

DiRAC

High Performance
Computing Facility

Call for applications for DiRAC Community Development Director

1 Background

The DiRAC Facility Management Team invites applications for the new position of Community Development Director. The post is available from 1st April 2021, and will initially run until 31st March 2023. There is the possibility of extension beyond this date (subject to funding). The post-holder should be available to take up the role no later than 1st October 2021.

Established in 2009, DiRAC is now the primary provider of computing resources for the Science & Technology Facilities Council (STFC) community working in the areas of theoretical astrophysics, particle physics, cosmology and nuclear physics (www.dirac.ac.uk). DiRAC is a distributed facility with hardware deployments at the University of Cambridge, Durham University, the University of Edinburgh and the University of Leicester. The DiRAC Project Office is based at University College London. The current DiRAC Director is Mark Wilkinson, Professor of Astrophysics at the University of Leicester.

This is an exciting opportunity to join the DiRAC team and further develop engagement between the facility and the user community. DiRAC's success relies on the support of its researcher community and the direct engagement of researchers in the design and oversight of HPC services is a unique feature of the DiRAC facility. The creation of this post to maintain and develop community engagement activities is an explicit recognition of the importance of these activities to DiRAC's mission of delivering world-class science, training and innovation.

2 Detailed job description

2.1 Role purpose:

To determine how DiRAC can best serve its user community and expand its user base in terms of the number and variety of projects supported.

2.2 Roles and Responsibilities:

User engagement

- Act as liaison between the DiRAC Management Team and the user community, proactively engaging with PPAN researchers to discuss their HPC requirements;
- Carry out an annual satisfaction survey among the user community;
- Introducing DiRAC researchers to new technologies and their cutting-edge research applications in order to contribute to the assessment of their suitability for DiRAC workflows;
- Facilitate the mentoring of new users by existing users.
- Encourage users to participate in public engagement activities and to develop press releases which highlight the value of DiRAC to their research.
- Promote participation in innovation placement schemes and other activities in collaboration with industry.

Proposals and resource utilisation

- Connect with our Project PIs and especially newer users (early career researchers, or those in up-coming science areas) to provide support and encouragement during the STFC Call for DiRAC Proposals.
- Obtain feedback from the community on the proposals process and, where necessary, identify ways of improving the experience.
- Engage with projects that are underusing their DiRAC allocations to identify ways that DiRAC can assist them in getting up to full usage.
- Engage with research groups via site-visits or virtual meetings and the creation of a new User Group to identify incremental improvements to DiRAC service provision in order to better serve the requirements of the science programme.

Events

- Organise workshops delivered by field-specialist researchers to demonstrate how new technologies can be applied to DiRAC research activities, with each workshop focussing on a particular methodology and/or research domain, coupled with a particular technology.
- Organise community conferences with the aim of proactively identifying new science projects for the facility and encouraging novel uses of the systems (e.g. AI or Machine Learning).

Funding and external advocacy

- Work with users, PIs and the DiRAC Project Board to ensure that the DiRAC Science Case is kept up-to-date
- Liaise with relevant STFC or UKRI committees on DiRAC's behalf.
- Identify and engage with UKRI communities outside STFC which might be users of future UKRI computing services delivered by the DiRAC Facility.

Reporting

- Provide ad-hoc updates to the Director and the Project Office as required;
- Write a summary of the results of the user engagement work in a 6-monthly report to the Project Office and Oversight Committee.

2.3 Internal and external relationships

Internal

- DiRAC Director
- DiRAC Project Scientist
- DiRAC Training Manager

External

- Members of the DiRAC research community at all levels
- STFC
- UKRI

2.4 Career development

DiRAC is keen to support the career development of all staff. There will be opportunities for training to support the career development of the successful applicant in collaboration with DiRAC and/or industry partners.

3 Person specifications

Applicants should demonstrate some or all of the following:

- Established research profile in a DiRAC research domain;
- A record of HPC-based research in a DiRAC field, either as a user or as PI of a computational project;
- Exceptional interpersonal skills;
- Enthusiasm for mentoring/supervising junior colleagues;
- Excellent oral and written communication skills;
- Existing engagement with the DiRAC research community;
- Proven ability to engage with research communities outside their own field of expertise;
- Proven ability to identify barriers to usage of HPC and explore constructive ways to overcome them;
- Experience of organising community events;
- Proven ability to engage stakeholders from a range of backgrounds, e.g. industry partners;
- Enthusiasm for development of improved service and/or management processes;
- Ability to advocate effectively on behalf of the entire DiRAC community;
- Experience of policy or process development;
- Experience of membership of, or engagement with, STFC or UKRI committees.

4 Funding

Funding of up to 0.4 FTE is available to allow the post-holder to devote sufficient effort to the role.

The post-holder will be provided with approximately 0.2 FTE of administrative support for community engagement, conference and workshop activities by the DiRAC Project Office admin team.

The post-holder will manage a budget of £11k p.a. to support workshops and community activities.

5 Application process

5.1 Applications

To apply, applicants should submit a CV together with a brief statement on their suitability for the role, including their reasons for applying, their areas of expertise/knowledge, and the names of two referees who would be willing to provide information to the panel on their previous experience and suitability for the role.

Statements should be no more than 2 sides of A4 and conform to the usual STFC regulations on style (font size, margins etc).

5.2 Closing date

Applications should be submitted by e-mail to the DiRAC Director (miw6@leicester.ac.uk) by **5pm on Monday, 8th February 2021**.

5.3 Assessment process:

The appointment panel will consist of Debora Sijacki (Chair of DiRAC Project Board), Mark Wilkinson (DiRAC Director) and Clare Jenner (Project Scientist & Deputy Director).

Consideration of applications will begin on February 8th. The appointment panel reserves the right to seek further applications after the closing date if no suitable applications are received by the closing date. The process will remain open until an appointment has been made.

The panel may invite candidates to attend a zoom interview.

Unsuccessful candidates will be informed of the outcome of their applications by the later of March 1st or three weeks after their application is received (for applications submitted later than the February 8th closing date).

We welcome applications from everyone, particularly from those who have a protected characteristic as defined by the Equalities Act (2010), which provides the legal framework to tackle disadvantage and discrimination.

These protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity.

The application procedure for this position requires the submission of a CV and personal statement. Please use these to bring to our attention anything we should know about e.g. disability or maternity, so that both the selection process and any subsequent employment can be reasonably adjusted to take account of anything you bring to our attention that you feel may disadvantage your application.

5.4 Additional information

Informal enquiries about this position should be sent to the DiRAC Director, Mark Wilkinson, (miw6@leicester.ac.uk).