Minutes of the General Assembly
Belief Functions and Applications Society (BFAS)

Ulster University
Belfast, UK
2 September 2024

Assembly: 21 participants (all on-site) including the following board members:

1. Thierry Denoeux (President)
2. Frédéric Pichon (Treasurer)
3. Anne-Laure Jousselme (Secretary)
4. Prakash Shenoy (LinkedIn group)

Regrets

5. David Mercier (Webmaster)
6. Zied Elouedi (Communication)
7. Zhunga Liu (Webmaster)
8. Sylvie Le Hégarat
9. Zhi-gang Su

Monday, September 2nd, 16h20—17:30 (UTC + 1)

Thierry Denoeux (BFAS President) opened the 2024 BFAS General Assembly, with an agenda of seven items, that are classically discussed at BFAS General Assembly: *Missions of the society*, *Partial board renewal, Approval of financial statements, Report of the BFTA 2023 School, Update on action items, Next event: BFTA school 2025, IJAR 2024 best paper award*.

T. Denoeux recalled the mission of the BFAS, which is to *promote belief functions theory and tools through different means* (conferences, schools, special sessions, special issues, LinkedIn group, supporting actions like student grants, etc). He also recalled some history of the BFAS events with attendance numbers.

T. Denoeux then presented to the Assembly the current composition of the BFAS Board of Directors (BoD) with its 9 current members. After the resignation of Johan Schubert in 2023, it was decided that the Board will run with 9 members only, until his vacant position would be filled at the next elections in December 2025. Prakash Shenoy will take over his role of moderator of the LinkedIn group for BFAS. The Board is partially renewed every odd year and the last elections took place in December 2023 with the following results:

- Thierry Denoeux (President) – *Re-elected*
- Anne-Laure Jousselme (Secretary) – *Re-elected*
- David Mercier (Webmaster) – *Re-elected*
- Prakash Shenoy (LinkedIn group) – *Re-elected*
- Zhi-gang Su – *New member*

The 2024 composition of the BFAS BoD is thus (newly elected members in **bold**):

- **Thierry Denoeux (President)**
- Frédéric Pichon (Treasurer)
- **Anne-Laure Jousselme (Secretary)**
- Zied Elouedi (Communication)
- Zhunga Liu (Webmaster)
- **David Mercier (Webmaster)**
- **Prakash Shenoy (LinkedIn group)**
- Sylvie Le Hégarat-Mascle
- **Zhi-gang Su**

Next elections will be in December 2025. A.-L. Jousselme encouraged BFAS members to run for elections.

Frédéric Pichon (BFAS treasurer) presented the 2023 financial statements, together with forecast for 2024. The net balance at the end of 2023 was lower than anticipated in the forecast for 2023, still with a positive balance of **13372,57€ (of which 10546,54€ on the savings account)**. The difference is mainly due to some issues of the BELIEF 2022 organization to transfer the surplus of the conference to BFAS. The expected balance for 2024 is **13871,99€** including an expected small deficit from BELIEF 2024.

A vote was organized among assembly attendees through two distinct questions:

1) *Do you **disapprove** the 2023 financial statements?* **0 vote**.
2) *Do you **abstain** for voting the 2023 financial statements?* **1 vote**.

The BFAS financial statements for year 2023 have been formally approved by the BFAS Assembly, with 1 abstention and 20 approvals.

T. Denoeux pursued by providing a brief report about the BFTA school which was held in Ishikawa, Japan (November 2023) at the Japan Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (JAIST) as a hybrid event. The event was organized by Prof. Nam van Huynh at the JAIST, T. Denoeux, D. Mercier, F. Pichon and A.-

L. Jousselme. 45 participants attended the event including 12 online, while 12 lectures were given. The event was sponsored by the JAIST, and the International Society of Information Fusion (ISIF). A report has been published in the ISIF Perspectives magazine, vol. 7, June 2024. (link to be added when available)

T. Denoeux then proposed options for the BFTA 2025 school, to be discussed:

- USA?
- Shanghai?
- Spain?
- North of China?

It may be good to have a small set of short proposals to get prepared for the next events.

T. Denoeux reviewed the list of action items collected at the last General Assembly in 2022 in Paris, opening the discussion on the different topics:

- **Support to students for conferences and schools**
  - [Done] 5 grants have been awarded for BELIEF 2028; 7 grants for the school in 2019; 4 for BELIEF 2021; 7 for BELIEF 2022; 5 for the BFTA school in 2023.
- **Joint action with other societies**
  - **2024**: BELIEF 2024 collocated with the 23rd UK Workshop on Computational Intelligence (UKCI 2024)
  - **2021**: Joint organization of BELIEF and Cognitive Analytics, Granular Computing, and Three-Way Decisions (CCGT) in 2021, but the CCGT was cancelled;
  - **2018**: Joint organization of BELIEF 2018 and SMPS in Compiegne (FRA);
  - **2017**: Collocation of the BFTA school in Xi'an with the FUSION conference the following week;
  - **2020/2021**: Tutorial presentations at the FUSION conference (S. Le Hégarat (2020) and F. Pichon and A.-L. Jousselme (2020, 2021));
- **Develop communication**
  - Thanks to David Mercier, the web site has been updated; two mailing lists have been created: members@bfas.org for active members and mailinglist@bfas.org reaching out to a broader community interested in belief functions;
  - The YouTube BFAS channel has been created and is active with 9 videos, corresponding to lectures of the 2023 BFTA school: https://www.youtube.com/@bfas_channel
- **Fund visiting projects by society members**
  - To be done
- **Define important problems deserving a prize if resolved**
  - Still pending
- **Best PhD or Master thesis**

- The idea is to award a BFAS prize to the best thesis on belief functions. We should set a committee, receive proposals, maybe every 4 or 5 years as there are not many such theses.
- The idea could be extended to the best (journal?) paper on the topic.

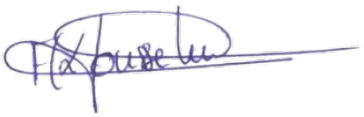
- **Other topics or ideas discussed**
  - [Constance Thierry] It would be good to tag recent interesting papers on belief functions, so they can be available through LinkedIn
  - The LinkedIn link is not very visible on the BFAS website, and is not active. [**ACTION**: Make it more visible, including the QR code; advertise it through the mailing list]
  - Ling Huang volunteered to start a WeChat BFAS group, and to act as a facilitator bridging the different media. The group has been created already, and the link and QR code will be sent to David Mercier for publication

Finally, A.-L. Jousselme (BELIEF 2024 general co-chair) presented the best paper award sponsored by the International Journal of Approximate Reasoning (IJAR), delivered to students or early-career researchers. The selection process was presented and the awards announced during the General Assembly (results available in Appendix A). The Assembly was a preferred venue than the traditional gala dinner, as this year it was a joint gala dinner with the UKCI conference participants.

The meeting closed at 17h30 (UTC+1)

Belfast, UK, 2 September 2024





Thierry Denoeux, President

Anne-Laure Jousselme, Secretary

Appendix A: IJAR Best Paper selection process and results

The IJAR best paper award was presented at the end of BFAS General Assembly.

Selection process

The BELIEF 2024 chairs selected 8 papers with an early-career researcher (PhD student or postdoc researcher) as first author, based on a pre-selection of 14 papers to be invited for extension in the International Journal of Approximate Reasoning. The criteria included overall quality, reviewing scores and feedback, diversity and potential for extension. These 8 papers were then ranked by the BFAS Board of Directors members, excluding members who were co-authors of candidate papers. Hence, T. Denoeux, F. Pichon, Z. Liu, Z. Su did not take part in the selection and ranking process. The vote was handled by the Helios voting system, ensuring anonymity of voters.

Results

This year, as in 2022, three papers were recognized, with a tie for the runner-up. A prize of 1000 euros will be shared amongst the awardees (400 euros, 300 euros and 300 euros). The papers and authors are:

- **1. Ling Huang;** Yucheng Xing; Thierry Denoeux; Mengling Feng, *An evidential time-to-event prediction model based on Gaussian random fuzzy numbers*
- **2 - tie. Loïc Guiziou;** Emmanuel Ramasso; Sébastien Thibaud; Sébastien Denneulin, *Deep evidential clustering of images*
- **2 - tie. Tuan Anh VU;** Sohaib AFIFI; Eric Lefèvre; Frédéric Pichon, *Optimization under Severe Uncertainty: a Generalized Minimax Regret Approach for Problems with Linear Objectives*

Authors will receive an official certificate from Elsevier as well as the corresponding prize within the following weeks.