

Candidate Question Time - VP Societies & Sport

Kate Roberts 07:45

Hello and welcome to our second night of candidate question time. My name is Kate Roberts, your current president. My pronouns are she/her, and I will be your host tonight and across the week. I am joined by Phill Dowler, our democracy coordinator, who will be supporting me with a tech tonight. We are currently live on zoom and Facebook and we'll be recording this evening to be uploaded to YouTube.

Kate Roberts 08:07

Last night, we got to hear from candidates running for the positions of NUS delegate and school rep. Tonight we'll be focusing on candidates for the role of Vice President Societies and Sport. We're just going to take a moment to run through how the evening will work. In each segment, candidates will take it in turns to start off with an opening statement. Once each candidate has made their statement we will then move on to questions. Questions were pre submitted by students over the last few weeks. And each question will be asked to all candidates have that role, and candidates will have a set period of time to respond.

Kate Roberts 08:41

Time will start once candidates begin speaking and if candidates continue to speak beyond reason, after the indicator has gone red, the candidate will be muted. Now with that I would like to welcome candidates for the role of Vice President Societies and Sport.

Kate Roberts 09:08

Brilliant. So tonight we're joined by Lucy Brown, Kayleigh Fryer, Alex Parry, James Shannon and Evie Skyrme, that Zak Craig is also running for the role that couldn't be with us this evening. So thank you so much, everyone for joining us. We're going to move right into opening statements in alphabetical order by surname. So that means we'll be starting with Lucy Brown. You have three minutes to make your opening statement and time will begin once you start so over to you.

Lucy Brown 09:40

Hi everyone. My name is Lucy Brown and my pronouns are she/her? I am your current VP Societies in Sport and I'm running to be reelected into this role the new academic year with the promise that voting Lucy means you can build better with Brown. I've absolutely loved every minute of being VP Societies and Sport this year, but I'm by no means done. I still have so much passion for student groups and this year I have even more added experience, which makes me a candidate that you can 100% put your trust in.

Lucy Brown 10:08

Going into this new year, student groups will need someone who is able to support them all after they have just gone through one of the most difficult years to date that someone is me. My manifesto is centred around building groups back following the pandemic, and ensuring that they have the tools necessary to come back better and stronger than ever. Due to my experience this year. I also know my manifesto is realistic and can therefore be the most impactful.

Lucy Brown 10:32

Firstly, inclusivity since last year, students and student groups have rallied to show their support for the important Black Lives Matter movement. The SU has also spoken out in support of the movement, and it is time we started implementing some changes. I'll introduce anti racism ally ship and active bystander training for committees to ensure groups are in the best position to develop that inclusivity.

Lucy Brown 10:55

Secondly, facility provisions, I will restart the conversation with the university about facilities available to student groups, because of returned to physical activity cannot see student groups back in the same unsuitable facilities from pre pandemic.

Lucy Brown 11:08

Thirdly, sport ready, the pandemic has heightened the importance of exercise and its correlation with improving mental wellbeing for so many of us. Therefore, I will ensure we are ready for a return to sport ensuring it is accessible to a wide variety of students and has the availability to accommodate them anticipated increase. To do this I will run a disability and sport campaign week.

Lucy Brown 11:29

And lastly, review student group support. With over 120 student groups at Royal Holloway, it is obvious that one size cannot fit all I want to ensure we are tailoring the correct support for each individual group. I will commence a review on support for cultural and faith societies. We need to improve the SU understanding of current issues felt by these groups to help support them to foster that all important communities that impact the lives of so many students. After my time at Royal Holloway so far I'm not done just yet. And I hope that you will once again put your trust in me I'm very Lucy so that next year we can build better with brown.

Kate Roberts 12:07

Thank you Lucy will now move on to our next candidate which is Kayleigh Fryer.

Kayleigh Fryer 12:17

Hello, I'm Kayleigh and I am a third year English and History student and I'm running to be your VP Socs and Sports. Over my time at uni I've done a lot, probably too much according to some people, so apologies for the schpiel you're about to get. I've co-founded two societies, Craft last year as our treasurer and Students Scouts & Guides organisation this year, both of which I'm now president of. I'm secretary for Rams, after winning Best Freshmen last year at the Socs Awards in which Rams also won Best New society and Treasurer of Left Forum. And I'm social secretary for Aerospace, after being their Welfare and Diversity Officer last year. I'm also a Course rep, I worked for the SU as bar staff before

lockdown and I'm a Widening Access Student Ambassador. So it's safe to say I've got some experience.

Kayleigh Fryer 13:00

I'm running for VP Socs and Sports because I'm genuinely genuinely passionate about student experience. I've always been involved in student voice schemes throughout my education and being elected is sort of the next best step for me to carry that on. I want students to have an excellent time here at Royal Holloway. And yes, our degrees are the primary reason why uni, but the atmosphere and life experiences should be taken into account. We're young adults were trying new things were making friends and we're seizing opportunities, the community atmosphere and wealth of opportunities at Royal Holloway, are one of the main reasons why I decided to come here and I'd love to be a part of continuing that and making that even better.

Kayleigh Fryer 13:37

I want to ensure that committees are well prepared and students overall have the best time they can in society sports and media groups.

Kayleigh Fryer 13:44

This moves me nicely on to my manifesto points of which I have five. Firstly advertising improving the way student groups advertise themselves under advertised by the SU. secondly, training. Making sure training is relevant, easily accessible and holds committees accountable for the safety of their membership. Third, academic societies utilising the current review of them to create better communication links, better channels for costs and society feedback and to improve student's academic and social experiences overall. Fourth, utilising resources. We have excellent training and performance spaces both on campus and in the local area. And I want to ensure these are used to their best potential to benefit specifically sport and performance groups. With this, I want to guarantee the student involvement in relevant SU events. So that is SU, wellbeing, give it a go. All of that stuff, to ensure your group is getting the best experience possible. And to continue de-stigmatising student groups asking for financial help, or sponsorship. And finally improving accessibility. I want all students to feel as though they can participate whether there are financial, social or physical accessibility concerns. I want to challenge these, looking into alternative ways to pay for memberships pushing for the widespread use of physically accessible spaces, and by giving an active focus to PGT and PGR students to increase our involvement in student groups.

Kayleigh Fryer 15:11

You can follow my campaign online on Instagram and Facebook at Socs, sports and Fryer. Yes, it is an Earth, Wind and Fire pun, no I won't be singing in September for you. And keep up to my campaign with the hashtag SocsSportsAndFryer. Thank you for listening.

Kate Roberts 15:25

Thank you very much, Kayleigh. We're now going to move on to our next candidate, which is Alex Parry.

Alex Parry 15:34

Hi, everyone, my name is Alex Parry, and I'm running to be your next Vice President Societies and Sports. During my time at Royal Holloway, I've been the treasurer and president for men's football. This year as well. I've also closely worked with AFC Holloway, enabling me to get vital negotiation experience and also see how sports clubs can be run better. I truly believe that being part of societies and sports has been a best part of my university. I want to push and help others share this view. Having been part of this university for years now, I've had too many people say that they're currently priced out certain groups huge lump sums, which they must pay at the start of the year.

Alex Parry 16:07

This nice changing is no fault a fantastic work put in by committees, rather a lack of support and attention given to those who struggle financially.

Alex Parry 16:15

When I first came to uni, I was overwhelmed by information given during my freshers week. I struggled with how intense socially it was, I actually struggled so much with how intense it was, I actually missed out. And so I didn't have any student group and I felt like it's too late to join after the first week. I know I'm not alone in feeling this way. And that's why we need to restructure the freshers week and give better support to new students, without bombarding them with so much information which can't be retained.

Alex Parry 16:39

If we give incoming students more accessible information of what you can offer, then not only for groups where we have more participation, but also for the students, they're able to create more friends, more support that works in the first year, which has been the most challenging time for students mental health. University departments also offer module reviews as that can help them see what went well and what did not, It actually amazes me that no such thing has been put in place with the Students Union to understand how we can support each group better, or to give each group an equal and fair chance to voice any issue.

Alex Parry 17:11

Alongside improving the communication between the SU and student groups. I also aim to improve the communication between each student group and bridge the divide between society and sport, creating a much stronger sense of togetherness across campus.

Alex Parry 17:24

Another point which will only take seriously is how sustainable we are collectively. I'll aim to raise awareness on what we can do, while also working with all societies and sports. To make sure we're all tackling this issue together.

Alex Parry 17:36

Finally, the VP Sport and Society's role needs to be freshened up, with new aims new ideas, as at the moment many groups aren't being supported early. I will achieve this while also bringing an upbeat, friendly and fun attitude to the role. My heart is with people and I'm determined to do what's best for students.

Kate Roberts 17:56

Thank you, Alex.

Kate Roberts 17:57

Our next candidate is James Shannon.

James Shannon 18:04

Hi there. I'm James, my pronouns are he/him. And I'm the current social secretary for the Holloway Players. I'm really glad to be running for this position. I believe that my current role is social sector. My prior role as Vice President of classic society, as my background as a director and theatre maker, have given me the understanding and experience to effectively support student groups in the coming year, particularly given the challenge of recovering from COVID-19.

James Shannon 18:33

While many of you who have seen me in a student group context will know me for being a bit wacky, a bit playful and great and a pair of tights. I hope that over the next two hours, you can see that I'm also very serious about supporting student groups, and ensuring that they develop.

James Shannon 18:49

I have five key points of interest which I would be focusing on if I'm elected. The first is supporting student groups, or taking note of the individual challenges they face. I'd like to assess how to best support newly ratified groups. I'd like to investigate the possibilities around affording more financial freedom to student groups, something which I believe is going to be of paramount importance going forward as so many groups are going to be and have had to be so much more flexible this year, and may do in the coming year as well. I'd like to highlight the activities and work of student groups, which focus on certain identities and issues. Particularly I'd like to be working with the Collectives which I know the domain of the VP Wellbeing and Diversity, but working with those and helping to bridge a certain divide which has been noticed between identity groups, societies, and the collectives which already exist. I believe that there's a lot more work that can be done between them. And that's something I'd be really encouraging to push forward.

James Shannon 19:52

Finally, I would take a hard focus on revitalising student groups which have suffered from COVID-19. Particularly sports groups which have suffered from not only the unfortunate timing of but also the unfortunate existence of a barrier to entry, even on training, even on trying things out and taster events due to the sports pass which I'd be very focused on renegotiating.

James Shannon 20:28

There are about 100 societies and sports, 150 societies and sports clubs affiliated with the Students Union. And hopefully, there'll be more to come, and it would be foolish to say that I am able to take a leading role in the revitalization of all of them. I do firmly believe, however, that the VP Societies and Sports should recognise the issues and concerns of all student groups, and that above all else, is what I will prioritise and promise.

James Shannon 20:57

In short, I've been involved with eight student groups while at this uni and I cannot claim to intimately understand all of them. But I do understand the fundamentals of what student groups this unit wants and needs at this particular moment. And I hope that if elected, I could come to support each student group through their unique challenges to a better year in 2021.

Kate Roberts 21:19

Thanks very much, James. And next we'll move on to Evie Skyrme.

Evie Skyrme 21:25

Hi, I'm Evie. I'm a final year liberal arts student, SU Sho worker, student ambassador, and perhaps most importantly, co founder and president of the liberal arts society and a committee member of the Society, Sport and Opportunities executive. I'm running to be your next VP Societies and Sport because I believe there needs to be big tangible changes at Royal Holloway that put inclusivity, accessibility and transparency in the heart of everything that Union and university do, not only for our student groups, but for every student, even if you're yet to get involved with societies and sport.

Evie Skyrme 21:57

Regardless of past experience or ability, the SU needs to be a place that makes facilities and student groups feel safe, and that anyone can get involved in them. There was a lot of encouragement at the minute from the Uni and the SU, to get involved in sport and physical activity to keep us healthy, both physically and mentally. I want to make sure that when people choose to engage with sport, the right support is in place. What good is encouragement when if you choose to participate, if the facilities let you down.

Evie Skyrme 22:26

As I'm sure a lot of you will agree that su website is in need of an update. student groups deserve visibility. So I'll work to create a communal online calendar so that every events get every event gets a promotion it deserves and so that students can find these events with ease.

Evie Skyrme 22:41

I also believe that virtual events should be here to stay. I know many of you, like I was, was really disappointed by the virtual freshers fair this year. I will work hard to improve it so that if need be it can be a great standalone event, or used as a way to supplement the in person fair.

Evie Skyrme 22:56

Information needs to be fun, informative and digestible. I want to make sure that the SU deliver more regular updates in a fun engaging way, videos as well as video updates as well as written ones helping students get familiar with the goings on at the SU as well as the people behind the decision making. Let's use the creativity of our students and ourselves to make the cohesion between SU and students better. My three manifesto points will mean that every student can be included in activities if they want to. Every student can easily find the events they want to be involved in. Without having to follow 100

plus society pages. Every student group gets the promotion and visibility they deserve. And every student can feel informed and up to date with the SU.

Evie Skyrme 23:37

With all these things in place we should all be able to recover from the past year, and feel as though we are moving forward rather than backwards. Before any work is done. The SU needs to gauge the successful and not so successful parts of the past year. To do so we need to listen to as many student opinions and experiences as possible, so that we can make sure the next steps are in the right direction. If you have felt excluded from student groups for any physical, mental or financial reason, then vote for me. If you are worried about how your student group will survive impersonal online next year, vote for me if you want to see true inclusivity, accessibility and transparency at the SU vote Evie for VP.

Kate Roberts 24:16

Thank you evening. And thank you everyone for your opening statements. We will now move on to questions where you'll have five to answer. You'll have two minutes to answer each question. Your first question is, what will you do to support student groups? And this time we're going to start with Evie.

Evie Skyrme 24:40

As I said in my opening statement, I'm looking to not only support student groups, but every student that Royal Holloway, particularly those who have missed out on opportunities this year because of the pandemic. I'm looking at you first years I know this experience hasn't been what you thought it would be. My manifesto point completely backs us up and I think visibility is a really key thing here.

Evie Skyrme 24:59

We need to support our student groups because we know how much hard work and creativity gets put into these events. But the SU needs to do everything it possibly can to make sure these events are promoted and and get the visibility they deserve.

Evie Skyrme 25:14

I want to make sure it's as easy as possible for you to join in. And sometimes financial, mental, physical reasons stop me from doing that. I want to introduce schemes and activities that make sure that you know that you are supported by the facilities and the SU. This could be things like beginner classes at the gym, or an online platform that helps you find that person you want to do an activity with.

Evie Skyrme 25:38

I want to make sure that the communication between the SU and student is clear, as a lot of us have already outlined, that is not a one size fits all policy for all student groups. It's about finding out what each individual student group needs, and how they best take, how they can best be supported so we can make, create a tailored approach to supporting student groups next year.

Kate Roberts 26:02

Thanks, Evie. Next, we're going to hear from James.

James Shannon 26:08

So when it comes to supporting student groups, I think the key difficulty that we need to recognise going forward is that whilst so many groups have done an amazing job of getting engagement this year, people have struggled in getting fresher engagement, and particularly in getting together for committees, which is something that I know, I know, I will and I'm sure a lot of everyone else in this call will also be pushing for when we get to student group elections in a couple of weeks.

James Shannon 26:42

So my focus will largely be around supporting committees which may not have had the amount of experience which their predecessors may have. So the things I'm going to do in particular, are making sure that a basic level of training is available throughout the year, particularly when it comes to people like first year reps, but also co opted roles. Sometimes people miss out on key levels of training, because they're not run regularly enough. And so I would like to be running the basic training that we run in the summer, a couple of times every year just to make sure that everyone is up to date on that.

James Shannon 27:20

In particular, I'd also want to put together information packs on how to run certain types of events, create standardised procedures for groups that want to use off campus, off campus spaces, and make sure that they feel supported either by offering negotiation support, or just by offering the advice that I can.

James Shannon 27:39

And I'd also make want to place a high priority on committee wellbeing and on member wellbeing. At the end of the day committees are going to be best supported when they know how to support their members best. And that's something I'm incredibly passionate about.

James Shannon 27:53

I would also take a key, place a key focus on supporting newly ratified groups, because I can I have seen through work in the SSO this year, that whilst some amazing contributions and some amazing ideas have come through, sometimes they need just a little bit more of a helping hand and getting those ideas off the ground. And as VP Socs and Sport, I'd be delighted to offer that support as part of a group which is coming up on a year old myself.

James Shannon 28:23

Finally, I would want to be making sure that every group has the financial support it needs. And that could come in the form of grants. But I will also be renegotiating the sports pass, as I said, and investigating the possibility with the help of the rest of the SU staff. In investigating possibilities of moving money between accounts, I'm generally doing a full review of that system.

Kate Roberts 28:52

Thanks, James. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Alex.

Alex Parry 28:58

The way I want to help support student groups more is, I want to actually understand better what each student group actually wants. And the way I'll do that is offer each student group end of term reviews so they can identify what they want. And they can say it to the SU and myself selected, what they want, what specifically they think they need, are they lacking. And we can address it from there each individually. And we can see if common issues keep on coming up. We get that then we must we have to look at it.

Alex Parry 29:26

I also think that one way this student groups can be supported better is we have to be more transparent with all of our processes on everything that we do. Whether it's financial things like supporting, giving in receipt tickets, we have to say how long we have to be saying to them more. This is when we expect to hear back from you, other than just leaving them without their money for a month or two months on end.

Kate Roberts 29:54

Thank you Alex. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Kayleigh.

Kayleigh Fryer 30:00

So supporting student groups really is the crux of this role. So it goes without saying that I'll be doing all that I can to support student groups, I will ensure the communication channels that we've opened over the past year, sort of, under unprecedented circumstances will remain open, because there's almost this inclination to go back to how things were and sort of close everything down that we've worked for, I want to ensure that the new methods of communication and the new ways that people have got in touch, which I think have been very effective this year, working better with our digital literacy and our online learning, I want to keep those open. That's my first point.

Kayleigh Fryer 30:37

And I will also continue to make sure that student groups are fully aware of the support that is available to them, because there's a whole lot of it, there's a lot of ways that shooter groups can access information that they just aren't aware of. I want to push the more widespread use of Freshdesk as a tool, because it has amazing articles on there. It has amazing guides, it has a lot of great information that I think committee members, including myself, have often forgot to look up first. And I want to keep that updated as much as I can.

31:16

[Pause]

Kate Roberts 31:16

I think Kaley may have frozen, she has on mine at least.

Kate Roberts 31:22

Hopefully she'll be able to come back and finish her answer. But we will get in touch with her. So we'll move on to the next candidate, which is Lucy.

Lucy Brown 31:35

So, any candidate going for this role is hopefully doing so in order to support student groups. It goes without saying. But this is why my manifesto completely centred around a variety of support from committee training, inclusivity, to reviewing the SU processes to ensure that they are effective. It's all about supporting groups to run their activities effectively. One of my main aims is to start a review of the student group support for faith and cultural groups in particular, these groups work with national networks, they open up discussions about some really important topics. And they're not properly supported. And we need to be looking at what we can do. But that's not something we can look at. Because we've been working with them so closely, it can often produce a barrier, so we need to bring somebody in to look at how we can support those groups better.

Lucy Brown 32:19

I'll also continue the committee cafes, which I introduced this year, as a way for student groups to support each other in a space created for peer to peer support. Committee cafes have gone down really well. And this is not something I want to see go anytime soon.

Lucy Brown 32:33

I will also build a really good relationship with the SSO executive. This is crucial because they are the link between the wider student body and the VP. By building a strong relationship with them, they will be honest and tell you the truth on how groups want to be supported, which you can then go and implement.

Lucy Brown 32:49

Also correctly supporting groups is completely reliant on effective communication with them. Over this year, I've learned which groups prefer emails, Instagram messages and Facebook committee pages, which is experience, I can take forward to effectively communicate and therefore support our student groups.

Kate Roberts 33:07

Thanks Lucy. Kayleigh, as you're back with us, would you like to finish your answer or start from the beginning? Either is fine with you.

Kayleigh Fryer 33:15

I have no idea where I cut out. So very sorry for having to sort of repeat most of what I said, My Wi Fi isn't happy today.

Kayleigh Fryer 33:25

So supporting students really is the core of this role. And that goes without saying that I'll do all that I can to help in that. I want communication channels that we've established over this year to remain in effect and remain as effective as they are by using, as I caught the tail end of what Lucy just said, by using those communication channels such as email, Instagram, Facebook, working with student groups, the best way to support them instead of trying to find an umbrella for everyone. And I want to continue to make sure that student groups are fully aware of the support that is available to them, pushing for the better training and awareness of Freshdesk. So people have this wealth of articles, and

also encouraging one to one meetings with each student group. So we directly hear feedback from the core group of people that I aim to be supporting next year.

Kate Roberts 34:14

Thank you very much, Kayleigh. And thank you everyone for your answers. We'll now move on to the second question. So the second question is, what will you do to ensure more effective communication of important information with committee members? This time, we're going to start with Kaylee.

Kate Roberts 34:35

Oh, you're on mute Kayleigh.

Kayleigh Fryer 34:38

Let's hope that my wife holds up for a whole answer this time and more effective communication with committee members. So as I briefly said in my opening statement, one of the issues I wish to combat is training. And a key point of this is accountability from both ends. I will ensure that committee members are held accountable in attending SU training. And on the flip side of this, this means that we can gather relevant emails and lines of communication with those committee members. And that means that we then have a direct point of contact to them, instead of sort of lists that we kind of have already that might not be manned inboxes, they might be old email addresses, they might be just communication channels that these people don't have anymore.

Kayleigh Fryer 35:20

So I want to ensure that I have direct communication with every committee member. And that will sort of break the first hurdle in effective communication by knowing that what I'm putting out is actually being received by the people who are supposed to receive it.

Kayleigh Fryer 35:36

I also think that using channels such as Instagram or Facebook or social media can be a lot better utilised, so having more information on them, but in more concise ways. So I'll look at putting myself through like SEO and graphic design, and sort of general social media awareness training to do the best I can to ensure that the information is put out and is available on multiple streams. Because this year especially, it's so easy to get overwhelmed online. And I want to combat that from the source. I don't want people to have to scroll for ages to find information. I want it to be easy to access, direct and readily available for everyone to have.

Kate Roberts 36:22

Thank you, Kayleigh. The next candidate to answer is Lucy.

Lucy Brown 36:31

So effective communication of important information is something that I had to learn really quickly this year in order to relay a lot of important updates related to the pandemic and various lockdowns to committees. But it's also something that I did make mistakes with at first, we were all learning. So I know that communication relies on knowing how groups respond to various platforms, and making sure that you're utilising the right ones for the right messages. You can't send a really important long update

in an Instagram message. But you can use your VP account to highlight that an email's comment, it's a really important update.

Lucy Brown 37:07

Knowing which groups respond to what and knowing how to communicate them with them is so important. But it's also really key to not confuse important messaging. If there is an important update for student groups committees need to know that that message will be on that email. And we need to make that really clear in training and make sure committees are hearing that message. But it's then the responsibility of the VP and SU staff to use social media platforms and other communication to point groups in the direction of that message. Social media is a really effective communication tool. But it's not the right tool for every single message. And we need to make sure the right messages are on the right platforms.

Kate Roberts 37:47

Thanks Lucy. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Evie.

Evie Skyrme 37:53

So this question is something that I feel my manifesto completely encompasses, it's a separate manifesto point about communication. As I say, I think the blog posts need an update, we get a lot of information through them about what has been done, not what is happening, not what is going on. I also know after chatting to a lot of you this past week and hearing your experiences, that receiving something in a long word document, a long email is not something that you enjoy, it's so easy to see that kind of really heavy looking long email, clicking on it and going, I don't have time for that, I'm going to come back to it another way, another day, and then you forget about it.

Evie Skyrme 38:32

So I think communication, as I said earlier needs to be something and something that Lucy, you said as well, that something is tailored to each student group, finding out what is best for them. And sometimes that could be verbal. So therefore, I think it's about really promoting these kinds of times where you can come to chat to me, hopefully in person next year, but also utilising the calls and MS Teams that we've been using this year. I'm also a huge fan of a voice message, which some of you will probably know after we've been chatting this week, that hearing something often helps you process information rather than reading it.

Evie Skyrme 39:05

It's also about giving committees the tools to pass on information. If we're having training, if we're having meetings and only certain committee members can attend. How can we make sure that that information is being relayed properly to other committee members, and the students and the wider student groups? I think it's all about the visuals. It's all about easy information, making sure the most important parts are the most prominent parts of a message.

Kate Roberts 39:34

Thanks Evie. And next we're going to hear from James.

James Shannon 39:38

So I think first of all, the issue of communication with the SU has always been a two way issue. There's always been issues of how do we get information to the SU and how do we feed back and then also how does the SU, get back to us and tell us what to do as committee members?

James Shannon 39:56

And I think that it's a question I've thought about a lot because I know many people will see an email, see it and a long list. And think that's, that's my problem for later and it gets left on read.

James Shannon 40:09

So I think when you're dealing with issues, communication, there has to be, you have to think of what's going to get people's attention. And sometimes that's going to be an email. But sometimes it could be as simple as dropping a message to Facebook pages and just saying, look, there's something up on the SU website, I think you need to give it a check it out, it might be helpful.

James Shannon 40:32

The SU website itself is a great place way to communicate with committees at the end of the day, I think all committees, you know, on, if issues that affect their members are going to try to be as transparent as possible. And I think that's the transparency that we should try to emulate in the SU. And so unless something directly concerns, committees that members should not be finding out about which is very few issues. I think the SU website is an amazing vehicle to deliver those.

James Shannon 41:01

I'd also say that not many people are aware that there's a Royal Holloway Students' Union app, which I would be very interested in looking at reworking, and seeing how it could possibly be used as a method of communication with committees, and with society members as a whole, to give out important information, notices and make them aware of key dates.

James Shannon 41:24

On the other hand, I'd like to see more ways of approaching the SU. Personally, I always love people just messaging me, I've always said, If I'm talking too much, just interrupt me and yell in my face. So something I'd be really interested in, is creating what I would call a red button, which is if someone needs to talk immediately.

Kate Roberts 41:44

Sorry James, the time it's not quite working, but you have run out of time, so apologies about that.

James Shannon 41:48

Never mind

Kate Roberts 41:49

Thank you very much for your answer. And next we're going to hear from Alex.

Alex Parry 41:55

So one of my key aims was to introduce a new platform for committees, and well their members to actually talk together and with myself through this platform, it will be so much easier for committees to understand when something important is coming up or what, what help they need with it and to understand with each other, more how to go about it. And I think that's something that can be really helpful. With the introduction of all the risk assessment forms this year, a lot of groups weren't able to actually hand them in in time, they missed one more week of training, because they were too late with it. But if all the groups were able to talk to see what they've written down and actually communicate together and have a platform designated for stuff like that, all the groups would be able to return immediately. And that was something that probably should have been looked at there and then, but yeah.

Alex Parry 42:46

Another thing that also will help with the communication as I want to make sure the student groups and all the committee members are actually getting on to Freshdesk. There's so many important articles on that. And so many people in each committee, just don't bother with it, don't bother looking into it, don't bother reading into it. And they actually don't see what information they can actually gain from it and what they can actually put down, and actually be useful to them, and they just don't want to read any of it. Yeah.

Kate Roberts 43:18

Thanks, Alex. So thank you very much, everyone, for all of your answers. We're going to now move on to the third question. So your question is, how will you reengage students and student groups after the impact on student experience over the last year? This time, we're going to start with Alex.

Alex Parry 43:38

So one of the key things I know that everyone goes through the pandemic has dealt with, there's a lot of people with financial issues. So I want to tackle that by making sure that there are no clubs, with huge, kind of one off payments that start the term, like there have been, and that'd be through, pay as you play systems, through clubs outside of university, they do it all the time. If you can pay five pounds for a match day, and it's just as easy as that. It's just so much easier for everyone to join in. I mean, if you're a part time student, and you only pay on a Wednesday, for example, you don't have to worry about also paying for so much money or if COVID came back, anything like that.

Alex Parry 44:19

Also, another way that I would make reengagement There is also making everyone more aware of every single society and sport that's actually available. And I'd actually make freshers week less intense for new students and push them towards and give them the help they need to actually join societies and sports. Making sure they're all aware and they will know how much they are important to everyone's mental health and how good they can actually be.

Kate Roberts 44:47

Thanks, Alex. And the next candidate we're going to hear from is James.

James Shannon 44:53

So when it comes to me, I'll try and keep it brief this time, when it comes to re engaging people in student groups. I think a major issue is just making sure that student groups can offer new and innovative ways of offering things to their members.

James Shannon 45:07

I think something that this pandemic and the consequences of the pandemic have actually been good for, is that so many groups have challenged very inset ways of working and had to adapt in more accessible and more far reaching ways.

James Shannon 45:23

I'd be really interested in encouraging that attitude going forwards once. Once we are even, once we are able to work in person, again, making sure that options are always accessible, and making sure that as many people as possible can enjoy the sports and societies that we are all here because we love.

James Shannon 45:43

As Alex just pointed out, nobody enjoys the being pushed through the meat grinder that is freshers fair. I think everyone has had the experience where it's just an experience to get flyers shoved in your face, or hand write down your name as many times as possible. And so I'd be really excited to extend that out, have fewer groups on each of the days, but really giving you a chance to shine. Even using venues such as the SU main hall to make sure that societies and sport have a pride of place in the new year.

James Shannon 46:18

I'd also be, I've also taken great pride in offering or suggesting the offering of a revitalization grant, where we can investigate the, the allocation of certain funds to groups that want to do something new and exciting in the new year.

Kate Roberts 46:37

Thanks, James. And next we're going to hear from Evie.

Evie Skyrme 46:43

I think I'm going to start sounding like a stuck record. Because again, for me, it's all about promotion, advertising and visibility. This year, we've seen such creative events. And I don't doubt that our student groups can come up with new ways to engage their students. But how can the SU make sure that those events are seen? How can we make sure that it's easy to for students to get involved with them? For me that's creating a online communal calendar on the SU website. Make it fun, make it interactive so that every event can be found, you can go to what's happening this Friday, bam, bam, bam, it's all there for you to get involved in.

Evie Skyrme 47:20

Again, we're all talking about freshers fair. And I'd like to reiterate the points that James and Alex already made. I think the impact of freshers fair does need a lot of work. But for me, it's also combining that, as it says on my manifesto, with a virtual platform. When we're trying to re engage students, we can't forget those that are also commuting students, we can't forget those that do not like these in

person events. And I have actually found that virtual events have been much more suited to them. By giving a more interactive online platform for freshers, can hopefully help engage those students. And we're not leaving them behind. When obviously, hopefully when in person events can happen again, I have no doubt that the SU wants to go bigger, better and brighter than ever before. But next, let's not leave a huge proportion of students behind.

Evie Skyrme 48:04

I also think financially, we need to make sure that student groups and sports facilities are affordable for all students. Again, after talking to you this week, that has been a huge issue that you're facing. I did a poll on my Instagram. And most of you came back and said that you find gym memberships too expensive. How can we promote it? How can we be promoting as a university, as an SU, physical exercise as a way to boost your mental and physical health, but have such a huge barrier to those facilities. And so I would want to see if we could make prices more affordable. Have instalments. And make sure that every student is not facing barriers such as financial ones, mental ones.

Kate Roberts 48:45

I'm sorry Evie but you've run out of time. Thank you very much for your answer. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Lucy.

Lucy Brown 48:56

There are multiple ways that we should be looking at reengaging students in student groups after the impact of the pandemic. And hopefully when restrictions lift students will be more willing to get involved with groups. And that's something that I think we're all really hoping for.

Lucy Brown 49:09

Firstly, it's about empowering committees to be able to run their activities effectively and providing continuous support for this through committee training at the start of the year. And then continuously we need to be supporting and that's how we should be empowering them.

Lucy Brown 49:23

But secondly, it's about giving student groups a bigger platform for recognition of their events. Yes, you need to be doing more to promote student group activities. This is something I've started work on this year with the weekly shout about it. But it's not big enough yet and I definitely have bigger plans for it.

Lucy Brown 49:38

Thirdly, it's about ensuring student groups are accessible to a wide variety of students. My manifesto highlights how I will ensure sports are accessible to more students. By introducing a disability and sport campaign we're working with the disabled collective and Royal Holloway sport, to promote active activities that are suitable for disabled students. That's how we're going to re engage students but also a wider student audience.

Lucy Brown 50:03

And lastly, it's about taking the good from this year, we've engaged with overseas students, commuting students in virtual activity and built some really valuable virtual communities. It's about taking this into the new year and not forgetting all the good we've done.

Kate Roberts 50:18

Thanks, Lucy. And next we're going to hear from Kayleigh.

Kayleigh Fryer 50:25

To reengage students over the next year, I'll play off the hype and help manage the concerns. from people I've spoken to. There's a huge mix of excitement and fear about things returning to normal. And I will ensure that student groups are kept up to date with relevant information and be able to be there for them to suggest or review ideas to make sure that they're fitting for as many members as possible.

Kayleigh Fryer 50:46

I will also ensure that as much as there is hype, there is reassurance. We don't know what the first week of time is going to look like yet. But we do know that not everyone would be super comfortable straightaway. I'll promote open communication and awareness of this because it'd be crucial for societies to adapt and sort of increase their catchment of these people.

Kayleigh Fryer 51:06

On this, my first manifesto point is advertising. And I want to ensure that shrinkers are visible. That is one of my key concerns. They need to be helped in promoting themselves ensuring that there are events specifically visible and shared by the VP Socs and Sport account and shared as widely as possible using as many different sort of techniques as possible.

Kayleigh Fryer 51:25

And finally, my final manifesto point is improving accessibility which ties in really well with this, I want to ensure that there are as few barriers as possible, be it financial, social, physical, but we'll reevaluate how students get involved and how they pay and how they sort of, come to find student groups and come to find sports because that's a way we can look at targeting more groups by expanding that.

Kayleigh Fryer 51:48

And from the back end, I will look at how student groups hold activities themselves with regard to location, space and timetabling to ensure as previous candidates have said, the commuting students, postgraduate students, will get involved as well as much as possible, so we can get a whole student body back engaged and back involved in student life.

Kate Roberts 52:10

Thanks, Kayleigh. And thank you everyone for your answers. We're now going to move on to the fourth question. So the question is, do you believe that societies and sports get equal opportunities, support and recognition through the SU? If you disagree, what will you do about it? And for this question, we're going to hear first from James,

James Shannon 52:32

I would say that the support that is offered by the SU is equal, however, I wouldn't say that's necessarily a good thing. I think that more than any other group, societies, as a base level, have very, not necessarily basic, but similar needs to sports groups. However, sports groups do have their own unique challenges. They need to find spaces, they need to arrange matches with other out of uni groups. And sometimes, as an outsider to the sporting community at Royal Holloway, I felt that there isn't enough attention paid to the incredible work that sporting committees do to make sure that they go on as, as planned.

James Shannon 53:21

In particular, this year, where unfortunately, sport has not been able to go on as planned, I have started to notice sporting groups, mostly through the charity work, because that has been done by so many. And I think that's a major issue that needs to be highlighted is that I think we need to be pushing and highlighting the charity work that these groups are doing as much as we're doing. As much as we're pushing performances, exhibitions, and research. I come from a performance background. And I think that the SU has always highlighted us plenty. However, I would like to see so many smaller groups and sports groups getting that same attention, particularly those that are new and may need extra highlighting to bring in new members. And I'd be hyper focused on highlighting new groups and struggling groups if I were elected.

Kate Roberts 54:16

Thanks, James. Next, we're going to hear from Alex.

Alex Parry 54:24

So answer quite simply, I don't think all groups get equal opportunities. I think the sports clubs specifically demands so much more from the SU. And I think that makes it the SU puts a lot more effort and time into sports clubs, which isn't actually fair, it doesn't mean that societies feel appreciated as much as they should be.

Alex Parry 54:47

One way I will tackle this is I will actually provide the end of term news like I said before, and that will make sure that everyone's voices are all being heard at the same time equally, all in the same way. It will also be a chance to actually understand better, as I said before, for society's actually raise, what they need to support and what they think is lacking.

Alex Parry 55:11

I also think that with, with the recognition, I think a lot of kind of the, sporting teams and such get a lot more engagement with the campus. And because they are a lot more better advertised and things like that, which again, I think needs to be changed and shifted a bit to give more advertising and more recognition on societies because I think there is a bit of an imbalance currently.

Kate Roberts 55:37

Thanks, Alex. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Kayleigh.

Kayleigh Fryer 55:46

I think that sports and societies get equal opportunities, as far as they present themselves, and opportunities are presented, it's hard to weigh up, weigh them up fairly, because they're presented in such different ways. Like sports and society and share a lot of similarities, their student groups, we want to promote engagement, we want everyone to get involved, have a good time and be safe doing so. But the like intrinsic parts of them are very different.

Kayleigh Fryer 56:12

One of the things that can be done is ensuring that the opportunities are given the same promotions and hype and awareness to make sure that committee members, members and the wider student body are fully aware of sort of the opportunities that are available, the resources that are available, and how to get involved and making sure that people are aware of just how impressive sports and societies are, to be off the ground to be running to have that engagement. And I believe there is work to be done in managing these opportunities. And as Alex said, the sports have a closer link to campus than societies do, because they rely on the physical spaces that campus have, where societies often, they might use campus rooms, but they have the ability to take themselves away or use pubs or local areas or whatever they use. One of the things that can be done is ensuring that even though they may not physically be on campus, ensuring that they have the presence within the student body. I think the main issue that I tackle in my manifesto is space and his awareness and utilising the space and resources we have available. But I think there is work to be done on that, especially with sports clubs, especially with societies from sort of very different perspective, making sure that not necessarily physical space, but physical, mental awareness of the societies is they're bringing up that balance.

Kate Roberts 57:43

Thanks, Kayleigh. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Lucy.

Lucy Brown 57:51

This is a really difficult question because although although the role of VP Societies and Sports is combined, societies and sport are naturally different, and they need to be treated as such a combined role does introduce the confusion that they should be treated equally. But I also think opportunities, support and recognition need to be taken differently.

Lucy Brown 58:10

In terms of opportunities, it's, it's so vast, and there's so many different things. They can't be given the equal opportunities, but where they do have opportunities, recognition needs to be equal for all of them. support from the SU is equal for all groups and should not be. As I said previously, we have over 120 student groups, and it cannot be a one size fits all. That's why part of my manifesto is to commence a review into this and make sure that we are tailoring the right support for the right group. Sport are given the added support from Royal Holloway sport, but they also have the added complications of kit or facilities.

Lucy Brown 58:46

But then your societies get more support from the SU It seems that that's because they have completely different complications. And it's about making sure you're tailoring what you're doing to each specific group, understanding their needs, and making sure that you can recognise these and support

them in the right way. But as I said, recognition definitely needs to be equal. We can't be providing the right opportunities for the right groups and then not recognising them in the right way.

Kate Roberts 59:14

Thanks, Lucy. And next we're going to hear from Evie.

Evie Skyrme 59:22

So I think this is a great question. And it's actually a topic I was discussing last night at the academic society review. I can only speak of my experience as a participant and a committee member of an academic society. And I believe that there is kind of a it's not balanced, what opportunities societies and sports are given and particularly in my experience, academic societies. Throughout the academic year, we have such high profile events for sports like varsity, and there's also opportunities for students to get involved with sports matches and being a spectator but do we see the same hope or high profile events for societies for academic societies, all the different groups? I'm not sure we do. So we've got these buzzwords that we're all talking about, recognition, support, opportunities. And I think that is a lot more the SU can be doing to create that buzz around societies.

Evie Skyrme 1:00:14

This year, we've seen societies absolutely creating their own opportunity, opportunities. There's been so much great collaboration, and skill swaps and kind of joint performances. And I think that's so great to see. I think some of that hard work should be taken off from individual societies and taken into the hands of the SU. I also believe that we need to constantly be reassessing and re evaluating what support is given and is available. And that is something that ultimately, all student groups need to be talked to about, because that is not something that I on my own can answer.

Kate Roberts 1:00:50

Thanks, Evie. And thank you, everyone, for all of your answers to that question. We're now we're going to move on to your fifth and final question, which is how do you think the pandemic will affect the running of student groups and activities? And what will you do to improve it? We're going to start with Lucy, but I'm not sure if she's there, as her video has disappeared. And if she is not we can then move on to the next person.

Kate Roberts 1:01:17

Yeah, we'll come back to her if she's able to rejoin us. So next we're going to hear from Evie.

Evie Skyrme 1:01:28

So in my opinion, I think the biggest thing that has affected the pandemic is committees of student groups, we've seen, this is paired with engagement as well. We've seen a complete drop in engagement and lack of opportunities for freshers, or any year to get involved with student groups, which means many of us are left with the committee that are made up of third years, who will be graduating this year, there's a lot of fear about the continuation of student groups, and how they will survive next year. And I think that needs to be a real focus.

Evie Skyrme 1:01:55

I also worry about those groups that have gone dormant this year, because they've not been able to sustain activity. I think that SU and myself as a VP need to really focus on those dormant groups and make sure they're getting the publicity they deserve, so that other students can come in and stop them from being deratified.

Evie Skyrme 1:02:13

I think that making committee positions seem fun and accessible to all is so important, and supporting those that have yet to engage with student groups to feel that they can fulfil a committee position successfully and have a lot of fun whilst doing it.

Evie Skyrme 1:02:27

The pandemic has also affected a lot of people emotionally, mentally, physically. And I think all those things need to be taken into board taken on board with a real intersectional approach. Again, it's all about hearing from student groups. It's all about understanding their opinions, their ideas, their experiences. It's not for something for me to think about and upon use my own, work on my own agenda. It's about hearing your concerns and acting on those. And, and I just want to say that student groups have done such an amazing job this year. Again, it's such a testament to yourselves and to the university for how you've overcome this really tough year.

Kate Roberts 1:03:05

Thanks, even if we're able to go back to Lucy, that would be fantastic. Did you hear the question Lucy?

Kate Roberts 1:03:12

Yeah, I did. Thanks, Kate.

Lucy Brown 1:03:15

So pandemic has obviously caused so many changes for student groups, a lot of them bad, but some of them good. I think the lifting of restrictions over summer is likely to cause an actual increase in participation in group activity in the new year, which will be great for student groups and their memberships. But it's going to be really concerning for the committee's who may not be equipped to deal with it properly, students are going to be excited to interact with more people having been in lockdown for so long. Committee training is going to be absolutely crucial this year. So we can prepare committees to be ready for this increase. It's also going to be crucial because only third year students and above are going to know what a student group looks like in a normal year. We need to make the VP accessible with regular drop ins and continuing support that we've done this year.

Kate Roberts 1:04:05

Thanks, Lucy. And the next candidate we're going to hear from is Alex.

Alex Parry 1:04:12

So one of the things I've actually been able to do this year, which is actually, I've helped on the running of a club outside the university and actually been able to have the experience of being able to run the club during the pandemic and help out with everything. So I've got that kind of vital experience and knowledge and how to actually do these things and how the pandemic change sports specifically with

relation to how match days and how fixtures actually help and change with the university. We haven't actually had any fixtures, no teams or anything this whole year. So I think that'd be really important that I have that experience to go into next year.

Alex Parry 1:04:52

I also think that a lot of committees will struggle to actually fill up all of their committee roles. And that's something that I'm currently kind of worried about with my committee football for this year. So I will actually enter support and give all the help that is needed to every single shooting group, especially to those who who don't have the full kind of committee after student collection. So I'll make sure that I'm always there to help them, support them and make sure that their voices are always being heard.

Kate Roberts 1:05:24

Thanks, Alex. The next candidate we're going to hear from is Kayleigh.

Kayleigh Fryer 1:05:27

So I think that the pandemic has affected the running of student groups as much as it's going to. And this isn't me saying that there won't be changes, or there won't be work to be done yet next year. More the fact that we've been through such enormous like, integral changes in the running of student groups already that if anything happens, now we have the experience, and we have the confidence that we can deal with it. And I want to take a second to congratulate everyone in student groups for their amazing work of this past year, keeping us going keeping students engaged, it's been incredibly hard like coming from a point of view of some who works with student groups, and is on committee. It hasn't been easy, and to keep going and keep societies and sports groups and media as good as they have been is a testament to yourselves.

Kayleigh Fryer 1:06:17

And as I said earlier, we need to approach with hype and reassurance, acknowledging the fact that things can change. And not everyone will be content, throwing themselves back into freshers style events, and meeting up in big groups encouraged in the retention of a virtual element for groups to encourage the participation of those who can't always come to campus or the local area, or don't want to yet.

Kayleigh Fryer 1:06:36

And I will ensure that committees are supported as I will make sure that I'm easy to contact, I have good reply times, I have all the information ready to me to be able to pass along and ensuring committees have accurate training, great opportunities, and hopefully myself as your VP Socs and Sports to support them.

Kate Roberts 1:07:00

Thanks, Kayleigh. And next we're going to hear from James.

James Shannon 1:07:05

So I'm coming from a society, been on committee for a society where we've had a very particular way of working since about 2007. And this year has completely thrown us into pandemonium. However, I

don't think that anything positive can be gained from trying to reach, and student groups trying to go back to exactly what it was like before the pandemic because this struggle and the difficulty that student groups have faced this year has actually brought out some really important work both for charities, in particular, I'd like to highlight, but also working for their members both in wellbeing and in offering certain events.

James Shannon 1:07:48

So I'd be really interested in ensuring that societies are able to take off next year, making sure that all student groups have the funds and have the support to push themselves in odd new directions that may attract new members. In particular, this would require strong committees. And that is why as I said earlier, I'm committed to running committee training throughout the year for everyone who was co-opted into their roles, or may need top ups, as well as ensuring that the standard of well being is set across the board. And so that all the members of student groups, not just the committee's feel loved and supported and safe where they are. Because that more than anything is what people are going to be looking for in a post pandemic University.

Kate Roberts 1:08:36

Thanks, James. Lucy, let me know she actually dropped out of her internet in the middle of the answer to her question. So Lucy, if you would like to continue, please do.

Lucy Brown 1:08:45

Thanks, Kate. Sorry about that. And so yeah, as I was saying, committee training is gonna be absolutely crucial this year, because only third year students and above are gonna know what student groups look like in a normal year. So we need to ensure that they are trained correctly at the start of the year, but they're also able to access VP and the Student Opportunities team at any point throughout the year, to also get additional support. We need to be increasing our recognition opportunities to highlight activities next year, and encourage students to get involved wherever possible.

Lucy Brown 1:09:15

And finally, I've just been absolutely blown away by everything that student groups have done this year, even during the pandemic. So when we come back, I'm not at all concerned that they will continue to provide incredible activity as long as they're supported in the correct way. And I do believe that as a second year sabbatical officer, I would be in the correct position to do that.

Kate Roberts 1:09:36

Thanks, Lucien. So thank you, everyone, for all of your answers. That actually wraps up the questions for the role of Vice President Societies and Sports. Thank you so much to all of the candidates for joining us this evening.

Kate Roberts 1:09:48

Voting is open from Monday the 22nd of March until Wednesday the 24th of March, with results announced later that evening. In our voting system, we use single transferable vote will So known as STV. This means that you can rank candidates in order of your preference. So candidates will need to secure 50%, plus one, of the total votes in order to secure the position. If this is not achieved right

away, the person with the lowest votes will be removed from the election, and their votes will transfer to remaining candidates according to your preferences. This will continue to happen until either a candidate achieves the 50 plus one line or only one candidate remains.

Kate Roberts 1:10:28

So thank you so much to our candidates and to you for joining us this evening. We'll be returning at the same time tomorrow where we'll hear from the candidates for the role of Vice President Wellbeing and Diversity. Thank you very much. We look forward to seeing you there and I hope you have a good rest of your evening.