

Handbook for RSC ChemSocs

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The RSC Student Chemical Society Handbook

What is the Student Chemical Society Network?

The Student Chemical Society Network (ChemSoc Network) supports student chemical societies globally.

The Network exists to provide the following support and services:

- Potential grants of up to £100 to support one lecture or event per year
- Potential grants of up to £500 for larger events
- Box of RSC materials to use at events (e.g. Freshers' Fair) on request
- Contact details of other student chemical societies on request
- Contact details of representatives of the Younger Members Network
- Help with advertising and advice on how to run a successful student chemical society

The ChemSoc Network aims to encourage communication and enhance interaction between all Student Chemical Societies, Younger Members, Local Sections, Honorary Representatives and the RSC. The Student Chemical Societies that make up the SCS Network also play a role in supporting the RSC by providing help with the following:

- RSC membership recruitment visits to their universities
- Promoting the RSC by passing information to colleagues
- Recruiting members on behalf of the RSC
- Representing views of younger chemical scientists

In this way, the network functions as a two-way support interaction.

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Why have a ChemSoc?

Student Chemical Societies play a varied role: some provide a social focus for their department, while others hold more formal events. Either is fine and most societies strike a happy medium by organising a combination of the two. However you decide to run your ChemSoc, the basic idea should be to get members of your department (students and staff) to network internally and have fun.

SCS Registration

For your chemical society to be an active part of the SCS Network, you need to register online. Once successfully registered, your society will be kept up-to-date with relevant RSC information.

What do you need to get started?

- A Committee
- A Catchy Name
- Support from your University Department
- Support from your Students' Union

If you need some help, talk to your head of department or the person who oversees societies at the Students' Union. Alternatively, contact the RSC for further help and advice: networks@rsc.org

Committee

The Committee is the driving force behind the ChemSoc. Therefore, it is vital to have people who want to be a part of the Committee and ensure that they are in the appropriate roles. The Committee members are encouraged to join the RSC.

Roles

- *President/Chair:* This person needs to be able to guide the Committee, keep them motivated and ensure that everyone is pulling their weight. A good chair will guide discussion, not lead it.
- *Secretary:* They need to be well-organised as they will be responsible for the agenda/minutes, arranging meetings and events. The Committee may wish to appoint a Minutes Secretary to support the Secretary too.
- *Treasurer:* They need to have a good head for figures as they will be responsible for the finances, including looking after the accounts and getting funding. They will also need to be able to sell the society to potential sponsors.
- *Year Reps:* They should be well-known within their year so that your message will get back to the year groups. Endeavour to have a healthy mix between undergraduates and postgraduates.
- *RSC Liaison:* The vital link between your ChemSoc, the RSC and the SCS Network.
- *Staff:* A member of staff gives your Committee credibility and enables more communication to the rest of the staff in the department.
- *Other roles include:* Social Rep, Minutes Secretary, Sports Rep, Magazine Editor, Publicity Rep, Webmaster/designer.

Teamwork and good organisation are essential if your Committee is going to be a success.

The Liaison Officer

The RSC Liaison Officer will:

- act as a link between your ChemSoc, your university department and the RSC
- keep in contact with other ChemSocs by requesting their contact details
- liaise with the RSC Local Section Committee via the Younger Member Representative
- be responsible for promoting the RSC and its membership.
- ensuring that RSC information and news is communicated within their university department

At the end of the year the Liaison Officer will ensure that information is passed on to the incoming committee.

Committee members can be nominated by other ChemSoc members. If there is more than one nomination received, then the position can go up for election. Some societies hold an Annual General Meeting (AGM) at which the new Committee is voted for by members of the society. Other societies choose to form the Committee of their own accord. Either way is acceptable but remember that elected Committee members carry a greater legitimacy and are far more accountable to their members. If you are appointing a Committee, make sure it is fair. A Committee with the impression of being a clique of friends will not attract many members.

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Meetings

Meetings are essential for ensuring that the Committee is communicating and they should be held on a regular basis e.g. once a week/fortnight.

Agendas:

The meeting will have more of a structure if you draw up an agenda beforehand. Send an email to all Committee members asking if they have any items for the agenda. Keeping to the agenda helps to cover all the necessary items and will hopefully keep the meeting short.

Guidelines for putting together an agenda:

Give full information as to the date, time and venue of the meeting.

Item 1 – receive apologies for those who are unable to attend the meeting.

Item 2 – to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. This is to ensure that everyone is happy with the content. Should any corrections be needed, they should be made on the copy in the minute folder.

The Chair should sign and date the minutes when everyone is satisfied with the content.

Item 3 – receive matters arising from the previous meeting.

Item 4 – receive matters at the discretion of the Chair.

AOB – ‘Any other business’

The date and venue of the next meeting should always be included on the agenda.

The Chair should be consulted when drawing up the agenda and all accompanying papers should be approved. The agenda and supporting papers should be sent to all members of the Committee, plus any invitees or speakers, well before the meeting.



Venue:

The venue is very important when deciding where to hold your meeting. It's worth noting that having your meeting in the pub may seem like a good idea, however, you probably won't decide on anything more important than who's getting the next round of drinks!

Minutes:

Taking minutes is a good way to keep everyone on the Committee well informed. Alternatively, action based spreadsheets may prove more reader friendly.

Guidelines for taking minutes:

- Give the name of the Committee, the date and venue of the meeting.
- List those present at the meeting, giving the titles of Chair and Secretary after the appropriate names.
- List those who gave apologies for not attending the meeting.
- Minutes should always be in past tense. They should be kept brief, without losing the sense of the discussion.
- Matters agreed should always be clearly stated and, where appropriate, action points should be included. These points ensure that everyone knows what they are meant to be doing.
- Generally speaking, where there is discussion, it is not usual to 'name names'. It is sufficient to say that 'the Committee agreed'.
- Minutes need to be approved by the Chair before circulation. It is also courteous to allow speakers to approve their section of the minutes, once written.
- Remember to send copies of the minutes to all those present at the meeting (and all those who should have been there). It would probably be easiest to have an email circulation list.
- It is useful to publish the minutes in the department. This keeps everyone informed about what you are doing and maintains the profile of the society.
- All the minutes should be kept in a folder as a permanent record. They should be handed from Committee to Committee as they will provide a useful record of what has happened over the past year and what has been successful.

You may find it simpler to put together an action based spreadsheet. The spreadsheet should include agreed actions that each Committee member is to undertake before the next meeting.

Finance

ChemSoc Membership Fees

Most of a society's funding will come from their membership fees. The amount you charge is up to you but generally the annual fee is between £3 and £5. The fees can either be charged annually or they can be a one-off payment to cover the duration of the course: for example, a life membership of £10.

NB: Remember that a life membership fee covers a 3-4 year period, so you will need to reflect this in the annual budget to ensure that you do not get a deficit over the later years of membership.

RSC Grants

In order to help you fund an event or lecture, grants may be available from the RSC. The RSC does not automatically provide a grant upon registration of your ChemSoc but instead, you can apply online at: www.rsc.org/chemsoc/grants

a) Lecture/Event Grants

A special grant of up to £100 per academic year may be available to help ChemSocs stage an RSC lecture/event. For ideas on lectures, see the RSC Presenter List at: <http://www.rsc.org/presenterlist>

b) Additional Grants

There are a number of additional grants which may be available for ChemSocs to bid for to help host bigger events/lectures/projects. There are also other departments in the RSC which may be able to provide additional funding. Additional grants can be applied for on the website.

Conditions of application

- The event should be designated as 'The Royal Society of Chemistry Lecture/Event'.
- The event should promote both chemistry and the RSC as well as the ChemSoc, and help recruit new members.

Students Union

You may be able to get funding from the Students Union but do be aware that different SUs have different rules. Generally, if your society is affiliated to the SU, they will allocate you a budget and this may vary each year. They will hold the account and only certain members, usually the Treasurer and the President, will have access to it. The signatures of both these officials will be required to make a claim and never assume that the SU will reimburse you for any expenditure.

Departments and External Funding

Other sources of funding include:

- Your chemistry department
- External companies that have research contacts in your department
- Local companies
- National companies

Approach these companies and ask them whether they would like to provide any funding or assistance to your society. If so, you can promote their company at your events.

Larger companies often get requests for funding so don't be disheartened if your request is rejected. Instead, send them a polite reply thanking them for their attention and this may work wonders in the future if they keep your letter on file.

Doing it alone

Some Student Unions may wipe your account slate clean during the summer, which means that if you have funds left over, you may lose them. Therefore, it is worth knowing that you are entitled to hold your account at a high street bank. There are certain advantages to having a separate account; for a start, you can keep funds that you have made over the year. You will need to do some research about which bank has the best deal and there is no guarantee that the bank will give you an account. Most importantly, if you do get into financial difficulties with a private bank account, you are the one that has to sort it out.

This option is for advanced societies and the RSC can accept no responsibility for any consequences to the society incurred from this information.



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Events

One of the main activities of a chemical society is to organise events. These can be a mixture of both social and formal events. Try to have one or two events per month in addition to one main event per term.

Ideas for events

- Boat Trip
- Lecture followed by reception and buffet
- Go-Karting
- Summer BBQ
- "Go Ape" outdoor activity event
- Chocolate tasting evening
- Chemistry Bingo
- Football/Rounders match/league
- Christmas Dinner
- Industry Visits
- Theme Park Trip
- Arrange a fun chemistry show for ChemNet A-Level students
- Themed fancy dress party
- University Challenge against another local university ChemSoc
- Careers Presentations from industry representatives
- Cheese and Wine evening
- Stand at Freshers Fair
- Raise money for charity (eg. Children in Need, Comic Relief)
- Lunchtime cake stall to raise funds for ChemSoc
- Horse/Dog Racing
- Offer a tutoring/mentoring/buddy service
- Book sales

Lectures

Planning:

Lectures need to be planned about 3 months in advance as speakers can get booked up very early. To avoid confusion, only have one person who makes all contact with the speaker. You may also want to leave a telephone number in the department where they can contact you. When contacting the speaker, give them as many details about the talk as possible including:

- The location and time of the talk
- The length of the talk and whether the presenter is willing to take questions
- The level of the audience (i.e. will non-chemists attend)
- What facilities will be available
- What expenses you will be able to afford (eg. their petrol, accommodation etc)

Send out a reminder and a map about 2 weeks in advance of the talk.

On the day:

Make sure the room is set up, the equipment is working and that there is someone to meet the speaker. The Chair may want to open the event by introducing the speaker, and bring it to an end, particularly if the speaker is exceeding the specified time. Don't forget to thank the speaker, you may want to take them out for a meal and also send them a letter of thanks. Don't forget that there is also an RSC fund available for these type of events.

Social Events

It's important that you organise events that your members want, so try and have events that appeal to the majority by making them novel and original. If past events have been successful, talk to the people who organised them. Ensure events can at least break-even, otherwise there is a danger of losing a lot of your funds. You need to plan the event thoroughly including tickets, cost, venue and timing. Be accurate with your costings so as to avoid any unpleasant surprises. Have regular meetings to check the status of the event and don't be afraid to form sub-committees, especially for the big events. Remember to choose the right date for your event. Don't clash with other society events or big national sporting fixtures e.g. The FA Cup Final!

The RSC would like to encourage ChemSocs to organise joint events with other ChemSocs, especially those ChemSocs in the same Regional area. Contact details for other ChemSocs can be requested by emailing networks@rsc.org

Following the event, the ChemSoc is requested to send a short summary of the event along with any photos to networks@rsc.org. We may choose to produce an article based on this information for publication in RSC News!

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Publicity

Publicity is essential if your society and its events are going to be a success. There are many methods you can use:

- Posters
- Flyers
- Word of mouth
- Department TV Screens
- Email
- Announcements in lectures and labs
- Notice board space
- Contacting other institutions, local schools etc.
- Putting it up on your web site (or department web site) and VLE (Virtual Learning Environment)

Whatever method you choose, the advertising needs to be attention-grabbing.

You also need to get the timing of your publicity right. If you advertise too early, people will forget about the event by the time it arrives but if you advertise too late, people will already have other things to do.

ChemSoc Web Site

There is no better way of keeping your members informed about forthcoming events than a regularly updated web site. Most societies have a Committee member that has the technical skills to set up a web site. You will have to negotiate with your department the possibility of linking your web site with the department web site.

If you do have technical difficulties, there are various people that should be able to help you:

- The member of staff who is responsible for updating the departmental web site
- The university computer department
- Other societies at your university
- Other chemical societies in the SCS Network



Information on the web

You may like to think about setting up your own webpage linked to your University website or, you could set up your a group using 'Facebook' like several ChemSocs and RSC Younger Members networks have done.

Did you know there is a Facebook Group named, 'The Royal Society of Chemistry glow-in-the-dark Biro Appreciation Society'? Why not join this group and share your ideas with other ChemSocs!

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Recruitment of new RSC members

New Members

There are 2 main events at the start of term where you can recruit new members:

1. Department Registration
2. Freshers' Fair

The Department and Registration

Don't wait for the freshers to arrive, you can include a letter with the welcome packs that the department send out. You could also include a list of benefits of membership and a membership form. If you send correspondence to the freshers before they arrive at university, they will be aware of ChemSoc before they arrive!

Once the freshers do arrive, you could set up a recruitment table in the department during registration. This will guarantee you a fairly captive audience of students and once one student is convinced, the rest should follow. Try to give members something for their money such as a membership card or welcome pack and, don't forget- there are other years who will be in the department to register.

Freshers' Fair

This is one of the first events of term and it's where you can make the most impact. It's also an important event as the students are there to join societies and are keen and enthusiastic to get involved. As the freshers fair is usually at the beginning of term, you will need to do some planning for this before the freshers arrive. Try and get as much organised before the summer as you can. Allocate the various jobs such as setting up the stall and distributing the resources to your Committee early enough for all the preparations to be completed on time. Make sure your stall stands out – sweets are good for attracting people.

Freebies

To help you attract new members and promote your society and the RSC, there are freebies that you can apply for. These include banners, posters, leaflets and pens. You can request a box of freebies by emailing: networks@rsc.org

The First Event

The first event you hold is 'make or break'. Therefore, it needs to be good and it needs to be held as soon as possible after Freshers' Week. Try to make it appeal to all years and promote it throughout the department.

The Royal Society of Chemistry – A Guide

The Royal Society of Chemistry is the professional body for chemical scientists and has over 46,500 members worldwide. The RSC aims to be modern, energetic and proactive in order to shape the future for chemical scientists.

Members

Anyone can be a member of the Royal Society of Chemistry all you need is an interest in the chemical sciences.

The RSC:

- Helps chemical sciences students and supports the Student Chemical Society Network
- Confronts the issues that will affect your future and your career
- Is the driving force behind chemical science education at all levels and ensures people are equipped to practise chemistry competently.
- Raises the awareness and understanding of the role and value of the chemical sciences.
- Is active in all areas of chemical science – from pure research to its application in business
- Maintains vital links with government, industry and academia

Benefits of RSC Membership

Join us for only £16 a year!

Becoming a member of the RSC provides you with a whole range of benefits:

Membership benefits

- **Local, national and international networks**
Develop your networking skills and personal contacts through the RSC networks and attend various conferences, meetings and events organised by these groups.
- **Monthly copy of Chemistry World**
Our award-winning chemical science magazine.
- **Careers advice tailored for chemists**
Advice from experts tailored to chemical scientists at all stages of their career.
- **Industrial placement database**
Exclusive online access to an extensive list of placement providers.
- **Chemical Enquiry Helpdesk**
Ask any question relating to chemistry, and receive a fast and accurate response.
- **Chemistry Centre – including The Virtual Library**
Access to the largest collection of chemical science information in Europe including books, journals and online databases.
- **Funding opportunities exclusive to RSC members**
Conference bursaries, travel grants and awards.
- **Huge discounts**
*Up to 85% off all RSC publications.
Discounts from other publishers, including 30% off Wiley Blackwell books and 25% off Oxford University Press chemistry titles including primers.
Special offers on car hire, hotels and many other lifestyle benefits.*
- **Events in your area**
Subsidised events designed specifically for younger members.
- **Interest groups**
Access to scientific interest groups covering all areas of the chemical sciences.
- **Credibility**
Membership of a professional body demonstrates your continued interest in the chemical sciences to future employers.

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RSC News

RSC News is the newsletter for all RSC members. It has articles on the RSC and its activities including details of local events, conferences and careers advice. Contributions are always welcome, so if you would like to submit an article; perhaps on something that your ChemSoc has recently organised, or on a more general chemistry-based issue, then please contact networks@rsc.org. Articles should ideally have accompanying pictures/photos.

Managing your personal development

Whatever stage of your career, the RSC has a range of resources and qualifications to help you to identify and develop your skills.

Undergraduate Skills Record (USR)

The USR is a framework for recording skills and development to be used throughout your undergraduate study. It contains a number of sections including a Skills Audit, a Skills Profile and Career Planning.

www.rsc.org/USR

ChemNet Ambassador Scheme

ChemNet, the RSC's network for 16-18-year olds, offers UK schools and colleges the opportunity to invite ChemNet Ambassadors (young chemical scientists) to visit and help promote careers in chemistry to post-16 students.

ChemNet Ambassadors can provide real inspiration to A-level students and it is a rewarding experience. Find out more by emailing chemnet@rsc.org

Student Chemical Societies

With over 30 Student Chemical Societies in universities across the UK and Ireland, the ChemSoc Network is an ideal way to get involved with RSC activities. visit: www.rsc.org/studentnetwork

Employee Profiles

A qualification in the chemical sciences opens doors to a wide range of career opportunities. As well as practical knowledge of the subject, chemical science students develop many other useful skills. Find out more about some of these by accessing profiles of people working in a variety of areas.

www.rsc.org/profiles

Once you graduate, you may be eligible to apply for professional membership and in doing so, you will gain these additional benefits:

- Designatory Letters to use after your name
- Start working towards the Chartered Chemist status which is the essential professional qualification
- Continue to enhance your skills by using our Continuous Professional Development programme.

There is more information about the RSC and membership on our web site: www.rsc.org

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Other RSC Networks

The RSC has a lot of networks set up throughout the UK and Ireland. The most beneficial contacts for you are:

1. Your Local Section

Local Sections are geographical divisions of the RSC's membership which organise events and networking opportunities for RSC members in their local area. There are 35 Local Sections in the British Isles each with their own varied programme of activities. To find out more about attending events and getting involved visit:

www.rsc.org/localsections

Some Committees have a Younger Member Representative or have close contact with the local ChemSocs. This contact ensures that the needs of younger members are represented. If you want more information about contacts in your local section, please email: networks@rsc.org

2. RSC Representatives

RSC Representatives are the main point of contact between the RSC and its members in the workplace. RSC Representatives are appointed in a wide variety of organisations in the chemical science community and play a vital role in ensuring information is disseminated efficiently to members. To find your local RSC Representative, or for information on becoming a Rep, visit: www.rsc.org/rscreps

3. ChemNet

RSC ChemNet is the network for 16-18 year old students in schools and colleges throughout the UK. ChemNet members are offered careers information as well as information about the chemical sciences and the opportunity to take part in industry and university visits, as well as other chemistry based events. Many of these events will offer excellent opportunities for ChemSocs and Younger Members to get involved in outreach activities.

If you would like to get involved with ChemNet events, visit: www.rsc.org/chemnet

4. Younger Members' Network

The Younger Members Network provides opportunities for younger RSC members to get involved with the RSC and form new links to widen their contact base. This network is primarily aimed at RSC members in the early stages of their careers. To find out about upcoming Younger Member activities visit: www.rsc.org/youngermembers

General Assembly

The RSC's General Assembly is held in November each year. All ChemSoc Presidents in the SCS Network will receive an invitation. During the General Assembly, they have an opportunity to learn more about the RSC, discuss any relevant issues, give feedback on current services and suggest new services. In addition they can meet other ChemSoc Presidents as well as various RSC members and potentially create many new contacts to enhance networking opportunities.

Help and Advice

You can find out lots more information about the RSC and what we do on our website: www.rsc.org

If you have any questions about the SCS Network and how the RSC can help, contact The Networks Team at: networks@rsc.org