

How to run a SSAGO Ball

Introduction

This factsheet aims to help any club who has won a bid or is thinking of bidding for a SSAGO ball. It provides basic information about putting the ball together. The National Events Policy Document should also be read to ensure all the requirements are fulfilled.

What is the SSAGO ball

The SSAGO Ball is a fairly new event in comparison to rallies and was first run in 2004. It is intended to be a completely different National SSAGO Event with a formal dress code and usually no theme.

As with rallies the ball is bid for each year at the AGM for the following year's ball. This event is much more manageable than a rally for smaller clubs to organise.

The ball usually falls in March or April, after the Spring Rally but before the Easter holidays. The sooner a date is confirmed the sooner SSAGO members can put it in their diary. The date should be announced, at the latest, at November Rally. Booking usually opens soon after the Christmas holidays.

Putting a bid together

Before attending the AGM it is advisable to have thought about the following points:

- In which city you will be holding the ball
- An estimate of the cost (this should be done by contacting a few hotels beforehand)
- The accessibility of the venue
- How you'll maintain the high standard of balls that have gone before yours
- What twist your ball will have to attract members

What you need to run a ball

- A good organising committee who work well together. It is vital that all team members are involved early in the decision making. The team should be small enough to work with but large enough to not make the load too big for any one committee member.
- Ability to plan well ahead of time. This is absolutely necessary to make the event a success.
- Club support is essential in order to promote the event and to make the final preparations such as decorating an easier task. To achieve this the event should be supported by the club at the bidding stage and the club should be kept informed of decisions and plans as the ball progresses.

- It is always good to have the Student's Union behind you for such a large event. However, do not be disheartened if they do not back it, it won't be the first time this has happened! If they can help and support you in anyway then use this to your advantage.
- Excellent communication between the organising committee and the National Executive to keep them informed of progress and any problems along the way. They are present to support you and help answer questions. Regular contact is essential.

Finding a venue

Picking the right hotel is vital for the enjoyment of all attending the ball plus the ease for the organising committee. The hotel doesn't have to be the best chain, it just needs to provide what is needed at an affordable price.

When looking for a venue consider the following:

- Location and accessibility
- Capacity of function room
- Number of bedrooms
- What is included in the price (breakfast, reception drinks, function room hire)
- Meal prices and variety
- Bar prices

Be prepared to compromise as it is unlikely you will find everything you want. However, don't be afraid to negotiate and be sure to inform them of the large booking you are likely to make from the beginning as this may help to secure a discount.

Finance

Budgets need to be planned in accordance with the National Events Policy Document. For the ball these should begin with a maximum of 100 attendees unless there were significantly less than this at the previous ball.

It is reasonable to expect to charge:

£50-£60 for the meal and room with breakfast included

£20-£30 meal only

Remember that there may be other costs involved that should be factored in early in the planning stages. These include:

- Printing of publicity material to take to SSAGO events
- Table/Room decorations
- Transport (if shuttle runs to/from train station etc are to be offered)
- DJ (if this is not included in the price of the hotel)

For items that may not be provided by the hotel, such as the DJ, ask around other societies and clubs at university. This may help find someone at a very reasonable cost.

Don't imagine you are planning a wedding! SSAGO people are usually getting cold/wet in tents in fields. This doesn't mean you have to scrimp and save but we don't require the earth!

Handling Bookings

When taking bookings there are a number of things that need to be established including:

- Meal choice (if applicable)
- Whether participant wants meal and room or meal only
- Dietary requirements
- Who participant wishes to share a room with and whether a double or twin is required.

The ssagorally website should be used to take bookings. Opening of bookings should be announced to clubs via email (everyone@ssago.org.uk) and the SSAGO messageboard. Clubs should decide, with the hotel, when bookings are required to close.

When initially booking with the hotel it will be difficult to gauge how many double and twin rooms are required. Ensure that you work closely with the hotel as bookings come in to alter this and that you keep a good working relationship with the hotel at all times.

On the day (and perhaps a little earlier)

- Organise a seating plan-it is usual that those sharing a room would want to sit together. Try and mix at least two if not three clubs on a table in order to break up the bigger clubs.
- Get a team of volunteers to help decorate the room.
- Ensure there is at least one person at the hotel reception to welcome members and check them in.
- Consider purchasing small gifts for members of the ball committee to thank them for their hard work.
- Relax and have fun!

Added Extras

- It is usual that balls have an official photographer. This may be provided by the hotel or sought in the local town. However some scout photographers who understand SSAGO are: Armes.family@ntlworld.com
- There is potential to have an after dinner speaker. Don't push your budget to be able to have one. When looking for a speaker it is wise to think of the relevance and ensure you have good visual and audio technology to aid the enjoyment.

- It is not compulsory but it is nice to invite the Chief Scout and Chief Guide to the SSAGO Ball. It is a chance for them to see us in all our glory. They would be expected to pay for their own ticket.