

Welcome Fair

Maximising your
Membership



BRISTOL SU
the best student life



Why is the Welcome Period so important?

The Welcome Fair is usually the single biggest opportunity you have to promote your group and sign up members. Approximately 10,000 people attend and enthusiasm abounds as new students look to sign up for familiar interests and new experiences. 33% of all memberships are sold in the week following Welcome Fair and a massive 70% in the 3 weeks following the Fair.

5 minute condensed version:

Before (pages 3-5)

Target Audience

The type of students join your group + the type of students who do not but could/should.

Unique Selling Point

What is the strongest, most attractive benefit of joining your group?

After the Fair?

Plan your post-Welcome Fair events. Is there something for everyone?

During (pages 6-9)

Catch Attention

Grab interest with a big sign. Use props as conversation starters.

Deliver Your Pitch

10-20 second spiel that sums up your group & its USP

Reinforce Your Key Message

Your leaflet: summarise the benefits & call to action

Call to Action

Use a sign-up sheet to capture email for follow up

After (pages 10-11)

Convert Interest into Membership

Send an email including: Explanation of how to purchase membership, a link to your webpage and links to your events on the Union calendar. Send the email on Sunday morning.

Keep your data clean, don't spam and constantly evaluate (for future committees).

Planning Ahead - The 3 Planning Stages



Who joins? - You probably already have a good idea of what kinds of students join your group. It's important to appeal to this core demographic but, in order to grow your membership, it's worth thinking about who doesn't tend to join. Would any students have concerns about joining your group? It could be because your activities are risky (in a good way) and some simple reassurance about safety might help. Perhaps some might think the level of commitment might be too high. Or some people could be deterred by socials that revolve heavily around alcohol.

Whatever the case it is worth testing with friends who aren't members or who have never tried your particular speciality. Ask them what their first thoughts are about it. Do any specific words or concerns come to mind? If so, then there will undoubtedly be students thinking the same thing. There is a lot of pressure on new students, especially at the very beginning of term. Think about your 'offer' can you finesse it to make more attractive and accessible?

Benefits not Features - People buy things because of wants not needs. List the benefits of joining your group (meeting new people, an exhilarating new hobby, a new skill, a healthier lifestyle etc.) before the features (access to equipment, number of socials etc.).

Once you have a list of benefits work out what your Unique Selling Point (USP) is. What is it that marks you out from other groups and what is it that will attract most new members? Hopefully those two things are one and the same. If not, can you combine them into one sentence?



What happens after the Fair? - What do you do with the hundreds of students you've gotten excited about your group at the Fair? If you're charging a membership fee then it's likely that people will want to try a taster before committing. What activities and events do you have planned for October? Are they on different days of the week and/or different times in order to catch as many people as possible? Don't rely on just one taster - if a student has another commitment at the same time you may lose out on their membership forever.

Use the worksheet opposite to work out what your target audience, USP and your post-Welcome Fair events/activities - it'll come in useful for the rest of this toolkit.

The Fair Itself

1. **Catch Attention** - Use your stall to grab interest. Start big (images/words) at the top and give more information as the eyes work their way down to the table. Then use props and activities as conversation starters.



2. **Deliver the Pitch** - Prepare a 10-20 second pitch that sums up your USP and creates excitement.



3. **Reinforce the Key Message** - Use a leaflet to reinforce your pitch. Summarise the benefits of joining your group, give key details (web address, social media, price etc.) and include a call to action ('Come along to our next taster' 'Join before next Friday to get a free X').



4. **Call to Action** - The sign up sheet is your most important weapon. Make it look professional as it shows you care about the signees details. If you can, use a laptop to reduce transcribing errors. Try to collect name, email and UCard number!



Tip: Stand out by wearing something that relates to your group e.g. committee t-shirts, cultural dress, sports kit, costumes and uniforms.

Catching Attention - Your Stall

Your stall is your shop window, it should catch attention so that you are then talking to people who have already had their interest piqued. That way you're not exhausting yourself talking to people who will never have an interest in joining your group.

Start from the top of your stall. The top of your backboard should feature a large image, one or two large words and/or a large prop. The middle should then draw the eyes down and develop the interest. Words and images can be smaller here but still readable from a distance - this is where you can expand on the benefits of joining your group. If you need to then you can have more detailed information towards the bottom but beware information overload - keep it simple.

Now you need some conversation starters, these might be props or an activity/game. These will give you an opening gambit with which to kick off your pitch.

Catch Attention

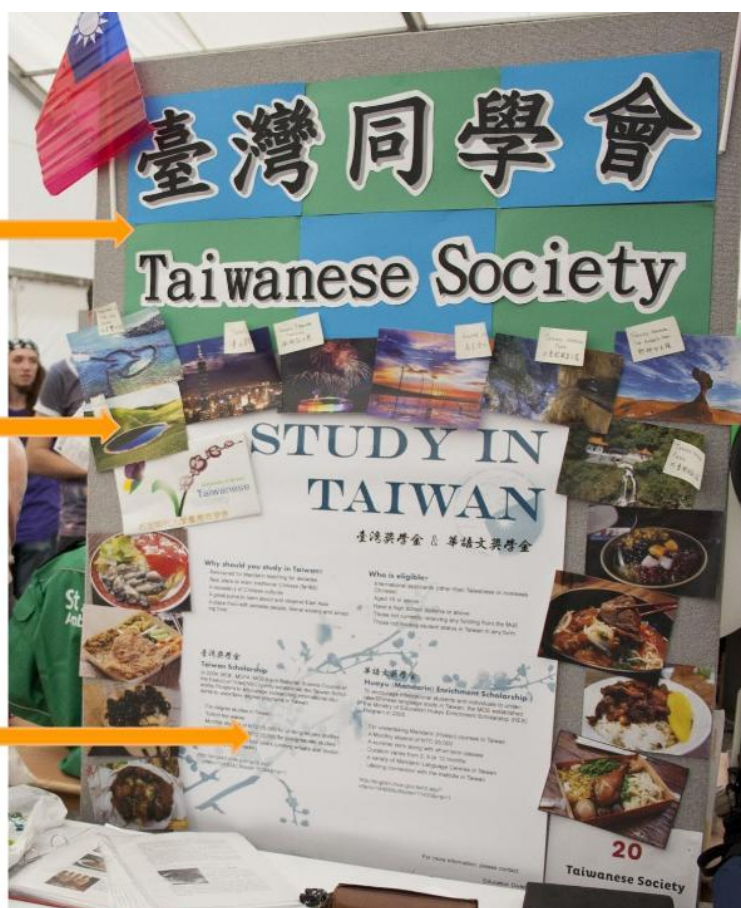
Large, clear images and/or text

Develop Interest

Images communicate quicker and more effectively than text

Give Detail

More detailed information should be in the lower half or on the table



Tip: The visible area of the backboard is 1 metre by 1 metre on a standard Welcome Fair stall.

Deliver the Pitch - Your Elevator Speech

An elevator speech is a succinct way of describing a product, service or idea. The name stems from the idea that if you have a chance encounter with a possible client, employer or partner then you need a short, pre-prepared pitch to quickly get the concept across e.g. if you happened to share the lift with someone for a few floors. It's useful for Welcome Fair as you'll only have a short time to get your message across to each student.

Here's how to prepare one:

1. **What's your goal?** - This will usually be to sign your sign-up sheet so that you can email the student later with a link to purchasing membership and/or details of a taster session.
2. **Describe your group** - Write down one or two sentences that sum up what your groups is all about.
3. **What is your USP?** - Write down the USP you settled on in the planning worksheet.
4. **Ask a question** - You'll need to engage the person you're pitching to by asking a question. Make sure the question is an open one (one that can't be answered with a yes or a no) so that a conversation begins naturally.
5. **Combine** - Put all of the above together so that you're left with a 10-20 second spiel. If you're initiating the conversation then you can start with the question and follow up with the description and USP. If a student has come to you (maybe with 'What do you do?') then start with pitch and end on the question.
6. **Practice and share with your committee** - Practicing means that you'll be more relaxed on the day. Share your pitch with your committee, it won't be right for everyone but if you're all consistent about the benefits/USP then you'll be more convincing.

Tip: Think about what your reason was to join your group. Try and incorporate that into your pitch. You will sound more convincing and engaging if you're talking about your own experiences.

If you have time:

7. **Second guess the answers** - Practice follow ups to possible answers students might give to your question. Also think of what questions students might have. Will everyone working on your stall know the answers to all of them?
8. **Have case studies in mind** - Think of a complete beginner who went on to a high level in your group. Use their first name when describing their experience. A case study like this can be reassuring for prospective members.

Reinforce the key message - Your Leaflet



Your leaflet should reinforce your key messages but, more importantly, it should ask people to do something. This call to action will usually be to buy a membership or attend an event. Try and ensure that the look and feel of the leaflet matches your stall, as well as your website and other marketing materials. You can get leaflets printed at the SU shop!

Put most of your time into writing a great headline and write it first. - The old advertising adage is that, on average, 8/10 people will read a headline but only 2/10 will read the body copy. Writing it first should ensure that everything else (images, body copy etc.) fits with it.

What is your call to action? - What do you want people to do once they've read the leaflet - Buy a membership? Attend an event? Whatever it is make sure that is clear, simple and prominent at the bottom of the page. Repeat it in the body copy if you can.

Benefits not features. You not we. - Make sure you are including the benefits prominently, people need to know what is in it for them. Use 'you' rather than 'we' - so, 'you can be part of a really social group' rather than 'we are a really social group'.

Make it double sided. - Don't waste the opportunity by having a blank side. Make one side about your group and the other side about your next taster/event.

Get it proof read. - Don't make a bad impression by including spelling mistakes or grammatical errors. Ask at least one person who hasn't been involved in making the leaflet to proof it for you.

Converting interest into membership

The fair is over and now you need to convert all of that interest into membership. The next 48 hours are key as you don't want to be forgotten amongst everything else going on. An email is the obvious next step. You can use it to remind everyone of the benefits of joining your group!

We recommend using the Google Add-On 'Yet Another Mail Merge'. Search for it from the Add-Ons menu in Google Sheets. It now features Open Rate tracking and sending from shared inboxes.

Thursday-Saturday tends to see a big drop in membership & ticket sales, aim for Sunday mornings or early evenings on a Monday or Tuesday for maximum exposure.

We have an exciting new web platform for 2016-17, so we will be in touch with details of how to add members, or get them to sign up online!

Keep Your Data Clean - Remember to update your mailing list before you send an email otherwise you will end up sending emails to people who have already bought their membership!

Tip: Try splitting your mailing list into 2 or more groups and sending slightly different messages to each. This is known as A/B testing and allows you to work out, for example, which subject line gets the best open rate.

Don't spam - set a limit to the amount of times you will email people if they don't go on to join your group.

Evaluation - Keep a record of how many people you sign-up at Welcome Fair, how many then open your emails, and how many become members. That will allow you to calculate your conversion rate and see what worked and didn't. Keeping these kinds of records will allow future committees to build on the work you've done.

Stay in Touch- You can add to your memberships throughout the year in lots of ways, and we are happy to help you come up with ideas. Contact the Development Team at bristolsu-development@bristol.ac.uk if you want any extra help!