

2024 ICAPS Council Meeting

Banff June 1st, 2024, 9.00-17:30 UTC-6

hybrid format: in-person attendance and remotely via Zoom

Attendees:

Council Members (in person):

Roman Bartak, J. Benton, Erez Karpas, Gabriele Röger, Shirin Sohrabi, Mauro Vallati, Michael Katz, Christian Muise (new member), Sara Bernardini (new member)

Council Members (remotely):

Eva Onaindia, Hankz Hankui Zhuo, William Yeoh

Non-Council Attendees:

Only for agenda item 2 (representing ICAPS 2024 and Summer School) 9.05 UTC-6:

Sheila McIlraith, Nathan Sturtevant, Jonathan Schaeffer, Pascal Bercher, Sarah Keren, Jane Jean Kiam

Only for agenda item 4 (representing ICAPS 2025) 10.30 UTC-6: Nir Lipovetzky

(remotely), Daniel Harabor (in-person)

Only for agenda item 5 (representing ICAPS 2026) 11:15 UTC-6: Alfonso Gerevini and

Sandhya Saisubramanian (in-person), Adi Botea and Amanda Coles (remotely)

1. Opening/Formalities

1.1 Review and approve minutes of the ICAPS 2023 Council Meeting

Two amends to the narrative of the minutes. Approved.

1.2 Decisions taken without meeting since last council meeting

- Approved the contract with Banff center for the ICAPS 2024 summer school.
- Approved the hiring of a sponsorship contractor for ICAPS 2024.
- Support ICAPS 2024 and the summer school jointly with 15K US\$ for supporting students or people coming from underrepresented regions. We ask the organizers to jointly decide how the money is exactly spent and handle the payments.
- Continuation of the financial support for the services around planning.domains. It's 800US\$ for two years, covering the cost for hosting, database and the domain.
- Change of award money: \$1000 for Best Dissertations, \$500 for Best Dissertation Honorable Mentions, \$0 for Influential Papers. We suggest to the conference organizers to give the awardees free registrations (one per award).

- **Hosting ICAPS 26.** The Council received three proposals for hosting ICAPS 2026. A first meeting, without the Council members with COI, was held on January 15. At this meeting, it was decided to request an extended EOI from two of the three EOIs. These were discussed at a meeting on March 20 and the outcome was a preference for one of the EOI and therefore to strongly encourage the team to submit a full proposal. The Council also left open the possibility for the other EOI to submit a full proposal if the team was willing to it. Only one full proposal was received.

After the whole process, some questions about the role of an EOI came up, as to whether the information contained in the EOI would be sufficient to make a final decision or not. If this possibility is going to be considered in the future, the Council needs to clarify the guidelines to prepare an Expression of Interest to hold an ICAPS conference so that EOIs are comparable.

1.3 Election of new officers

Congratulations to the new officers:

- Roman Bartak for taking over the role of Secretary
- Mauro Vallati for taking over the role of Conference liaison
- Michael Katz for taking over the role of Competition liaison

1.4 Welcoming new members

Congratulations to the new elected members: Sara Bernardini and Christian Muise

2. ICAPS 2024 (including Summer School)

2.1 Financial Report (presented by Jonathan Schaeffer)

1. 237 registrants: regular (119) + student (99) + complimentary (19)
2. Sponsorship: 29K CAD + 10K CAD (possibly more) expected. Lack of local sponsorship.
3. The projection is roughly break even.
4. Prices higher than expected.

2.2 Reviewing process (presented by Christian Muise)

1. *Paper acceptance rate*: 25% (82 out of 335 submissions)
2. *Acceptance rate (others)*: Previously published works (53% -- mainly Journals), Doctoral Consortium (100%), System Demonstrations (100%), Tutorials (71%), Workshops (100%), Summer School (85%)
3. *Submission stats*: desk rejects (20), reviewers (184), SPC (25). Hard time recruiting reviewers

4. *Paper scope reporting*: PC and SPC raised issues of papers out of scope with Program Chairs. Rejected papers were signed off by the PC chairs. The system worked well.
5. *Self-nominations*: open calls for Organizing Committees, PC, SPC, Session Chairs, etc. It worked well: major impact on the diversity at all levels.
6. *Open review*:
 - Reviews/rebuttals made public for accepted papers
 - Running reviewing through OpenReview as Program Chair was heavily involved (system is not very intuitive from an organizational perspective)
 - Primary keywords vs Tracks:
 - o topic choice worked well
 - o topics: Applications (16 papers); Robotics (7 papers); Learning (22 papers); Theory (10 papers); Human-aware Planning and Scheduling (4 papers); Temporal Planning (7 papers); Multi-Agent Planning (14 papers); Knowledge Representation/Engineering (9 papers); None (26 papers)
 - o topics were not much used in assignment but heavily used for session scheduling
7. *Program Scheduling*: the team built a software to create semantic embeddings of the papers and used it in several ways to allocate papers to sessions.

2.3 Considerations for future years (presented by Nathan Sturtevant)

1. *Sponsorship*: knowledge transfer is very important; it need to get started very early
2. Immigration has a large impact in workshops.
3. Attendance: 20% late registrations, lower attendance than Prague (AICan overlap)
4. Considerations for the Council: sponsorship role; registration services; award payments; remote streaming and remote attendance.

2.4 Summer School (presented by Pascal Bercher, Sarah Keren and Jane Jean Kiam)

1. Lectures in the morning (5 to 10 people in all the lectures). Lab program in the afternoon.
2. 49 applicants:
 - 41 accepted/8 rejected
 - 5 students with Visa issues; 4 out of the rejections took a spot
 - 40 students finally made it: 29 male (72.5%)/ 9 female (22.5%)/ 2 other or prefer not to say (5%)
3. Selection criteria:
 - Academic excellence only factored into a sponsorship.
 - Criteria: priority to older participants (last chance to participate), under-represented country of affiliation and nationality, under-represented gender, previous attendance to Summer School, quality/efforts of CV and cover letter

- Participants from under-represented nationality: India, China, Vietnam, Nepal, Syria, Bangladesh
- 4. Financial report: gain = 931.21 CAD. The Council highlights that there is no expectation to make any money out of the Summer School.
- 5. ICAPS scholarship and income came in too late. This should not be an issue anymore as ICAPS decided to continuously support the Summer School from now on.

3. Governance

3.1 ICAPS 2023 Report and Update (presented by Roman Bartak)

1. Participation figures (numbers at registration):
 - Total number of participants: 321 (290 in-person, 31 online)
 - Europe (52%), North America (25%), Asia (12%), Australia (5%), South America (1%), no answer (5%)
 - Male (76%), Female (16%), Non-binary (1%), No answer (7%).
 - Regular fees (59%), Student fees (41%)
 - Early registration (70%), late registration (21%), Complimentary (9%)
2. Financial report:
 - Student support: US-based students (NSF support: 14,700 USD); Non-US-based students (AIJ support: 7,000 EUR)
 - Income from partners: sponsorship to ICAPS conference (266,660 CZK), partners directly to ICAPS Inc (17,000 USD)
 - Final balance: 17,659 USD

3.2 Treasurer's Report (presented by William Yeoh at 13.50)

1. Ending balance by 2023: 291,499.61 USD (slightly lower than 2022 but still a healthy budget)
2. Currently, a joint checking account with AAAI. Looking into moving funds to an ICAPS-only account that earns interest and eases financial tracking in the future.

4. ICAPS 2025 (presented by Nir Lipovetzky and Daniel Harabor)

Nir Lipovetzky (remotely) and Daniel Harabor (in-person) join the meeting at 10.30.

Nir presents the General Updates.

1. The organizers run a small conference around 70 people for two days to test the conference venue. Lessons learned on how to run ICAPS smoothly.
2. Conference venue booked: November 9th – 14th 2025

3. Collocations: CPAIOR fully collocated with ICAPS; exploring options to partially collocate with KR (around 200 people at KR, KR would run after ICAPS with some overlapping)
4. Difficulties in finding an international Sponsorship chair (many requests were declined)
5. Nir presents a new initiative: **Pioneers Workshop**
 - A novel and more inclusive approach to attract students who would not otherwise participate in ICAPS.
 - A more structured approach for new students to meet and form groups across research groups.
 - Ways of implementing the Pioneers Workshop (PW):
 - o Option 1: relabel the DC program as PW and expand the program to also take Masters and Undergraduate students who are looking for mentors
 - o Option 2: PW run alongside the DC program (ICAPS pioneers consists of students who traditionally do not attend ICAPS DC)
 - Model taken from HRI pioneers, a program that attracted students who had never attended HRI
 - Requirements from ICAPS council: funding four students
 - Discussion on the PW initiative:
 - o Misgivings on a potential confusion with DC
 - o Some members wonder how to attract students who do not come through someone from the planning community, how to recruit students with no advisors to be part of ICAPS
 - o Is the experience worth testing?

Conclusion: after deliberation, the Council approves the following:

- To request a more detailed proposal from the proponents.
- To support a pilot program and urge the proponents to collect data from the Pioneer Workshop initiative.
- The pilot program at ICAPS 2025 does not imply commitments for further ICAPS conferences.
- To allow allocate at most 10,000 USD from the money to support underrepresented groups for the Pioneer Workshop initiative.

Daniel Harabor presents the Technical Program and introduces a proposal for a new reviewing model. The outline of the model is as follows:

1. Dates:
 - Abstract deadline: 21 October 2024
 - Paper deadline: 28 October 2024
2. Longer reviewing period (desk rejections and two rounds)
 - Desk rejects: reviewers flag papers for desk reject; PC chairs determine if they continue to round 1 (11 November 2024)
 - Round 1: 2 reviewers per submission; clear-cut cases are decided at this stage (accept/reject, 16 December 2024)

- Round 2: uncertain/divisive papers reach this round; 1 or 2 more reviewers added to the paper; author rebuttal and subsequent discussion; notification on 7 March 2025 can be accept, reject or (website only) extended abstract & poster.
- 3. Submission type paper tags for authors: Theoretical, Algorithmic, Models and Position Papers.
- 4. Context/Topic tag: Abstract models, Learning, Robotics, Human-Aware, Applications, others (similarly to 'Primary Keywords')
- 5. Introduce new types of submissions like position papers or industry talks proposals (extended abstract)
- 6. Introduce special protocol for reviewing Applications papers
- 7. Borderline reject papers converted to extended abstract and poster presentation (similar initiatives are tried in AAMAS and SoCS)

Discussion on the new reviewing model. Misgivings on the new concept to move on to the second stage only if disagreements between reviewers. The community needs time to adjust to new guidelines.

Conclusion: after deliberation, the Council approves feedback on the two-round reviewing process where the result of Round 1 will be rejection given two unfavorable reviews, otherwise, the paper moves on to Round 2.

5. ICAPS 2026 (presented by Adi Botea)

Adi Botea and Amanda Coles (remotely) and Alfonso Gerevini and Sandhya Saisubramanian (in-person) join the meeting at 11.15.

Adi Botea presents ICAPS 2026 at Dublin.

1. Conference chairs: Adi Botea and Alfonso Gerevini
2. Programme chairs: Amanda Coles, Wheeler Ruml and Sandhya Saisubramanian
3. Main venue: Trinity College Dublin: Summer School venue: University College Dublin. Both locations connected by public transportation (30 min bus approx..)
4. Projected registration fee: 700 EUR (regular), 500 EUR (student)
5. Projected participation: 270 participants (110 students)
6. Breaking point: 145 participants

Several aspects were discussed with the organizers of ICAPS 2026:

1. Explore the possibility of celebrating the Summer School at the Trinity College Dublin too. Having the two events in the same location is better for logistics unless there is an economical reason.
2. ICAPS 2026 organizers dealt with the issue of recording the talks in Trinity and a camera cannot be used in the rooms. Organizers plan to request presenters a video of their talk. The question that remains is what about tutorials and invited talks.

3. Additional questions related to some other aspects of the organization came up during the discussion.

Conclusion: after deliberation, the Council unanimously approves the proposal to hold ICAPS 2026 in Dublin.

Lunch break from 12:30 to 13:30

6. Diversity and Inclusion

6.1 Diversity & Inclusion report (presented by Shirin Sohrabi)

Shirin Sohrabi presents the ICAPS Diversity and Inclusion Report.

1. Gender statistics over the last three years (male to female ratio): ICAPS 2022 registrants (3.6:1). ICAPS 2023 registrants (4.75:1), ICAPS 2024 on self-reported survey (3.73:1).
2. A new ICAPS Diversity and Inclusion Committee is formed which will serve for 2024 and 2025.
3. ICAPS conference guidelines:
 - A diversity and inclusion chair
 - At least two diversity and inclusion advocates
 - Collection of diversity data
 - Awareness of Code of Conduct (website, registration) and incident reports
 - **UPDATED:** the ICAPS organizers should also ensure that anyone attending the conference in any capacity (e.g., vendors, employees of the venue, visitors) is aware of the Code of Conduct.

6.2 Handling of incident reports and violations of Code of Conduct (Roman Bartak)

The Council members initiated a discussion on an incident that happened at ICAPS 2023. A person claimed to be the recipient of misconduct (undesired behaviour) during the conference but did not want to file any report. The conducted investigation was primarily a realization of the Code of Conduct (CoC) to see if the perpetrator had read the CoC.

Some concerns around this issue came up. Does reading the CoC prevent and discourage this type of incidents? How do we know if the CoC is violated? What can be done to avoid this type of behaviour? The goal of the CoC is for people to feel safe, people are aware of the existence of a Diversity and Inclusion Committee but the tools to handle this type of situations are not clear.

We concluded that the protocol, the outcome, and the tools of the CoC must be clarified. We decided to revise the AAAI policy on this matter and adopt or adapt the AAAI CoC to refine the ICAPS CoC.

7. Discussion items

7.1 Amendment for clarifying election rules (J. Benton)

The proposed amendment is as follows: *“The changeover of officers and directors will take place at the conclusion of the ICAPS annual meeting after their election, with the new officers officially assuming their roles immediately following this meeting. The President-elect becomes President two years following their election, at the conclusion of the day on which the annual directors’ meeting is held. If there is no ICAPS in the year in question, then June 1st is the reference date for the changeover”*.

The Council approves the proposed amendment.

We comment on the email voting and that when we agree to sign a document or use funds without a meeting, we need unanimous written consent of all members for the decision.

7.2 Financial support for underrepresented groups (Erez Karpas)

Proposal to allocate money to support underrepresented groups:

“In order to increase diversity of those who attend ICAPS, ICAPS Inc. will allocate 15K USD every year for the next 5 years (ICAPS 2025-2029) to support attendance of people at any seniority level from underrepresented regions and students of early career researchers worldwide. The money will be treated as sponsorship by ICAPS Inc. to the ICAPS conference running the given year. The ICAPS organizers can use the money to support a co-located Summer School, if there is one.”

The Council approves the proposal.

7.3 Facilitating the VISA application process for ICAPS attendees (Erez Karpas)

It is important to ensure that organizers are aware of the VISA requirements and VISA application and take control of this well in advance, above all workshop organizers.

The following paragraph is included in the document “Guidelines for Conference Organizers”:

[...] Examples of past invitation letters can be obtained from the conference liaison. This should be taken into account when deciding on the notification dates for workshops, demos, previously published papers, etc. Some countries, such as Canada and the US, might have government offices that can help with this process.

Please note that requests for invitation letters can also be used for human trafficking (e.g., <https://www.livemedianews.uk/trafficking>), and ICAPS has already been contacted with such a request. Organizers are asked to exercise their judgement in providing invitation letters to unknown individuals.

7.4 Approval of the updated guidelines for conference organizers

Main updates in the document “Guidelines for Conference Organizers”:

1. Last paragraph of section “Finances” explaining the handling of financial aspects of the conference
2. Second paragraph in section “Conference Proposals” explaining the protocol to choose a conference venue.
3. Last paragraph of section “Diversity & Inclusion” recommending a dedicated diversity and inclusion chair for the conference.
4. A newly added section “Conference Rankings”
5. Last bullet in section “Recording and Archiving of Talks” to enhance the need of consent forms for recordings
6. Other modifications

The Council approves the updated document “Guidelines for Conference Organizers”

7.5 Approval of the Conflict of Interest(Col) ICAPS policy

Following the discussion on the Col guidelines at the previous council meeting (see minutes of ICAPS 2023 Executive Council Meeting), the document ‘ICAPS Conflict of Interest Policy’ is updated.

The Council approves the updated document “ICAPS Conflict of Interest policy”

7.6 Statistics on reviewer invitation acceptance rates (presented by J.)

J. presents the figures of Accepted Reviewer Invitations over the last 6 years. We can observe some fluctuations over the years. The percentage of accepted invitations in ICAPS 2024 was slightly higher than in the last three years.

Recruiting reviewers is a recurrent problem related to all ICAPS organizations. We discussed two actions to take: (1) promote Reviewer Self Nomination and (2) request that at least one author of the submitted papers act as a reviewer.

8. Wrap-up

8.1 Community meeting preparation

Community meeting preparation in charge of J. and Erez

8.2 ICAPS Council Meeting 2025

The next Council meeting will be on the day of the Doctoral Consortium at ICAPS 2025.

8.3 Thanking departing members

Thanks to Gabriele Röger for her service as President of the Council and her strong involvement in the ICAPS community. Thanks to Eva Onaindia for her service as Secretary.

8.4 Any other business

No remarks.