

# RSMU Report

Union Council  
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the RSMU Committee

## RSMU Overview

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## Introduction

This report provides an overview of the Royal School of Mines Union's activities so far and any plans for the year. I have detailed my plans and those of my officers below.

The start of the year has come with many challenges for our Committee as we have attempted to provide RSMU Members with a similar experience as previous years with a remote aspect due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Our transition to a largely virtual Constituent Union has seen our participation rates fall dramatically but we hope to reverse this throughout the rest of the year and take the opportunity to provide services and events that weren't possible or provided with limited capacity previously.

## Goals As President

1. Increase participation of the Materials department students in RSMU activities to lessen the divide between the two halves of our constituent union (Earth Science and Engineering students being the respective other half).
2. Increasing engagement with postgraduate students and their participation in RSMU activities.
3. Providing an equal or similar RSMU experience to members as previous years, whilst adhering to guidelines associated with Covid-19.

## Goal 1

Increasing the participation of Materials department students in RSMU activities

### Cultural Celebrations – International Students

- The Materials department has a diverse cohort of students. This year we aim to offer a wider range of cultural events than previous years with the hope of encouraging all students, reaching out particularly to international students, to feel welcome and celebrated within our Constituent Union. Some examples of the cultural celebrations we will promote are listed below:
  - Black History Month
  - Diwali
  - Chinese New Year
- RSMU Events and Welfare officers are focussed on planning activities which don't highlight or promote the underlying drinking culture which is particularly prevalent within Earth Science and Engineering Students. This is majorly off putting and intimidating for departmental peers and the Materials community and thereby eliminating this we hope to increase inclusivity.

### Engagement/Representation

- The RSMU Welcome Talk was delivered jointly to both Materials and Earth Science and Engineering Students during Freshers' Week to educate both sides of the RSM about the respective 'other side'. Last year the RSMU was unable to deliver a combined introduction to the whole Constituent Union cohort proving detrimental for first year engagement from Materials as the students were unaware about how our sports clubs, events and other services run and that they are automatically enrolled as members of the RSMU.
- This year there is an equal representation of Materials and Earth Science and Engineering students filling the RSMU Executive Committee Roles. Students from the Materials department are now more likely to join the events and acknowledge notices from Committee members from their own degree courses as they will act as the friendly face-type of representatives to encourage participation.

## Goal 2

Adjusting to the inclusion of Postgraduate Students



### Post Graduate Committee Member

Following the inclusion of Postgraduate students from the Materials and Earth Science and Engineering departments, the cohorts are currently not represented to a high enough degree on our committee.

- The current RSMU Committee will discuss which roles we can amend or add which are limited to Postgraduate students only.
  - Discussion so far is centred around adding a Postgraduate Ordinary Member to the Exec Committee.
- If the role addition in the constitution is passed, an officer will be first active in the 2021/22 academic year with awareness about the opportunity shared beforehand.

### Communication with Departments' Graduates

- Communicating with representatives of the unofficial graduate societies will be necessary to find ways of supporting them effectively.
  - An email to the representatives of ESE GradSoc was sent in late August without a response.
  - Following the Autumn election of year group representatives, contact can be made with the relevant Postgraduate members of the two departments.
- The RSMU President's update email has been released twice so far this term with details of events which have seen minimal Postgraduate participation (two students at most). Therefore, emailing the Postgraduate students alone, will not be effective for communicating and encouraging participation at our RSMU activities.

## Goal 3

Deliver the usual services of the RSMU during the Covid-19 pandemic

### Online events

- A number of online events have already replaced our annual Freshers' Fortnight activities where the in-person equivalent was not deliverable for health and safety reasons and not being in line with both government and college guidelines. See Page 5 (RSMU Events) for more details.

### Time Zones and Remote Study

- Where activities have and will be delivered in-person in the future, online equivalents are provided for students who are not physically able to attend (i.e. live away from London/outside of the UK) and those who do not feel comfortable participating in person.
- Online activities will be predominantly in the daytime, as close to noon (GMT) as possible. This will allow participation from students in both eastern and western time zones, without being too early or late.



## RSMU Academics

The RSMU Vice-President Education (VPE) has largely echoed the aims of the officer acting in the 2019/20 academic year. This includes the goal to progress the integration between the Materials and Earth Science and Engineering staff and students further. The VPE will act as a point of contact between both departments' staff members to communicate ideas about how to maintain the positive aspects of academic teaching and research as well as where areas need attention for improvement. As an Earth Science and Engineering student with a particularly strong relationship with the associated course staff and students, the officer aims to replicate that relationship and build their connections with the Materials department staff and student representatives.

For the benefit of incoming and first year students, the VPE will require that the departments outline any hidden costs students can expect to come across during their degree and highlight what financial support services are available to mitigate the impacts of these costs. This is more applicable for the Earth Science and Engineering students who become overwhelmed by the costs of their fieldwork modules in later years. Second-hand sales will take place where students who no longer require their fieldwork equipment (tools and clothing) can sell their items at a reduced price than would be found for new retail items. The departments will also be encouraged to increase transparency with students about how money can be saved as they study their specific degree courses, or signpost them clearly to where this information can be found.

It is imperative that the standard of teaching is as high as when lectures, practical and support sessions are delivered in person now that they are streamed live or pre-recorded. Therefore, the VPE will be dedicating time to collecting feedback from students throughout the year and approaching the relevant staff members where appropriate. This will also be achieved by working closely with the academic year group representatives.

The VPE and Vice-President Welfare (VPW) will be working together this year to promote campaigns about issues that affect both student welfare and academic performance. The VPE has already been making great progress this year advocating for a staff-student relationship ban which will ultimately, not only benefit students within the RSMU but the wider college too.

## RSMU Welfare

The VPW for the 2020/21 academic year has reflected on the aims of their predecessor and aims to continue working towards a goal for integration within the Constituent Union and making our community a welcoming and inclusive environment.

Continuing to improve student engagement is especially important this year following the transition to remote study. However, it is more challenging to ensure students are retaining a healthy sense of wellbeing in a virtual community when some members don't



feel comfortable enough to reach out to the RSMU support services and others sign posted to them. The RSMU wellbeing team will work closely with the departmental staff this year to make sure students are accounted for and they engage as much as they can with our activities and services to prevent feelings of loneliness and isolation.

Looking forward to the year's wellbeing activities, CU-wide 'Tea and Biscuit' drop in sessions will take place over Microsoft Teams with themes associated with each monthly activity. This will be a space to learn how to make certain food or drink items as well as listen to other students' topics of interest and is likely to attract students to participate more than if the activity wasn't themed. It is worth noting that the RSMU will support departmental representatives as much as possible when organising smaller scale 'Tea and Biscuit'-like drop in sessions which will run more regularly and be aimed at the specific departments' students. While the RSMU wants to build and strengthen a wide sense of community, this must not be at the expense of smaller and potentially more tight-knit departmental relationships.

As mentioned above, the VPW and VPE will be working together this year to promote campaigns. There will be a virtual 'Beat the Blues' campaign in January which the current VPW and VPE successfully hosted together as departmental representatives in the 2019/20 academic year.

## RSMU Events

### Freshers' Fortnight

This year we hosted 7 events which largely ran online: Scavenger Hunt both in person and online (6/10), Fancy Dress Quiz (8/10), Netflix Party (9/10 & 11/10), Sports Day (10/10) Arts and Crafts (13/10), Escape Room (15/10) and Virtual Freshers Dinner (16/10).

- **Scavenger hunt:** The in-person component was very well attended having been advertised as a union-wide event attracting students from all over the College. Groups were pre-organised with staggered start times to avoid social contact and was well carried out getting freshers used to South Kensington. Good online alternative turnout also. Prizes were awarded for winners/best socially distanced photo.
- **Fancy Dress Quiz:** This also ran well with a fair attendance but a particularly strong Materials student participation. Fancy dress theme was 'Favourite Fictional Character'.
- **Netflix Party:** Was ran on 2 separate occasions to accommodate for students in different time zones focussed around celebrating and educating Black History. Was not very well attended however discussions following the film were beneficial. The films were also supplemented with snack ideas to introduce international students to come 'typical British' snacks. Films were LA 92 & 13<sup>th</sup>.
- **Sports Day:** Held on Teams with all RSM Sports Captains present. Was extremely poorly attended despite the purpose for and information about the event being circulated beforehand.
- **Arts and Crafts:** Held on Teams as a drop in RSMU Welfare session with little to no attendance throughout - 2 first years joined.



- Escape Room: Fairly well attended, particularly by those students studying remotely and even split between ESE and Materials students. Took approximately 2 hours to complete with competitive aspect and prizes to be awarded for the winning team. New concept which can be sent out as a wellbeing activity for students to do in their own time at a later date.
- Virtual Freshers Dinner: One of the best turnouts of virtual fresher's fortnight events with guest speaker Dr Valentin Laurent from ESE who gave a brief talk on the importance of involvement at university. Menus and drinks suggestions were sent out prior to the event to encourage people to cook together/sense of togetherness throughout the meeting. Good integration of students through the use of breakout rooms (tables) of which conversations carried on a few hours after the event. Was attended by around 45 students.

#### Future events

- Future plans include a Virtual Pub Crawl to replace the November Bar Night, possible charity event for Children in Need, Diwali celebrations + regular RSMU/departmental tea and biscuits with themes such as Yoga & Festive Drinks.

## RSMU Clubs and Societies

#### Bottle Match

- Varsity in February was planned to take place in London this year however is not looking likely to go ahead in its full capacity. The weekend long varsity not been confirmed to be cancelled; however, talks are in place with the relevant members of CSM regarding postponing the event or livestreaming the sporting events with no crowd present.

#### DepSocs

- Materials Society (MatSoc) have had a great start to the year, holding a very successful Careers Fair in mid-October gaining 5 new company partnerships with a good turnout. Many other events are planned for the remainder of term.
- Geology Society have officially passed their name change and have run one very successful seminar at the start of term with >55 students attending reaching other universities geology cohort. Second seminar will have occurred by the time this reaches council (27/10) and Annual Symposium/Sponsorship plans are in the works.
- Geophysics (GPS) are currently planning their first events and a new partnership with CGG who are looking to provide interview practice to GPS Members. They are still working with the Union with regards to return of deposit for last year's annual tour which was unable to go ahead.

#### Sports

- RSM Sports are underway in the intermural league. Hockey have received one strike from Sport Imperial/Imperial Athletes regarding COVID security so have enhanced this. Tennis are yet to get underway following technical issues and poor support from



the Union, the club have record member numbers at 149 despite existing in the incubator for CSP's this year.

## RSMA Collaboration

Relationship between the RSMU and the RSMA remains positive, with the RSMU President and Honorary Secretary attending meetings, as well as the three Dep Soc Presidents. I, in my position as RSMU President, act *ex officio* as a Trustee of the Royal School of Mines Association Trust.

### RSMA Events:

- RSMA Dinner scheduled for late November has now been cancelled due to Covid-19.
- RSMA Careers Day will go ahead virtually in Spring Term.
- Summer Term BBQ TBC.

### Finances

- RSMA will continue to provide bursaries and hardship funds to RSMU students. They have just awarded 5 final year student bursaries. There is continual work being done to raise awareness of the RSMA Endowment Fund.
- Will continue to provide financial support to the RSMU to facilitate normal function adding support for regalia collaboration (enamel pins) following suspension of Goods and Services budget.

### Transitions from RSMU to RSMA

- Facebook Group for recent graduates will advertise both RSMU events and provide alumni connections/information regarding the RSMA.
- RSMA events tickets are often discounted for students to aid transition.

### Student involvement with RSMA Committee

- RSMU President and Honorary Secretary sit on the RSMA committee, as well as DepSoc Presidents to boost involvement of students on RSMA Committee.

## RSMU Finances

Opening balance of ~£8000 following a suspension of £1500 due to COVID-19. We have not yet written a proposal for our Faculty of Engineering grant but hope to do so in the coming weeks. We are hoping to also acquire grants from the Royal School of Mines Association to boost our goods and services budget. Previously, the Department of Materials and the Department of Earth Science and Engineering have donated ~£1500 towards Bottle Match,



as well as the Royal School of Mines Association, however this is unlikely to be needed this year

Our sports clubs and departmental societies are also in a good financial position.

## Items for Discussion

### Participation Rates

1. Are there any suggestions surrounding issues with low participation rates for online events?
2. Are there any suggestions for ways to engage with the Postgraduate Students?

If you have any other comments or would like to discuss RSMU activities to a greater depth, you can contact me at [rsm.chair@imperial.ac.uk](mailto:rsm.chair@imperial.ac.uk)

