SICSA Research Theme Activity Report

Please complete all sections of this reporting template and submit within <u>four weeks</u> of your event or activity taking place. This report will allow the SICSA Directors to provide detailed information about the progress of the SICSA Research Themes to the Pool funders, SFC, and your cooperation is appreciated.

Primary Applicant

Name of event primary organiser: Angus Addlesee
Institution: Heriot-Watt University
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Event Details

Title of event: Young Researchers' Roundtable on Spoken Dialogue Systems 2022

Location of the event: Heriot-Watt University

Date of event: 5th-6th September 2022

Was this a cross research theme event: NO

Which SICSA Research Theme(s) sponsored your event: Artificial Intelligence

Was the event in collaboration with another SFC Research Pool: NO

Was the event in collaboration with Innovation Centre: NO

Event Summary

Please outline in brief what took place at the event, providing details of speakers and titles of talks: The first day started with an industry talk by a Scottish startup called Alana AI, followed by presentations by the student participants and some roundtable discussions about current challenges in Conversational AI. All students presented to help them make friends, chat to each other, and feel comfortable joining the discussions. The day ended with an industry talk by Amazon Alexa, and a keynote by Matt Henderson titled "Conversational AI Projects in Industry". On the second day we had a talk by Christine Howes titled "Putting the Dialogue in Dialogue Systems", more roundtable discussions, and a final talk by Oliver Lemon titled "Conversational Grounding and Emergent Conversation in Natural Language".

Proceedings available here:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/13KoTjlINRO2hr-ZkgMVggHyv49cdp6Vc/view

Please confirm an approximate number of attendees and if possible, information about which institutions were represented: There were 34 participants from universities around the world. Please see the proceedings linked above to see which institution every individual participant came from. Many more attended invited and student talks

Outcomes:

Do you have any plans to bid for further SICSA Theme Funding in the future? NO
        If yes, please provide details:

Did this event strengthen relations with other Research Pools and/or Scottish Innovation centres? YES
        If yes, please provide details: Students travelled to this event from around the world, strengthening ties with international research labs working on Conversational AI. This list may not be exhaustive, but the Scottish Universities represented included: Strathclyde, Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Heriot-Watt. We showed visiting students the new National Robotarium to illustrate Scotland's drive to lead AI research.

Please give details of any potential research papers that have come or are pending as a result of this activity: People discussed collaboration, but I do not know their progress.

Please provide details of any grant applications that have come or are pending as a result of this activity: NA

Please provide details of any further outcomes that you think will come as a result of this activity: Overall, we provided a space for early-stage conversational AI researchers to meet to share ongoing challenges, discuss useful tools, and spark new ideas in our field. This strengthened ties between international research labs and provided an opportunity to present Scotland's AI leadership. I personally know that at least one brilliant researcher is now planning to move to Scotland to join a Scottish AI startup.

I wrote an article summarising the discussions at the event here (including the SICSA SCOTLAND logo): https://towardsdatascience.com/the-future-of-voice-assistants-what-are-the-early-research-trends-dc02215fe2aa