

DRAFT ALT Research Committee Minutes

Minutes of the meeting of the ALT Research Committee held on Thursday 02/02/2012 at 11.00 GMT by conference call using Blackboard Collaborate.

1. Participation and apologies.

The meeting was attended by John Cook (JC, Chair), Norbert Pachler (NP, Vice Chair), Anne-Marie Cunningham (A-MC), Rachel Harris (RH), Barbara Newland (BN), David Nicol (DN), Jane Seale (JS), Maren Deepwell (MD), John Slater (JBS).

Apologies were received from Alexandre Borovik, Vanessa Pittard, Frank Rennie, Seb Schmoller, Rhona Sharpe, John Traxler.

2. Overview items.

The committee welcomed the trustees' decision to co-opt Rhona Sharpe onto RC. It helped to support future relationships between Research in Learning Technology (RLT) and RC.

Maren Deepwell introduced the facilities of Blackboard Collaborate to the participants. She then withdrew to attend another meeting.

The chair pointed out that minutes of the committee would be available, in both draft and final forms on the ALT website. It was therefore important that if personal confidential items were considered then they should be clearly flagged as such so that the secretariat could take appropriate action.

Members introduced themselves.

Action: All members to follow the convention about confidentiality

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 25/10/2011 in Birmingham (RC06).

The minutes were approved.

4. Matters arising not separately on the Agenda.

4.1 Changes to ALTC2012 (RC06 Agendum 9.1): The open submission system OCS was now up. All the design changes reported at the previous meeting should come about and there was a new category of "hybrid" presentation to allow linked things (such as a set of PechaKuchas linked by being related to the same initiative together with an overarching commentary). Planning with Manchester was progressing well. The Proceedings Papers editors were Gail Wilson, David Hawkrige and Steven Verjans. Gail and David are also on the editorial board of RLT.

4.2. Influencing public policy (RC06 Agendum 9.2): The event, chaired by JC, and led by Jonathan Shepherd and John Naughton on evidence-based policy development in LT took place in London on 09/01/2012 and was supported by BIS, ALT, Intellect and TLRP/TEL. Attendees found it very useful and there was an excellent debate about the differences and similarities between Medicine and LT especially the medical school model and the evidence-based techniques used in medicine including randomised trials. A write up, currently with Intellect to approve and tidy up will appear in the ALT repository and will be circulated to RC members.

One output from the debate was a checklist of things that researchers in LT should take into account to get their work more adopted. A draft of the checklist was given as RC07.

4.3 Webinars and other ALT events (RC06 Agendum 9.4): ALT was still on the look out for webinars about topics of interest to its members. The Diana Laurillard/Stephen Downes one on the 22nd Feb on "To what extent should learning design be supported computationally?" was attracting interest. Members of RC should consider running a webinar as a way of getting more involved with ALT. They should contact MD (maren.deepwell@alt.ac.uk) with proposals.

Action: Members to make webinar proposals to MD

4.4 The place of Computer Science in the National Curriculum (RC06 Agendum 14): Our work had led to a lot of follow up and involvement. The ALT document sent could be found in the repository at <http://repository.alt.ac.uk/2200/>. A serious problem remained that of having enough well qualified and prepared teachers.

5. Standardised rubric for ALT committees.

ALT had four different committees with four different approaches to defining what the committees are about. This was to be standardised. RC08 gave suggested revised Role, Remit and workings for RC in a way that is hopefully close to standard. They were built on RC's previous (2005) document.

RC endorsed the suggested document for forwarding to CX.

One new thing that will be required by CX of its committees is that they should have a plan. It need not be over detailed. It will need to be constructed between the CX meeting that approves the new rubrics and September 2012.

Action: JBS to take forward the document to CX as an Annex to the minutes and to start work on the plan

6. Impact.

The responses from the committee to the request for each member to write a brief position paper about what we mean by impact as it applies in the LT field (RC06 Agendum 5.4) had elicited the responses in RC09. However, the process would be taken forward by a meeting in London Metropolitan University on March 20th 2012 which JS would address and the issue would be revisited after this meeting. Details of the meeting are on the ALT website and this is the place to sign up.

There was brief discussion about whether remote participation would be possible/desirable and JBS agreed to raise that with the organisers.

Action: JBS to approach the organiser, members to sign up if they were interested. Impact to be an agendum at the next meeting.

7. CMALT and research.

The committee endorsed the idea of there being a specialised research specialist option within CMALT but there were reservations and little enthusiasm from the individuals present in being involved. ALT should now seek volunteers to get involved but these may have to be from outside the members of RC taking part in the meeting.

Action: JBS to look into finding volunteers

8. Research in Learning Technology issues.

8.1 The new Journal had gone live last month. A report was given at RC10. There had been a successful switchover to Open Access and the decision had got much praise from the relevant communities.

8.2 Journal Overall RC role: The intention of the Central Executive Committee (CX), in endorsing the report from RC to the November meeting of CX, was that RC would have a support role for the journal, providing "volunteers" as needs arose but also taking a more proactive role in some areas. More formal cross membership has been arranged. RC had been tasked to "oversee" Journal Supplements in 2012 (see RC11).

In general discussion it was suggested that more detail as to how RC would accept this responsibility was now needed. In the academic community, responsibility should come with recognition, and the process needs defining that ensures that those involved in the oversight are properly acknowledged.

8.3 Journal Supplements: RLT was expanding in the area of Journal Supplements. RC06 Agendum 12 discussed how a particular one (output of Stellar Network of excellence) might work and there had been ongoing discussion and documentation. ALTC proceedings would also be journal supplements.

Unfortunately, JC would not be at the next CX so a meeting with the chair of PX was not possible then. However, the Journal Steering Group, which consists of relevant ALT staff, the Journal Editors, the chair of RC and the chair of the Publications Committee (PX) will be meeting in March and may have further comments.

Action: JC, MD and SS to look further into how the model might work along with the editors and the chair of PX

9. Ethics.

At the last meeting it had been agreed that JT and PC would work further on this issue and JT subsequently circulated a statement that could be the basis of further work (RC06 Agendum 13 and reproduced here).

"Whilst many of our members are university academics and thus often subject to institutional oversight of their research (though not their teaching!!!) we recognise that as a scholarly and professional body it is appropriate for us to formulate guidelines (or codes ... a distinction to be discussed) as support in our specialist, abstract and rapidly evolving domain where popular, as opposed to institutional, ideas about what constitutes harm (and oppressive practice, harassment, bullying, embarrassment, and inappropriate behaviour, interactions, humour, etc) are constantly changing and fragmenting."

At the same time the CDG had been working on ethics within CMALT and had produced a framework for a document given as RC12. This was still very much in its early stages and needed most section place holders filling in as well as some other changes. The committee endorsed that there could be a possible way forward through JT and PC working with Charles Juwah and Sarah Horrigan who owned the action for CDG, to refine this document so that it was fleshed out to something acceptable to all, combining the two approaches.

Action: JBS to discuss this with JT in the first instance

10. Any other business.

10.1: There was a suggestion that there should be an FE Action Research Group in ALT and that RC might wish to put forward one or two names. RH volunteered and was endorsed by the committee. Further volunteers could be sought from amongst those not present.

Action: JBS to approach one or two further members to see whether they wished to be involved.

10.2 There were bidding opportunities from NESTA and some individuals on the committee had a lot of relevant knowledge and skills to undertake the tasks requested. As the timescales were tight, SS had brokered contact between JC and NP and a member of ALT who is a consultant and who is active in the field relating to the NESTA Invitations to tender, who had tentatively agreed to write a bid on an unremunerated "at risk" basis. The consultant had advised that timescales were very tight. It was agreed that as a bidder in its own right ALT would not pursue the matter further.

The chair asked the committee to consider the principle of consultants writing bids being remunerated by a top slice on the resulting award if successful, or through a paid role in the delivery of the ensuing project if secured. There was agreement that this was an acceptable way forward in general.

10.3: The committee noted that SS had attended his last RC. It thanked him for all the work he had done in setting up the committee and for his leadership, help and guidance in its running. He had shown exceptional skills as an advocate, organiser and inspiration. The committee wished him every success in the future.

11. Dates of next three meetings.

These were 10th May (conf call); 30th Oct (Birmingham and conf call to coincide with an event involving all committees); and provisionally 7th Feb 2013 (conf call): all would be at 11.00 UK time.