**Imperial College Union**

**Union Council / 7th January 2024**

**Committee position (Vice President (Postgraduate Students)) addition to RCSU committee**

Author(s): Stefaniia Medvetskaia (RCSU VP Welfare)

Seconder(s): Julia Purrinos De Oliveira (RCSU President)

Deniz Beydagi (RCSU VP Clubs and Societies)

Daniel Zhuo (CGCU President)

Anson To (LGBTQ+ Officer)

Miriam Foulkes (Mental Health Officer)

Scarlett Kilford (Working Class Officer)

Decision(s): To approve

**Union Notes**

1. The Royal College of Science Union (RCSU) is a faculty constituent union representing welfare and educational interests of the students in the Faculty of Natural Sciences (FoNS).1
2. Most of the RCSU committee are undergraduate students, who are unable to fully understand or appreciate the experiences of Postgraduate students.
3. Historically, the postgraduate student representation was covered by the Graduate Student’s Union (GSU). In 2022, the GSU ceased its existence2.
4. Moreover, since the dissolution of the GSU, the ICU has had difficulty filling the role of PGT AWO3 (Post Graduate Taught Academic & Welfare Officers). This role has been unfilled for the past 3 years. This means there’s been a significant gap in support for and representation of PGT students.
5. The RCSU is also responsible for “providing social, cultural and recreational activities” for their students.1
6. In previous years we have found that postgraduate engagement with “Postgraduate only” events is a lot higher than that for mixed events.
7. Standing orders 4.1 and 4.3 list the existing positions on the RCSU committee.4
8. Standing order 7.1.3 and 7.2.4 list the members of the general committee and the executive committee respectively.4
9. The standing orders 7.4.4, 7.5.4 and 7.6.4 list the members of the activities, academic and welfare committees.
10. Standing order 5 lists the responsibilities of each existing role.4
11. The FoNS Faculty Staff (Rebecca Middleton (Head of Education and Student Experience), Chris Kerr (Education and Quality Assurance Coordinator), Ingo Muller-Wodarg (Senior Tutor)) have expressed that they support the resolves proposed in this paper both via email and during a meeting.

**Union Believes**

1. The RCSU plays a vital role in both student welfare and academic representation.
2. The breakdown of the GSU means that the responsibility representation and activities for postgraduate students in FoNS has been informally incorporated into the RCSU.
3. Given that most of the RCSU committee tends to be undergraduate students, we believe that this significantly affects the quality of postgraduate representation we can achieve and places a lot of pressure on the RCSU VPs for Welfare and Education.
4. We believe that the breakdown of the GSU made it more challenging for postgraduate (PG) students to connect with ICU, without their own PG-focused constituent union, and requiring the RCSU to step in to support PG students where previously the focus had been on UG..
5. Given higher postgraduate student engagement in “postgraduate only” events, we believe that these are important to run to create a stronger sense of community for postgraduate students. This places additional pressure on the already stressful and busy role of VP (Activities) to run extra “postgraduate only events”. Moreover, the VP (Activities) role tends to be held by an undergraduate student who would be unable to fully appreciate the desires and needs of postgraduate students.

**Union Resolves**

1. To amend the RCSU standing orders 4.1, 4.3, 7.1.3, 7.2.4, 7.4.4, 7.5.4 and 7.6.4 to include in the lists a new role to the RCSU Executive committee: Vice President (Postgraduate students).
2. To update RCSU standing order 5 to include the Vice President (Postgraduate students) role with the following responsibilities:
   1. Deputise for the President on the campuses of the Faculty of Natural Sciences (South Kensington and White City) as required.
   2. Oversee RCSU general events and host “postgraduate only” events
   3. Promote communication and cooperation between the White City Campus, the South Kensington Campus the other campuses of the Faculty of Natural Sciences.
   4. Work closely with Postgraduate AWOs (Academic Wellbeing Officers) to ensure every FoNS postgraduate student feels represented.
   5. Work closely with ICU representation team and FoNS staff to ensure all AWO roles are filled, allowing for fair representation of postgraduate students.
   6. Attend CWF (Community and Welfare forum) and/or RARF (Research Academic Representation Forum) to ensure postgraduate student’s opinions are voiced.
   7. Be responsible for collecting and voicing postgraduate student opinion on Welfare and Academic topics (to VP (Welfare), VP (Education) and Faculty Staff).

References:

1. ICU Bye-Law L (Constituent Unions) <https://cdn.sanity.io/files/k7lmfnyj/production/c6db1e6a5777d1f2e68794b7bacd4a3e760287c8.pdf> (accessed: 16/12/2024)
2. Dr Lloyd James, Postgraduate Engagement Review <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/your-union/how-were-run/committees/21-22/Board_of_Trustees/file/6971> (accessed: 16/12/2024)
3. ICU “Academic & Welfare Officers “AWO’s”” <https://www.imperialcollegeunion.org/sites/default/files/AWO%20Role%20Descriptor%202024.pdf> (accessed: 16/12/2024)
4. Royal College of Science Union Standing Orders <https://rcsa.org.uk/wp/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/RCSU_SOs.pdf> (accessed: 16/12/2024)