

Summary of Focus Group Meeting Wednesday 28th November

Topics: Access issues, booking system strengths and improvements.

Focus group attendees included undergraduate and postgraduate student representatives from MusicSoc, ChaOS, DanceSoc, BUSMS, Edge Arts Community Advisory Board, an independent band, and dance studio user.

Edge staff in attendance: Jamie Eastman – Director of Arts, Eloise Tong – Arts Development Manager, Sophie Cooper – Communications Assistant and Aloys Feeney – Visitor Services Co-ordinator

After an introduction by Eloise, the focus group split into two groups to discuss the positive and negative elements of the current booking system and the desired changes for a new booking system, highlighting key concerns and requirements.

Positives of the current booking system which they would like to carry over into the new system.

- SU Societies weekly booking email showing availability for next two weeks proves helpful.
- Yearly advanced bookings (it was understood to be an imperfect system but the best way of tackling such a large task with many differing groups).
- Flexibility provided by Box Office staff
- Friendly face to complete bookings

Negatives of the current booking system which they would like solved in the new system.

- Not possible to see live booking
- Labour intensive process for both staff and bookers
- Groups find it hard to book the Ensemble Room as it is often in use by Platinum Card holder's individual practice, as it houses the grand piano. (It was felt that the proposed change of this piano moving to the Music Studio would have a positive impact on this)
- Some student groups are let into the room by the previous group rather than collecting an access card from the Box Office – this means they are incorrectly marked as 'no shows' (It was discussed that room card scanners could be one solution to this)
- Collecting access cards from Security on Sundays and out of hours in vacation time is inconvenient, students have found some of Security seem unsure on the process. (It was felt Library Card access could be a solution for these issues)
- Box Office/Booking hours do not work well for returning instruments and equipment after gigs in town. The current process of requesting Security to open the building/rooms often means delayed entrance, as they may have other important security issues they are working on (It was felt Library Card access could be a solution for these issues)
- Current regular access slots (for collecting and returning equipment) are difficult to co-ordinate with rehearsals, politely asking to enter the room during rehearsals has worked as a preferred alternative
- BUSMS equipment being stored in the Music Studio has proven difficult to access or book at times, especially as rehearsals do not take place in this room. The previous use of the Instrument Store was preferential.

Students and staff discussed desired changes to booking system, concerns moving forward and key requirements of new system.

- Visible calendar with real time availability information
- Online booking
- Automated room booking notifications/reminders
- Clear distinction between booking types:
 - Annual** - for Societies booked in Spring of each year
 - Advance** - Booked more than two weeks prior
 - Ad Hoc** - Booked less than two weeks in advance, 4 hours per week limit for Societies
- Number of expected participants included in booking info
- An inventory of the permanent equipment/piano available in each room
- Membership option for students to form smaller non-society groups such as bands and orchestras, give these groups access to Advance bookings with a limit applied.
- Security to have instantaneous access to same booking system The Edge staff and students use. To alleviate security concerns, health and safety issues.
- Self Service Terminal in foyer discussed, with member of staff on hand to help people book/introduce the system for new users.
- It was discussed that there should be repercussions for repeat no shows. One group felt a possible one week/two week ban for repeat no show offenders, the other group felt missing 3 bookings was a reasonable number to then hold a discretionary meeting with the individual or group which could result in membership being revoked.
- A policy in place for people not turning up, if a student finds a room empty half way through a booking slot can they just go in? A waiting list or first reserve process also discussed.
- A system which does not rely on Security to grant access
- Possibility that the Ensemble Room is only booked by individuals when no smaller practice rooms are available, as this space is well suited for large groups where as other rooms are not.
- The proposed reserved times in the Ensemble Room for society use only also open to large groups.
- QR code on each door to show what is booked or directly link to the booking system
- Tracking room use was felt to be important - to pinpoint users if any damage was caused. It was suggested that CCTV and card scanners could be used for this.
- A system which allows cancellations or ability for societies to swap slots. If not possible then the ability to contact a member of staff to do this manually.
- The system could also offer a 'reserve' function meaning that if a booking was cancelled, those who had requested it as a 'reserve' would receive a notification allowing them to book the space.
- Quarter past the hour bookings for all rooms to tie in with lecture times
- Guarantee that the last booking time would finish at quarter past i.e. Security not locking the building on the hour
- Library card access for returning equipment
- A possible caveat introduced for any student/staff bookers of the Ensemble Room or Music Studio for rehearsals, agreeing that other students may enter the room to access lockers.
- A mailing list to societies to inform them of any important events in the Ensemble Room and Music Studio that should not be disturbed (i.e. conferences, events) so they can make alternative arrangements if they need equipment from lockers during this time. Alternatively

this could be made visible in the online calendar to show bookings which should not be disturbed.

It was agreed that another session is needed to bring all these points together and look towards a final outcome, as well as an opportunity to discuss any additional issues.

The final session will be on Wed 5 Dec, 4-5.30pm in The Edge.