



# Royal College of Science Union

## Term 2 Report

### 2022-2023 Executive Committee

Trinity Stenhouse (*President*)

Julia Purrinos de Oliveira (*VP of Activities*)

Anthea MacIntosh-LaRocque (*VP of Welfare*)

Runtian Wu (*VP of Education*)

Roy Wang (*VP of Operations*)

Sorina-Gabriela Andrei (*Treasurer*)

Amir Rahman (*Secretary*)



## *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 been very successful in furthering its aims over the latter half of term 1, and is looking forward to continuing its successes throughout the rest of the year.

We have fostered a culture of advanced planning, having made a plan for the year's events and begun making venue bookings and event proposals over the Christmas break. We have also met with collaborators, including fellow CUs and our counterparts at other universities, in order to plan large scale events promoting collaboration between faculties and London universities. We are also aiming to increase Postgrad engagement, firstly with a pub quiz on 24<sup>th</sup> January, and then a cocktail making evening in March.

We have reforged our connections with our alumni network, the RCSA, and plan to commence sending monthly newsletters to RCSU and RCSA members this term, notifying all persons of the activities of both organisations and how they can get involved. The RCSA has also agreed to fund free tickets to events for students in receipt of Bursaries and/or the Hardship Fund, which will allow the RCSU's funds to not be depleted by offering this scheme. We are in the process of bringing a paper to Council to cement this scheme in our Constitution.

Our representation networks are working hard to improve in the areas highlighted by regular rep meetings. VPW has spoken at the Natural Sciences Education Committee on the Mitigating Circumstances Review, and we look forward to implementing the resulting action plan this term. We are also looking forward to welfare week, which is in the process of being booked after discussions with collaborator societies over Christmas. We have been working to streamline the UROP process, and have contacted the careers service for help with this.

We have postponed the Science Challenge Launch so that the Grand Awards Ceremony falls at a more convenient time for external students participating, after their A Level/GCSE exams and during their Summer Holidays, around late June. This will hopefully allow more students to attend the Awards Ceremony, and remove some barriers for international



students. Broadsheet has had an excellent start to the year, with the distribution of its first issue on the 'Energy Crisis' causing many more students to email in saying they want to get involved. We are currently working on identifying potential sponsors after having updated our sponsorship package and meeting with other CUs for advice in this area.

Overall, the RCSU is on track for an excellent year ahead, and we hope that with the hard work and dedication of our committee, we can continue to further our goal of making this year one of the best the RCSU has seen.



# Activities

JULIA PURRINOS DE OLIVEIRA

The Activities Team have been working hard to expand our events through collaborations, as well as making sure our events cater to a wide variety of groups and interests, such as increasing postgraduate participation and hosting non-alcohol centric events.

## Non-Alcohol Centric Events

### ICPokeSoc Scavenger Hunt

We organised a Pokémon scavenger hunt around the Natural Sciences buildings on campus to get students exploring different parts of the university that they may not usually see. We are planning to do this again next term to get more students involved.

### Art Club

With the help of the chair of IC Art Club, we planned an end of term Christmas event on 13th December. This was a special Christmas art club session with RCSU students getting involved and making their own snow globes. The event had excellent turnout and we look forward to more collaborations with Art Club in term 2.

## Sports

We kicked off the termly sports league with an interdepartmental basketball tournament at Ethos sports centre. Next term we are looking forward to hosting chess, climbing, football and e-sports tournaments with their respective societies.

## Spring term plans

### Postgraduate events

Postgrad bar night already organised for 24th January in the Union Bar, with a university challenge style pub quiz and prizes for the winning team. A cocktail making event is planned for the end of the spring term in Blakett level 8 common room. Hopefully these events will help our postgrads feel more involved in RCSU.

### ICSMSU x RCSU Spring Ball

We are looking to organise the annual RCSU Spring term ball with ICSMSU. Currently we are in talks with Chris and his team considering venues for the black tie event, such as Quaglino's in St. James's. We are once again planning to get bands from live music society and Imperial DJs involved due to the success of this at the RCSU Autumn Ball. We would prefer to host a more formal event for our termly balls instead of a normal club night.



### **UCL Natural Sciences Collaboration**

A new goal for the RCSU Activities committee this year is to strengthen our network with Natural Sciences departments at other universities in London. We are currently in the middle of discussions with the UCL Natural Sciences committee about potential event collaborations in the Spring and Summer terms. We're considering hosting a boat party with them.

### **Quad-Union Bar Night**

The 4 CUs would like to organise a Quad-union event including a possible takeover of Beit in spring term. This would be a chance for everyone in all departments to meet students that they would never usually come across in their busy lives at the College. We have discussed making the mascots a key part of the competitive aspect of the evening, and featuring both transient competitions like 'test your strength' common at fairgrounds, which people can try throughout the evening, and organised competitions such as beer pong and darts where students can sign up in advance to represent their CU at a time throughout the evening. We are working on a dress code with the idea of it being CU related/CU stash, but this does not work for all CUs who do not all have stash/have no intention of opening a shop in the near future. The exact games and details of this event still need to be planned out, but we are really looking forward to collaborating with the other CUs and sharing our creative outputs to make a great event for everyone!



# Education Representation

RUNTIAN WU

My role in the second half of this term focused on feedback, internships, and departmental-specific issues.

**Feedback.** The late timing and the low quality of some assignment feedback have been raised in departmental SSCs, faculty SSCs and regular faculty catch-up meetings. A greater emphasis has now been placed on staff to ensure the quality of the feedback and to communicate to students any delay in returning feedback.

**UROPs and internships.** A survey was sent to all undergraduates in the Faculty of Natural Sciences about UROPs and internships. The result shows that most students eagerly seek internships but need more support. The results also show advice and improvements for the UROP system. The survey has been raised in many catch-up meetings and communicated to DUGS from all departments, who are currently reviewing the feedback. After communicating with staff, the UROP website is now updated with more detailed guidance on things such as how to apply and fund for UROPs. Besides, I approached department liaison officers and conducted meetings to discuss the result. In addition, I have raised the transparency of the UROP with the staff. Whether to publish the UROP acceptance rate in each department is now being discussed by the team in the registry. The possibility of establishing an internship list for the relevant major is being discussed with presidents from departmental societies and the Career Service. I also notified the Career Service and discussed greater support for students in finding internships, including the deputy director of the Career Service, Richard Carruthers. And here are his major points:

- Career Service is happy to engage with RCSU on Career Service advertisement, newsletter, and offer a presentation to RCSU members in the new year to brief the members of the service and support;
- Career Service is unable to produce an internship list or a searchable page for internships due to the high number of internships. Letting students search and apply for internships helps to select motivated students and train their skills in job seeking – it would be detrimental if we remove this aspect;
- Producing departmental-specific internship and placement list does not align to [public sector digital accessibility regulations](#), and therefore will not be conducted;
- Career Service is actively providing support to speculative applications;
- Career Service doesn't think students are not aware of external internships other than UROP.



**Life Sciences (Biology and Biochemistry)** is giving the common room access to first- and second-year students. A student common room committee has been established to purchase a number of items to improve the room. Staff are notified of a high demand for more problem classes, and more revision time for third-year exams.

**Chemistry** conducted a survey about students' preferences in learning format (online/in-person). The reps are trying to make sure that students are happy with online teaching. The survey is now being processed and discussed with staff.

**Maths** is looking at NSS reports. Issues in the report are being discussed in the student-staff meetings.

**Physics** has introduced an "announcement" WhatsApp chat for each year group where only the admin can post. People are finding it very useful to read announcements than emails. Lab issues about demonstrators have been raised with the head of labs. DUGS is now increasing student-staff communication about some module changes.



# Welfare Representation

ANTHEA MACINTOSH-LAROCQUE

## VPW Goals

1. Mitigating circumstances review
2. FONS Mental Health Strategy Proposal

### Update on Goal 1. Mitigating circumstances review

- Discussed with DPE, Disabilities Officer and Mental Health Officer key issues with the MC process and how they are impacting students (particularly students with disabilities and/or mental health conditions);
- Reviewed MC policies at other high student satisfaction universities (e.g. University of St. Andrews);
- Identified key areas which need improvement: Application process, mitigation for chronic conditions/disabilities and the available forms of mitigation;
- Devised a set of recommendations, Appendix A;
- Presented results of survey and consultation alongside recommendations in Natural Sciences Education Committee (NSEC), received feedback from members of staff, including Registry;
- An action plan based on the discussions in NSEC has been written up (with collaboration from DPE), some delays in actioning the plan, but should in motion by January;

### Update on Goal 2. FONS Mental Health Strategy

- No updates since last Council report.

### Welfare Week Update

- Dates: 6/2/23 to 10/2/23;
- Welfare Activities Officer and VPW have events ideas planned;
- Next steps are to contact relevant societies, complete risk assessments and room bookings, make plan to increase student engagement with Welfare Week which will be done by January.

### Rep engagement...

- Working with dep reps to fill unfilled wellbeing year rep roles in departments;
- Rep social in the Union bar for all Wellbeing & Academic reps in FONS/RCSU was held on 14<sup>th</sup> November;
- Three RCSU Welfare Board meetings held in Term 1.





# Operations

ROY WANG

## Broadsheet

100 copies of Broadsheet were successfully distributed at the end of term, causing an increase in interest in the magazine. We now have more people signed up to the Broadsheet writers and designers mailing list and look forward to utilising their talent in the term 2 issue, the theme of which is still in discussion.

## Alumni and Sponsorship

We have had excellent progress with regards to Alumni, after reforging our connections with the RCSU's historical alumni network, the RCSA. The association is currently not organised due to recent changes in management and has asked we give them 3-6months to 'get their house in order' before expecting collaborative events. We already have plans to send out a joint RCSU and RCSA newsletter to members of the two organisations monthly, which will hopefully start this term, to keep everyone updated on what's going on and how to get involved. We have also said that a goal for the RCSA should be to have a mailing list ready by the Summer term so that hopefully alumni can attend our end of year sit down dinner. The RCSA has also pledged funds to support our events, and we are in the process of working with the other CUs to get this set up. They are also keen to fund our free tickets scheme, which will mean providing these tickets will cause no financial drain on the RCSU's funds to host other events.

We have spoken with the other CUs regarding sponsorship and hope to find potential sponsors this term, to sponsor us in the 2023-4 academic year.

## Science Challenge

We have postponed the Science Challenge Launch so that the Awards Ceremony falls at a more convenient time for the external students participating. The competition will be launching on the 27<sup>th</sup> February 2023 (provisional) with the submission deadline in mid-April and the Award Ceremony taking place in late-June. This will allow more students to attend the Awards Ceremony which will now take place after A Level/GCSE exams, and will hopefully remove barriers for international students.

In preparation for the new launch date, we have submitted all required forms for a launch on 27<sup>th</sup> February instead. Catering will be arranged in the new year. Invites have been extended to Professor Lord Winston, Professor Kathy Sykes and Dr Tom Crawford to attend.

The Science Challenge website was updated with new information and the competition's theme on the 14<sup>th</sup> December and for this Vanessa (Science Challenge Chair) designed a new logo, icons, the colour palette and font for this year's competition and a website banner accordingly. Once the room booking and event proposal form have been approved, the



website will be updated to include the launch date. Following the launch of the competition, the judges and their prompts will be added.

Recently, Instagram has become a more video-based platform and so we are in the process of adjusting the original plans for the pre-launch publicity campaign to one that is in line with this new direction. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> December, Vanessa will be interviewing 12 students who have expressed interest in being featured on Science Shorts, with plans to film all of the shorts on the 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> January. In addition to this, we will be filming the launch video and a short clip inviting students to attend the launch on these dates. A purchase order has been submitted to cover the filming costs. We have also applied to do an Instagram takeover of the Imperial College account on the 20<sup>th</sup> February to promote the launch event.

Once the launch has been fully approved, we will send an updated promotional description to Outreach, International School Recruitment, and the Faculties for their newsletters. We will also be producing posters and pull-up banners for publicity and use at the launch event respectively.

Regarding the logistics of the competition itself, two of the four judges have confirmed the prompts for their category of the competition, and we are expecting video clips for their section of the launch video by the 1<sup>st</sup> February. In the new year, we will be contacting the Data Protection team to ensure that the submission form for the competition is GDPR compliant. Finally, following meetings with the Chief Editor of the Young Scientists Journal, a partnership has been established between the Journal and the Science Challenge. This will take the form of the Journal promoting the competition to its school-aged audience on their website, as well as members of their editorial team forming part of the judging panel, specifically to award the Young Scientists Journal Prize for Excellence in Written Communication to at most three students from the schools' division of the competition. There have also been discussions about a prize for spoken communication that would involve a speaking position at the YSJ Conference at King's School Canterbury in September 2023, but these discussions are still on going.



# Finances and Societies

SORINA-GABRIELA ANDREI

The RCSU has happily received a grant of £21,500 from the Faculty of Natural Sciences, which will cover our full budget for the year, including an expansion on the budgets of sports and welfare, and a budget for committee team building events. This brings our total finances to approximately £45,000, including the float left over from previous years. In addition to this, we plan to receive donations from the RCSA for events throughout the year, as well as subsidy for tickets for those in receipt of Bursaries and/or the Hardship Fund.

We have ordered tankards for Vice President (Welfare and Wellbeing) and the five Departmental Wellbeing Representatives, as this is their fifth year of instatement.

We plan to open a Union Shop selling RCSU Merchandise this term, which will hopefully provide additional funding allowing us to greater subsidise events. We aim to sell products such as hoodies, sports shirts and t-shirts, with an aim that sports shirts can be worn by players in our Sports League.

The departmental societies have largely been doing well, with most organising Christmas dinners, and general member engagement being good. Updates from each society are below.

## Biology

BioSoc has had a movie night and a Mums N Dads Pubcrawl recently, both with good turnout. Due to Union delays, they are still waiting on an invoice to be paid, which has meant that some events had to be postponed due to lack of funds. They are in the process of finding sponsors. RCSU is trying to help as much as we can.

## Biochemistry

BioChemSoc has held both academic and social events. Academic events included a Careers fair, Health and Disease seminar, book sale and an event with one of our sponsors (Newton). For the social events we organized a clubbing night with other bio societies and a trip to winter wonderland. For next term we are planning on organizing more social and academic events including our annual spring ball.

## Chemistry

ChemSoc had an excellent Christmas Dinner which was extremely well attended and loved by attendees. They are in the process of organising events for next year such as game nights and seminars by academics and sponsors, to expand to hosting some more academic activities too.

## Maths

MathSoc also had an excellent Christmas dinner which was well attended and thought highly of. They have been successful in procuring sponsorship agreements. They also had a fantastic integration bee and plan to hold similar events in term 2. Their main concern is a



lack of attendance at smaller events, which they are unsure about. RCSU plans to help by publicising MathSoc events through our channels (as well as the other DepSocs’ events, of course).

### Physics

PhySoc has had an incredible term 1, managing to host events every week of term. Their hard work seems to have paid off as physics students hold the society in very high regard and look forward to these events.

Here is a summary of PhySoc’s events:

Week 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome Fair</li> <li>• Intro to Physoc (for Y1)</li> <li>• Mums &amp; Dads (first meeting)</li> </ul>	Week 5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk by Nicola Fox from NASA</li> <li>• LaTeX Workshop 3 – Advanced Functions</li> <li>• Star Wars Marathon with SciFi-Soc</li> </ul>	Week 9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RCSU Sports League – Basketball</li> </ul>
Week 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physoc x Aerosoc Pub Crawl</li> </ul>	Week 6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mario Kart Tournament</li> <li>• Research Frontiers</li> </ul>	Week 10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christmas Dinner</li> <li>• Research Frontiers</li> </ul>
Week 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LaTeX Workshop 1 – Basics</li> <li>• Pop-Up Shop/Merch Pick-Up</li> </ul>	Week 7 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Powerpoint Party &amp; h-Bar Hangout (Mums &amp; Dads event)</li> </ul>	Week 11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• End-of-Term Pizza</li> </ul>
Week 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Careers Fair</li> <li>• LaTeX Workshop 2 – Maths Syntax</li> <li>• Research Frontiers</li> <li>• Boat Party</li> </ul>	Week 8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research Frontiers</li> </ul>	