



Royal College of Science Union

Mid-year report

2021-2022 Executive Committee

Aparna Pillai (President)

Priantha Pretheshan (VP of Activities)

Tianyu Wen (VP of Welfare)

Nicolas Barykin (VP of Education)

Trinity Stenhouse (VP of Operations)

Susan Rutter (Treasurer)



The Aims of the Royal College of Science Union:

1. *To further the community experience of UG and PG students in the RCSU by providing sporting, social and other recreational activities.*
2. *To build a stronger relationship between RCSU and departmental societies and the FoNS alumni association.*
3. *To represent the welfare and education needs and concerns of students.*

President's message

APARNA PILLAI

Last term saw significant student engagement with the RCSU, both in our digital presence and our events. This was particularly true for the Autumn Ball (see images below) that sold 800 tickets.

The disparity in the engagement between the small and large scale events has led to us focussing our attention more towards larger scale events which allow cross-department interaction. We have cut some of our plans for small scale events, allowing DepSocs to take up the majority since they have more inter-departmental engagement.

Our events plans for this term reflects this new focus, with the key events being a Valentines day RAG event, Revel 2022, Welfare Week, Science Challenge launch, and two tri-union (RSM, CGCU, and RCSU) events.

Further to this, we are continuing our efforts on ensuring that students feel they are represented fairly about exams. Surveys have been carried out by reps in every department to make sure we are aware of what students really want/need. Any welfare concerns in these respective departments is also being addressed.

In terms of our operations sub-committee, preparations for Science Challenge are ongoing. Introducing our alumni network, as well as building future relationships for sponsorships are still being discussed.





Activities

PRIANTHA PRETHESHAN

EVENTS

Term 1 was a great success from the events side of things – our freshers events and our flagship, annual Term 1 event, the Autumn Ball, were very well received and had high attendance in general.

The main events being planned by the activities team for Term 2 are two tri-union events/socials and Revel in conjunction with DocSoc. The tri-union events are still in the planning stage, but will ideally be one bar night/pub-quiz event and one pub crawl/club night event and all the members of the RCSU, RSM and CGCU are invited. They will be events which facilitate meeting new people and will hopefully bring all the constituent unions closer together.

Revel planning is also underway – we are currently in the process of finding a venue and ensuring they can provide all the features we want within budget. The event, which will be held in the first week of March for both DocSoc and RCSU members, is a canapes and drinks style reception followed by more of a dancing/party vibe at the end of the night. There will likely be about 200-250 people from the RCSU in attendance (50/50 split) and should be a great night!

RAG

Unfortunately, we had to cancel the Christmas Card Competition we were planning on running due to COVID restrictions. The plan was to hold the competition to find the best card design, and then sell the cards on campus with all the proceeds going to charity. As everyone moved to remote learning for the last week of term, we were unable to hold the stall and online sales weren't feasible either as collection would have been an issue.

However, we are in the process of planning one or two RAG events for this term – one will be Valentine's Day themed so that's something to look forward to!

SPORTS

The RCSU sports league was launched this academic year and involves all the departments within the RCSU competing against each other in a variety of sports to win points. The department with the most points at the end of the year will be the overall winner and get a trophy! So far Chemistry is in the lead! The main sport run last term was football and we are planning on having dodgeball and chess this term which should be fun.

One thing we will be changing about the league for the next academic year is the allocated budget for it – we underestimated the costs of booking pitches but now that we have a rough idea of costs, and we know that the league a viable concept, we will be looking to pour more funds into it.



Welfare Representation

TIANYU WEN

Last term, our attention was placed on students' opinion of mix mode teaching/exam format and mental wellbeing amid the Omicron variant, along with the uncertainty that it brings. A survey was sent out to FoNS students, asking for students' opinion on the teaching mode amid the omicron variant; 48% of students responded as more in person teaching/fully in person teaching, 39% responded as continue with the current mix mode, and 14% responded as going fully remote. As being surveyed before, more in-person teaching is highly correlated with higher student well-being. This survey result is shared with the departmental staff and allows the successful implementation for entirely in-person teaching in the life science department for all years as of Jan 31st. However, while the teaching is going towards in-person, the exams are going in person as well, which creates substantial mental stress for students. There are open letters initiated from the Math department opposing exams, also a petition signed by many life sciences students and is sending to the Vice Dean in the students experience team. I would very much like to follow up with the result.

Some of the things that we are doing are described as follows:

1. Creating a list of "blacklist" of places where we suggest CSPs don't hold events or discourage students from frequenting, and share with other faculties.
2. We are hosting events in the week of March 7-11th for our RCSU annual welfare week. Collaboration with dodgeball soc, yoga soc, art soc, and a potential dog therapy day.
3. A website of useful links and mental health resources by me, aim to send out the website address to all RCSU students at the beginning of March.

The Departmental Representatives continued to be very involved in their department and bringing on change.



Academic Representation

NICOLAS BARYKIN

The main concerns throughout the last term were lectures going back in person and the delivery of exams. Each department is handling these differently with very varied approaches: maths is going for "open-book" in person exams, where you can bring in two sides of an A4 sheet of paper, whilst chemistry is planning on open book online exams. Students from each course also have different preferences, with Physics students preferring in person exam but Maths ones preferring on-line. This term the RCSU has focused on providing the relevant support for each department to push their views forward.

Operations

TRINITY STENHOUSE

BROADSHEET

After the disappointing end to last term where everything was moved online, we never managed to print last term's Broadsheet since there was no point distributing to an empty campus. We are in the process of printing them now, and hope to distribute them next week.

Plans for this term's Broadsheet will begin on Monday, with the first official meeting in the RCSU Office. An email will be sent round later this week to remind students they can join even if they did not participate last term.

ALUMNI & SPONSORSHIP

We have secured Morgan Stanley's sponsorship for 2022-3 by allowing them to speak at the Science Challenge Awards Ceremony. We are still in the process of contacting other companies and filling in applications.

Unfortunately, due to the lack of forthcoming companies, we cannot hold a careers conference this year, however, we are assured the departmental societies hold similar events so the students are not missing out.

Regarding alumni, we are slowly rebuilding the network and pre-recruiting this year's final year for the mailing list. We hope to hold our first alumni event in the final term.



Operations

TRINITY STENHOUSE

SCIENCE CHALLENGE

The Science Challenge Launch was a great success, with emails being sent to over 700 schools with our launch video. We were lucky enough to secure a feature from James Corden, which we are hoping will boost participation. Entries are slowly trickling in, and judging by the number of questions sent to the VPO directly, we have no doubt there will be plenty of entries.

We have started recruiting PhD students to mark the entries, and have asked the judges to provide criteria. As of yet, we have 74 PhD student markers and 3/4 judges have provided criteria. We will start marking the entries we have received shortly.

Our Awards Ceremony is still being held at the Royal Institution, and VPO will be having a meeting to make final arrangements soon. The date was 27th January but has now been pushed back to 17th February due to Imperial's regulations. After this date, we will know if we can provide our own refreshments to guests or if we have to pay for the RI's, and therefore how much to charge for tickets. We have also started looking into options for live music, and speakers. We have already secured an environmental analyst from Morgan Stanley to speak, and have spoken to Environmental Society



Finances and Societies

SUSAN RUTTER

RCSU FINANCES

RCSU Term 1 events making a loss all came out to £50 over their expected expenditure or less, which is covered by a combination of college and grant funding. We had budgeted for the Autumn Ball to make a loss of up to £1000, however this actually made a profit of £4000. We have not yet decided what to do with this profit, but it will be spent on events this year to benefit students.

This coming term we will have large expenditure for Revel and the Science Challenge awards ceremony, as well as smaller expenditure on welfare week, departmental events and representatives socials. This has been budgeted for in advance, with amounts communicated to the relevant subcommittee.

GENERAL DEPSOC UPDATE

Many had scheduled large events for the end of last term, particularly Christmas Dinners. Chemistry Society managed to hold theirs as it was the earliest. Physics Society and Maths Society have rescheduled for February and March respectively. Biochemistry Society and Biology Society cancelled entirely, though Biochemistry have a spring ball planned for the end of this term.

Biology society have social events planned for refreshers, valentines, and collaborations with other societies. They plan to sell merchandise this term, as well as hold internal society events.

Biochemistry society have various sponsor events planned for this term, both in-person and online. They are also planning information events about the Enterprise Lab and the Year in Management. Socially, they are planning several union outings, a bubble tea crawl, as well as a spring ball. They hope to hold outdoor events as the weather improves.

Chemistry society have held an elections event, and are planning an online quiz and seminar, before moving back to in-person events for valentines, mario kart, and a pub crawl, as well as another seminar. They are also holding an elections hustings.



Finances and Societies

SUSAN RUTTER

Maths society had planned to start this term with a games night, though this was cancelled due to confusion over covid regulations. They are planning the integration bee with physics and then a valentine's message event. The Christmas Dinner has been rescheduled to a Pi Day dinner on 14th March.

Physics society have started this term with an inter-university conference with UCL, and next week will hold an integration bee with MathSoc. They will hold an elections Q&A at the start of February, are starting biweekly 15 minute lectures by PhD students from week 5, and have a careers fair towards the end of February. Their rescheduled Christmas dinner will also be held at the end of February, and in March they will hold a pub quiz and a leavers' party.