

**Motion Name:** Improve the Music Practice Rooms at the University

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***Background:***

This is the current situation –

There are three SU music practice rooms in the Richmond building

- Uncomfortably hot (under swimming pool)
- Windows don't open/ no windows
- Pianos out of tune
- Lack of useful chairs
- Not enough/ broken music stands
- Rooms are generally messy/ full of broken items
- Rooms are often booked for regular rehearsals, leaving very little time for personal practice.

Victoria Rooms music practice rooms are only for music students and there is no scope to change this.

***Purpose:***

- The number one question that the music society gets, particularly at the start of a new year, is people asking us where they can practice, ~90% of the Music Society is made up of non-musicians, so they can't use the Victoria rooms. Many people feel uncomfortable practicing at home or in halls, plus may not have the facilities they need to practice.
- Pianos are the biggest issue, because other than in some accommodations, the current practice rooms are the only ones available. For the very serious players we often have to recommend they hire a practice space externally.
- For many people music is a hugely important for relaxation, especially playing piano. Improving the music practice rooms would show the university's commitment to welfare by providing a space for any student to be able to play.
- At open day we had multiple people asking about practice rooms, for many of whom it was a make-or-break in their decision, so the situation is literally discouraging prospective students.
- From a society perspective, we need an official space for small chamber groups to practice, we are having to hire church spaces for our chamber network.
- Overall, the university advertises itself as a music performance institution (6th for music in the Guardian Rankings) but doesn't have the facilities to back it up. We have some of the highest level ensembles and orchestras in the city, yet don't give the members spaces to practice in. Especially as opposed to other comparable universities- Durham has 40+ practice rooms, available for anyone to use, each with a Steinway Grand Piano.

**Actions:**

The ideal outcome from this motion would be to allow the following actions

- The Union Affairs Officer, with support from other Full-time Officers, to work with the University to provide a solution that meets the our goals
- The Union Affairs Officer to work with relevant SU Staff to meet compromise/short-term changes as much as possible.

Below is listed a series of ideas and goals that could possibly be worked towards.

**Ideal Situation**

- Move the rooms: The music practice rooms will never be truly suitable under the swimming pools, the heat and humidity will always be there. Possible locations: Other parts of Richmond Building (ex-burst radio studio, small rooms up the back), Arts Complex, New Hawthorns redevelopment- more research needed.
- Create more rooms: three is simply not enough for the demand. Also sound proofing.
- Replace pianos: speak to music department about using their old pianos or strike up a deal with piano dealers or manufacturers, like Durham did.

Possibility of charging a practice room subscription fee (similar to other unis), which would cover maintenance costs.

**Compromise/ Short Term Changes**

As this process is likely to take a long time, here are some changes that can be made very quickly.

- Clean the music practice rooms, and chuck out broken gear
- Buy new stands, and have more in each room
- Likewise, get more suitable chairs
- Pianos: the best current solution would be to replace the pianos with electric pianos (one room has an electric already). The pianos are very out of tune, but even if they were re-tuned it wouldn't be long before they went out of tune in the humidity (although in the long term, it is definitely better to have acoustic pianos, people much prefer playing on them)
- Put fans/ ac in each room to help cool it down.
- Big Band says a better quality drum kit is needed and perhaps new amps.

Perhaps a locker system in the corridor so the rooms can be decluttered.