

## **How to RCSA**

The RCSA or Robinson College Students' Association is an association of all the junior members of the college who haven't chosen to opt out.

The role of the RCSA is to represent the students of the college to liaise with various committees; to highlight areas where the college can improve as well as point out things the college is doing well.

It is important to note that the RCSA has a symbiotic relationship with the college, we need them to work with us to facilitate the wellbeing, recreational and intellectual lives of the student body but equally through legal obligations they need us to exist and we provide invaluable insight into the actual lives of students in college. They need to consult us of issues affecting our members and in doing so allow us to be party to discussions that influence college life. To this end if there is an issue that you wish to raise with college the RCSA provides best the framework through which you can do it and through which you will get the greatest impact. A weak student association is of no benefit to anyone in favour of the continual development of the college as a positive environment, ensuring we are positioned to provide a nourishing and stimulating experience for all students who matriculate here.

This guide seeks to highlight some of the things that the RCSA does as provide guidance particularly to freshers about how to take advantage of the opportunities and services we offer.

## Open Meetings

Open meetings are the forum through which any old member of college can steer what the RCSA is doing. They are meeting in the JCR that normally occur two to three times per term when the RCSA sets its policy and allocates money to different ideas. The meetings are generally less than an hour and typically are held on Sunday afternoons.

Any RCSA Member can propose a motion at an Open Meeting either seeking funding or to set RCSA policy. Motions should be structured in the "RCSA Notes, RCSA Believes, RCSA Resolves" format

RCSA Notes	State the facts/problem/idea
RCSA Believes	Why should something be done about this?
	Why would it be beneficial to Students or the College?
RCSA Resolves	What should be done?

To do this you'll either need to put a hard copy of your motion signed by you as the proposer and a second member as the seconder in Secretary's pigeon hole. Alternatively, both you and the seconder can submit a motion by emailing the secretary at [secretary@rcsa.co.uk](mailto:secretary@rcsa.co.uk) the motion from your [CRSid@cam.ac.uk](mailto:CRSid@cam.ac.uk) addresses. Normally this needs to be done by midnight two days before the open meeting. However, if your motion asks for more than £150, it needs to be submitted at least five days before the meeting along with a report gives details about what the money will be used for and where you are requesting it from.

Formal policy motions set the consensus on which the RCSA are obliged to campaign, if you want the RCSA to tackle a particular issue then submitting a policy proposal is one of the best ways to ensure that we do so. Trawling through the RCSA archives we have previously campaigned on huge range of issues such as facilitating black students from South Africa during the apartheid to come to Cambridge and that members of the RCSA committee should have a function knowledge of how the RCSA works. In recent years the RCSA hasn't been particularly effective at campaigning but this comes from the fact we, relative to other JCRs, have quite a good relationship with college. However, we must continue to engage to ensure that we do not become complacent.

If you are thinking about asking for money it is best to do this through requesting a dedicated society budget at the annual budget meeting (held near the start of november). However, if this isn't possible there are two sources of funding open to students to fund RCSA activities. Firstly, we have the open meeting budget, every year we allocate hundreds of pounds from our budget to pay for open of purchases such as new crochet mallets or resources for newly founded societies, alternatively if you're thinking about a much longer term investment, something that will be of 'lasting benefit to the RCSA and its members', you can request funding out of the RCSA reserves. Drawing money from the reserves is a lengthier process and so it's best wherever possible to request money from the open meeting budget. The reserves currently stand at just over £11,000.

## Setting up a Society

At Robinson students are free to set up societies for the promotion of social, athletic or other collegiate purposes. These can be independent but to get funding most if not all societies within college are subsidiary to the RCSA.

The process of setting up a society under the umbrella of the RCSA is fourfold:

1. Crucially you should check with the Sports and Societies Officer that a comparable society doesn't already exist! If the similar society exists but is inactive you can simply revive it avoiding the formalities of founding a new society and skip straight to securing some budget.
2. For a new club or society to be founded and recognised by the RCSA a motion must be passed at an RCSA open meeting. The motion should contain the principal aims of the society and state that its members will 'agree to be bound by the constitution of the RCSA'. A written proposal should be submitted alongside the motion containing the societies own constitution (a preferably brief document detailing its aims and how the society will be run) and all other relevant information. This must be done at least 5 days before relevant the open meeting. A two thirds majority is need to pass a motion to found a society.
3. The establishment of a new club or society doesn't bind the RCSA to provide finance to the club or society being created. After being founded the earliest possible point at which a society can get RCSA funding is the next Open Meeting. Claiming from the Open meeting should be for unexpected/additional expenditure to tithe societies over until the next annual budget meeting. At these meetings claims for long term investments of lasting benefit should be made from the RCSA reserves\* or for short term expenditure money should be sought out of the open meeting budget. The RCSA will most likely be able to fund any reasonable requests for equipment or other fees and perhaps if it's been a slow year some more unusual requests might also be able to be accommodated out of the remains of the open meeting budget. However, funding is only given to societies that are open, both in principle and in practise, to all members of the RCSA so you must make sure to advertise!
4. Once established any RCSA society can seek a dedicated budget in the annual budget meeting. This is typically the second open meeting of Michaelmas term around the start of November. Societies must ask for money to be allocated towards specific spending categories. If a society later wishes to transfer money between categories, this can be done by submitting a motion at an open meeting. Money can be claimed out of the budgets by re-imburement on presenting the RCSA Treasurer with valid invoices or receipts.

\*If you wish to make a proposal for a large piece of equipment raising it with the RCSA treasurer, Sports and Societies Officer or President beforehand is highly advised as they'll be able to point you to various people in college whose permission/consultation might be needed to make the process as easy as possible.

## Room Full of Boxes

The Trunk room is a secure space with college for all students both undergraduates and graduate students to store suitcases or larger items (except for bikes) that would be inconvenient to take home over the vacation periods.

Each Room in the main building of college has an overhead locker above the wardrobe, this is the best place to keep smaller items over the break and they can be fastened with a small padlock. If you need additional storage that is the purpose of the trunk room.

The trunk room is in the staff car park which can be found by going down the steps opposite the porters' lodge and going through the door to your left. The trunk room's organisational system is administered by the college porters and you'll need to draw the key to access it. The limits on storage are nominally two suitcases for international students and one for home students. Discretion is often given to home students from further afield to allow them to store two suitcases if needed. All items stored in the trunk room must be clearly marked with a sticker available from the porter's lodge. The name of the owner, CRSid, year group and the date of storage should be filled in on the stickers.

The RCSA reserves the right to discard any item that is not clearly labelled or for whom the owner has left the college (i.e. graduated). Where possible we will try donate discarded items to the housekeeping charitable sale that happens at the beginning of Michaelmas term each year.

## Getting things Fixed

One of the nice things about studying in Cambridge is that the college porters are normally there to help you, they can direct you to the best places to go for certain issues but even with the help of the colleges 24/7 porters can offer the world is changing fast and technology is reaching into every aspect of our lives, the technological revolution has come to the Robinson maintenance department.

If you have any issues with your room you can report them online using this [maintenance form](#). Alternatively, you can visit them in their office and ask nicely if you have any problems.

For IT issues the college has an IT department that are easily contacted by their [helpdesk email](#). They also have a [website](#).

But for anything else I'd advise going to the porters as your first port of call.

## **Election Fever**

Every year the RCSA elects a new committee, this is done in two stages with the President and Chair being elected a week before the rest of the committee. The Elections are aimed to take place in the middle of Michaelmas term allowing for freshers to run for positions having settled in at college.

The RCSA Committee is large and each member has a specific role, this allows for students to easily manage their commitments within the RCSA without it having any significant detrimental effects on their ability to pursue other extra-curricular activities, watch significant amounts of Netflix or keep on top of their work.

There are 20 positions on the RCSA that you can run for and they are loosely grouped into Senior Officers, Executive Officers and Non-Executive Officers.

The Senior Officers are: The Chair, The President, The Vice-President and The Treasurer.

The Executive Officers are: The Secretary, The Academic Affairs Officer, The Welfare Officer, The Catering and Amenities Officer, The Sports and Societies Officer.

The Non-Executive Officers are: The Access Officer, The Ents Officer(s), The Green Officer, The Computer Officer, The Women's Officer, The Men's Officer, The Ethnic Minorities Officer, The Overseas Students' Officer, The LGBT+ Officer, The Mental Health and Disabled Students' Officer and The Newsletter Editor.

When an election is announced in order to run you simply need to submit a valid nomination to the junior returning officer, usually the RCSA chair. This nomination should have a recognisable photograph of you, state that you 'agree to be bound by the constitution and policy of the RCSA' and bare your signature as well as the signatures of two further members as a proposer and a seconder.

If you want to run for a position it's a great idea to get in contact with the previous officer just to check what the role entails, often they'll be able to offer insight into the role about what you'll have to do and what they've been working on during their time on the committee.

If you do run for a position you will have to attend hustings where you'll get three minutes to talk about your ideas before other members are allowed to ask questions.

Voting is carried out online using the CUSU voting platform and the results are available immediately on the closing of the polls.

The RCSA committee has an important role to play in college pushing student views and pushing for changes that improve the day to day lives of students at Robinson.

## **RCSA Welfare**

The RCSA provides a dedicated welfare team made up of seven officers and we are always looking for new ways that we can provide support to ensure that your time at Cambridge is as smooth as possible. The Welfare sub-committee is headed by the welfare officer and is filled out by the Women's, Men's, BME, LGBT+, Overseas and Mental Health and Disabled Students' officers.

Whilst the team are not professional councillors they are always willing to listen and offer advice, often they will set aside a couple of hours a week for drop ins where you can go have a chat. It is important to appreciate that the RCSA welfare team is just a small part of the wider pastoral support systems available in Cambridge and so the welfare team undergo training to ensure that they can signpost students to the best sources of help for their issues.

The welfare team organises events throughout the year starting straight away with each officer holding a social in fresher's week. The events typically vary but in the past we've had art sessions, walks and guide dog puppies.

## **The Weights and Games Rooms**

The RCSA is responsible for keeping good care of the Games Room, Weights Room and Outdoor Calisthenics equipment. To use the weights room and calisthenics equipment you will need to be inducted on how to do so safely, you can sign up for induction sessions with the sports and societies officer by emailing them at [sports@rcsa.co.uk](mailto:sports@rcsa.co.uk). After being inducted you will be issued with a card that will allow you to draw the keys.

The games room is a multifunctional room it has rowing and running machines as well as a table tennis table. You don't need to be inducted to use the games room but please be sensible about how you use the equipment. If anything is broken or needs to be replaced tell the sports and societies officer as soon as possible.