

The LSESU Room Bookings and Events Report

The LSESU Room Bookings and Events Report

Contents

Foreword.....	3
Introduction	4
LSE Room Bookings.....	7
Room Booking Rejections.....	11
LSESU's Events Form	13
Welcome Week.....	17
Final Comments.....	20
Conclusion	22
Recommendations	23

Foreword



Every year that I have been at LSE, room bookings have been an issue for student groups. As Activities and Development Officer, my role is to represent the views of students, especially those who are in clubs or societies. This year, one of the biggest barriers for those student groups' events has been navigating the LSE room bookings system to hold events on campus. This is why I was so keen to commission this report, to get an insight into the specific problems which students have faced so that we can start to fix these and improve things, in collaboration with LSE.

The report recognises that the SU also has improvements to make. However, progress has begun to be made in the areas identified, such as committee election timetables, since the survey was published. I also wish to thank the LSE Room Bookings team, who have been extremely helpful over the course of the year. Their genuine commitment to cooperation with student groups and the SU officers and staff gives me great hope for the implementation of these recommendations in the future.

Looking ahead, I would like to see LSE and LSESU implement the recommendations of this report, including the long term aspirations of achieving a room booking system which works for all of its users, but principally for students. This report highlights some quick wins which are achievable in the short term, but these are not a substitute for the deeper changes which cut across LSE divisions, to improve the overall student experience.

Megan Beddoe

Activities and Development Officer (2017-18)

Introduction

Background

The issue of societies and students more generally being able to book rooms and host events at LSE is not a new issue and is one that is highlighted as a problem by students' year on year. The current process primarily involves the LSE Room Bookings team and the SU; depending on the booking it will sometimes involve other divisions within the School such as catering or security. Due to so many potential stakeholders involved in the process of booking a room and/or holding an event this can make it confusing and time consuming for students. The complexity to the current system does cause dissatisfaction for society members and has consistently been raised in manifestos for potential SU sabbatical officers' year on year. Internally, the SU has worked closely with the School in trying to improve the room bookings and events process, nevertheless the current process is far from perfect. This academic year students have again raised issue with the process and therefore the current Activities and Development Officer (Megan Beddoe) commissioned this survey to seek out further improvements to the process for both the SU and the School.

The focus of this survey is to seek out immediate and short term solutions to the problems raised by students; nevertheless many of the issues with the room bookings and events process cannot be solved in the short term. At the SU we are aware that to release rooms to book to students requires an improvement in LSE's timetabling which is not immediately solvable; the SU will continue to lobby and work with the School on this issue. Neither can the issue of space on campus be resolved. While the opening of the new buildings (Paul Marshall and Centre Buildings) will go some way to solve this problem it is not the answer. Further it is unfair to current students and their experience to consistently rely on the new buildings as these will not open until 2020 and 2021 respectively.

Methodology

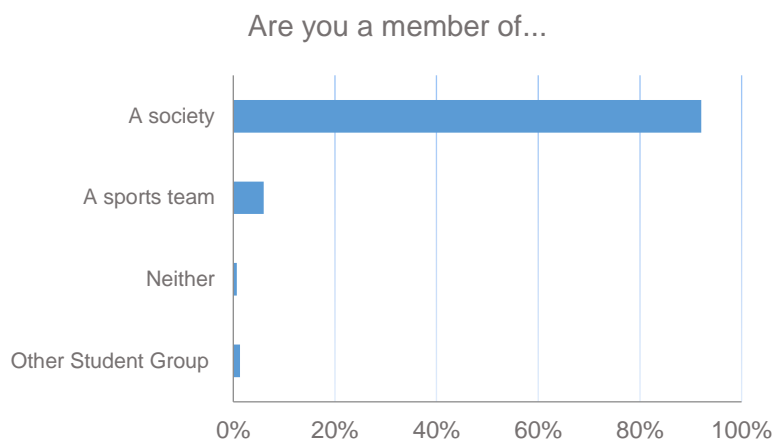
Fieldwork took place from 2 February to 19 February 2018; this was carried out through an online survey which was promoted via:

- A targeted email to room booking rights holders;
- The LSESU newsletter;
- The LSESU societies newsletter;
- Sports and Societies Facebook groups; and generally through
- LSESU social media channels.

Students were asked a total of 31 questions; the Saw Swee Hock Building was explicitly excluded from the survey as the room booking process for this building is run by the SU. Students were required to input their LSE email as a mandatory question, a further mandatory filtering question was asked ensuring that the only students answering the questions were those that have booked rooms at LSE. The survey covered LSE Room Bookings, room booking rejections, the SU Events Form and Welcome Week. Finally, students were asked a catch all question of whether they had any other comments.

Responses

A total of 151 responses were received from students; this represents around two thirds of students who hold room booking rights at LSE. The only demographic information students were asked was whether they were a member of a society etc.



The majority of responses (92%) were from society members, this was unsurprising as the group of students most likely to book rooms and run events on campus are society members. Of the students that said 'Other Student Group' one student said they were both a member of a sports team and a society and another response was from the student campaign group Understanding Inequality.

Findings

The following report sets out the findings from the Room Bookings and Events Survey; they are presented in the following sections:

- LSE Room Bookings;
- Room Booking Rejections
- LSESU's Events Form;
- Welcome Week; and
- Final Comments

The findings are presented then analysis is given for each section, please note that the percentages used have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

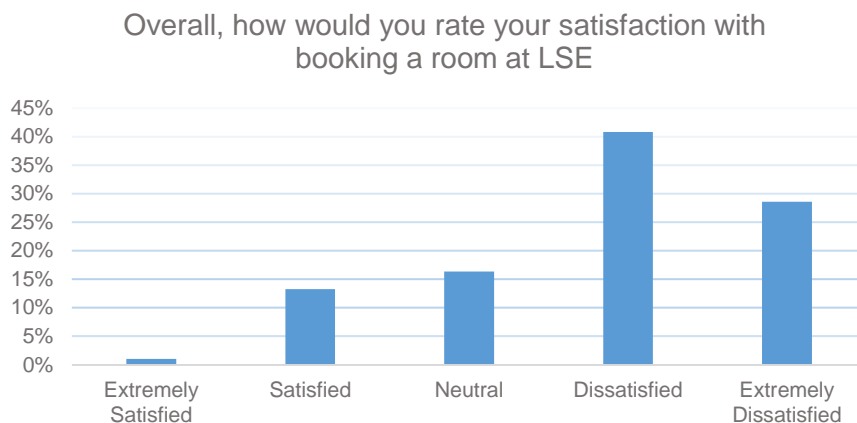
Overall the findings show that students are unhappy with the room bookings and events process, this is focussed at both the School and the SU's processes and there is a need for improvement for both parties. Students were mostly unhappy with the ten working day policy, it is this that most students who responded cited as having the largest influence on room booking requests being rejected. Students also felt that the room bookings and events process was too bureaucratic and that there was scope for streamlining and simplifying; particularly between the SU and LSE but also internally with LSE as well.

As previously mentioned there are some issues with the room bookings process at LSE that cannot be resolved in the short term, nevertheless this report contains recommendations that will resolve many of the issues raised by students. The recommendations are organised as to how immediate, short term or longer term they are to achieve. It is important to note that this report and its recommendations do not shy away from critiquing the SU's own internal processes. One of the explicit purposes in commissioning this survey by the Activities and Development Officer was to acknowledge the SU's role in students' unhappiness with the process and to seek improvement within the SU itself.

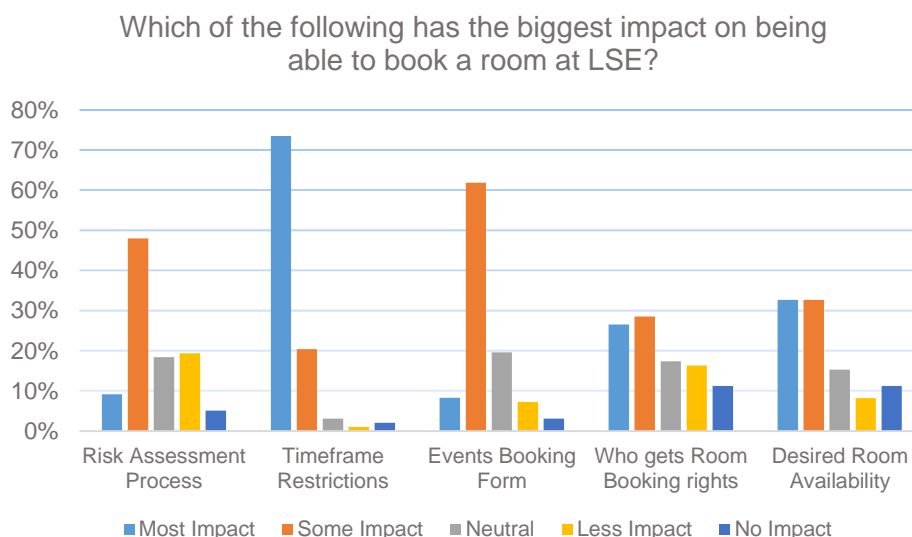
Finally, the SU looks forward to working with the Room Bookings team at LSE to implement the recommendations from this report. At the time of writing the team were already working on the short term improvements. A follow up recognition of these changes will be released by the SU at a later date as these occurred as a direct result from this report's findings.

LSE Room Bookings

This section of the survey sought to investigate student views on the room booking process, this is a process run by LSE Room Booking team within the Estates Division. These questions were formulated with input from the Room Bookings team.



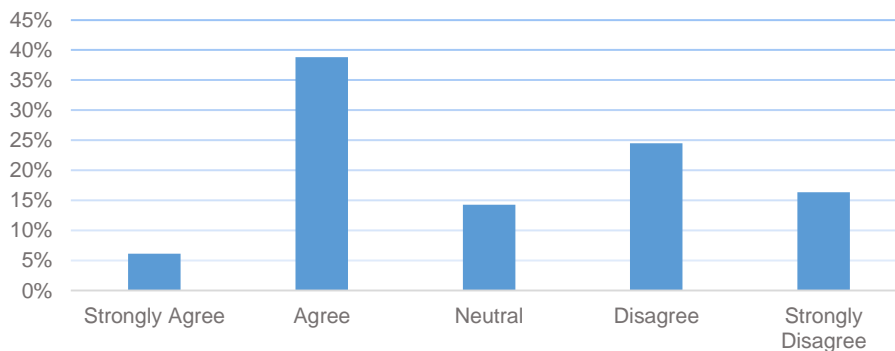
Only 14% of respondents stated that they were satisfied with booking a room at LSE, with a total of 69% of students answering this question to the negative. Students were given the opportunity to comment on this question and there were a range of answers explaining why students were dissatisfied with the process. Students' criticisms in the comments included the process being too lengthy and complex, the ten working day rule, gaining room booking rights too late, slow response rates, not being able to book rooms at the beginning of terms. What came across strongly in all of the comments left was the sheer sense of dissatisfaction with the room bookings and events organising process (including the SU). Even comments that were generally positive also suggested that the process was overly bureaucratic and cumbersome.



Students were then asked what issues had the most impact on their ability to book a room at LSE. While most of the issues presented to students are those controlled by the Room Bookings team, the Events Booking Form is controlled by the SU and is dealt with more comprehensively in later sections of this report. This is the only reference to the SU run process within this section, the decision to include this was because students were unlikely to

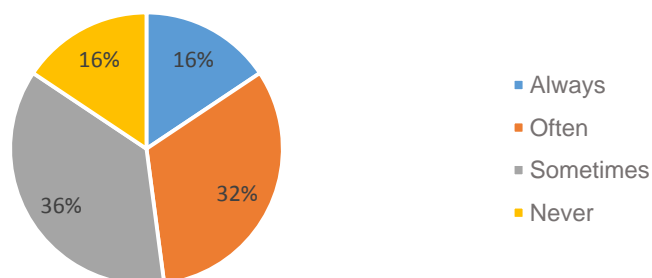
wholly separate the Events Form from the Room Booking process. Overall, 93% of students said that timeframe restrictions had either the 'Most' or 'Some' impact on their ability to book rooms with over 73% of students stating that it had the 'Most Impact'; only 3% of students stated that it had little to no impact. The next most impactful issues was the SU run Events Form with 70% of students stating it had impacted them and only 10% stating that it had little to no impact. The third most impactful issue was the room availability. The least impactful issues were risk assessments and room booking rights, nevertheless this does not mean that they do not have any impact as 57% and 51% of students respectively stated it had some impact on being able to book a room.

The LSE Room Bookings process facilitates me to hold events on campus



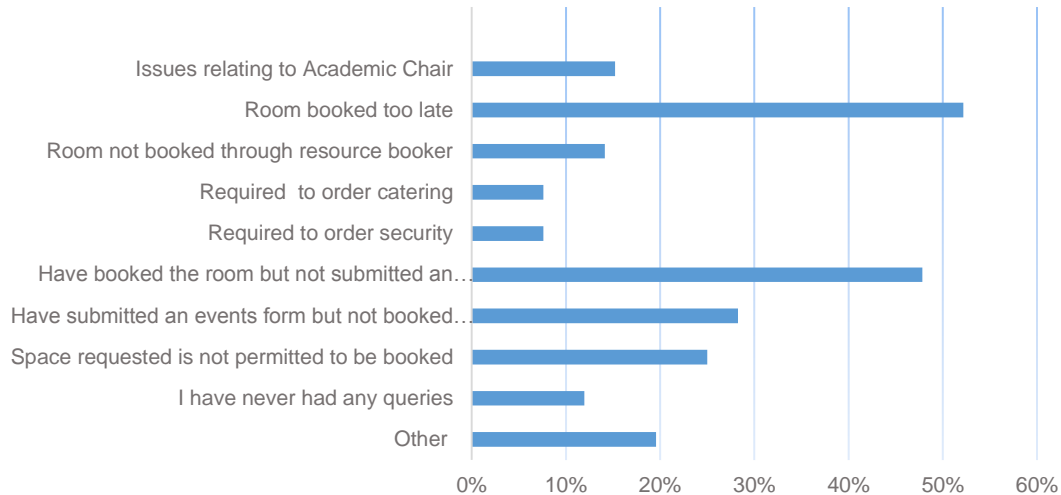
The next question asked students whether they agreed that the room booking process facilitated them holding events on campus. Given how dissatisfied students were with the overall process it is surprising that the majority of students (45%) stated either 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' to this question. Nevertheless, 41% of respondents stated that the room booking process did not facilitate them holding events on campus is still a significant proportion of dissatisfied students. Students were invited to leave comments to this question and these mirrored those of the earlier question in that the process of booking rooms for events is lengthy, complex, too many duplicate forms. These comments were also left by students who answered this question positively. Disappointingly, a number of students disclosed that they had chosen to hold their events off campus including at partner societies in other institutions due to the complexity and the stress of trying to organise events on LSE campus.

How often is your room booking request accepted without query/comment by LSE Room Bookings?



In total, 84% of students have had a query or comment against their room booking request by the LSE Room Bookings team, although only 16% of respondents stated that this always happened to them. Only 16% of students stated that they had 'Never' had a room booking accepted without comment or query.

What queries/comments do you normally receive back?



To contextualise the above question students were asked what queries or comments that they received back from the LSE Room Bookings team, students were able to choose multiple options for this question. The most cited reason (52%) was that the student did not book the room within the ten working day limit, the next most cited reason was that the student had booked the room but not submitted an Events Form to the SU (48%) and finally the third most cited reason was that the student had submitted an Events Form to the SU but not booked a room with LSE. Of the students that stated 'Other' the majority of these were queries about the external speaker or that the room requested was not available.

Analysis

The results from this section speak for themselves, students are unhappy with the room booking and events organising process, they are unhappy with both the Room Bookings team and the SU. This has resulted in some student groups resorting to holding events off campus, this is not a state of affairs that should be welcomed or supported, or that smaller societies can afford to finance regularly. Interestingly, it is not the availability of rooms that appears to create the greatest barrier to students booking rooms on campus, which is surprising but a positive outcome. However, this means that it is the room booking process that is creating the main barrier. It was not clear why students were more positive towards the process facilitating events rather than for strict room bookings, perhaps because it is easier to book a room for a large event than for smaller meetings due to the ten working day rule. Larger events would tend to have a longer planning period than ten working days while smaller impromptu events might not.

These results clearly demonstrate that the requirement for students to book a room at least ten working days before they plan to use it is creating the most dissatisfaction for students with

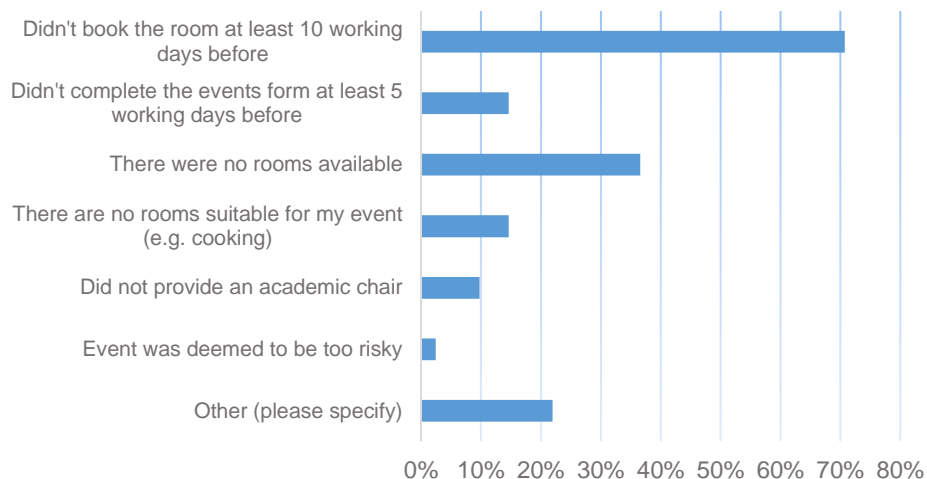
process. For societies, sports clubs and groups that wish to hold informal gatherings or committee meetings they are unable to meet on campus at short notice. This is unacceptable, students should be encouraged to congregate and meet on campus so as to facilitate a sense of community; neither the School nor the SU should be forcing students off campus. Further frustrations are clear with the lack of coordination and the bureaucracy that students face when trying to navigate both the room bookings system and the SU. This will be dealt with in more detail in later section. Overall, issues around email response times notwithstanding, it seems that it is the ten working day rule which creates the most dissatisfaction for students when they deal with the Room Bookings Team. The SU understands that for complex, high profile, high-risk events this rule is necessary, however the blanket approach by the School (and the SU) needs to be reviewed.

The next section of the survey deals with rejected room booking requests therefore this may be able to shed more light on this disparity.

Room Booking Rejections

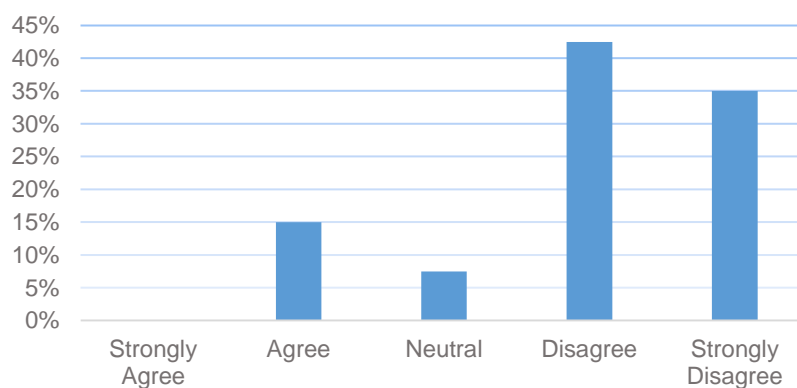
This section of the survey sought to explore issues around why students have their room booking requests rejected and how supported they feel to find alternative spaces. Of the total number of respondents 43% stated that they have had a room booking request rejected; only those students answered this section of the survey.

Why was your room booking request rejected?



Students were asked why their request was rejected and were allowed to choose multiple options. The option that was most commonly cited was that the booking was made less than ten working days before the event; the second most cited option was room availability. For the 'Other' option included human error and technical issue with Resource Booker. Only one respondent cited that their event had been deemed too risky.

I felt sufficiently supported to find an alternative space



Ultimately there is limited space on campus and not every event or room booking will be able to be accepted, therefore it is important to find out whether students feel supported to find alternative spaces when rejections do happen. Overall, 78% of students answered this question to the negative with 35% stating that they 'Strongly Disagree'. No students stated that they 'Strongly Agree' with this statement.

Finally for this section, students were asked if they had any further comments about rejected room bookings. From the comments left the majority cited that they would appreciate being informed that their request was sooner as this did not facilitate them being able to find an alternative space within the ten working day limit. Other students used this as an opportunity to comment that the process more generally was too disjointed and complicated.

Analysis

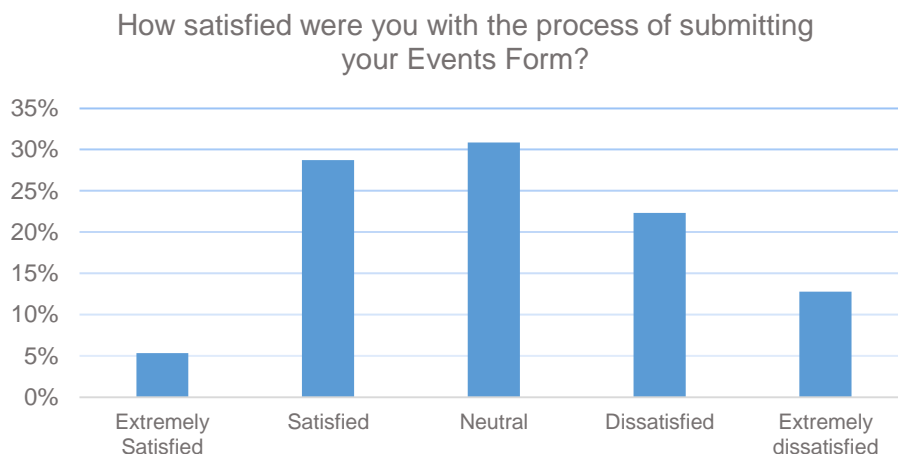
The results of this section reinforced the conclusions drawn from the previous section of the survey in that it is the ten working day rule that has the most negative impact on students being able to book rooms at LSE. However, shed more light on why students are dissatisfied with the ten working day rule. For example, if a student books a room and the Room Bookings team rejects the request as the room is not suitable, the subsequent booking that the student makes is then subjected to the ten working day rule. This results in events being delayed or even cancelled as it is likely that room booking request was not rejected immediately and can be less than ten working days before the event is planned. Not only is the ten working day rule itself too stringent but this indirect impact is unfair and unhelpful to students and should be removed.

Unlike in the previous section room availability came up much more strongly in this section, the SU understands that there is little at present that can be done about this issue. Although in terms of space planning the School should seek to work with societies and sports teams to ensure that there is a variety of rooms available for the range of activities that they offer on campus. The issue of risk was also raised in this section by students, the ten working day rule is put in place to ensure that proper risk assessments on events held by students can be assessed, and yet only one student commented that their room booking had been rejected on the basis of being too risky. This could suggest that while LSE and the SU take a risk-averse approach to room bookings that the high-risk events by students are not that common.

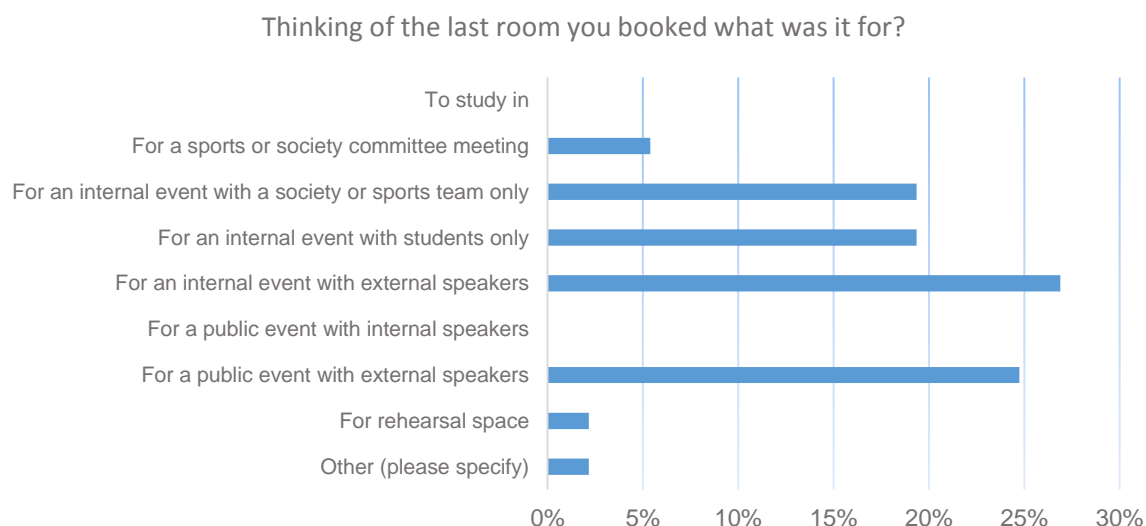
The next section of this report will explore the SU-run Events Form including a brief look at the risk level of events run by students.

LSESU's Events Form

While the last section mostly explored students' experiences with the LSE Room Bookings team, this section of the survey sought to find out from students how they felt about the Students' Union's processes. It also sought to explore the risk level of student events through looking at the type of events that students are holding.



Students were asked how satisfied they were with the Events Form section of the room bookings process. Only 35% of students stated that they were dissatisfied with the Events Form process, with 34% of students answering this question positively. However, from the comments left by students to this question criticisms include that the form too lengthy, the form duplicates the Room Bookings and the Risk Assessment forms and for small events the level of information requested is burdensome. Students felt that the Events Form was an additional and unnecessary step that made the process of booking a room lengthy and complicated. Finally a small number of students also commented that they were unhappy with the time it took to process the Events Form.



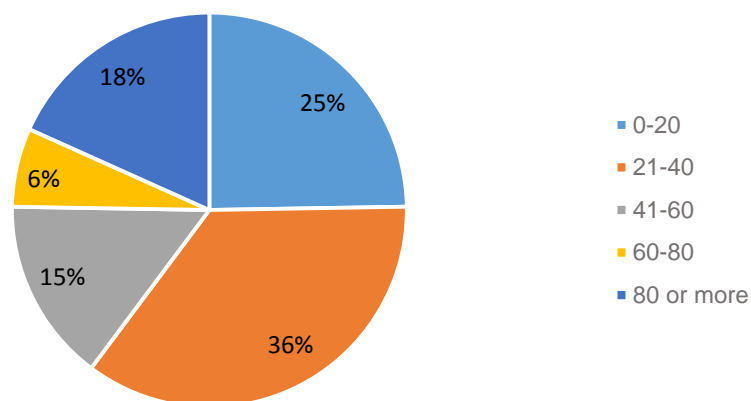
To get a sense of why students book rooms on campus they were asked to think of the last room they booked and to inform us of the purpose, students were only able to choose one option. Just over half of the events held by students (52%) involved an external element to them, this suggests that while many students do want external speakers – which may carry a

higher level of risk – a significant proportion of the room booking requests are students simply attempting to find an easy place to meet up with their peers such as for a society committee meeting.



Students were then asked directly what risks there were present at the last events that they booked, these were presented in the survey exactly as they are on the Events Form and students were able to choose multiple options. Interestingly, no students stated that there was a reported event at a previous event suggesting that these do not often occur. Only two students stated that participants at their event were likely to be highly opposed to one or other that it may cause conflict. Interestingly, the largest risk attached to students' events is that they require an external speaker with 60% of respondents choosing this option. Nevertheless, for 30% of events students stated that none of these risks were present for the type of event they were organising.

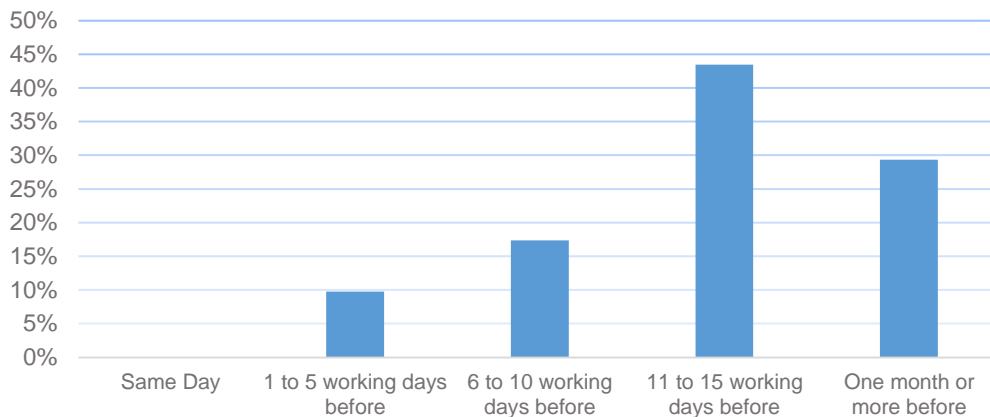
How many attendees did you plan for at your event?



Another potential source of increased risk to the School and the SU is the number of attendees that students plan to invite to their events. Therefore students were asked how many participants they were planning on inviting. In total, 75% of respondents stated that they had intended to have 60 attendees or less. Only, 18% of respondents stated that they had planned an event with 80 or more attendees. This could suggest that high risk, large scale events are

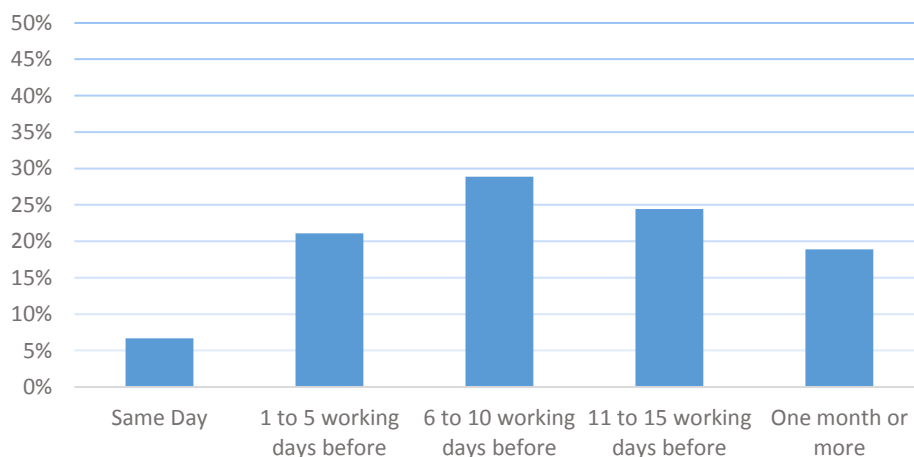
not the primary reason that students book rooms with LSE. When these results are looked at in the context of requiring an external speaker 46% of these were for attendees of 40 or less. Only 25% of events including external speakers were for events of 80 or more people. This suggests that when students ask external speakers onto campus this is not usually for large scale public events, but it could be simply to address a small society gathering.

How many days before your event did you submit your Event Form?



As with the booking of the room students are required to submit their Events Form no less than five working days before their event. This is to allow both the Students' Union and the Room Bookings team time to process the information and is related to internal resourcing. While most students successfully submit the form before the five working days cut off there is still a proportion of students who did not (10%), which broadly mirrors the number of students who had their room booking requests rejected for this reason earlier in the survey. In total, 72% of students submitted the form over ten working days before their event.

When did you feel you had enough information about your event to complete the Event Form?



To compare and contrast with the previous question, students were then asked at what point they felt able to submit their events form. The reasoning for this question is to explore if there is an issue of students submitting an Events Forms with incomplete information as they may not be able to gather all the required information before the deadline. Interestingly 72% of respondents stated they felt they had the required information six days or more before their

event. But unlike the first question there were some students (7%) who stated that they did not feel they had all the required information until the same day as their event. From the comments left by students to this question, it seems that confirming external speakers can be a barrier to submitting the Events Form as often the speaker will not confirm until closer to the date of the event. This has directly resulted in events run by students being postponed or cancelled.

Analysis

The Events Form process is currently managed by the SU, the purpose of this process is to assess the risk attached to events that are run by students. This is mandatory part of the process and adds to the administrative burden for students when booking rooms at LSE. While the five working day threshold is lower than that of the Room Bookings team, it appears that students still work to the latter's timescales and may not be aware that the SU's process is less stringent. This approach to 'risk' at student run events appears to take a blanket, one size fits all, high-risk approach to student run events. Many students complained that the Events Form duplicated forms that students are also required to submit to the School further adding to the administrative burden. Students were critical of the lack of flexibility for different types of room bookings and events.

The areas in which the SU could improve its processes are in revisiting the high-risk blanket approach to student run events. Only just over half of students were holding events that involved an external element, and the majority of events were planned for less than 40 attendees (with 25% planning for under 20). This suggests that many student run events at LSE are relatively low risk and that in taking a wholly risk averse approach to student run events is perhaps not the correct approach. More flexibility is needed for students to easily hold small informal, internal meet ups. Greater flexibility can also apply to those students who are holding small events with external speakers. Absolutely, where a speaker high profile and is known to be controversial there should be safeguards put in place, but this does not necessarily need to apply to all speakers. Students have clearly stated that it is not always possible to have confirmed your speaker within the ten or the five working day limits and this results in events being delayed or cancelled completely. This policy of a high-risk approach has become a barrier for students who may want to invite world leading speakers to their student run events. LSE prides itself on its reputation of attracting these speakers and therefore should facilitate and not prevent its students from doing the same. If LSE wants to maintain and expand its reputation, a more flexible approach would be beneficial.

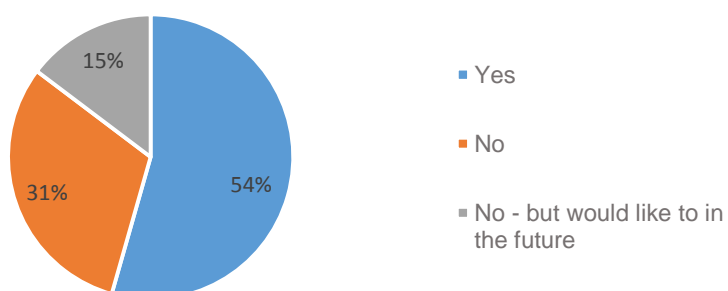
The SU should take reasonable steps to ensure that risks are assessed but the current process goes beyond that. The SU's current approach does not give sufficient flexibility to what students need and more importantly is detrimental to the student experience. This same criticism also applies to the School's Room Booking processes, more flexibility is required in the entire process that does not act as a barrier for students to meet on campus or to run events.

The next section of this report will look into how easy it is for LSESU societies to run events for incoming students during LSE Welcome Week.

Welcome Week

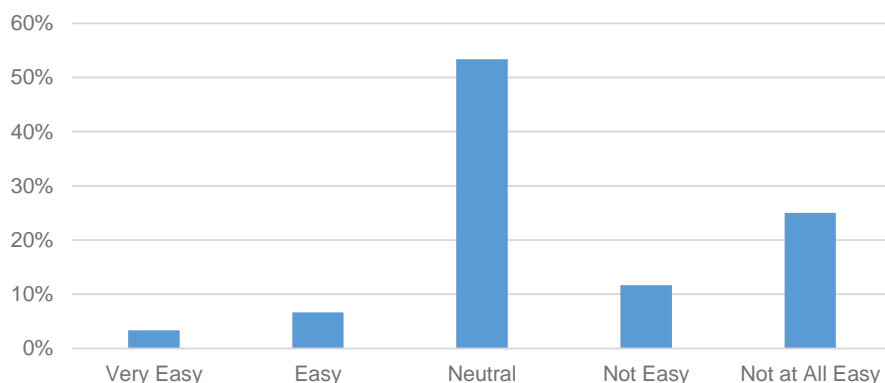
This section of the survey was focussed specifically on the experiences of societies in booking rooms for Welcome Week; therefore any responses not from societies were filtered out for this section. Welcome Week is an integral part of introducing new students to societies and for them to gain members. It is a priority for LSESU to increase the offer for students to take part in activities organised by societies during Welcome Week.

Does your society run events for students during LSE Welcome Week (excluding a stall during the Welcome Fair)?



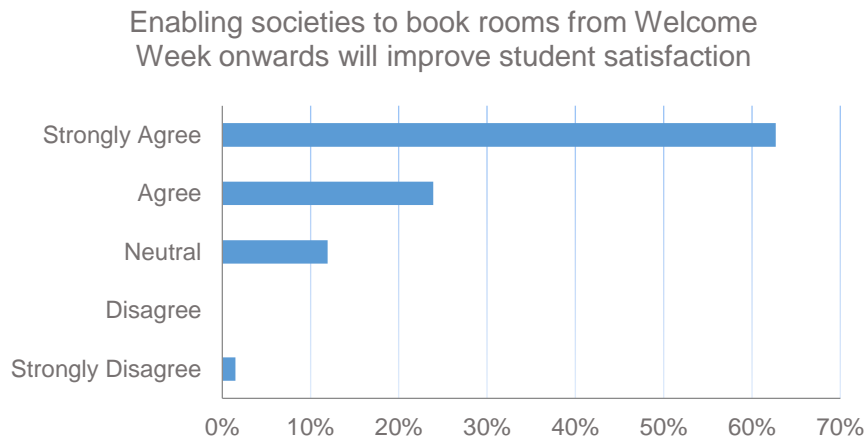
Excluding societies having a staff at the SU's Welcome Fair, just over half of societies offer events to students in Welcome Week. Of the 31% who did not want to run events it is likely that these are postgraduate taught (PGT) academic societies who, due to the nature of PGT study, are not active during Welcome Week. Nevertheless, this leaves a further 15% of societies who do wish to run events during Welcome Week in the future. Societies were then asked whether they agreed that societies should be able to book rooms from Michaelmas term, 88% of societies agreed (67% 'Strongly Agree') with only 1% disagreeing.

How easy is it to book space at LSE to run events during Welcome Week?

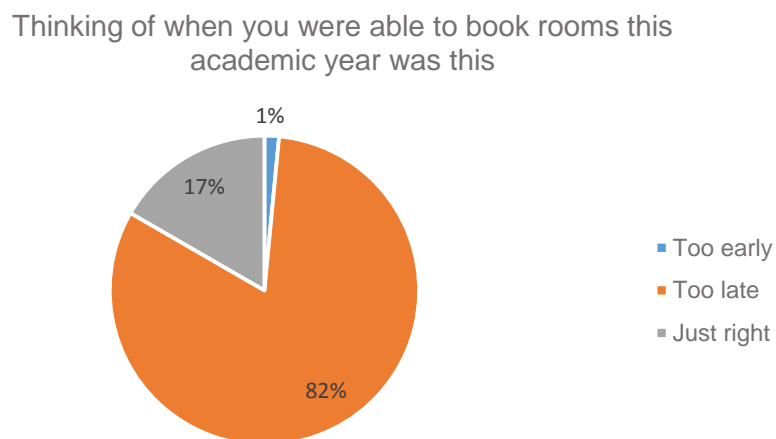


The above question assessed whether the ability to hold events was impacted by how easy it is to book space for societies during Welcome Week students. Only 10% of societies answered this question positively, 25% of societies stated "Not at all easy" and an overwhelming 53% of societies were neutral on this issue. The comments left for this question demonstrate that societies are unhappy with some societies stating they had given up

attempting to hold events on campus and just held them externally; others simply left comments like “impossible” or “ABSOLUTE NIGHTMARE!”. However, there were a few proactive societies who stated that they booked the rooms for their events well in advance during August to ensure that they had space on campus. The issue of committees not being elected until Michaelmas Term and the allocation of room booking rights was raised as a barrier for some.



The next question sought to find out from societies whether enabling societies to book rooms from Welcome Week would improve student satisfaction. An overwhelming 87% of societies stated either ‘Strongly Agree’ or ‘Agree’ and only 1% of students disagreed with this statement. From the comments left by societies they felt that being able to book rooms from Welcome Week would not only improve the students’ satisfaction more for incoming students but also their own satisfaction as well. Others used their comments as a further opportunity to again raise dissatisfaction with the process of attaining room booking rights which delays the process.



Finally societies were asked whether they thought that when they were able to book rooms this academic year was either too early, too late or just right. Unsurprisingly 82% of societies stated that this was too late and just 17% of societies felt that this was just right.

Analysis

Welcome Week presents the School, the SU and societies the opportunity to set out its stall in terms of a positive student experience. LSESU has nearly 300 societies and while many of

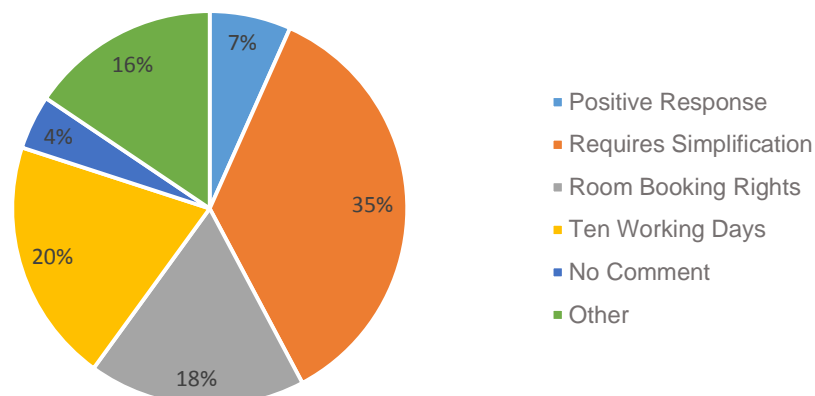
these are represented at the Welcome Fair organised by the SU, societies events are not built into the SU's Welcome Week programme in the same way that other universities with a similar number of societies are. Societies not being able to hold events on campus can have an impact on their membership which can hinder the development of those societies. Further, this impacts on incoming students as they are not aware of the opportunities available to them and can miss the chance to build social connections and communities at LSE. There are improvements that both the School and the SU can undertake to change this picture.

For the SU, many societies in this section raised the issue of gaining room booking rights as a hindrance to being able to hold events on campus. One of the requirements for applying for room booking rights is to have a committee, specifically a Secretary, in place. However, at present some society committees are not elected until mid-Michaelmas term meaning that room booking rights are often not awarded until at least Week 6 of term. This year the SU, led by the Activities and Development Officer has recognised this issue and has brought forward the election of all society committees to Summer Term, with flexibility to ensure that postgraduate students are not excluded from this process. SU staff have supported societies to elect their committees and providing them with training before the end of Summer Term. This change will enable societies to apply for room booking rights well before Michaelmas Term meaning that they should be able to book rooms for Welcome Week onwards.

There are improvements for the School to make, firstly ensuring that there is room availability for societies from the beginning of Michaelmas Term. However, the SU is aware that this issue also links to timetabling which is not within the remit of the Room Bookings team and that it is the complexities involved in organising timetabling that creates these delays. To improve this requires a long term solution from the School, therefore the SU will continue to lobby LSE on this issue. In the meantime, an immediate solution to this problem would be where a society has room booking rights, they should be able to book a room specifically for Welcome Week in advance. Welcome Week takes place before scheduled classes begin and while the School books some rooms for activities there should be little to no teaching taking place. Therefore the School should release rooms from early May to societies for the Welcome Week events.

Final Comments

Any other comments?



To ensure that the survey had comprehensively captured students' feelings on the room booking and events process respondents were asked if they had any other comments. The comments left by students have been coded as follows:

Positive Response – These comments included those that directly stated that their experience with room bookings and events at LSE was positive. This represented the smallest group of comments (4%).

Requires Simplification – These comments were from students who stated that they felt the room bookings and events organising process required simplification. Students' felt that the process is too bureaucratic and there is too much duplication of forms. Students also stated that the different elements of the process between the Room Bookings team and the SU and where present other LSE divisions such as security or catering could be more coherent. This category represented the largest number of comments with 35%.

Room Booking Rights – These comments were from those who stated that it had taken them too long to be awarded room booking rights and from societies who felt that just awarding room booking rights to the secretaries of societies had a negative impact. Only having one member of society committees able to book rooms places a burden on those individuals and makes the secretary role stressful. Further, it means that societies are wholly reliant on that one individual, which can mean that they are unable to book rooms and hold events.

Ten Working Days – Many students commented that the ten working day requirement was the main barrier to being able to booking a room. Students stated that this rule requires more flexibility, especially for smaller, internal society committee meetings where the ten working day rule is not appropriate.

Other – These comments consisted of those that were generally negative towards the room booking and events process but did not fit explicitly state a reason for that negativity. More

specific responses included some students stating that they were charged £1,500 to use the Sheikh Zyed theatre; other students felt that the process made booking larger events too onerous. The specific issue of sports clubs not being allowed to have room booking rights was also raised in a number of comments.

No Comment – These comments consisted of students that stated “No” or “N/A”

Analysis

The purpose of this section was to provide students with an opportunity to raise any issues that may have been missed elsewhere in the survey, the three issues raised in this section that need to be addressed, these were that only the society secretary is awarded room booking rights and that sports clubs are not permitted room booking rights and that students are being charged for holding events.

The most concerning of these three issues is it that of only society secretaries being allowed room booking rights. Many respondents stated that this places an undue pressure on the student that is elected as the society secretary. They are the only person responsible for room bookings and engaging with the events organising process which can place a high burden on one single student, particularly if it is an active society that runs multiple events. Considering how intense an LSE education is, it seems unfair to place such a high administrative burden on just one student. The reasoning for this approach reduces the administrative burden on monitoring room bookings for both the SU and the room bookings team. However, this is not a sufficient justification, both the School and the SU should be seeking to reduce the burden on students and not to increase it therefore this rule should be reviewed to allow other members of committees to be added.

Sports clubs who responded to this survey complained that they were not allowed room booking rights. This means that sports clubs are only able to book rooms directly through the sports coordinator (staff member at LSESU). The clubs that responded were unhappy with this difference in treatment and argued that it was wrong to assume that sports clubs do not hold events such as seminars and lectures or simply need to hold committee meetings on campus. This is a fair criticism, while it is societies that hold the majority of events on campus this disparity in treatment has no real justification.

Finally, at LSESU we oppose any student being charged to use LSE’s facilities to hold events; the fact that societies were citing being charged £1,500 is unacceptable. At LSESU we are working to make our sports clubs and societies more financially accessible to our students. The School placing such high costs on society’s runs in direct opposition to this principle as it will mean that our students have to pay more to join societies to cover these costs. Simply put, as a matter of principle of social mobility and fairness LSE should not charge students for simply booking a space. Further, there needs to be more transparency when as a result of additional requests such as catering as to how this is communicated to students.

Conclusion

The unavoidable finding from this survey is that students are dissatisfied with both LSE and the SU when it comes to booking rooms and holding events on campus. This dissatisfaction is primarily caused by the high-risk, blanket approach adopted by both the School and the SU. Working within the ten working day limit is sometimes simply not achievable or appropriate for all student run events especially when it comes to confirming an external speaker to address a small group of students. Understandably the School is keen to avoid situations in which a controversial speaker or the mishandling of a controversial event may harm its reputation, but these types of high-profile events are few and far between. Instead, this has resulted in a completely risk averse approach that is genuinely harming student satisfaction; students are actively seeking to hold their events away from campus and that is just not fair. This situation is not conducive to creating a campus community and actively prevents students from getting involved in their student groups. Being a student in London is challenging, it can be difficult to meet people and create communities, which leads to lower student satisfaction than traditional campus institutions. At LSE we are lucky that we have one single campus in the centre of the city, therefore we should be working to encourage students to meet and engage with each other here and not dissuade them to look elsewhere. Simply put, the School and the SU's approach to students meeting on campus needs to change.

The process itself of booking a room and holding an event is lengthy, complex and there is duplication of information. The SU and the School need to work to streamline this process so as to reduce the administrative burden on students. The fact that only society secretaries can book rooms and engage with the process also places too much responsibility on one student. LSE is an intensive place to study which can dissuade students from getting involved in extra-curricular activity in the first place let alone for those students who want to take on leadership roles to facilitate others taking part. Neither the School nor the SU should be placing any unnecessary administrative burdens on those students. We should be facilitating our students on the basis of how these events build communities and improve the student experience. Whatever the process looks like to the School and the SU, for students the process should be one streamlined system with the absolute minimum in administration.

Fundamentally at LSESU we believe that the Estates Division and the Room Bookings team want to improve the processes as much as the SU does. They have actively shown this by engaging in the process of creating this survey and have been open to constructive feedback. We have been incredibly grateful for their openness to change to improve students' experiences. At LSESU we look forward to working with the LSE Room Bookings team to implement the recommendations from this report. Equally, we recognise that there are ways in which LSESU can improve its own processes and we will not shy away from this. Therefore SU focused recommendations will be as equally challenging as those directed towards the School.

Recommendations

The following recommendations aim to facilitate the improvement of many of the issues highlighted in this report. LSESU recognises that while there are some immediate improvements that can take, others are more complex and involved different divisions within the School, therefore the following recommendations have been grouped into immediate, short term and long term. These recommendations are:

Immediate Recommendations

These recommendations are those that the SU believes should be implemented before Michaelmas Term 2019.

LSE should:

1. Commit to collaborating with the SU on making improvements to the room bookings and events process.
2. Allow societies to book rooms for events specifically for Welcome Week in Summer Term 2018.
3. Allow students to book the Sheikh Zayed Theatre and the Shaw Library, where appropriate, from Michaelmas Term 2018.
4. Allow sports clubs to have room booking rights and to book rooms from Michaelmas Term 2018.
5. Ensure that full room booking rights to all registered group bookers is completed by Week 0.
6. Form a monthly working group between the LSE Room Bookings team and the SU to make progress towards these recommendations.

The SU should:

1. Commit to improving its own process and to work constructively with the School to improve theirs.
- 2.
3. Ensure that all society committees are agreed on a pre-agreed timeline before the end of Summer term.
4. To facilitate a process to allow societies and sports clubs to fill in one Events Form at the beginning of academic year for block bookings e.g. for committee meetings.

Short Term Recommendations

These recommendations are those that the SU believes should be implemented before the end of Michaelmas Term 2019.

LSE should:

1. Embed advanced room bookings for Welcome Week for the next academic year and extend this to:
 - a. Sports clubs;
 - b. Give it a Go week (Week 1).
2. Review the current forms used for booking rooms in collaboration with the SU, with a view to streamlining, simplifying and removing duplication.
3. Review the ten working day rule with a view to creating more flexibility for less high-risk room bookings and events.
4. Remove the ten working day rule for requests as a result of a rejected room booking request.
5. Review how LSE supports students to find alternative spaces on campus.

The SU should:

1. Review the current forms used for booking rooms in collaboration with LSE, with a view to streamlining, simplifying and removing duplication.
2. Embed processes implemented this year to ensure that all societies and sports clubs committees are elected before the end of Summer Term 2019, where possible.
3. Review the spaces available for students to book in the Saw Swee Hock centre to ensure these are an alternative for student events which fall outside the 10 working day rule, and that the spaces are easy for students to book.

Long Term Recommendations

These recommendations are those that are ongoing and have no set deadline as they are more complex to resolve. These recommendations are solely focussed on LSE.

LSE should:

1. Ensure that there is a strategy in place for room bookings when Centre Buildings and the Marshall Building open.

2. Ensure that the variety of rooms available for students to book reflect the uses that students require, such as retaining some rooms without carpeting for dance societies to use, until such a time as alternatives are provided.
3. Ensure that LSE is future proofing its estates development and room bookings process by investing in an electronic system.
4. Addressing the issue of late timetabling in conjunction with the SU's Education Officer to work on issues of late room release to student groups during the academic year.

Published: May 2018

Written on behalf of the elected officers of LSESU by:

Claire Rackley
Policy Officer
Policy and Advocacy Team

If you have any queries please contact the author:
Su.policy@lse.ac.uk

LSE Students' Union
Saw Swee Hock Student Centre
1 Sheffield Street
London , WC2A 2AP



FIND OUT MORE AT LSESU.COM