

Year Report Bloom 2023/2024

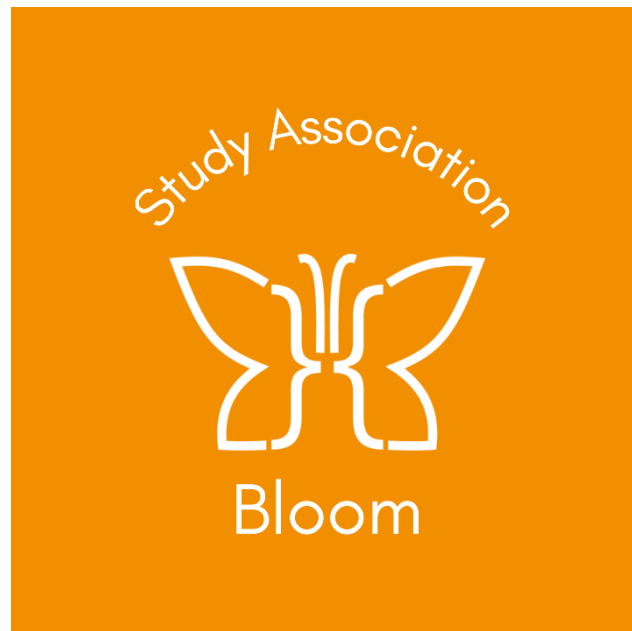


Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Introduction.....	3
Transparency	4
Community.....	5
Cooperation with the programme	7
International Orientation.....	8
Social Safety	8
Personal reflections.....	10
Jelle (Chair).....	10
Akanksha (Secretary).....	11
Rosa (Treasurer)	12
Liss (Internal Study Commissioner and Vice Chair)	13
Martyna (Internal Social Commissioner)	14
Karolina (Internal Promotional Commissioner)	15
Final Message	15

Introduction

Dear Reader,

In our policy plan from already a year ago (we too can't believe how much time has flown!) we thanked a variety of people for the foundations that we could work upon. Now that our year will be over on the 16th of October, it is time to reflect on what we contributed to these foundations, and what we did throughout the year.

It has been a year of finding and defining Bloom's identity. Of officialising all that must be officialised, while creating an environment and events where Computational Social Science students can thrive in multiple aspects of life. Of presenting Bloom to the (university) world.

A year ago, we outlined our plans for the upcoming year. Most of these goals we reached, some we did not. It is however without doubt that we say that we wouldn't have been able to reach any of these without the help from our Audit Committee, Advisory Board and Praesidium who have each guided us through the year, and especially our Committee Heads and active members who have given it their all to organize fantastic events with the little previous knowledge that there was. But most of all we want to thank all the members who have been to our events the past year. Without you, there would be no Bloom.

In the following, you will find our reflections on both general and individual goals of the year. For the sake of preventing too long of a document by having a lot of repetition, we have decided not to include too many details of the first half-year. For those curious, these can be found in our Half Year Report. Here we will focus on the second half of the year, and our general feelings about the year as a whole.

We are grateful for the opportunity we got as the very first board of Bloom. It was a responsibility that we have all felt throughout the year, and we hope to have lived up to all the expectations. Finally, we want to wish the 2nd board of Bloom the best of luck, and we hope you will do (even) better than we did.

Keep Blooming,

The 1st board of Study Association Bloom

Transparency

In the first official year of the association, we have tried to ensure transparency to the maximum possible extent. There was a monthly newsletter to inform and update the members on Bloom's events and achievements. There has been an open Bloom Room for members to visit any time they want. All necessary documents were uploaded on our website for members and multiple feedback points have been set up for member queries and feedback.

"Members will have open access to the statutes, bylaws, social safety plan of the association, and the data-privacy policy. Along with that, committee members will have access to the whitepapers of the committees to get a better understanding of how the committees functioned in the past year(s)."

- All these documents were uploaded on the official Bloom website (<https://www.bloom-uva.nl/documents>). The committee whitepapers are uploaded to the committee drives and accessible to the head and/or members.

"This newsletter will inform the members about important ongoing conversations in the association, important events that occurred that month and upcoming events."

- In the first year after setting up the association, we also created our monthly newsletter - Bloom's Big 5. Currently, it has almost 60 subscribers. The newsletter consisted of rant sections, photos and a storytelling approach to make the newsletter more enjoyable to read. The sign-up process for the newsletter this year was separate from the regular membership sign-up process. However, new members will be able to subscribe to the newsletter when signing-up to be a member.

"-- have an open Bloom Room with at least one board member present regularly. This will facilitate communication between the board and the members."

- We had an open Bloom room with office hours of the current board members put up on the door. The Bloom room was moved once from the first floor of the JK building to the basement to ensure it was close to the general CSSci space. Because the room was relatively far away from the Common Room, not a lot of members made use of it. With the new room on the 3rd floor being much closer to the common room, we recommend the second board to take their board hours more serious again.

"-- voting on important matters"

- Voting was done to pass the motion of a half-term membership during the mid-year general assembly. Furthermore, voting was also done to elect the nominated second board. Members have also voted on their trip destination preferences and merch designs.

"Feedback forms will be sent after events to get a better understanding of what the members thought of the events. General feedback forms will be sent to understand the members' opinions on the functioning of the association."

- A half-year member feedback form was sent out to the members at the end of February to gather their opinion on the events the association organised. For the later half of the year we planned activities while keeping the answers to this form in mind. Things we used from this form include how long in advance to promote events, and at which times events should start. There is also an anonymous feedback point on the website for members to provide feedback.

Community

Bloom tried to facilitate a community feeling to the best of its abilities in the first official year of the association. We provided opportunities for members to bond as well as tried to be available often for members to have the opportunity to chat, give feedback, and provide help. The following paragraphs present our goals from the beginning of the year.

“The association will organise social events [...], at least one educational event [...], and at least one career-related event [...] per semester. With this goal, we want to make sure that a diverse range of opportunities is offered.”

- Each committee organised at least one event (but in the case of most committees multiple). These events included a variety of different (themed) borrels, trips to Antwerp and The Hague, Trivia and Board game nights, workshops around venture capitalism and startups, documentary nights with related discussions and magazine and merch release events. Different events attracted different groups of people, which showed that there is interest for various niches within the association.

“We will send out feedback forms to the members of the association after events, where they will get the chance to express their thoughts about it and give recommendations”

- We did not send many feedback forms, there was one at the end of the first semester. We did collect feedback from individuals during and after the events, as well as reflected on them within the committees for the most part. We decided against sending one after each event, as it would have been overwhelming and probably not as popular. However, sadly, we didn't send one at the end of the year, which should have happened. We recommend future boards to do this early, as we were late and decided against sending it out during the summer holidays.

“The number of attendees will be measured (e.g. with sign-up forms) so that the board can be sure that the events are still of interest to the members.”

- Only on a few events we actually measured the number of attendees with sign-up forms. Although, on each event there was at least one board member present who could estimate the interest rate, no actual data was gathered and sometimes that resulted in similar events being organized later on in the year with a similarly low attendance. Of course, the goal is not always to have as many attendees as possible, but it still is an important factor, especially for events that cost a lot of effort and/or money.

“[...] there will always be non-alcoholic drinks provided following our social safety plan. In the case of food, if possible, we will accommodate different dietary restrictions.”

- We always provided non-alcoholic drink options at events that included drinks and food. However, in the case of the latter, we were not always as diverse. For the most part it could have been improved by a more in-depth shopping lists made beforehand.

“We decided to have an open and simple committee member recruitment process so that everyone can easily join the committee(s) of their choosing.”

- This decision was especially important at the beginning to get people involved and excited about the association. This gave a chance for members to get familiar with the association. However, with some time passing, some people stopped showing up, so to make organisational matters easier, we decided to introduce a “three meetings no-show rule”. However, while doing so we informed the members that they are free to re-

join all the committees at any time if they only decide to do so, therefore not compromising on our value of openness.

Apart from the things mentioned above, we also worked on creating the community feeling by organising a bonding for the committee members early in the year and later a photoshoot featured on Instagram and in Spill magazine. We also got thank you gifts for all committee heads and members for their work in the association.

Cooperation with the programme

Since the half-year report, we have maintained and improved our cooperation with the program through the following activities.

“[...] by working together on at least one event during the year.”

- One of the most participated events of the semester was the “Build your CSSci resume” workshop which was organised and held with support from one of the Core Lecturers - Regina. Another event organised together was the Bystander Intervention Workshop held by Our Bodies Our Voice. The resume workshop proved to be a very popular and successful event, with a lot of members from both years joining. This could indicate a need for more CSSci/work related events in future years. The Bystander Intervention workshop was less well visited, which might partly have been due to the moment it was planned at. Even though there were few people, we believe there is a lot of value for the whole community with every person who attended, and we would like to ask the next board to try and organize something similar with the program again, but to think better about the planning.

“Furthermore, we plan to invite the staff to at least one event during the year, like the pub quiz with staff members last year.”

- We have organised an End-of-Year Borrel, which staff members were invited to. Additionally, during the event, we have involved them by awarding them with Bloomies unique to their personalities as a gratitude for their efforts in building CSSci. We would do this again, but we would announce it further in advance to increase the number of staff members that are available.

“Another way to involve the staff in Bloom and bring them even closer to the students would be to create a segment in Spill.”

- In the “Dream” release of Spill, some Core Lecturers shared their childhood and current dreams, which many members found surprising and a nice way to get to know their teacher in a different way. We encourage the next board to add a similar segment to at least 1 edition of Spill during the next year.

“It is also important to us that the relationship goes both ways. This means that we will always be ready to help them out. This could be when they need input for something, help organising an event or just to help reach out to the students.”

- In regard to the protests taking place on campus, we provided our opinion on the planning of the Community Dialogue. The program listened to our ideas and opinions, and we worked them out together to find a way to discuss this tense topic in an as open and comfortable way as possible. We are thankful for being listened to, and hope that these short lines of communication will stay part of Bloom and the program.

International Orientation

In the half-year report, we explained that this ended up not being our biggest priority. Since the half-year report, we have successfully done the Language Café. This was a great opportunity for our members to learn more about each other's languages and cultures in a relaxed setting. We believe it would be valuable to test out more events that incorporate the great cultural diversity that we have in our program, to see if there is an interest. These events could be either in an educational or social setting.

Sadly, we had to cancel the trip we were planning due to a combination of factors, including the big financial risk. This was one of the hardest decisions we made during the year, and we made it not lightly, taking a lot of input from the committee as well. We hope to have learned enough from it to make it easier for next year. The main thing we believe would have prevented the cancellation was to start planning and gauging interest sooner in the year, to make the booking costs more predictable. Additionally, we would not give a poll with too many options to members about the location, to prevent members of being disappointed when their favorite location is not chosen.

Social Safety

One of our main goals has been to create a safe space within Bloom, but where possible also the CSSci community. Establishing this early hopefully created a culture that students will benefit from for many years to come.

“We aim to enable members to communicate issues by implementing (anonymous) feedback forms on our website where members can report their concerns and/or be redirected to an appropriate party.”

Since our half-year check-in, we completed our remaining goal of implementing (anonymous) feedback forms on our website where members can report their concerns and/or be redirected to an appropriate party. We now have a point for feedback where anyone can anonymously share their thoughts/questions/concerns/complaints/experiences through a Qualtrics form. This can be found under the “Contact” header on our website, within “Feedback Point”. We recommend the next board to make this feature more well known, by advertising it in multiple different ways.

“We will implement trust persons within the association, at least one internal and one external, who can act as the first point of contact for members who need someone to talk to regarding Bloom-related issues.”

Our Trust Persons system remains in place, but new Trust Persons will be chosen for the next Bloom year. Their information can still be found on the website! We now also have a drafted document outlining what steps our Trust Persons can take to help advise and guide our members when approached. This document has been given to the second board to refine and share with the new Trust Persons.

“We want to create and maintain a safe Bloom environment by ensuring that at least one board member, and ideally a trust person, will be present at Bloom events --”

This is still a difficult thing to ensure, but thus far we have had at least one board member at each event. Coordinating Trust Persons is more challenging because they are volunteers and we have many events, but we have made them accessible by having their contact information available directly on our website, and by informing members of this at GAs. We advise the next boards to, in addition to the two existing Trust Persons, appoint a board member as a third one. This should increase the presence of Trust Persons at events. Additionally, we recommend appointing a sober person for every event that includes alcohol, and make this well-known to attendants.

“We also aim to foster a low-pressure environment when it comes to activities such as drinking by, for example, offering non-alcoholic options.”

For each event throughout the year, we have continued to provide non-alcoholic options! All games involving alcohol have of course been optional, and we ensured stressing this in-person when talking with members one on one. At the same time, we recognize that a lot of our prizes for winners of events were centered around alcohol, even though there was always the option to get a non-alcoholic option. We think it might be better moving forward to find a better balance between the prizes and incentives for events. Although we are happy to have seen a lot of members having a lot of fun without drinking, we recommend putting more focus on this during the next year. This could for example be done by a simple Instagram story or post, or if needed an event around peer-pressure or alcohol consumption.

Personal reflections

Jelle (Chair)

First, I would like to once again thank everyone who has been involved in Bloom during the past year. It has been an absolute pleasure to get to know so many (active) members, and to contribute to all the great things we have achieved together. I am especially happy to have been through all the ups and downs together with Akanksha, Rosa, Liss, Martyna, Karolina, and for part of it Seb. Without them, it would have never been such a successful, instructive, useful, and most of all fun year.

Overall, I look back with a positive feeling. Of course it is not all smooth sailing, and especially the last half year has seen some struggles, which we have been able to recognize and tackle thanks to our Advisory Board and study adviser Maartje.

In our policy plan I mentioned that a big part of our year would be building and setting the association up. I am very pleased to see that after a year this has all been done. From the most basic things like having a bank account, to getting recognized by the UvA to ensure that all future boards get compensated for their work. With all these official tasks out of the way, I am sure the next chair and the next board will have even more time to make Bloom a place that all CSSci people love.

Another one of my personal goals was creating good relationships with the other study associations. The relationships we have as an association, as well as the ones I have gotten personally, have exceeded all my expectations. At the start, someone from the FvFMG called us the “puppy” of the faculty, because we were new and everyone was excited to see and get to know us. I believe that within a year we have grown from that puppy to a full-fledged member. We as a board have shown to be very capable in contributing to organizing the FvFMG events, with a personal highlight for me the Scientia Calix that I was responsible for, and our members have impressed by being relative to our size one of the most active and involved ones out there. This has already resulted in some collaborations last year and will without doubt result in even more next year.

I have also been responsible for preparing and chairing the weekly board meetings and having regular one-on-one checkups with my board members. I am sad to say that I did those less often in the second half of the year, because I felt like everyone had grown more comfortable in their roles and therefore had less of a need for them. I underestimated the importance of these talks for problems that were less role related, and since some of the board members were quicker to come to me with their struggles than others, I missed some things that caused problems that could have been prevented. I have made sure to stress the importance of these talks in my transmission, to prevent the same mistake from happening next year.

I have been the general point of contact for the program as well. I am very happy about all the communication I have had with Tommy, Barbara, Maartje and everyone else about a variety of things, including the two room movements we have had.

Finally, I started the Welcome Committee for the introduction activities for the new group of students that start in 2024. After the recruitment of committee members and creating an outline of what we wanted to do, we shifted the final responsibility to the new board, to involve them as much as possible. I stayed involved and the events went well, giving the new students a first taste of Bloom during an already intense Deprogramming Camp.

I am beyond happy with the foundations that we have all laid together and look forward to watching our child grow up even more. Bloom will always have a special place in my heart, and I look forward to contributing in a different way next year and perhaps the years after. The first year was a blast, so let's make all the future ones even better together!

Akanksha (Secretary)

I am glad to have this opportunity to reflect on how the past year went for me as the Secretary of Bloom. The past year has been exciting for me, and I could grow both personally and professionally while being a part of the board. I want to start this reflection by thanking my co-board members who made it so amazing to be a part of the board. With support from the rest of the board, I have been able to achieve the goals I had set at the start of the year in our policy plan and follow my own endeavours to establish and develop Bloom.

As the first secretary of Bloom, one of my primary goals was to set a foundation for all the administrative tasks that happen within the board. A crucial step for this was to ensure transparency within the association while safeguarding the privacy of the members. I have written the association's social and digital privacy policy statements ensuring it resonates with our members' perspectives. I hope this creates a strong foundation for the future boards. Being a member of the association from even before it was officially established, member wellbeing has been one of my most important concerns. To facilitate transparency and inclusivity among the members, I have set up Bloom's monthly newsletter – Bloom's Big 5. Through this newsletter I was able to update members on the association's achievements and events.

I believe in establishing a solid foundation for the association, enabling future boards to innovate and take on new initiatives. So far, I have created an efficient membership base on Excel which the future boards will be able to easily access and maintain. After trying different drives, I was able to implement a secure data storage system using Microsoft Teams. This involved researching the most secure methods of communication and data storage while safeguarding the privacy of our members and communicating with several other parties including the university, ICT office and other associations.

I have contributed to developing the backend system of our website, setting up anonymous feedback points and managing member sign ups and member permissions. I have helped other committees and members in website feature development and account setup.

Other hands-on administrative tasks I have been responsible for are taking minutes during meetings. Along with that, I have written and formatted several internal documents including

application timelines, brochures and internal policies. I have been able to fulfil my responsibilities and achieve goals I had set for myself in the past year.

I have trust in the second board of Bloom, and I wish them the best for their board year.

Rosa (Treasurer)

I am grateful that it happened, but I am glad it is over - well, it is almost over. This is what I answered a week ago when someone asked me how I feel about my board year. Building the bones of an association is a huge honour, but also a heavily hanging responsibility. How many things that we decided on a whim will be upheld years later, because that is how it was before?

Looking back, my biggest triumphs of last year has been creating a frame for the future treasurers. A way of making a budget, a form to apply for subsidies and providing realisations. A little bit of direction in a sea of possibilities. The financial rules of procedure, for the future treasurers to have something concrete to grasp on. But as I said, these are a frame. If something does not work, please improve it. If something does work, share it with other people.

That is what I want to leave with the new generations of Bloom - keep questioning things. Our biggest strength and weakness the first year was that there were no people to ask advice from, so we had to make it up on the go - or reach outside our immediate circle. It took a village to make the first year work. I want to thank everyone who helped make it happen. Thank you to every association from the Fv-FMG, who took the time to answer silly questions and contemplate different solutions to the same problems. Thank you to the board of Common Room for always being there. Thanks to all the committee heads, committee treasurers and all the committee members. And a special thank you to the Audit Council for answering every question that I had, helping navigate all the complications of a first-year study association.

I learned a lot from being a treasurer this year. While at glance it might be just moving money around, but these decisions surrounding where money is used are what reflects the values of the association. Are we using more money on social or educational values? What does it say when we want to keep our events free for members? How can we make sure that we use money in a way that benefits all our members? These are the questions that I also want to leave with the future boards. Always remember to critically think about the decisions you are making.

After all this, I want to end this the same way I started. With gratefulness. Thank you for the trust. Thank you for the memories. With the future years of Bloom, let's make more!

Liss (Internal Study Commissioner and Vice Chair)

Though it is difficult to believe that Bloom's first official year has come to an end, I am glad to reflect on the fun and growth that I had the chance to contribute to, and alongside that the (seemingly infinite) challenges that we faced and overcame as a board and as an association along the way. It has been wonderful to witness the creation of a wholesome space and community for students who are taking on the University of Amsterdam and Computational Social Science experience!

I am thankful to have worked alongside an incredibly dedicated group of people who developed and executed a vision for Bloom that exceeded my expectations and hopes. Despite the obstacles and issues that came with organising and managing a large group of people and events, Bloom is indeed up and running and we each got to shape it in our own unique way, together.

I am happy to say that my work on our social safety policies, plans and systems (including writing the Social Safety Policy and implementing our Internal and External Trust Persons) has helped to facilitate social safety, inclusivity and belonging within Bloom. This was an important goal of mine as I wanted to help create an environment in which our members could feel comfortable and safe.

In my role as a committee coordinator, I helped to create the space for organising a diverse range of events, which helped me reach my goal of promoting academic and career-related development for CSSci students. Memorable events on this note include the Career Build your CSSci resume workshop and the Education x SEC pub lecture on surveillance. It was impressive and rewarding to see so many students coming together as committee members and participants, and we have our active members, especially our committee heads, to thank for this, and even our CSSci staff for supporting us along the way. We had some lovely collaborative events with our fellow committees, staff, other associations and entities that helped further contribute to the development of an environment that inspires and empowers collaboration. These initiatives will be passed forward and may serve as inspiration and guidance for the upcoming years.

As a board member, I advocated for the needs of my committees and tried to ensure that they had the tools and resources to facilitate valuable initiatives for Bloom members. Although I was lucky to have two creative and independent heads, I would have loved to be able to provide even more support to them and to the committee members when needed in the form of extra helping hands. For example, Education was quite small, so it would have been nice to generate more interest to have more team members. In the future, I hope that committee communication in general improves, perhaps through the implementation and communication of clear structures on the Commissioners' behalf. Overall, I am proud of the ways that they and their members managed throughout the year and of the initiatives that were carried out as a result!

Further, I was our board's representative on the Fv-FMG Activity Planning Committee, and although this event did not end up taking place, the collaboration with the other FMG

associations and their representatives was valuable. I was also our representative on the Application Committee that selected the second board of Bloom, alongside Ella and Gideon, who I cannot thank enough for their invaluable help in ensuring and shaping the future of Bloom. I have all the faith that our (not so) baby Bloom is in the best of hands, and I am excited to see where they take us.

Here's to the first year and cheers to many more! <3

Martyna (Internal Social Commissioner)

I started the year with the following values in mind: open communication, helpfulness, inclusivity, and safety. They have guided me throughout the year, and moreover, I learned that apart from those, values like patience, independence, and vulnerability are also important for working in a study association.

Working for Bloom has been an amazing learning curve. It required a lot of figuring things out, improvisation, listening to others, speaking up and courage. I realised that there are two sides to a study association. One which is very formal, as it is an organisation, which has its rules and legal constraints and the other, which is people who are trying to have a fun and creative time next to their academic education. It was sometimes difficult to navigate that and get that message across to the members. For that reason, being a board member sometimes felt exclusive. I tried to combat that by attending the committee meetings when I could, talking to the members privately and at events and trying to encourage others to get involved. I remember at the beginning I was really afraid to make any mistakes, but as time went on, I learned that it's unavoidable and the best I can do is to learn from them (as corny as it may sound).

I reflected on the first semester in the half-year report, therefore here I will focus on how the second half of the year went. My personal objective for the summer semester was to express my gratitude to the members that contributed to Bloom as well as try to convey the message that being a part of a study association in Computational Social Science (which is a small degree) especially means working in a very community-oriented way in a flat structure. To do so, together with some of the board members we organised a committee photoshoot and I tried to make myself available in-person a lot of times (in the common areas and in meetings) and I tried to encourage a rather laid-back form of meetings/organisation, but one that is still fair to the members and keeps to the schedule and budget. I also recognised the importance of being close with the professors and helped organise events where they were invited too. To me, what Bloom is extends past just the members of the association, it's the people of CSSci who would like to contribute to doing creative and community-based work along with their studies. To end my reflection, one of my regrets during the year was not always being as familiar with some of the formalities of the association, like the bylaws or the statutes.

Hopefully, with my work I have encouraged others to be a part of Bloom and helped create a fun school year and a closer CSSci community.

Karolina (Internal Promotional Commissioner)

It is unbelievable that Bloom is now officially 1 year old. I still remember the first couple of meetings when groups of CSSci students would meet after classes or during lunch breaks to organise fun things around the association that hadn't even gotten its name yet. Receiving an opportunity to become a part of the first board as Internal Promotion Commissioner was a great honour.

The main goal and responsibility of my position was to create and establish Bloom's brand identity and website. The process and decisions behind them can be found in our policy plan and the mid-year report. I believe that the outcome has been quite satisfactory and hopefully will serve as a great foundation for the future years.

As a commissioner, my focus was to oversee two committees - Marketing and Magazine. I can never stress enough how proud and grateful I am for the active members.

As a group, we were able to accomplish so many things. To only mention the second semester, Magazine has released "Dream" edition of Spill with many fun and interesting segments which involved a very deep dive into a random topic. Or the discussions over the logo, which were brought into life by Merijn. Marketing has not only consistently promoted events, but has also created the merchandise with Vanessa's design. The long hours researching lino printing method instead of other conventional options proved to be worth the end result, making the merch sustainable, affordable, and unique for the members.

My support initially started out as helping the Committee Heads feel more comfortable in their positions, structuring the committees, and ensuring that the activities are well done. However, later on, I have helped through acting as a committee member to lighten the workload when the committee got smaller or when academic period intensified. With a lot of plans, we were able to meet almost all of them for this semester except for organising a creative event in collaboration with another committee, which unfortunately didn't end up happening due to scheduling conflicts.

Throughout this journey, I have met and become friends with the most wonderful people. Seeing their dedication in committees or/and excitement when participating in events made me realise how significant of an impact Bloom has made in our small community. It is so impressive how much we were able to achieve doing unfamiliar things with grand results.

While there are a lot of happy memories from the committee meetings and events that I will cherish, working in a board has had its rough patches. Nonetheless, with a happy end, the experience has allowed me to grow as a person and learn new skills that I will be able to share with next generations. With this, I want to wish Bloom many more and even better years!

Final Message

Thank you for reading this far, and we hope that we did you proud with Bloom's first year! Thank you to everyone who has helped create Bloom, and we wish the new and all future boards the best of luck. So, for the last time from us: Keep Blooming!

Yours always,
The 1st board of Bloom,

