

PLANNING A FORMAL

So, you want to organise a society formal, and why not?! It is a great way to bring all your members together for a celebration.

Don't underestimate how much hard work organising a well-run formal takes! UUSU are here to help, but before you start planning, there are a few things to consider.

In order that a society formal event proposal is considered for approval by SAT, the following criteria should be met.

- The society (or group of societies) should have a minimum of 50 registered members.
- The society should have delivered a minimum of one event per semester during the academic year in which the formal is proposed.

In addition to our standard event planning process (you can read more about that [here](#)) the following actions should also be completed

- Hotel/Venue contract should be made available to the Events coordinator for review before being agreed/signed.
- UUSU Events Coordinator will provide a budget template to societies which they should complete for review, outlining their projected costs and demonstrating how these costs will be met.
- Only when the above criteria and actions are met and carried out, will the events coordinator give their permission for the society to enter into a contract with the venue.

UUSU are here to help with this useful list of things to consider to ensure you have a fab night!

WHEN

- You need time to sell your tickets, there is no point in planning to sell last minute tickets in the run up to the event and then realising that campus is closed for Easter for example!

- Ask your Societies Coordinator for list of Finance payment dates for the semester so that you can work out when ticket sales will need to be closed.
- UUSU pay invoices every 2 weeks and society deadline for submission of paperwork is the Tuesday 10am of payment week.
- Hotels will want invoices paid before the night and you want to ensure you can keep ticket sales going as long as possible to get as many tickets sold - so ideally you want formal date to be held during week following a payment run.
- We are normally all fairly skint in the run up to Christmas so it might not be advisable to have an expensive formal/ social at this time.
- Student loans hitting bank accounts is an ideal time to advertise ticket sales.
- Make sure your event doesn't clash with anything else happening on campus that might mean you are competing for guests. Refer to your yearly plan for info.

WHERE

Logistically it makes sense to choose a venue close to campus so that it is easy to travel to.

Have a look at different hotels and venues in your area and find out which of them can cater to the size of event you are planning (you'll know how many members your society/ course has so use this as a benchmark. Not everyone will attend of course).

Different venues will offer different packages so chat to them all, get a brochure and an approximate price per guest. It's often useful to see where previous committees have held formals and get feedback from them.

WHAT

Consider putting a poll on your social media to find out what your members would like

- What type of event do you want?
- Fancy dress or casual?
- Sit down meal or buffet?

- Pre-planned entertainment or make your own fun?
- How much are you prepared to pay?
- When would suit you best to attend?

HOW MUCH

Formals and socials generally aren't cheap. But if you offer value for money your members won't want to miss out! Plan your budget in advance to ensure you have all costs covered. These are likely to include:

- Deposit to the hotel - as much as £300-£500 will be due to secure your formal date - your society may need to start fundraising well before formal is advertised to make sure you can afford this!
- Price per head - set by the hotel for venue, hire and food.
- Drinks on arrival.
- Band/ DJ.
- Decorations for the venue.
- Security bouncers for hotel (if not included in the package) – price depends of size of formal so check with hotel in advance if this will be extra- if it is it can range from £300-£400.
- Security damage: some hotels will ask for £300 in lead up to event which they will refund if no damage occurs on the night.
- Photo booth/ Candy cart or any little surprises.

TOP TIPS

- Price around- get the best deal you can from the venues in your area and choose the one that gives you the best value for money.
- If your venue is charging e.g £30 per person, you'll need to factor in the extra costs as above to ensure that the ticket price you charge covers your costs- plus making a profit for the society isn't a bad thing!

- Be realistic - don't tell the hotel you are expecting 100 people to come when you only have 75 members! Your hotel will have a minimum amount of people that they will expect so there is risk that you will lose your deposit if you cannot meet the numbers & have to cancel the event.
- Most of your suppliers will want to be paid in advance so sell your tickets early enough to ensure that you have the funds to pay your bills.
- You might want to arrange a fundraising event such as a bake sale or quiz night to keep money flowing into your society account for all the bills you'll have!
- If you are collaborating with another society on your event communicate and delegate tasks. Decide who will pay what!
- Have all your paperwork in order and submitted in time to ensure that UUSU accounts can pay your suppliers by their deadlines.
- Get a receipt for any payments you make so you can check back easily on who has been paid what.
- If signing a contract, read the small print and seek advice from your Events Coordinator! What happens if you do not sell as many tickets as planned?



ADVERTISE

If you are organising the event of the year, people need to know about it! Set up a social media events page, book stalls to sell tickets and promote the event.

It's also useful to go around your classes and announce the event to everyone on your course.

Just check in with your lecturer first if you can nip in for 5 minutes at the start of the lecture. Read up on publicity and promotion for more information.

SELLING TICKETS

There are 2 ways you can sell tickets to your events– in person or online via the UUSU website.

• ONLINE:

- The easiest option is to so create your .formal as an event on UUSU website & set up tickets so that students can purchase tickets online.
- You can set up a member and non-member ticket so that your members can get a cheaper ticket as a thank you.
- Non students can purchase tickets on the website by creating a guest account **Register a Guest account uusuu.org**
- Collect vital info needed such as email addresses, dietary requirements, accessibility requirements.
- You can download a report detailing who has bought tickets which will help you keep track of sales in a timely way. Plus capturing email address will allow you to email out all attendees closer to the event to confirm details.

- An e-ticket option can be added to your event which will mean you don't have to buy hard copy of tickets!
- All monies received will be allocated directly to your society account enabling you to pay your venue and suppliers easily.
- If you wish to use the UUSU website to sell your tickets, please speak to your Events Coordinator well in advance and they will help you set this.

• IN PERSON:

- You may find it beneficial to book a promotional stall to sell your tickets on campus (you may find that if inviting staff or non-students that they will not be able to access the website so cash sales will be needed).
- Ensure you capture the following information when selling tickets in person:
 - student's name
 - contact email address
 - number of tickets purchased
 - total money paid (this is important if society members pay less than non-members).
- Monies collected should be left to the UUSU office asap with a lodgement form so that it can be allocated to your society account.