

# Sponsorship

## Supporting clubs and societies with sponsorship

With a growing onus on clubs and societies to be self-sustaining coupled with a growing interest in reaching the student market there are more and more sponsorship opportunities for student clubs and societies opening up. Whilst this has great potential benefit there are also key issues to consider in managing this process.

### Introduction

External organisations sponsoring clubs and societies has been a growing trend over the last few years. While this is to be welcomed in bringing much needed funds into student opportunity provision there are also important considerations that come with external sponsorship.

Managing external sponsorship requests and contracts is now an ever more challenging operation. This includes managing conflicts of interest with union commercial activities, ethical considerations, contractual requirements to name but a few.

This guide aims to shine the light on a number of unions who have approached the issue of sponsorship in a variety of different ways.

There is no right or wrong way to manage sponsorship activity. Finding a level of control that you feel comfortable with and that is approved by the executive team and board of Trustees is imperative.

### Developing external sponsorship

If you don't already have a programme of sponsorship or you are looking to support your clubs and societies to deliver sponsorship the

guidance below will give you some hints and tips.

Firstly you need to look at the internal environment that you're operating in. Look into:

- What commercial considerations do you have to think about? Does your students' union operate a bar? Would they want competition through external advertising
- Are there any companies for ethical reasons you wouldn't work with? Check past union policy to see if you have a ban on advertising any particular organisations
- What views do your officer team have? What does your societies council or sports federation think? Consider what internal consultation you need to do.

Once you've scoped out your position internally there are some additional things you should consider:

- What relationships with external organisations already exist? If you've got big graduate recruiters based near you it's likely someone within the institution will already have a relationship with the organisation. How can you utilise their connections.

- Think about who would be interested in sponsoring your clubs and societies? Look at who currently advertises at your freshers fairs, has student deals on and/or would want business from students. These will be good places to start.

Once you've looked into the key points above developing or amending your current sponsorship policy and having it approved through your union council and Trustee board will be important in ensuring they're happy with your risk management processes.

The case studies in the following pages will help you think about what process you want to put in place to support and manage your student groups in obtaining and fulfilling contractual obligations around external sponsorship.

## Contents

This inspiration sheet contains content from:

- University of Bath Students' Union
- Stirling University Students' Union
- University of Lincoln Students' Union

If you have any questions about this guide or would like to suggest any amends please contact [fiona.ellison@nus.org.uk](mailto:fiona.ellison@nus.org.uk)

# University of Bath Students' Union

## About

This case study covers the University of Bath Students' Union sponsorship process. They wanted to make it as easy as possible for student groups to make more money to enable their development whilst maintaining an acceptable level of control.

## The idea

Students always need more money to enable them to develop within their various groups. The Students' Union has always provided support for student groups when seeking sponsorship but a more formal process was needed.

Many of our student groups would often go off and seek sponsorship completely independently and we found students were signing up to deals which were taking advantage of them or not being successful as they were completely overpricing themselves. Students were also signing contracts but not fulfilling them and losing contact throughout the year which can be damaging to the reputation of the Students' Union and the likelihood of contracts being renewed.

We also wanted to prevent informal deals being agreed to without any official contracts and prevent students from taking cash or cheques from companies into personal bank accounts.

Having a formal process has meant that we see every proposal that is sent out, we advise them

on how they can price their sponsorship and also work with them to produce an effective package for the sponsors. We are also responsible for invoicing sponsors which has released any pressure from the groups to have to chase for money and be responsible for large sums of cash

## Development stage

We had many internal conversations about the best way to standardise the sponsorship process and how we can make sure students buy into it and see the benefits.

We already had the steps of the sponsorship process and were doing them but using an online form was a new idea to allow students to reach us more easily and to get them thinking about the process before they came in and met with the department.

We took feedback on board from key sponsors about how they want to deal with student proposals and they felt going through the Students' Union in a formal way would be beneficial to them.

## Advice

To be a support to students for sponsorship is a big job. We have over 80+ societies and 49 sports clubs as well as many other groups so it can be so time consuming. Getting all the groups to follow the process is challenging and we still have groups going off and doing their own thing. However we run training sessions throughout the year which highlights the importance and I would advise any SU to do regular training on this.

The biggest issue we have is managing student's expectations of sponsorship. Some students feel that it will be really easy and expect to receive thousands of pounds in sponsorship for doing very little. Getting sponsorship now is so much harder than it was a few years ago and companies want so much more for their money. Getting students to understand this is difficult. We do however highlight this in training and use our one to one meetings with them to try and give them a realistic view of what they are likely to achieve.

### Follow up

We now have a host of sponsorship proposals all in a very similar format on file that I can send out if I am ever approached by a sponsor who is looking to sponsor a student group.

I believe although we haven't seen a huge increase in the amount of sponsorship the students are learning a lot more about how to seek sponsorship and gaining skills on dealing with external companies and how to negotiate which are all valuable skills.

Those students who are successful in achieving sponsorship are also starting to see sponsors continuing to the following year as they have listened to the importance of communication throughout the agreement and put together impressive reports at the end of the year.

You can see a copy of the information we provide to students here:

<http://www.bathstudent.com/marketing/international/sponsorship/>

### Contact

For more information about this case study please contact Helen Freeman, Marketing and Promotions Coordinator and the University of Bath Students' Union - [h.freeman@bath.ac.uk](mailto:h.freeman@bath.ac.uk) or 01225 386806

# Lincoln University Students' Union

## About

This case study looks at implementing a sponsorship policy and procedure for Sports Clubs, Societies and Groups within the Students Union that is easy to understand and implement.

## The idea

In Lincoln we have a lot of Sports Clubs and Societies that are always looking for new ways to raise money to support their activity. In the past Sports Clubs and Society could not receive sponsorship from external Bars and Clubs.

A motion was brought to our AGM to allow Sports Clubs and Societies to be sponsored by Bars and Clubs, this motion was passed and a process was to be implemented by the start of the new academic year.

## Development stage

The motion that was brought to student council had conducted a survey of 90 sports and societies committee members as well as investigating best practice from 10 student unions.

When implementing the policy we have looked at and contacted organisations external to the movement such as Lincoln City football club and other sports clubs.

## Advice

To keep the officers up to date we regularly discussed it at executive as this helps the decision making but also the clarity of the communication to sports clubs and societies. They would regularly ask about it with officers and we found it helped the implementation process that the officers knew the latest news.

We met with the major sponsors such as Home and Revolutions night clubs so they understood the process, who to contact and what the expectations were from the union in terms of the quality of the deal they should be providing.

Pick a date and stick to it. It sets expectations at a manageable level and with so many members of clubs and societies and the importance of the businesses who would be involved on student opinion it is important to meet those expectations.

## Follow up

Alongside budgeting support the clubs that entered the academic year in debt are all now out of debt due to this new policy.

It's made things open and honest between us and the teams and societies by reducing the level of 'donations' (unauthorised sponsorship) and the concerns about external bank accounts. Societies and clubs are widening the scope of where they get sponsorship from since the new policy came into place.

We've also reduced the risk of the union having to bail teams out if they did not receive money.

This is two-fold; the teams and societies are not all being sponsored by the same five companies so if one reneged on its deal a few teams are affected but also the Union's policies means we can ensure the companies deliver their side of a legal agreement.

It has also created new community relationships which did not exist before and hopefully can lead to new business through marketing.

The policies benefits are far more than the effort put into implementation. The insurance for the clubs, the certainty of value from the deal and legal oversight the union now has are of extraordinary benefit to all involved.

You can find copies of the sponsorship pack and policies here:

<http://lincolnsu.com/activities/resources>

## Contact

For more information on this case study please contact Joseph Burt, VP Activities at University of Lincoln Students' Union - [jburt@lincoln.ac.uk](mailto:jburt@lincoln.ac.uk) or 01522 83 6434

# Stirling Union

## About

We have a standard sponsorship form which is available on the internet for our students. It is a template form, the clubs and societies can edit this as they see fit. We advise clubs and societies to come to the Union and we review the sponsorship agreements to make sure that the conditions are fair for the clubs and societies.

## The idea

The form was put online to make it easy for clubs and societies in gaining sponsorship. They had said that they found it quite difficult to draft a document which was legally binding.

We wanted to prevent clubs and societies from being taken advantage of and having a standard document for clubs and societies put some formality into their dealings with external organisations.

## Development stage

We developed the sponsorship template which we rolled out to clubs and societies at the start of the academic year alongside our training.

The form has to be countersigned by someone in the union which means that we're able to confirm what clubs and societies are being given and what they're promising in return. This has really helped to make sure that they're getting the best opportunities available to them.

## Advice

I would suggest that other Unions may want to research to see if their clubs and societies are being treated fairly and review the sponsor details. We were able to articulate to clubs and

societies that other groups were having which meant that it was easier for people to see the value.

Some clubs and societies feel like they have to do all that is asked of them by external organisations in order to get extra funding, however it is important that they know their rights and that certain conditions, such as glass collecting at local bars, should not be part of the sponsorship agreement.

## Follow up

We did not have targeted outcomes as such but it seemed to work well as it gave us a better overview of what clubs and societies were being sponsored.

It also enabled us to speak to local businesses in the community which has raised awareness about our role within the community. Building these relationships have been important as it helps to cut out unscrupulous behaviour.

You can see a sample copy of our sponsorship document here:

<http://stirlingstudentsunion.com/files/club-sponsorship-proposal.docx>

## Contact

If you'd like further information on this case study please contact Robbie Norval, Academic and Development Co-ordinator at Stirling Union - [Robbie.norval@stir.ac.uk](mailto:Robbie.norval@stir.ac.uk) or 01786 467178

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