR)

3:00 – 3:30 Tea, Coffee

3:30 – 4:15 Teaching (SRP, TLJH, US)

4:15 - 5:00 Staff (JJM)

5:00 – 6:00 Wine reception

Please could you reply to [Lynn Howarth](#) to confirm your attendance or let her know if you are unable to attend.

Funding Opportunities

Reminder: Research Exchanges

4 Nov 11

The next round of the of the Research Exchanges with China and India scheme run by The Royal Academy of Engineering is now due to start. The scheme provides funding to enable researchers in engineering departments at UK universities to spend time at academic centres of excellence in China or India, and academic engineering researchers in China or India to spend time at a UK university. Awards support visits of 3-12 months and should be part of longer-

term efforts to build UK-China/India partnerships. The aim of the scheme is to support international research collaborations and strengthen networks of excellence in engineering research. The deadline for applications is 4 November 2011. Please do not hesitate to contact Radhar Babbar if you require any further information or have any queries regarding this scheme. Further information including application forms and notes for guidance are also available at [Here](#)

Reminder: Royal Society Wolfson Research Merit Awards

8 Nov 11

Jointly funded by the Wolfson Foundation and BIS, this scheme aims to provide universities with additional support to enable them to attract to this country, or retain, respected scientists of outstanding achievement and potential. Awards are made to the university and as such researchers must remain at the university named on the application.

The focus of the award is a salary enhancement. Research expenses are also considered for research costs not suitable for Research Councils' research grants applications and for overseas applicants to support integration into the UK research and funding environment.

Eligibility: Applicants can be of any nationality and must hold, or be guaranteed, a permanent post at a UK university. All applicants must have their basic salary wholly funded by the university.

Length of tenure: Five years funding after which the award holder continues with the permanent post at the host university.

Place of tenure: UK university. Please note that these awards are made to the host university and cannot be transferred to another university.

Value: Salary enhancements have been made usually in the range of £10K to £30K per annum.

Website link: royalsociety.org/Wolfson-Research-Merit-Awards/

Closing date for approved applications: 08 November 2011

Leverhulme Trust Senior Research Fellowships

11 Jan 12

The Royal Society Leverhulme Trust Senior Research Fellowships were established through the generosity of the Leverhulme Trust and seek to provide opportunities for academic researchers to be relieved of all their teaching and administrative duties to allow them to concentrate on full-time research for up to one year.

Subjects Covered: All areas of the life and physical sciences, including engineering, but excluding clinical medicine.

Eligibility: Applicants must hold a permanent post at a UK institution and be at a suitable stage in their career when they would particularly benefit from a period of full-time research.

Length of Tenure: Between one academic term and one year.

Value of Grant: The fellow's employing institution will be reimbursed for the full salary cost of a teaching replacement (up to the equivalent of the minimum point on the lectureship scale as paid by the host university). Research expenses up to a maximum of £2,500 are available to each fellow to cover the costs of consumables, equipment, travel and communicating science.

[Weblink](#)

Closing date: 11 January 2012

CHIST-ERA (European Coordinated Research on Long term Challenges in ICST) Call 2011

17 Jan 12

Issue date: 21 October 2011

Closing date: 17:00 on 17 January 2012

Call type: Invitation for proposals

EPSRC are one of eleven European Funding Organisations participating in the ERA-Net CHIST-ERA, a coordination and cooperation activity of the partner agencies in order to reinforce the transnational collaboration between member states in challenging multidisciplinary research in the area of Information and Communication Sciences and Technologies (ICST) with the potential to lead to significant breakthroughs.

The CHIST-ERA initiative is looking for highly innovative and multidisciplinary collaborative projects in information and communication sciences and technologies.

Thus CHIST-ERA is open to new ideas and original solutions, involving interdisciplinary skills. In addition, the transformative research done in CHIST-ERA shall explore new topics with potential for significant scientific and technical impacts.

In the 2011 Call, two separate topics are addressed, namely:

- From data to new knowledge (D2K)
- Green ICT, towards Zero Power ICT (G-ICT)

Closing date: 17:00 on 17 January 2012

[Full details and how to apply](#)

Brian Mercer Feasibility Award

Rolling round

Subjects Covered: Built environment, clean technology, energy and nanoscience/nanotechnology. One award in each round will be specifically in the general field of electrotechnology (including telecommunications and IT systems), and this award is supported by the ERA Foundation.

Eligibility: The Brian Mercer Feasibility Award is open to applicants of any nationality who have a PhD (or are of equivalent standing in their profession), who hold a substantive post in a UK university or not-for-profit research organisation and who will be in post for at least the duration of the project. The project must commence within three months of the date of notification.

Applicants may make only one application per round. Applications from individuals or groups who already have established contacts with industrial or commercial collaborators are particularly encouraged.

Length of Tenure: Awards are not expected to exceed 12 months in duration.

Value of Grant: Up to £30,000 (this figure includes VAT where applicable).

Number Offered: We have funds for 3 awards in the fields of built environment, clean technology, energy and nanoscience and nanotechnology, and one award in the field of electrotechnology. Once all awards have been made, the round will close.

[Website link](#)

Opening Information: 30 August 2011. These awards now operate on a rolling round, awards assessed on a first come, first served basis. Once all awards have been made, the round will close.