



Training Board Meeting, Thursday July 22nd, 2021

Held by Zoom video-conference

Minutes of the Meeting

In Attendance: John Wainwright (Chair & Training Manager), Laura Turnbull-Lloyd (i-CONN Co-ordinator), Selim Haj Ali (ESR Representative), Andreas Ioannides, Jennifer King (Project Manager).

Apologies: Thomas Hein, Christina Prell, Demian Battaglia

1. Minutes of the Meeting held on March 1st, 2021.

The minutes of the meeting held on March 1st, 2021 were approved.

2. Matters Arising

JW reported the following matters arising:

Action: JK to send the approved [secondment] changes to the Supervisory Board for final approval.

The proposed changes to the secondment plan were approved by both the Supervisory Board and the Project Officer.

3. Chair's Introduction

JW recorded a formal vote of thanks to Vicky Papadopoulou Lesta for the organisation of the online Network Workshop and Advanced Course in March 2021.

JW also reported that the accreditation of i-CONN courses and activities through Durham University is close to being finalised. The documents are with the Head of Department in Geography for signing and will then be sent to the Provost's Board for final approval.

SHA asked about the training course that was cancelled in March. JK confirmed that the course, 'Networks, Teams, Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Research Impact', would be rearranged.

Action: JK to finalise new dates for the cancelled training course.

4. Training Best Practice

JW reported that the Project Officer has requested that all Career Development Plans should be revisited to assess COVID impact. This will coincide with the need for i-CONN ESRs to make the yearly update of their CDP.

Action: JK to send a link to the 2021 version of the CDP to all ESRs and their supervisors.

SHA delivered the feedback that although the ESRs generally enjoyed the Advanced Course the extent to which it was useful depended on an individual ESR's academic background. This situation is exacerbated by the online delivery format which is delivering material via shorter sessions and without the opportunity to engage with the speaker or each other about the material. This format makes it harder to engage with the subject. It was agreed that it is difficult to get a good balance between addressing "Zoom fatigue" and covering a material in enough depth, and this must be considered when planning future courses.

The TB discussed the draft Secondment Report. JK confirmed that this is for the ESRs to complete at the end of each secondment. The report will need signing by the secondment host and the ESR's supervisor but no report is required from either the supervisor or the secondment supervisor. The Board decided that a short secondment report should always be included as part of the report. ESRs can append a longer scientific report if they have prepared one but a summary report will provide a useful record for non-experts.

Action: JK to distribute the secondment report to the Management Board for final approval and then send the template to the ESRs & supervisors.

5. Upcoming Training Events

a) Datathon

There is no further update on the Datathon. There is a provisional booking for the week starting the 28th September. This event will no longer be extended to the whole network as there is limited accommodation available at the venue. The meeting in Brussels for the Interim Review in December will be extended to include a network-wide meeting instead.

The Board discussed whether the Datathon should be delayed if COVID-19 restrictions prohibit the meeting taking place in person. It was agreed that as far as possible the Datathon should go ahead in September as it will be ineffectual if left too late in the ESRs' studies. If necessary, an in-person 'Datathon-follow-up' event could be scheduled at a later date.

Action: JW/LT/DB/JK to discuss the potential for a hybrid or online Datathon if COVID restrictions force cancellation.

b) Brno (Advanced Course in Socio-ecological Systems & Network Analysis)

The organisation of this meeting is largely complete but will now have a hybrid format to accommodate the fact that some ESRs are unable to travel.

- c) Vienna, Advanced Course 4 – Connectivity in Environmental Sciences,

The date of this meeting has been finalised as 1 - 4 February 2022. LT explained that Louise Bracken has a new senior role at Northumbria University and might not be able to attend the meeting in person. The Board agreed it would be good to identify another consortium member who could either stand in or work alongside LB to deliver this material.

Action: JW to discuss the Vienna Advanced Course with LB.

- d) Bremen (Enterprise Skills and Workshop 2)

Approval to move this meeting to June 2022 is being sought from the Project Officer. Moving the meeting to June also means that the workshop and the Enterprise School will be re-coupled. The Durham University Business School will deliver the Enterprise School.

Action: DU Management Team to finalise dates with Marc Hütt and the Business School.

- e) Nicosia (Advanced Course 5 - Novel approaches to collecting high resolution data) March 2022

AI reported that he is planning experiments that will generate data for the neuroscience part of the course and is negotiating with suitable hotels. He suggested that it would be more straight forward to use pre-prepared data sets for the fluvial aspect of the course. LT said it would be a good opportunity to give the ESRs some experience of gathering experimental data as long as the permissions can be arranged to access the sites. However, a back-up dataset would also be available.

It was also agreed that the overall approach of the Advanced Course needs to be agreed (in particular whether to let the ESRs work on either the fluvial or the neuroscience data and just highlight the connections in the approaches used in both cases or to emphasise the connections in the approaches and look further into the maths underlying the approaches).

Action: JK to arrange a meeting to discuss the course.

6. Changes to Secondments

The Board approved the secondment changes requested by Harald Waxenecker, Michalis Papadopoulos and Marcel Mallow.

Action: JK to request a short justification for shortening Michalis' secondment to Durham.

Action: JK to send the approved changes to the Supervisory Board for final approval.

7. Date of next meeting

It was agreed to hold the next meeting in October 2021, probably the week starting 18th October.

Action: JK to set up a Doodle Poll in September.

8. Any Other Business

LT requested that formal thanks be recorded to JW and JK for organising the accreditation of i-CONN activities.