

The background of the cover is a photograph of several students from The University of Edinburgh walking away from the camera. They are wearing bright red jackets and t-shirts. The central student's jacket has the university's crest and name on the back. The text 'PARTNERSHIPS GUIDE 2022/23' is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the middle of the image. The bottom of the image features a dark green and blue geometric design.

**PARTNERSHIPS
GUIDE
2022 / 23**

THE UNIVERSITY
of EDINBURGH

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INTRODUCTION

Successful partnerships are key to running a sports club. They can ensure income via sponsorship, reduce costs for your members, and help raise awareness of important issues. Many clubs have social sponsors, but increasingly clubs are also looking further afield, partnering with local businesses, charities, and other sports clubs.

A partnership will benefit both parties and for sports clubs this will often be discounts/sponsorship payments in exchange for marketing the partner business to your members and wider audience. Other examples could be raising awareness and money for a charity, in exchange for the charity providing resources for your members, or coaching at a community club in exchange for facility use.

As a club you can have multiple partners across a range of areas. It is important to be honest with potential partners and inform them of other partnerships you have, but generally as long as there is not a conflict of interest, there should be no issues.

GETTING STARTED

Step 1: Review existing partnerships your club has. Are these still mutually beneficial to both your club and the partner?

Step 2: Establish potential new partners. Make a list of businesses that could be beneficial to your club and reach out to them - social sponsors, equipment sponsors, facility providers or charities.

Step 3: Draft up a partnership agreement and submit it to the Partnerships and Alumni Officer.

Step 4: Share your new partner on social media so that your club members and wider community are aware.

Think about your club values and how they fit the image of the prospective partners; partnerships should not contradict your club values.

Partnerships take time and building them should be an ongoing process; ensuring a good relationship with partners can be crucial to future agreements.

THE NEEDS OF YOUR CLUB

When considering partnerships for your club, it is essential that you consider your members. Partners must be beneficial for your club, its members and the partner - to achieve this, all parties must be invested.

Meeting with potential partners allows you to understand the requirements of the partnership and what your club is able to gain. It is recommended that you meet with your partners to ensure that everyone is agreed on the benefits of the partnership so that the contract is correct and all benefits can be claimed.

Although formal partnerships with written agreements are important, informal partnerships with an unwritten agreement can be just as valuable. Don't forget about informal partnerships when managing your partners and handing over committee positions - they require maintenance too.

NEGOTIATION

When negotiating with potential partners, you should keep in mind what the business needs and what you can offer them.

Data about your members is important for negotiation - businesses will want to know what you can offer. The more you know about your club (numbers, age range, interests, courses, competitive/recreational, alumni engagement, social media reach, size and location of events you attend) the more you can do to a business that your partnership will be beneficial.

Contact with club partners should be completed using your club email address - this is more professional, and makes it easier to hand over partnership information at the end of the year.

Businesses are most likely to choose clubs to partner with which have a low risk to them as a business. and are going to be reliable customers. Ensure that you can fulfil the needs of the company before you commit to signing any agreements.

MANAGING PARTNERS

Social media is likely the main way that you will engage your partners; it is, therefore, important that your social media reflects your club well and is on-brand. Incorporating partners' logos into posts allows them to see them more easily and will help boost their perception of your club.

Whilst meeting with partners, it is important to discuss social media and what their expectations are from you with regards to posting and engagement.

Once partnerships are agreed, you should make an effort to ensure that the conditions of the agreement are fulfilled. If committee members do not engage with and support the partnership, it will become more difficult to engage club members.

If you run into any issues regarding Partnership agreements or challenges with your partners, please contact the Partnerships and Alumni Officer.

BEYOND SOCIAL PARTNERS

Social sponsors are brilliant and often get good engagement from club members, however your club will be of interest to a much wider audience...

- **Student targeted organisations;** a graduate recruitment company, hairdressers, or stationary suppliers.
- **Charities (see charity section for more info);** particularly those who support a cause your members are passionate about or can educate your members on an important issue.
- **Local community groups;** schools/young people organisations will often look for coaches and can offer facilities for your club in some cases. Getting involved with these groups can allow you to spread your passion to others, and may even inspire school-aged children to join your club at university.
- **Other university sports clubs;** sometimes strength is in numbers and there will be projects and events that multiple clubs can work on together. Although many agreements will be ongoing throughout the year, it is also possible to partner for one-off events.

CHARITY PARTNERS

Partnering with charities is a great way to promote a cause which is important to your members; members will get the chance to make a difference, whether that is raising money, awareness, or volunteering for the charity.

Some charities that work with students and young people (such as mental health charities) will want to reach your club's demographic and may be willing to come in and do a talk with your members or run events.

If you are running an event in support of a charity, check their website or get in touch with them; they may be able to provide resources or provide social media exposure for the club.

Marketing smaller clubs postively

As a smaller club, it can be more difficult to sell yourself to potential partners, due to your smaller audience. There are certain ways you can increase your appeal to partners; team up with other similar clubs to increase the size of your 'club' or if you are in contact with alumni, use them to increase the scale of your audience.

COVID-19 RECOVERY

Scottish businesses are back up and running and eager to get customers through the door. It is particularly important this year to meet the conditions of your partnership to a high standard, as businesses will have less money to spare on poor partnerships.

Be understanding of your partner's concerns, but do not let them use COVID as an excuse to undervalue you. If you rely on a partnership to carry out club activity and are struggling to renew it, speak to the Sports Union.

It is advisable to keep in communication with your partners and not let them fizzle out if they are important to you, however, if it is going to be a while, it may be worth looking into other options.

Looking Ahead

During the year you should also think about how you can improve your appeal to sponsors. You could work on improving your appearance and following on social media, growing your alumni engagement, and gathering data about your members (make sure this is in line with UK GDPR).

CASE STUDY: EUSSC



Club: Snowsports

Size: Over 100 core members (1000+ for ski trip)

Values: Having fun, being a welcoming and inclusive team, family feel, along with sustainability to try and counter some of the travellings they do.

Seeking partnerships: Partnerships are mainly dealt with by the Vice President and President. Other committee members will work with partners related to their role (socials and trip director for example).

At the start of the year, the committee sit down, list potential new partners, and discuss which partners could fill gaps in the club offering. They then approach potential partners via email, focusing on what they can offer partners (social media exposure is a main offer).

CASE STUDY: EUSSC

Partner exposure: Partner logos are displayed on social media posts and as a banner in their website footer.

EUSSC Partners:

- Aloha - sent ingredients for cocktails for a lockdown social
- Ski Racing Supplies - gave the club discounted ski racing supplies; allowing new students to try ski racing using high-quality equipment.
- NUCO – logistics partner for the ski trip.
- POW - charity partnership. EUSSC joined Heriot Watt to run 2000 miles in July.

Top tips from EUSSC:

- Send out lots of emails, it makes a difference - don't be put off when some businesses don't want to speak, you will be surprised who picks up.
- Even if you are a small club, big up what you are doing - how many people will see you at competitions?
- Good pictures help, this can be a selling point for sports which photograph well.

CONTACT

If you have questions regarding the content of this guide or are unsure where to start, please contact the Partnerships and Alumni Officer.

Any questions relating to wider EUSU partnerships or community engagement, please contact Emily Roxbee-Cox.

A template for Club Partnership agreements can be found on the EUSU Website.

Please ensure that all partnership agreements are sent to the Partnerships and Alumni Officer so that they can be checked before being finalised with your partner.

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