Contents

1. Executive summary ................................................................................................................. 1

2. Aims & methods ..................................................................................................................... 1

   A. Basic information about the school visit ................................................................................ 1
   B. Desired student outcomes ..................................................................................................... 1
   C. Five themes captured during feedback ................................................................................ 1
   D. Methods .................................................................................................................................. 1

3. Main themes ............................................................................................................................ 2

   A. Motivations ............................................................................................................................ 2
   B. Likelihood of applying to university ....................................................................................... 2
   C. How useful are the sessions? ................................................................................................ 3
      Most useful ................................................................................................................................ 3
      Least useful .............................................................................................................................. 4
   D. Student finance – how worried are they? ............................................................................. 5
   E. Overall satisfaction ............................................................................................................... 5

4. Is student finance a barrier to Higher Education? ................................................................. 6

5. Conclusions ............................................................................................................................. 6

Appendix 1 ..................................................................................................................................... 8
1. Executive summary

- 94% of students stated their intention to apply to university after the visit
- This represents an increase of 138% on their intentions before the event
- The most useful session was “student finance”, chosen by 42% of students
- The least useful sessions were “goal setting” and “campus tour”, each chosen by 34.5% of students
- Before the event, 72% of participants were worried about student finance
- This decreased by 96% to just 3% after the event
- Students’ confidence about student finance rose 400%
- Student finance has the biggest impact on students’ intention to apply to university
- 100% of participants were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with the event

2. Aims & methods

A. Basic information about the school visit

Date of event: 19/12/13
Number of student responses: 32

B. Desired student outcomes

To improve students’ aspirations and increase their awareness of key higher education issues by delivering Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) sessions on goal setting, student life, course searching, study skills, student finance and independent living.

C. Five themes captured during feedback

1. Motivations
2. Likelihood of applying to university
3. Most and least useful sessions
4. Student finance awareness
5. Overall satisfaction

D. Methods

A survey was administered to students at the end of the visit. It contained 11 questions, using either multiple choice, free text or scale-type questions.

The full survey can be found in Appendix 1.
3. Main themes

A. Motivations

When asked what they were most looking forward to finding out about, 75% of students answered either “finding out about student life” or “figuring out what courses I can apply to” (Figure 1).

![Figure 1: Participants’ reasons for attending the event](image)

B. Likelihood of applying to university

59% of respondents were either “not at all likely”, “not that likely” or “unsure” of applying to university before the day’s event.

At the end of the event, no students answered “not at all likely” or “not that likely”.

Of those who had been “unsure” (40.6%), all were now “likely” or “very likely” to apply.

The percentage of participants who had been “likely” or “very likely” rose by 138% (from 40.6% to 96.8%).

The mean for the likelihood of applying before and after the day, based on a scale of 1-5, with 1 being least likely and 5 being most likely, went from 3.31 to 4.58 (Figure 2). Note the low standard deviation after the event, confirming the overall improved likelihood.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St. deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>1.091</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>0.564</td>
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</table>

Figure 2: Mean representing the likelihood of applying to university before and after the school’s visit

C. How useful are the sessions?

Most useful
The most useful session was “student finance”, selected by 42% of students. That was followed by “course searching” at 23% (Figure 3).

![Figure 3: Participants’ views on the most useful sessions](image)

According to participants, the student finance session helped alleviate fears and anxieties surrounding the financial system.

“[the session] showed me all about student finance and how it isn’t as difficult as I thought.”

“Because student finance was much [scarier] beforehand.”

It also served to inform students of the options available to them, reinforcing the importance of IAG sessions.

“Because knowing how much things cost (i.e. loans etc) was something I was unsure of.”
“Because I wasn’t aware of all the loans available before.”

“Course searching” also proved to be a powerful IAG session:

“Before today, I was completely unsure about what sort of thing I wanted to do. I’m not sure about my career path for definite, but the course searching session gave me some valuable insight into what direction I want to take.”

“I managed to find what I want to do and what I need to do to get it.”

**Least useful**
The least useful sessions were “goal setting” and “campus tour”, each chosen by 34.50% of respondents (Figure 4).

![Figure 4: Participants’ views on the least useful sessions](image)

Concerning “goal setting”, respondents felt this repeated what they had already done in previous sessions (i.e. at school):

“We have set goals a lot before; doing new stuff was better.”

“ Heard it all before.”

As for the “campus tour”, students indicated that they were unlikely to remember the tour:

“In one ear and out the other.”
One student was unimpressed by the actual tour guide, in addition to stating memory-related issues:

“Because the tour guide lacked confidence in explaining; more importantly I will forget!”

Some did not feel the tour fully represented the university:

“We didn’t see any of the actual rooms, just walked around outside.”

Some students did not intend to apply to Hertfordshire and felt that it was therefore redundant:

“I might not come here so it may not be relevant to me.”

**D. Student finance – how worried are they?**

Before the school’s visit, 72% of the participants were worried to some degree about student finance. Just 16% were not worried.

This uncertainty is reflected in a mean of just 2.09, where 1 is most worried and 5 is least worried.

However, after the day’s events, the mean jumped up to 3.81 (Figure 5).

In fact, the percentage of worried students plummeted to just 3%, a decrease of 96%.

Students now registered a 400% increase in not being worried (78%, up from 16%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>St. deviation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.058</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>0.738</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Figure 5: Mean representing how worried students are about student finance before and after the school’s visit

**E. Overall satisfaction**

Satisfaction for the school visit was very high, with a mean of 4.44 (1 being least satisfied and 5 being the most satisfied).

100% of the respondents answered with either “satisfied” (56%) or “very satisfied” (44%).

Individual responses range from increased awareness and confidence about their own education, abilities and university life:

“I’m more aware of university life and what is on offer. I feel much more reassured about my education 😊”
“It’s given me a deeper understanding of uni life and I now know the courses to take.”

“I enjoyed today’s event and it inspired me to go to university.”

“It has made me want to go to university now. I wasn’t sure before, now I’m 100% going.”

“Found out loads of information, I know what I want to do, I am now more confident.”

“I’ve learnt so much that I didn’t know and now feel happier. Staff were lovely + a great help. A fantastic experience. Thank you!! 😊”

### 4. Is student finance a barrier to Higher Education?

84% of the students who were either unsure or unlikely to apply to university before the school visit were worried about student finance.

Comparatively, just 54% of students who were either “likely” or “very likely” to apply before the visit were worried to some degree about student finance. 31% were “not that worried”.

As previously stated, after the day’s events, all students (except one) were planning to apply to university. Of these students, just 3% were still worried to some degree. 19% were unsure how worried they were, while 77% were not worried—the latter is an increase of almost 150%.

Finally, for those students who were more likely to apply to university after the school visit, 42% of them found “student finance” to be the most useful session—the highest percentage of any session ("course searching" and “independent living” were joint second with 21%).

The following quote from a participant who was “unsure” about attending university before the school visit and who felt “student finance” was the most useful session, illustrates this transformative behaviour:

“Before coming [on the school visit], I didn’t think I’d be going to uni. However, after being explained [student finance], I believe coming to uni is now likely.”

### 5. Conclusions

Although there are undoubtedly many factors why students decide to apply for university or not, it seems that worrying about student finance acts as an additional barrier, especially if levels of worry are about a third higher amongst students who are unsure or leaning against applying.
Placing students in a higher education environment for just one day—and running a specific IAG session on finance—alleviates concerns and dramatically improves their aspirations by 150%.

These statistics also suggest that misconceptions surrounding student finance are very real and that IAG sessions on finance can offer the most impact on students with doubts about higher education.
Appendix 1

Barnwell School Year 11 Visit

We hope you had a great day here on campus! We’d love your thoughts on how it went. *Please be honest!* Thank you! 😊

1. **What is the main part of university you want to find out about today?** Please tick one.
   - ☐ Building-up my confidence by learning new skills
   - ☐ Finding out about student life
   - ☐ Figuring out what courses I can apply to
   - ☐ Learning about student finance

2. **How likely were you to apply to university BEFORE today?** Circle one.
   - 1 Not at all likely
   - 2 Not that likely
   - 3 Unsure
   - 4 Likely
   - 5 Very likely

3. **How likely are you to apply to university AFTER today?** Circle one.
   - 1 Not at all likely
   - 2 Not that likely
   - 3 Unsure
   - 4 Likely
   - 5 Very likely

4. **Which of today’s sessions was the MOST useful?** Tick one.
   - ☐ Goal setting
   - ☐ Why go to uni / student life
   - ☐ Campus tour
   - ☐ Course searching
   - ☐ Study skills
   - ☐ Student finance
   - ☐ Independent living

5. **Please explain why.**

PLEASE TURN OVER 😊
6. Which of today’s sessions was the LEAST useful? Tick one.

☐ Goal setting
☐ Why go to uni / student life
☐ Campus tour
☐ Course searching
☐ Study skills
☐ Student finance
☐ Independent living

7. Please explain why.


8. How worried were you about student finance BEFORE today’s event? Circle one.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very worried</td>
<td>A bit worried</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Not that worried</td>
<td>Not worried at all</td>
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</table>

9. How worried are you about student finance AFTER today’s event? Circle one.

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<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very worried</td>
<td>A bit worried</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Not that worried</td>
<td>Not worried at all</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. Overall, how satisfied are you with today’s event? Circle one.

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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not satisfied at all</td>
<td>Not that satisfied</td>
<td>Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Please explain why.