

Access to Space

A Review of Clubs and
Societies Booking
Procedures at the
University of Glasgow

Students' Representative Council, April 2026

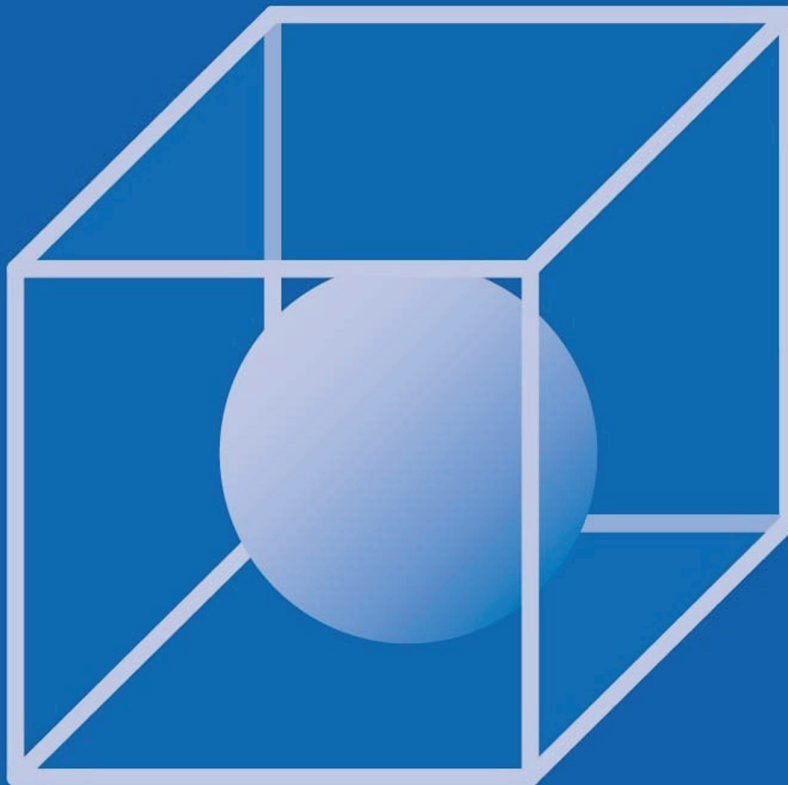


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1. Executive Summary

About this research

This report was commissioned by the Students' Representative Council (SRC) to examine how clubs and societies currently access space across the university estate, what prevents equitable access, and what practical changes would improve the system. It draws on 15 in-depth qualitative interviews with space managers, timetabling staff, university administrators and student union staff across the estate and an online survey of 353 clubs and societies representatives, with a resulting 37% response rate (132).

The headline figures are misleading

70% of societies rate securing space as easy or very easy, but this figure only measures whether a request was resolved, not whether the space allocated was suitable. 15% of confirmed bookings were later cancelled or changed by the provider, and more than two in five societies have gone off-campus because university facilities were unavailable or unfit for purpose. The people managing bookings across the estate are largely doing their best, but they are working within a system that makes it harder than it needs to be.

Five systemic barriers to equitable access

Availability is the most acute pressure. Three-quarters of societies need weekday evening slots, which is the single most constrained part of the timetable. The planned closure of the St. Andrews Building will remove a significant volume of specialist, high-demand space, including gymnasium, drama, music and arts studio space with nothing confirmed to replace it. Keystone does not fill that gap. This is a clear net loss of usable space at the point of highest demand.

Cost is routinely obscured. Charges for out-of-hours access, room resets, equipment hire and bar deposits typically only surface after a booking is confirmed. Societies referred to Events and Conferencing face a commercial pricing model with no published rate card. For some societies, the headline cost of space is enough to reduce the ability to book. Smaller and newer societies carry this risk disproportionately. For one society running a national charity event, room booking costs consumed over £8,500 of the £11,000 raised across the weekend.

Policy has accumulated building by building over the years, introduced in response to individual incidents and almost never reviewed. Rules vary, are not published centrally and can only be discovered by trial and error. The power to determine what a society can do in a booked space rests with individual space managers with no accountability to any central standard.

Catering restrictions compound the availability problem. Not one society with food at its event uses the university catering. Some interviews indicated the service cannot reliably meet halal or kosher requirements for club events. The most accessible spaces prohibit food entirely. For faith and cultural societies where food is central to the event, this removes the most obvious options from consideration altogether.

Information is fragmented and inconsistently shared. There is no central directory of available spaces. Locally managed rooms are not listed anywhere societies can find

them without already knowing they exist. Three-quarters of societies find out whether a space is available by submitting a request and waiting. The system rewards those who already know how to navigate it.

Who bears the greatest burden?

The barriers above are systemic but they do not fall evenly. Disabled students are regularly allocated rooms that are technically bookable but practically inaccessible, there is no mechanism in the booking system to catch this before the society arrives at the venue.

Faith and cultural societies are blocked by food prohibitions, a catering service that cannot meet dietary requirements and an evening capacity constraint that falls hardest on communities whose religious observance is calendar driven. The evidence in this report includes documented cases where the institutional response to faith society events was not only unhelpful but factually incorrect on equalities law.

Specialist and performance societies face not a shortage of rooms but an absence of rooms that work for them. Music spaces at University Gardens are currently unavailable with no confirmed return date, and most teaching rooms cannot accommodate dance, large ensembles or technical theatre.

New societies are left competing for whatever limited space remains after established groups have secured block bookings. They enter the process without the contacts, institutional knowledge or track record that make the system navigable, placing them at an immediate and structural disadvantage. What presents as a neutral allocation process in practice rewards incumbency, making it significantly harder for new societies to establish themselves or grow.

Better practice already exists

The research did find examples of what works within the current estate. Two separate venues including the SRC itself operate flexible food policies built on advance notice and a basic liability disclaimer with the responsibility placed on the society rather than the venue. A booking framework puts societies with no budget first. Proactive outreach to returning societies before each academic year begins. None of this required additional resource. Each required only a decision.

Five case studies within the report illustrate how these barriers operate in practice, each documenting a situation where the system failed a society that had every right to expect it to work.

- **Central Timetabling in Practice**

A single booking enquiry can generate up to 20 separate helpdesk tickets. When CTT cannot fulfil a request, it marks it as resolved and directs the society to the Student Bodies. No record is kept of how many bookings fail. The system produces no useful data about its own dysfunction.

- **The Gaming Society and the National Charity Tournament**

Routed to Events and Conferencing because CTT could not accommodate the scale, the Gaming Society spent £8,500 on venues against total income of £11,000 and raised less than £500 for charity. In 2019, the same event raised over £10,000. The referral was not a recommendation. It was the only option offered.

- **The Sikh Society and the Langar Event**

A communal meal requiring a bookable space passed through six separate teams over several months with no single team taking responsibility. The event was resolved only because an SRC staff member personally contacted the QMU operations manager. Over 300 students attended and the university promoted it on social media. Without that intervention, it would not have happened.

- **The Saudi Society**

During an Iftar event in a new SRC-managed pilot space, a male Facilities staff member entered the room where women had removed their hijabs. A Facilities staff member subsequently wrote to the SRC claiming that female-only provision contravened the Equality Act. That position was factually incorrect.

- **The Kelvin Ensemble**

The Kelvin Ensemble lost its Sunday concert dates because a change in the university's staffing contract made overnight resets unachievable. The society had offered to cover all overtime costs, as it had done in previous years. The offer was irrelevant to a contractual constraint no one had told them existed. No alternative venue for a 90-piece orchestra exists on campus. The Sunday bookings remain unresolved.

Nine summary recommendations

- Publish a single, authoritative directory of all bookable spaces, covering both centrally and locally managed rooms, including capacity, access conditions and contractual requirements
- Provide real-time visibility of availability through a live calendar before any booking request is made
- Audit all building-level restrictions and remove those that cannot be clearly justified
- Confirm, ahead of the closure of the St. Andrews Building, the capacity that will be lost and the provision that will replace it
- Revise the catering policy to allow societies to bring or arrange their own food
- Undertake a formal equalities audit of space provision, with a specific focus on disabled students and faith communities, and report findings to the SRC
- Establish a joint governance group involving Estates, Central Timetabling, the SRC and the student unions, with a clear remit to oversee access and hold delivery against these recommendations to account. This should be chaired by the SRC.
- Involve clubs and societies in the design and review of the booking system. No mechanism currently exists for their experience to feed into how the system operates.

Society representation should be built into the governance group and an annual access survey conducted and published.

- The University should establish a dedicated funding arrangement to support the student unions in mitigating the financial barriers associated with access to union-managed space for clubs and societies.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

Clubs and societies are central to student life at the University of Glasgow. They provide students with opportunities for social connection, cultural expression, creative activity, sport and community beyond the academic curriculum. For many students, particularly those new to the city or navigating a large university for the first time, a club or society is one of the most effective routes to building a sense of belonging on campus.

The ability to access suitable space is a basic operational requirement for almost all club and society activity. Without it, meetings cannot take place, events cannot be held and communities cannot form.

In recent years, concern has grown that the patchwork of booking arrangements across the university estate is no longer working for clubs and societies. Access to space is increasingly constrained. New buildings have opened but in practice most are not available to societies. Repeated assurances that new provision would resolve the pressure have clearly not been borne out. Costs are rising, policies vary between buildings, and the information available to societies is fragmented and inconsistent. These concerns have been raised consistently enough by student representatives, society office bearers and staff to warrant a structured investigation.

2.2 About This Research

This research was commissioned by the Students' Representative Council (SRC) and had three core aims: to understand how the current system operates in practice; to identify the barriers that prevent societies from accessing suitable space equitably; and to draw out practical recommendations that could improve the system for all societies, including those whose needs are currently least well served.

The full research approach, including sample details, methodology and limitations is set out in Section 3.

2.3 Structure of this Report

This report is organised into eight sections following this introduction:

- Section 3 sets out the research approach in full, including methodology, sample profile and the limitations of the research
- Section 4 describes the current booking landscape; the spaces available to societies, the processes through which they are accessed, and the range of systems and gatekeepers involved across the estate
- Section 5 examines patterns of access; how frequently societies book space, what types of space they use, and the overall picture of how well the current system is meeting demand
- Section 6 identifies the key barriers that prevent societies from accessing suitable space

- Section 7 examines how these barriers fall unevenly across particular groups of students including disabled students, faith and cultural societies, specialist and performance societies and new societies
- Section 8 identifies models of effective practice from within the current estate, and considers what local solutions reveal about the wider system
- Section 9 draws directly on the voices of clubs and societies themselves, presenting the changes they felt would make the most difference to how the booking system works for them
- Section 10 draws together the findings and sets out recommendations for action.

3. Research Approach

3.1 Research Aim and Objectives

The aim of the research was to develop a clear and evidence-based understanding of how clubs and societies at the University of Glasgow access room bookings across the estate, and to identify barriers to equitable access and practical changes that could improve the system for all societies. The specific objectives were to:

- Map the processes through which clubs and societies book space across the estate, including centrally managed, locally managed and union spaces
- Understand the varied policies, costs and building-level rules that govern clubs and societies access to space
- Identify the main barriers to access, including those that fall disproportionately on particular groups of students
- Examine how the information environment around booking affects their ability to secure suitable space
- Identify examples of effective practice within the current system that could be adopted more widely
- Provide findings and recommendations to inform decisions and future prioritisation decisions by the University's Senior Management, Estates Department and the SRC

3.2 Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was used combining in-depth qualitative interviews with an online quantitative survey. This design was chosen to capture both the operational perspective of those that manage and allocate space and the experience of the clubs and societies that use the system. Neither source alone would have provided a sufficient picture. By conducting a mixed-methods study, interview data gives depth and context and survey data gives scale and the ability to identify patterns across a broad range of clubs and societies. The research was conducted between November 2025 and February 2026.

3.3 Qualitative Interviews

Fifteen in-depth interviews were conducted with space managers, timetabling staff, university administrators, union representatives, and other institutional stakeholders across the estate. Interviews were conducted face-to-face or by Microsoft Teams and lasted between 30 and 55 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed. Thematic analysis was conducted across all transcripts to identify recurrent themes and patterns.

Participants were selected to cover a broad spread of venue types and space management roles across the estate. The sample included staff responsible for centrally managed teaching buildings, locally managed specialist spaces, student union venues, conferencing and events functions, and university-wide space management and timetabling. Some interviews were conducted with two participants together where they held complementary roles in the same building or function. The spread of coverage means the research findings draw on experience from the main categories of space that clubs and societies use.

All participants were interviewed under conditions of anonymity. No names or job titles are used in the findings sections of this report. Interview sources are cited throughout using numbered reference codes [IR-01 to IR-15].

3.4 Online Survey

An online survey was distributed to clubs and societies representatives across the University of Glasgow. The survey was designed to capture the experience of societies navigating the booking system, including how they access space, which types of rooms they use, the costs they face and the barriers they encounter. It also invited open-ended responses to allow societies to describe experiences in their own words.

The survey generated 132 valid responses, all from the individual in the club or society that was responsible for booking space. Respondents were asked to complete the survey on behalf of their society rather than as individuals. Responses covered a broad range of society types, sizes and levels of experience with the booking system.

Survey findings are cited throughout the report. Base sizes vary across questions because of routing; not all questions were shown to all respondents, and not all respondents answered all questions. Open-ended survey respondents are also cited and flagged where this is the case. Survey percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number throughout.

3.5 Limitations of the Research

The following limitations should be kept in mind when reading the findings.

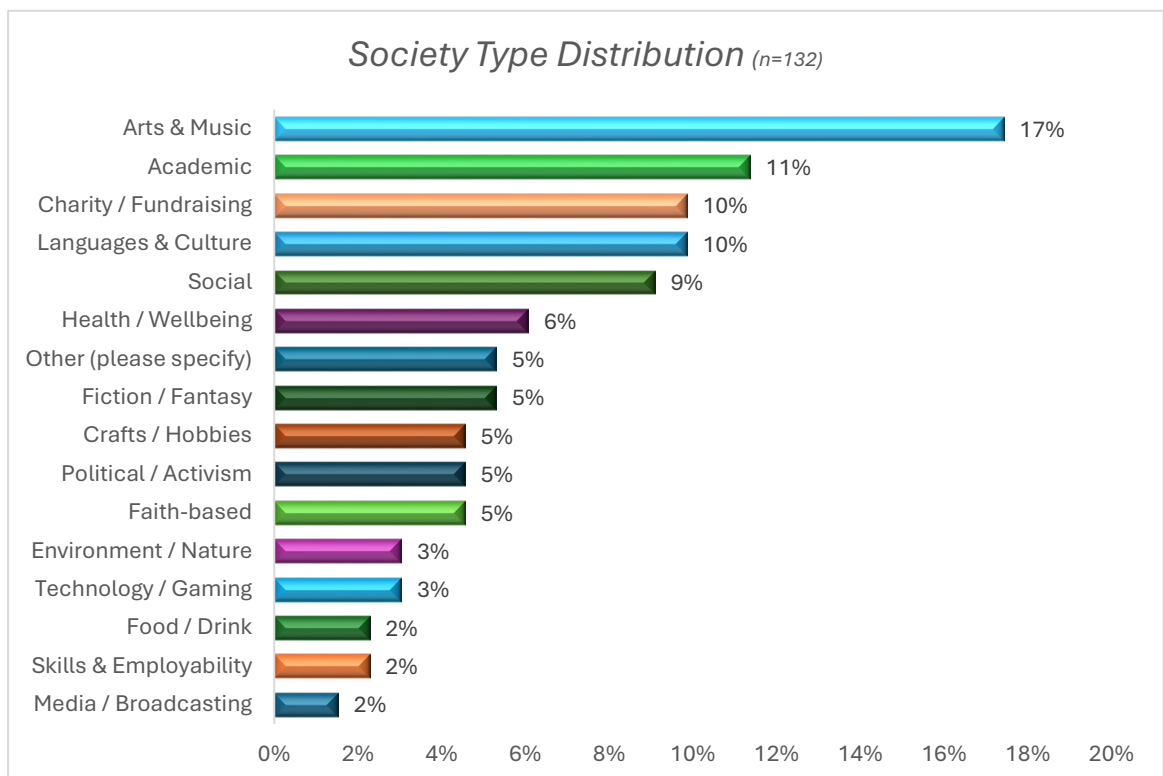
- The interview sample was selected to cover the main venue types and management roles, not every building or person involved in space booking. The findings are likely to reflect the main patterns of experience but cannot claim to represent every building or every institutional perspective.

- The survey achieved a response rate of approximately 37%, with 132 valid responses from a sample population of 353. This is a solid response rate but as with any self-selecting survey, those with stronger views may have been more likely to respond, and findings should be read as robust rather than a precise census of all clubs and societies experience.
- The research captures a point-in-time picture. The estate is subject to ongoing change including the planned closure of the St. Andrews Building. Some findings, particularly those relating to availability may shift as these changes take effect.
- The research focuses on the booking systems as experienced by clubs and societies and space managers. It does not examine in detail the financial or operational constraints facing the relevant University stakeholders, and some of the barriers identified may reflect resource pressures as well as policy choices.

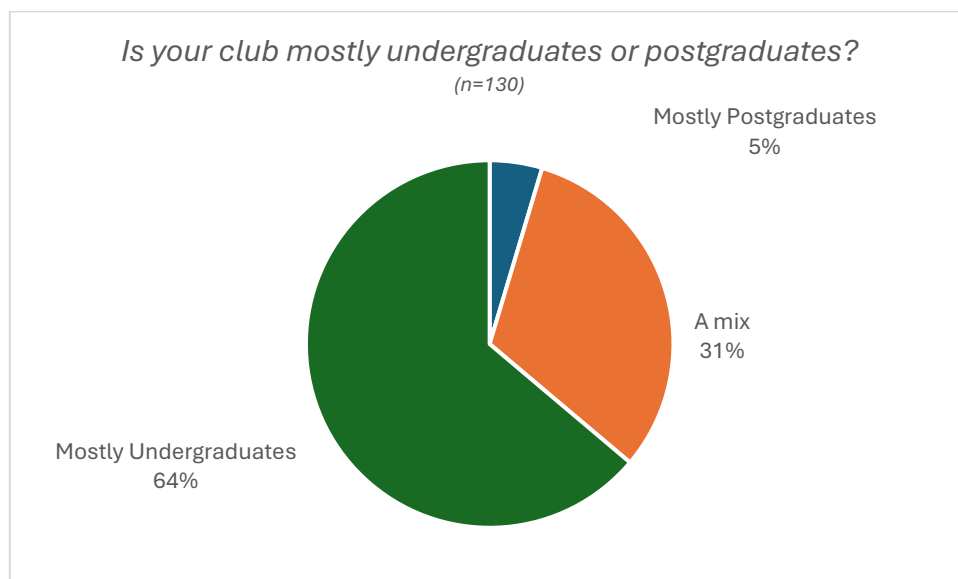
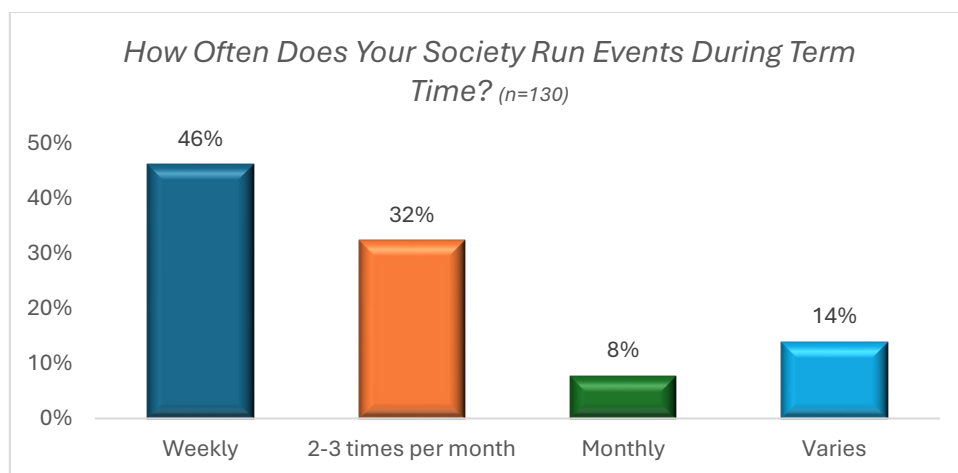
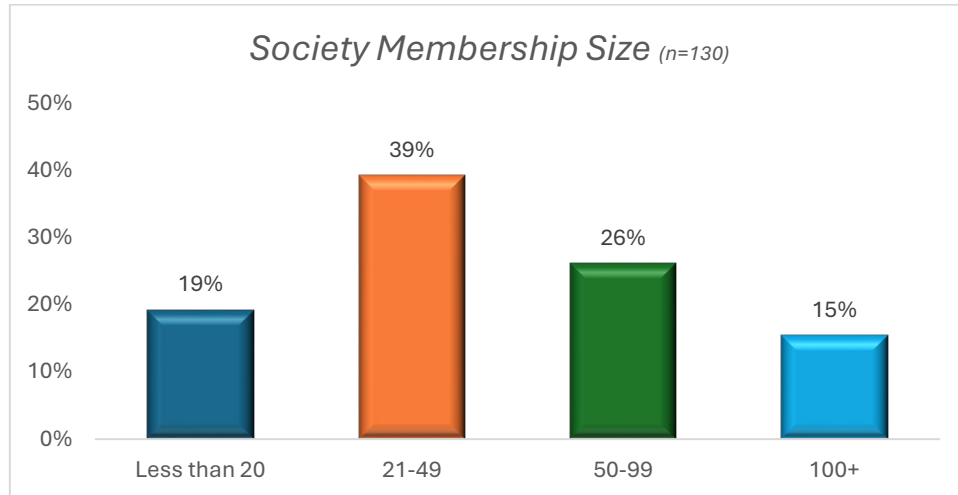
4. The Current Booking Landscape

4.1 The Survey Sample

The survey generated 132 valid responses from SRC affiliated clubs and societies. All but two respondents confirmed they were the person responsible for handling room bookings and 61% were chairs or presidents. The findings in this section therefore reflect the experience of the most knowledgeable people in each society on the question of space access.



Most societies in the sample are small to medium-sized and meet regularly, nearly half hold events weekly during term time and most regular sessions involve fewer than 50 people. For the context that follows in this report, this matters. Most of the clubs and societies are running modest frequent meetings that should in principle be the easiest to accommodate in a large university estate.



The survey sample was predominantly undergraduate, with 64% of respondents describing their society membership as mainly undergraduate and 31% as a mix of undergraduates and postgraduates. However, SRC membership data tells a more complex story. At least 37% of society members across all affiliated clubs and societies are postgraduate taught students. This is a significant shift from a decade ago and has practical implications for how societies use space. As one interviewee observed: "*Not all their activities are based within the unions or pubs - that's why the demand for spaces has grown. They're not looking for that type of space.*"

Attendance at regular events is modest. Half of respondents (50%) typically have fewer than 20 people at their regular sessions and a further 37% have between 21 and 49. Taken together this means that 87% of societies are running regular events with fewer than 50 attendees. Only a small minority report typical attendance of 50 or more.

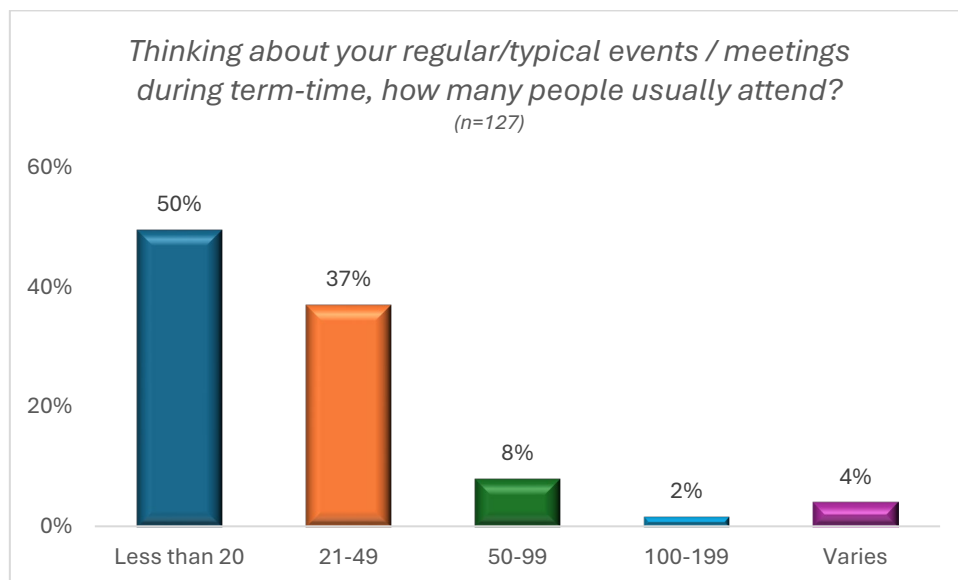


Figure 4.1: Booking Routes Across the Estate

How clubs and societies request space on campus: four main pathways. Routes are not mutually exclusive; societies commonly use more than one.

A: Central Timetabling (CTT)	B: Local Space Managers	C: School of Music	D: Student Bodies (GUU / QMU / SRC)
Step 1	Step 1	Step 1	Step 1
Complete online booking form for Central University Spaces: type of room; purpose of event; event name; date/time; flexibility with date; accessible space requirement; attendee numbers; recurring booking; contact details for main contact and society; and external speaker info	Find space manager contact details on university website; email with details of the activity and space requirements	Summer: Music School administrator emails returning societies; submit requests via shared spreadsheet (dates, times, ensemble, purpose)	GUU: Affiliate (free); block bookings via form at semester start; one-off bookings via email to events team QMU: Email events team or internal referral from student-staff member SRC: Email SRC room bookings mailbox
Step 2	Step 2	Step 2	Step 2
CTT reviews request; may email to request additional information or clarification; back-and-forth to identify suitable room	Back-and-forth email exchanges between local space manager and club about the proposed event; guidelines for usage can vary widely between local spaces and are not available in one directory or standardised between local spaces; questions to book determined by space manager and on occasion, require special training to confirm booking	Requests reviewed by Music School against teaching, research and performance commitments; new societies considered by Head of School	GUU: Back-and-forth with events team to confirm space, timing and requirements; block bookings fill quickly QMU: Back-and-forth to confirm suitability; access limited to specific days (other days reserved for commercial events) SRC: Availability checked. Alternative offered if unavailable; meeting offered to discuss options
Step 3	Step 3	Step 3	Step 3
Booking confirmed; logged in Ivanti system. Terms and Conditions included at bottom of booking form but not booking confirmation email. Conferencing & Events handles larger or more complex bookings by referral from CTT or direct approach; not a standard route for regular activity	Space manager approves or declines; if unsuitable, some managers redirect to an alternative space manager or CTT, sometimes local space managers require approval from more senior management in a School to approve usage Booking recorded via CTT (some managers) or in a locally maintained log (others); practice varies across buildings	Approved bookings entered into CTT system and confirmed to society before academic year begins; ad hoc requests logged in same spreadsheet throughout year	GUU: Events team confirms space; terms and conditions apply; some societies hold historical priority access not available to others QMU: Space confirmed; terms and conditions apply SRC: When completed booking form & signed T&Cs are received, email sent detailing clear-up & room reset requirements
Outcome	Outcome	Outcome	Outcome
Most requests reach some form of resolution; room allocated may differ from preference	Successful if society can identify correct contact; outcome and recording practice vary by manager	Pre-approved societies access specialist spaces; new societies require Head of School approval	GUU: Established societies with existing relationships may benefit from additional access; other societies allocated on first-come, first-served basis. QMU: Access limited to specific days SRC: Limited spaces to meet demand; particularly for large cultural events
98% of requests reach resolution, but this does not mean suitable outcome for club that meets their need. CTT volume is also high.	No shared directory of local space managers exists that includes standard booking process and room guidelines; process and requirements vary widely; students often do not know this route is available	Process opens in summer. Note: not all schools operate a comparable system; this route is specific to School of Music	

4.2 How Bookings Are Made

The fragmentation illustrated in Figure 4.1 also has a practical consequence that does not appear in the survey data: some spaces operate entirely outside the central booking system and as a result their availability is not reflected in what Central Timetabling shows. One facility for example runs its own booking process independently:

“We don’t go through Central Timetabling to manage our bookings...the information is always incorrect [in Central Timetabling]. This never tallies... [the facility] basically has its own little system that if you’re not kind of au fait with, is probably quite a difficult nut to crack.”

[Source: IR-03]

This is not a criticism of how that facility manages its spaces, which reflects its specific operational needs. But it means that what Central Timetabling shows as available and what is actually available are not the same thing, and clubs and societies have no way of knowing the difference.

Case Study: Central Timetabling in Practice

CTT processes club and society bookings through the Ivanti helpdesk system. The system shows only the initial enquiry and any new questions raised, not the full exchange between parties. Staff handling a booking may not have sight of what has already been agreed. In practice, a single enquiry can generate up to 20 separate form submissions before it is resolved. When the researchers asked whether direct communication could reduce this, CTT confirmed it did not have the staffing capacity for calls or meetings with clubs.

When a booking cannot be fulfilled, CTT does not direct clubs to alternative spaces managed locally across the estate. The only option offered is to try the Unions, which will generally involve cost. CTT holds a list of locally managed spaces but updates it annually and acknowledges it does not have full knowledge of the booking procedures attached to those spaces.

The consequence is that the burden of navigation falls on the club. When the process breaks down there is no single point of accountability. There does not appear to be any mechanism to escalate without involving the SRC and no record is kept of how many bookings fail or how many clubs just stop trying. The system as it currently operates creates a great deal of both effort and frustration without any data to prove it.

“When CTT can’t fulfil your booking, they just ‘resolve’ it. That’s what it says on the email response you get - it has been resolved. But realistically, your request was denied. Resolved does not mean a confirmed booking.”

[Source: IR-15]

There is also the practical problem of CTT's response time for urgent bookings which is inflexible for time-sensitive requests:

"Their policy is to get back to clubs within 48 hours, which is too late for last-minute bookings during busy times." [Source: IR-15]

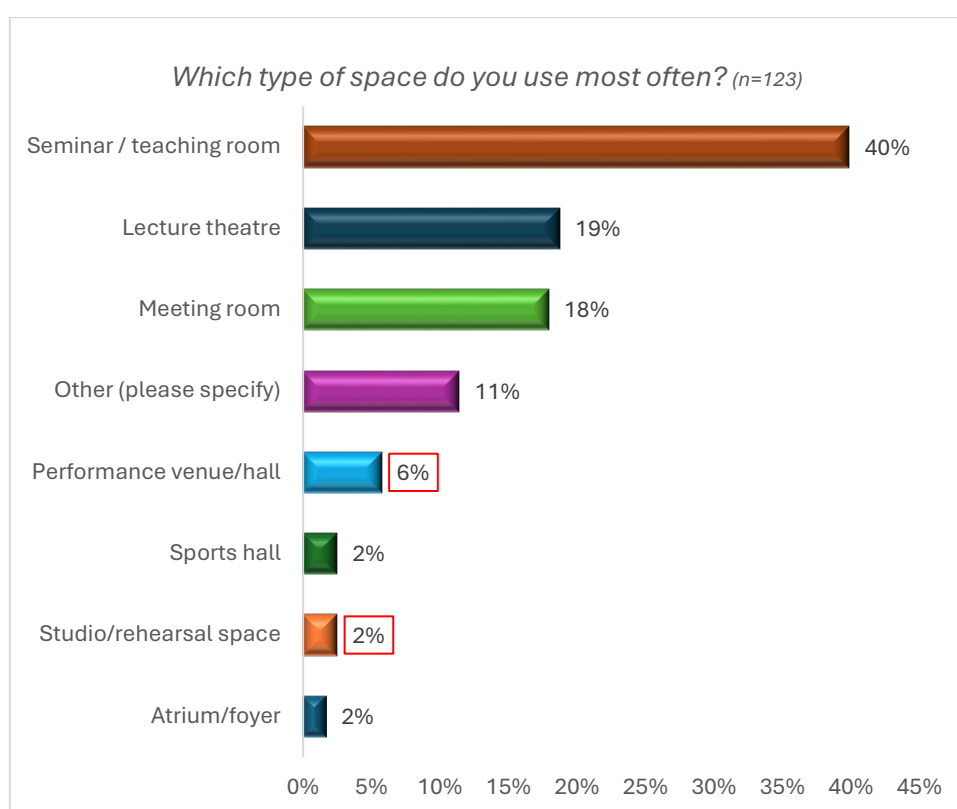
The survey open-ended responses also reinforced the issues with Central Timetabling:

"Central Timetabling requires a lot of improvement in regard to communication times, no alternatives are suggested when a room is booked, no way to tell what is otherwise available."

"The Central Timetabling system is broken as for the second year in a row now we have had to go to the head of this service."

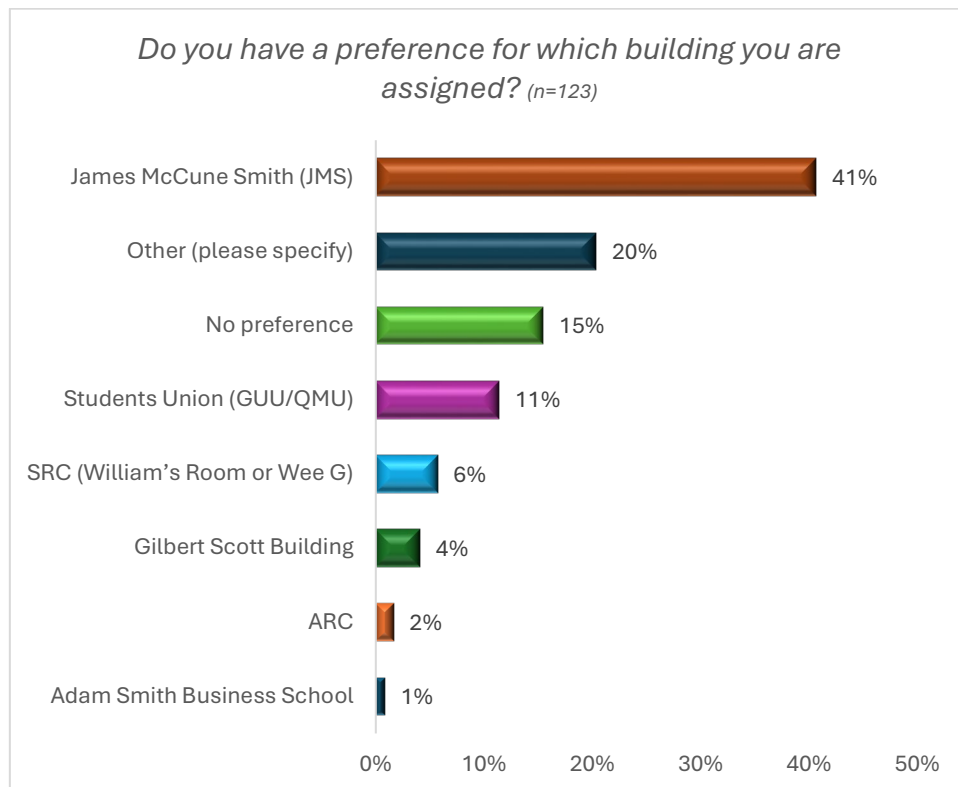
4.3 The Spaces Available

In principle, clubs and societies can access a wide range of space types across the estate: centrally managed teaching buildings, locally managed specialist spaces, the student union venues, and community spaces such as the Byres Community Hub. In practice, the spaces most commonly used are standard seminar and teaching rooms.



The low figures for specialist spaces do not indicate low demand. They indicate limited access. Spaces that societies need such as flat floored rehearsal rooms and music practice space are not available through standard routes or are currently restricted or

are simply not listed anywhere a society would find them. The spaces societies end up using are the ones they can get to, not necessarily the ones their activity requires.



The concentration of demand on the James McCune Smith (JMS) Learning Hub reflects its prominence in the Central Timetabling allocation process and its accessibility. However, the feedback from interview participants suggested that JMS was not necessarily designed with society activity in mind and its dominance in the preference data is as much a statement about the absence of alternatives as it is about JMS itself.

“a lot of feedback we’re getting from people is it’s not suitable for clubs and societies...” [Source: IR-06]

“I think [JMS Learning Hub] isn’t suitable for lots of clubs and societies based on what the activity is. They probably don’t ask for our building, or they aren’t looking for our building because the space isn’t necessarily suitable. It is set up as a teaching space, it’s study.” [Source IR-04]

The absence of alternatives is the predictable result of a system in which access depends not on need, but on who controls the space. Gatekeepers operate within their own range of rules, policies and priorities, many of which are not consistently visible or understood.

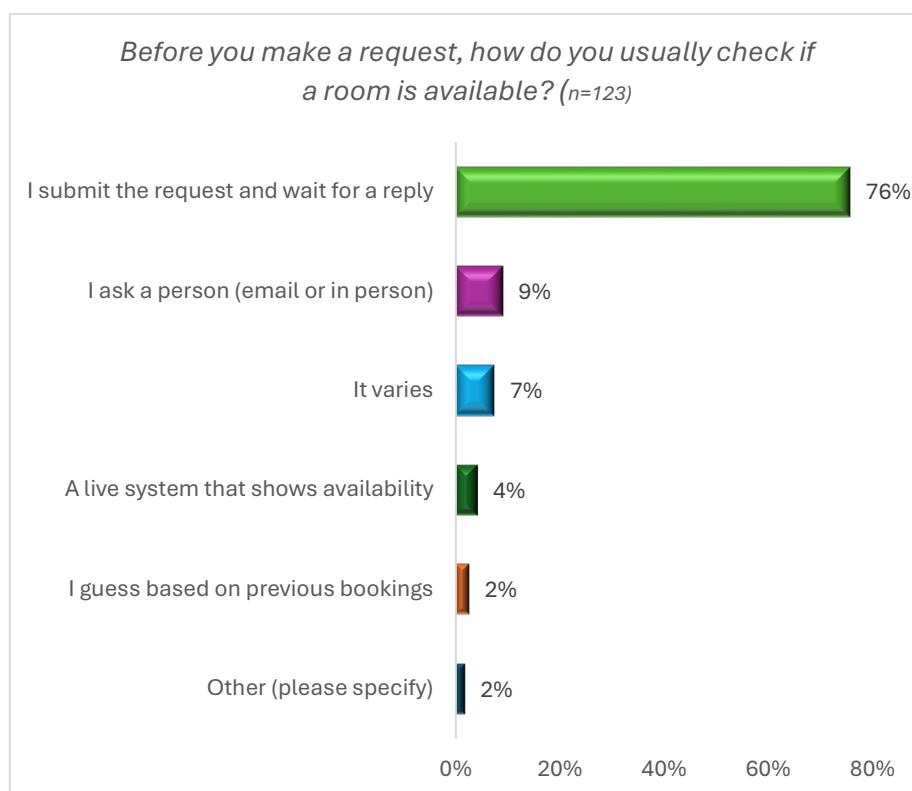
The estate contains a wide range of spaces. Which of those spaces a society can actually access depends not on whether it is suitable for their activity, but on who manages it, whether that manager is aware of the society's need, and whether the policies accumulated in that building over time permit the activity in question.

Access is controlled not by a coherent system but by a series of individual gatekeepers, each with their own rules, their own discretion, and no shared obligation to accommodate clubs and societies at all. For societies with experience or established contacts, this can be navigated. For those without, it can present a barrier before a request has even been made.

4.4 How Societies Find Out What is Available

The experience of checking availability for most clubs and societies is to submit a request and wait. A live view of what is already booked and what remains available does not exist for the majority.

Consequently, planning ahead is difficult. Societies cannot see competing demand, cannot easily switch to an alternative if a preferred space is taken, and have no way to assess how realistic a given request is before they make it. Several open-ended survey responses described submitting multiple sequential requests for the same slot precisely because there was no way to find out what was already booked.



Across all booking routes, clear or very clear ratings were consistently high, ranging from 81% for Central Timetabling to 87% for 'other routes'. There was no meaningful variation between formal and informal channels.

4.5 Block Bookings and Priority

Block bookings give certain clubs and societies access to a fixed slot in a specific space on an ongoing basis. Not all venues operate this way, but where it exists it is one of the most reliable routes to regular space on campus.

One example is the QMU. Each term, the union opens term-long bookings to clubs and societies for specific days. The process is open to all, but it requires prior knowledge to use it. Societies that do not know it exists will not benefit from it.

This creates an equity problem. Societies that are new, or whose members come from outside schools with established booking relationships, have no prior history and no existing contacts. They compete for what is left after established groups have secured their slots, starting at a structural disadvantage the system does nothing to correct.

5. Access in Practice

The picture that emerges from the survey data is one of a system that functions passably for most societies most of the time but masks a more uneven reality beneath the headline figures. This section presents the aggregate findings on access, what clubs and societies are getting, how often they go elsewhere and where the system is less reliable before Sections 6 and 7 examine the reasons why and the groups most affected.

5.1 The Headline Picture

Most societies describe the process of securing space as “manageable,” with 70% rating it as easy or very easy. But this reflects how accustomed societies have become to working around a flawed system, rather than the system functioning well in its own right. Only 43% had all of their requests approved in the past year, meaning the majority encountered refusals, while a further 37% were only partially successful. Consistent access is therefore the exception rather than the norm.

At a more fundamental level, these figures measure administrative completion, not practical suitability. A booking may be ‘approved’ even when the space is unfit for purpose; too small, inadequately equipped, or subject to restrictions that prevent the activity taking place. The system therefore counts compromised outcomes as successes.

Even when a booking is confirmed, it cannot be relied upon. 15% of respondents reported that their booking was later cancelled or materially changed. The most common reasons, including lack of availability, unsuitable capacity or layout, and duplicate bookings, point to underlying coordination failures rather than isolated issues. They are evidence of a system that does not know what space it has, cannot match it to need, and routinely over-promises.

The impact is not trivial. Societies plan events, promote them, and commit resources on the basis of these bookings only to have them pulled or altered at short notice. The disruption is then pushed entirely onto students to absorb. This is not a minor inconvenience; it is a structural failure of coordination for which societies carry the risk.

At face value, the data appears positive — 91% of respondents rated their most recent event space as suitable or very suitable. But that headline obscures a more concerning picture.

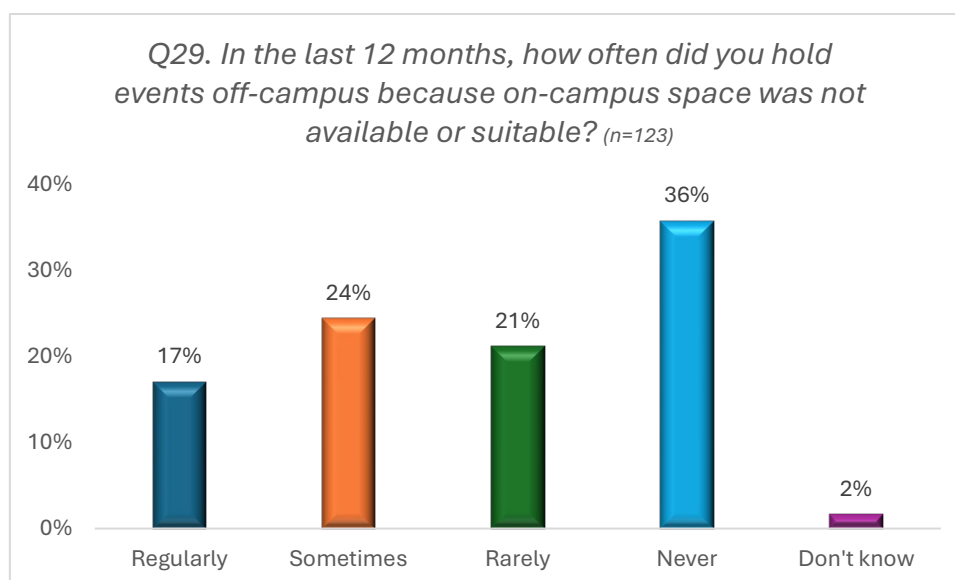
Only 35% felt their room was very suitable, meaning most societies are settling for spaces that are merely “good enough” rather than genuinely fit for purpose. In other words, adequacy has become the benchmark, not quality.

More importantly, 6% reported their space as unsuitable or very unsuitable. That is not a marginal issue — it represents a consistent minority of societies being placed in spaces that actively fail to meet their needs. For those groups, the system is not just imperfect; it is failing.

Taken together, the data suggests a system that delivers passable outcomes for most but consistently falls short of providing high-quality or appropriate space, with a non-trivial number of societies left with spaces that are simply not fit for purpose.

5.2 Frequency and Pattern of Off-Campus Activity

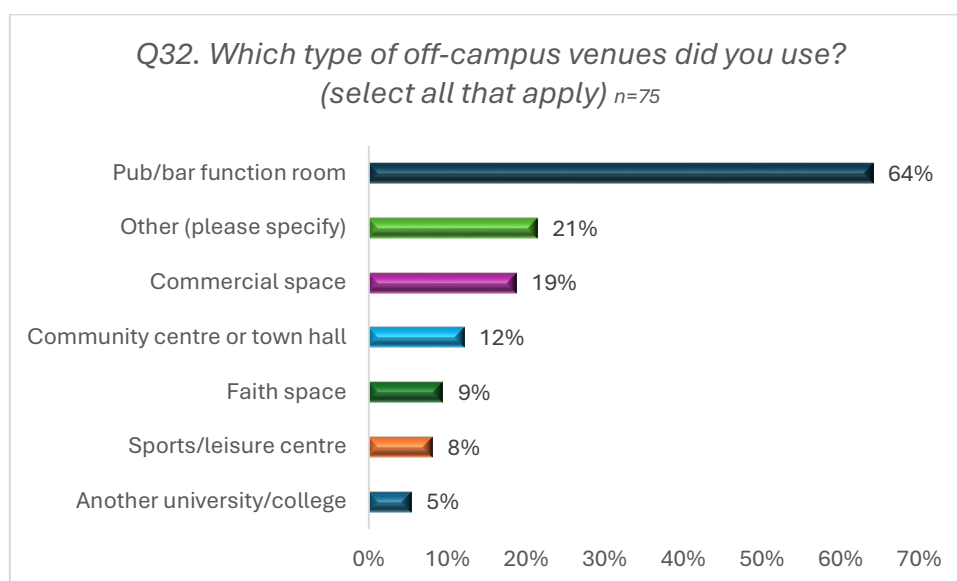
17% of respondents said they regularly held events off-campus because on-campus space was not available or suitable, and a further 24% did so sometimes. Taken together, more than two in five societies (41%) have gone off-campus at least occasionally for this reason.



5.3 Nature of Off-Campus Venues

The type of venue societies use when they go off-campus is informative in itself. Pubs and bar function rooms are by far the most common venue, used by two-thirds of those that went off-campus (64%). Interestingly, one in five respondents cited ‘other’ type of space.

These fell into two areas: specialist hire like dance and pole studios where no on-campus equivalent exists; and low-cost venues like cafes and outdoor space where food and drink are permitted.



The concentration of off-campus activity in pubs and bar function rooms points to a structural limitation rather than a neutral trend. While the data here is descriptive, it highlights a reliance on venues that are not universally suitable. Such spaces can present accessibility barriers, may exclude or deter faith-based groups, and are inherently ill-matched to a significant proportion of club and society activity.

5.4 Where the System Works Less Well

Two findings cut through the otherwise positive headline picture. As noted in Section 4, 41% of respondents prefer the James McCune Smith Learning Hub, yet multiple interviewees describe it as effectively at capacity during peak evening hours. At the same time, 15% report confirmed bookings being cancelled or materially altered. For societies hosting external speakers, performers, or advertised events, a late cancellation can render the event unviable.

Taken together, this points to a system that functions adequately on average but fails in ways that matter. Demand is concentrated on spaces that cannot meet it, a non-trivial minority are not securing suitable provision, and a significant share are pushed off-campus by constraint rather than choice. The risk is not evenly distributed: for some societies, the system breaks at precisely the point where reliability is most critical. The following sections examine the underlying causes.

6. Key Barriers to Equitable Access

The previous sections indicate that 70% of respondents described securing space as easy or very easy. While this suggests a degree of operational efficiency, it primarily reflects the experience of those already familiar with the system and supported by existing relationships. It should not be taken as evidence that access is straightforward in any meaningful or consistent sense.

This headline figure masks a more uneven reality. For newer or less well-connected societies, the process is often significantly more difficult to navigate.

The underlying requirements of societies further expose these limitations. The majority are not seeking generic rooms but spaces that meet specific functional needs. Nearly two-thirds (62%) require layout or space adaptations, over half (53%) need AV or technical support, and almost a third (32%) report accessibility requirements. The current system appears better suited to handling straightforward bookings than to accommodating these more complex and common needs.

A small number of respondents specified requirements not captured in the main options including:

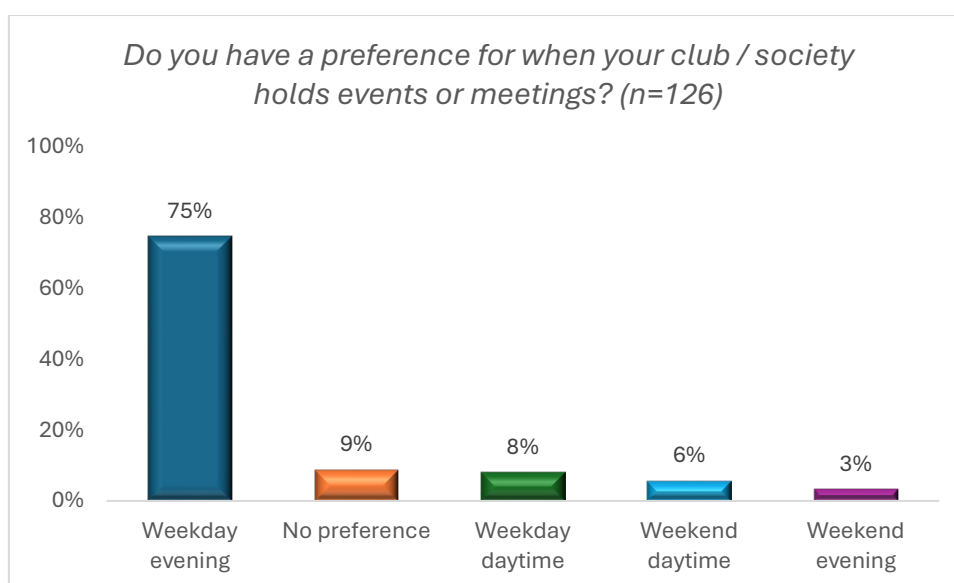
- Access to a piano
- Suitable acoustics for a large ensemble
- Flat floors and mirrors
- Green room space
- Ability to serve drinks
- Minibus (as all events are hill walks)

Five systemic barriers emerge consistently across the 15 in-depth qualitative interviews and the 132 survey responses. Each is examined below.

6.1 The Availability Barrier

The Evening Access Problem

The survey found that 75% of responding clubs and societies prefer weekday evening slots. This reflects the basic reality that students have course commitments during the day. Evening access is not a preference but a practical necessity for most activity.



Evenings are also the most constrained window for space booking. Scheduled teaching now regularly extends into the 5pm-6pm slot and sometimes beyond. Furthermore, the Wednesday afternoon slot, historically protected for student-led activity, has in practice been eroded to the point where teaching commitments now fill it at the same rate as other periods. The result is that club and society demand is concentrated in a shrinking 6pm-9pm window across a small number of high-demand buildings.

This restriction is made explicit in the form clubs are required to complete for Central Timetabling (CTT), which states:

"Please note that it is only pop-up spaces, available every day, and rooms at the JMS Building on Saturday and Sunday, that are available from 9am. If you request a time before 6pm for any other spaces, your enquiry WILL be declined, and you will need to submit a fresh one."

In practice, this means clubs and societies cannot access centrally managed spaces before 6pm on weekdays, regardless of whether those spaces are actually in use. Requests are not assessed on availability; they are automatically declined.

As detailed in the previous section, 46% of survey respondents run weekly events. Interview evidence also indicates that students who commute from beyond walking distance face a further barrier: there could be a gap of several hours between the end of teaching and the availability of evening slots that many will not be able to wait out.

Clubs and societies were particularly frustrated with this barrier and when asked what would make booking easier here are some of the open-ended responses:

"More spaces during daytime hours. Cannot book university spaces before 4pm despite many being empty."

"There have been many times that we have not been given a space and therefore cancelled rehearsal, because McIntyre 201 is booked, and then I have gone past and no one is there."

[Source: Survey, open-ended response]

A Shrinking Estate

Added to this is the St. Andrews Building problem. The St. Andrews Building currently accounts for a significant share of club and society bookings. It also provides space types that do not appear to exist elsewhere in the centrally managed estate at comparable cost and accessibility. This includes:

- Gymnasium used by sports and movement societies
- Drama room and arts studios
- Music practice space
- General seminar and teaching rooms used by a wide range of societies

The new Keystone Building, currently under construction, will add approximately 1,500–1,700 seats to the campus. However, it is designed for learning, teaching and research and will not replace the St. Andrews Building as a venue for clubs and societies. This represents a net loss of usable space that is already difficult to replace elsewhere. The St. Andrews Building is also one of the few locations available in the evening, with facilities staff on site and bookings possible until 11pm, and it is formally listed by the University as a designated club space. Participants put it plainly:

“Currently the theory is we open Keystone and we lock the door at the St. Andrews Building. That is a massive impact to student experience for us, massive and particular for societies...”

[Source IR-06]

“We’ve got these lovely shiny new buildings and students come for open day and Welcome Week and they think this is amazing, and then they join a society and they never get back into those spaces.”

[Source: IR-03]

“When they say the word community, they don’t see the students as the community. They see external partners.”

[Source: IR-15]

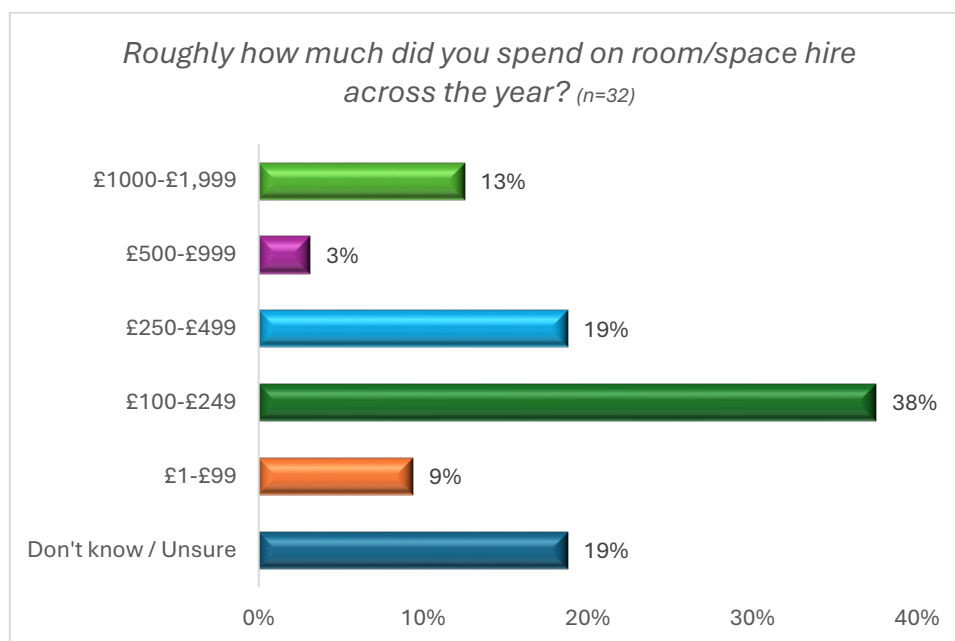
At the time of this research, no confirmed plan exists to replace the specialist capacity that will be lost when the St. Andrews Building closes. This is a significant gap that will require urgent attention from senior university leadership and Estates.

Taken together evening compression and the impending loss of the St. Andrews Building represent the two most pressing availability pressures on the clubs and societies estate. Section 5 of this report shows that most societies are currently securing space. What it cannot show, however, is how many are doing so in the wrong building or in a room that does not suit their needs because nothing better was available. As demand continues to be squeezed into a narrowing evening window, and as the St. Andrews Building moves toward closure without a replacement strategy in place, the number of clubs and societies in that position is likely to grow.

6.2 The Cost Barrier

What Societies Actually Pay

A proportion of central university spaces are available to societies free of charge through the Central Timetabling process. Union venues, specialist spaces, student conferences in any spaces, and out of hours access often carry charges and 25% of survey respondents paid for space hire in the last twelve months. In addition, a conference in the JMS or the St. Andrews Building will have room hire fees if booked through Events and Conferencing when rooms would be free if booked through Central Timetabling.

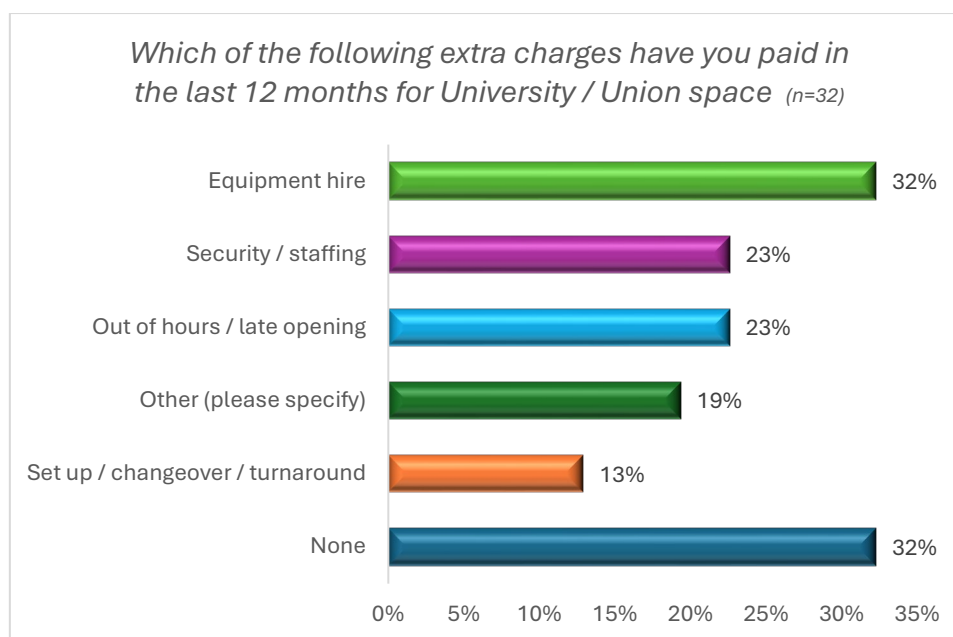


The issue is not limited to headline hire costs. What is perhaps even more problematic is the systematic layering of additional charges that only become visible after a booking has been confirmed. This practice obscures the true cost at the point of decision-making and leaves societies exposed to escalating expenses they had no realistic opportunity to anticipate or avoid.

Newer and smaller societies, those least familiar with how the system operates and least able to absorb financial shocks, are disproportionately exposed to these hidden costs. What might be an inconvenience for established groups becomes a real barrier for them, with unexpected charges carrying the potential to derail events altogether.

The following charges were identified across the research:

- Out-of-hours or late-opening fees
- Security and stewarding charges, triggered by event size or the presence of alcohol
- Room reset fees where furniture movement requires professional staff
- AV equipment costs, which can vary by venue and context
- Bar deposits and minimum spend requirements at union venues
- Corkage fees where societies bring their own alcohol
- Cleaning charges for rooms left in a non-standard state



At both Unions, a bar booking requires a deposit, waived only if a minimum spend is attained. This model is structurally exclusionary; societies whose activities do not involve alcohol, such as the Muslim Students' Association, have no realistic means of meeting the threshold and are therefore required to absorb the full cost. In effect, the pricing mechanism privileges drinking-focused events and places non-drinking or faith-based societies at a systematic financial disadvantage.

When one interview participant was asked directly about AV cost, the response was:

"I'm not actually sure on that point....it might depend on if there's a bar booking with it."
 [Source IR-08]

The Cost of Going Off-Campus

When on-campus space is unavailable or unsuitable, clubs and societies do not simply relocate and carry on. Going off-campus introduces costs and risks that would not arise if suitable provision existed on campus.

They may face higher costs, greater organisational complexity and in some cases reduced safety for their members.

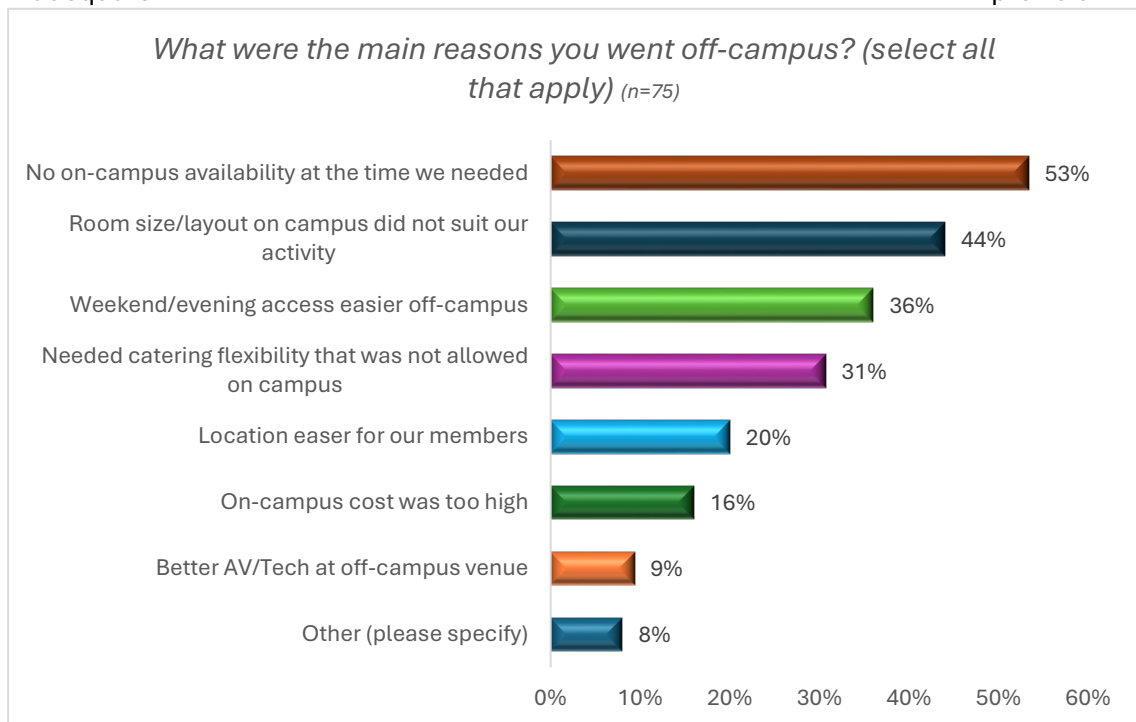
One interview participant put it in terms of student welfare, noting that when cost and availability pressures push societies off-campus, they lose the institutional protections that come with being on university premises:

"Otherwise, we price them off-campus... and then they don't have that sort of bubble of safety, security and protection that they would have if they were here on campus. That's all subject to the external venue, and then they have travel costs."
 [Source IR-12]

Amongst those pushed off-campus by availability or suitability failures:

- 33% incurred venue costs they would not have faced had a suitable on-campus space been available
- 36% reported a greater travel burden for organisers and members
- 26% faced accessibility challenges at off-campus venues

The accessibility figure is particularly revealing. When a club or society cannot secure an accessible room on campus and is forced off-campus, the problem has not been solved, it has been displaced. In practice, the University is shifting responsibility onto external venues it neither oversees nor controls, effectively abandoning any meaningful guarantee of accessibility and leaving affected students exposed to inconsistent and potentially inadequate provision.



8% of respondents selected 'other' and provided a written reason. The responses are small but illustrative. Two societies went off-campus because of specialist equipment needs that cannot be met on campus; one required a venue with a suitable piano after being unable to use 14 University Gardens (Music Department space) out of hours; another hired an external pole studio because no on-campus space can accommodate the equipment their classes require. A further respondent went off-campus specifically to hold a wine and cheese event where they could bring their own alcohol.

These responses point to a more fundamental failure that runs through the wider findings. For some societies, the issue is not general availability or the mechanics of the booking system; it is the outright absence of any suitable space on campus. No amount of process improvement can compensate for a provision that simply does not exist.

[The Cost of Events and Conferences](#)

When a club or society event reaches a certain scale, involves external partners, or requires use of specific spaces, it is often referred to the University's Events and

Conferencing team. While internal users are said to receive discounted rates compared to external clients, there is no clear indication of what this discount is or how it is applied. It is simply assumed to be reflected in the final bill.

In practice, the only transparent pricing available in advance relates to catering menus. There is no published information on core costs such as room hire, room set-up, security, or other charges (referred to as “participant rates”). As a result, societies are expected to commit to a process without any meaningful understanding of the likely total cost.

Ultimately, this creates a clear disincentive for clubs and societies to use the University’s Events and Conferencing service. The risk of additional or unclear costs, often beyond their limited budgets, is enough to deter engagement altogether.

It also has a more distorting effect. Where societies believe that fully describing their event, particularly one involving external guests, may trigger a referral from Central Timetabling to Events and Conferencing, they are incentivised to understate the scale or nature of what they are planning. This undermines transparency and leads to poorer planning outcomes for both the society and the University.

Case Study: The Gaming Society & the National Charity Tournament

The Gaming Society runs a national student charity tabletop gaming competition over a full weekend, with over 400 attendees requiring large-scale flat table space and step-free access throughout. The event has run twice, in 2019 and 2024. By 2024, it had become financially unviable.

A room booking request submitted through Central Timetabling in August 2023 was refused. The capacity required was beyond what the service could accommodate for a student society booking. With that route closed, the society was directed to Events & Conferencing. This was not a choice. It was the only option left.

The 2024 event ran across three venues: the St. Andrews Building, the GUU and the JMS. The Saturday opening ceremony had to be run twice to direct attendees to separate locations. Room bookings cost upwards of £8,500 against total weekend income of £11,000. Less than £500 was raised for charity. In 2019, with nearly twice the attendance and lower venue costs, the same event raised over £10,000.

The society had identified the JMS as the most suitable single venue. They were told it was unavailable through Conferencing due to cost.

6.3 The Policy Barrier

How Policies Develop

Booking policies across the estate have not been designed. They have accumulated. Each building has developed its own rules over time, mostly in response to individual incidents or local operational pressures, with no reference to what is applied elsewhere and no central standard against which they are assessed. The result is a patchwork that no one designed, no one oversees and that clubs and societies are expected to navigate without a map.

When asked directly, several University space managers were unable to say when their current policies were introduced or last examined. This is not a minor administrative gap. It means that restrictions affecting hundreds of societies may have no current justification and no one with the responsibility to question them.

The following policy problems were identified consistently across the research:

- The food and drink prohibition in Central Timetabling managed spaces is applied as a blanket rule, catching ordinary activity that poses no realistic risk to the room. The same activity – bringing food to a meeting – is permitted in some buildings and prohibited in others, with no explanation available to the society booking the space.
- Reset obligations are inconsistently applied. Smaller rooms place responsibility on the club or society whereas larger spaces require professional staff and trigger additional charges that may not have been communicated at the time of booking. In addition, costs for the weekend reset are twice as high due to the current university staff terms and conditions.
- Policies introduced in response to single incidents have remained in place for years. In one documented case, a specialist arts space was permanently closed to clubs and societies following a single incident of damage and has never been reviewed. The incident that prompted the closure may no longer be representative of how societies use the space, but no one has ever checked.
- Building-level policies seem to have developed independently and are not assessed against any cross-university standard. Rules vary from building to building, are not published in any central location and can only be discovered by trial and error.

The cumulative effect is significant. Societies navigating the system for the first time do not know which rules apply where. Experienced societies learn to self-censor requests – avoiding buildings where they have previously encountered problems or omitting details about their event to reduce the risk of refusal. Neither response is rational from a university perspective as the first excludes societies that have every right to use the space and the second makes it harder for space managers to assess whether a booking is suitable.

A useful comparison exists within the same institution. The SRC reviews its own booking policies annually, assessing what has and has not worked and adjusting before each academic year. That practice has produced a food policy that accommodates Iftar events, cultural celebrations and other activities that the university's own centrally managed spaces prohibit. There is no clear policy basis for the inconsistency. The same approach is standard practice in some parts of the estate and entirely absent in others, without any transparent or justifiable reason.

"Maybe clubs have been in the Boyd Orr for a number of bookings and then they get one in the JMS, and they get scared because they get told off, and they're like: we've done that before in the Boyd Orr and no one said anything."

[Source: IR-15]

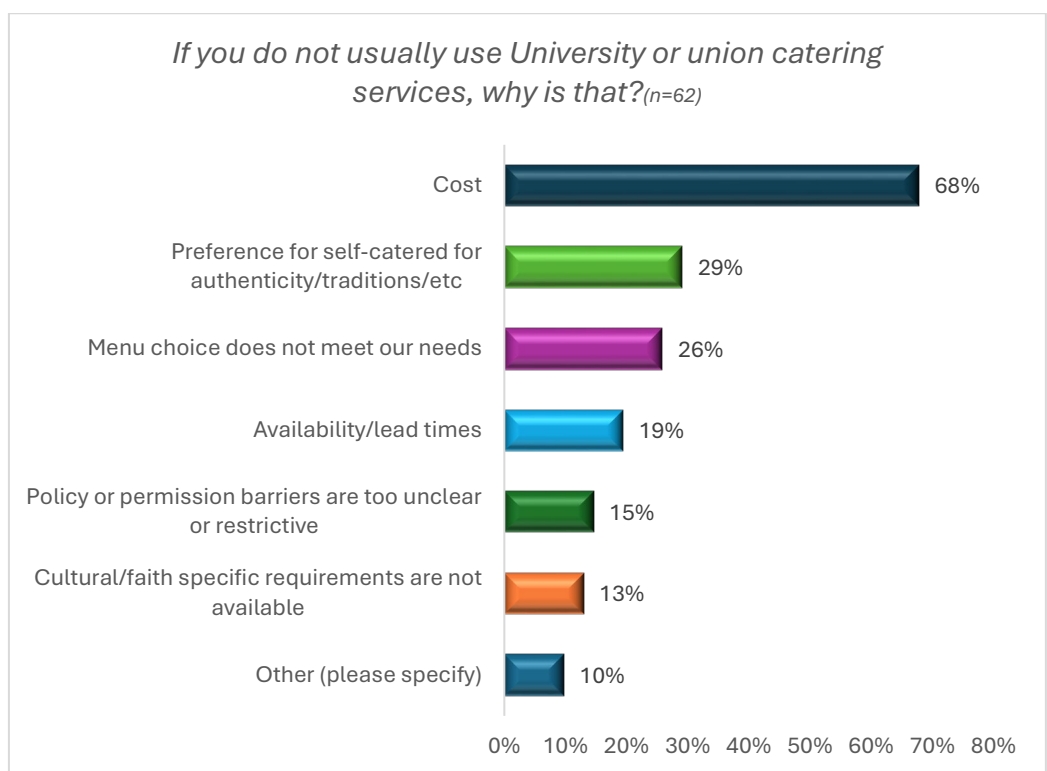
Without a central, university-wide review mechanism, restrictive policies will continue to accumulate unchecked rather than be scrutinised.

The University currently has no mechanism to assess how many of the restrictions imposed on clubs and societies remain necessary or proportionate, and no process for reviewing them. Decisions about what societies can and cannot do in booked spaces are left to individual building/space managers, operating without clear accountability, reference to a central standard, or any requirement to justify the constraints they apply. Nowhere is this lack of oversight more evident than in the approach to catering.

6.4 The Catering Barrier

The Catering Gap

Among clubs and societies that have food at their event, not one uses the university catering service and over half (52%) prefer to bring and prepare food themselves. The chart below shows the reasons given for not using university or union catering:



The interview evidence adds important context to these figures. One account described expenditure of approximately £14,000 in a single year on university catering to support a programme of community-building activity. These costs ultimately proved unsustainable, leading those involved to seek alternative arrangements externally. Attempts to negotiate a more affordable option were unsuccessful. This approach by the University does not seem accidental. Some space managers described being directed to university catering as an institutional instruction rather than a considered policy choice:

“Our hands are tied, really...the line that we are told is that it has to be university catering. There used to be more external caterers that could use, but increasingly we have to direct folk to catering initially...”

[Source: IR-03]

Beyond cost, some responses indicated the university catering service cannot guarantee clubs halal or kosher provision for their events. Clubs and societies requiring these options must go through a request process each time and are routinely told these requirements cannot be met.

“I don't think they can guarantee kosher or halal... they still have to go through the process each time of saying this is what we want to have, and then they agree that they can't do it.”

[Source: IR-09]

For faith communities with non-negotiable dietary requirements, the University catering offer is effectively unusable irrespective of cost. This is not a marginal issue of preference but a basic question of inclusion. The problem is further compounded by inconsistent and often restrictive rules on whether societies are permitted to provide their own food, leaving some groups with no viable way to cater for their members at all.

External Food: Inconsistent Rules Across Venues

The rules on bringing in external food into university and union spaces vary considerably by venue and are not always clearly communicated. The picture that emerges from the research is one of inconsistent policies, some of which have legitimate origins but have calcified into blanket restrictions that are applied without flexibility.

At one union venue, external food was banned following a health and safety incident at a cultural food fair event several years ago. This policy has remained in place since, without review of whether it is still proportionate or whether safeguards short of an outright ban could manage the same risk. When asked where a cultural society wishing to bring food from their own culture could be accommodated the response was that it was something that “could be looked at” but no current route existed, however they were open to considering new rules.

A second union venue has a more workable position, although it is not clearly published. External food is permitted provided the society:

- gives advance notice
- includes a disclaimer that the venue bears no liability
- supplies a basic risk assessment from the food provider

Section 8.1 demonstrates the practical outcomes of this approach. Each was managed through advance notice and a basic liability disclaimer rather than a blanket refusal. Notably this venue sits outside the university catering procurement framework, which

prevents it from delivering food across campus and may limit its visibility to societies that could benefit from its flexibility.

In some of the University's centrally managed buildings, a degree of informal flexibility exists. One local space manager described providing equipment to community groups and allowing them to bring their own food on the understanding that it was not an officially sanctioned arrangement. This kind of under-the-radar accommodation may benefit groups with an existing relationship with the building, but it is invisible to clubs and societies that do not have that contact.

It is clear from these findings that the catering picture across the estate is inconsistent and poorly communicated. Where workable solutions exist, they depend on individual goodwill rather than any coherent university policy.

6.5 The Information Barrier

On the surface, the survey data appears reassuring, with 84% of respondents rating booking rules and conditions as clear or very clear. In reality, this reflects a narrow and potentially misleading view. Societies can only judge the clarity of the routes they have already managed to find and use. It tells us nothing about the spaces that remain undiscovered, the processes that are opaque to newcomers, or the societies that have disengaged entirely after failing to navigate the system.

The remaining 16% who report that the rules are unclear or very unclear should not be dismissed as a small minority. They are more likely the visible edge of a wider issue, indicating underlying complexity and inconsistency that is not captured by headline figures.

As Section 4 sets out, the information needed to navigate the booking system is not published centrally or systematically shared. The consequence is not simply inconvenience for all the clubs and societies needing space, it is a structural advantage for societies with experienced leadership and existing contacts, and a structural disadvantage for those without.

A related but distinct problem is that societies often do not know what information a booking requires. The requirements tend to vary from venue to venue and are not published in any consistent format. The consequence is that initial enquiries tend to generate a sequence of follow-up exchanges as space managers work to establish basic logistical details that an experienced event organiser would supply at the outset. Interview participants noted that this back-and-forth is more pronounced with societies than with other users precisely because many are running events for the first time. The burden falls on both sides: on the society, whose booking remains unresolved while these exchanges continue and on the space manager whose time is absorbed by requests that could be resolved more efficiently if the information requirements were clear from the start.

Hidden Space

The locally managed spaces held by individual schools and departments are not listed in any central directory accessible to clubs and societies. A spreadsheet of these spaces exists and has been shared in some contexts, but it is not routinely available and is not systematically kept current. Therefore, clubs and societies who do not know that locally managed spaces exist, or that direct approaches are permitted, will never access them.

Two interview participants described how the system worked in practice:

"I would not know where to find this room owner list on the web page. I'd need to Google it. I'd find it, but it's not, I don't have it like bookmarked. I think most people don't quite know that is there and that they can reach out."

[Source IR-05]

"Do local space managers know where to send people when they don't know? I think that's an issue too."

[Source: IR-15]

7. Who Bears the Greatest Burden?

The barriers described in Section 6 are systemic, but they are not equally felt. For certain groups the combination of limited evening availability, opaque costs, unreviewed policies and information gaps converges into a pattern that goes beyond inconvenience. Four groups are examined below where the research evidence is clearest.

The common thread across all four groups is the same: that societies that bear the greatest burden tend to be those with the most specific operational requirements, the least institutional familiarity or both.

7.1 Disabled Students

The Scale of the Problem

One of the interview participants stated that there has been an approximate 400% increase in reported disability requirements in the preceding year. The physical accessibility of university buildings is a growing concern. Students with mobility-related requirements regularly encounter rooms that are technically bookable but practically inaccessible whether due to the absence of step-free routes, unreliable lifts or unsuitable room configurations.

One interview participant framed the impact on club and society participation directly:

"If you've had a terrible time trying to get into a teaching room for teaching, it probably reduces your whole engagement... do you even bother to join?"

[Source: IR-06]

Specific Issues

The following accessibility problems affecting participation were identified in the research:

- The Disabled Students' Society reports that members are regularly suggested rooms that are not accessible.
- Members who cannot attend evening events due to disability require daytime access, which is currently heavily restricted for society use.
- The Chaplaincy building ramp is steep and presents difficulties for wheelchair users and the nearby lift is unreliable.
- One union venue presents challenges for wheelchair users when it is busy. The high volume of people makes it a struggle.
- Accessibility information is not included in pre-booking communications, so clubs and societies cannot reliably anticipate whether an allocated room will be suitable for all members.

This intersection with the evening compression discussed in Section 6 is significant. Concentrating society activity in evening slots creates a structural disadvantage for students whose disability-related needs make evening attendance difficult or impossible. A system that routinely allocates inaccessible rooms to disabled students, without any mechanism to identify or correct the problem, could reasonably be seen as treating those students less favourably on the grounds of their disability. Whether or not that is the intention, the effect is difficult to distinguish from discriminatory practice.

"We have to have accessible rooms. For us it would be having access to JMS bookings during the day on weekdays because a lot of our members cannot attend in evenings due to their disability."

"Central timetabling will not budge on the 6pm rule... A lot of our members have PAs which are only funded during the day or are too sore or tired to come to events in the evening. We also can't book JMS before 6pm. There are such limited accessible spaces available that so many other societies just don't hold their events in accessible locations."

"Reach Out staff have repeatedly told us off for wedging open the door to allow our members to get in with their wheelchairs and mobility aids even though we told them this is why we need the door open. They were rude to us."

[Source: Survey, open-ended response]

7.2 Faith and Cultural Societies

Where Standard Provision Falls Short

Faith and cultural societies face a compounding of barriers that, taken individually, might each appear manageable. Taken together they amount to a system that has not been designed with these communities in mind and has not been reviewed to consider whether it is serving them fairly.

The most accessible university spaces prohibit food. Food is not incidental to faith and cultural events. For many, it is the event. The spaces that permit food are either commercially operated with no guaranteed availability, or capped at capacities too small for larger community gatherings. Evening slots are the most constrained across the estate, yet many religious observances are calendar-driven and cannot simply be moved to a more convenient time. And the booking system contains no mechanism to flag or address any of this.

Each of these barriers is a problem for any society. For faith and cultural societies, they arrive simultaneously, reinforcing each other and narrowing an already limited set of options. A Muslim society seeking space for a weekly Iftar during Ramadan needs an evening slot, a space that permits food, capacity for several hundred people and, where possible, the ability to bring food that meets dietary requirements. There is no single space on campus that meets all four conditions reliably. This is not a marginal edge case. It is a predictable and recurring need of a significant part of the student community, and the estate is not equipped to meet it.

The evidence in this section suggests this is not primarily a resource problem. Workable solutions have been found where individual managers have exercised flexibility. The SRC's Gilchrist space, the Sikh Society Langar at the QMU, the Chaplaincy's partnership with a local church - each demonstrates that the activities themselves are not the obstacle. The obstacle is the absence of a consistent, university-wide commitment to making space available for them.

Iftar During Ramadan

The clearest example of this is Iftar during Ramadan. For Muslim students, sharing evening meals during this period are a religious obligation. Student societies seeking space for weekly Iftar gatherings for several hundred people face significant practical obstacles. The three further spaces identified as best suited for large food-related events each have limitations.

- The GUU operates commercially and is frequently booked for other purposes
- The Adam Smith building atrium is available but lacks dedicated catering infrastructure
- The Wolfson atrium has its own access and use restrictions

One interview participant reflected on what this means for the students concerned:

“The fact that they try and do even one a week and are met with resistance is difficult to explain why that should be... we do recruit students from parts of the world where we know what their requirements will be, and yet when they arrive here, that experience is much less than they are being offered.”

[Source: IR-09]

Food & Catering

As discussed in Section 6.4 the food prohibition particularly in teaching spaces and spaces designated for society use, means the most accessible and widely available rooms on campus cannot be used for events involving food. For faith and cultural societies, where food is often central to the event rather than incidental to it, this removes the most obvious option from consideration entirely.

The spaces on campus where food-related events can be held are limited in number and each carries its own constraints. The SRC manages a small number of spaces where food is permitted, including the Gilchrist Postgraduate Club in the Main Building, but capacity at these venues does not exceed 40 at three of the spaces & 80 seated in the Gilchrist. The Wolfson atrium and the Adam Smith building atrium can accommodate larger gatherings but present their own access and infrastructure limitations. Union venues offer more flexibility on food but operate commercially and availability is not guaranteed. For a society wishing to host a communal meal for 200-300 people, the practical options are few.

For communities where dietary requirements are a matter of religious observance rather than preference, if there are consistency or cost barriers to halal or kosher provisions for club-led events, this means that the university catering offer is not a viable option at all, regardless of cost. Where flexibility has been exercised by individual venues, workable solutions have been found but this depends on the goodwill of individual managers rather than any consistent university wide approach. The activities themselves are not the issue. The lack of a consistent policy is.

Case Study: The Sikh Society and the Langar event

In December 2024, the Sikh Society approached the SRC seeking support for a Langar - a large-scale communal meal event rooted in Sikh tradition. The society had guidance from its national chapter, appropriately trained volunteers and a safe food preparation arrangement in place. What followed was a referral chain involving six separate teams over several months with no single team taking responsibility.

CTT told the society the event did not classify as something it could support and marked the request as resolved. As the SRC Clubs and Societies Engagement Coordinator noted: *"Resolved does not mean booked."* The ARC declined use of St. Mungo Square, citing construction noise, and directed the society to External Relations. Facilities directed the SRC to Car Parking, who refused and referred back to Conferencing. A further contact was told the matter would need to go to the Senior Management Group.

The event was eventually resolved when the SRC personally contacted the QMU's operations manager and secured a booking. Over 300 students attended and the university promoted the event on its own social media.

As the Clubs and Societies Engagement Coordinator reflected: *"What was disheartening is how complicated the process was for something that was so beneficial for students to happen."*

The case illustrates several failures in combination: CTT closing requests without offering a workable alternative, local space managers referring societies onward without knowing where they should go, and no coordinated route for events that fall outside standard booking categories. The event happened because an SRC staff member personally navigated the process. Without that intervention, it would not have taken place.

Prayer & Reflection Space

For faith societies, barriers to access are not always generated by the booking system itself. The prayer and reflection space near the Chaplaincy is one of the very few spaces on campus with the washing facilities required for ritual ablution yet building security arrangements mean this space is inaccessible in the evenings when many faith-related observances are scheduled. The operational decision to restrict access appears to have been made without thought to its impact on Muslim students. Equitable access for faith societies depends not only on how booking space is allocated but on how operational decisions across the university are made.

Case Study: The Saudi Society

In early 2026 the SRC piloted a new bookable space for societies in the Fraser Building kitchen area. The first weeks of this pilot exposed a series of coordination failures. Facilities staff did not initially have access to the booking calendar and were unaware of when the space was in use. After calendar access was arranged, staff continued to enter the space while events were taking place.

The most significant incident involved a booking by the Saudi Society for an Iftar event. During the event, a male Facilities staff member entered the space as part of his standard patrol. The event involved women removing their hijabs. A Facilities duty manager subsequently wrote to the SRC raising concerns under the Equality Act 2010, stating that this female-only provision potentially contradicted equality principles.

“... guided by the Equality Act 2010, the Equality and Diversity Unit implements policies tackling discrimination based on protected characteristics such as race, disability, and gender, while actively working towards becoming an anti-racist institution. In my opinion, segregation based on sex should not be applicable and appears to be contradictory to the principles outlined in the above Act.”

[University Facilities Duty Manager]

This is factually incorrect. The Equality Act explicitly permits single-sex provision where there is a legitimate aim and the measure is proportionate. Single sex spaces for reasons of privacy and religious observance are a well-established example of lawful provision.

Following a Persian Society Nowruz celebration, the Facilities team contacted the SRC to express concern that the club put some directional posters up and accessed the wrong floor space. They further expressed concern that it could be booked for “highly unsuitable purposes”:

“The spaces are open to ‘events,’ but there is no clarification around what this does/does not allow. This could lead to the venue being booked for highly unsuitable purposes, and we wouldn’t know about this until the group turns up.”

[University Facilities staff]

In the absence of a clear and consistently applied university-wide framework, significant discretion is left to individual facilities teams. In practice, this can create an environment in which events perceived as unfamiliar or outside standard operational norms attract disproportionate scrutiny and intervention. This appears to arise from a combination of factors, including limited staffing capacity or resource pressures that make non-routine activity more difficult to accommodate, operational culture, and uncertainty around responsibilities.

The consequence is not usually formal refusal on paper, but something more difficult to evidence and challenge: a pattern of heightened monitoring, excessive caution, and operational friction that can make spaces feel conditional or practically unworkable for some groups.

7.3 Specialist and Performance Societies

When there is no suitable space

For societies that rely on specialist spaces, the issue is not simply a shortage of rooms but a lack of any viable alternatives. A large musical ensemble cannot rehearse in a seminar room, just as a dance society cannot operate in a tiered lecture theatre. In these cases, the absence of an appropriate space does not result in a compromised session — it prevents meaningful activity altogether.

In addition, one interviewee commented on some staff changes that have made things more difficult:

"For music, they used to have a staff member up until about two or three years ago who could support them with bookings. They don't have that staff member so they're being asked to manage these things on their own for the first time. That's why they're getting rejected for a lot of their stuff."

[Source: IR-15]

Music Societies

Around ten societies draw on spaces in the School of Culture and Creative Arts for rehearsals and performance preparation. An ongoing ceiling safety project at University Gardens has removed several of these spaces from society use. Two of the three most used rooms are currently unavailable. Consequently, societies have been redirected to centrally managed spaces that lack the acoustic properties and equipment their activities require.

Survey respondents from music societies described the impact:

"We have been forced to take the money that in previous years we would have donated to music charities and use it to hire a space almost a mile from campus and a van to move all of the equipment we need. Without the Music Club, it is likely I would not have applied at all."

"We are told we cannot use a space, only to see it sitting empty as we struggle to move our equipment off-campus to a venue less suitable and more expensive. When we do get to use a space, we are hit with staggering fees which we barely make back with ticket sales. We are constantly made to feel by this fight like what we do does not matter, leaving us feeling disheartened, disappointed and desperate for something to change."

[Source: Survey, open-ended response]

Case Study: The Kelvin Ensemble

The Kelvin Ensemble is a student orchestra of around 90 players. Each year it holds two concert weekends in Bute Hall, covering Friday set up, a Saturday concert and a Sunday afternoon performance. Ticket income is the society's main source of funding.

The concert manager first requested dates for the November 2024 weekend in April 2024. Each exchange with Central Timetabling (CTT) opened a new Ivanti helpdesk ticket. There was no continuous thread, and context had to be repeated with every reply. By October 2024, Sunday dates for both the Autumn and Spring weekends had been refused. The reason given for the refusal was that due to a Monday morning teaching class Facilities could not reset the hall overnight. The society had offered to cover all janitorial overtime costs and to carry out the reset themselves. Both offers had been accepted in previous years. **What had changed was the staffing contract.** Sunday resets incur double time costs under the current model and there are no part-time evening or weekend contracted staff available to deploy. The offer to cover overtime costs could not resolve a contractual constraint the society had no way of knowing now exists. No alternative venue capable of accommodating a 90-piece orchestra with an organ could be identified.

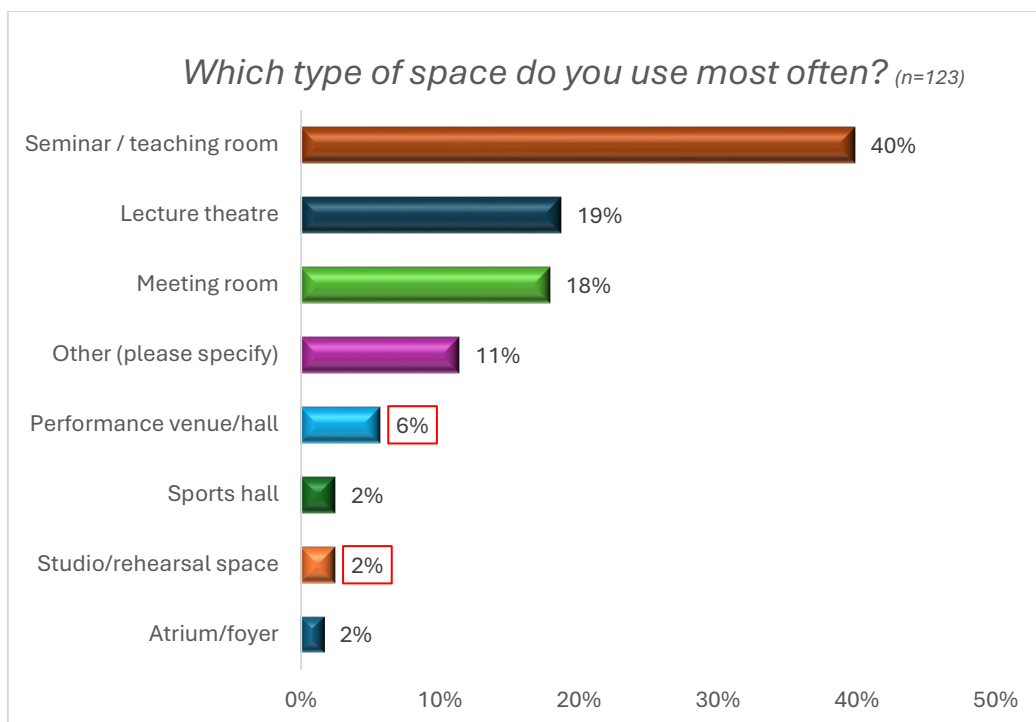
The society escalated to the SRC. A meeting was arranged involving CTT, Facilities, Music in the University and the SRC. The outcome was a partial solution: Saturday-only concerts compressing two performances into a single day. The Sunday bookings remain unresolved.

This case study illustrates several failures in combination: no joined up working between CTT and Facilities, a refusal based on staffing uncertainty rather than actual unavailability and no mechanism to offer a workable alternative. The society's financial position was directly at risk throughout the process on establishing availability and costs.

Drama, Dance and Arts Societies

The performing arts presents a distinct set of problems, where the barrier is not just the availability of space but its fitness for purpose and conditions attached to its use:

- Theatre spaces require a qualified technician to be present but there appears to be only one technician available – and so access depends on that individual's working hours
- Dance societies needing flat, unobstructed floor space find that most teaching rooms contain fixed or tiered furniture
- 20% of societies that went off-campus cited instrument or equipment transport as an added burden.



As can be seen from the chart only 8% use studio/rehearsal space or a performance venue. However, although these figures are low this only shows when societies have used this space rather than low demand. It would appear that many societies with specialist needs have already found other ways to operate, often at a greater cost and inconvenience. None of this is recorded in the booking system.

7.4 New and Less-Established Societies

How the System Advantages Established Societies

The booking system at Glasgow University works better for clubs and societies that have used it before. This is not a deliberate design choice, but it is the predictable result of a system that is built around 'who you know' and familiarity. Several structural features of the system contribute to this:

- Block bookings which are the most reliable route to regular space are based on prior booking history. A society in its first semester has none and competes for what is left after established societies confirm their slots.
- The knowledge needed to navigate the system effectively is passed informally between successive office-bearers of the club or society.
- Deposit requirements and minimum spend at union venues assume a large membership and attendance that most new clubs and societies may not yet have attained
- Email-based booking systems require fluency and confidence in written communication, which can present additional barriers for international students.

The barrier for international students is not always one of language or confidence. An interviewee described it in terms of basic unfamiliarity with the concept of a student union itself:

"When I came here as an international student, I didn't go into either of those unions. Not necessarily because I didn't feel welcome, but I just didn't really understand because I didn't come from a university setting that had student unions like that. I didn't understand what they were and why they were available to me. I think that would be a barrier for a lot of students - just the basic understanding that these spaces are for you to use."

[Source: IR-15]

Withdrawal From the System

During the research, we found a society that failed to achieve formal sports club recognition. This meant they were excluded from booking any university sports hall, leaving them confined to a gymnasium that was too small for its activity. Another society described its experience with booking at one of the main union venues:

"We have only had endless nightmares with the Union so have given up...This has created a lot of problems for us as bake sales are one of our main sources of fundraising. We also have no money for any additional costs as most of what we raise goes to charity..."

[Source: Open-ended survey response]

The rational decision from a society's point of view is just to stop trying. Repeated failure is demoralising and there is no mechanism through which their continued effort is rewarded. The society simply drops out of the picture, and no complaint / refusal is logged anywhere.

One interviewee described the cumulative effect in direct terms:

"It can't be a matter of these societies having long-standing affiliation and therefore always getting the benefits and the first preference versus the newer societies coming in. For a lot of the international cultural clubs, they don't know how to navigate those spaces, and they don't know how to navigate these varying processes."

[Source: IR-15]

The Longer Term

If the barriers to getting established are consistently higher for new and less well-connected clubs and societies, the groups that survive over time will tend to be those that were already well-established with established networks. Over time this means that the range of communities and interests represented in student life narrows gradually as a result.

The university's commitment to inclusion and belonging is most at risk of being undermined at exactly the point where the booking system should be supporting new communities to establish themselves. Reducing these structural barriers facing new societies is a practical step towards delivering on those commitments.

8. Evidence of Effective Practice

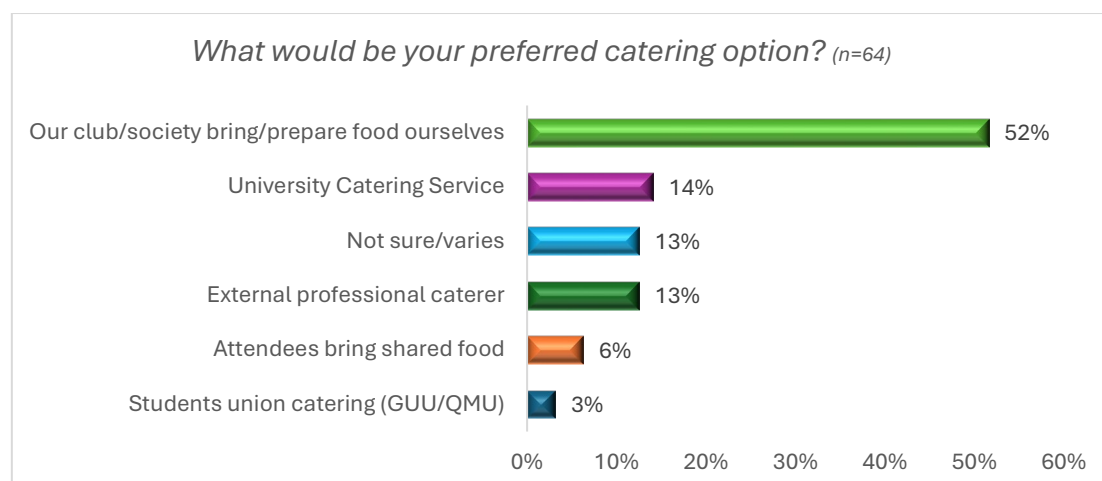
During the study, the research found no clearly well-functioning booking system across the University. What it did find was pockets of effective practice. For example, in how individual venues approach food, access, navigation and the process itself. These isolated examples are worth examining for what they demonstrate and what they reveal about the wider system. The survey finding that 70% of clubs and societies rate current access as easy / very easy shows that the booking system is not broken for everyone.

8.1 A Venue Designed for Its Users

The clearest example of effective practice in the research is a set of deliberate decisions made by one union venue. On identifying that around 10% of its student population were of Asian descent and that neither its food offer nor its events programme reflected this, the venue brought an Asian fusion restaurant on site, employed a staff member to translate event content into Mandarin and promote it through Chinese social media, and built a programme of cultural events directed at international students. The venue manager described the resulting international student engagement as unusual among student unions nationally.

What distinguishes this example from others detailed in this section is that it did not rely on individual discretion. A policy decision was made, implemented and holds regardless of staff changes.

The same venue runs a flexible food policy. Societies can bring or arrange their own food on advance notice with a basic liability disclaimer. This has accommodated a restaurant delivery for a Chinese student's association, a potluck for a Jewish society when kosher provisions could not be sourced through university catering, and a cooking session in the venue kitchen for a Palestinian student's group. The liability concern underpinning blanket food bans elsewhere is addressed by the disclaimer, not by prohibition.



The survey asked societies about their preferred catering option. More than half (52%) said they would prefer to bring or prepare food themselves and a further 6% favoured attendees bringing shared food. Only 14% preferred the university catering service. The approach this venue has taken by allowing self-catering with prior notice along with a simple liability waiver is what the majority of societies would choose if permitted. So, the barrier here is not preference. The policy is.

The SRC operates a comparable approach across its own bookable spaces. Societies can bring or arrange food subject to allergen information being provided, a no-homemade-food requirement for health and safety reasons, and clear-up responsibility placed on the society rather than on SRC staff. For newer food formats, such as Iftar events, SRC staff attended the first few bookings to oversee clean-up before confirming the arrangement worked. In three years of operation, the policy has generated two minor incidents, both relating to room reset rather than food. The approach demonstrates that a workable food policy does not require prohibition, it requires clear conditions and placed responsibility.

8.2 A Framework That Prioritises Need

The Byres Community Hub gives access to groups with no budget and to activities that bring underserved or marginalised groups into the university. This is not an informal commitment as it is written into its booking conditions that are publicly available on the Hub's website and applied consistently to every request.

The conditions prioritise in sequence certain groups from societies with no funding who have nowhere else to go to not-for-profit groups running events that are free to attend. Around 1,000 confirmed bookings were processed in the most recent year, and the volume is handled through a clear process.

What this produces in practice is shown through individual cases. For example, the Byres Road Community Hub supports people with lived experience of the criminal justice system. When they first came, they said they never expected to feel welcome in a university. That outcome is what such a booking framework is designed to deliver. However, the Hub does not regard Clubs and Societies as local community groups, so this space is not open to them.

8.3 Redirecting Societies

Some effective practice comes down to what happens when a request cannot be accommodated. One local space manager described redirecting societies to Central Timetabling or Conferencing and Events rather than simply declining them. A similar approach operates at one union venue, where guidance on room suitability is part of how requests are handled. The Music School takes a more structured approach where societies that booked music spaces the previous year are contacted each summer and invited to submit requests through a shared spreadsheet with decisions confirmed before the term begins.

The SRC also absorbs last-minute bookings when other venues fail, including cases where commercial events displaced confirmed society bookings at union venues. Societies in that position can approach the SRC front desk in person, and staff will attempt to find an alternative on the spot. This works when SRC space is available. It is entirely informal, depends on the capacity of a small team at any given moment, and is not visible to societies who do not already know it is an option. It is a further example of effective practice that functions despite the system rather than because of it.

None of this has required additional resource or policy change. It has required only a consistent expectation of what the role involves. That expectation is not currently shared across the estate. As detailed in Section 4.4, at present three-quarters of clubs and societies check availability by submitting a request and waiting for a response and only 4% can consult a live system.

8.4 Using External Venues to Fill Gaps

Unable to meet the needs of faith communities fully on campus, the Chaplaincy developed a working relationship with a local church providing space for Friday prayers and weekly bagel lunches for international students, funded by the university. This does not resolve the underlying gap in on campus provision and should not be seen as a substitute for it, but it demonstrates that workable solutions exist where there is a will to find them.

8.5 The Problem with Informal Agreements

The SRC has a good framework for their room bookings as does The Byres Community Hub. However, nothing else detailed in this chapter is written down as policy, applied consistently across the university or visible to societies in advance. Whether a society has a good experience depends largely on which building it approaches and who handles the request. New societies, international students and groups without existing contacts are least likely to know how to navigate the system and least likely to benefit from the flexibility that more established societies access as routine.

Effective practice is also not written down anywhere. There is no post-event feedback form for clubs and societies to fill in, so the venue cannot learn from such feedback.

In reality the 70% who find access easy are real and so are the 30% who do not. The difference between them is in a large part a matter of which building they approach and who answers.

9. In Their Own Words: What Societies Say Needs to Change

Within the survey the research asked an open-ended question which invited clubs and societies to name the single change that would most improve the booking process for them. One point was clear and raised by many – visibility of what is available before a request is submitted. This was raised in some form or another by around a third of respondents, across venue types, society sizes and levels of experience with the system.

The current model in which societies submit a request and wait stops planning. Several respondents described submitting multiple requests in sequence because they had no way to assess what was already booked:

“Our society often submits several bookings requests because we can’t see what times are free...”

[Source: Survey, Open-ended Response]

Others were direct about what they wanted:

“A live list of what rooms are available or be able to select from a list”

[Source: Survey, Open-ended Response]

A minority of clubs and societies referenced the study space feature of the UofG Life app which is in real time and consultable without involving a member of staff.

Closely related to this was a request for more control over room selection. Respondents described being allocated rooms rather than choosing them and wanted as a minimum the ability to state a preference. The practical cost of the current approach was clear:

“The tech isn’t consistent across campus so sometimes we arrive to the space we have been assigned, and things don’t work how they’re supposed to, which negatively impacts everyone’s experience”

[Source: Survey, Open-ended Response]

Beyond visibility, the most common concerns were earlier access to university spaces, catering flexibility and clearer rules. On timing, several respondents cannot book before 6pm in university-controlled spaces; some identified 5pm as sufficient. On catering, requests ranged from external deliveries to potluck events to hot drinks. One respondent asked simply, *“let us have tea!”*. On policy the open-ended responses revealed that the issue was not only that the rules were unclear but that they can vary without explanation between buildings.

A smaller number raised more specific concerns such as the financial cost of venue hire for performances; the difficulty of securing accessible rooms for members who cannot attend in the evening due to disability; the semester boundary ‘reset’ that requires clubs and societies to re-book the same room twice a year, and restrictions on which club members are approved to make bookings.

Two responses went further. One, from a music society, describes a pattern of being told spaces are unavailable, then watching them sit empty while absorbing costs the society cannot reasonably sustain.

“We are constantly made to feel by this fight like what we do does not matter, leaving us feeling disheartened, disappointed and desperate for something to change”

[Source: Survey, Open-ended Response]

Another raised the prospect of de-affiliation as a more financially viable option than continuing to pay venue hire as a student performance group receiving no university funding:

“It would be more financially viable for us to de-affiliate from the university and continue as a community orchestra, as we cannot afford to pay the university £1,000 (minimum) a year to perform as students on our own campus”

[Source: Survey, Open-ended Response]

The recommendations that follow address both the process changes clubs and societies have identified as most urgent and the structural conditions that make them necessary.

10. Conclusions & Recommendations

The research set out to understand how clubs and societies access space at the University of Glasgow, what prevents equitable access and what practical changes could improve the system. What follows draws the findings together and sets out eight recommendations.

10.1 Conclusions

Access to space is not equitable, predictable, or needs-led

The current system does not allocate space based on suitability or need. It allocates space based on which booking route a society happens to know about, who manages a building, and what restrictions have accumulated locally over time. Societies that understand the system, have historic relationships, or can absorb compromise manage to operate. Others do not. This is not an equal-access system.

Disproportionate Scrutiny of Non-Standard Events:

Despite the regulatory environment, including the Prevent duty, and the forthcoming Martyn’s Law, there is no evidence that many of the operational difficulties described in this report arise from legal necessity. Instead, in the absence of a clear and consistently applied university-wide framework, significant discretion is left to individual facilities teams and managers. In practice, events perceived as unfamiliar, atypical, or outside standard operational norms can attract disproportionate scrutiny and intervention. Minor issues may be escalated, operational concerns magnified, and organisers left with the impression that their events are being treated as operational risks rather than ordinary student activity.

This reflects a combination of inconsistent operational culture, uncertainty around compliance expectations, and, in some cases, staffing or resource pressures that make

non-routine activity more difficult to accommodate. The result is rarely formal refusal, but something more difficult to challenge heightened monitoring, excessive caution, and operational friction that can make access feel conditional or practically unworkable for some groups.

“Resolved” bookings frequently conceal failure

The university’s booking processes record administrative completion, not practical success. Bookings that result in unsuitable rooms, prohibitive restrictions, late cancellations, or unaffordable costs are still counted as resolved. As a result, institutional data materially overstates how well the system is functioning and systematically under-records failure.

Availability pressure is structural and worsening

Evening access is essential to clubs and societies, yet this is the most constrained part of the timetable. Teaching encroachment, loss of Wednesday afternoon access, and the impending closure of the St. Andrews Building together represent a net reduction of already scarce provision. There is currently no confirmed replacement plan for specialist capacity that will be lost.

Policies have accumulated without oversight or justification

Many building-level rules governing food, room use, resets, and supervision exist without a clear rationale, published explanation, or review date. Restrictions introduced for isolated incidents continue indefinitely, even where proportionate alternatives are demonstrably workable elsewhere on campus. Decision-making power rests with individual gatekeepers without accountability to any central standard.

Cost is opaque and disproportionately harms smaller and newer societies

Societies are frequently exposed to significant charges only after a booking is confirmed or when a request is redirected to Events and Conferencing. This obscures risk at the point of decision-making and deters transparency. Non-drinking, faith-based, and newly established societies are disproportionately affected and least able to absorb unexpected costs.

Whole groups of students are systematically disadvantaged

Disabled students are routinely allocated spaces that are technically bookable but practically inaccessible, with no mechanism to prevent this at booking stage. Faith and cultural societies encounter a combination of evening constraints, food prohibitions, and catering provision that does not meet religious requirements. Specialist and performance societies face an absence of suitable space, not merely competition for it. New societies begin at a structural disadvantage that the system does nothing to mitigate.

Disengagement and exclusion are invisible in the data

The booking system captures only those societies that continue to submit requests. Societies that stop trying, move permanently off-campus, scale back activity, or

abandon events altogether are not recorded. The absence of complaints or bookings is therefore not evidence of success; it is evidence of a blind spot.

Student Union Provision

At present, both student unions operate under financial constraints that require them to recover costs through room hire charges, minimum bar spends, or related conditions. While understandable operationally, these arrangements can create a significant barrier for societies, particularly smaller groups, cultural or faith-based societies, and activities where alcohol-related spending is inappropriate or unrealistic.

Better practice already exists but is not scaled or embedded

Workable solutions already operate within parts of the estate, including flexible food policies, proactive annual planning, and booking frameworks that prioritise need. None of these require additional resource. All require institutional decisions that have not been taken.

10.2 Recommendations

The recommendations below follow directly from the evidence. Several require decisions rather than additional resource; others require coordination across functions that currently operate in silos. Taken together, they address systemic weaknesses that the University has allowed to persist.

1. Publish a single, authoritative directory of all spaces bookable by clubs and societies. At present, a significant proportion of bookable space, particularly that managed locally by Schools, is effectively invisible unless a society already knows it exists. This embeds a system in which access depends on prior knowledge and informal networks rather than equitable access.

A publicly available, searchable directory should cover all centrally and locally managed spaces and include capacity, costs, access conditions, food and drink policies, reset requirements, and booking contact details. It should be updated at least annually, with a clearly identified owner accountable for its accuracy.

This must not be treated as a one-off exercise. Without active maintenance and clear accountability, the directory will quickly lose credibility and revert to the current position. The SRC should have a formal mechanism to flag inaccuracies or omissions and require timely correction.

2. Establish a clear university-wide operational framework for student events in managed spaces. The University should develop and publish a clear operational framework governing how Facilities teams manage clubs and societies activity within university spaces. This should set out consistent expectations around risk assessment, event oversight, escalation thresholds, and the application of legal or regulatory duties, including Prevent and health and safety requirements.

The framework should be designed to reduce unnecessary inconsistency between buildings and minimise the extent to which operational decisions rely on local

interpretation or informal practice. It should also recognise that non-routine or culturally unfamiliar events are not inherently higher risk and should not be subject to disproportionate scrutiny without clear justification.

As part of this work, the University should review whether current staffing models and operational capacity are sufficient to support evening and non-standard student activity without creating avoidable operational friction for organisers.

The SRC should be involved in both the development and ongoing review of this framework.

3. Make availability visible before a request is submitted. Three quarters of clubs and societies currently discover whether a space is available only after submitting a request and waiting for a response. This is not a neutral inefficiency; it is a structural barrier to planning that disproportionately affects those without time, experience, or informal access routes.

The University already provides real-time visibility for study spaces via the UofG Life app. A comparable approach for bookable clubs and society spaces, even a basic live calendar, not necessarily online booking, would remove the need for speculative requests and reduce avoidable administrative churn. The absence of such visibility is a design failure, not a technical inevitability.

4. Audit restrictions on activity in booked spaces and remove those that cannot be justified. Restrictions on what societies can do in booked spaces have accumulated incrementally over time, often in response to isolated incidents and without subsequent review. In many cases, those applying the restrictions cannot identify their origin or rationale.

This is not a defensible position. A systematic review should require that any restriction has a clear, current, and demonstrable justification. Where it does not, it should be removed. Findings should be published and incorporated into the directory outlined in Recommendation 1. Without this, the University is maintaining control without accountability.

5. Plan explicitly for the closure of the St Andrews Building. The St Andrews Building is one of the few spaces that provides both specialist and evening capacity for clubs and societies. Its closure will remove provision that is not easily replaced.

The University should confirm, in advance of closure, exactly what capacity will be lost and what provision will replace it. This should include a clear transition plan with identified spaces, clear timelines, and any interim arrangements.

This is time critical. The SRC should secure this commitment now. Once the building has closed, the University's leverage to identify and allocate suitable replacement provision will be significantly reduced. At that point, the risk is not theoretical. It is that specialist activity simply ceases.

6. Revise the catering policy to permit clubs and societies to provide their own food.

Not one society with food provision at its events uses university catering. The service is frequently unaffordable, and cannot always meet key dietary requirements, including halal and kosher, for club events. Nor is it able to provide food at a cost that societies can afford. The approach already working at the SRC and one union venue (advance notice; liability disclaimer; risk assessment) manages this without a blanket ban.

These existing models already in operation demonstrate that allowing external or self-catered provision, supported by proportionate controls, can be managed safely. The current approach therefore represents a restriction that appears ineffective and disproportionate. Maintaining it in its current form prioritises administrative control over inclusion and affordability.

7. Conduct an equalities audit of space provision for disabled students and faith communities. The evidence in Section 7 identifies specific, named failures affecting both groups that go beyond general accessibility concerns. These are not isolated issues but again indicators of systemic gaps in provision and decision-making.

An audit should examine both booking processes and operational practice, with findings formally reported to the SRC and accompanied by clear actions and accountability.

Failure to address these risks embedding structural disadvantage within core student provision.

8. Establish a joint governance group to oversee access to space. The persistence of the issues identified in this report reflects a simple fact: there is currently no single point of ownership or accountability. Problems arise repeatedly because there is nowhere, they consistently land. A joint governance group comprising Estates, Central Timetabling, the SRC, and the student unions should meet regularly with a standing agenda item on access to space. It should monitor delivery of these recommendations, provide a formal escalation route, and receive annual reporting on booking patterns alongside user experience data. This group should be co-chaired by the SRC and University to ensure an effective partnership approach in maximising student access over operational convenience.

9. Involve clubs and societies in the design and review of the booking system. The students who use the system are best placed to identify where it fails. No mechanism currently exists for their experience to feed systematically into how the system operates or how policies are reviewed. The joint governance group proposed in Recommendation 7 should include society representation, not only institutional stakeholders. In addition, an annual survey of clubs and societies' experience with space access which is separate from the broader clubs and societies survey should be undertaken, with findings reported to the governance group and published. This creates a feedback loop that is currently entirely absent. Without this, the system will continue to be shaped by institutional assumptions rather than actual use.

10. Financially support Student Unions in providing space for Clubs and Societies: The University should establish a dedicated funding arrangement, administered either

directly or in partnership with the SRC and student unions, to reduce the financial barriers associated with access to union-managed space for clubs and societies. This would allow unions to reduce or remove charges and minimum spend requirements for recognised student groups, improving equitable access to suitable social and event space across the campus.

This should be recognised as part of the wider infrastructure required to support student activity and community building, rather than as discretionary or commercial expenditure.

11. Closing position

Failure to act on these recommendations will not preserve the status quo. It will entrench a system that already delivers inequitable access, masks failure through process-based metrics, and risks the progressive loss of student-led activity where suitable space cannot be secured.