COINS Academic Advisory Board

Time: 10:46-12:21
Place: Stockholm, Sweden + Skype
Participants:

- Academic Advisory Board (AAB) members: Prof. Dr. Armin B. Cremers (B-IT, University of Bonn), Prof. Dr. Eugene H. Spafford (Purdue University)
- Steering Committee (SC) members: Prof. Dr. Hanno Langweg (Gjøvik University College)
- Activity Management Office: Urszula Nowostawska

Apologies:

- Prof. Dr. Hanne Riis Nielson (Technical University of Denmark), Sofie Nystrøm (CCIS), Prof. Dr. Simone Fischer-Hübner (Karlstad University)

Agenda

- Status of COINS
- Mid-term evaluation Autumn 2016
- Discussion of status, achievements, and challenges
- Input to steering committee and work plan 2016

Status of COINS

- Hanno Langweg gave an overview of COINS since the advisory board meeting last year. In 2016 we will have two events that will influence COINS: intake of more than 20 students and mid-term evaluation of the research school.

Mid-term evaluation, Autumn 2016

- Evaluation is going to be done by the Research Council. Last time Research Council sat up a committee made of external members. It is not decided yet how it will be in done in 2016, since at the evaluation of 2012/2013 they had only 5 schools that needed to be evaluated, but this time it will be more than 10 schools. They might set up more than one committee. They will probably release the information how the committee is going to be set up, questions that need to be asked and information that needs to be prepared in March or April next year at the annual seminar for research schools. Last time there was a time to fill questionnaires until the end of November and there were meetings scheduled with the representatives from all research schools close to Gardermoen airport in Oslo.
- It will be interesting to know to what extent the advisory boards were involved in the evaluation of research schools. From the documents from several years ago with the latest evaluation they talked to scientific director of the school, steering committee members, student representatives, and representatives from all consortium members. Nothing was mentioned that they communicated with the advisory board.
- What materials would be communicated from our work like reports, minutes etc.? It would be useful for evaluation and ongoing operation: to survey the students that have been graduating: what was helpful to them, what they obtained from COINS, what they have liked to see; get the numbers - to try identify the impact and differentiation. What things has COINS done that made a difference in attracting them or their graduation might have not occurred if COINS did not exist. This is useful for the direction what to do next, to address efficiency and positives. That also gives a great deal of presenting to local and overall authorities, that we make a difference.
- At the annual PhD seminar where we invite our alumni (this year 2 of them in Stockholm) we asked them to talk about how life went after the PhD, some are in academic positions, others with industry, others left Norway to work in their home country.
- To the extent to get all of those students rather than one at the time, ask all of them the same questions, perhaps anonymously. There is weight from numbers, rather than act at the individual experience. The weight of numbers is useful when talking to funding agencies.
- What we see from the report of the previous mid-term evaluation is that the committee liked to see all events evaluated especially if the teaching is organised through the research school.
- Part of asking the questions is being preparing for answers you can get, the responses we get might not be positive. Therefore, asking the question in the way, that if they are positive they are helpful and if they not, it gives you a course of action to fix things. Asking alumni: are you aware of COINS, did it provide you with opportunity, what would you like to see. It gives you actionable answers rather than simply potentially negative answers. In the design, you want to think about how to

use this as a tool to show you that you made a difference or be able to respond to any criticism that the evaluators might have. We need to think about asking the question to use the answer.

- We started to put all the information on events on the website, so students can print out a certificate that they have been members of COINS and they attended these courses. For us it is also an information we can use for statistical purposes. If we are asked by the Research Council, how many events have we had, how many students were affected, we can compile this information. We have not done it yet in a way that you can see it on the statistics page, but it will probably happen by the end of the year.

- Feedback from the participants about what did they learn - For the summer school, we did it in a structured way, the same questionnaire for everybody. Most of the people answered and they answered not just yes/no, but also gave us a meaningful feedback so we can use it for the next summer school. For the PhD seminars we also do it but not in the form of questionnaire, but people email us afterwards. We collect feedback in the sessions and also through the student representatives. We also made changes to the PhD student seminar this time, because we got feedback from last time, when we had many short presentations and people thought that it was too diverse. Students wanted to have longer presentations and sessions, so this time we have fewer people presenting, but everybody got more time and so far, the feedback has been positive.

Discussion of status, achievements, and challenges of COINS

- How are the other schools? Does it happen to all of them that students and supervisors decide not to attend events because of time spent on traveling?

- It depends on the disciplines. We have not surveyed the 10 new schools. We did, in a sense a survey, for the existing schools at the time we applied. They were all bigger, they were all around 80-120 students, but we were only close to 50, and they put much emphasis on offering courses, getting students to a place where there is a seminar, inviting lecturers from abroad and having 20-40 students there for a course. This is a little bit different from how we operate, because courses do not seem to be a pressing issue for many of the universities.

- If you have small university like Trømso, they do not travel 2 000 km to attend a course elsewhere. The PhD students there usually are in software or cryptography. The groups are so specialised that they do not see much value in attending other courses. You have some universities like Trondheim and Bergen, where they usually have the model that the course is to agree between professor and student on a number of articles and 2 or 3 months later you meet again for a discussion about the content of the articles and the oral exam. The students feel this is very related to their research and for professors it is not a lot of effort to teach the course. This is different in other research schools, where professor do not want to invest a lot in preparing the course and then have only 5 people attending. Then we multiply by 5 institutions where they do the same. We do not have pressure from either students or faculty. What we see from students especially from University of Agder is that they have a limited set courses they can take and they would love to attend schools for credits. We have introduced this opportunity to get credits last year. You can get 3 credits for winter school, 3 credits for the summer school. 3 credits is about 10% of

work load of the semester. It is 60 credits for full year and 30 credits for semester. They need to complete 30 credits for the training component in the PhD programme. PhD last 3 years out of which one semester are courses and 5 semesters is research after the Master degree. Out of the 30 credits we offer 3+3+1 credits and you can attend PhD seminar several times where there are different topics every time and you write a report and you can collect more than one credit every time.

- The idea of using the money to have schools as a tool of concentrating the information is a very good one and I assume you have that as a part of evaluation, how to use the money. Response or question is: investing in online courses, because of the summer school, winter school. How much could be done during the year for broadcasting existing notes with specialisation or creating some people from industry or bringing someone from another country for lectures. The literature seems to indicate that something on the great scale, larger then COINS is looking at, might not always be successful, great deals depend on economy. Distance education perspective. Is COINS funding any distance classes?

- When reading the evaluation reports from 3 years ago, we stumbled over some issues that were mentioned there and we are running into the same situation. Nothing has changed over the last years. With the courses, we would need consortium members to agree on some courses that these are the courses that every PhD student in information security should take sometimes or which are relevant for most of them. It does not help us to have online courses that are very specialised, the only students that are going to take these courses are students from small groups and it is additional effort to put the courses online. This is one thing. We seem to be fragmented in research, because it is a small country and we have small research groups. Most of the cryptography research is in Bergen, one person in Trømso and you have biometrics that is concentrated in Gjøvik. You have protocols concentrated in Trondheim. It is not easy to find a common ground here to agree on a curriculum for the training component of PhD.

- The other thing is that universities are hesitating to recognise courses completed at other universities in the same country. We have feedback from a student at the University of Oslo, who said he could not attend the summer school for credits and he cancelled his participation, because his department decided that there is a limit of 5 credits that he could get recognised from institutions outside of University of Oslo and he had already filled up that. It is completely neglecting that the research school has the University of Oslo as a consortium member. We have a quality control through the whole consortium. You have the same limits also in the other places but they enforce differently. In Gjøvik there also is this limit, but distinction is made between other universities in Norway and any other organisations in the other places of the world. These were exactly the same challenges that the other research schools also have mentioned that if you have a research school, a university thinks it is not a local course, therefore the quality must be lower and therefore they set the limit for what people can attend.

- When we first started introducing our courses, the idea was to have the same course description under seven local course codes so the course would appear as local course for every consortium member, even though it was produced by the research school. Then the steering committee members said that this is too much hassle with the administration. Why not just have the courses and to go with all administrative

- hassle in one institution and then we recognise participation of the student. However, the recognition part does not always work. We have the course code provided by one consortium member, but the other six have local challenges in recognising participation.
- Local regulation is an issue of reliability. It has to be address to Research Council as a national issue.
- Citing from the 2012 report: the panel recommends that the future quality of proposal requires formal, mutual acceptance agreement to be established between the partner institutions and the school. It should be stronger and more binding then the present agreement. Panel recommends that the Research Council of Norway takes an initiative to prepare an agreement by the research school and the degree conforming institution that insures participation of the student.
We running to the problem that different schools have been having for several years now. We might have to get the attention of the Research Council.
- If this was an evaluation result from years ago, you need to show that something was tried for the next evaluation. They have observations and you did nothing about it. That was for the other schools. They did it before we submitted application. The evaluation was done in 2012 and report was published early in 2013. We had already money but we have not started up. Maybe we have to take the issue again and introduce a local course codes. It would be the easiest way to make it look for local administration like our students enrol under the course codes of our institution and everything is fine, even though the teaching itself is performed by lectures that are hired and at locations that are not local. It should solve the problem for us.
- It would not solve the problem on political level. Sometimes if you do something at local level, the political level resolves itself because it already happened, it is done, and everyone is doing that. There is no reason for argument, so if you can find a way to do this, that is good.
- 150m NOK were mentioned at the seminar that they were going to research funding for information society. It was a call in the IKTPLUSS programme, which is basically the program for Research Council for ICT funding for next couple of years. This call was about safe and secure information society. We have 8 new projects starting and one is for the law school of University of Oslo, it is a security and internet governance and networks. We have relations with them and that work is really within the scope of security. The Research Council expressed an expectation that all these projects that are funded at the same time should also try to find common ground and work together. For PhD students we hope that we can accommodate that with COINS. The other 7 of the 8 projects are computer science projects: 2 cryptography, 1 computational forensics, 1 biometrics, 1 subjective logic, 1 internet of things and smart grids and 1 in secure software development. These are good IT security topics. COINS is expecting ca. 20 new Ph.D. students. All the consortium members have agreed that they will register all their eligible students for COINS.
- COINS already made an impact regarding the IKTPLUSS projects. All the projects have to cooperate with the national research school, i.e. the COINS research school of computer and information security, and the Research Council made that requirement without asking.
- Another source of impact could be alumni, get some contents, serious statements from some of them and get their expectations. We need a couple more probably,

now we have only 9 graduates and maybe 3-4 more who will graduate this year. They do not really end up in similar places.

- We have no problems organising events (that works), we have some challenges in getting some students to the events, from our perspective they would benefit from attending.
- We have some challenges with consortium members that do not document their in-kind contribution. It makes it hard for us to document for the Research Council that we are also contributing to the project. We get 75% of the money from the Research Council and we need to document that we at least invest time towards the 25% of the budget; many of the partners do not submit this documentation even after several requests. Non-compliance could lead to fines, maybe?
- If consortium members do not comply we cannot get full funding, the students cannot attend courses, receive credits that otherwise will have to be provided by faculty and this a problem for a university. We could just exclude students from non-cooperating consortium members, but that would punish the wrong people.
- At CERIAS, they installed an incentive scheme for faculty to report papers. For every paper that they are reporting that they publish and put it as part of organisation they are given $100 or $200 that come from industry partners, but it was soft money, which had no restrictions how to use it. They could use it for travel, for books. So somebody who publishes 5 papers had money to go to a conference.
- We have a similar scheme for students in COINS. If you publish a paper and you have an acknowledgment that you have been supported by COINS you get a copy of the PhD comics. For supervisors it is not an incentive here, but for students it works.
- Another issue that might be worth of thinking about, there are 2 or 3 or more professional organisations that could be appropriate for students in this field, ACM is one, ISSA is another one. It has several societies, computer society, forensics that students might find valuable here. You might think about as a benefit for student who participate, paying a membership. It might benefit them since it might encourage them to announcing the qualification, if they go to the conferences they might get a discount, newsletter and these kind of things.
- So, an approach could be to fund membership in a professional organisation for all Ph.D. students from a consortium member for a year if that consortium member submits all documentation and students put in a sentence in papers that acknowledges COINS. As a back of the envelope calculation, paying $50 per person times 40 people would be $2,000 per year. That is roughly the same amount for one student attending a longer event like NordSec and CySeP in Stockholm this year.

Input to steering committee and work plan 2016

- The challenges that COINS faces are those of a mature organisation, they are different from the start-up phase, and that is a good sign.
- Encouragement from the Research Council to have IKTPLUSS projects cooperate also by help of COINS is a good sign that COINS has impact.
- In preparation of the mid-term evaluation, COINS should determine which questions asked of students, supervisors, alumni would yield answers that are helpful in an evaluation or indicate what actions should be taken.
- All consortium members should enable all of their Ph.D. students to attend COINS events for credit, i.e. there should not be issues with recognition of courses taken

under the course code of another consortium member. Proxy course descriptions could be introduced to circumvent limitations of non-local course codes.

- Distance learning was mentioned as a topic to be discussed to get more value out of local courses and out of COINS courses.
- A scheme with incentives/fines could be developed to ensure a higher grade of compliance as regards documentation of in-kind contributions and reflection reports sent by consortium members.
- Membership in professional organisation like ACM could be sponsored by COINS to increase visibility, create networking opportunities and to reward students and institutions.
- Next AAB meeting should probably be planned before or after the Finse winter school in Finse or Bergen. An alternative would be co-location with the Metochi summer school or the next Ph.D. student seminar.

Meeting ends: 12:21