Governance Review, ICTF

This review has been undertaken by Richard Carpenter (RC), ICTF Vice-Chair for the 2017/18 Academic Year & ICT Support Officer, Faculty of Oriental Studies.

Distribution

Once issued in final stage, this report shall be issued to:
- ICTF Steering Committee Members
- Head of ITS3, IT Services

Other interested parties may review this on request, and persons who have received a copy of the report shall be free to share it. This report does not contain commercially sensitive information. The vast majority of the information it refers to, including that on University Committees, are publically available on University Websites. No recommendations are commercially sensitive either.

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Background to the calling of a review

On the 4th December 2017, a meeting was held with the Chair, Vice-Chair of ICTF in attendance, as well as the Head of ITS3, a regular catch up meeting for the elected officers of the ICTF. As part of this meeting, after a discussion on the governance of the ICTF, it was enacted that a Governance Review should be held of the ICTF and that RC should carry out this task.

Existing Governance Model (ICTF)

The ICTF's current Terms of Reference (ToR) and Constitution is available at https://www.ictf.ox.ac.uk/about-the-ictf.

"The ICTF;" section is a set of ideals and aspirations for the ICTF. It is not directly relevant to this report, however, I will refer to this in the recommendations later.

On the Constitution of the ICT Forum:

All members of the IT Support Staff Register, as held by IT Services, will be the members of the Forum. The chair and vice-chair of the ICT Forum will be elected by the steering committee at its first meeting following annual steering committee elections.

The current system works well and certainly is the most accurate list that we have. It does however have certain weaknesses. Firstly, gaining of ITSS status is dependent on Line Manager and Head of ITSS (ITSS01) approval. While for the majority of staff, this is a normal and known process, there are a number of members of staff who have IT responsibilities but may or may not be considered part of ITSS. An example of this would be the Support Centres within IT Services, but similar situations are found around the collegiate University.

This leaves individuals open to issues where they may not be aware of the ICTF or support and help that can be provided through the wider IT Community. This may be for local reasons within a unit, or a simple lack of awareness from a Line Management point of view.

The ICT Forum will lobby for representation on University IT Committees and shall appoint a member (normally its chair) to represent it at those committees where appropriate opportunities arise. The ICT Forum will appoint representatives to other committees and groups as necessary or requested.

The ICT Forum shall have no executive authority but will make representations through its representatives (as defined above) to the University IT Committee and to other committees and/or bodies as appropriate.

The ICTF does this to an extent. Committees that it sits on for example are the Divisional Software Licensing Committee and the User Services and IT Excellence Board. ICTF does not have membership on IT Committee at present. It could be said that ICTF has reasonable influence at the "regional" level of the University, i.e smaller committees with day to day

logistical decisions to make, however does not have influence at the "national" level i.e the central part of the University.

A meeting of the ICT Forum, open to all its members, shall be held at least once each term, normally in week 9 and will be notified at least 10 working days in advance. It is suggested that at least one representative of each University Unit attends at each meeting where possible. IT Support Staff Services will be responsible for organising these meetings, for assembling the agenda (in consultation with ICTFSC) and for taking and producing minutes in a timely manner.

This has been carried out for every term that the ICTF has been in existence and has been advertised accordingly. From a point of compliance, there is little to note as this is all compliant, however there is a major concern regarding them which is lack of attendance. Attendance has been steady at around about 40 or so other than a spike over a particular topic that has happened in the past, i.e the issues with eduroam in 2013. While the actual numbers remain steady, the numbers as a percentage of ICTF have dropped considerable. While I do not have access to the exact data on this, I would estimate that current attendance stands at 4%, down from 6-7% over the past 5-7 years. This, is incredibly poor, especially when put in terms of the attendees at the Conference which has attracted a 35%+ attendance.

On the section that follows that refers to the what should happen at an ICTF meeting. From the point of view of this report which is focused on the governance only, this is less relevant. This a matter for the ICTFSC to, while mindful of the constitution, operate the meetings as they see fit.

Existing Governance Model (ICTFSC)

The ICT Forum Steering Committee (ICTFSC) is an elected group of officials, who are elected by the ICTF membership, typically at the ICTF Conference.

The exact text in the document states:

The ICT Forum Steering Committee shall comprise nine members elected by the whole ICTF (with a ballot, in the case of more nominations than vacancies, normally at the ICTF Conference in the long vacation). Three members will be elected every year and each member will be elected for a three year term so there is continuity and rotation. Members may stand down or re-stand for election at the end of each term. The Head of ITS3 will be an ex-officio member of the Steering Committee but will not be entitled to vote on any decisions. The Head of ITS3 will also act as returning officer in all ICTF elections.

The Chart below shows the data on the applicant numbers over the past ten years as raw data. There are several items to note here. Firstly, the average applicants per position has now dropped below the ten-year average (2.38) for each of the past four years. I would suggest, that in a healthy democratic environment, a minimum of two applicants per position would be "healthy". And based upon that figure, it is the same calculation, that the first six would be "healthy" and the last four are "unhealthy"

Chart 1: ICTFSC Applicant numbers 2008-17 shown against number of positions available

Year	Positions	Applicants	Applicants per Position
2008	6	14	2.33
2009	2	11	5.50
2010	2	4	2.00
2011	3	6	2.00
2012	2	5	2.50
2013	2	8	4.00
2014	5	9	1.80
2015	5	6	1.20
2016	4	7	1.75
2017	3	2	0.67

Despite this, the current system of electing by thirds (i.e. a third of the steering committee is elected each and every year) has its advantages. It is a simple system which is easy to understand for the wider membership and breeds consistency. It means that a minimum of six members will return for the next academic year, which is especially strong. While there are other options (longer terms, elect by whole every three years etc.), none preserve the consistency as well as this one. For me, the current weakness is simply in terms of candidate numbers, not the system of election itself.

There is however a fair few issues which need to resolved. Up until now, all elections have been conducted using the Single Transferable Vote system, running under the same rules that apply for elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly and in local elections in Scotland. A simple guide to this system can be found on YouTube at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P38Y4VG1Ibo as produced by the Electoral Commission. Put simply, this is where electors rank the candidates in the order they want with transfer of votes between candidates as opposed to the a First Past the Post (FPTP), "x in the box" system which is used for Parliamentary Elections in the UK.

STV has worked for the ICTF in the past and certainly gives more advantages over FPTP, considering that it works allow people to vote for more than one candidate in what is essentially a multi-member election.

There is also the matter of the election being directly attached to the Conference. I.e if you wish to vote, you have to attend the conference. Turnout may be higher if not attached to this. There is also the wider question of inclusivity when it comes to voting. Currently, it is effectively the case that you can only vote if you come to the conference, or seek out a voting form on request. This does not seem to be an inclusive approach to voting.

The Steering Committee will meet after the annual ICTF election and before the start of September in each calendar year for the purposes of electing a chair and vice-chair of the ICT Forum from among its number, with its nine members forming the electorate. The chair and the vice-chair will be elected for a term of one year but may continue to re-stand for as long as they are on ICTFSC. At least six of the nine elected members must be

present for the election of the chair and vice-chair and the appointment of co-opted members.

On the meeting held on the 27th July 2017 for the current Elections, there were a number of issues with this paragraph which ended in a long debate on the rights of non-attendees to vote and the meaning of the word present. There are multiple issues with the current voting process for this as well as wider structural weaknesses in the current model of electing a Chair and Vice-Chair for each year.

Firstly, following the events of the said meeting, this paragraph of text as it stands is not fit for purpose. It fails to clarify key points such as:

-   The voting system (FPTP/STV or another) which is to take place.
-   If a Candidate can run separately for Chair or Vice-Chair or if they are obligated to run for both.
-   It is not specified if candidates require a nomination process at all
-   The rights of members who are not present at the meeting to either nominate themselves for a position or vote

Moving on, I have now been in the role of Vice-Chair for the past six months, making this a useful time to reflect. It strikes me that there are a number of issues with the current model of wholesale change of the elected officers every year and at it seems at odds to the committee based model of ensuring two-thirds retention of the committee which is a stated goal and does work.

Primarily, the reasons for this involve the fact that the elected officers (Chair and Vice-Chair) and the steering committee, regularly make decisions that will impact on the next committee (i.e the committee elected for the next academic year). Such examples of this involve the ICTF Conference in terms of booking of venues in a highly competitive market in Oxford, the existing Suppliers Exhibition as well as working out future dates for meetings. There is no reason why items such as booking the major events cannot be done years in advance, which assists with the ease of administration on ITS3.

At ICTFSC's first meeting after the annual ICTF election it may also co-opt up to an additional three extra members to the Steering Committee for the upcoming academic year. Those co-optees will not, however, have a vote in a ballot for the chair and vice-chair election should one be necessary.

Members may be co-opted to the ICTFSC at any full meeting if vacancies arise during the year. All co-options will end at the next annual ICTF election.

This paragraph establishes that the ICTFSC may go up to twelve members. Co-options can be used for any purpose as determined by the ICTFSC.

The ICTFSC may at any time require the chair or vice-chair to stand down and leave the steering committee. This clause may only be enacted if at least 50 members of ICTF have signed a petition requesting the action.

This establishes that it is only the membership of the ICTF, not the members of the ICTFSC that can remove a Chair or Vice-Chair. As it stands, this acts as an important safeguard for the University and furthermore its approach of asking the membership to vote other than the committee ensures that this is highly unlikely to be used irresponsibly or for purely political reasons.

However, it does leave a gap in two places. Firstly, individual members of the ICTFSC cannot be removed by any means currently. Secondly, there is no constitutional method for members to be suspended pending a separate investigation which could be a useful protection for the University to have, should a member of the ICTFSC be accused of a serious matter in terms of protection of both the University, ICTF and the person against who the complaint is made.

The ICTFSC will be led by the chair of the ICTF in combination with the vice-chair and will meet at least once a term, usually just prior to the ICTF termly meeting. Secretarial services for the ICTF and ICFSC will be provided by ITS3 and its staff members will be entitled to attend Steering Committee meetings.

This currently happens and this paragraph is certainly up to standard.

Methods of Change

In order to change any of the above:

- Proposal to ICTF Chair or Head of ITSE3 by no later than Monday of Fifth Week.
- Proposals to be discussed by the Steering Committee at a meeting prior to the Termly meeting
- At least 10 working days before the meeting, circulated by an ICT-A Email
- Requires two-thirds majority vote at the next ICT Forum Meeting

The standing orders in this regard do work and last were used in 2014. As the Conference is better attended however, it seems strange that this is not included as a way for this type of change.

ICTF Relationships

To clarify where the ICTF membership stands in terms of its defined responsibilities

ICTF (as a membership, not in a meeting)
- Elects the ICTFSC
- Can remove the ICTFSC Chair or Vice-Chair if 50 signatures are gathered.
- (any member of) Can submit a request to change the Terms of Reference/Constitution

ICTF (in a termly meeting)
- Change the Terms of Reference/Constitution

Future Planning

At present, under the chairship of Duncan Tooke, there have been a number of changes to the overall direction of the ICTF, for example with a review of the termly meetings and trying to get the best value out of them. With a view looking to the future and to assist with this process of change, there is also the question that at the moment the existing ToR/Reference are quite restricted in what can be done with the Termly meetings in the fact that they are constitutionally protected to be done in a particular way.

Recommendations (brief)

I wish to submit the following recommendations as well as a proposed timescale for such proposals to be made. It is my view that at this time several "tidying up" matters need to be seen to for the sake of clarity or expanding flexibility.

In addition to this, I am hereby proposing a significant change to the structure of the Steering Committee, especially in relation to its senior officers (Chair and Vice-Chair). I believe that currently, there is a large amount of institutional risk of the ICTF being a body which can change rapidly from academic year to year with different Chair and Vice-Chairs being adopted.

If approved, the new system would be as follows:

- Key officers increased from two to three. There would be in each year, an incoming Vice-Chair, a Chair, and an outgoing vice-Chair. While keeping this to a small group, this expands on ICTF operational ability to function.
- Establishing a three-year cycle for key officers. Following a transitional period, each year only the incoming Vice-Chair would be elected. That person would then begin a path of them spending a year as the incoming Vice-Chair, then moving to be the Chair the following year, before becoming the outgoing Vice-Chair the year after.
    - o In the same way that the committee benefits by only losing by no more than three members every year, this way, two of the three key officers would still be there from the past year, increasing the level of consistency within the officers.
- Elected officers along this path would automatically have their terms extended until after completing their time as outgoing Vice-Chair. These extra spots would be taken from the pool of up to three co-opted members.
- While an outgoing Vice-Chair may apply for re-election to the ICTFSC in the usual manner, they would not be permitted to run for the incoming Vice-Chair that year. They would be free to do so in the following Academic Year however.

The full details of such a system are included in Appendix A. I feel that this system gives ICTF the best approach and stability for the future, will give a shot in the arm for the democratic aspects of it, and ensures that no individual (or group of three) can dominate the ICTF, giving it a constant barrage of fresh blood and ideas in the key officer posts.

Recommendations (detail)

For the ease of reading and understanding, the following recommendations shall be split into five sections, which reflect the five areas of the document which I am recommending change on and each recommendation in that area shall be numbered. As I am not recommending any change in relation to the ICT Forum mission statement or the ICTF Forum purposes and functions, I will not be including this here. The sections which I will be making recommendations on are:

- A - The ICTF
- B - ICT Forum constitution
- C - At the meeting of the ICT Forum the following will occur
- D – The ICTF Steering Committee
- E – Changing these Terms of Reference and Constitution.

A1) That the ICTFSC conducts a review of the areas included in the section "The ICTF:", determines if they are currently accurate and appropriate and if not, submits a ToR/C amendment for Trinity Term 2018.

B1) That the ICTFSC consulting with the IAM team inside IT Services, will raise the issue of ITSS status based upon the concerns raised in this report to ensure that all ICT staff of the University have the opportunity to be part of the ICTF, regardless of if they currently have ITSS status or not.

B2) That the ICTFSC considers the views of this report and conducts a review of the appropriateness of the termly meetings, with increasing attendance for ICTF events to be of the highest priority.

B3) That an amendment be made to the ToR/C, changing the minimum frequency of meetings from a minimum of once per term, to a minimum of twice per year.

C1) That an amendment be made to the ToR/C, with the aim of giving more flexibility to the ICTFSC on how events are run. This would include the ability to:
  - i)   Run termly meetings without the level of detailed restriction as determined in the current ToR/C
  - ii)   Integrate meetings into other events as held by the ICTF, for example, the ICTF Conference

D1) To make an amendment that establishes the use of the Single Transferable Vote system for all ICTF elections.

D2) That the ICTFSC, along with the Head of ITS3 (in their role of Returning Officer) look to establish a system of electronic voting for the voting for ICTF Steering Committee members and that this should be look to be established ideally the elections in 2018, but no later than 2019.

D3) To make an amendment to the ToR/C, removing Section 2 of the "ICTF Steering Committee" and replacing it with a model as specified in Appendix A, amending Section 3 to state that the number of co-option places will depend on the number of extended terms that are in place.

D4) To make an amendment to the ToR/C, changing Section 5 to reflect that any member can be removed by a 50-person petition as opposed to just the Chair and Vice-Chair.

D5) To make an amendment to the ToR/C, appending Section 5 with a suspension protocol.

E1) To make an amendment to the ToR/C, reflecting the changes in this section as proposed in B3 and C1.

Timeline

I intend to put this report on the Agenda for the next Steering Committee meeting to be discussed, where the committee can decide if to accept the report's recommendations (in full or part) or to reject it.

Should the recommendations be accepted, I would propose the following. Prior to the Hilary term meeting, the amendments in draft form will be prepared by myself and submitted to the ICTFSC for initial review.

For the Hilary Term ICT Forum, a short presentation be made by myself regarding these changes, as well as a copy of either this report, or a shortened version focusing on the changes be issued to ITSS. In addition, a new webpage will be created containing this information and the text of the draft amendments and ITSS-D emails will be issued bringing this to peoples' attention.

A review period will then take place ending in on Friday of 2nd Week, Trinity Term. The ICTFSC will then be asked for its final thoughts by no later than the end of 3rd Week, Trinity Term, possibly to include a meeting in that week.

The final text of the document will be submitted in the middle of 4th Week, to comply with the Changes to the Terms of Reference and Constitution. A final vote will then take place at the Trinity Term ICT Forum.

Thanks

Thanks to Saffron Greenwood, Head of ITS3 for providing the information on application numbers for the roles.

List of Abbreviations/Definitions

CIO: Chief Information Officer
CTO: Chief Technology Officer

Collegiate University: The University of Oxford as a whole, the 38 Colleges and 6 Permanent Private Halls

FPTP: First-past-the-post, a voting method

IAM: Identity Access Management, a Department of IT Services.

ICT-A: Refers to the mailing list, itss-announce. Membership of ICT-A is mandatory for ITSS.

ICT: Information Communication and Technology

ICTF: ICT Forum

ICTFSC: ICT Forum Steering Committee

ITS3: IT Support Staff Services, a Department of IT Services.

ITSS: IT Support Staff

ITSS01: Nominated Head of IT for a University Unit

STV: Single Transferable Vote, a voting method

ToR/C: Terms of Reference/Constitution

Unit: As defined by the PRAC (Planning and Resource Allocation Committee) organisational chart (https://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/pras/uniorg/)

Appendix A: New model for ICTF Elected Officers

It is proposed to replace the existing Chair/Vice-Chair with a new model, based on a three year cycle of officers of the ICTF, to always ensure that two of the officers served as an officer the previous year which provides continuity and a desire for incremental, rather than sudden change.

The three roles and their purpose will be:

Vice Chair (Incoming) (VCI) – To be the newest elected officer, to provide an influx of new ideas into the officer posts

Chair – To be the key officer, "on point" so to speak for the ICTF for the rest of the University, similar to the current Chair role now.

Vice Chair (Outgoing) (VCO) – To provide experience gained in the previous two years and to provide key support and assistance to the new Chair

Any member who is successfully elected to the post of Vice Chair (Incoming) shall, if required, have their term extended to the end of their Vice Chair (Outgoing) year. For each role that requires this (up to a theoretical maximum of two, there shall be one fewer co-opted spot available).

At the end of their Vice Chair (Outgoing), that persons term on the ICTFSC would be over and would need to seek re-election again. Should they so do, and be successful, then they would not be permitted to apply to the post of Vice Chair (Incoming) for a period of 12 months. This is to avoid a bloc of three people emerging and to ensure new persons lead the ICTF.

The following chart illustrates how the process works:

Year	Vice Chair (Incoming)	Chair	Vice Chair (Outgoing)
Y1	Abigail	Brandon	Claire
Y2	Dominic	Abigail	Brandon
Y3	Claire	Dominic	Abigail
Y4	Emily	Claire	Dominic
Y5	Fazil	Emily	Claire

As you can see from this example, at the end of every year, each person moves one to the right in terms of their role, so in Y1, Abigail was the Vice Chair (Incoming) and in Y2, is the Chair. Claire, the Vice Chair (Outgoing) in Y1, cannot run for the Vice Chair (Incoming) role in Y2 due to the 12 month rule, however is free to do so in Y3 and becomes Chair in Y4.

In this example, we have had six different people across a five year period. Across that period, the minimum possible would be four and maximum would be seven, which ensures a solid variety of persons in the roles.

In terms of numbers of co-options, which will have an impact with the number now floating, between a minimum of one co-option, and a maximum of three. The Vice-Chair incoming, will always have at least one year left of their term. There are five possible options for determining this, but only one of the five reduces the number of co-options to one.

There would need to be a one year transitional period in order to facilitate this.

I would propose the following as the simplest solution, which also establishes the process for elections for the coming years.

- That an election be put in for the post of Vice-Chair (Incoming) for the 2018/19 Academic year
- That the current Chair (Duncan Tooke) retain his post for the 2018/19 academic year in the new structure, will become Vice-Chair (Outgoing for the 2019/20 academic year) and have his term extended to 2020 as per this proposal
- That the current Vice-Chair (Richard Carpenter) take the new post of Vice-Chair (Outgoing) for the 2018/19 academic Year. RC's term does not end until 2020, so there is no requirement for an extension and RC would not be eligible to stand for Vice-Chair (Incoming) in the 2019/20 academic Year

This way, there would only be one election which is similar to the structure and kick-starts the three year cycle to then proceed.

There is the question of procedure to take place should an officer resign from the Committee. However, resolving this would be reasonable simple under the rotation model and would proceed as follows.

Vice-Chair (Incoming), would be replaced by a by-election within the ICTFSC at the soonest possible opportunity, ideally, within 15 working days of the resignation.

Chair resigns – Vice-Chair (Incoming) becomes Chair with immediate effect on an extended term to include the remainder of the academic year, plus the next academic year as scheduled, new Vice-Chair (Incoming) not replaced for that Academic Year. ICTFSC runs with just the new Chair plus Vice-Chair (Outgoing)

Vice-Chair (Outgoing) resigns – Not replaced for that Academic Year, ICTFSC runs with just Vice-Chair (Incoming) and Chair