

Special Events Information Pack

Your go-to guide for everything Special Events.



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Introduction

So – you’re looking at putting on a Special Event? Amazing! Putting on large scale events is an exciting and rewarding process, but it can be a lot of work! Bristol SU Events and Tech Team are here to support you throughout the process - use this pack as your go-to-guide for everything you will need to know - but always reach out if you have any further questions.

Timelines

The Special Event process follows the below timeline structure, to help ensure everything is completed in plenty of time to make appropriate arrangements and deliver the best events possible. If you have any queries of what is needed of you at certain stages of the process, please let the Events Team know.

- **Slot Accepted:** initial meeting booked in.
- **1 Month Pre Event:** month out meeting booked in, all key event details confirmed, tickets on sale.
- **1-2 Weeks Pre Event:** check in meeting booked in, deadline for final info, no changes after this.
- **Set-Up and Live Event:** managing setting up the room, and making sure everything cleared at end.
- **Post Event:** complete host feedback form, approve internal transfer form (if applies).

Budgeting

In event planning, there's a lot of information and variables thrown at you. What might that mean for costs? Your budget is an essential part of your event planning. Sadly, nearly everything costs money so getting it all into one document can really help you to see the scale of work that there is to do, where pinch points might happen and where you might need some help.

Budget Template

Using an event budget template is a great way to map out your projected costs, and budget for your event. You can access our recommended Special Event budget template [HERE](#).

TOP TIP: Don't forget to consider VAT – this is an additional 20% tax added to most services.

*Depending on your way of working, or the financial processes of your event, this template may not be the best fit! There are also loads of other templates online so make sure you use one that suits your way of working.

Budgeting Top Tips

- Check if all your quoted costs include VAT. If not this could add 20% to your costs!
- Keep to your budget – no last-minute splurges on flying carpets and snake charmers.
- Budget to break-even at two thirds of your maximum ticket sales (use our budget calculator and it will do all the maths for you).
- Sell tickets on your SU page. There are no transaction fees, and the money will go directly into your Union Account. No messing around collecting cash or chasing bank transfers. You can easily print out a guest-list from your page, set up a mailing list for all attendees and can even ask them to specify dietary requirements or menu options.
- Having different ticket releases at different prices is a great way of encouraging people to build hype and buy their tickets early ensuring that you have enough cash to pay your suppliers.
- Allow for other additional costs like riders for entertainers, decorations and additional equipment.
- Check the date that you have to confirm final numbers with your venue/caterer. Make sure you give an accurate number on this date to avoid being charged for catering for more people than you will have attending.

Costs

Putting on an event can be an expensive endeavour! At the SU we try and keep costs to you as low as possible, but be prepared for rising costs when using external providers due to the cost of living crisis. It is important to consider all costs associated with your event in the initial planning stages to ensure you are well prepared.

SU Hire Fees

We have made steps to standardise and simplify the SU hire fees for Special Events. The different brackets reflect a range of event and tech support package that we are able to provide. After our initial meeting to discuss your event we will be able to advise which bracket your Special Event will fall into.

Bracket	Price +VAT	Event & Production Type
Anson Rooms Bookings: Headliner Slots	Dawn	£150 Low-level production event Tradeshow and minimal tech support
	Sunshine	£250 Mid-level production event Balls and seated dinners ONLY
	Twilight	£450 Mid-level production event Events with a band or a performance
	Dusk	£580 High-level production event Performance based or Stage Manager needed
	Midnight	£800 3 day booking for high production Theatrical performance with a dress rehearsal
Anson Rooms Bar ONLY Booking: Spotlight Slot	Spotlight	£125 Small-scale event with private bar E.g. Comedy Night, Open Mic, Karaoke

Security

In most cases, we recommend having security present at Special Events. This allows you and your society to enjoy the event, as well as creating a safe and protected atmosphere for your attendees. This is of course considered on a case-by-case basis, and for some events security will be mandatory - especially if the bar will be open, and the venue is at capacity.

Security fees for Special Events will vary based on the length of the event and number of security staff needed. As a general rule of thumb, our Security Team require 2 members of staff present for a minimum 5 hour call out hire, and aim to use 1 male and 1 female where possible. They typically charge £19.00 + VAT an hour.

It is worth remembering that security will need to be booked to arrive before the event starts, and to stay after the event to clear the room, so make sure to factor this into your budget plans.

Approx. Security Fees	2 Security	3 Security	4 Security	5 Security
5 hours	£190.00 + VAT	£285.00 + VAT	£380.00 + VAT	£475.00 + VAT
6 hours	£228.00 + VAT	£342.00 + VAT	£456.00 + VAT	£570.00 + VAT
7 hours	£266.00 + VAT	£399.00 + VAT	£532.00 + VAT	£665.00 + VAT
8 hours	£304.00 + VAT	£456.00 + VAT	£608.00 + VAT	£760.00 + VAT

Cleaning

Due to the nature of Special Events, you can often expect there to be an additional cleaning charge. Having so many people going through the room, not to mention if food and drink are involved requires more cleaning than any other space in the SU.

Exactly how much this will cost is unfortunately based on many different factors so is hard to give an accurate quote in advance. Weekend events will have a higher cost due to the Cleaning Team having to work outside of their typical working hours to get the space ready for regular room bookings to take place that day. This being said, extra cleaning costs are typically £182.50 + VAT per booking (subject to change depending on day and booking).

REMINDER: If you do not prearrange extra cleaning, and the room is not returned in the same state you received it in, extra cleaning charges will be added after the event. The SU Events and Tech team are happy to advise if an event will require extra cleaning.

Portering

The Richmond Building closes at 23:00 throughout term time, which means your event needs to be finished and everyone out of the building by then for the Estates Assistants to lock up.

If your event will finish after this time, or if you will take a while to clear up the room, you will need to pay for late portering. This typically costs £132.00 +VAT for an extra hour of the building staying open (subject to change depending on day and booking).

Stewards

If your event does not require security, having extra stewards may be best. Even if you do have security, stewards allow more support with front of house, getting every seat filled and checking tickets. These are student staff which cost £12.60 + VAT per hour (and do remember they will need to be here before doors open to get set up).

External Hires

You may choose to hire in some extra features for your event, in order to enhance your guests' experiences. Make sure you factor these into your initial budget plans and feature these in your promotion! Be creative when planning this – there are plenty of wonderful and wacky options out there! Below are a few ideas to get you started.

- Musicians or performers
- Catering provisions
- Photographer or videographer
- Specialised or additional furniture
- Technical equipment hire
- Photobooth
- Novelty dessert stand

TOP TIP: When hiring external performers and musicians it is helpful to forward their contact details of any external hires or performers on to the SU Tech Team. This means we are able to coordinate tech details directly with performers and finalise stage plans before the event.

Food and Drink

Anson Rooms Bar

The SU manages a pop up can bar at Special Events, which is available on request. This is offered with no minimum spend, with the understanding that if the bar is quiet or not used by attendees, it may close before the end of the event.

Other Drinks at Special Events

Under no circumstances can outside alcohol be brought into the venue, either to distribute to attendees, or to be consumed by anyone involved in the event. Any alcohol not purchased on the premises will be confiscated. This is in-line with premises licence to sell alcohol.

Groups may provide soft drinks to attendees themselves, only if the Anson Rooms Bar is closed.

Catering Considerations

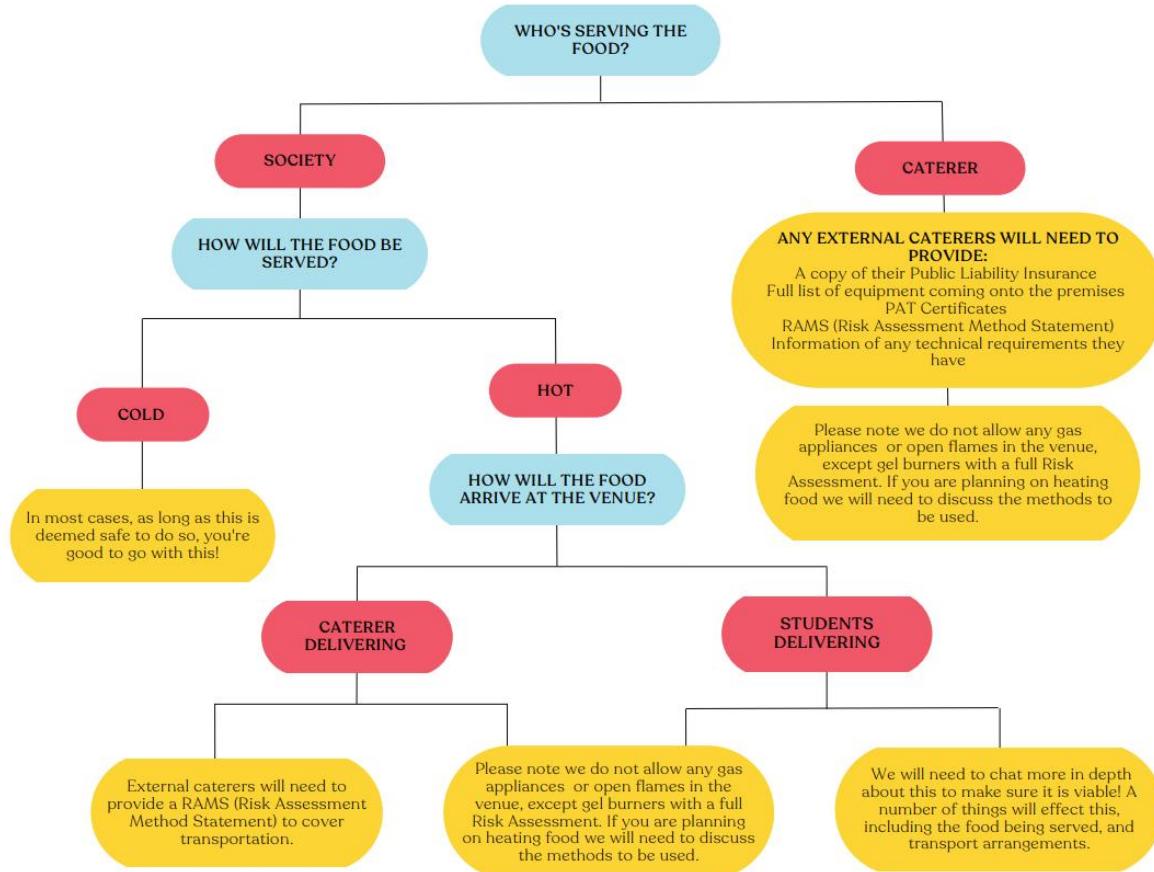
You're planning to serve food at your event - amazing! Providing catering is a great way to boost your event and attract attendees.

There are lots of things we need to consider when confirming catering for a Special Event. The health and safety of attendees is our main concern, and we will need to ensure that all catering provisions follow the health and safety requirements and restrictions we have in place.

As every Special Event is different, it is hard to produce an exhaustive set of instructions for catering provisions. That being said, here are some general guidelines to consider when arranging catering. Make sure to let us know your catering plans as early as possible, so we can flag any issues there may be.

If you intend to use an external caterer, make sure to also check out the '[External Hires and Providers Advice](#)' section for tips on booking this in.

REMINDER: all external hires and caterers are responsible for removing all waste from the premises.



Caterers Database

Bristol SU Events team has started to form a database of caterers in the area. The list is not exhaustive, and you are more than welcome to go with anyone you wish to that works best for your group.

This list consists of a mix of caterers that we have worked with in the past, as well as those who have contacted us to offer their services. Although we do not vouch for the caterers on this list, this could be a good place to start your search if you are still navigating your catering options.

Access the Caterers Database [HERE](#).

External Hires and Providers Advice

A big part of event planning is agreeing contracts with any external providers, be these caterers or other external hires. Find below our top tips for managing contracts with external providers. Remember, Bristol SU Events or Development Teams are happy to review any contracts for events.

- Where possible, don't pay the full hire fee upfront. Negotiate an initial payment to secure the booking and, if this is variable cost based on ticket sales, agree a date to confirm final numbers closer to the event.
- Make sure you read the whole contract and you understand everything that is being agreed to.
- If there's anything you're unsure of or want to add, make sure to ask the question; don't feel pressured to sign something you don't agree with. Never assume a contract is non-negotiable!
- Check that the partner is a legitimate business? An easy way to check is to look up their website on [Companies House](#), is the business name and contact details the same?
- Don't begin working with a company or pay any money until you have an agreed and signed contract in place.

- Check the cancellation terms and make sure you fulfil all your obligations.
- Make sure all parties have a signed copy of the contract, including yourself.

REMINDER: all external hires and caterers are responsible for removing all waste from the premises.

Accessibility

Accessibility is more than just considering the physical space. It is about removing any barriers that are preventing someone from accessing something. When planning your event, it is vital to consider what barriers may prevent someone from attending, and how these can be removed.

Consider what measures you could implement to ensure more people are able to engage with your event. Are the tickets affordable? Is your marketing accessible and easy to understand? Are you advertising the event in accessible places? Is the event itself appealing to a diverse audience e.g. people that don't drink alcohol, all genders? Have you considered physical access needs?

To get your started, take a look at the suggestions below on how to address the accessibility of your event.

- **Access information:** provide clear access information online in advance.
- **Access requests:** invite people to contact you with any specific access requests or questions.
- **Marketing:** consider how your marketing strategy and promotional material can be made useable to as many people as possible – see pg.15 of Attitude is Everything's 'DIY Access Guide' linked below for top tips on achieving this.
- **Quite room:** set up a quiet room to provide a space for people to use when they need a break or private area away from the main venue.
- **Personal assistant tickets:** offer free tickets for personal assistants.
- **Gender neutral toilets:** consider adapting the toilets in the venue to be gender neutral.
- **Alcohol:** consider making your event 'alcohol-free'.
- **Seating:** provide accessible seating or viewing area.
- **Lighting:** avoid the use of strobes and consider the general lighting used at the event.
- **Captions:** set up DIY captioning with a laptop and screen for performances and shows.

TOP TIP: the Internet is your best friend! There are lots of amazing resources online that can provide inspiration and help you design an inclusive and accessible event. Some of our favourites include:

- Attitude is Everything's '[DIY Access Guide](#)' which offers tips on how to improve your approach to accessibility in events, especially on a small budget or limited capacity.
- The Neu Project have recently released both a guide, and an event checklist, aimed at helping event professionals improve the neuroinclusivity of their events. Check these out [HERE](#).

Sustainability

We are currently living in a climate emergency, urgent change and action are required to avoid environmental damage. Focusing on running Bristol SU sustainably is one of the ways we plan to reduce emissions and leave a positive impact on the environment and student body. As such, sustainability is one of the SU's core values and underpins every aspect of our work. We expect all Special Event hosts to uphold this value and work to reduce the environmental impact of their event as much as possible.

Organising events on a tight schedule or budget can seem like a barrier to picking sustainable options. It is important to start discussing the sustainability of your event from the start, so you can include this in your event budgets and plans.

To get your started, take a look at the suggestions below on how to address sustainability through different aspects of your event.

- **Choosing suppliers:** you vote with your money – make sure your vote counts! Use local suppliers, and opt for suppliers who demonstrate sustainable practices where possible. This applies to general event or equipment suppliers, as well as catering providers.
- **Food and drink:** prioritise offering vegetarian or vegan food options only, consider the carbon footprint of your menu, and don't over order – have a contingency plan in place in case of leftovers!
- **Waste management:** have you created a waste management plan for your event? The best way to reduce the total amount of waste produced, as well as mitigate the amount that ends up in landfill after your event is to create a waste management plan early on. This plan could include:
 - Extra food waste bins being in place for the event.
 - Signage to promote use of recycling bins during the event.
 - Advise suppliers about how best to manage their waste on site.
 - No single use plastics used at the event.
 - Request caterers use eco packaging (e.g. Vegware), or even better – reusable crockery!
- **Advertising:** cut back on physical advertisement as much as you can.
- **Energy:** prioritise using or hiring equipment with high energy efficiency ratings.
- **Travel:** make information about public transport and other low and zero carbon options for travelling to the venue available to attendees. You could even provide incentives to attendees who can prove they opted for low carbon transport options!
- **Event materials:** opt for second-hand materials, re-use something already owned by your group, or even rent equipment, rather than buying new. Failing this, consider local, independent and sustainable businesses to supply materials needed. Bristol has plenty of great second-hand and sustainable shops - have you checked out the [Children's Scrapstore](#)?
- **Carbon offsetting:** organise a volunteering day for your student group to collectively offset any carbon emissions linked to the event. This should be done to active efforts to reduce the environmental impact of your event.

TOP TIP: there are countless online resources which can give guidance on how to improve the sustainability of events. Check out some of our favourites [HERE](#).

Capacity and Floor Plans

The maximum capacity of an event is influenced by the type of event and the finalised floor plan. When a floor plan is created, the safety of attendees and the flow of the event are considered. From this we are able to determine the maximum capacity to ensure the event can go ahead safely.

In most instances, the maximum capacity of an event will comprise of everyone expected to be at the event: make sure you consider how much of the capacity will need to be allocated to committee members, competitors, performers, event volunteers, judges, hosts, or anyone else who may not be required to purchase a ticket, before you determine the maximum number of tickets for attendees.

USEFUL INFO: The Anson Rooms measures 27m (l) by 14.5m (w), and the stage measures 1.2m (h) by 10m (w) by 7m (d).

Approximate Capacities

Event Type	Approx. Capacity
Balls	250
Theatre Style	460-480
Theatre Style (Relaxed shows)	260
Beer Hall set up	296
Standing gig	550
Fight Night	380
Anson Rooms Bar Seated	90

Example Floor Plans

The Anson Rooms can be arranged in a number of different ways, depending on the needs of your event. The most common formats include formal balls, rowed/theatre seating, beer hall/banquet set-up (rows of tables), standing gig, fight nights and tradeshows. Check out some example floor plans [HERE](#) to give yourself an idea of how these look in the space.

SEB: Special Events Base

Throughout the process, you will use SEB - our Special Events Base - as our main platform for communication. This can be viewed [HERE](#).

After the initial meeting, you will be sent an event log in. You'll then see an overview of your event with some key info, and once you click 'View/Approve Details' you will see more details including your documents, timings for the event and your room set up.

This is linked to the database we use so is the most up to date and easily editable record that we have. You can always still email the event team directly, but this a helpful central point for documents and important information to be stored. Please check this regularly throughout your planning time and let us know if anything does not match up.

Risk Assessments

In most cases, your event will not be covered by your Student Group's Annual Risk Assessment. You will need to fill out a One-Off Risk Assessment and upload this to SEB ahead of the event.

This is not a difficult task to complete, and we are not trying to catch you out here. A risk assessment is simply thinking about what might harm your members/others, whether you are doing enough and if more should be done. It is NOT about stopping people doing things. Use the guidance, template and examples below to help you when completing this.

Access guidance on how to complete a risk assessment [HERE](#).

Access the One-Off Risk Assessment template to be used for all Special Events [HERE](#).

Examples

If you're looking for some inspiration, check out some examples of previous Special Events Risk Assessments [HERE](#) to get you started!

Card Readers

Are you planning to take payments at your event? Let us know! We have a few Zettle card readers available for your use during your Special Event. This can be to sell tickets on the door, take donations for a registered charity, or for upselling during the event.

We will need to know the name of the item, and the intended charges(s) before the event so that our Finance team are able to set this up for you.

Donations

Are you planning on taking donations during the event, or raising money for charity through ticket sales? Using your event as a platform to raise support and awareness for a charity is a great thing to do! Make sure you check out our guidance online to ensure this is possible – find this [HERE](#).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding donations, please let us know!

Listing Your Event

You should aim to have your event listed at least a month before your event. Not only is this a requirement of all Special Events, but this will allow an adequate amount of time for successful promotion of your event.

As all events are different, there is not one perfect formula or procedure for the best way to promote or advertise your event. That being said, there are a few points that are vital to include in your event listing to make sure the specifics of the event are clearly communicated to potential attendees.

Make sure to consider these points when drafting your event listing:

- Event timings.
- Event description: what attendees can expect, and any further details about the event.
- Location of the event.
- Ticket release information: if you opt for a tiered ticket system, or are staggering the release of tickets it is good practice to give details of this.
- Reference any age restrictions, or any other restrictions to the event.
- Accessibility needs?
- If there is something you need to find out from ticket holders, you could include a short mandatory questionnaire to be completed when tickets are bought - this could be a question about accessibility requirements, dietary requests or restrictions, or even song requests for the event.

Marketing and Promotion

It is your responsibility to get the word out about your event and get ticket sales. The SU cannot do this for you, but you will be supported throughout. As a Special Event, you have access to a range of support from the SU Marketing Team, on the condition that certain requirements are met.

TOP TIP: Including the 'Bristol SU Supporting Student Groups' logo in all promotional material is the first thing we check, and vital to unlock the marketing support on offer. You can find the logo in different colourways and formats [HERE](#).

Requirements of Student Group to Unlock Marketing Support

- Event to be listed on SU website at least 1 month prior to the event
- Clear connection to Bristol SU brand in publicity materials – Bristol SU student groups logo
- Bristol SU to be added as a Facebook event co-host (if listed on Facebook)
- Bristol SU to be tagged in promotional material on Instagram
- Request in advance (minimum two weeks) if would like to host an Instagram takeover

Marketing Support on Offer

- Inclusion in all student SU Newsletter
- Inclusion in Instagram What's On round-up (week of event)
- Consideration for Instagram takeover
- 'Featured' event on SU website
- A1 termly 'What's On' poster in SU Building and other sites

Promotion

Thinking early on about how you will promote the event, and creating a promotional plan that includes various different ways of promoting is a great way to reach a wider audience, and attract more attendees.

When considering promotion – think outside the box! What fun and exciting way can you grab your audience's attention? Previously, Special Events have 'spiced-up'/boosted their promotion (and ticket sales) by doing a range of different things, such as:

- Inviting other student groups to hold a social at the event.
- Purchasing an ad from 'Bristruths'.
- Flyering on campus

TOP TIP: Check out [Mustard Media's guide on '100 Ways to Sell More Tickets'](#), for some inspiration on how you could boost your promotional approach.

Instagram Takeover

All Special Events are given the opportunity to take over the Bristol SU Instagram. Running an Instagram takeover during your Special Event is a great way to promote your event and showcase the brilliant work your student group is doing.

To arrange an Instagram takeover, you will need to submit a '[Social Media Promotion Request](#)'

Takeover Top Tips

- Share your posts to Instagram stories.
- Don't post more than 10 to 12 stories.
- Tag your accounts in the posts.
- Don't share posts to the grid. Instead, send Bristol SU photos and videos we can use in future posts.
- Post clickable links using the link sticker.
- No swearing or offensive language.
- Be sensitive to anything that may cause offence; our audience is international and some references may need explaining.
- Logout as soon as your takeover ends.

For more tips, information and examples find the extended 'Instagram Takeover Guidelines' [HERE](#).

Decorating the Event Space

Decorating the space can really help bring the 'wow' factor to your event – we encourage you to get creative and think outside the box! The SU Tech Team work really hard to make the room look great, playing around with lighting designs and room additions – try to focus on ground level decorations to help bring the room alive.

When planning how you will decorate the event space, we will also need to consider health and safety and fire safety restrictions. The flammability of decorations is one of our biggest concerns, so we recommend using non-flammable materials wherever possible. Let us know your plans so we can advise if these will be possible.

As every Special Event is different, it is hard to produce an exhaustive set of instructions for decorating. That being said, here are some general guidelines to consider when planning how to decorate the space.

Decorating Guidelines

- Decorating the Anson Rooms can be tricky – think about what you do at floor level to optimise the effect of decorations.
- Only blue tack to be used to secure decorations.
- Please avoid placing blue tack on painted walls as this will damage the paintwork – we have plenty of doors or wooden surfaces in the Anson Rooms that you can use instead!
- All decorations must be removed by the Student Group at the end of the event.
- No decorations or furniture blocking fire exits.
- In some cases, paper decorations will not be permitted due to higher fire risks – e.g. use of gel burners in the room, or extensive lighting operation.

Pre-Event Considerations

Timings of Live Event

Creating a realistic schedule which is then followed during the live event has a direct impact on the quality of an event, it will help your event go as smoothly as possible, and is a great way to avoid additional stress on the day. Events are multifaceted, changing the schedule on the day will likely have a number of repercussions. Will the food still be hot? Will performers be in the right place? How do we fill in extra time? As you can see, it is best to avoid changes as much as possible!

Unsurprisingly, sticking to schedule is also essential in optimising guest satisfaction. The biggest criticism we receive from attendees of Special Events is that they started late. By sticking to the advertised timings and not underdelivering or going over the allotted time, you will enhance the quality of your event.

REMEMBER: you only have one shot at delivering an event and making a positive impression on attendees, you want to make this count – sticking to schedule can help achieve this!

Guestlist

Who is coming to your event, but you don't expect them to buy a ticket? This may be judges, hosts, performers, volunteers supporting the event, VIPs and more! Not only is it important that you factor these guests in before releasing tickets to ensure you do not exceed the venue capacity, but it is also vital to have this finalised before the event so a printed copy can be kept on the box office.

TOP TIP: Don't forget to alphabetise your guestlist to find people quickly!

Ticket Holder Email

It is good practice to send out an email to all ticket holders a day or two before the event. This serves as a helpful reminder so that people do not forget the event is happening, as well as a means to pass on useful information to attendees.

Depending on the type of event, the contents of this email will vary. Check out the list below for some of the main points to consider when drafting this:

- Timings of the event: consider doors opening, show start time, last entry times and event end time.
- Alcohol and drug policy: no outside alcohol to be brought in, there will be bag checks on the door.
- Reminder to bring ID: depending on the type of event, implementing an age limit may be required – if so, it is useful to remind ticket holders to bring ID to avoid being refused entry on the door.
- Dress code (if there is one).
- Details about an after party, or equivalent.

Event Day: Who's Doing What?

When it comes to the day of the event, it's easy for things to run away a bit. It is likely there will be numerous people from your society, committee or general helpers working on the event. It is helpful to create a rough rota so that everyone knows who is doing what and when.

TOP TIP: Do this ahead of time and play to individual's strengths. Got someone who loves organising people? Make them a stage manager, got someone with customer service skills? Put them on the box office.

Event Clean Up

It is the responsibility of the Student Group to return the venue to the same standard you received it in, at the end of the event. This includes removing all decorations, additional equipment brought into the venue and clearing excessive waste from any spaces used during the event booking, such as the Anson rooms, bar area, foyer, link spaces, Green Rooms, and any additional room bookings.

REMINDER: If you do not prearrange extra cleaning, and the room is not returned in the same state you received it in, extra cleaning charges will be added after the event.