

Freshers' Events 2021: Mandatory guidelines for in-person events

Guidelines

1. Venue

Premise

The Collegiate University supports Freshers' Events that demonstrate their accessibility and inclusivity to incoming students. Certain private venues, and venues promoting an impression of grandeur, risk compounding a misconception that Cambridge events are lavish, exclusive and expensive. Despite best intentions, such venues can be off-putting to some students, and at worst, can make some individuals in attendance, or considering their attendance, feel ostracised, discouraged and doubtful that Cambridge is for them.

The Collegiate University supports Freshers' Events that prioritise the safeguarding of students, adults and Groups and demonstrate steps have been taken to mitigate risks to all parties that are associated with minors and vulnerable adults being in the company of adults.

Guidelines

- Suitable venues for Freshers' Events are public, neutral and accessible. Examples of such venues are listed below:
 - café or tea room
 - café in a public space, such as a leisure centre, theatre, cinema, garden centre, botanic garden or farm
 - café at a place of historic interest, such as a National Trust property
 - café or room in a sports club or sports centre
 - room in a community centre
 - room in a local government building
 - room belonging to a faith group that is available for public use, such as a church hall
 - lounge or conference room in a hotel
 - reserved area or room in a pub, bar, bistro or restaurant
 - room in a local state school, college, university or students' union
 - room in a conference or business centre
 - park or public garden
 - Group member's workplace (with the exception of workplaces that are also private residences).
- Certain private venues are best avoided, but will be considered in exceptional circumstances, such as when a suitable alternative venue cannot be found, provided there is no dress code and that it is made clear to attendees that they are not required to become members of the club, or to pay a fee over and above any small charge associated with attending the event. Examples of such venues are listed below:
 - private members' club (such as the Oxford and Cambridge Club, London)
 - private school
 - private sports club
 - private library.

- Unsuitable venues for Freshers' Events are listed below. The Collegiate University does not support events in such venues.
 - private residence, such as a Group representative's home
 - private or commercial rental property
 - Group member's workplace, if it is also a private residence (such as a bed and breakfast).
- The suitability of other venues that are not mentioned in this section will be determined by the Collegiate University on a case-by-case basis.

2. Dress code

Premise

The Collegiate University supports Freshers' Events that are informal and inclusive. An effective way to convey informality and inclusivity to incoming students is to permit them to wear whatever they feel comfortable in. Dress codes are problematic because they can exclude students who do not own the required garments, or who feel uncomfortable wearing them.

Guidelines

- Events with a dress code are not supported by the Collegiate University.
- If a venue operates a dress code, it is suggested that the Group representative seeks to arrange with the venue a concession to the code for the duration of the event, or finds an alternative venue without a dress code.

3. Serving and drinking alcohol

Premise

There are risks associated with serving and drinking alcohol and, for this reason, it is recommended that events are alcohol-free. Furthermore, alcohol-free events offer inclusivity to individuals whose religious, cultural or societal practices and beliefs prohibit or discourage the consumption of alcohol and to individuals abstaining from alcohol. Groups considering providing alcohol at their events should bear in mind that students in attendance could be under the legal drinking age for their area and that safeguarding measures are to be observed.

Guidelines

- Groups offering alcoholic drinks are requested to do so in line with local licensing laws and to observe the minimum legal drinking age for their country or region.
- Where alcohol is offered, Group representatives are asked to ensure that attendees drink responsibly, which includes safeguarding attendees from alcohol misuse and pressure to drink alcohol.
- Group representatives are asked to drink responsibly.
- It is essential that non-alcoholic drinks are readily available.

4. Charging attendees

Premise

The Collegiate University supports Freshers' Events that are accessible to students on all budgets. Students on tight budgets could be deterred from attending an event if they are to be charged an entrance or ticket fee, or for refreshments, thus Groups are encouraged to waive all costs for attendees. Where this is not possible, any fees are to be capped, as outlined below.

Guidelines

- Group representatives are encouraged to organise events that are entirely free for students to attend. Groups can achieve this by holding their events in free venues and using any profits generated from other alumni events to fund refreshments. Alternatively, Groups can seek sponsorship to cover costs, or split costs among members.
- If charging is unavoidable, in order for the event to be supported by the Collegiate University:
 - entrance/ticket fees are to be capped at £5, or local equivalent, per attendee and can only be used for the purpose of recouping the Group its costs for running the event, such as for venue hire, or refreshments; Freshers' Events are not to generate a profit for the Group
 - entrance/ticket fees must enable attendees to fully participate in the event
 - where a venue charges on a consumption basis, it is acceptable that attendees be required to pay for their own refreshments. However, the venue cannot charge more for refreshments than it would in its normal course of business
 - all fees, including where it is required that attendees pay for their own refreshments, are to be advertised up front to prospective attendees.

Application

These guidelines are for organisers of Freshers' Events, the majority of whom are Alumni Group representatives.

Purpose

This document sets out the guidelines that must be observed for an event to be registered as a 'Freshers' Event' supported by the Collegiate University. It provides Alumni Group representatives with an approach so that Freshers' Events are welcoming and accessible to incoming undergraduate and graduate students and advises representatives on:

- good practice in planning, promoting and prioritising the safety and wellbeing of students attending Freshers' Events; and
- hosting events that support the Collegiate University in tackling misconceptions about Cambridge.

Scope

The guidelines relate to four aspects of Freshers' Events programming, each of which have a bearing on student safety and wellbeing and of perceptions of Cambridge. These are:

1. Venue
2. Dress code
3. Serving and drinking alcohol
4. Charging attendees

Background

In 2015, Development and Alumni Relations received concerns from many Alumni Group representatives in relation to a significant drop in attendance at their Freshers' Events. At this time, concerns were raised by stakeholders across the University about the appropriateness of some Freshers' Events; it was thought, for example, that some Freshers' Events reinforce negative perceptions of Cambridge and that information given to students at them is sometimes out of date. Such concerns were causal to many stakeholders electing not to promote the events to incoming students, which likely explained the drop in attendance.

In 2016, Development and Alumni Relations sought feedback and guidance from stakeholders, including Cambridge Admissions Office, the Outreach Steering Group, the Colleges Admissions Forum and the Schools Liaison Officers Group. A sub-group of the Outreach Steering Group was established and tasked with providing Development and Alumni Relations with guidance on good practice in hosting Freshers' Events, for sharing with Group representatives.

In 2017, a set of guidelines for Freshers' Events was agreed by stakeholders (including the Alumni Advisory Board and the Networks and Volunteers Working Group) and circulated to Group representatives. Development and Alumni Relations registered and supported all events, whether or not they observed the guidelines. Stakeholders agreed to promote only events that observed the guidelines, which resulted in a significant increase (43%) in the overall attendance of Freshers' Events.

In 2018, the guidelines were modified to incorporate further feedback from Group representatives and agreed by stakeholders. 52 events that observed the guidelines were registered and supported by Development and Alumni Relations and promoted by stakeholders. Attendance levels remained high, with an increase of 1% overall.

Conclusion

It is for individual Alumni Groups to determine whether to host an orientation event for incoming students and whether to seek its registration as a 'Freshers' Event'. Registration is encouraged, not least because stakeholder endorsement of Freshers' Events is a determining factor in securing high attendance levels.

The Collegiate University recognises that Groups are autonomous bodies and deeply values the commitment of their volunteers. Where a Group activity has the potential to impact on broader institutional matters, such as student wellbeing and institutional reputation, the Collegiate University becomes de facto a stakeholder in the endeavour; hosting a Freshers' Event is an example of such an activity.

It is for this reason that the Collegiate University offers Alumni Group representatives best practice guidance in organising Freshers' Events (as set out in this document) and determines that **only events that observe this guidance will be supported by the Collegiate University**. Support comprises event registration and recognition as a University 'Freshers' Event' and promotion to incoming students, such as through the Colleges and the International Student Office. Events that are not observant of the guidelines set out in this document will not be registered, promoted, or resourced by the Collegiate University.

Help and support

Please contact the University Alumni Engagement team via networks@alumni.cam.ac.uk with questions about these guidelines.