

Fine dining and jewellery: University's attempts to charm investors revealed

Dinner for donations: iTunes purchases and luxury hotels charged to credit cards

By [Neil Johnston](#), News Editor (2012/13)
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Thousands of pounds have been spent by the University on luxurious 'gifts' for donors, as well as other 'excessive' purchases for senior staff.

The University has splashed out on Michelin star restaurants, luxury hotel stays and even one £500 trip to a jewellers, an analysis of the credit card bills of senior staff by Nouse has revealed.

Over £20,000 has been spent on credit cards belonging to the Vice-Chancellor's Department, in addition to tens of thousands of pounds of expenses over the same period.

The University have confirmed the expenses were claimed by several staff, and that many of the claims were gifts.

Among the claims featured on the 'hospitality' bill were hundreds of pounds on iTunes, and bills from Betty's tea room also appeared on the list of purchases.

The credit card bill included a £100 meal at Loch Fyne restaurant and a £588.25 spend at the Murano Michelin star restaurant in London.

In New York, £474.90 was spent at luxury restaurant Patroon, [described by Time Out magazine](#) as place to enjoy "bigwig style".

Kallum Taylor, YUSU President described the claims as "excessive, and worryingly contradictory", adding that he was "uncomfortable" with the revelations given the current economic climate.

These claims are on top of the £32,888 of expenses the VC claimed last year, which the University refused to break down.

However, Nouse was able to reveal earlier in the year that [the University was spending money on gardeners, paintings, iPads, and luxury travel](#). A University spokesperson said: "The credit card bills relate to the Vice-Chancellor's department and so include the expenses not only of the VC but also seven other senior academic managers, making average annual expenses for each at around a modest £1,250.

The records also include such items as a £216 charge from West One Cars London, a cab company that offer an 'executive service' which provides 'luxury travel in one of our Mercedes E-Class or S-Class vehicles.' There was also a £600 transaction to Europcar in York.

The total spent on lavish London hotels contradicts the University's justification earlier in the year for providing the VC with a Mercedes.

Taylor said: "As a registered charity, I find the University's expenses excessive, and worryingly contradictory: featuring 'gifts' for 'donors' and overnight stays in London for those despite the expensive chauffeurs to bring them home after late meetings in other cities.

"Everyone else seems to be tightening their belts, so even when it's slightly uncomfortable or impractical, the University should really consider how this looks."

After senior staff perks were revealed by Nouse last term, the University commented: "The E-Class Mercedes (there is only one) is used to transport VIP visitors the Vice-Chancellor. In the case of the Vice-Chancellor, the car is frequently used to transport him home from evening meetings in London and other locations outside York, thus avoiding the cost of an overnight hotel stay. The only other vehicles operated by the University are service vehicles used by Estates & Campus Services, and Commercial Services."

But the spending went beyond charges in the UK, as senior staff enjoyed luxuries worldwide. In total thousands was spent on hotels in London and several thousand in hotels in York, despite the VC being provided with a house in the city.



4 comments

Derek

1 Oct '13 at 6:05 pm

This is lazy reporting or editing. So thousands were spent on hotels in London/York, "despite the VC being provided with a house in the city". Who says the hotels were for the VC? Earlier the article says the expenses were for "senior staff". Either this article has been sloppily edited, or it's intentionally trying to mislead.

I too am uncertain as to why the university needs to spend this money on gifts, but I don't have access to the raw data (who spent what on what, and when), and what the return on those gifts were. Presumably a reporting organisation interested in actually doing some reporting would follow up on the gifts, find out what donations were made, do some cross-referencing, and then tell us Yorkers what the return on investment really was. No, much better to just try to get us outraged at the university spending money on anything.

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HoBS

4 Oct '13 at 5:15 pm

Careful Derek, careful. There's a student journalist behind this, and we all know how vicious they can be. Just look at the savagery of this report! It makes my eyes water.

The University spent money to try and attract investors. So, they spent money to try and recoup money through investment. Find out how much cash has been invested, either directly or indirectly due to your stunning findings shown above, and then see what the net bill is. I'll wager you a half-pack of airwaves it is a net gain. Your petulant outrage at someone spending something, served with a thimbleful of vitriol, pushes this once great paper further towards tabloid-dom. Sort it out.

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Jim

8 Oct '13 at 5:24 pm

What I am more concerned out is the lack of taste exhibited by the various higher ranking officials in York. I understand in the North that anything above a Carlsburg is considered Haute Cuisine but, as my father and I discovered at the Manchester business lunch for Goldman Sachs Loch Fyne or Loch Shite as we like to call it is utterly appalling. I would be happy to pay people to enjoy the finer things in life, so long as they meet my, what I consider low, standards. Stay clear of the place, and stay clear of Carlsburg.

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Also Jim

9 Oct '13 at 4:51 pm

Jim,

'I understand in the North that anything above a Carlsberg is considered Haute Cuisine.'

Two points;

A) Learn how to spell Carlsberg.

B) I'm sorry, but who on earth do you think you are? Let me remind you that you are in the North. You were perfectly happy to get your university education here, so it can't be that bad can it? I speak as a Northerner and this is a fantastic part of the world. If you don't like it up here, then I will gladly, personally show you the way to the train station, so you can leave if you so desire.

Otherwise, belt up and learn a bit of respect for your surroundings.

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