

Annual Report 2020

Executive Committee Activity

During the year, The Executive Committee met seven times (via Zoom/telecom). Over the year it discussed a number of key issues that the Association regards as of central importance to Members and the field more generally. These included (and are reported on in more detail below):

- National events organised by the Association
- The REF 2021
- Building Membership numbers
- Strengthening links between STIS centres
- Website development
- Policy engagement
- Determining the challenges facing PhD and ECR members

Strategic Priorities for 2021

- Increase A-UK membership
- Develop additional resources for Members
- Develop proposals that improve ECR members' careers
- Support and strengthen the STIS community
- Develop new and build on current links with the S&T policy community

Current EC membership

Chair, Robin Williams, University of Edinburgh

http://www.sps.ed.ac.uk/staff/science_technology_and_innovation_studies/williams_robin

Vice-Chair, Barbara Ribeiro, University of Manchester

<https://www.research.manchester.ac.uk/portal/barbara.ribeiro.html>

Marie-Claire Brisbois, University of Sussex

<https://profiles.sussex.ac.uk/p458012-marie-claire-brisbois>

Anne-Marie Coles, University of Greenwich

<https://enterprise.gre.ac.uk/migrationtools/new-content/content-type/people-updated-26-11-20/holding-folder/anne-marie-coles>

Rachel Hale, Cardiff University
[Dr Rachel Hale - People - Cardiff University](#)

Julia Kasmire, University of Manchester
[Dr J. Kasmire | The University of Manchester](#)

Matjaz Vidmar, University of Edinburgh
<https://www.roe.ac.uk/~vidmar/>

Andrew Webster, University of York
<https://www.york.ac.uk/sociology/our-staff/academic/andrew-webster/>

AsSIST-UK Events

Planning a national conference for this year was abandoned because of COVID-19. Instead we ran a virtual meeting attended by almost 100 members on the theme of 'STIS and COVID-19'. Our Panel of five experts drawn from the Membership showed how the field is opening up new questions as well as policy recommendations in regard not just to COVID but to other pandemics. A [full report was published on the website](#) as well as a recording on [YouTube](#). The Association also drew on the outcome of the Webinar to send a submission to the Government Office currently seeking proposals for near-term research (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/areas-ofresearch-interest>) relating to COVID-19.

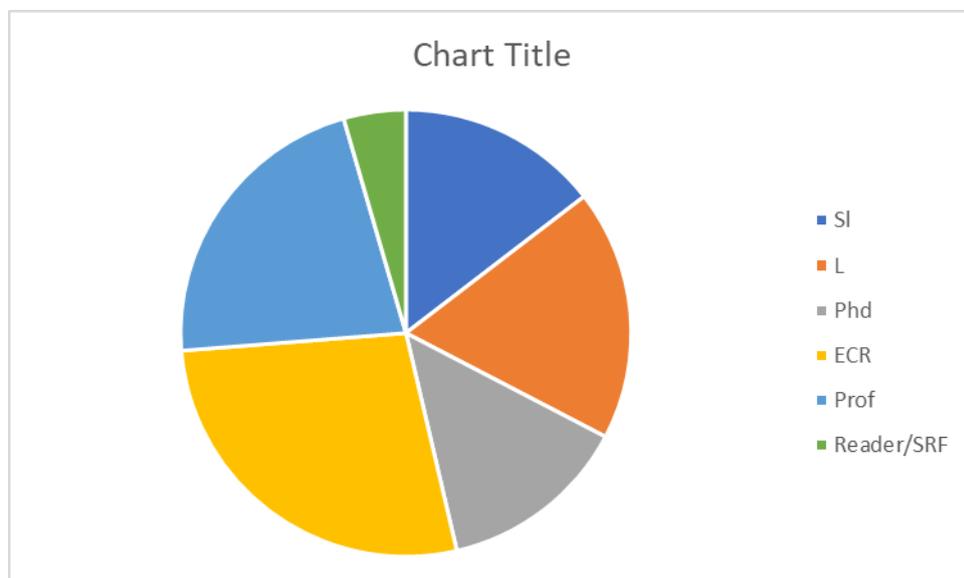
A second important event related to the theme of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI). AsSIST-UK coordinated a Workshop on RRI chaired by Robin Williams in collaboration with and hosted by member Jack Stilgoe (UCL). The meeting brought colleagues involved in delivering research training and supporting RRI in UKRI/EPSRC CDTs across 12 Higher Education Institutes: Bristol, Edinburgh, Exeter, Kings College London, Imperial College, Manchester, Nottingham, Sheffield, UCL. Participants shared a wide range of experiences and highlighted key institutional and pedagogic challenges. Please contact Robin Williams (R.Williams@ed.ac.uk) if you are interested to take part or would like to be kept informed of these developments. Partly in relation to this, and in response to the ESRC's autumn consultation on Postgraduate Training, the Association sent in a submission focusing on AsSIST UK's transdisciplinary expertise and the benefits and challenges of interdisciplinarity especially between social and natural science.

REF 2021

The Association was invited to submit nominations to the UoA Sociology Panel seeking expertise in STS and environmental studies. We are delighted that two of our members, Professor Noortje Marres (Warwick https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/cim/people/noortje-marres/) and Professor Andy Stirling (Sussex <https://profiles.sussex.ac.uk/p7513-andrew-stirling>) have been appointed to the Panel.

Membership Report:

Current membership stands at 380 principally though not solely in the UK, including 40 from overseas. Within the UK, members are distributed across 47 institutions. We are keen to see more members join based in these and other academic centres during 2021. Membership remains free.



Labels: SI: Senior Lecturer; L: Lecturer, PhD: Doctoral Student ; ECR: Early Career Researcher (postdocs/research fellows); Prof: Professor; Reader/Senior Research Fellows.

AsSIST-UK is also linked to the UK Postgraduate STS Forum [Postgraduate Forum for Science, Technology and Innovation Studies \(pfstis.co.uk\)](https://www.pfstis.co.uk)

The chart shows that there is a good balance in regards to more senior and more junior positions held by Members. In regard to Members' research areas of interest, all 20 areas on the Member's application form are represented: those areas which have most interest are the bio/life sciences, digital systems, energy systems, environment, health and medicine, innovation studies, and science and technology policy.

The Association conducted a survey of ECR Members during the year, coordinated by A-UK Exec member Julia Kasmire. We will be following this up in 2021. There were a number of key issues that emerged where members felt their universities needed to act to help improve their position/opportunities:

- Provide a platform to get published (such as a special edition ECR journal or a collected edition)
- Set up policies or awards that require or encourage funding bids which explicitly include/name ECRs (so the ECR can put the bid on their CV)
- Reach out to ECRs for help with other staff articles (so they can get an authorship). For example, ask them to check draft papers for reproducibility, to check through

code or data and find ways to share it, to check that a paper and its visualisations are clear/accessible to readers with disabilities (or ask them to create a disability accessible version/audio promotion).

Strengthening Links between STIS Centres

The Association is keen to strengthen ties between academic centres working in the field. We are discussing ways in which the Association can facilitate fellowships/exchange visits between STIS centres, at the UK and wider level. While considerable informal exchange can be seen (though now constrained by CV-19), we hope to be able to foster and support a more formalised programme of activity. We will be contacting centres/Members soon on this.

We will be publishing a map of STIS centres on the website in 2021 which will help in this regard and act as a resource for Members.

A-UK Website

The website <https://assist-uk.com/> has continued to be developed this year with some new features. A full review of the site is underway with the intention of its providing more resources for members, as well as new opportunities for blogs and news from projects.

AsSIST-UK Prize 2020

The EC was delighted to announce this year's Doctoral Prize was awarded to Dr Aaron Amankwaa, from the Department of Applied Sciences at Northumbria University. His thesis contributes towards our understanding of the dynamics of technology governance and theoretically interrogates the overlapping areas of the social embedding of technology in both STS and innovation studies.

A reminder that applications are open for the 2021 A-UK Annual PhD Prize. See details at: <https://assist-uk.com/assist-uk-phd-prize/>

Financial Position

The Association's budget (with a current balance of c£8000) is available to support initiatives, awards and out-of-pocket expenses for EC members where needed.

Some Highlights of the Year reported by Members

In March Theo Papaioannou (Innogen, OU) was appointed Member of the Expert Peer Review Group on Evaluation at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Andrew Webster and Sally Wyatt (eds) *Health Technology and Society: Critical Inquiries* (2020) Palgrave Macmillan. The book reflects the strong interest noted above in the Bio-sciences/Life science and Health and Medicine field within the Association. As a collection of readings drawn from twenty two books published in the Series, the book gives a concise and rich guide to the core issues and debates within the field.

Catherine Will (University of Sussex) received funding from the Wellcome Trust to examine mobilisation on antimicrobial resistance with a particular focus on sexual and reproductive health, working across policy, science, clinical practice and voluntary sector advocacy and activism.

The National Centre for Research Methods (NCRM) (University of Manchester) began a project exploring methodological adaptations in social research in light of the dynamic Covid-19 social restrictions.

Professor Paul Martin (Sociological Studies and co-director of iHuman, University of Sheffield) was awarded a £1m Wellcome Trust Investigator Award: Orphan drugs: high prices, access to medicines and the transformation of biopharmaceutical innovation

Aurélie Mahalatchimy (University of Aix-Marseille, France) and a team composed of SHS and biomedical sciences researchers received funding from the French NRA to explore the processes of fragmentation and defragmentation of the European law on biomedical innovations (BI- mainly gene therapy, regenerative medicine, and nanomedicine).