

The Percival Guildhouse Survey (Jan/Feb 2021) – Report

Introduction

The Trustees and Staff at The Percival Guildhouse are immensely grateful for the extraordinary response we received from students (past and present) and tutors to the Survey we put out in January.

This has given us invaluable information and guidance, helping us now to start to shape our plans and priorities for the future. One thing that came through loud and clear is how deeply loyal and committed to the Guildhouse so many people feel - thank you.

Background

At the beginning of January 2021 it was apparent that, despite doing all we could to move tuition online, our total enrolments were over 50% down compared with the same time last year. Although many of our students had been enormously generous with donations it was also clear that the Guildhouse could not survive indefinitely on this basis.

Undoubtedly, much of the problem was due to the COVID epidemic however in order for us to plan for the future we really needed to understand how things were likely to play out once the COVID restrictions started to be lifted - for this reason we designed a questionnaire.

A total of 790 students and 25 tutors were invited (by email) to complete the survey. As at 17th February 2021 we had received 438 responses comprising 416 students and 22 tutors - a response rate of (53%) and (88%) respectively. For a survey of this type, this was a very encouraging result, indicating that our students are engaged, open to discussion and willing to help!

Results of The Survey

In some respects, the answers to the survey questions were unsurprising:

- Most students and tutors prefer face-to-face tuition.
- Zoom lessons don't work too well for practical subjects like handicrafts.
- Hybrid classes don't work very well for subjects like languages.
- Most students who were not currently attending a course cited the inability to socially interact at the Guildhouse (ie. because of lockdown) as being the main reason for not having re-enrolled last year.
- Most students and tutors, who were not currently doing a course at the moment, wanted to return to the Guildhouse as soon as it was safe to do so (if not for the Summer term then almost certainly for the Autumn term).
- A few thought the courses were too pricey but others found the courses reasonably priced or even suggested a price increase.

Other responses (in particular the free text comments) identified areas where there was scope for the Guildhouse to evolve, for example:

- Around 90% of students and tutors who did Zoom classes were generally content (in some cases actually *preferred*) to continue using Zoom until the classrooms re-opened - suggesting a possible ongoing demand for online courses after classroom lessons re-commence.
- A number of new course titles were suggested.
- Some thought that we needed to advertise much more, both locally and farther afield, and that the Guildhouse was not well enough known in Rugby.
- There were also a number of suggested schemes for making money, including: quizzes; board games; evening wine-tasting sessions; sponsorship from local businesses.

The Way Ahead

Most importantly, the feedback has been overwhelmingly supportive and has supplied a much-appreciated morale boost! The survey has also given us much food for thought and a host of potential projects to consider. Essentially these fall into 4 categories:

- **Marketing & Enrolment** – The website, social media, advertising, communication, methods of booking & payment, enrolment procedures, student & tutor recruitment.
- **Classroom Equipment & Training** – Broadband infrastructure, classroom equipment layout and procedures, training.
- **Money-making Ventures** – Evaluation and implementation of new money-making ideas.
- **Networking with the community** – maintaining and developing links and partnerships with local organisations/businesses/community groups, considering new community-inspired courses (eg. low-waste living) and continuing traditional activities to help keep the Guildhouse in the public eye (fairs, book sales, art exhibitions, etc.)

At the time of writing, the clear priority is to welcome back as many past students as possible and attract many new students to ensure our financial viability. We're working on that!

As well as more students, we need to bring on board new Trustees to help us run and develop the Guildhouse. Trustees, alongside volunteers, provide invaluable support to our permanent staff bringing with them the range of skills any successful organisation needs. Expect to hear more about this in the coming months!

In the meantime, we thank you all once again for your ongoing support and look forward to seeing our St Matthew's Street home return to its hustle and bustle in the near future.

Best wishes,

The Staff & Trustees