

Students set for Pongathon Finals battle

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Students will be fighting for university ping pong bragging rights when they go head-to-head for glory at the National Pongathon University Challenge Finals.

Teams from Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire, Queen Mary University of London, UCLAN, Oxford Brookes and City University of London will be slugging it out to be crowned champions on Tuesday, April 28.

The event takes place at Richmix in Bethnal Green Road, Shoreditch, London, from 6-11pm and is free to attend.

Pongathon University Challenge (PUC), now into its second year, has been developing thriving social ping pong communities in campuses across the UK. Providing a healthy, fun and social environment through weekly drop-in and play events, PUC plays an important part of the university's social curriculum, introducing a new generation of students, regardless of skill or sporting prowess to participate in the wonderful game.

The teams earned the right to compete in PUC finals by topping their league tables at their respective universities.

The finals will be part of a fantastic night of ping pong fun including DJs, bar action, exhibition and challenge play from Pongathon pro players, social tournaments, crazy visuals and the 'Pongbot Challenge', in which a ping pong robot will take on all-comers over 60 seconds.

Pongathon University Challenge is funded by Sport England through the small grants initiative in partnership with Table Tennis England and was launched March 2014. PUC currently has 8 universities in the national network with more joining each term.

Find out more about Pongathon: www.pongathonunichallenge.com / www.facebook.com/pongathonuc / **Twitter:** @pongathonuc

In the first year alone PUC attracted a participation figure of 4,293 students with an averages of 34 students attending the weekly social ping events many of whom have been enjoying the game for the first time and returning to play on a regular basis.

This year's competition promises to be even bigger and better.

Alice Walton, Sports Participation Officer at Oxford Brookes says of the scheme: "Pongathon has helped improve the enrichment activities at Oxford Brookes, because it provided the students with an opportunity to socialise with other students they would not usually interact with.

"PUC has helped introduce ping pong to some 'non-sporty' students and encouraged them into the sports centre. It has definitely enabled some of the activators to develop their skill sets. We would definitely recommend PUC to other universities because the set-up of the programme is really well organised, and the resources required from the university are minimal because PUC provide everything necessary to have a successful programme.

"Pongathon provides training to students in all aspects of event management including marketing and social media, allowing students to improve upon their natural skills, whilst learning new ones and incorporating them as part of their coursework or case studies for their CVs or voluntary work programmes."

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