

ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

ICT Strategic Advisory Team

Input to strategic decisions and planning

7 November 2011

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Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council



Examples of input

- **The following are examples of input the ICT Strategic Advisory Team has made and which resulted in action being taken by EPSRC**

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Centres for Doctoral Training

- EPSRC running Balance of People support review in 2009
- SAT contributed to evaluating position in ICT and developing thinking on priorities and strategy
- SAT noted two key areas where the absence of CDTs from the portfolio should be rectified
- SAT advised on the scope of the call for CDTs in 2010

Result

- **CDTs in Communications and Computer Science established by ICT Programme**

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Early Career Campaign

- Acknowledged we need fresh blood to replenish the research base
- SAT asked: what can EPSRC do to help?
- Noted there should be focus on science and we spot and nurture rising stars
- Warned that care was needed to stop any cuts to funding causing disproportional harm at this career stage

Result

- **ICT Programme launches Early Career Campaign, sets up Early Career Focus Group and increases support at this career level**

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Dream Fellowships

- SAT perceived a gap at “senior” end the career path
- The Full Economic Costing model and constraints on funding were noted
- An opportunity to promote creativity and new thinking was identified
- Difficulties with current practice regarding sabbaticals acknowledged

Result

- **Dream Fellowships launched by EPSRC**

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ICT Research: The Next Decade

- EPSRC establishes Shaping Capability as strategic goal
- SAT advises that there is a need to engage across all of the ICT research communities on Shaping Capability
- SAT advises that there is benefit to be gained by bringing together representatives from across the ICT theme
- SAT members attend workshop to provide input, facilitate and report back to the rest of the SAT

Result

- **Workshop provides important input into thinking on priorities for the ICT Theme and on shaping research areas**

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Shaping Capability

- EPSRC establishes Shaping Capability as strategic goal
- SAT provides advice on the taxonomy for the ICT Theme
- SAT members provide advice on the research areas, including their interdependencies and interfaces
- SAT members contribute to thinking on strategies for shaping the ICT portfolio and cross ICT priorities

Result

- **Cross ICT priorities and strategies for shaping research areas published which incorporate the advice and input of the ICT SAT**

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PostDoctoral Fellowships

- EPSRC running Balance of People support review in 2009
- SAT contributed to evaluating position in ICT and developing thinking on priorities and strategy
- SAT reviews the case for closing down the call for PostDoctoral Fellowships in Theoretical Computer Science
- SAT agrees with decision to close down this initiative

Result

- **ICT Programme stops funding for new PostDoctoral Fellowships in Theoretical Computer Science**

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Evolution of the ICT SAT

- SAT members note the opportunity for the ICT SAT to be a “working SAT” which does more than comment at twice yearly meetings
- ICT team adjusts interactions with the SAT to enable greater input and work outside of the main meetings
- SAT members volunteer to attend workshops, review issues and engage with research communities
- SAT members feedback on the progress made to the ICT team

Result

- **ICT SAT becomes a key stream of advice for the ICT team and means through which to engage constructively with the ICT research communities**

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Response plan for potential cuts

- EPSRC facing prospect of up to 30% cut in budget and risk that it might need to stop funding over £150M worth of active grants
- SAT responds to request for a meeting at short notice to discuss priorities and identify areas that should be the focus of any cuts
- SAT provides advice on priorities and identifies areas which need to be protected

Result

- **A plan for how to respond to cuts was in place for the ICT Programme in summer 2010**

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Regional sessions on Shaping Capability

- ICT team develops a plan for communicating and engaging with the ICT research communities
- SAT members have consistently advised that we should avoid having all meetings in London and spread them around the UK
- SAT members host regional sessions at minimal cost
- SAT members attend regional sessions and give their perspective on how they were involved in decisions being reached

Result

- **ICT team and ICT SAT deliver a series of regional sessions which covers representatives from across the portfolio**

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Engagement with FoC communities

- EPSRC establishes Shaping Capability as strategic goal
- SAT members acknowledge the need to consider the whole portfolio and note the important role fundamental work plays in it
- SAT members identify the need to engage constructively with researchers in fundamental areas of computing

Result

- **ICT team invites key members of the FoC research community to meet to discuss how this area contributes to the overall portfolio**

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Network of networks

- SAT encourage ICT team to organise theme days across the portfolio and some members attend these
- Theme days reveal need for better networking within and across ICT research communities
- SAT members contribute to the development of the cross ICT priorities and identify which parts of the portfolio need to work together

Result

- **ICT Theme supports networking between networks and includes Working Together as a cross ICT priority in its shaping strategy**

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Current and future activities

- Subgroup focusing on international collaboration
- Participation in the organisation and scoping of the Many Core and Concurrency workshop and call
- Participation in the Working Together workshop and call
- Nominees for reviewers in FET Flagships
- Participation in the organisation and scoping of the TI3 workshop and call

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