



RCASU

Trustee Board

28/02/24

Royal College of Art Students' Union
Kensington Gore
London, SW7 2EU
Registered charity: 1204514

Agenda:

Attendees:

Jacqui Moore, <i>Chair</i>	x	Thomas Cury, <i>Student Trustee</i>	x
Jane Crumpton-Taylor, <i>Vice-Chair</i>	x	Ryan Lea, <i>Secretary & Director</i>	x
Frank Brown, <i>External Trustee</i>	Apologies	Megan Reddy, <i>Advice Officer</i>	x
Ed Pearson, <i>External Trustee</i>	Apologies	Alasdair McLaughlin, <i>ArtBar Manager</i>	x
Roisin Sullivan, <i>Student Trustee</i>	Partial attendance	John Schless, <i>College Observer</i>	x
Kimberley Burrows, <i>Student Trustee</i>	Apologies	Ruby Bailey, <i>Minutetaker</i>	x
Myles Igwebuike, <i>Student Trustee TBC</i>	Partial attendance	Gordon Mattocks, <i>External Trustee TBC</i>	x

1. **Welcome & Apologies**

Kimberley Burrows, Frank Brown, and Ed Pearson are absent with apologies.

2. **Appointment of lay trustee and student trustee**

The Board are happy to record their support for the appointment of Gordon Mattocks as the new finance trustee, who will be welcomed formally from the 1st of March. Myles Igwebuike is now an official student trustee.

3. **Conflicts of Interest**

No conflicts of interest

4. **Previous Board Meeting**

3.1 Minutes/Actions from Previous Board of Trustees Meeting

It was noted that the Board should be made aware of material changes of the risk and issues log, but this is the responsibility of the finance committee to raise through their minutes and/or formal report to the board

Approved	Y/N
Minutes of Previous Board Meeting	Y

Action	Responsibility	Status
Include defamation training for DODO editors and research defamation insurance	RL	Update: insurance cover runs on a case-by-case basis. The training continues to be updated.
Signing of the Trustees' Report, the Balance Sheet and the letter of representations.	JCT	Complete.
Plan for designated reserve	RL	Ongoing
Transfer items from the risk and issue log across to the risk register	FB and RL	Complete.
Contact JS about Student Inclusion Plans	RS	Ongoing with Student Experience Team

5. **Reports**

5.1 Chairs Report (5 minutes)

The report for this board emphasized changes to trustees and SU committee membership changes in recognition of JCT formally stepping down at the end of the month. As approved at the start of the meeting, GM will be replacing her as an external trustee with finance expertise. With JCT's previous membership of sub-committees, it was confirmed as part of succession planning that FB will be stepping up as the Chair of the finance and risk committee with Gordon joining as a committee member. Ed Pearson will join the people and remuneration committee.

The role of Vice-Chair is also now open, Board members are encouraged to contact JM or RL if you are interested in understanding more about the vice-chair role and/or registering your interest in the position.

Board input was also encouraged regarding potential opportunities to invest in Board development to enhance strategy delivery and/or relevant training such as EDI for board members.

RS joined the meeting.

5.2 Sabbatical Officer's Report (10 minutes)

- TC has been focusing on working with the ILTS (IT, Library and Technical Services) department to improve workshop access for students. This has been in response to feedback from students across the College at School assemblies.
- English language barriers and proficiency levels have also been raised as a concern. Discussions with the EAP (English for Academic Purposes) team and the College have led to the organization of a workshop to collect feedback. These views will be compiled and presented to the LTSEC (Learning, Teaching and Student Experience) committee on March 18th. RS noted that English language barriers are more noticeable in AcrossRCA*.
- On College opening hours, we are waiting for the final proposal on possible opening hours reduction for next academic year. JM requested a timescale for this statement. JS noted that the prospect of reduced hours is a result of the occupancy statistics dropping over the past year, and

suggested that the College will make a call for suggestions from students before altering the opening hours. No proposals have been sent out. JM noted the importance of making students aware of the patterns in opening hours so they have the opportunity to take advantage of quieter times. They have been shared with student reps, who can share with their cohorts.

- There have been 35 applications for non-academic shows in the second term.
- The materials exchange is an ongoing process.
- Social events are being steadily increased in White City and Battersea. TC hosted a board games night in White City recently, and a pop-up bar in Battersea will be hosted next week (Friday the 8th March).

*For board members' clarity, AcrossRCA is a compulsory unit which requires students to work in a team composed of different programmes. They must complete an assessed task based on a contemporary theme. The four themes given are caring society, climate crisis, being digital, and justice, equality and misinformation. This module is worth 30 credits out of an 180 credit system and has been extended to a two-term assessment period.

5.3 Director's Report (10 minutes)

- Savings account (highlighted from the January Finance and Risk committee). We will keep the HSBC Business Money Manager savings account, and create a new CAF Charity Deposit Scheme under flagstone. Move £150,000 to the CAF: £53,000 from savings account and 97,000 from current account.
- Update on RAAC: we are expecting a terrace handover on the 18th of March, and all inspections will take place at the same time. It is uncertain yet if the Terrace will return to full capacity.
- Merchandise license agreed with College. The College branding can now be used on our merchandise to sell at the ArtBar, pop-ups, convocations and the college shop.
- Student members meeting and student assembly. We need an external trustee for the 20th March (student members' meeting), where there will be discussions of last year's finance. JM is una aims or as out of the country. RL will contact FB and EP. If FB and EP cannot attend, it is suggested that we run the members' meeting in the third term (as opposed to the second), and align it with the next students' union assembly during the third term.
- Elections - As of Monday the 4th March, the nominations are closed and we have eight candidates overall (four for President and four for Vice-President).
- Cost of Living Fund. student experience to increase funds by £40,000 (proposed), totalling £100,000 for the funds for this year. Fund will be reviewed for next year, with the possibility of increasing voucher frequency and/or introducing a food bank on campus.

6. Current Affairs

6.1 Staff Spotlight (10 minutes)

Alasdair McLaughlin, ArtBar Manager:

- Current focus is on expanding bar attendance through regular events such as CocktailMania and Karaoke. Monday's footfall has since increased due to the cocktail deals, and karaoke attendance increases mid-term. The quiz has been reduced to monthly, and will take place on Wednesday to combine the karaoke footfall.
- The bar hosts flagship events, such as Lunar New Year, Burns Night and Saint David's Day.
- Student staff development is another focus. The bar has a new supervisor, and Alasdair runs regular cocktail refresher sessions.
- The bar is used for student organized events, especially society led-events. The bar collaborates on posters and offers up the karaoke and DJ equipment, and AM is in communication with

student DJs and musicians wanting to perform. The ArtLounge has also had a revamp in the form of new lighting, which encourages people to stay longer.

- Pop-up bars for student events and non-academic shows have proven very successful for bar turnaround. There will be a pop-up bar at the student event in Battersea on Friday the 8th. From feedback, social nights at Battersea will likely be very popular in future.
- Techs on Decks, where the ILTS staff come in and DJ, has also been very successful and will continue.
- The closure of the Terrace has impacted the bar sales, but we are looking forward to its reopening. An advertising push will be needed when this date is confirmed.

It was also confirmed that the pop-up bars have been experimenting with more varied drinks sales, such as cans of mixed drinks. RL added that we now have a proper pop-up till system as well, which makes sales easier. The SU is looking into pop-up bar units, especially at Battersea, and after discussions with Estates we are drafting a hot-food proposal for the bar, so an update will follow on this. Equipment must be self-ventilating, so items like a MerryChef are the most plausible, and we will explore options with the Estates department.

It has been drafted into the Estates '27 strategy that the SU will be provided a space in Battersea.

Megan Reddy, Advice Officer:

- Bulk of the role has been providing individual advice, with the occasional cases of group advice, on issues such as disability access, employment, and bureaucratic processes such as academic complaints and appeals.
- Met with 32 students in the last three months, many of which have been concerning long-term issues. Seven of these cases have involved accessibility, disability, and inclusion. Nine cases have involved advising international students on employment and finance, as well as how they navigate communications with programme staff in a professional setting.
- The advice service offers in-person meetings in the Stevens building, as well as zoom or phone-call conversations. There is a booking system available on the website, and also referrals to the College services (report and support).
- Complex complaint processes mean that MR attends appeal/complaints meetings as the students' advocate, and offers help going through policy and processes. There have been four official complaint procedures from beginning to end (writing complaint, collating evidence, following up with staff). There is also a theme on Technical Services and workshop access, and these complaints have allowed students to meet face to face with staff and receive clear answers.
- There has also been a focus on clarifying website pages to ensure College policy is more navigable for students.
- Moving forward, MR will be working on a physical resource collating key support information around welfare, finances, academic and student life. It will also include College services, Union services, general info such as GP registration, and culturally specific external resources for Welcome Week.
- Also working on changing the inclusion plans, such as accessing disabled student allowance.
- Collecting data to establish a reporting schedule
- Making sure guidance is available in different languages
- Running sessions like drop-ins and workshops

The board expressed their thanks for the presentations.

6.2 Finance & Risk (15 minutes)

Covered Income and expenditure and balance sheet, plus Actual, Budget, variance, annual budget.

The income, expenditure and balance sheet shows a variance from the budget because we did not know how much the College grant was going to be. We are currently budgeting to spend the restricted funds. Loosely, there is a higher than budgeted sales on the ArtBar. There have been planned overspends, such as the legal and professional investment in the CIO setup, but these are offset by underspends on student focused initiatives. This calendar year we will hopefully catch up on this as the SU team continues the academic year. Our year-in deficit will end up being closer to the budget, but noted will not catch up on salaries due to some delays in appointing people. The VAT favorable variation of £4,000 will have to be paid. Last year, we did not spend all the COL funds (a restricted reserve) so we need to be proactive to promote availability of the funds with a view to spending all of it this year.

RL agreed to analyze the COL data to review which students may be missing out on the COL opportunity.

The balance sheet shows that the SU has over £300,000 in the bank. The Societies and clubs account also acts as a designated reserve which can be removed by Trustees if needed. Comparative figures from the balance sheet could be useful for the future.

Recommendations and suggestions welcome on how to improve the funds format in order to look more like that of a charity, and less like that of a commercial entity. This will also help make the finance documentation less esoteric.

JM noted that the overspend was deliberate in order to progress the CIO and properly engage the students in the process. The work that has been done in terms of communications and the website, especially for student engagement and society visibility, has also been important in the development of the SU, not to mention the development of SU presence on other sites. This has been especially reflected in the enthusiastic response to the exhibitions.

On the risk register and the risk and issues log:

- The bank mandate and the risk associated with the delegation of authority has been completed with the additional signatory of FB.
- RL has moved two items from the risk and issues log. One being that all existing money is in one account, which is on the risk register with those proposed changes going through the board today. The second is trustee recruitment and training. Our risk level has dropped slightly, and we are still looking to recruit additional trustees.

MI joined the meeting

6.3 Governance & Policies: Time Off for Public Duties & Volunteering Policy, Staff Benefits, Bye Laws, for sign off (10 minutes)

- Time off for public duties and volunteering policy: all eligible employees have 2 days leave per academic year. This has gone through the remuneration committee. It was clarified that the days would be accumulative across the year, and the document will be adjusted accordingly for full transparency. The SU's HR software will properly document this. Board agreed to pass this.
- Staff benefits and perks (season ticket loan, tech scheme and cycle to work scheme). This has been through the finance and risk committee twice and amended.

RL will take feedback away after the board discussion and make amendments for the next finance committee, including separating of season loans and benefits, and creating parity on the loan amount. These revisions will be made and sent round the board for review.

Comments on the Bye Laws

- The wording of 14.26 and 14.27 around approving the appointment of the auditors for the next financial year and approving the appointment of trustees is covered by votes from the board, and so will be changed from 'approving' to 'notifying'.

- Noted that the changes to the assemblies for '24/25 will need to be reflected in the Bye Laws, once the changes have been approved by academic leads (these are based on the recommendations of the College PwC audit).

Bye Laws approved subject to the above changes.

7. **AOB**

- The finance committee meeting has been moved to the 25th of March.

JM extended recognition and thank you to Jane for all she has done her time as trustee and as past Chair of the Board, as she steps down from the Board after seven years.

Board of Trustees proposed dates and agenda - 17:15 - 19:00		
24th April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SU Update - Election Results Update - Budget 2024/25 	
26th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SU Update - Sabbatical Handover - 2024/25 Planning Confirmation 	

Finance & Risk Sub-Committee proposed dates and agenda:		
25th March	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accounts Review - Budget 2024/25 Planning 	
18th April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accounts Review - Risk Register and Risk & Issue Log Review 	
23rd May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accounts Review 	
20th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accounts Review - Budget 2024/25 Final Review 	

People & Remuneration Sub-Committee proposed dates and agenda:		
11th April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff objectives review - Salaries review (alongside budget) 	
26th June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2024/25 proposals - staff, salary signoff 	

Action	Responsibility	Status
Trustees to be contacted regarding their presence at the next Student Members' Meeting	RL	Complete.
Update on food proposal to Estates	RL/AM	Ongoing, with regular discussions.
Revision of staff benefits plan has been sent to the board for review	RL	Complete.
Plan for designated reserve	RL	Ongoing
COL data breakdown	RL	Data sent to Student Experience.
Contact JS about Student Inclusion Plans	RS	Ongoing with Student Experience Team