

Astrobiology Society UoM: Rethinking the Mission of University Student Societies

Joaquin Perez-Grande^{1,2}, Silvia Castillo^{1,2}, Marco Del Val Fernández^{1,2}, Salma Malaika^{1,2}, Salomé Urien^{1,2}, and Luna Noguera^{1,2}

¹Astrobiology Society UoM (Steve Biko Building, Oxford Rd, M13 9PL, Manchester, United Kingdom)

²University of Manchester (Oxford Rd, M13 9PL, Manchester, United Kingdom).

As the leading astrobiology university student society, run by students, for students, at the University of Manchester Astrobiology Society we are embarked on a mission to spread the word about astrobiology, enrich the university community by delivering high-quality events and resources, and create a global network of students and young professionals that will become the astrobiologists of tomorrow. Ever since our foundation, we have gone beyond the classic student society activities by inviting renowned researchers, creating a dedicated careers program, or even organizing the first student-led online congress at the university.

In terms of our resources, we provide outreach and writing opportunities, weekly featured articles, publications and news, a list of astrobiology-related courses, and a map of institutions where to study or research astrobiology, a volunteering scheme open for everyone, and more.

The events we deliver are mainly research updates from leading academics with our Singularity Talks, together with special access to congresses, workshops for students, trips to UK facilities and conferences, movie nights, coffee discussions, socials, and our flagship event: 'Universal Dialogues', an annual Astrobiology Expert Panel where we invite world-famous speakers to discuss about life, its origins, and its future. In its first edition, it brought together over 700 attendees from all over the world and six panelists, with Nobel Laureates Didier Queloz and Richard J. Roberts among them.

We also have big plans for the future: creating a bursary for undergraduate students seeking astrobiology-related work experience, bridging the gap between undergraduates and academia at their home university, assess the extent of astrobiology in the UK with a national survey, or even laying out the foundations of the first Bachelor's in Astrobiology in the country are among our top priorities.

In addition, our innovation team always ensures that we use the latest tools and technologies to keep thriving in our ever-evolving world. In this sense, we have developed an all-in-one website where people interested in astrobiology can discover, learn and connect. Among other things, it allows them to stay up to date with the latest research in the field, read or write for our online blog, obtain a student membership, discover how to become an astrobiologist, join our in-person or online weekly events, explore our community. Furthermore, we have also built a global community using social media, with almost 3000 followers spread over 17 countries and over 35,000 monthly impressions.

By leading by example, we want to spark change among student societies and for them to redefine their boundaries and to achieve bigger. Joining AbSciCon 2022 will help us pursue this goal, grow our network, share expertise, and learn from others.

Our ultimate goal is to join forces with like-minded organizations and future astrobiology student societies to work towards the same goal: showcase the potential of astrobiology as a discipline and as a must-known in order to discover what we are, where do we come from, and where are we heading to.