



April 25th, 2012

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Letter of Recommendation for Dr Jim Bednar

This is a letter of recommendation for my colleague Dr Jim Bednar.

I have now worked with Jim for five years. Like me, Jim is a lecturer at the School of Informatics, which is a tenured research and teaching position. We are part of the same institute (IANC), share common research interests, and students supervision. Importantly, Jim is currently the director of our doctoral training program (DTC), which is a world-class PhD program for interdisciplinary research in neuroinformatics and computational neuroscience, and which has funded more than 70 PhD students to date. Our department is known to be one of the best computer science departments in the UK, and our DTC program in computational neuroscience a very unique program in Europe, attracting outstanding students. Since I am the deputy director of the DTC, Jim and I meet several times a week to discuss the DTC management and students issues.

Jim has truly done an amazing job with the DTC since he became the Director two years ago. Although always praised by our funders EPSRC for the quality of the program and our students, we were then going through a difficult period due to financial difficulties, which had led to some resentment within the School. Through very hard work and impeccable communication and leadership skills, Jim has completely rescued the situation, improving the quality of the program at many levels, from recruitment to finances, quality of supervision and support to the students, scientific quality of the PhD projects, and greatly improving our relationship and image with the rest of the School -- which I think is now excellent again. I can't emphasize enough how important Jim's contribution has been to the program and how much work he has put in it. It will be very scary to see him leave (I could never do the job he has done !).

Jim is extremely conscientious in his work, a very hard-worker with excellent qualities of transparency and honesty. He is a very kind, serious and a trustworthy person, humble and always open to feedback, while not compromising for things that are really impor-

tant. He is always very thorough in everything he does, from research to assignments marking to communication with the rest of the School.

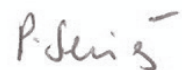
In addition to other courses in computer science (which I know less about), he is offering a course on Computational Neuroscience of Vision which he has created from scratch, which is very popular and which students regularly give excellent feedback about. He is a very clear speaker, a kind mentor, and a very patient teacher and supervisor. He is known to be very close to the day-to-day work of his students, always available to discuss problems and eager to find the best solutions for the students when they encounter difficulties in their studies.

Jim is also a great scientific colleague. I am a second or third supervisor for a number of his PhD students and working with him and his students is very enjoyable and productive. We have recently co-authored a paper together and are working on new projects. I admire the focus of his scientific program, his tenacity, and the deep expertise he has gained on questions related to computation in the visual cortex, development and learning. Although rooted in computer science and AI, Jim's research has attracted a lot of interest from visual cortex experimentalists. He has recently formed new international collaborations with both theorists and physiologists, which I think are very promising for the validation and extension of his models, and the development of his unique research program.

In summary, I very warmly recommend Jim, and I will be very sad to see him leave.

For any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Peggy Seriès, Lecturer.
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