

PLANNING A SOCIETY FORMAL

A formal is a fantastic way to bring your members together and celebrate your society! While organising a well-run event takes planning and hard work, UUSU is here to help and support you throughout the process.

BEFORE YOU START PLANNING

Before organising a society formal, there are a number of important factors to consider.

For a society formal proposal to be considered for approval by your UUSU activities team, the following eligibility criteria must be met:

- The society must have a minimum of 50 registered members.
- The society must have delivered at least one event per semester during the academic year in which the formal is proposed.
- The society must have a minimum of £300 in its fundraising account.
- There should be at least an 8-week lead-in period from the submission of a society formal proposal to the event taking place.

ADDITIONAL REQUIREMENTS

In addition to following UUSU's standard event planning and advice and checklist (**which you can read more about here**), the following actions must also be completed:

- A hotel or venue contract must be shared with the Events Coordinator for review before it is agreed or signed.

Only once all criteria and actions have been met will the Events Coordinator grant permission for the society to enter into a contract with the venue.

WHEN TO HOLD YOUR FORMAL

- Student loan payment periods are an ideal time to promote ticket sales, as members are more likely to have available funds.
- Try to ensure your event does not clash with other major campus activities, as this could affect attendance. Check out www.uusu.org/whatson to see what else is happening on campus on your suggested date.
- In the run-up to Christmas, students often have multiple commitments and limited finances, so it may not be the most suitable time to plan a formal.
- Be mindful of Easter break dates, as members may be less likely to attend events when they are away from university.
- Where possible, plan your formal for the week after a UUSU payment date so the event can be paid for in advance. Your activities team can confirm these dates at any time.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Formals aren't cheap, but if you offer good value for money, your members won't want to miss out.

It's essential to plan your budget in advance and make sure all potential costs are accounted for. These may include:

- **Hotel or venue deposit**

To secure your preferred date and venue, a deposit of £300–£500 may be required. Societies may need to begin fundraising well in advance to ensure they can afford this upfront cost.

- **Price per head**

This is set by the venue and usually covers room hire and catering.

- **Door staff / security**

Most venues will require security staff. Costs depend on guest numbers but can range from £300–£400. Speak directly with your venue about their requirements.

- **Damage deposit**

Some venues may request a refundable deposit (often £300 or more) to cover any accidental damage. This will be returned if no issues arise.

- **Additional extras, such as:**

- Photo booth or candy cart
- Bands or DJs
- Venue décor
- Any added touches or surprises for guests

Use our formal costing template to help



Once all research and costings are complete, you must inform the Student Activities Team of your plans before making any commitments to a venue or before selling tickets.

TOP TIPS

Shop around.

Compare venues in your area to secure the best deal and choose an option that offers real value for money.

Set ticket prices carefully.

Ensure your ticket price covers all associated costs—not just the venue's price per head. You may also wish to build in a small surplus to support future society activities.

Be realistic about numbers.

Consider how many members you have and how many are likely to attend before making any commitments to a venue.

Avoid over-committing on numbers.

Venues will usually charge based on the minimum number agreed in your contract, even if fewer guests attend. Start with a lower minimum and only increase it later if ticket demand is strong.

Understand cancellation policies.

If your event is cancelled due to low ticket sales, you may lose your deposit. Always check the small print, as all venues will have a cancellation policy.

Be mindful of UUSU payment rules.

UUSU will only pay in full for services once they have been delivered (e.g. DJs or photographers). Deposits can be paid in advance, and a Purchase Order can be issued as a formal promise to pay the remaining balance after the event. Ensure tickets are sold early enough to cover any required deposits.

Keep funds flowing.

Fundraising activities such as bake sales or quiz nights are great ways to boost your society account, build excitement for the formal, and encourage early ticket sales.

Collaborate effectively.

If working with another society, communicate clearly and agree in advance who is responsible for which costs.

Stay organised.

Submit all paperwork accurately and on time to ensure UUSU can meet supplier payment deadlines.

Keep receipts.

Always request and retain receipts for any payments made, so reimbursements can be processed and records checked easily.

Get advice before signing.

Read contracts carefully and seek guidance from your Events Coordinator before committing to any agreement.

ADVERTISE

If you're organising the event of the year, make sure people know about it!

- List your event on the UUSU website so members can easily find details and purchase tickets.
- **Request to host a society activity or event** on campus to promote the event and sell tickets in person.
- Email your members with clear event information and ticketing links.
- Promote the event on your social media channels, using eye-catching graphics and regular reminders.
- Display posters in designated UUSU social spaces to reach students on campus.
- Course Based societies: Consider promoting the event directly to your course cohort. Ask your lecturer if you can make a brief announcement at the start of a lecture or hand out flyers.

For more ideas and guidance, please refer to **[our publicity and promotion resources here](#)**

SELLING TICKETS

There are two ways you can sell tickets for your events: in person or online via the UUSU website.

Online Ticket Sales

- The easiest option is to create your formal as an event on the UUSU website and set up tickets so students can purchase online.

- You can offer member and non-member ticket options, allowing society members to benefit from a reduced price.
- Non-students can also purchase tickets by creating a guest account on the website.
- Collect all essential information at the point of purchase, such as contact email addresses, dietary requirements, and accessibility needs.
- You can **download a ticket sales report** to help you track purchases and monitor sales easily.
- An e-ticket option can be enabled, removing the need to design and print physical tickets.
- All income from ticket sales is paid directly into your society account, making it easier to pay venues and suppliers.



If you wish to use the UUSU website to sell your tickets, please speak to your Events Coordinator well in advance so they can help. You'll also find some useful [information here](#)

In-Person Ticket Sales

- If you plan to sell tickets in person, it may be beneficial to **Request to host a society activity or event** on campus to maximise visibility and sales.
- When selling tickets, ensure you collect all key information at the point of sale, including:
 - Student's name
 - Contact email address and phone number
 - Number of tickets purchased
 - Amount paid
 - Any dietary requirements
 - Any accessibility requirements
- All money collected must be submitted to the UUSU Office as soon as possible, along with a completed **cash lodgement form** so it can be processed and credited to your society account.

DON'T FORGET...

- It's important that you enjoy organising your formal—don't let the process become overwhelming. If you need support at any stage, please reach out to a member of your Student Activities Team.
- Be adaptable. Things don't always go exactly to plan, so be prepared to adjust the finer details as you move through the event-planning process.
- Formals should be fun, welcoming, and inclusive. Keep this in mind when planning any novelty awards or activities.
- Your formal represents your society, and where applicable, your school. It should reflect the values of UUSU and uphold a positive student experience.
- Most importantly—have a great night and enjoy seeing all your hard work pay off!