

RSMU Report

Union Council
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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 RSMU is optimistic that this academic year will prove less challenging to deliver a full CU experience to our members while the effects of Covid-19 lessen. Despite this, the committee is still making great efforts to provide events, campaigns and services which are inclusive and considerate of what could be an overwhelming return to in-person university life. We are looking forward to seeing increased participation in our events that are returning from the online transition and welcoming back the UG and PG cohorts to our revived traditions.

Goals As President

1. Return member participation and engagement with our CU to pre-covid levels and reviving traditions that haven't been seen for 20 months.
2. Continue to encourage Postgraduate participation.
3. Successfully arrange two Bottle Match Varsities, something never achieved in 120 years.
4. Be the most effective support for the RSMU and respective CSP committee members who are experiencing an in-person RSM for the first time.

Goal 1 and 2

Return member participation and engagement with our CU to pre-covid levels and reviving traditions that haven't been seen for 20 months. Continue to increase Postgraduate participation.

As expected, and felt widely across ICU, the 2020/21 remote activities saw large decreases in member participation. For 2021/22 I would like to restore our attendance numbers to pre-Covid levels for events that are making a return and those that we are trialling for the first time where social distancing restrictions allow.

During Freshers' Fortnight the attendance for our Oktoberfest, Pub Crawl, Rock'N'Talk, Bowling and Freshers Dinner events were as high as we'd expect, if not greater. However, the Scavenger Hunt, Crazy Golf and Film Night events were lower than desired. These events will be reviewed by the activities committee to decide whether we should advise our successors to carry on their existence in the Freshers' Fortnight timetable. The Vice President - Activities and Events, will be adding new events to our social calendar and if they are successful, we would like them to implemented in future years (see RSMU Events section for more details).

As social members of the RSMU, postgraduate students have had minor engagement with our events in the last couple of year and therefore, we opted to elect a Postgraduate Ordinary Member onto the RSMU Executive Committee. This is to ensure that we are not biased by catering only for the desires of undergraduate students who may have a different taste to the more mature students. Unfortunately, the role remains empty following the Autumn elections so we will continue with our efforts to make more PG inclusive events with our existing committee.

Goal 3

Successfully arrange two Bottle Match Varsities, something never achieved in 120 years.

When COVID-19 brought the cancellation of our annual sports varsity between the RSMU and Camborne School of Mines (CSM) from Exeter University (Penryn Campus, Cornwall) in 2020, it was decided between both the RSM and CSM that the usual event held in February 2022 would go ahead in Cornwall. Further to this, a second extraordinary event would be held in June 2022 in London. This event will allow the most recent graduates to experience the varsity as if it were their final year of studies as it will be branded as the '2021 event in play'. The RSMA, Earth Science & Materials departmental staff, ICU, and CSM staff representatives all approve of the idea.

The efforts made for a singular event are high from RSMU volunteers (Vice President - Clubs & Societies and President among other contributors who help via delegation). Therefore, in most years, the planning stages for an event in February are completed before Autumn term



begins. Having only recently received confirmation of a date for the February event (25-27th) there is now a lot of pressure on the committee to bring the RSM's involvement to fruition. Accommodation, travel and excursions will need to be arranged for ~160 RSM students to Cornwall in 4 months' time.

For the second Bottle Match Varsity in 2022, an official event date, sports ground hire, travel for students and players, a players' dinner and afterparty will need to be arranged.

Goal 4

Be the most effective support for the RSMU and respective CSP committee members who are experiencing an in-person RSM for the first time.

Following the year of online activities, there are cohorts of students in the RSMU who haven't experienced as many, if any, RSMU traditional events (including the general working of the CU and Dep Socs/Sports Clubs) as they would have had the opportunity to by this point in their degree. Although the 20/21 committee worked hard to host as many traditional activities online, replicating the real experience as close as possible, there is ultimately a gap in cohorts who are most confident in committee roles based purely on the fact they haven't been exposed to the RSMU in a 'normal year'. Alongside myself, the 3rd and 4th year students on the RSMU General/Sports/Dep Socs committees are guiding the other half of our 2nd year volunteers who we want to feel comfortable in their roles now and who are expected to fill our roles in the upcoming years. There is ultimately a pressure to pass on as much information and guidance to the 2nd year students now as they will be the ones keeping the RSM afloat and teaching the students in the new cohorts in years to come. I would like to express how grateful I am for the students who are simultaneously learning what the RSM stands for and provides for other students as well as learning how their roles enable this.

RSMU Academics

The main goal of the Vice President (Education) (VPE) is to ensure a seamless transition to in-person teaching for both departments, ESE and Materials. This is an ironic change from the hard work of the previous VPE, whose main goal was to ensure the quality of remote learning would match the quality of in-person teaching. In-class learning, both in terms of quality and also student experience, should not be impacted by issues outside of the learning environment, wherever that may be. All universities, including the college and the RSM, are in a strange position where students from years 1 through 4 have received a completely wide-ranging learning experience at university. Most importantly, students in years 1 and 2 have had very little in-person teaching, either at school or university level over their last two years spent in education. Therefore, it is imperative that these students, as well as students in years 3 and 4, are able to adapt quickly to being in their department, as well as engaging with students and staff in-person - not via the means of Teams.



The VPE will work closely with both the Deputy President (Education) as well as the two departmental academic representatives within the RSM. This will be achieved firstly via the means of frequent communication, as well as listening diligently to the student voice and acting effectively and efficiently to ensure students are satisfied with their learning experience here in the RSM. The VPE and departmental representatives have analysed the NSS results for the two departments within the RSM. ESE maintains its high-scoring student satisfaction and excitingly achieved the highest overall student satisfaction within the Faculty of Engineering. Materials improves in all areas of the survey topics, yet ranks the lowest in the faculty in overall student satisfaction. The VPE will aim to understand the disparities in student experience between the two cohorts, taught on opposite sides of the RSM.

Nonetheless, the VPE is confident that this year will be a success academically. Both departments have a good record of working alongside the student representatives and the excitement surrounding the students' return should be able to overcome any uncertainties involving the return to South Kensington. All students and staff will need to collaborate to provide an enjoyable and well-rounded learning experience in the RSM, and the VPE is committed to facilitating this.

RSMU Welfare

The Vice-President Welfare (VPW) for the 2021/22 academic year echoes the aims of their predecessor to continue building a strong sense of community within the CU, integrating the two departments, and maintaining inclusivity. The VPW will act as a point of contact, bridging both departments' staff members and student representatives. Through frequent catchups, the VPW aims to implement best practice across the cohorts and departments, as well as discuss where areas need attention for improvement.

Improving student engagement is especially important with the transition back to in-person learning—to offer a chance for freshers and second years to build stronger relationships by interacting offline, and for older cohorts to rekindle bonds that may have been lost or weakened as an effect of distancing due to the pandemic. The situation seems optimistic, as observed through the already increased engagement with activities and events thus far, and positive feedback upon students' reflection. Looking forward to the year's wellbeing activities, the VPW will work closely with the Vice-President Activities & Events (VPAE) to host an annual 'Beat the Blues' campaign in January, as well as range of other themed activities such as Diversity Make & Share in March for as many students to feel resonance with the events on offer. This, and the reduced drinking aspects of events, are an active effort of the RSMU to widen participation and create a welcoming environment for all students to thrive.

It is also imperative that students continue to feel supported no matter what situation they are in to retain a healthy sense of physical and mental wellbeing. The VPW has created and



shared a directory of college-approved wellbeing resources within and outside of campus. The goal is to improve their accessibility for members who aren't familiar with or don't feel comfortable enough to reach out to the RSMU support services for. The RSMU wellbeing team will also work closely with the departmental staff, with adaptable strategies in response to unpredictable circumstances such as lunchtime drop-in sessions on Microsoft Teams. Therefore, all students are accounted for, and they engage as much as they can with our activities and services to prevent feelings of loneliness and isolation whether they are in-person or remote.

RSMU Events

Freshers' Fortnight

This year we have fulfilled a fortnight of events for first year and returning students.

- Oktoberfest
- Bowling
- South Kensington Pub Crawl
- 'RSM Olympics' /Sports day
- Film night
- Bar night
- Crazy golf
- Freshers Dinner

Future events

- Future plans for this year include:

November	December	January	February
Bar night. Ice skating at NHM. Escape room.	12 Days of Christmas scavenger hunt. Murder mystery night. Christmas buffet. Movie Night.	Bowling. Veganuary- cooking with VPW. Dry January- RSM mocktail competition. Beat the blues.	Secret cupid. Sweetheart's hangout- arts 'n' crafts. Pre-bottle bar night Bottle Match! Post-bottle bar night!
March	April	May	June
Women in STEM events. Mastermines. Easter egg hunt. Spring dinner.	Post- exam gaming afternoon.	RSM fashion show. Photography competition.	Water fight- students vs. lecturers/ ESE vs Materials. RSM Hackathon. Bottle Match.



RSMU Clubs and Societies

Bottle Match

- The varsity was planned, postponed and cancelled for a variety of eventualities (all players and spectators, no spectators, rugby match only) last year due to Covid-19 restrictions. Heated discussions were held with the opposers Camborne School of Mines (CSM) from Exeter University at Penryn campus when the time came to make a decision about who would host the next event, given that normally it alternates on a yearly basis. We are now pleased to say that in the 21/22 academic year, there will be two Bottle Match varsities. The first, 'ordinary' event will be held between 25th-27th February 2022 in Cornwall and ~160 RSM students will travel to Penryn for a weekend of sports and celebrations. The second, 'extraordinary' event will be held in late June 2022 in London and CSM students will migrate to the city for the '21 postponed event. This extraordinary event will be heavily advertised as an opportunity for the graduates of 2021 to return to the Bottle Match and play/spectate.
- It has been agreed between the RSM and CSM that terms of reference must be collaborated on in the eventuality that another Bottle Match varsity must be cancelled in the future.

Dep Socs

- Materials Society (MatSoc) has had a very successful start to the year with three new sponsors and a very well-attended first event. Students across all year groups are engaged with the society which is something the committee are particularly excited for heading into this term. MatSoc is currently planning a joint event with UAL to promote sustainable materials within the fashion industry as well as the annual careers fair on 27th October.
- Geology Society has had a good start to the term despite half of the committee being away on fieldwork. The introduction of a joint Pizza Social with GPS was well attended and provided a different setting for members to meet as well as an event we look to recur in future years. Plans for the Freshers Fieldtrip to the Mendip Hills on the 19-21st Nov are well underway and expected to be a sell-out amongst younger years. With nearly 500 members and plans for our lunchtime lecture series to kickstart in late November, the committee are very excited for a busy year ahead.
- Geophysics (GPS) are planning their first academic talks of the year as well as socials. They have maintained a good relationship with last year's sponsors and are currently securing more sponsorship agreements. With CGG, their biggest sponsor, GPS are organising a Women in Geoscience talk, as well as planning career-oriented talk in November.



Sports

- Badminton, Tennis, and Rugby (who attend IC training sessions) have all engaged with their members through casual training so far. The former 2 clubs are entered in leagues and expect to play matches this term.
- Netball, Football and Hockey have participated in matches with a range of wins and losses but are experiencing great engagement with students so far this year.
- Cricket and Lacrosse currently have no official committee, but volunteers exist who are keen to get the clubs functional ahead of Bottle Match in February.
- A Ladies' Football club are planning to submit a 'New Club' proposal to the New Activities Committee soon.
- None of the RSMU's sports clubs have received the kit that should be provided by Imperial Athletes thus far and have therefore been attending matches in their own sportswear. The clubs have not been able to use old kit due to the contract that Imperial Athletes has with the kit provider. We hope that our sports clubs can return to looking professional at matches with the promised kit soon.

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:

- The 136th annual RSMA Dinner is scheduled for Friday 26th November and is returning after the 2020 cancellation due to Covid.
- RSMA Careers Day will go ahead in-person in Spring Term.
- Summer Term BBQ will go ahead at the Union after the 2021 cancellation.

Finances

- RSMA will continue to provide bursaries and hardship funds to RSMU students. The have just awarded 5 final year student bursaries through members funds in the '100 Club'. There is continual work being done to raise awareness of the RSMA Endowment Fund.
- The RSMU receives a grant from the alumni association each year which goes towards Bottle Match, Spring Term formal dinner and welfare events. An exact amount hasn't been determined thus far but it has been agreed that funding will be increased slightly for the cost of the additional Bottle Match.

Transitions from RSMU to RSMA

- The Facebook group for recent graduates to connect with the alumni community is not used as we'd hope but there will be a drive for participation again this year. This space should be used as a platform to share information about the activities the undergraduates are getting up to throughout the year.
- RSMA events tickets are often discounted for students to aid transition.



- A mentoring scheme will be set up this year for RSMA members to guide current students in aspects of their studies, job applications and further into their careers.

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.
- The RSMU President also sits on the RSMA Board of Trustees ex-officio.

RSMU Finances

Opening balance of -£9200. The Faculty of Engineering have granted £5270, an increase compared to previous years. This is due to the addition of a second Bottle Match Varsity this year, an increase in Freshers Dinner attendees due to Covid-19 preventing the 2020/21 dinner and £500 allotted for the new Tri-Union event. A move to make 'The Pit' magazine online has reduced the grant by £250 in comparison to previous years. We are also hoping to acquire grants from the Royal School of Mines Association to boost our goods and services budget later this term.

Due to the extra Bottle Match Varsity this year, more funding is required. The Royal School of Mines Association (RSMA) have offered to contribute extra this year. The Earth Sciences and Engineering department have delegated an increased their donations of up to £2000 for this year and a similar contribution from the Materials department is still to be confirmed, however we hope to see a similar return following the hiatus due to Covid-19.

All three Dep Socs are in a good financial position with the support of external sponsorship and Union grant. The story for the sports teams is very different, however. With the introduction of Imperial Athletes and the removal of membership funds going directly to the clubs, many of the RSM sports clubs are very close to being in debt. Although IA had promised to pay for costs such as umpires and court hire, many clubs have experienced that either there isn't space for matches or IA are prioritising Imperial ACC Sports Clubs. This has led to clubs being forced to pay for external venues and umpires. In addition to this, with travel only being paid for matches above LUCA level, the benefits of IA to our clubs is very minimal as we only play in local matches. This is causing a great concern within the RSM, and although Imperial Athletes was created to make sport more accessible, if anything it is creating a financial detriment to our teams.

Items for Discussion

Participation Rates

1. Would any CSPs/MGs/CUs like to collaborate in celebrating cultural events this year?
2. Would any MG/CU chairs like to discuss how they are supporting clubs suffering from lack of IA support?



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

