

JANUARY 31, 2018



ANNUAL REPORT 2017

THE FIRST YEAR OF PITCOM

PRESENTED BY: PITCOM BOARD

FACULTY OF GEO-INFORMATION SCIENCE AND EARTH OBSERVATION
UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

THE FIRST YEAR OF PITCOM

The PhD ITC Community, abbreviated as pITCom, represent the PhDs in the ITC Faculty. Its purpose is to foster scientific and academic support among PhD candidates. The need for such an organization was identified during the SENSE Institute Assessment in 2014, which recommended that ITC PhDs could benefit from organizing intellectual activities, such as conferences, workshops, or seminars. As a consequence, the 'PhD ITC Community' was officially established in January 2017.

During its first year, the Daily Board of pITCom (DB) focused on establishing a foundation as a new organization within the ITC Faculty, and planning several PhD-oriented activities. Currently, pITCom counts with an office, official email address and website¹, a logo, and financial support for the organization of scientific activities. To reach ITC PhDs, the DB created a Facebook group and ran a survey to identify education and training needs among PhD candidates. It established links with relevant bodies inside and outside the ITC Faculty (e.g., the ITC Academic Board and P-NUT). Moreover, the DB organized information sessions, education, scientific and social activities, which brought together PhDs from all scientific departments.

In this report, the DB of pITCom presents a summary of 2017. The first part describes activities and achievements of pITCom in chronological order. The second part highlights pending matters and the organization of future activities. This may serve a starting point for the organization of pITCom activities in 2018. The third and last part contains the financial report of 2017.

The pITCom board

Evelien Rost (Chair)

Manuel Garcia (Secretary)

Adish Khezri (Education Responsible)

Milad Mahour (Science Responsible)

Haidi Abdullah (Social Responsible)

Harm-Jan Benninga (Public Relations)

¹ <https://utwente.nl/pitcom>

1. OVERVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

The first year of pITCom was characterized by a learning and adapting process. Along that process the board of pITCom planned and organized the activities described below.

TRAINING AND EDUCATION SURVEY

As part of the initial efforts to identify relevant matters among the ITC PhDs, pITCom ran an online survey in March 2017. A total of 67 ITC PhDs (45% of the population) responded eleven questions regarding the demand on generic and specific skills courses, the difficulties in securing a spot on the courses offered by the Twente Graduate School (TGS), and the level of participation in P-NUT activities.²

The results of the survey showed that courses on ‘academic writing’ and ‘poster design and presentation’ have a high demand and priority among PhD candidates in the first year of the PhD program. ‘Networking’ and ‘CV building’ courses had a high priority among PhD candidates in the final years of the program. A 27% percent of the respondents had to wait between 1 and 6 months to find a spot in some of the most popular courses offered by TGS (i.e., English writing and Dutch lessons). Only one third of the respondents were a member of P-NUT, of which only a few had participated in P-NUT activities.

Result of this survey were communicated to the ITC Directorate, the Academic Board, P-NUT, TGS and the ITC PhDs. P-NUT and TGS were already aware of the long waiting lists for some courses and plan to open more places. Therefore, waiting times are expected to be reduced by 2018. A relevant notice is that in the second half of the 2017, the format of some courses has changed into what is known as “boot camp” (e.g. Academic Presentations, Academic publishing), and places are open with more frequency.

KICK OFF MEETING

The pITCom kick off meeting marked the official start of pITCom as a body within ITC Faculty. The meeting took place on May 19th 2017. ITC PhDs and P-NUT representatives were invited to participate in the information session and open discussion.

During the information session, the DB presented the results of the *training and education survey* and the work plan for 2017. Two representatives of P-NUT joined this session as guest speakers and they shared a summary of P-NUT activities for 2017. During the open discussion, ITC PhDs were invited to a group discussion to learn about the research topics of each scientific department of ITC Faculty. ITC PhDs also had the opportunity to express their suggestions regarding the participation and organization of activities. PhDs, who attended this event, showed enthusiasm about pITCom, the opportunity to count with a more coherent group of PhDs in ITC Faculty, and the initiates of scientific, educational and social activities specifically for PhDs. The kick off meeting facilitated the engagement of more ITC PhDs in subsequent pITCom activities.³

² Survey results: <https://www.utwente.nl/en/itc/pitcom/documents-public/et-survey-results>

³ Kick-off meeting report: <https://www.utwente.nl/en/itc/pitcom/events/Past-events/KOM-2017>

POSTER WORKSHOP

pITCom organized a workshop on the 'design and presentation of scientific posters'. This activity was a response to the needs expressed in the *Training and Education survey*. The workshop consisted of sessions of 3 hours on the 13th and 27th of September 2017, and an assignment in between. The workshop was planned and organized in collaboration with ITC staff (Wim Feringa) and PhDs from the GIP department (organized as GIP rePUBLIC).⁴

Twenty-three PhDs participated in the first session of the workshop. During this session, Wim Feringa shared his experience and knowledge on how to design a scientific poster. However, 14 participants attended the second session and completed the workshop. Reasons for drop-out included overlap with other responsibilities and time constraints for completing the workshop assignment. A certificate of participation (2 ECTS) was issued to PhDs who completed the workshop.

Despite the drop outs, PhDs who completed the workshop considered it a useful, interesting and well-organized event. PITCom could organize this workshop once every two years, this would give PhDs the change to participate in this workshop in the first half of the PhD program.

SCIENCE DAY

The Science Day was the largest event for pITCom in 2017. This event took place on the 27th of October, and aimed to encourage the discussion of research and research related topics in the context of the PhD program.

The registration for the Science Day was open to PhDs, staff and MSc students. A total of 40 participants registered, including speakers and the poster competition jury. The program included multiple plenary presentations, a poster competition and a photo competition. The keynote speakers focused on open access research and data management (by Marga Koelen, LISA), career expectations after a PhD (by Elnaz Neinavaz, ITC and Sandro Meucci, Micronit), and relevant research in ITC (by Xi Zhu, ITC best research paper winner 2016).

During the poster sessions, eleven ITC PhDs presented their posters. A jury, which remained anonymous during the event selected the best poster. The photo competition had ten submissions and a winner was chosen by the attendees. Matthew Dimal from the Earth Systems Analysis department was awarded the prize for the best poster, and Festus Ihwagi from the Natural Resource department won the photo competition.⁵

An article about this event is going to be published in the ITC News Magazine. pITCom aims for the Science Day to become an annual event that acts as a flagship for promoting the engagement of PhDs in (organizing) intellectual activities.

COLLABORATION NETWORK

pITCom built a collaboration network with bodies and organization inside and outside ITC Faculty. These include: the ITC PhDs, the ITC Directorate, the ITC coordinator research (ITC-CR), the Academic Board, P-NUT, SENSE, TGS and the PhD candidates Network of the Netherlands (PNN). The figure below shows the current status of the network.

⁴ Workshop program: https://www.utwente.nl/en/itc/pitcom/events/Past-events/PosterWorkshop_2017

⁵ pITCom science day: https://www.utwente.nl/en/itc/pitcom/events/Past-events/ScienceDay_2017

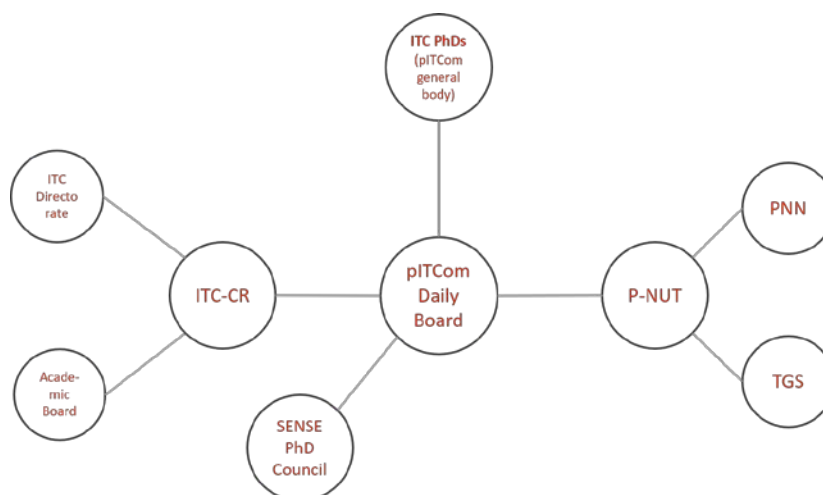


FIGURE 1 COLLABORATION NETWORK

The ITC coordinator research acts as the pITCom advisor and a first point of contact with other bodies in ITC Faculty. On the other hand, the collaboration with P-NUT provides a point of contact for reaching all its members, TGS, and PNN.

REVIEW OF PITCOM COSTITUTION

The functioning of pITCom is stated in a Constitution Document, endorsed by the ITC Coordinator Research and the ITC Directorate. At the beginning of 2017, the DB started operations with a first version of the constitution document. After a few months the DB realized that its norms and procedures were not in complete accordance with the current organization structure of the ITC Faculty, and that some of the responsibilities of the members of the DB either lacked clarity or were overlapping.

Using the experience of the first year, the DB reviewed the constitution document and compiled a new version. The new version removed the overlap in responsibilities and ambiguity. It also added clarity on the procedures to solve disputes among members of the DB and to protect the representability of all ITC research departments in the DB. The new version⁶ has been endorsed by the ITC Research Coordinator, and the 2018 DB was established under its new regulation framework.

COMPENSATION FOR BOARD MEMBERS

At the end of 2017, the DB requested to extend the types of compensation for DB members. As a result, the Academic Board has agreed to increase the compensation from 2 to 5 ECTS, for those ITC PhDs who take part of the DB for one year.

2. PENDING MATTERS AND FUTURE CHALLENGES

This section focusses on activities, plans and challenges for pITCom in 2018. When pITCom started at the beginning of 2017, the DB prepared activity portfolios with many ideas and plans, several of them

⁶ pITCom constitution document: <https://www.utwente.nl/en/itc/pitcom/documents-public>

were successfully organized. The remaining ones are shared here, as they may still be organized in the near future. Additionally, there are a couple of ongoing matters at the beginning of 2018.

On the scientific portfolio, the most relevant ideas are the summer and winter symposia. Such symposia could be organized around topics that are relevant for the ITC research community. In the original idea, PhDs from two or three scientific departments would agree on a common topic of interest as theme for a symposium. The program could include the participation of external speakers from national or international scientific organizations. A budget for a summer and a winter symposium was approved for 2017, however due to time constraints such activities could not be materialized.

On the educational portfolio, the DB proposed to organize one-day workshops on networking and CV building, to cope with the demands identified during the education and training survey. However, TGS started offering courses that cover those topics, but for an unknown reason, ITC PhDs were not aware of it. The DB should work on a strategy to keep new ITC PhDs fully aware of the courses provided by ITC, maybe through periodical information sessions.

Although good progress has been made during 2017, several other topics remained open. Such ongoing matters are described in the following sections.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Several PhDs have expressed that they would like to have the opportunity to be involved in teaching within the faculty; however, this proves to be difficult to arrange especially for scholarship PhDs. The Academic Board has showed interest on this topic, and requested the DB to determine the scale of such matter.

The DB has agreed to conduct a survey to determine how many ITC PhDs would like to acquire teaching experience as part of their PhD program. The survey should determine the proportion of PhDs who would like to gain teaching experience, their reasons to do or not to do so, their status in ITC (AIO or bursary-PhD), etc.

The results of this survey should be communicated to the Academic Board. If necessary, the DB should work on a strategy to respond to the demands of the ITC PhDs regarding this matter.

SPECIFIC SKILL COURSES

The results of the education and training survey showed that many PhDs experienced problems with fulfilling their training and supervision plan (T&SP) with topic specific skills. As a consequence of meeting with the Academic Board to communicate the survey result; the DB prepared, in consultation with the ITC PhDs, a list of specific topics for the development of PhD courses within ITC Faculty.

A first step forward was taken in a meeting on the 11th of January 2018, between Aji Perdana (pITCom educational responsible), Paul van Dijk (Director of TGS), Tom Rientjes (ITC Coordinator Research), Prof. Alfred Stein (Portfolio Holder Education of the Faculty Management Team) and Simba Chereni (PhD-Faculty Board member). As a result, TGS has agreed to support a PhD course on Programming in R (3-4 days on the basics of R and one day specifically on advance image analysis or machine learning).

As a different strategy, the DB have proposed to reach ITC staff for the organization of PhD courses. This requires the agreement of the heads of the research departments (i.e. the ITC Academic Board), and adjustment to the time allocation for those staff who might agree on taking part as course instructors. The DB and the Academic Board are currently collaborating to make this possible.

PHD PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

All pITCom activities were well received by ITC PhDs. However, it is necessary to increase the level of attendance and participation during the activities. Therefore, the DB makes the following suggestions:

- Promote social contact. The first year of experience showed that personal communication with ITC PhDs by the pITCom board members is most effective to promote and motivate PhDs to participate in the activities. Personal contact tends to work better than only email communication, and it must be encouraged.
- Clear purpose and benefits. Another important stimulus, for attracting participants, is to be clear on how they benefit from an activity, either by gaining a skill they need, obtaining credits or meeting others during a social activity. Organizers should let participants know why they should join and how they benefit from the activity.
- Prepare a diverse program. When organizing events, a diverse program will attract more participants, as ITC PhDs work on a variety of (possibly interrelated) fields. Adding social activities to the program could motivate people to join and to stay until the end of an event.
- Involve others in the organization of activities. The involvement of ITC PhDs outside the DB will probably have a positive effect, because the more people are responsible for an event, the more people care to join. Furthermore, the workload is shared among more people.

3. FINANCIAL REPORT 2017

The table below presents an overview of the budget and expenses for 2017. The symposia were not organized due to time constraints. Therefore, the amounts assigned to the symposia remained unspent. In general, expenses on public relations (PR) materials were much less than expected. Regarding the activities that were actually organized, the expenses were in line with the expected costs.

Portfolio	Activities	Expected # of participants	Actual # of participants	Costs	Budget request	Actual
Social events						
	Kick off/ Inaugural meeting	75	~35	Catering	€190,00	€190,00
Total costs social events					€190,00	€190,00
Scientific events						
	pITCom Science Day (PhD Day)	50	~45	Travels Catering Lunch	€450,00	€359,00
	Summer Symposium	50	-	Travels Catering Lunch	€700,00	€0,00
	Winter Symposium	50	-	Travels Catering Lunch	€700,00	€0,00
Total costs Scientific events					€1.850,00	€359,00
Promotional						
				PR material	€300,00	€0,00
Total costs					€2.340,00	€549,00