NOTES of the Information and Communication Technologies Strategic Advisory Team MEETING HELD ON 17 December 2014 at Polaris House, Swindon

Present:

Professor David Hogg CHAIR University of Leeds
Professor Mike Chantler Heriot Watt University
Professor George Constantinides Imperial College London
Professor Mischa Dohler King's College London
Professor Yang Hao Queen Mary, University of London
Professor Martin Kuball University of Bristol
Dr Wyn Meredith CST Global Ltd
Professor Bashar Nuseibeh Open University
Professor Gerard Parr University of Ulster
Professor Andrew Pitts University of Cambridge
Professor David Roberton University of Edinburgh
Professor Peter Smowton Cardiff University

EPSRC Staff:

Dr Liam Blackwell Lead of ICT Theme
Dr Vivienne Blackstone Senior Portfolio Manager
Zoe Brown Portfolio Manager
Lisa Coles Portfolio Manager
Dr Anke Davis Portfolio Manager
Dr Miriam Dowle Portfolio Manager
Diane Howard Portfolio Manager
Tracy Keys Portfolio Manager
Dr Matthew Lodge Portfolio Manager
Dr Susan Peacock Portfolio Manager
Brooke Smith Year in Industry Student

Apologies:

Dr Susan Appleby CESG
Professor Edmund Burke University of Stirling
Professor Matt Jones Swansea University
Dr Alex Hulkes EPSRC Senior Portfolio Manager

1. Theme Update

1.1 Finance Update

The ICT SAT were updated on the current spending for this financial year and the estimated budget for the 2015/16 financial year.
1.2 Autumn Statement
The ICT SAT were updated on the content of the Autumn Statement and in particular those relevant to the ICT Theme. This included the Sir Henry Royce Institute for advanced materials research and the Cognitive Computing Research Centre at Daresbury.

1.3 REF
It was stated that the results of the REF 2014 exercise would be digested by the ICT Theme at EPSRC and that the ICT SAT would be consulted as necessary. The further use of the REF impact case studies was also discussed, and work is on-going to develop these in relation to EPSRC preparations for the next Comprehensive Spending Review bid.

1.4 Research and Innovation Internet Environment (RIIE)
The ICT SAT were informed of progress on this.

1.5 Digital Healthcare
An update was given following the Digital Healthcare workshop involving the ICT, Healthcare Technologies and Digital Economy SATs and PAB. The SAT commented that the workshop was a positive, useful meeting and that more signposting was needed to encourage researchers to apply to the ICT:Healthcare Technologies interface through standard mode. Various methods of community building are also being investigated and the ICT SAT were reassured that EPSRC is working with MRC and other research councils on this activity.

1.6 International Working
The ICT SAT were updated on the Engineering Theme’s progress on establishing a lead agency peer review process with the Engineering directorate of the NSF. As the Engineering directorate has a broad remit, there may be some cross-theme issues to work on, but this could be a starting point for the ICT Theme to also establish such a process. The SAT advised that the NSF has a different internal structure to EPSRC, and that joint working is therefore not straightforward, although the SAT International sub-group could leverage existing relationships to assist with this. Clarification was also provided on the CHIST-ERA topic selection process and involvement in the Multidisciplinary University Research Initiative (MURI) jointly with the US Department of Defence and Dstl.

1.7 Turing Institute
An update was given regarding the Turing Institute. The Joint Venture partners for this are not expected to be announced until early 2015, the location will be at the new British Library site in Central London.

1.8 SAT recruitment
A summary of the current ICT SAT recruitment process was given, three vacancies were advertised on the website, and the ICT Theme is currently working on shortlisting the nominations.
1.9 Workshops
An brief update on the ‘New Materials for RF & MW Technologies’ was given, along with a summary of the main points of discussion. An update was also given from the Creative Industries workshop which was coordinated by the Digital Economy Theme and included ICT researchers. Full reports from both these workshops will be published in early 2015.

1.10 Pioneers
The ICT SAT were updated on planning for the next Pioneers 2015 event and SAT members were asked to help promote it. The ICT SAT asked whether an Early Career researcher showcase element could be run in parallel and it was agreed that this was something that could be considered for the next event.

2. Speech Technology
It was explained that during the May 2014 ICT SAT meeting and as part of the Monitoring Portfolio Evolution (MPE) health check, the SAT recommended that the ICT Theme re-think the current position on the Speech Technology Research Area due to a rapidly changing landscape. Key members of this research community were consequently consulted and input sought from two international experts. The information gained was shared with the ICT SAT at this meeting, and the SAT was asked to advise and comment.

The SAT noted that this discussion arose from the portfolio health check, as unsolicited lobbying would not be appropriate, and that this wasn’t the case in this instance.

**ACTION:** ICT Theme to continue to explore what the EPSRC’s position should be on the Speech Technology Research Area.

3. Portfolio Management
Following discussion at the May 2014 SAT meeting and SAT conference and as part of the Monitoring Portfolio Evolution (MPE) health check, several ICT Research Area definitions were identified as needing clarification. During this session the ICT SAT considered the current wording of these Research Area definitions and gave advice on how to re-word, in order to clarify what was included within the Research Area. It was stressed that this exercise was not to re-scope Research Areas. It was explained that the ICT Theme would synthesise the comments for relevant areas, reword the definitions where appropriate and communicate the final definitions to the SAT members who were involved in the discussions in early 2015.

**ACTION:** ICT Theme to finalise any changes and send to the relevant ICT SAT members.
4. **Responsible Research and Innovation**
   An update was given on several activities relating to Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) on-going within EPSRC. The ICT SAT were asked to speak to colleagues in their departments about developments and attitudes towards RRI within the ICT community.

   The ICT SAT were also updated on the FRRIICT\(^1\) project and the establishment of a web observatory. The concept of this was supported by the ICT SAT and work is on-going to develop a detailed case.

   The ICT SAT expressed concern about how RRI would be assessed and reviewed within the EPSRC peer review process. It was clarified that what is being asked for is not a solution to the problem but rather more consideration from researchers about the wider impacts and possible implications from their work. The SAT were also reminded that the FRRIICT observatory aimed to provide resources to support this and that this was already a requirement within the Horizon 2020 call.

   The ICT SAT suggested that the responsible execution of research should be dealt with by universities, whereas consideration of the implications of research is a much thornier issue. The SAT also commented that there was some interesting research to be done in this area, for example the protection of data anonymity.

   **ACTION:** ICT SAT members to discuss developments and attitudes towards RRI with colleagues and report back to ICT Theme.

5. **Update on the next EPSRC Delivery Plan**

   **5.1 Update on Council Meeting**
   The ICT SAT were updated on the progress with thinking around the next EPSRC Delivery Plan. After working with the ICT SAT, the ICT Theme input to the delivery plan thinking coalesced around the contribution of ICT research to four strategic areas – Big Data, Internet of Things, Robotics and Autonomous Systems and Intelligent Systems and how this might be delivered through the use of collaborative programmes, strategic packages, and working across ICT Research Areas.

   The ICT SAT were asked for further input on how the ICT Theme should work with other Themes within EPSRC and further evidence to support our case.

   **5.2 Community Engagement**
   It was explained that there will be EPSRC regional workshops to be held in Jan, Feb, and March 2015, and encouraged the SAT members to attend. The ICT workshops being held in early 2015 were also highlighted. The ICT SAT were asked to comment on further ways we should be engaging with the community, particularly around thinking for the next Delivery Plan.

---

\(^1\) EPSRC funded project ‘Framework for Responsible Research & Innovation in ICT’, led by Marina Jirotka, University of Oxford.
6. Fellowships
The ICT SAT were informed of the success rates for Early and Established Career Fellowships from 2012/13 to 2014/15. A discussion around this was held but the ICT SAT agreed that the number of applicants were too small to be able to do any meaningful analysis based on success rates alone.

A general comment from the ICT SAT was that the criteria for EPSRC Fellowships is open for interpretation regarding person specification for Early and Established career stages and that it might be useful if the specification could be separated somewhat. It was asked whether there was an internal procedure for classifying Early and Established Fellowships, as it’s possible that reviewers think this is being done and therefore don’t comment on the suitability of the chosen career stage. It was clarified that this did not take place, and that it is up to the applicant to choose which category they fit in to.

7. What next?
There was a discussion about plans over the next year for the ICT Theme. The ICT SAT were reminded about the upcoming ICT workshops, and the EPSRC regional sessions for further community engagement around the next Delivery Plan. It was agreed that the ICT Theme will provide SAT members with a slide set to facilitate wider engagement.

**ACTION: ICT Theme to provide ICT SAT with a slide set so that they can communicate what current thinking is on the Delivery Plan and how this was developed.**

8. AOB
David Hogg thanked the retiring members of the ICT SAT – George Constantinides, Gerard Parr and Andrew Pitts for their work on the SAT over the years and this was reiterated by the ICT Theme at EPSRC.

**Next ICT SAT Meeting will be held on 20 & 21 May 2015**