

LASSIE-ITN First Management Meeting

29th March 2010, University College London

Nyholm Room, Department of Chemistry, University College London

Minutes

1. Attendance

Present: Chair, HWU: Martin McCoustra (MMc)
UCL: Steve Price (SP), Wendy Brown (WB)
SU: Helen Fraser (HF)
UGOT: Gunnar Nyman (GN)
Chalmers: Dinko Chakarov (DC)
LUO: Harold Linnartz (HL)
AU: Liv Hornekær (LH), John Thrower (JT)
MPG: Cornelia Jaeger (CJ)
OBSParis: Jean-Louis Lemaire (JLL)
UM: Helmut Zacharias (HZ)
OU: Nigel Mason (MN)
INAF: Elisabetta Palumbo (MEP)
QUB: Tom Field (TF)
HWU: Mark Collings (MC)
Hiden: Colin Robertson (CR)

Apologies received from: Thomas Henning, Tom Millar, Martin Paterson, Serena Viti, David Field, Peter Hatton (Hiden) Christian Bradley (SPECS), Fraser Reich (Kore), Ben Johnson (Graphic Science)

2. Consortium Agreement

The content of the Consortium Agreement (CA) was agreed, subject to the following changes:

- *Section 1*
 - A specific definition of the consortium to be added
- *Section 4*
 - 4.3. JT to be the ER representative on the Training Coordination Group (TCG), ESR representative to be appointed at a later date.
 - 4.5 Note that for this draft WB has replaced HF on the Outreach and Promotion Group (OPG)
 - 4.7 MMc reports that Eric Herbst has agreed to act as the Chair of the International Advisory and Assessment Committee (IAAC).
 - Further representation of the IAAC to limited to 3 additional members
 - Tim Lee (NASA Ames – theory), Naoki Watanabe (Hokkaido University – experimental), and Ted Bergin (U. Michigan – Observational) are to be invited to become members of the IAAC.

- Others who may be approached if any of the above decline the invitation are Marla Moore (NASA Goddard – experimental), Geoffrey Blake (Caltech – observational) and Peter Gill (ANU – theory).
- Meetings of the IAAC are to be electronic, with face-to-face meetings every other year, arranged in conjunction with major scientific meetings.
- The makeup of the Industrial Liaison Group (ILG) will be defined in the CA. The ILG will be chaired by the Gridcore representative, and each of the associated partners (with the exception of Graphic Science) will be represented. The TCG will be represented on the ILG by NM, and the RCG by MEP.
- *Section 5*
 - 5.2: *Notice of a meeting*: timescale to be changed from “no later than 14 days” to “as soon as possible”.
 - A clause is to be added to enable committee members to send a replacement to a meeting.
 - 5.3: Voting procedures shall be changed such that a vote will be carried by a simple majority. In the event of a split decision, the committee chair will have the casting vote.
 - The issue of decisions taken by a committee which affect a beneficiary that is not represented on that committee was discussed. It was agreed that the CA will be checked and modified, in this section or elsewhere if required, to reflect that the project coordinator (MMc) has over riding control in the event of such disputes.
 - Table 5 of annex 1 should be included in the CA.
- *Section 6*
 - The relative merits of biannual and annual periods for internal reporting were discussed. Key issues: identifying and addressing problems, and whether 6-monthly reporting will be of help; minimising bureaucracy such that no more than is required by EU regulation is done; keeping science as the focus.
 - It was agreed that the 6 monthly period for internal reporting is retained, but that every effort be made to keep bureaucracy to a minimum by using on-line forms to be completed by ERs and ESRs, developing a “tick-box” style template on a single side of A4 for each report, and sending timely reminders.
 - The 6 monthly internal reports will also include a financial summary from each beneficiary.
 - A table of reports required by REA is to be included in the CA
 - The CA will give specific dates as relevant to the LASSIE project (*i.e.* by “xx/xx/20xx”), as opposed to generalised due dates (*e.g.* at least 30 days before mid term review).
- *Section 7*
 - Proposed changes to the allocation of person months are agreed.
 - HL explained the background REA/Commissions request to reduce the number of ERs on the proposal as the reason why changes to the originally proposed allocation are necessary.
 - The possibilities of for combining the ESR allocations of different beneficiaries to make up a project with a maximum of 36 months for a single researcher were discussed.
 - That the award of PhDs is not a milestone of the project and is not required by the REA was discussed.
- *Section 8*

- Clauses that clarify that the consortium can act as a legal entity in negotiating arrangements with external organisations are to be added.

3. Recruitment

- In general, it was noted that the number of applications has been low, and that interest has been dominated by non-EU applicants, in particular from India and China. It is felt that this is a difficult time of year to be advertising ESR positions (which are inevitably of interest to potential postgraduate students) and that a relatively large number of PhD placements in astrochemistry have recently been made across Europe.
- The appointment of non-European applicants was discussed. There are no restrictions within the LASSIE funding preventing appointment of non-Europeans to ER or ESR posts.
- The timing of tranche 2 appointments was discussed. It is allowable to bring forward the start date of tranche 2 appointments.
- The names of all applicants will be centrally compiled, so that any difficulties resulting from candidates applying to more than one institution can be avoided. Ideally, the details of strong applicants will be shared throughout the network; however, the applicants' permission must first be sought.
- The REA has given permission for the SU first tranche ESR position to be delayed until the end of HF's maternity leave. However, the mobility rules will be strictly applied, and permission to make appointments outside these rules has been denied.
- General advertisements to be re-circulated after lassie website is up and running.
- Approximately 60 enquiries were received at the lassie email address. These were dominated by potential ER candidates.
- Progress on recruitment is summarised as follows:
 - HWU: advertisements have not yet closed. There has been interest from suitably qualified applicants to both ESR and ER positions.
 - UCL: an ESR has been appointment and will start in early April.
 - SU: starting of the first ESR appointment has been put back until after HF's maternity leave. The starting date of the second ESR appointment will be brought forward, in association with UGOT.
 - UGOT there have been a few good candidates. The local deadline for appointment is 30th April.
 - Chalmers: the short length of the ESR allocations are incompatible with local rules. Combining the allocations with other beneficiaries' allocations will have to be investigated.
 - MPG: few applicants, but 2 potentially suitable candidates have been found. Some local technicalities must be addressed to allow appointment.
 - LUO: few applications.
 - AU: JT to start ER position April 1st. Applications for ESR position are mostly international.
 - OBSParis: Only a few good applicants.
 - UM: 4 applicants, including one request for an early start for a tranche 2 position.

- OU: seeking to arrange a work permit for a strong Indian applicant.
- INAF: applications for the tranche 2 ER position will be collected until mid-October
- QUB: applications for the 1st tranche ESR position have been from non-EU applicants.

4. Website

- available web addresses:
 - www.lassie-itn.eu
 - www.lassieITN.org
- MMc to reserve web address.
- OPG to take responsibility for development
 - OBSParis group have volunteered to create website.
 - NM indicate OU staff could assist and that offer accepted
 - Involvement of David Field and Ben Johnson (Graphic Science) also suggested.
- Timescale for operation of website: end of April.

5. Planned Scientific Meetings

- 2010
 - First ESR/ER meeting to be held in October 2010, at a time to avoid clashes with other meetings.
 - JT to be organiser, with the local assistance, probably of UCL ESR.
 - The possibility of running this jointly with the Astrophysical Chemistry Group (RAS/RSC) as their Young Astrochemists Meeting will be investigated.
- 2011
 - First summer school to be organised by INAF in collaboration with the Italian ALMA Regional Centre (ARC), to be held in Bologna. This will take place in June 2011, timed to avoid a clash with the IAU astrochemistry symposium, the dates of which are yet to be confirmed.
 - Astrosurf meeting to be hosted by HWU in August 2011 in collaboration with Cost Action CM0805.
 - 2nd ESR/ER meeting to be hosted by OBSParis, October 2011, and organised by ESRs yet to be appointed.
- In addition to the network's own meetings, details of scientific meetings of relevance to network members will be posted on the network website. Efforts will be made to avoid clashes between these and network meetings. The www.astrochemistry.eu website already provides a good list.
- The Lorentz Centre is an ideal venue for the second summer school. Applications must be submitted at least 18 months in advance.
- The 3rd summer school, hosted by OBSParis, will be organised around the IVC meeting in Paris, 2013.

6. Training Programs and Industrial Placements

- ESR placements are to be 1 to 3 months in duration
- The combination of two allocations to make up 36 months employment for an individual ESR will count as a research placement.

- Research placements for ERs will be preferred; however industrial placements will be acceptable if this is the preference of an ER.
- The requirement to undertake placements will be written into the ESR and ER contracts to make sure that the appointees don't try to avoid them. The relevant parts of the contract will also make clear that accommodation and travel for these placements is paid by the researcher from the funds provided by network. HWU will be asked to provide draft text from their contracts if possible.
- It was noted that industrial and research placements may have an impact on the work permits/visas required by international applicants.
- Outreach training should be organised to occur prior to the outreach event planned for 2011. OPG to be proactive in coordinating this with Graphic Science.
- Language training was mentioned in the proposal. PIs should investigate language training offered at their institutions to assist ESRs/ERs in research and industrial placements.
- PIs should investigate what courses of relevance to ESRs/ERs are offered at their institution and how these can be made available.
- The TCG will develop certification and grading schemes for training that can be applied by institution's internal student training programs.
- Industrial partners should start to prepare ideas for what research / technical and or business projects they can offer in placements.
- It was noted that academic partners must keep a monthly log of training and supervisory activities.

7. Gender Balance

- The commission requirement of at least 40% female appointees was discussed.
 - It was agreed that gender balance is not currently a problem within the LASSIE network, or the European astrochemistry community as a whole.
 - Given the difficulties currently being experienced in finding applicants, the appointment of good quality applicants regardless of gender is agreed to be the primary concern.
 - Gender balance will be monitored by recording the gender of all applicants against the gender of the appointees.

8. Any Other Business

- NM provided information regarding the Cost Action in Astrochemistry – The Chemical Cosmos.
 - This has three working groups, in gas phase chemistry, heterogeneous chemistry and the chemistry of planetary atmospheres. The second workgroup (heterogeneous chemistry) has goals which overlap with those of the LASSIE network, and the Astrosurf meetings will be hosted jointly with this workgroup.
 - The COST action has significant funding for short visits, which can be arranged with partners outside the LASSIE network.
 - Significant funding may also be available to stage an outreach event in Brussels. This could ideally be held in 2011, to coincide with the International Year of Chemistry.
- HL noted that it is important to increase the promotion of LASSIE.

- LASSIE will be acknowledged in all future publications and presentations, and a standard sentence or section for use in acknowledgement sections will be developed.
- Publications produced collaboratively by network members are to be particularly encouraged.
- HL noted that communication within the network needs improvement.
 - A monthly newsletter providing information on appointments, publications and reminders of upcoming meetings etc, suggested. This will be the responsibility of the OPG and or the Network Manager.
 - Creation of email aliases for distribution lists was suggested to avoid “reply to all” email responses, and to help avoid people being accidentally excluded from communications.
- MMC thanked HL, SP and Eva Day for their help in the preparation of proposal when he was away at a conference during a critical point.
- Leaflets from the REA for newly appointed ESRs were distributed.

9. Next Meeting

- Next meeting to be held at UCL in October 2010, in association with the ESR/ER meeting, possibly the day before or day after. A date can be finalised when the ESR/ER meeting is scheduled, bearing in mind the meetings of other organisations

ACTIONS:

- MMc: details of Marie Curie Training event (July 1st-2nd, 2010; Torino) from the REA to be forwarded to PIs.
- MC: changes to the CA outlined above to be made and marked; copies of the modified CA in an editable format to be distributed to the PI of each beneficiary.
- MC: details of the names and genders of applicants for each position to be requested from PIs.
- MMc: web address to be reserved
- MMc: contact proposed members of the IAAC with invitations.
- MMc: ask IT about creation of aliases for email distribution lists.
- HWU/MC guidelines for allocation of funds from the various ‘columns’ to be developed so that a standard practice can be adopted throughout the network.
- HWU/UCL: standard sections for contracts regarding the requirement for industrial and research placements, and the funding of these placements to be developed.
- MMc & MC a standard piece of text to be developed for acknowledgement of LASSIE in publications.
- JLL: create website in association with NM, David Field and Ben Johnson.
- PIs: the availability of language training courses to be investigated within their own institutions.
- PIs: the availability of training courses offered by their institutions that may be of interest to other network researchers to be investigated.
- Industrial Partners: ideas to be developed for scientific/technical and or business projects for industrial placements.
- OPG/MC develop website and set up monthly newsletter.
- HF, WB, NM: joint hosting of the ESR/ER meeting to be proposed to the Astrophysical Chemistry Group.
- JT: first ESR/ER meeting to be organised at UCL in October 2010.