**UAP in Glaciology – Feedback**

**(Presentation breifing, interview questions and panel members inserted by FC below for context)**

**Department Presentation Briefing:**

*You are asked to deliver a 30 minute in-person presentation, in which you communicate to the Department your research achievements to date and your research plans for the next three to five years, and also outline how you would design, deliver and assess a third-year elective paper in glaciology to Cambridge geography undergraduate students.*

**Interview questions (given in advance):**

*1. What is it about this advertised position that has attracted you to apply?*

*2. What do you see as the most important and cutting-edge questions in your area of glaciology, and why? How do you see your research contributing to these questions over the next five years?*

*3. If you were invited to shape a funded PhD studentship in your first year or two in post what would it be?*

*4. How can you see your research fitting in with and complementing ongoing research at the Department? Do you see scope for collaborations with other University departments?*

*5. In what ways do you see your research as having non-academic impact?*

*6. How do you see yourself contributing to the Department’s undergraduate and postgraduate curricula, including practical teaching such as field, lab- and computer-based methods (such as remote sensing or numerical modelling)? Can you give us an example of how you would teach glaciology in these practical ways?*

*7. How would you inspire and educate students without a scientific background and from a diversity of educational/cultural backgrounds? How would you create diverse modes of assessment to capture the learning of such students?*

*8. What would you identify as the ingredients of a supportive and productive research culture? How would you hope to contribute to such a culture in the Department?*

**Panel**

Mike Hulme (HoD)

Neil Arnold (Director of SPRI)

Ian Willis (SPRI)

Christine Lane (Geography)

Amelie Kirchgaessner (BAS)

**FEEDBACK**

Frazer Christie

**Strengths**

Previous work clearly relevant to the advertised position, some of which had high scientific and public impact. Interesting range of studies of clear relevance to the discipline and contemporary issues. Clearly achieved some high impact/high quality research. Research to date has been of high standard, complements existing SPRI topics and would provide a useful continuation of marine-based polar research, which will be lost to some extent following Julian’s retirement. Leading on topic of atmosphere-ocean-ice interaction stemming from PhD work and subsequent work (four 1st author papers) and co-lead on paleo-ice sheet work (with Dowdeswell & Batchelor) including the recent ‘big’ paper on rapid buoyancy driven ice sheet retreat. Other papers in the pipeline.

Experience in writing and obtaining money to support research, inc. PhD (with Rob Bingham) and recent Post-Doc (with Julian Dowdeswell).

Experience of presenting parliamentary papers and reporting of work to the Arctic Council was a convincing step toward making research impactful in the policy sphere.

Reported experience in supporting and delivering teaching in physical geography, with appropriate bias toward polar. Had some good ideas about alternative assessments, such as mini poster conferences following project work. Presented some good ideas about teaching outside the lecture room. Teaching experience at Edinburgh & Cambridge, most recently Polar MPhil lectures / practicals – well received by students - and undergraduate supervisions. He had some sensible things to say about the importance of hands-on learning. Experience of mentoring and supervising graduate students at an early career stage. Experience in supervisory role, most notably PhD student Boxall (1 published & 1 forthcoming paper), former Masters students, and former undergraduate students (one of whom (Deakin) has a paper forthcoming).

**Weaknesses**

Talk:

Yes, draw attention to your achievements, but this was rather overdone in the talk with repeated over-emphasis of the fact that research had been published in particular journals and that certain media outlets picked it up. We would like to have seen more on what the current issues involving ice in Antarctica are, how the candidate’s research fits into that wider agenda, and what exactly their contribution was to answering the questions – i.e., what are the key results from the papers, not just the fact that they were published in *Nature* and picked up by the BBC etc.

Over-emphasis on the metric-based assessments of success -- e.g. publishing in high IF journals – which indicated a poor grasp of the breadth of skills and requirements of a tenured academic role. There is also more to really good papers beyond the journal they appear in, and more than just “discovery” of new “facts”, which the candidate didn’t really see past. Didn’t provide any well-formed ideas about future research plans, mostly referring back to what was previously achieved: “more of the same” is not a good vision to convince others.

The crossing out of SPRI colleagues on a visual image was poorly received and was not a good idea.

Interview.

General. Answers were rather superficial – beyond saying “I can contribute” and “huge potential” and (especially re. PhD project) “I have a ton of ideas”, which is not good enough in the context of an interview for a position like this. Lack of detail, precision and clarity, with concrete examples, in answer to some of our questions. Overall there seemed to be a lot of hot air in the presentation and during the interview. Questions were answered superficially without any or much detail.

Q2. Vague about future ideas other than to continue what he is already doing. Given that applicants had been given the interview questions in advance, I would have expected to hear details of one or two ideas for novel future research ideas. Much about  “how fast?” and “how much?”, but not about the background, i.e. why these matter? While the panel may know this, we would have expected the applicant to show their knowledge about the wider relevance of their research during the interview. There was little about truly interdisciplinary research ideas.

Q3. Shaping a PhD student – answer seemed mostly to be similar to current PhD student, Boxall’s, work. We were particularly surprised how much pushing was needed by panel members before a tangible PhD project plan was provided, despite having had a week to come up with an idea. This led us to question whether previous research stemmed from own ideas or whether supervisor / collaborators had driven the initiatives.

Q5. Being present in the mainstream media is only one aspect of outreach.

Q7. Asked about teaching students without scientific background gave an initial answer that focused on inspiring, not educating (OK for school kids, not for UG level). Good idea to ensure teaching starts without prior assumptions of ability, so that everyone is on the “same page”, but naive to think that means all the students will learn at the same pace. This led us to question how much had been learnt from the extensive teaching experience we were being told about. Educating students without a science background or from a range of educational / cultural backgrounds – gave the impression he had experience of this already, but we were not convinced this was the case. Re. diversity, there was a very poorly directed answer about connecting with people in the SPRI museum and University via admissions and College dinners. Surprised to hear no recognition of diversity challenges in polar research. The applicant did not convince us that he understood the breadth of underrepresented groups in glaciology and academia. Unfortunately, College dinners are not where one meets a diverse range of people to improve outreach. It teaches you to explain your research to someone from a different discipline, but not how to enthuse, e.g., a teenager from a deprived background. The applicant’s ideas about how “Cambridge is achievable” did not convince us as a concept to improve diversity or make glaciology/SPRI a more inclusive discipline/institution.