

Research Computing Academic Leadership Team

Motivation

Over the past three years the Research Computing Service (RCS) has broadened its remit to encompass not only High Performance Computing (HPC) but also Research Software Engineering (RSE) and the provision of a Research Data Store (RDS). Looking forward there is a need to continue this development and to broaden the service further for example in secure data infrastructure and support for cloud services for research and embracing/unifying the broader Research Software Engineering and Research Computing Training communities which RCS contributes to.

As this service continues to evolve, jointly supported by the VPR office and ICT in partnership, there is therefore a requirement to set the direction of travel to ensure a broad buy in from the academic community which appropriately reflects its varied constituent membership and academic priorities. It is therefore timely to consider how to develop the academic leadership team which represent the VPR office.

What value could a broader academic leadership provide?

Currently the formal academic representation consists of a Director of RCS at 0.2 FTE (supported by the VPR office) and voluntarily leverages one or two more academics. This has allowed for some engagement at the faculty level and for key stakeholders through an advisory board and limited direct contacts. The HPC and RCS services have approximately 4600 registered users with an active membership of around 1250 primarily residing in the faculties of Engineering, Natural Sciences and Medicine. Therefore, a more formal leadership team could (and should) provide:

- Greater awareness of the diverse research portfolio within the college that requires RCS support.
- A broader communication and coordination to help ensure the academic community is aware of, benefiting from and making effective use of the RCS provision.
- Guidance on how to unify RCS related activities within the faculties.
- The ability to better capture and respond to the diverse and sometimes competing requirements for prioritisation of the service.
- Continuity of knowledge and experience and an opportunity for succession planning.

Proposed Fixed term positions and scope of their roles

- *Director of Research Computing Service*
 - Ensure coordination between the leadership roles and VPR
 - Engage with ICT RCS leadership to establish academic priorities and review service delivery.
 - Establish and maintain faculty level engagement.
 - Act as a liaison for research and teaching related computing between academics and ICT
 - Engagement with key/emerging stakeholders (e.g., facilitate HPC acquisition)
 - Support college level business cases. (e.g., renewal bid, Secure Data initiative)

- Promote engagement at Departmental level (e.g., DOMs, Departmental Meetings, Computing Groups).
- *Director of User Engagement.*
 - Chair the User Engagement Group involving PDRAs/PhD/Teaching related research.
 - Participate and engage in Faculty Computing Committees or equivalent to develop and ensure there is active and effective dialogue and representation.
 - Facilitate collection of user data from all stakeholders (users, ICT).
- *Director of Data strategy:*
 - Identify and support requirements for all data provision, from open access to sensitive data.
 - Assist in information governance and data strategy, particularly for secure data.
 - Liaise with ICT teams/infrastructure and data related college services (e.g. the library).
- *RSE College Coordinator:*
 - To act as the RSE Network coordinator/liaison.
 - Coordinate and liaise between ICT (RSE team), departmental/faculty RSE and the Research Computing Training team in the Graduate School.
 - Act as an outward facing RSE coordinator for the college, engage with London and national communities and funding agencies.

To facilitate a smooth transition between these fixed term positions and continuity of experience, particularly for the academic director, it may also be useful to consider the overlapping appointment or additional recruitment of deputies, and to ensure that changeovers occur seamlessly.

Recognition and support

It is important that the leadership team is recognised as acting collectively for the VPR office in RCS governance and has the authority to speak on behalf of the VPR. Previously when academics have been acting on a voluntary basis this role has not been recognised at the departmental level. This support can be reinforced by FTE contribution or honoraria depending on what is most suitable for each candidate.

Currently we are spending 1% of the VPR RCS related budget in this manner but it would not seem unreasonable to increase this to 3-5% to ensure the best possible service.