

UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

ROOM CHARGING - POLICY AND PRACTICAL APPLICATION, January 2006

Updated October 2006, paragraph B viii

This document is intended to:

- * describe the University's room charging mechanisms
- * explain how in detail these mechanisms operate in practice and within the IDM
- * set out the process through which Schools can seek the release of take-up of space/rooms

A) ROOM CHARGING MECHANISMS

The University's approach to room charging is broadly as follows:

- i) Schools are charged for space occupancy - i.e. for the occupation of office space (or other forms of space such as School-specific teaching labs).
- ii) Schools are also charged for the use of centrally bookable space - i.e. for rooms that can be used by all Schools, and that during the teaching times (i.e. Mon-Fri, 9am-6pm, term-time) are prioritised for academic usage.
- iii) Services are charged for space occupancy, with the costs of this occupancy included within the Professional Services Charge applied to all Schools; Services are not charged for usage of rooms that are centrally bookable.
- iv) Charges for space are also made by Hospitality Services to external clients for the booking of conferences and events.

B) ACTUAL PRACTICE AND FINANCIAL TREATMENT (*also see Management Accounting Handbook, via Finance Services website*)

- v) Schools are charged for occupancy of space on the basis of the category of space, and on the floor area (square meterage). Four types of space are categorised: shed, desk/seminar, serviced space and highly-serviced laboratory.
- vi) The calculation of space occupancy for budgeting is based on a December census date, with that data to be confirmed by Schools by 31 January (in the 2005/06 cycle). The data that drives budgeting will incorporate agreements on changes of use/occupancy (e.g. take-up or release of space - see D below) and with adjustments also made for known major changes that are planned to space use. I.e. the space data recorded mid-way through one year, incorporating known major changes to come, are the basis for charging for the next year.
- vii) For centrally-bookable space, charging is based on actual usage within year. Charges to Schools are driven by 'student-hours', and not by size of rooms. The timetabling and room booking processes administered centrally seek to make optimum use of centrally bookable space, and in certain limited cases will do so by allocating large spaces to relatively small activities. Therefore if a room for 20 is requested, but the only suitable room available is a room with a capacity of 100, then the charge for that event would be simply for 20 persons. However, where Schools explicitly require/demand the use of a room that is over-size (compared to student

numbers being taught), the charge will be based on the room size and not the student numbers.

viii) Charging is driven from the estimate of total space maintenance charges for that year, and the 'student-hour' price is fixed in advance. *For 2006/07, that price is £0.59 per student-hour.* The data used to apply these charges is that as stored in the teaching timetable, which does include ad-hoc bookings made in teaching time in centrally bookable teaching rooms. It is therefore in a School's best interests to make sure that if a room is not likely to be used that it is cancelled, and also to be as accurate as possible with planned person numbers for the event when requesting rooms. The charges to Schools are based on usage across the year, and whilst the December census data gives a reasonable guide, further ad-hoc bookings across the year will be added to generate the overall charge to each School.

ix) Services are not charged for using centrally-bookable space, to avoid the administrative burden of internal re-charging. It is the responsibility of the Timetabling / Rooms Bookings service to police the following: that Services are only permitted to use such facilities either (a) where it is clearly in the University's interests that they do so (e.g. for major events) or (b) where the University's academic timetable makes possible the use of centrally bookable space for non-academic meetings.

x) Committee/meeting rooms are classified as centrally bookable - but Schools/Services booking these facilities will not be charged individually for usage to avoid entering unduly expensive internal accounting arrangements (that would in any case require recharging within the PSC). The costs of maintaining these spaces is to be included in the overall centrally bookable space charge, attributed to Schools on the basis of rooms usage (excluding that for this particular set of rooms).

xi) Income does accrue from Hospitality Services making charges for space usage for conferences, events and so on. These charges are based for each room on what the market will pay. For income-attracting activities taking place using centrally-bookable facilities, the specific income that comes in through Hospitality Services for this space is directed, through planned surpluses in Hospitality Services, into the pan-University SDF. Where conferences/events are booked for areas that are paid for by individual Schools within their own space charge, the School 'owning' that space should receive the equivalent of the space charge made for that space within the IDM i.e. the School should receive an element of the cost by the client to Hospitality Services for the use of that space. This would be a matter for negotiation between the School and Hospitality Services. However, as part of those arrangements, there will be occasions when (e.g. visit of a senior politician/dignitary) that particular space would be required and used, but through which the University and therefore the School would not receive any direct income.

C) CHANGES AND CANCELLATION OF ROOM BOOKINGS

xii) Unwanted room bookings (or unwanted weeks of room bookings) should be cancelled by email, as soon as this is known. Only the unexpired portion (based on the email 'sent' date) of teaching room bookings may be expired. This system operates on a basis of trust - i.e. that all bookers acknowledge that to make bulk bookings and then cancel swathes of these at the last minute would cause major problems for fellow colleagues and Schools. The discretionary right is reserved to make a charge (to be approved by DVC Resources) for cancelled bookings should there be evidence that there has been deliberate breach of this principle of trust.

D) RELEASE AND TAKE-UP OF SPACE

xiii) It is vital for the success of Schools and of the University as a whole for space to be managed as efficiently as possible. The space charging mechanisms, since their application from 2004/05, have encouraged Schools to make the optimum use of space.

xiv) Schools are able to seek the release or the take-up of space, either seeking to release or to gain office space, to release a School owned-space into the centrally-bookable pool, or to request a take over of space previously designated as centrally-bookable*. It is stressed that Schools may *seek* this release/take-up, but the *authorisation* is a matter for the Director of Buildings and Estate only, with escalation to the DVC Resources where necessary. The Director/DVC will take advice from the Timetabling/Rooms Bookings offices. Directors of Buildings do not have the authority to make such decisions, but will often wish to have input to this process.

xv) The census date for space will be normally be December (9 December for 2005), with the process of agreeing release/take-up following in January - to be effective for the following academic and financial year.

* It should be noted that moving space from centrally-bookable to School-owned is only likely in the event that previous take-up from Schools other than the one wishing to take up that room's occupancy is zero or exceptionally low, and where demand is not be anticipated to increase within the planning horizon.

E) POTENTIAL CHANGES

xvi) It should be noted that development of rooms charging can be expected to continue, with PRARG responsible for this work. One important issue that PRARG will be addressing in its 2005/06 interim review of the IDM is any perverse financial incentive in the resource allocation system for Schools to seek to take over centrally-bookable space for School-only occupancy. With the implementation of a new service for AV-IT provision, one issue to be addressed is whether the centrally-bookable charge should vary depending on the type of facilities in a room (it might be that rooms get banded into premium, enhanced and basic categories). Schools/Services will be kept updated on any developments prior to implementation.

Timetabling and Roombookings
www.admin.ex.ac.uk/academic/timetable

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