



RCSA Open Meeting Minutes

2pm, 20th November 2016, JCR



Agenda

1. Apologies for absence or lateness

Mihai Truta, Will Birch, Tim Mason

2. Announcement of the presence and purpose of guests.

Roberta Huldish, The CUSU Education Officer is coming to discuss the motion regarding whether we should sign the CUSU letter opposing the TEF.

3. Approval of the presence and speaking rights of guests

Approved

4. Approval of the order of the agenda

Approved

5. Reading by the secretary on request by any member, amendment if necessary and approval of the minutes of any previous Open Meeting, not yet accepted by an Open Meeting.

N/A

6. Matters arising from the minutes

N/A

7. Reports from the committee

N/A

8. Questions to the Committee

N/A

9. Extraordinary Motions

a) Co-option of the ethnic minorities officer into the committee.

RCSA Notes:

1. The co-option of the ethnic minorities officer into the RCSA has been left off the agenda

RCSA Believes:

1. That it is important to co-opt the ethnic minorities officer into the RCSA RCSA

Resolves:

1. To co-opt the ethnic minorities officer into the RCSA.

VOTE

For: 25

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

This extraordinary motion passes.

10. Ordinary Motions

a) Constitutional Reform

RCSA Notes:

1. It has been nearly five years since the last constitutional reform. The last constitutional amendment was in 2012.
2. The Constitution must be submitted for review by College Council every five years or upon amendment.

RCSA Believes:

1. That constitutional reform may be of benefit to future RCSA members and officers.
2. That every RCSA member ought to be given fair opportunity to contribute their thoughts and opinions to any changes before they are put to a referendum.

RCSA Resolves:

1. To convene a Constitution Sub-Committee that shall:
 - i. have the RCSA Chair as its chairperson;
 - ii. exist until (whichever is sooner):
 - a. the Sub-Committee is satisfied that the proposals are ready to be considered by the Executive, or
 - b. the last Ordinary Open Meeting of lent term;
 - iii. review, discuss and, if necessary, amend sections of the constitution; iv. meet at least twice during the period in which it exists, at a time and place decided by the chairperson.
 - v. be open and advertised to all Members.

2. To mandate the RCSA President to bring the proposals of the sub-committee for consideration at an Open Meeting once they are complete and before they are officially considered by the Executive.
3. To mandate the Executive to consider the finished proposals from the Constitution Sub-Committee once they have been passed by an Open Meeting and decide whether or not to put these to a referendum.

Proposed by : RCSA Executive

FOR:

Rhys Goodall (RG): There are some things in the constitution that need to be changed. I think it would be beneficial to have a sub-committee so that I don't have too much influence over the process.

AGAINST:

N/A

QUESTIONS:

Dexter Chua (DC): why are we doing this in lent term ?

RG: So that the process of reviewing it doesn't run over into the easter term.

Mark Driver (MD): The last time there was a constitution review it was rejected by college council. Because the review hadn't finished by the end of lent term it had to redrafted and reconsidered over the summer and put to a referendum at the beginning of the michaelmas term. So its good to get it done in lent term so that if it is rejected the issues can be addressed in easter term.

Laura Prince (LPr): With regards to the the statement of discrimination on the RCSA website, we want to make a statement that any student should be able to use the bathroom that they are comfortable with. Is that something that would need to be addressed as part of the constitutional reform?

MD: No, you can just take it to the open meeting.

LP: Ok, I will put forward a motion at the next open meeting.

VOTE

For: 25 Against:

0 Abstentions:

This motion passes.

b) Constitutional Alternatives

RCSA Notes:

1. The constitution although thorough isn't the most digestible source of information about what the RCSA offers.
2. Students (particularly freshers) are often unaware of the procedure to set up a society and claim budget or get reimbursed.

RCSA Believes:

1. That providing abridged guides about societies and funding would be of benefit to the student body.

RCSA Resolves:

1. To mandate the RCSA to produce such abridged guides and make them easily available on the RCSA website.

Proposed by: RCSA Executive

FOR:

RG: I said i would do this on my manifesto and I think its worth doing. I think the motion should be passed so that I'm obliged to do it.

AGAINST:

N/A

QUESTIONS:

N/A

VOTE

For: 25

Against: 0 Abstentions:

0

This motion passes.

c) CUSU Affiliation

RCSA Notes:

1. According to the constitution, a list of organisation that the RCSA is affiliated with should be submitted yearly for approval.
2. The RCSA is currently affiliated to CUSU, for the cost of £2840 including NUS subscription fees. This money is allocated within the RCSA budget for solely this use and as such payment of the subscription does not take funding away from anything else in the RCSA budget.
3. That CUSU's support in terms of welfare, access, representation at university level and running of campaigns would be unsustainable at a college level.

RCSA Believes:

1. That its affiliation to CUSU is of major benefit to the college RCSA

Resolves:

1. To stay affiliated to CUSU

Proposed by : RCSA Executive

FOR:

Lizzie Palmer (LPa): After a new committee is elected we have to make sure that we all want to remain affiliated to CUSU. This was proposed by the Executive-Committee and we voted to remain affiliated because of the benefits it provides, but does anyone want to speak against it?

AGAINST:

N/A

QUESTIONS:

N/A

VOTE

For: 25

Against: 0 Abstentions:

0

This motion passes.

d) Renewable Policies

RCSA Notes:

1. That all policies on the Renewable Policy List lapse after 3 years.
2. That a number of these policies are due to lapse during the forthcoming year.
3. The constitutional requirement for such policies to be proposed for renewal at the first Open Meeting following the election of a new RCSA committee.

RCSA Believes:

1. That there are a number of such policies which we would not want to lapse.
2. That these policies continue to support the general aims and objects of the RCSA as set out by the constitution.

RCSA Resolves:

1. To renew the policy contained in the list in the addendum.
2. To expressly revoke any policy passed before 1st January 12 and not contained within the renewable policy list.

Proposed: RCSA Executive

FOR:

RG: These are things the RCSA commits themselves to do. I went back three years and found out the things we committed ourselves to do. They seemed reasonable, and so I took it to the meeting that we propose to renew them. These policies include making sure the RCSA always campaigns to have hobs in kitchens, that we try and maintain our fair-trade status within the college, we buy matriculation photos and we ensure the bar has extended opening hours before bops.

AGAINST:

N/A

QUESTIONS:

Greg Barbour (GB): is one of those about 4th year rent

RG: Yes

GB: Because our rent went up this year.

DC: The policy is just that the RCSA will oppose it not that it won't happen.

RG: I am going to have a meeting with the bursar in the next week so i'll discuss it then.

GB: That would be helpful thank you.

VOTE

For: 25

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

This motion passes

E) Student Switch Off Campaign

RCSA Notes:

1. The importance of promoting energy saving measures amongst the student body
2. The NUS run a Student Switch Off campaign, currently including 15 other colleges, that has been shown to be successful in saving energy amongst students.
3. Little is currently done to incentivise students to take such energy saving measures.

RCSA Believes:

1. Promoting energy saving is important.

RCSA Resolves:

1. That £290 (plus VAT) should be made available from the reserves to enrol the college in the Student Switch Off campaign for this year.

Proposed: Monty Matson

Seconded: Catriona Somerville

FOR:

Monty Matson (MM): I'm asking for £290 from the reserves to enrol the college in the NUS student switch off campaign which is basically a campaign to incentivise students to take energy savings measures such as turning lights off and saving water. The idea is that students show evidence of themselves doing such things and get rewarded with formal tickets, Ben and Jerry's ice cream and things like that. There is also there is an intercollegiate league table and whoever wins will win a prize. The £290 is to cover the administrative costs of the campaign and also for promotional materials.

AGAINST:

N/A

QUESTIONS:

Patrick Roddy (PR): would it not be better for the environment to turn lights off rather than print off lots of paper to tell people to turn lights off.

MM: I don't think it will be a paper intensive thing. I don't plan to print anything off to communicate with students through posters.

PR: Where does the £290 go?

MM: administration of the campaign, funding for the prizes and materials for the campaign.

MD: Is this just for one year ?

MM: Yes

MD: Ok, Maybe it would be better if it came out of the open meeting budget because the reserve budget should be for the lasting benefit of the college. MM: I was told there was a limit for the open meeting budget.

MD: Thats the issue, which is why it might have been better to have had it in the budget meeting.

LP: Could we not just take £150 from the open meeting budget and then the rest from the reserves.

RG: It is easier if we just take it from one source. So I would say that it should just be taken from the reserves, with the view that helping the environment will be for the lasting benefit of humanity.

MD: Yeah fair enough.

VOTE

For: 25

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

This motion passes

F) Robinson College Cross Country and Athletics Budget

RCSA Notes:

1. People in college want there to be a budget for the 'Robinson College Cross Country & Athletics' (RCCCA) of £50
2. £50 would go towards college league so that members of Robinson can compete in CUH&H league fixtures.
3. Previously had a budget until a typo removed it at the most recent budget meeting.

RCSA Believes:

1. It would be good to represent Robinson at Running and Athletics Events RCSA

Resolves:

1. To give funds to the RCCCA

Proposed: Patrick Roddy

Seconded: Cameron Holloway

FOR:

PR: Basically we had a budget, I tried to reduce the budget but accidentally removed it completely. So basically I would like to reinstate the part of the budget I meant to keep but accidentally got rid of. Lizzie Palmer: So that is £50

PR: We used to have £150 because we needed £100 for kit. Now that we have the kit we only need £50.

AGAINST:

MD: Just a friendly amendment. Just to say that you want \$50 from the open meeting budget. You've put it in notes that you need £50 but you then need to say in resolve that you need £50 for league fees to be allocated for cross country and athletics. PR: Ok

VOTE

For: 25

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

This motion is amended

QUESTIONS:

N/A

VOTE

For: 23

Against: 1

Abstentions: 1

This amended motion passes.

G) Underwriting of Robinson College 2017 May Ball

RCSA Notes:

1. We are on our way to delivering a May Ball on June 16th 2017.
2. There is a very small chance that the Ball could collapse financially or otherwise.
3. Should this happen it is preferable that the RCSA absorbs the fiscal impact given the capability their budget affords them.
4. College Council will not permit the May Ball to occur if the RCSA does not adopt this position.
5. The RCSA are not being asked for money, simply to underwrite the 2017 May Ball as outlined in Addendum A – May Ball Contract between the RCSA and the May Ball Committee.

RCSA Believes:

1. The majority of the College unquestionably wants the May Ball to take place.
2. It would be rather unfair for an individual member of the May Ball Committee to be personally liable for any losses incurred by the May Ball.
3. The proposed agreement is adequate and acceptable for both parties.

RCSA Resolves:

1. To authorise the RCSA President to enter into the agreement attached as Addendum A on behalf of the RCSA.

Proposed: Tasha Robinson

Seconded: Sam Lewis

FOR:

Tasha Robinson (TR): Basically, we need the ball to be underwritten so that just in case something goes wrong with our budget, rather than us all being personally liable for the money the RCSA will be liable. It happens every year, we have reserves of our own that are about £20,000 so it is very unlikely that we would ever need to use the RCSA money. It is more just for security - it is basically the college's way of underwriting us.

MD: This is the same motion they submit every year. They have their own insurance which covers pretty much everything anyway. This is just a formality.

RG: I had a talk with Bill about this and we both think that the college should underwrite the ball in future because this stands from a time when we had a lot more money in our reserves than we do currently.

TR: We have the same amount as you in reserves.

RG: You have more than us.

TR: Ok, but it is basically the college's way of underwriting it - so if we were to use your reserves, college would just reimburse you.

RG: Yeah I get that, but I think I will talk to them about changing it for next year.

MD: But for this year I think its fine.

AGAINST:

N/A

QUESTIONS:

N/A

VOTE

For: 25

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

This motion passes

H) Robinson College Table Tennis Club Budget

RCSA Notes:

1. That it will benefit students of the College to revive the operations of the Robinson College Table Tennis Club.
2. That the Robinson College Table Tennis Club wishes to enter a team in the intercollege league and hold conduct a ladder for members of the College
3. That the Robinson College Table Tennis Club intends to promote its activities more generally to encourage College members to play table tennis.
4. That the current equipment available for table tennis in the Porters' Lodge is in a state of disrepair.
5. That the budget meeting has already passed.

RCSA Believes:

1. That the Robinson College Table Tennis Club should be provided with an initial allocation of funds sufficient to enable the club to carry out functions for the benefit of club members and for the benefit of Robinson students more generally.

RCSA Resolves:

1. To provide funding from the open meeting budget of up to £138 to the Robinson College Table Tennis Club for the following purposes:
 - a) £8 for entry of a team into the inter-college table tennis fixture.
 - b) £130 for the purchase of table tennis rackets, balls and glue and related equipment
2. That equipment purchased should be generally made available for use by members of the College from the Porters' Lodge when not being used by members for training or competition.

Proposed: Tim Mason

Seconded: Andriy Levitsky

FOR:

Edward Butler-Caddle (EBC) : Tim basically wants to set up a table tennis club, enter a college team into an intercollegiate league and create a small ladder league within college. He wants £138, £8 for fixture fees and £130 for rackets and other equipment.

AGAINST:

RG: Just a friendly amendment - I would suggest we take this from the reserves.

MD: I would say take the league fees from the open meeting and £130 from reserves. RG: Yes I would agree.

VOTE

For: 25

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

This motion is amended

QUESTIONS:

LPa: Is this already a society

EBC: its already in the constitution

MD: what often happens is that the people who run the society graduate and then a few years later someone else arrives and wants to start it up again and so we get this situation where they ask for funds.

EBC: it doesn't need to be added to the constitution because its already there, but they need funding because there was no one running it when we had the budget meeting.

VOTE

For: 25

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

This motion passes

D) Signing CUSU Letter against TEF

RCSA Notes:

1. That Cambridge is deciding whether or not to join the TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) which was proposed in the Government's green paper in 2015
2. A Letter against signing the TEF has been proposed by Roberta (CUSU Education) RCSA Believes:

1. The RCSA believes that the TEF will be a devastating blow to access and outreach from Cambridge University
2. The TEF will allow for fees to increase and also vary between certain subjects.

3. The RCSA believe that we should continue to support disadvantaged students applying to Cambridge from lower income backgrounds and poor achieving schools. Joining the TEF will go against those values which the college admissions department and committee strongly support.

RCSA Resolves:

1. We should vote to sign the letter from CUSU education (Roberta) supporting CUSU in abstaining from joining the TEF.

Proposed: Emily Fishman Seconded:

Rhys Goodall

FOR:

EF: So I believe that Robinson College should sign the letter against the Teaching Excellence Framework, I have Roberta here from CUSU education to talk more about it.

Roberta Huldish (RH): The teaching excellence framework is part of a higher education bill which is going through parliament at the moment and has its final reading in the House of Commons on Monday. The bill proposes a drastic re-structuring of the way higher education is organised, for example by removing the caps on tuition fees. At the moment there is a tuition fee cap of £9000 which was introduced in 2010 but this bill, through the TEF, proposes to allow fees to rise year on year so that in 10 years time students could be paying £12000 per year for an undergraduate degree. All of this is based on the Teaching Excellence Framework which is supposed to tie tuition fees to teaching quality in universities. However when you look at it in detail it is quite concerning because the metrics it uses aren't related to any coherent idea of what teaching excellence actually means. One of its main metrics is graduate employment, which is quite weird because what kind of employment you get can depend on other factors like where you live or on your race, gender and social background. Cambridge is in the process of deciding whether or not to take part in the TEF which would mean fees could keep rising here and we're afraid that higher fees will put off people from low income backgrounds from applying here, especially if tuition fees at other universities don't rise which could happen. Therefore we've produced a letter to be sent to the top decision makers within the university to encourage them not to participate. We have already had lots of students and academic staff sign it, and so we're now asking JCR's to sign it in order to send the university a clear message that this is something than students have discussed and perhaps decided they don't want to be a part of. If you have any questions please ask.

AGAINST:

MD: I have procedural amendments. With the “RCSA resolves”, it should be changed to “mandates the RCSA to sign the letter” and then there should be a second resolve which says “to encourage RCSA members to sign the letter”. RH: That makes sense.

VOTE

For: 25

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

This motion is amended.

QUESTIONS:

DC: If the university doesn't sign up to the TEF, what will happen to the tuition fee cap? will it just stay at £9,000 per year?

RH: The idea is that if Cambridge doesn't take part then Cambridge won't be able to raise tuition fees further for the foreseeable future or until we decide we do want to take part. What we're hoping is that if Cambridge, Oxford and other Russell Group Universities decide not to take part then the government may rethink the entire bill.

RG: I spoke to Bill about this, he thinks the university is likely to follow the TEF for the first year. The framework is broken down into a two stage introduction it for the first year. This would allow fees to be raised to £9250 without regards to any metrics. He thinks the university is likely to take that route and then reject the second phase will take that route and reject

RH: Cambridge already have accepted it for the first year, fees for students starting in 2017 will be £9250 per year - it is already on the website. So the question is now whether they can continue raising fees beyond that.

RG: Which is something I think we should oppose.

EBC: who is the letter being given to ?

RH: So the people who are actually going to make this decision are the 2 most senior committees, which are the general board of education and the university council. Firstly, the general board will vote on it on the 30th of November and then The University Council will decide on it two weeks after. So it will be decided before the end of this term. So we're basically giving the letter to all the members of those committees.

EF: How many JCR's so far have signed it.

RH: Kings and Pembroke have signed it. I am going to Fitzwilliam later today who will vote on it later today and I'm working on a few more.

EF: So I personally think it will be really beneficial for Robinson to sign it. I think the TEF will be devastating for access in the future and I think if we want to support access as a college then signing this would be very beneficial.

George Barton (GBa): Presumably Tuition Fee Loans are going up as well ?

RH: I think that because tuition fee loans are only rising by £250 this year it won't have a drastic effect and they only go up for new students. I think the main concern is that it

removes the fee cap and puts the power to raise fees into the hands of the Department for Education rather than it needing a new vote in parliament everytime the fees rise, which I believe is quite dangerous. Also although loans will increase so will debt.

EF: It might also differ between subjects.

RH: That is not going to happen in the next few years but the bill gives the Department of Education the power to do that, to raise fees differentially between subjects, because it is quite vaguely written it seems clear that they are giving themselves power to do these things without consulting parliament.

Amelie Haerberlin (AH): Do we know how will it impact overseas students ?

RH: We honestly don't know because the government have kept very quiet about it and obviously the situation is quite uncertain anyway because of Brexit.

MD: The university I think gave assurances for the next two years,

RH: Yes, but the TEF doesn't include any specific information about international fees and whether they will go up or not. EF: The actual report is very vague

RH: It's really badly written

MD: It's as if they don't know what they're talking about.

PC: How does the ranking system work?

RH: So the TEF is like a quality assurance process that universities have to go through.

Universities will have to give details of what they do to correspond to certain metrics and then it uses quantitative measures, for example the national students survey and graduate employment statistics. I could go into more detail, but for all of these metrics it is really quite unclear how they correspond to teaching quality. After they've gone through that process there is a panel which gives the universities a rating of either Bronze, Silver or Gold.

Universities can then raise fees to different extents based on their rating.

LP: So it might be that Cambridge would be rated Gold and will therefore have the ability to raise it more.

RH: Almost definitely yes. Also there are other Russell Group universities who are thinking of not taking part and so if Cambridge did we could be in a situation where Cambridge has higher fees than other Russell Groups which would be very dangerous for access.

VOTE

For: 25

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

This amended motion passes

J) Formation of Robinson Backgammon Society RCSA

Notes:

1. There is interest in forming a college Backgammon Society.
2. The joyous game of Backgammon is becoming increasingly popular amongst college members.

3. The romance of the beautiful board game requires proper backgammon boards to play on.

RCSA Believes:

1. Forming a Backgammon Society will bring a cross-section of members of the college together to enjoy one of the world's oldest, and surely the most dynamic and thrilling, board game in a setting well apart from other college activities.
2. The RCSA should officially recognise the Robinson College Backgammon Society (RoBS).
3. Two-dimensional representations of a backgammon board are a perennial disappointment, putting a checker on the bar is physically displeasing if there isn't a physical bar to put them on, and so this: <http://tinyurl.com/j6oadh2> is a good value, appropriately sized, three-dimensional board to purchase. It also looks durable enough to last many years of fast play, or many more years of slightly slower play.

RCSA Resolves:

1. To create a "Robinson College Backgammon Society (RoBS)".
2. The society will be bound by the constitution of the RCSA.
3. To amend appendix 1 of the RCSA constitution to include "Robinson College Backgammon Society (RoBS)".
4. To approve the "Robinson College Backgammon Society (ROBS)" Constitution (appended).
5. To allocate £84.95 from the Open Meeting Budget to purchase 5 of the above described backgammon boards.

Proposed: Chris Barton

Seconded: George Barton

FOR:

GBa: Having canvassed the student body, there seems to be quite high demand for a backgammon society so it seems like a decent thing to do.

AGAINST:

GB: Reading through the constitution I notice that in article 2 one of the aims states that inclusivity is the key word, but then if I could draw your attention to paragraph 2 of article 3 paragraph 3 it states "there shall never be more than 0 members who are named Greg". I have done extensive research and discovered that there are two members of this college named Greg. One is the Boat Club president Greg Tainter and the other is me.

GB: We were aware of that when we wrote the constitution but to amend it would be a deal breaker, sorry Greg.

RG: Unfriendly Amendment - it should be amended so that there can't be more than 2 Gregs.

VOTE

For: 3

Against: 22

Abstentions: 0

This motion is not amended.

RG: There is a qualifying condition that if Greg wanted to join we can change the name and we can do that within the committee.

QUESTIONS:

MD: A Friendly Amendment, I think we should remove resolves 5, because if it is a new society they have to wait till the next open meeting before they can ask for any money. You should re-submit the resolves for buying boards at the next open meeting. GB: Ok, can we buy them now and then get money at the next open meeting.

RG: Yes

MD: Yes, at the next open meeting.

EBC: Generally it is the practice that you get the money before you buy things because people might not back you up in the next meeting.

VOTE

For: 25

Against: 0

Abstentions: 0

This motion is amended

VOTE

For: 24

Against: 1

Abstentions: 0

This amended motion passes