

RSMU Report

Union Council
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President's Report

President - Rob Tomkies

With the initial rush of freshers week being over and each committee member settling into their role, things in the RSMU have become encouragingly productive. Classic events have shown continued success with equally successful new events being brought in alongside. This year we have had record numbers of attendees at Bottle Match (172 compared to 115 two years ago), nearly reaching home bottle match numbers - really showing the increased engagement and involvement of RSMU members. Everyday life as a Royal Miner very much progresses on.

Due to the continued great work of the RSMU committee, my work managing internal affairs and the everyday running of the RSMU has been kept minimal. This has allowed me the time to look at our documentation and also how to establish the RSMU firmly into a forward looking stance, ensuring it's continued ability to represent and support its members in the future to the best of its abilities. This work largely is building towards the construction of a 5 year plan and encompasses everything from the evaluation of individual events, brand construction and a general cultural review of the RSMU.

Committee engagement with ICU matters in general has really been encouraged and as a result we have seen a consistent greater representation at all boards and councils. Increasingly these attendees engage in all matters and we hope this engagement continues and builds.

The continued hard work up to this point of all RSMU committee members has really put the RSM Union in a strong position to build going forwards. I really look forward to the potential for positive change that this presents us with in the future.

RSMU Welfare

Welfare continues to be a huge priority in the RSMU. Helen (RSMU Welfare Officer) has run several new schemes and campaigns both within the RSMU and university wide. I'd like to thank her for the all the effort she's put in over the past term and a half.

The RSMU has supported and taken part in several campaigns since the start of the year. We ran a healthy snack stand during World Mental Health Day to support a "Food and Mood" theme. Helen has also pioneered "Look After Your Mate week" as a Student Minds campaign which the RSMU fully supports. On top of this we have also established regular wellbeing tea and coffee lunch times that commonly align with themes and campaigns such as CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably). We are looking to run a joint event with CGCU come early March along the lines of "Dog Spotting Bingo".

"I'm excited to see how future Wellbeing Reps want to use the new Departmental Wellbeing budget. I see it as a real opportunity for creativity and as a tool for positive social change."

**– Helen MK
(RSMU Welfare Officer)**

The Wellbeing Rep network has been successfully introduced and has rapidly become essential to welfare in the RSMU. Monthly meetings with the senior tutors have been implemented and through this we've seen the benefits to both the departments and union in communicating to tackle challenges that arise quickly and in a way best for our members. We have successfully secured a wellbeing budget of £200 per department in the Faculty of Engineering which we feel is a brilliant and exciting step in addressing matters and utilizing the Wellbeing Rep Network to its maximum potential.

Freshers Week surveys were ran and this year for the first time an adapted version of the survey for older years. The results from these were compiled, analysed and fed into discussions that were ongoing relating to the culture of the RSMU. We identified underlying issues relating to inclusivity and began to construct concrete stages to address many of these. These are gone over in more detail in section "Ongoing and Looking Forward".

The RSMU Academic and Welfare Board, long since forgotten but described in what was an ancient constitution, has been re-established. This is to provide a platform to formally discuss what are two very interlinked matters. It shall also be used to provide a platform to discuss and design the overall strategy of the RSMU concerning academics and welfare, something that is sorely missing at the moment.



Clubs and Societies

RSMU Clubs and Societies continue to be as popular as ever with a special mention to RSM Lacrosse, a sport started last year at Bottle Match as a one off that has since trialed internally and made it into the incubator MG. A brief list of achievements is given below.

- RSM Badminton consolidated numbers and for the first time ever are now competing weekly in LUSL.
- Football created a second team due to high attendance.
- All sports have worked together on a universal RSM sports kit
- Most clubs are financially better off this year and the one that is not did so intentionally and within their means.
- The RSMU has worked for active bystander training for all club committees.
- All clubs have met membership targets
- Materials Society has put on many extra events and produce a new magazine which are incredibly successful
- We are currently working with club presidents and committee members to vastly improve the previously lacking handover process
- DLB put on another successful symposium
- GPS are working towards a trip to the Azores
- RSM Lacrosse has started up as a new club with excellent success
- Bottle Match has had record demand (172 compared to 115)



RSM Hockey players mining for food



DLB Symposium with people thinking about rocks

RSMU Events

The RSMU continues to have huge demand for its events which we constantly aim to improve. This year as previously mentioned Bottle Match has a higher turnout than in current student memory. That isn't to say that we believe our events are perfect as they currently stand, in fact as the largest interface that we have as a Union with our students these events are very much the center piece for cultural change that we are looking to implement. These changes shall be outlined in greater detail in section "Ongoing and Looking Forward".

The RSMU has run several non-drinking events. RSM Ice skating ran successfully with 25 people attending. We have also brought in and continued with Arts and Crafts events through our DepSocs. These are great events that are cheap to run. We've seen people that are not normally involved in the RSMU coming along consistently which is a great sign. Whilst numbers have varied we actually see the more stressful times of year have a higher attendance suggesting that these are great for welfare as well as purely having a social function. The least successful event was a trip to the science museum lates, this could be down to anything from inundation with events to advertising - we have not run trips to the lates since.

Bar nights and Christmas dinner have all run well with changes made outlined later. These events both have faced complications recently. Bar nights have been hit by capacity limits in the Union Bar - the limit has not changed however there is increasing variation in message from staff on how many are allowed in. Dinners are facing the issue of cost. With costs of hotels increasing year on year, soon we will have to look at either cutting a dinner or moving one to a non SK based venue.

RSMU Academic Affairs

The RSMU works closely with its departments to represent the academic interests of its members. With the current curriculum review we have had varying success with our departments and being engaged in this process. ESE has successfully set up focus groups to provide a student input. Materials has also looked to construct focus groups however progress has not been as swift. We continue to be engaged in discussions at ERB on these matters as well.

SSCC's continue to deal with academic concerns from students. Particularly in Materials there have been issues concerning organization from the department in terms of time table release, module scheduling and coursework descriptions - we are currently in discussions with the departments concerning this and hope to be able to work towards an improvement. Issues with departments following through with things agreed in these SSCC's have been highlighted which in turn emphasized the need for an action tracker for these meetings. After working with Nick B (DPE) we determined that this is actually suggested best practice for SSCC's anyway and so we are pushing for these to be implemented in the RSM.

Alumni Relations

The RSMU works closely with its alumni for both their financial support and experience. Recently we have had concerns relating to the engagement of Material Scientists, this is something we are continuing to work on. To summarise our alumni related on goings we are:

- Increasing the exposure of the RSMA to the students by developing an alumni magazine that will hopefully be established in the upcoming year.
- Collaborating with the RSMA to develop scholarship opportunities for students that have shown exceptional academic performance or students that have made significant contributions to life in the RSM.
- Improving the annual dinner to ensure it is inclusive towards both students of ESE and Materials.
- Organizing a careers day with the alumni body to strengthen the relationship between the students and alumni.

Finance

Whilst financially fine, the RSMU is struggling to provide events and subsidies to any extent. This is due to a) lack of sponsorship and b) above inflation cost increase of events.

Venues in the area are charging considerably more, requesting large damage deposits that were not seen in the past and the introduction of security that we didn't previously rely on. This means in the near future, unless alternate funds are secured, large events such as our 3 dinners will have to change location away from SK or reduce the number we put on.

With regalia we have attempted to move towards a more online driven system, with preorders where possible to minimise dead stock accumulation as has been the case in the past. This has been somewhat tricky however as students still expect in person sales in the department and there is unquestionably more sales when we cater to the impulsive consumer.

The RSMU is currently in the process of completely overhauling its sponsorship portfolio. This has largely been an initiative between our Treasurer and sponsorship officer who aim to build on MatSocs success from last year



Ongoing and Looking Forward

The RSMU constantly looks for feedback and ways in which to improve itself. Over the past 4 years there has been a constant drive to increase the inclusivity of the RSMU events. This has looked at increasing social awareness and responsibility alongside topics such as drinking culture and gender equality. This was a focus coming into the New Year as a committee. Discussions were had that whilst “preserving tradition” is one of the core aims of a CU - in fact that this should be interpreted as preserving history whilst creating traditions that change with the times.

As part of this we implemented the normal freshers survey however also this year implemented one for the older years for the first time. These surveys highlighted several key areas in which we aim to work towards making concrete change by the end of the year. Much has been implemented already and is detailed below.

Drinking Culture

Drinking events are some of the most popular events at University however without doubt there is the concern of a) alienating people who do not drink and b) going too far causing harm to the member and representation of the RSMU. Several changes have been made to counter these at the following events.

Dinners:

- Non-alcoholic dinner options have been made available at all dinners so that two soft drinks are offered in the place of wine. Whilst we saw very little take up of this option at Christmas Dinner it is very much something we intend to keep present.
- Raffle prizes are awarded at dinners however presented at a later date. This is to prevent alcoholic prizes simply being consumed on the night to excess.
- Complaints of people bringing in excessive amounts of their own alcohol into events were observed. This has since expressly been condemned by the Union and a security guard employed at the door to check none is brought in damaging the reputation of the RSM as well as themselves.

Bar Nights:

- Non drinking competitions such as apple bobbing races have been brought in to encourage friendly competition.
- Concerns arose about presidential yards off putting nondrinkers from running for events. These have been removed from bar nights.

Bottle Match:

- Removed all endorsement, encouragement and enabling of drinking during BM.
- Enabled non-drinkers to attend all Bottle Match events and avoid those that would not suit. This included creating a shuttle service to the accommodation post sport for those not wishing to continue to the dinner and evening's entertainment.
- Ring-fenced money to subsidise volunteers and drivers at BM. This ensures those with the role take it seriously and allow the event to run safely.
- The 'freshers auction' at pre-bottle match bar night has been completely restructures to ensure only those wanting to participate can do so and without fear of inappropriate bids



Ongoing and Looking Forward cont...

General:

- The RSMU has repeatedly pushed for its key volunteers to receive active bystander training. Money for this has been secured although dates have not been confirmed.
- All key volunteers leading trips have been consulted on trips they are running and the safe guards needed to be put in place. The use of the ICU as an aid in planning trips has also been pushed as best practice.

Gender Inclusivity

The decision was made that certain existing traditions had become outdated from society as a whole. The RSMU has made it a priority to scrutinize these and rather than simply removing issues, look at how it could reform old traditions or create proactive ways to tackle. One such issues was gender inclusivity. This has been addressed currently in the following ways:

- Several chants have been officially retired due to lyrical content. To update these a chant competition has been run where members can submit any chants and then a group selected as the official Bottle Match RSMU chant. This had early momentum and in the run up to BM we will push again to gain more entries. These chants will then be adopted going forward into other RSMU events.
- Women in STEM events have been publicized and supported throughout the RSMU to increase awareness of the opportunities present. We have seen regular good turnout at these events.
- We are currently in the process of running an RSMU women in science and engineering dinner - this will be a celebration of a range of different peoples achievements with speakers ranging from PhD's to senior academics to leading industry experts. Initial estimations put this dinner at around an attendance of 40-50 students.

General

The RSMU has been looking at the possibility of forming an unbiased way of withholding the right to sell tickets or allow entry to events. This was initially proposed as the Misconduct Review Process seen at the previous Union Council. After further discussion with OT's and Senior Management this is in the process of being reformed and formalized to take into account Union separation and concerns over keeping disciplinaries in house.

Five Year Plan

The RSMU is currently in the process of building a 5 year plan. This will outline the construction of an RSMU brand, utilizing this to gain better sponsorship prospects, become more financially stable and hence ultimately provide a better service for its members. It will also cover changes in culture and outlook that the RSMU should be making. Whilst we aim to complete as many steps as we can in the right direction this year, for it to be engrained in RSMU culture these changes need to be continually enforced over a longer time period.

