

Physics Societies Forum 2017- A Reflection

The first Annual Physics Societies Forum took place at the University of Leeds during the weekend of March 25/26. Physics societies that are affiliated with the Institute of Physics or societies that have gained an affiliation recently came to this meeting. To name a few, student representatives from the Oxford, UCL, University of Manchester, University of Leeds, University of Nottingham, University of Strathclyde (SCOPE), University of St Andrews, University of Sheffield, University of Swansea, University of Loughborough, University of Leicester, University of North Cumbria, and two representatives from the Republic of Ireland (University College Dublin) came to the meeting. I attended the meeting on behalf of SCOPE. It seems postgraduate students from the University of Leeds and the Oxford along with us have an active postgraduate student participation.

The University of Leeds folks arranged an informal welcome night for the visitors from Scotland and Wales on Friday evening. On Saturday, the welcome talk was given by Ben Fernando (first year PhD student at Oxford) who chairs the University Student Network. Dr Alex Brabbs (IOP representative) gave a talk about how students (both undergraduates and postgraduates) can make most of their IOP membership. In particular, I found this session really useful. Professor Rene Oudmaijer was the guest speaker. He talked about the Department of Physics & Astronomy at the University of Leeds and the stellar evolution. Student representatives from all above mentioned universities presented about their societies and their involvement with the campus community both on Saturday and Sunday. It turns out that funding a student society is the most challenging task and also a common problem. Here is the summary of all physics societies' presentations:

The primary source of funding for all societies is the student union. In addition, to raise funds, physics societies did/do the following:

- Oxford has external eternal sponsor named Metaswitch.
- The UCL arranges an annual boat party for 250 students.
- The University of Sheffield hosted a charity quiz.
- The University of Leeds sells merchandise (hoodies). Delegates also managed to host a pub-social at the Bierkeller bar which donated £1000 to their fund.
- The University of Nottingham arranged a barbeque to raise £700, especially from the faculty members. They have an external sponsor named the UKSEDS Leonardo.

- Folks from the Loughborough and St. Andrews sell merchandise too.

A few societies managed to arrange a trip to the CERN but funding their trips were a pretty mix of the student union and from the attendees own interests. Societies that arranged a trip to the CERN are: the University of Leeds, University of Manchester, University of Leicester, University of Swansea, and the University of Nottingham. In terms of outreach activities, it seems only University of Sheffield and the Loughborough (LEGO robotics) do something similar to us where the audience get to check their understanding by participating in various hands-on activities.

Dr Brabbs said that any affiliated society and the IOP member should be able to apply for a travel grant for organising a trip that involves exploration in physics. The maximum allocated fund for this is £500. She also talked about the branch structure of the IOP is under revision now. All members will receive an update about the voting rights open to apprentice in the middle of June this year. Students representatives from the St Andrews proposed the IOP to arrange career talks for the 3rd year and 4th year undergraduates so that they will have a better idea on what to expect when they graduate. They also asked the IOP to publish a comprehensive list (based on qualification) of openings, which would essentially be very similar to American Institute of Physics.

It was a fun weekend despite the fact that I had to ask about the deposit money on Sunday. Mr Luke Higgins (the Secretary of the University Student Network and PhD student representative of the University of Leeds) wrote in his e-mail to SCOPE president that any attendee should get his/her deposit money upon arrival. We stayed in the Discovery Inn Hotel, which is not the best of its kind especially it seemed the security was a bit sketchy. Apart from accommodation, I had to pay for my food except lunch, which was sponsored by the University of Leeds. I think it will be more effective if we send an undergraduate member of the Strathclyde Physics Society to this kind of event because s/he will have a better idea of difficulties experienced by an undergraduate student society.