

# Meeting of UKFN Advisory Board

16:00 BST, Wed 21 September 2016

Via Webex

## MINUTES

### **Attending:**

Matthew Juniper (Chair)  
Nick Daish  
Simon Bittleston  
Ton van den Bremer  
Ann Karagozian  
David Standingford

### **Apologies received:**

GertJan van Heijst<sup>1</sup>

### **1. Terms of Reference**

MJ proposed Terms of Reference for the AB. These consisted of two groups: (i) based on the proposal and (ii) additional suggestions for the AB to consider.

AK thought the Terms seemed reasonable. DS commented the Terms appeared sensible, and would help with the important goal of improving links to, and cross-fertilization with, industry. TvdB suggested the long-term continuity of UKFN was important for the AB to consider. SB acknowledged it was likely that the Terms would need to be refined as the project proceeded.

To set the Terms in (i) in context, MJ also gave an overview of the project, in particular the goals of keeping the UK central to the global field of fluid mechanics, and encouraging the community to act in a coherent way to calls from funding agencies, which themselves are in transition from many small to few large grants.

AK asked whether there had been a negative view of fluid mechanics from the funding agencies: in the US, there had been a decline in funding (e.g. from NSF), but the community fought back and now APS-DFD was flourishing. MJ responded that although certain fields would go in and out of favour, fluid mechanics was still overall one of the top recipients of EPSRC funding.

SB agreed that the research councils seemed to be moving away from attempting to manage many diverse threads towards a simplified array of topics, and that the UKFN is therefore well-positioned to respond. MJ also commented that a coherent community would be able to respond effectively to calls for ideas on strategic spending plans – something other scientific disciplines, such as materials sciences, seem able to do well. DS agreed that other communities, such as chemists, worked together better than the fluids community probably does, which tended to pull in different directions, possibly resulting in missed opportunities.

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<sup>1</sup> MJ and ND discussed the meeting with GJvH in a subsequent Webex call on 29 September 2016, and have added his comments to these minutes (3 October 2016).

GJvH commented that the J.M. Burgerscentrum (JMBC) network has made the fluids community in the Netherlands more visible and helped with obtaining funding, and that it was likely the same would apply to UKFN.

In summary, the AB agreed the Terms were adequate for now, and would be reviewed at the next meeting.

## 2. Website

MJ presented the current (beta) version of the UKFN website. It consists of a home page (with “What’s New”, “What’s On” and Twitter sections), SIG and SRV pages (containing the respective calls for proposals), a Talks page and a Contact page, plus a Sign-up form for the mailing list at the bottom of every page. MJ asked for comments on the current content.

Overall, the AB liked the website.

SB questioned the level of guidance on the SIG page: was this sufficient to bring about a coherent set of SIGs (e.g. avoid overlapping topics) or should there be more oversight of the process of building SIGs? MJ pointed out that the EC will perform these tasks for the first call, e.g. combining closely-related SIGs, and that there was likely to be a second call soon after the first that would allow both the community and the EC to benefit from the experience gained in the first call. SB noted that Schlumberger had its own Significant Interest Groups, and offered to share guidelines for the formation of groups in the area of fluid mechanics/mathematics.

GJvH noted the Talks page was long and suggested some changes to the formatting that might it quicker to scan, specifically (a) where an abstract is included, hide it behind a link (“Read more”) and (b) group the talks by date, e.g. all those taking place this month/next month/etc, using colour-coding or similar.

TvdB asked whether the possibility of using a *.ac.uk* domain name had been considered, since this would be suggestive of an academic enterprise, organised at a national level, compared with *.net*, which simply suggested a generic network. MJ noted this had not been considered, but would like to know more. TvdB offered to pass on details of the website where eligibility to use the *.ac.uk* domain name is discussed.

**Actions: SB to send guidance on formation of Schlumberger Significant Interest Groups; TvdB to forward details of website to check use of *.ac.uk* domain names.**

MJ then outlined the proposed next steps in the development of the UKFN website.

GJvH commented that a website was the appropriate means of organizing data on a network as large as UKFN (in contrast, the much smaller JMBC is able to use its Annual Report to describe the current membership, etc).

TvdB suggested the advertisement of jobs would be useful to increase traffic through the website. SB was also keen for the website to feature jobs, as this would help to filter applicants down to those with a relevant background, compared with the customary jobs website [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk) which has too broad a catchment. MJ pointed out that the mailing list, which will probably be sent out weekly, would include jobs. It was agreed that MJ and ND would consider how to feature jobs more explicitly on the website, e.g. a list based on relevant content extracted from [www.jobs.ac.uk](http://www.jobs.ac.uk).

**Action: ND and MJ to explore how a Jobs section could be included in the website.**

TvdB noted that konfer currently offered a very limited service, in terms of the hits generated in a search, and questioned the utility of a link with UKFN. MJ outlined the background to the association with konfer, and noted that it was under active development, so the current performance should not be taken to reflect its full potential. It was agreed that the UKFN will pursue the association if konfer develops well. If not, the UKFN will rely on its own website to present the searchable directory of UK Fluid Mechanics researchers.

### **3. Operational principles / “set of values”**

MJ noted that the items for consideration are the outcome of the discussion at the recent meeting of the EC meeting, where the EC agreed to distil proposals for consideration by the AB. MJ presented the recommendations of the EC, which fall into two categories, namely (i) the aims of the network and (ii) the running of the network.

- The aims of the network are those stated in the proposal.
- The principles for running the network were condensed from suggestions made by the fluids community during the proposal stage.

Regarding (i), it was agreed that the final bullet point *“keep the UK an international focal point for creative, innovative, and relevant fluids research”* should be modified to highlight that this goal extends beyond the end of the first 3 year period of the UKFN.

Regarding (ii), SB first commented that there may be concerns that those taking the decisions, such as judging the SIG proposals, should be properly representative of the community, in terms of both the range of technical backgrounds and the geographical distribution around the UK. MJ said that this had been taken into consideration when choosing the EC, and the current committee members met the criteria of both technical and geographical diversity. It was agreed that this should be maintained if and when new EC members are appointed.

GJvH noted that JMBC has a strong educational component – it organises 5 or 6 graduate-level courses per year, open to both PhD students and industry – and asked what part this would play in UKFN. MJ outlined the likely participation of PhD students, and noted some UKFN SIGs will also create graduate-level courses and workshops. GJvH favoured making these open to a wide audience as this would allow students to network with industry (as well as each other) and broaden their perspective.

TvdB commented that comparing the set of values with the corresponding version adopted by APS-DFD, the points under (i) were essentially the same, while under (ii) the training of talent was an additional point not present explicitly in the UKFN version. MJ suggested this would be good to include in the long term, beyond the end of the grant. AK noted that APS-DFD places an emphasis on the advancement of the field rather than of the community, so as areas in the discipline come and go the APS values might need to change, whereas those for UKFN would not. The AB agreed that the set of values would be revisited in, say, a year’s time, informed by the experience gained.

It was agreed that the set of values would be posted on the website.

**Action: ND and MJ to amend the bullet point under (i) and ensure set of values are posted on the website.**

#### 4. Special Interest Groups (SIGs)

MJ gave an update on the first call for SIG proposals and the selection procedure discussed by the EC.

DS questioned whether two reviewers per proposal was sufficient, and suggested that it might be preferable for all members of the EC to review all proposals, for maximum transparency. It was agreed to propose this to the EC.

**Action: ND and MJ to propose to the EC that they each review all the SIG proposals.**

It was agreed that the scoring guide will be reviewed by the AB and the final version posted on the UKFN website. MJ noted that the scoring guide would be based on the proposal categories

**Action: ND and MJ to pass draft scoring guide to AB for comment, and ensure final version is posted on the website.**

AK noted that if there was a concern over possible skewing of applications led by the biggest institutions then it might be worth considering an option used in the US known as a “limited submission opportunity”, whereby the number of proposals per institution is capped, thus requiring internal institutional competition before the proposals are submitted. MJ agreed this was a useful idea to consider: depending on the outcome of the first call, it could become part of the follow-up second call, if required.

DS asked if there was guidance on whether pre-existing ERCOFTAC SIGs in the same area would have any bearing on a UKFN SIG proposal, since it could be seen as either a positive (an active area) or a negative (already a SIG). MJ pointed out that there is no particular guidance on this apart from noting that UKFN SIG meetings are intended to be shorter and smaller than ERCOFTAG SIG meetings and therefore have a different scope. As stated in the call for SIG proposals, it is hoped that some UKFN SIGs may expand into ERCOFTAC SIGs in the longer term.

GJVH noted that JMBC has a similar concept to SIGs, called “contact groups”: these have performed with varying degrees of success, but meeting at intervals appears to be important for their continuation.

#### 5. Short Research Visits (SRVs)

It was noted that a call for proposals for SRVs had been issued via the UKFN website.

GJVH suggested that setting a regular deadline, such as every 4 months, rather than having a totally open call, may help to stimulate proposals and thus produce a more even uptake of SRVs over the project lifetime.

#### 6. AOB

None.

#### 7. Next meeting

The AB agreed to hold the next meeting in six months’ time, in March 2017, rather than in September 2017, as it was agreed that a gap of a year was too long.

**Action: ND and MJ to initiate planning of next AB meeting in January 2017.**