

## IET On Campus: Robot Wars tournaments

The IET On Campus student group at Bristol University, also known as Bristol University Electrical and Electronic Engineering Society (BEEES), regularly holds Robot Wars tournaments. These have given the committee members experience in transferable skills as well as providing the society with fame both in and outside the university.

### How did the event idea come about?

The idea of running a Robot Wars tournament at Bristol University was first discussed during an IET On Campus/BEEES committee meeting, when members, many of which grew up in the nineties, began talking about their childhood obsession with the TV show. Sadly not on air since 2004, Robot Wars quickly became a buzz topic within the group, with the members considering ways to bring such a tournament to life on campus.

### How did the On Campus group approach this idea?

After some research the group discovered rules for an 'antweight' version of the competition, which was more suitable to a student-sized budget and easier for people to compete, and from there it didn't take long for the event to be developed.

*"Once the idea was sparked we started looking online for inspiration. We found other universities had run similar events so took some of their ideas on board,"* says Sam Walder, past president of BEEES.

*"Organisation was achieved through weekly formal meetings and less formal meetings in between for those keen to discuss smaller aspects and ideas. We also used of Trello, which has been a really useful tool,"* he explains.

## How did they develop and promote the event?

In order to make the event accessible to as many people as possible the committee decided to supply entrants with the most expensive component – the remote controller, allowing competitors to build a robot for under £10 using university tools such as 3D printers. In addition, to make it appeal to even more people, they made sure the event was as much a show for spectators as a competition for those taking part.

*“In the committee we had some people building the arena, some doing promotion and sign-ups, some ordering parts and others working on room hire and health and safety – it was a big team effort,”*

explains past BEEES secretary Joe Brown.

This is all well and good but the team knew without promotion the event might not be a success, so they also worked hard on getting the message out there.

*“Promotion was crucial in order to get enough teams competing and a good crowd of spectators,”* Joe continues.

*“We had posters up all over the university, a regularly updated Facebook event page and a booth manned by committee members during lunch breaks.”*

*“The best was the stall – we had a video of what we anticipated happening as well as robots on show,”* says Sam.

*“This allowed us to talk to people passing by and get them interested.”*

*“We also found word of mouth was important,”* adds Joe.

*“People would tell their friends that we were recreating the show and the nostalgia hit really helped!”*

## What learnings did they take from the event?

Putting together this event was a real learning experience for the IET On Campus group, as members discovered the hidden costs related to hosting such things, learning that a fair paid entry scheme was one way to make it affordable.

*“We also found out quite a bit about the health and safety involved with having very high speed spinning metal blades hitting things,”*

Sam laughs.

## What skills have they gained from this activity that they can add to their CV?

The committee members came away with some great experience in event management, teamwork, organisation and communication – brilliant to add to the CV.

## What feedback did they get from students who participated?

The participants even felt that they received some CV boosters thanks to taking part, as Joe highlights.

*“Taking part encouraged learning new skills and inter-departmental collaboration as most teams had members from different kinds of engineering or science subjects.”*

## How has this activity helped the On Campus group?

The society itself also gained a lot thanks to the popularity of the event, which has boosted IET On Campus and BEEES' recognition both in and outside the university, helping the group to secure sponsorship for future events as well as inspire new students.

*“BEEES is only a few years old but thanks to Robot Wars we're widely known at the university – we're the student union's featured society! We also have a big online presence as the videos from our events have totalled over 50 thousand views on YouTube,”* enthuses Joe.

## Will they run the event again next year?


The popularity of the Robot Wars tournament has meant that the event is now a regular feature on the society's calendar. Run biannually, the committee continues to invest in the arena as well as hardware associated with the event, and they certainly recommend the idea to other On Campus student communities.

*“We have so much fun doing this,”* says Sam.

*“We really want to encourage other universities to consider holding Robot Wars tournaments of their own – we'd love to have an inter-uni competition!”*

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