

Student Groups

**Event Planning 101**

Information & Resource Guide

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# **Introduction**

Event planning is a positive way to engage, inspire and connect students to the MacEwan University community. Group events range from educational, academic, professional, spiritual, and social. We hope that this information guide will assist you in planning successful events on and off campus. The key to a successful event is thoughtful planning and communication from the beginning to the end of the event. The Student Group’s Department is here to help you do that.

Keep in mind **ALL** group events **MUST** be approved by the Student Groups Department. Groups are **NOT** allowed to book space, sign contracts, or confirm any sponsorship details until their event has been approved. Groups have a responsibility to ensure that their events adhere to SAMU and MacEwan University rules and regulations. The SAMU Student Groups department is available to assist you with any questions or concerns you may have regarding event planning. We act as your connection to university services such as conference services, facilities, and security on campus.

# **General Event Planning Tips**

* Meet with the Student Groups Department to keep them informed and updated on changes to your event. Email is another option for you to use. The better informed we are the more successful your event will be.
* Advertise your event to the rest of the group and membership. Complete an Advertising Request Form on <https://samu.campuslabs.ca/engage/forms> to request additional adverting support from SAMU.
* Ensure that you have sufficient group executives and volunteers for your event. Ensure that they are trained and recognized for their contribution.
* Ensure that all applicable MacEwan University and SAMU policies and procedures are followed. If you are not sure, check in with the Student Groups Department. Policies and procedures can be found at <https://samu.ca/about/bylaws-policy-procedures/>

# **Event Grants**

SAMU provides financial support via the $2000 Event Grant for groups. This funding is available year-round and is approved by the Grant Approval Sub-Committee (GASC).

Once GASC has reviewed the grant application, the Student Groups department will notify the event organizer and group by email indicating the amount they were awarded or if additional information is required.

This grant funding can be used to help cover many of the costs associated with running an event such as food, venue rental, marketing, etc. More information on this and other SAMU grants can be found at: <https://samu.ca/about/bylaws-policy-procedures> under the Grants Procedure.

# **Budgeting Tips**

The success of your group’s events can often depend on its ability to budget effectively. This means taking a serious look at what you want and what you can afford. It’s to your advantage to come in under your budget. If you go over, it is the group’s responsibility to pay for any costs that are not budgeted for. Below are some budgeting tips:

* Make sure the event has been approved before you start spending
* Look at past budgets if available
* Try to share resources with other groups when possible
* Keep and itemize all receipts. Only original receipts will be reimbursed from grant money. If you lose a receipt, you will need to fill out paperwork to get reimbursed from your groups regular account.
* Have one person in charge of the budget
* Fundraise and request funds from various internal and external resources (faculty, sponsorship, donations etc).
* Consider charging a small entry fee to help lower costs
* Always set aside some money for miscellaneous or emergency expenses
* Reconcile your account regularly to prevent financial errors (group treasurer)

**Note:** A budget template can be found on: <https://samu.ca/get-involved/student-groups/student-groups-resources/>

## **Handling Floats**

Some groups may have no choice but to keep petty cash or a cash ‘float’ readily available to make change for things like bake-sales or ticket sales at the door.

If your group is hosting an event off or on campus-, the group treasurer needs to collect money from sellers. It’s a good idea for collections to be recorded on a summary sheet signed by sellers to confirm the amount of money collected. In certain circumstances, it may not be practical for money to be counted at interim stages during an event; however, keep record of all collections made, evidenced by signatures from both collectors and sellers. Of course, all takings, including floats, should be collected, and recorded from all locations at the end of an event. You can borrow cash boxes from SAMU.

Once the event is over and the group has finished collecting the cash, the money should be brought to the Student Groups front desk (SA-214) to be deposited into the groups account.

**Note:** The Student Groups Department only provides the cash boxes, not the cash float.

# **Planning for Events**

## **Events in MacEwan University**

MacEwan University offers a variety of classrooms and special event spaces which are available for student group use.

However, when a group uses a MacEwan room for an event, any food provided must be catered through MacEwan’s catering service, Aramark.

**Note:** There are limited exceptions to the Aramark rule, these exceptions can be found in the Catering FAQ located at: <https://samu.ca/get-involved/student-groups/student-groups-resources/>

Events in MacEwan University spaces must be booked by Student Groups staff, please indicate what space you would like to book in the Event Approval Form when submitting your request. Once the event is approved, a staff member will contact your group regarding the MacEwan room booking.

For more complex events, once your room has been booked, your group will need to connect with MacEwan Facilities. Facilities will help groups with any additional set up requirements such as technology, furniture, and lighting.

If you are having an event past regular university hours, you will be charged an hourly rate to keep the building open past regular operating hours. Discuss this with facilities so you will know roughly how much it will cost you.

## **Events in SAMU**

SAMU offers a variety of meeting, collaboration, and multimedia rooms which are available for student group use.

When a group holds an event in SAMU they are not required to adhere to MacEwan’s catering agreement with Aramark. Groups are free to use a catering service of their choice, or to provide their own food.

**Note:** Currently, the Lookout is not available for Student Groups to book for events. SAMU will announce when this space becomes available to student groups later in 2023.

## **Events Off-Campus**

Off-campus events are usually organized to make money for groups, but keep in mind that the costs and liability greatly increase when you plan these types of events. Read all contracts thoroughly so there are no surprises at the end of the night.

Contracts and sponsorship agreements **MUST** be submitted to the Student Groups Department for review before signing. Its good practice to allow for a bit of extra time for planning and processing time for off campus events.

**DO NOT** book the venue or pay for any damage deposits required to hold the space **UNTIL** **AFTER** your Event Approval Form has been approved.

Ensure that you have contacted a caterer for your event and received a quote, so you know up front how much the food, beverages, etc. are going to cost. Include quotes in your Event Approval Form and associated budget.

If you are serving alcohol at the event, ensure that you attach a copy of the venue or catering company’s liquor license and security contract to the Event Approval Form.

Ensure that you leave the venue clean, and garbage and recycling products have been handled. Often this is identified in your contract.

**New:** SAMU can now pay invoices directly. Attach invoices for large expenses such as vendors, entertainers, and security to a Cheque Requisition and SAMU can send cheques directly to the third party.

# **Audio-Visual Requirements**

## **SAMU Student Groups Equipment**

The Student Group Department has an inventory of AV and general equipment. The list of equipment can be found on the Television, Audio/Visual, and General Equipment Booking Form found at: https://samu.campuslabs.ca/engage/forms

AV and general equipment provided by the Student Groups Department is available at no charge to student groups.

If your group requires equipment that the Student Groups Department does not have in inventory, you will need to rent the equipment from MacEwan, which may come with a rental fee.

## **MacEwan Equipment**

The MacEwan Library has an inventory of technology and equipment that groups can rent

The list of rental equipment available from the library can be found at: <https://library.macewan.ca/services/technology/laptops-equipment>

Some MacEwan classrooms are already equipped with certain equipment. If your group’s event has specific set-up requirements (such as tables, curtains/partitions, whiteboards, podiums, stage, etc.) this is to be indicated in the Set-Up Requirements in the Event Form when the submission is made.

# **Alcohol Guidelines**

Due to the complex nature of alcoholic events, we encourage dry events. However, if a group still wishes to offer alcohol at their event, there are additional precautions that must be taken.

## **Events with Alcohol on Campus**

Hosting an event on campus may save you money; you will not need to purchase an alcohol license. MacEwan is registered to serve alcohol so make sure your guests know to bring their government issued photo identification. Student ID is not acceptable for any events where alcohol is served. Here are some points to consider if you are having alcohol at an event.

* Events with alcohol require additional security, which may come at an extra cost.
* Events with alcohol must be catered through Aramark. No special occasion permits are allowed on campus. Check with the Student Groups department before serving alcohol in the SAMU building.
* Executives and volunteers are required to remain sober throughout the event.

## **Events with Alcohol Off-Campus**

Groups may choose to serve alcohol at an off-campus event. In this case the following contracts must be sent to the Student Groups Department and included in the Event Approval Form.

* Venue rental agreement
* Catering contract
* Venue or Catering Company’s license to serve alcohol
* Security contract

**Note**: Any other contract or agreement specific to your groups event, should also be sent to the Student Groups Department.

When servicing alcohol off-campus, groups must ensure that the venue does not allow underage participants to enter the event.

**Note:** Groups are not allowed to purchase or sell their own alcohol for events. Even if a member of the student group has their pro-serve, this service must be provided by a licensed organization such as the venue or catering company.

## **Excessive Drinking Reminders for On and Off-Campus Events:**

* Student Groups volunteers should keep an eye on dangerous areas such as stairs, balconies, or hallways.
* Individuals that display signs of intoxication will be cut off immediately this is the responsibility of the certified pro-serve staff.
* Student Groups volunteers should monitor the behavior of all attendees and report any problems to their team leader or the Group President who will determine further action.
* Groups must abide by the provincial liquor laws when planning events with alcohol.

# **Outdoor Events**

Weather is one of the hardest things to predict, and wind, rain, snow, or sun can adversely affect the success of your event. Consider the following when planning an outdoor event:

* Check the weather report prior to any outdoor event
* Arrange for an alternate indoor venue if required
* Always ensure water is available when holding an outdoor event during warm weather
* Shaded areas should be created for those who want to get out of the sun
* Minimize sun time by holding the event later in the day or for shorter time periods
* Remember that people often won’t notice heat/sun stroke until it hits them. Be aware of the signs and symptoms.
* Find someone who has basic first aid training.

# **Travel**

## **Travel Within Canada**

Groups may wish to travel within Canada to attend conferences, trade shows, or other events. There are many risks associate with travel, therefore, these types of events will require more time to plan and more communications with the Student Groups Department. Because the event requires more time to plan, please submit your event form 60 days prior to the date of travel.

**The following tasks must be completed before your group can be approved for travel:**

* Complete the University’s travel forms if required located at <https://www.macewan.ca/safe-at-macewan/travel-safety>
* Submit a signed copy of all students approved for travel *within Canada* to the Student Groups Department 1 month prior to travel.
* Ensure the department has a contact list of people who are approved for travel *within Canada* in your group 1 month prior to travel.
* Ensure that travelers have all their documentation, passports, health care card etc
* Ensure that all the traveler’s hotels, meals, flights etc are all arranged.
* Ensure that transportation have been arranged when you arrive at your destination.
* Ensure that there are 2 people from the groups who serve as go to people in case of emergency
* Ensure that all waivers have been provided, signed, and collected.

**Note:** After receiving your Event Form, the Student Groups Department will contact you and help your group navigate through the tasks associated with domestic travel.

## **Travelling Abroad**

Travelling abroad increases the risks associated with the event. Therefore, there are additional requirements which groups are required to meet before they can be approved for international travel

**In addition** to the tasks for travel within Canada, international travel also requires groups to:

* Have all students approved for travel attend a pre-departure orientation session hosted by MacEwan International.
* Ensure that all travelers have purchased extra insurance if required.
* Adhere to all MacEwan University policy and procedures when travelling abroad.

**Note:** After receiving your Event Form, the Student Groups Department will contact you and help your group navigate through the tasks associated with international travel.

# **Risk Management Practices**

A SAMU Student Group hosting an event or activity is responsible for the behavior of its guests along with injuries that may result at an event they are hosting. Its good practice to look at all of the things that could wrong at your event and strategize how you will minimize potential risks. A risk management plan assessing potential risks and identifying strategies to mitigate will need to be included in your Event Approval Form.

**Here are some things to keep in mind when accessing risk.**

* Consider the community surroundings. For instance, what are the city by-laws or campus rules regarding noise?
* Does your event conflict with any other event or holiday?
* Are your safety and security plans clearly outlined?
* Is your event inclusive and accessible?
* Have you planned appropriately for your target group of participants?
* Is your event conflicting with any laws of the land, objectives of the University or by-laws within your organization?
* How many people are coming to your event?
* Is this event dangerous in any way (Going for a walk versus Hip Hop Dancing)

**Note:** Notify the Student Groups Department within 24hrs if you experience an incident during your event. There is an Incident/Emergency Report Form located at: <https://samu.campuslabs.ca/engage/forms> for you to fill out.

## **Waivers**

Some events require waivers from group members and participants. A waiver may be required in the following situations

* Fitness activities
* Participation in sporting events and races
* Participants will be filmed or photographed
* Events where the hosting venue requires participants to sign a waiver (ex. rock climbing)

**Note:** The Student Groups Department will notify you if a waiver is required for your event.

# **Event Day Procedures**

Even with well-planned out events, it is common for issues to arise. Event planners who keep this in mind are usually the most prepared and best equipped to handle any situation that may arise. If an event has been well planned, and your executive and volunteers are familiar with safety and security procedures, you should be able to run and implement the safest event possible.

## **Pre-Event Procedures**

Prior to any event, there are precautionary measures that should be taken. They include the following:

* Determine the layout arrangement of your event. Carefully utilize the space to ensure there is room for everything from electronic equipment to seating
* Review the fire regulation and building capacity policies for the event location
* Check the event site to ensure it is fully accessible (elevators, ramps etc.)
* Assign roles to all event volunteers/staff (ex. greeters, technical assistance, etc.)
* Ensure a communication method is in place for all event volunteers/staff (ex. group chat)

**For larger events you may need to:**

* Hold a training session for all staff/volunteers before their shift, reviewing the entry/exit points, safety equipment, and emergency procedures
* Create a rotation schedule for all security persons, ensuring staff have been assigned to all areas of the venue
* Place volunteers in strategic areas so they can quickly respond to all situations
* Ensure group members/volunteers are dressed so they are clearly visible
* Conduct a final venue check before the doors open to ensure everything is ready

## **Entrance Procedures**

To ensure a smooth entry process for event participants:

* Utilize signage outside the venue to indicate the doors that are accessible
* One student groups volunteer should keep track of the number of people within the venue, to ensure attendance does not exceed building or room capacity

**For larger events you may need to:**

* Stagger event entry and use barricades to avoid areas of high congestion
* Arrange for adequate entry areas to prevent long lines or have a system in place that can control the queue.
* At least two-line monitors should supervise the entry line into an event, to keep the line calm and orderly
* Door staff should work in pairs, with one person checking identification cards/wristbands, and the other taking tickets and admission fees

## **Day-Of-Event Procedures**

* Have a day-of-event planner, ensure that each minute of the event is planned out. Consider everything from the beginning of the event when guests enter to the end when they exit
* Last minute rechecks. Visit the venue prior to the event start time and ensure the equipment is working and everything is laid out
* Communicate with attendees. Be around to help attendees as required.

## **Post-Event Procedures**

* Clean up the facility. Leave wherever you held the event in a better state than you found it in.
* Conduct a post-event evaluation. Gather feedback from participants to determine how you can improve future events.
* Debrief with event volunteers/staff. Were there any issues encountered throughout the event. Determine areas for improvement.

Responsibility for event participants does not cease once they have left the event venue. Injuries or damages that occur after the event has concluded can become the responsibility of the student group and event staff. To protect the safety of event participants, you can:

* Contact Safe-Walk to walk students’ home or to their cars
* Call taxicabs or arrange for transportation after the event
* Report all outstanding event details to event volunteers/staff
* Submit waivers if you were directed to do so through the event approval process

**Note:** Please submit a Post Event Summary Form after the event. The form can be found at <https://samu.campuslabs.ca/engage/forms>

# **Additional Event Resources**

In this section you will find some resources for your group to use to help them with event planning. Feel free to adapt these to your groups event needs.

## **Event Evaluation Feedback from Guests**

There are many ways that you can assess how successful you event was. For example, you can ask participants to complete an on-line survey and offer an incentive such as a gift card. You could have volunteers roaming around with tablets asking participants to complete a survey at the event. The key here is to keep it brief and make it easy. Don’t ask for a lot of detail. You can also leave a paper survey at the tables and remind the guests that you will be picking them up at the end of the event.

Here is a sample of an Evaluation Questionnaire you may want to use. Remember keep it to under 10 questions. Please remember to review the feedback you receive and add it into the Post Event Summary Form.

**Evaluation Questionnaire Sample Questions**

1. Were the date and time of the event convenient for you? Yes or No
2. Were you able to find the venue? Yes or No
3. How easy was it to register for the event? Extremely, Easy, or Not Easy at all
4. How would you rate this event? Excellent, Very Good, Good, or Poor
5. How would you rate the cost of this event? Excellent, Very Good, Good, or Poor
6. How satisfied were you with the food? Excellent, Very Good, Good, or Poor
7. Would you attend this event again?
8. Would you recommend this event to a friend?

## **Create an Event Committee**

Event Committees can be appointed to organize a specific event. Planning can go much smoother with a dedicated team in place who are assigned specific tasks and responsibilities.

**Sample Event Committee Job Titles and Duties**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Title** | **Duties** |
| **Chair****Name:** | Call and chair meetings of the committee, liaise with various coordinators, liaise with group secretary to set agenda for future meetings, liaise with the Student Groups department, and facilitate communication with committee. |
| **Secretary****Name:** | Records and distributes meeting minutes including action items and persons responsible, works with chair to prepare agenda. |
| **Treasurer****Name:** | Maintains accounting of the event expenses and revenues, understands, and is involved in creating the budget for events, liaises regularly with the Student Groups department to ensure balances match, prepares financial statements during and after the event has ended, outlines if group has gone under/over budget.  |
| **Fundraising Coordinator****Name:** | Prepares a funding strategy for committee and volunteer coordinator, carries out fundraising strategy with volunteer coordinator, maintains contact lists of all financial and in-kind donations, prepares thank-you letters to donors, acquires appropriate licenses/permits, liaises with volunteer coordinator on volunteer needs, develops sponsorship package to be mailed out to potential sponsors.  |
| **Promotions Coordinator****Name:**  | Prepares a publicity strategy for the event (to be approved by committee), arranges any promotional swag (ex. T-shirts) |
| **Volunteer Coordinator****Name:** | Recruits volunteers, maintains a list of volunteers along with keeping track of hours worked, prepares job description for volunteer positions, communicates with volunteers the day of the event to ensure they have what they need. |
| **AV/Facilities Coordinator:****Name:** | Ensure all AV equipment is working and has contacted MacEwan technician to ensure there is a mutual understanding of what is requested, the booking of sound and lights (if the event is off-campus), checking out the space after set-up to ensure all is done the way it was requested. |
| **Catering Coordinator****Name:**  | Arrange for food for guests, develops a menu from a budget given by the overall committee, (again, if it is on-campus catering must be done through Aramark; You may be subject to after-hours cleaning charges for your event), the committee and the Student Groups department will need to know of caterers for off-campus events, purchases liquor license, purchases event insurance, hires security guards, arranges underage wristbands. |

## **Task Planner**

Here is an example of a task scheduler to help keep track of who is doing what for your event. Remember to update this as much as possible. Hint: If you want to be extra organized, create this as a google doc that all your coordinators have access to, so that when a task is finished, they can update it themselves.

Make sure that when you develop your task organizer it is clear and concise so that whoever is reading it knows exactly what is going on.

**Example Task Planner:**

|  |
| --- |
| **Date of Event: September 1** |
| ***Task*** | ***Target Date*** | ***Person Responsible*** | ***Status*** |
| Booking of Room | June 9th  | Emily | Tried to book room 7-292, but was already booked. Inquired about 7-293, and they are getting back to me. They said it should be good to go, but I will know for sure by the 8th. |
| Booking of Entertainment | June 23rd | Vanessa | The Red-Hot Chili Peppers said they were available, just waiting on a confirmation email! |
| Catering | July 7th  | Rachel | Contacted Aramark but have yet to receive quote |