Report to AGM from Conference Programme Chair, March 2018

The Reviewing Process for 2018 – facts and figures:
The review panel for 2018 has three new members. Two members of the reviewing panel for 2017 stepped down and were replaced by two new members. Eleven replied to the invitation to express their interest in joining the panel for 2018 and these expressions of interest were logged and checked in order of receipt. Nine of these met the eligibility criteria and the first two were appointed to the two vacancies on the 2018 panel. There were still seven who had declared an interest and who were eligible to serve. These were placed on a reserve list. During the review process it became necessary to call up one of these, leaving a reserve list of six.

A meeting of representatives of the review panel took place on 23rd January 2018, at which final decisions were made on submissions for the 2018 conference. The following are the figures for submissions received and accepted for the 2018 conference, together with corresponding figures for 2017 and 2016.

Submissions received: 119[*] (135 in 2017; 118 in 2016)
Submissions accepted: 66, or 55% (68, or 50% in 2017; 65, or 55% in 2016)

Breakdown of the 2018 figures:
Papers accepted: 42   Papers declined: 35
Workshops accepted: 9   Workshops declined: 16
Symposia accepted: 4   Symposia declined: 2
Posters accepted: 11   Posters declined: 0

Decisions were communicated by 2nd February to all who made submissions. The invited speakers for this year's conference all submitted copies of their papers by 11th February 2018.

The Reviewing Process 2018 – Issues for review:
Two issues arose during the reviewing of submissions: (a) word count and (b) original material. An initial discussion on both took place at the January 2018 meeting of representatives of the review panel. The Programme Chair then sought the views of all 30 panel members and prepared recommendations for the Executive Committee to render the requirements under these two headings more precise, thus avoiding some ambiguities that arose this year.

After the completion of the reviewing process there were a few communications from individual members of the review panel expressing a few concerns about the reviewing itself: e.g. insufficient coherence in some reviewers' comments; possible ambiguities in the "relevance to education" criterion; the necessity of judging a paper on its own terms. Also, 42 out 77 of papers were accepted, but only 9 out of 25 workshops. The Programme Chair is happy to review these concerns with the Conference Committee and to report back to the Executive Committee.

Tasks from last year's AGM:
Four issues from the 2017 AGM were referred to the Conference committee. These were discussed in detail at its meeting of 22nd June 2017. Below are the four issues and the recommendations to the Executive Committee:

(a) Require members of the review panel to have further credentials than are currently required.
    Recommendation: No change to current policy.
(b) Require each reviewer to indicate in her/his individual comments what her/his recommendation is.
    Recommendation: Not necessary to require this much, but a reviewer's comments need to be clearly consistent with the individual score he/she enters for a particular submission.
(c) Communicate the initial recommendation of individual reviewers to authors. (Not done at present.)
    Recommendation: No change to current policy.
(d) Give some adjudication powers to the Programme Chair in the case of a decision that is contested by an author after completion of the review and decision process.
    Recommendation: No additional powers necessary for Chair on completion of review process.

Pádraig Hogan   March 2018

[*] There were 121 submissions altogether, including 12 posters. One paper was withdrawn during the reviewing process. One poster was withdrawn.