



Royal College of Science Union

Term 2 Report

2023-2024 Executive Committee

Trinity Stenhouse (*President*)

Kye Bong Choo (*Treasurer*)

Clarisse Bonacina (*Secretary*)

Stefaniia Medvetskaia (*VP of Activities*)

Jasmine Chan (*VP of Clubs and Societies*)

Julia Purrinos de Oliveira (*VP of Welfare*)

Chloe Lee (*VP of Education*)

Ed Bird (*VP of Operations*)



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

TRINITY STENHOUSE

Recent Activity

The RCSU has had a jam packed term 2, with many successes including our continued postgraduate engagement success, welfare week activities and the launch of our science challenge.

Our activities have gone from strength to strength with our new VPA, Stef, and we are delighted to have had events for all communities within RCSU this term. From our Postgrad Sip & Paint to the launch of the sports league to our Alumni Bar Night, to upcoming Puppy Therapy, there has been a real effort to make sure our events cover all the needs of our community. We are looking forward to releasing tickets to our end of year formal, the RCSU x RCSA Summer Dinner which will be held on 1st June, on 13th March, and extending invitation to Faculty. We had a sizeable donation from Faculty this year which aimed to subsidise this event, and we are very much looking forward to it and connecting with Natural Scientists throughout our community.

We are particularly proud of the turnout for our Welfare Week activities, and we are happy to have opened an anonymous feedback box through our Instagram and email chains.

The Science Challenge launched on 1st March after securing five judges and making a launch video. The Challenge has been run somewhat unusually this year, by Ed (VPO), Stef (VPA) and myself, and I am very impressed with how we managed to pull something together so last minute. We look forward to seeing everyone's entries.

The RCSU Shop is continuing, and we are putting out feelers to see what new merch people want added!



Overall, I believe the RCSU has been running smoothly and has successfully adapted when needed. We are excited to look to the future and welcome our new leadership team for 2024-5.

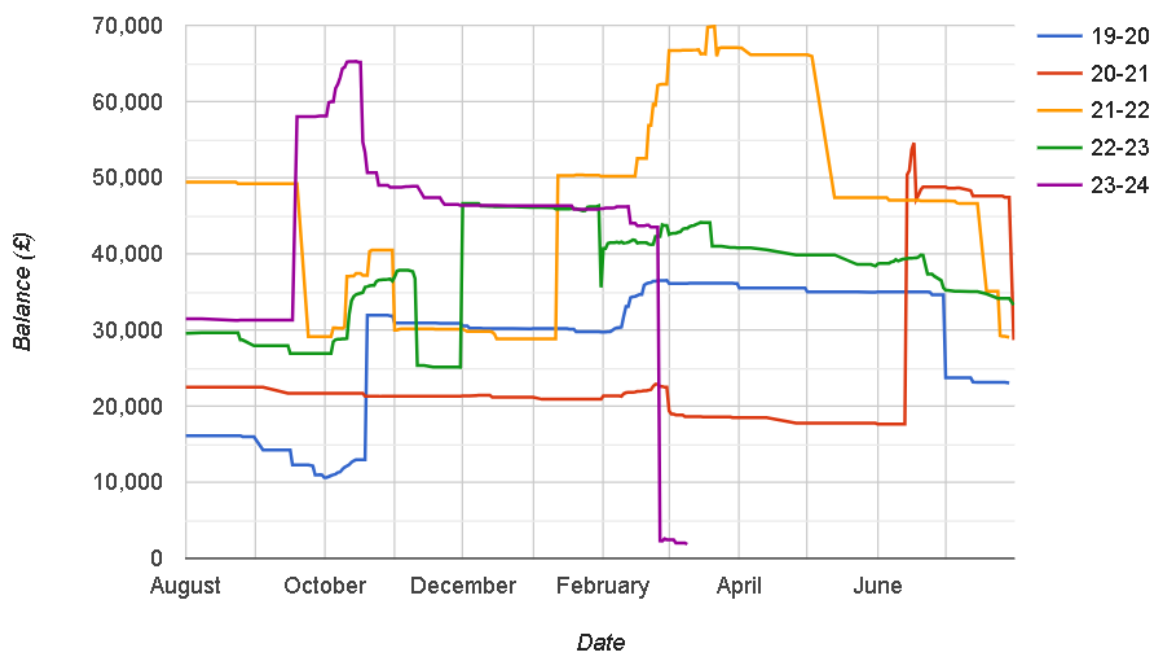


Finances

KYE BONG CHOO

2023/2024 Term 2 Overview

For term 2 starting 1st January 2024, the accounts started off with **GBP46,300.96** and as of 4th March, the balance remaining is **GBP2,033.61**. This is a huge fall mainly due to the ground hire cost for the RCSU x RCSA Summer Dinner, for which the income from ticket sales have not been reflected.



Simplified breakdown of major expenditures:

(1) Welfare Week:

- a. Puppy Therapy: **GBP2,160.00**
- b. Miscellaneous: **GBP616.63**

(2) RCSU x RCSA Dinner @ De Vere Grand Connaught Rooms:

- a. Ground Hire: **GBP37,460.80**
- b. Contingency deposit: **GBP3,746.08**

(3) Other miscellaneous below GBP500.00 (not broken down).

The above presents some financial stress with the RCSU having only around GBP2,000 for the rest of Term 3, until ticket collection for the Summer Dinner starts coming in. We estimate that **if all tickets are sold, we would be expecting an income of GBP32,200.00**. Therefore, must ensure that the event is properly advertised and circulated.

2024/2025 Budgeting

The budgeting for the year 2024/2025 was done with reference to the previous year's estimate with adjustments made.

For the year 2023/2024, the total expenditures are GBP59,114.14 with grant requested of GBP4,952.14 and budgeted income of GBP54,204.17. We have adjusted appropriately for the year 2024/2025 to estimate expenditures of GBP76,793.31 with grant requested of GBP7,622.48 and budgeted income of GBP71,116.66.

Some highlights of changes are:

- (1) **Increase in expenditure for major flagship events to account for inflation.** Most notable examples where increases are massive:
 - a. Autumn ball ground hire **increasing by 44%** from GBP10,000.00 to GBP14,400.00.
 - b. Summer dinner ground hire **increasing by 60%** from GBP25,000.00 to GBP40,000.00.
- (2) **Slight increase of faculty grants** to GBP26,500.00.
- (3) **Addition of maintenance cost of Jezebel** totalling GBP1,800.00 because of the loss in direct union provision to the maintenance of mascots.

Due to the above increases in costs, the next committee might find it useful to re-evaluate the pros and cons of hosting the events at the same premises or to make a change.

The above budget was made with the assumption that there would be no major movements in revenues and expenditures compared to this year.



Union Shop

CLARISSE BONACINA

In week 5 of first term, the RCSU successfully launched its online shop, with a range of RCSU-branded merchandise, including hoodies available in sizes XS to XL offered in two distinct colours. Communication with the physical union shop has been sporadic, and we have not managed to secure a spot. The collection system for online sales has however been successful. We have sold a handful off hoodies, but despite our attempts at publicity, our merchandise does not seem very popular amongst our student body. We have focused on trying to get more engagement and interest with the shop, instead of releasing new merchandise items like we initially planned last term.

In the coming term, we aim to ask our student body for suggestions as to what kind of RCSU merchandise they would like us to make available. That way, we can ensure satisfying sales in the future.



Activities

STEFANIAA MEDVETSKAIA

After joining the RCSU executive committee in January, I have worked on developing a plan and running events that will help RCSU achieve its goals.

Secret Valentine event - RAG:

This project required students to order a box of heart shaped chocolates from the Union shop, they also had the option to leave a message or remain anonymous, and I then delivered the present and the messages to their valentine. This format proved to be successful and the students were happy with the products they have received. With collections having finished this week, I am now working on selecting a charity and transferring the profits. In terms of engagement numbers, we have had 42 purchases and raised 45 pounds for charity. I believe the purchase numbers were not higher due to the nature of product we were selling. Lindt chocolates are quite expensive, however, also good quality. At the same time, after we have launched our event, BioSoc announced their Valentines event of the same format but the cost of their product was 3 pounds. However, for a RAG event, I believe the events was successful and the people who engaged, really enjoyed it.

Post grad Sip and Paint:

This event was planned with RCSU's goal of increasing Postgraduate engagement in mind. It proved to be extremely successful from the start. All 30 tickets were sold out within 48 hours of being released. We have hired a teacher to lead this event who explained the techniques of drawing at the start of the session. We have also invested in good quality art supplies and came to the decision of subsidising this by 50 pounds as we will be able to re-use the water colour paints (which were 60 pounds for 3 sets) and thus, come out to 0 overall. The feedback from this event was extremely positive and Postgraduate students seemed to be having a great time, drawing, chatting and socialising. I have advertised this event via email and Instagram and several postgraduate students expressed that they would like to be there but could not make it. This showed that email advertising is effective and that Postgraduate students do engage with RCSU if events are catered specifically to them. I am definitely considering running the event of a similar format again in the near future.

The RCSU x RCSA bar night:

This event was mostly organised by the RCSU President, Trinity, when I first joined the committee and was getting to grips with all the RCSU processes. I have however run this



event. It was quite successful and the attendees seemed to enjoy it. The RCSA kindly provided drink tokens to students, which was definitely very attractive and helped increase attendance.

Sport league:

Our sports officer, Linus, has been working hard to produce consistent and engaging sports events for all RCSU members. The sports events that have already taken place include football, touch rugby and frisbee. We also have a basketball session coming up.

Puppy therapy:

I have organised a puppy therapy event that is coming up on the 13th March. We have sold 54 tickets so far and are planning to continue advertising this to drive sales.



Clubs & Societies

JASMINE CHAN

The departmental societies have continued to exhibit strong enthusiasm and initiative in orchestrating a diverse array of events aimed at enriching the academic and social experiences of their members. From collaborative celebrations to innovative initiatives, these societies have demonstrated unwavering dedication to fostering community, diversity, and academic enrichment within their respective departments.

Within the RCSU, the interdepartmental sports league has remained a cornerstone of our community engagement efforts. This league serves as a platform for participants from various societies to come together and compete in a diverse range of sports, including football, touch rugby, frisbee, and basketball. By facilitating friendly yet spirited competition between departments, the league fosters teamwork, and healthy active lifestyles among our members. It also continues to promote cross-disciplinary interaction and strengthens the sense of unity within the RCSU community. As we continue to uphold the values of sportsmanship and inclusivity, the interdepartmental sports league remains a highlight of our union's activities, enriching the overall experience for all participants.

Biology - BioSoc

BioSoc continues to foster vibrant engagement among members, building upon its successful collaborations with BiochemSoc and other biology-related societies. The recent initiatives showcased the society's dedication to creating enriching experiences for students within the realm of biology.

In a heartwarming gesture, BioSoc have organised a Valentine's chocolate sale within the Biology department, allowing students to share chocolates and personalised letters. This initiative not only celebrated the special day but also fostered a warm and inclusive atmosphere, strengthening bonds among peers. Continued collaborative efforts with BiochemSoc and other biology-related societies resulted in "QuadBio," a clubbing embargo event, offering an alternative social experience for students beyond campus. Moreover, BioSoc's commitment to sustainability was demonstrated through its collaboration with EnvironmentalSoc and BiochemSoc for a beeswax workshop. Participants learned to craft eco-friendly products, such as lip balms and beeswax wraps, underscoring the importance of environmental consciousness within the biological sciences.

A notable event was the virtual exchange between varsity biology students from esteemed institutions like Cambridge and Oxford Universities. Through platforms like Microsoft Teams, students engaged in intellectual discourse, presenting their research topics and fostering cross-institutional collaboration among aspiring scientists.

As the academic year draws to a close, BioSoc and BiochemSoc are working on an exciting celebration to commend students for their hard work and dedication through a boat party.



This collaboration reflects the commitment of both societies to provide memorable experiences for their members.

Biochemistry - BiochemSoc

In addition to the joint events with BioSoc previously mentioned, BiochemSoc has organised a series of engaging activities throughout the academic year.

Following the January exams, they have hosted a pub crawl to celebrate the conclusion of the exam period which provided a well-deserved opportunity to unwind and socialise after such a stressful period. BiochemSoc have also facilitated an inter-university event by partnering with UCL's BiochemSoc to host a games night, further strengthening bonds between esteemed institutions within the field of biochemistry. Additionally, in partnership with Bioscience Review, BiochemSoc organised a scientific pub quiz. This event facilitated intellectual engagement and friendly competition among participants, further fostering a passion for scientific inquiry and knowledge sharing.

Recognising the importance of career guidance, BiochemSoc have also arranged various talks focusing on post-degree paths. Speakers provided insights into diverse career opportunities within the field of biochemistry, including discussions on biotech and biological start-ups, empowering students to make informed decisions about their future endeavours.

Chemistry - ChemSoc

Continuing their commitment to enriching the student experience, ChemSoc fulfilled their promise from the previous term by organising a variety of events catering to both freshers and non-freshers alike. These events included a screening of the new Wonka movie, providing an entertaining and communal experience for members. Additionally, a pancake cook-off celebrating Pancake Day utilised the Chemical Kitchen facilities, showcasing students' culinary talents while incorporating scientific elements. Furthermore, collaborating with KnitSock to create knitted goodies not only promoted creativity but also strengthened connections among chemistry students, fostering a sense of unity within the department.

They also have exciting plans to host a Mario Kart tournament in collaboration with PhySoc. This event aims to foster friendly competition between departments while providing a lighthearted and enjoyable way to wrap up the term.

Mathematics - MathSoc

MathSoc has embarked on the new term with an array of captivating activities, marking a vibrant start for its members. Notably, the introduction of weekly games nights, including trivia sessions and mahjong, has provided students with regular opportunities to unwind, socialize, and engage in friendly competition. These gatherings have not only cultivated a lively and inclusive atmosphere but have also strengthened the bonds between students within the department, fostering a sense of camaraderie and belonging.



In a departure from conventional events, MathSoc organised a pottery painting social, offering participants a creative outlet to express themselves artistically. This innovative initiative has added a fresh dimension to the society's repertoire, enriching the experiences of its members and encouraging exploration beyond the confines of traditional mathematics activities.

A highlight event on MathSoc's calendar, the Pi Day dinner, demonstrates the society's dedication to celebrating mathematical excellence and fostering community spirit. This cherished tradition serves as a testament to MathSoc's commitment to honouring and nurturing the shared passion for mathematics among its members.

Looking ahead, MathSoc is planning an exciting ice skating event in April. This anticipated outing will not only provide members with an enjoyable recreational activity but will also serve as another opportunity to foster connections among students within the department.

Physics - PhySoc

Following a slow start from last term, PhySoc has demonstrated remarkable initiative by orchestrating a dynamic array of events focused on fostering community, diversity, and academic enrichment within the physics department.

In collaboration with BioSoc, PhySoc hosted a lively post-exams celebration at h-bar, providing students with a well-deserved opportunity to unwind and socialise after examinations. Additionally, to celebrate Valentine's Day, PhySoc hosted a social event with a twist—a casino night on campus, adding an element of fun to the occasion.

Recognizing the paramount importance of promoting diversity in STEM fields, PhySoc organized a Woman in STEM day. Partnering with Women and Non-Binary Individuals in Physics, PhySoc hosted a movie night featuring "Enigma", aimed at inspiring and empowering underrepresented groups while fostering inclusivity within the department. Furthermore, these collaborations extended to inviting guest speakers who are prominent figures in the field of physics, promoting gender diversity and amplifying the contributions of women in the scientific community.

In an effort to provide students with firsthand exposure to cutting-edge research, PhySoc organised laboratory tours to various facilities, including those focused on quantum technology, magnetism, and nano-fabrication. These tours offered participants a glimpse into the exciting world of experimental physics and provided valuable insights into ongoing research endeavours within the department.

A highlight on PhySoc's calendar is the annual boat party - a department-funded black-tie event. Bringing together students and faculty in a festive and elegant setting, the boat party serves as a culmination of the term, fostering a sense of unity among members as they bid farewell to another successful academic period.



In conclusion, it is evident that all departmental societies have exhibited outstanding dedication and creativity in their efforts to foster a sense of community and enhance the academic and social experiences of their members. Through a variety of engaging events and initiatives, these societies have succeeded in creating vibrant and inclusive environments within their respective departments. Their commitment to collaboration, diversity, and academic enrichment serves as a testament to their vital role in shaping a thriving university community. As we look forward, we anticipate continued success and innovation from these societies as they continue to inspire, empower, and unite their members.



Education & Welfare Representation

CHLOE LEE & JULIA PURRINOS DE OLIVEIRA

Education

The Academic Representative Team has been consistently excelling in fulfilling their respective roles, diligently meeting their responsibilities to ensure that all current academic feedback is addressed effectively. It is reassuring to note that everything has been going smoothly, with only minor issues having emerged, all of which have been swiftly resolved.

VPE Overview

1. Library Matters

Update on Point 1. Library Matters

- Elizabeth Killeen has now been added as a regular member of the NSEC meetings, which has been incredibly well received by everyone. This addition presents a great opportunity for the Library to enhance integration into the student experience. Relevant items from the library will be raised for representatives to share with their departments, and representatives will have the chance to provide feedback directly to the Library.
- Concerns were raised regarding the noise levels on Level 4 of the Library. The Library actively is seeking ways to resolve this issue, which might involve rearranging the layout.
- Students who borrow devices such as laptops from the Library have reported that they often have low battery levels. This concern has been communicated to the Library, and they will take note of it.

Chemistry

- Organised a vertical meeting for the year 3, term 2 electives which is a carried forward meeting from term 1 after receiving positive feedback. Students found it extremely useful and informative. Older year students were invited to discuss their experiences with third-year modules and to answer any questions. The emphasis was intentionally placed on discussing modules in a constructive evaluation manner rather than labelling any as 'easy'. The approach aimed to highlight both the advantages and disadvantages of each module, thus encouraging students to make informed choices based on a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum.
- Working on setting up a symposium for Chemistry students, encompassing Year in Industry participants and those who have conducted independent research, which involves defining clear goals and a format for the event. However, given the existence of UROP Student Poster Day, it appears more practical for Year in Industry and other interested students to participate in this already established event.

Currently, the department is actively seeking insights into the benefits for both presenters and attendees from departments that have successfully implemented similar symposiums.

- Regarding interdepartmental events, the aim is to promote collaboration between various disciplines, facilitate the exchange of ideas, and cultivate new perspectives. A potential joint research symposium, like the Changing the Face of Science Research Symposium on 2nd June, might be of interest. The department will be gathering information on the turnout and engagement for this event.

Life Sciences (Biochemistry)

- The Departmental Academic Representative, unfortunately, stepped down, and the department has been searching for the most suitable replacement. Although the current Year 3 Academic Representatives were offered the position, they did not respond. Therefore, I am currently assuming the role alongside the Departmental Wellbeing Representative.
- The department has requested a handover document from the Departmental Academic Representative, but unfortunately, they have not received any updates or responses.

Life Sciences (Biology)

- From the continuous success of all their UG Biological Sciences Colloquium, the department has managed to increase engagement and interest through creative outlets. By hosting it in a more informal and relaxed environment like the common room, interest has grown significantly not only in terms of attendees but also presenters.
- The standardised Academic and Wellbeing survey has been sent out recently, with additional EDI questions included this time round.
- The department is in the process of discussing the implementation of a 'study skills' workshop for second/third years, which is currently under further consideration with DUGS.
- The department is looking at reorganising overlapping material in Year 1 to implement a skills module, aiming to ensure that students' transcript fully reflect the skills they gain from the degree.
- Minor technical issues, such as muted lectures and disruptive chatter in Year 2 lectures, have been raised and are currently being investigated with a survey.

Mathematics

- Recently, the department successfully hosted an interuniversity event with Warwick, and there is strong interest in continuing such collaborations in the future.
- As the department continues its discussion on reducing high-stake assessments by converting some modules to pass/fail modules, a challenge has emerged concerning the JMC course. This is due to conflicts with the computing aspect of the course, which is managed by the engineering department. Therefore, reaching a final decision has proven more difficult.



- The Academic Representation Team has recognised that the voices of JMC students have not been as well heard as those of other Mathematics students. In the future, the team aims to take note of this and improve to ensure full representation across the department.

Physics

- The lecture courses through the four years are progressing well, with no major complaints about individual courses.
- Research Frontiers and events such as the Abdus Salam Legacy day were successful.
- MAB affected module results were released in December.
- Discussions are underway regarding a course reorganisation, prompted by concerns about the effectiveness of including Maths Analysis (Y1) as a compulsory theoretical module. There are overlaps in content between Maths Methods (Y2), DEEM (Y2), and ACP (Y3) that generally do not align well. Lecturers are currently exploring options to eliminate the overlap without creating prerequisites.
- De-weighting of Year 1 remains an ongoing issue, with ongoing discussions about methods to gather student voice regarding this.
- Implementing feedback provided by external examiners, the department took action to increase the duration for certain exams, which has been well received by the students.

Welfare

Welfare Week - 4th March to 8th March

Welfare week this year consisted of origami, pottery, gardening, yoga, LGBTQ+ bracelet making and a Pokémon scavenger hunt. Welfare week this year was very successful, most of the sessions were booked up and we got positive feedback from students. Reflecting on this, I believe there should be more regular RCSU welfare events throughout the year instead of just one week.

Hardship Fund

I have been investigating different financial support options available to students in FoNS. There is a need for a short term emergency hardship system for quick access to money when a student is in trouble. This is supported in a recent survey with 166 responses and 124 of those said this is a necessary addition to the Dean's fund as currently it takes at least 10 days for money to be sent out to applicants.

Mike Munroe (RCSA president) and I met with the Faculty to discuss how RCSA can use their funds to fill this gap in the Dean's fund. We had a positive discussion and the Faculty were very open to improving their current financial hardship infrastructure. We will have further meetings in the near future about communicating hardship fund options to students with VPE Chloe.



Anonymous suggestions box

I set up the online suggestions box to inform us better about what students actually want from the RCSU. Currently respondents feel that they aren't getting a wide range of events or student initiatives that would suit everyone.

Wellbeing leaflets/posters

Currently working on leaflets with faculty student wellbeing advisors to better communicate support options available to students. This is to help address issues with communication from FoNS as many students aren't aware of what support is available.

Departmental Wellbeing Representatives

Good engagement with all dep reps. The same wellbeing issues such as stress and burnout keep cropping up due to increased workload in year 2 of each subject. Life sciences have started 'Communittea' which is an arts and crafts get together with tea and biscuits in the life sciences common room which has had great uptake. Physics are interested in having their own version of this.



Operations

ED BIRD

Broadsheet

A new issue of the broadsheet has been finished with all the editing and writing completed. The purchase order for the magazine has been approved and it is currently being printed. We hope to receive them in the coming weeks and distribute them all across campus! We are also looking into potentially maintaining a digital archive of the broadsheet issues as it would be good to allow digital access to those who want it.

Alumni

Collaboration between the RCSU and RCSA has continued to grow with the first RCSU AGM going very well, and hosting our joint Bar Night. The RCSA student dinner at the London Museum of water and steam is going ahead on the 23rd of March and extensive discussions regarding outreach for the RCSA and areas that could be targeted by the trust have been had. Also, Spanner and Bolt were stolen... and then spanner was lost... and then theta was lost... but we still have bolt!

Sponsorship

We have continued to collaborate with the RCSU treasurer and have been actively contacting a variety of companies including KPMG, Barclays, Lloyds, and Deloitte. We are also currently in talks with PwC regarding a sponsorship for next year. The system for storing the specialised files for these sponsorships has also been revamped to improve organisation and efficiency.

Science Challenge

The science challenge has been launched as of the 1st of March 5 PM and promotional materials have been sent out to the various networks and newsletters. The website has been updated with the questions and all the relevant information. A video which introduces the challenge was filmed, with each of the judges presenting their own questions, and this has been distributed to further promote the challenge launch.

This year we have five judges and questions, providing an increase in variety from previous years, and with the very general theme of *Hidden depths*, there is something for everyone. The submission deadline is currently set for the 26th of April and the awards ceremony is scheduled for the 21st of June. We are hoping to stream the awards ceremony on Panopto to assist international participants.