

REPORT ON 2019 FESTIVAL OF CREATIVE LEARNING

JENNIFER WILLIAMS AND JON TURNER,
INSTITUTE FOR ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

In May 2016 Senate Learning & Teaching Committee approved the launch of a new Festival of Creative Learning to secure the legacy of Innovative Learning Week¹. From AY16/17 onwards, this would include events and activities throughout the academic year, along with a curated week-long programme in February. This paper reports on the progress made to date with a focus on the curated programme of Festival of Creative Learning events in February 2019. Included throughout the paper are a selection of comments from event organisers.

The Festival team has implemented a regular strategy of evaluation and improvements following on from each Festival week. The Festival Pop-up programme, which allows staff and students to run Festival events throughout the year, continues to grow. We supported Festival organisers to open their events up to the general public in a more strategic way than in previous years, diversifying audiences and forging new connections within and beyond the University.

The focus on building a community of practice of staff and students keen to innovate and experiment with creative approaches to learning has, in line with our plans, continued in a voluntary and meaningful way, thus supporting innovation in teaching and learning more widely.



'I think the Festival gave us the chance of exploring different ways of teaching and exhibiting and allowed us to think of taking this knowledge further and deeper into experimental approach.' 2019 Festival Event Organiser, Postgraduate Student

¹ LTC 15/16 5E (<http://www.ed.ac.uk/files/atoms/files/agendapapers20160525.pdf>)

IMPROVEMENTS

Following on from the 2018 Festival of Creative Learning, the team identified a number of areas where improvements could be made to increase the efficacy of the administration and communications of the Festival and the diversity and robustness of Festival audiences.

We were keen to improve reporting by organisers on Festival event attendance, so made this information requisite with the penalty of funding being revoked if they did not supply it. This vastly increased our reporting numbers on these important statistics. We also required each organiser/event team to write and submit a blog about their event. This has resulted in a wonderful cornucopia of creative blogs which we now have to draw on for the rest of the year, meaning our blog content can be regular (weekly) and dynamic.

We worked on our processes with Timetabling, which continue to be complicated. We have implemented an annual review meeting where we initiate the first round of room booking together in person, and this has some advantages. This year we tried a more hands-off process following on from that, allowing the organisers to negotiate where necessary for their desired rooms directly with Timetabling, however this seemed to increase rather than decrease room booking issues for organisers, so we will revert in future to managing those negotiations from within the Festival team.

We had received feedback which suggested that people from outside the University are increasingly interested in the Festival, so we encouraged organisers to open up their events to the general public. More than 20 organisers did so this year, and in order to support the booking process as the University Event Booking System does not properly support bookings by externals, we created an umbrella Festival of Creative Learning Eventbrite Booking Platform to which organisers had access. This was a great success and we will continue to do this in future, at least until we have an internal booking system that can accommodate booking by externals.

We partnered with ASCUS, Talbot Rice Gallery and the Dialogues Festival this year, which diversified our audiences and offerings as a Festival without taking a significant toll on our resources. We also worked with Careers Service to support their first 'Students As Change Agents' week, and with the Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas (CODI) and Edinburgh Futures Institute to provide a celebratory and entertaining closing event for the Festival that featured CODI performers sharing their research in amusing and creative ways.



'The Festival of Creative Learning is a great initiative for our university to be able to gather everyone from so many diverse backgrounds/disciplines and come together to create new ideas. In terms of the organisational process, we found it very user-friendly and easy to operate. The pre-event mixer and the end of festival party was also helpful and fun. Although during the time of our workshop event, we encountered a huge last minute drop out on the day and we feel perhaps this is something that can be addressed further next time for other organisers as well.' 2019 Festival Event Organiser, Postgraduate Student

As usual, one of our biggest complaints from organisers is the drop off from booking numbers to attendance numbers. This year we encouraged organisers to overbook (to a manageable extent) and to offer their waitlists a 'show up and see' policy, via which interested people without a booking could show up before the event and be offered a place if one was available. For the people who used these strategies, there seemed to be an improvement in attendance. Drop off from booking to attendance, sadly, continues to be an issue that we will likely encounter every year.

Following on from the 2019 Festival, we have again audited our procedures and reviewed our organiser survey results. We are in the process of outlining a number of improvements which we will implement in AY2019/20. We see this as an ongoing process as the Festival continues to innovate and develop over time.



'I was particularly proud of being able to build an advertising campaign for the event from the ground up. I learned how to liaise with a variety of organisations and how to engage with attendees in a profitable manner, adjusting my strategies to my audience.' 2019 Festival Event Organiser, Professional Staff

STATISTICS

In an attempt to improve our statistics collection and reporting, we have chosen to focus on more rigorous gathering, interpretation and representation of data. This has resulted in statistics that do not match up perfectly with data from the previous years, and we suggest that it is worth starting fresh with these new mechanisms in order to have the most useful data reporting going forward.

Though the total number of curated week event occurrences in AY2018/19 (113) is slightly lower than in AY2017/18 (133), the total number of Pop-up event occurrences is higher in AY2018/19 (48) than in AY2017/18 (16). We believe an increased interest in running Pop-up events at different times of year than the February week is responsible for this shift (total event occurrences AY2017/18: 149, total event occurrences AY2018/19: 161).

Below please find the new statistics and graphs, followed by the previous 2017/2018 data.



'The support from the Festival was incredible and everything they shared with us was so useful. Particularly, the documents available online for support are such precious guides to take you through the different aspects and steps of organising.' 2019 Festival Event Organiser, Postgraduate Student

OVERVIEW STATISTICS 2019 FESTIVAL OF CREATIVE LEARNING

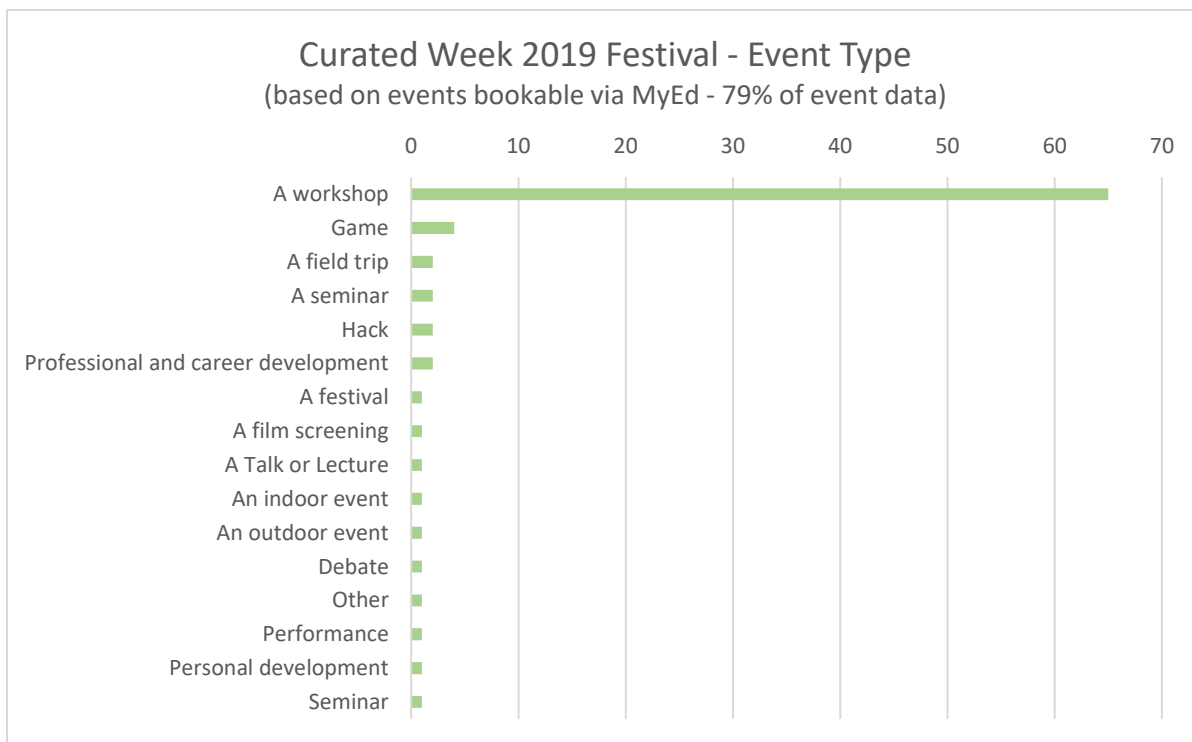
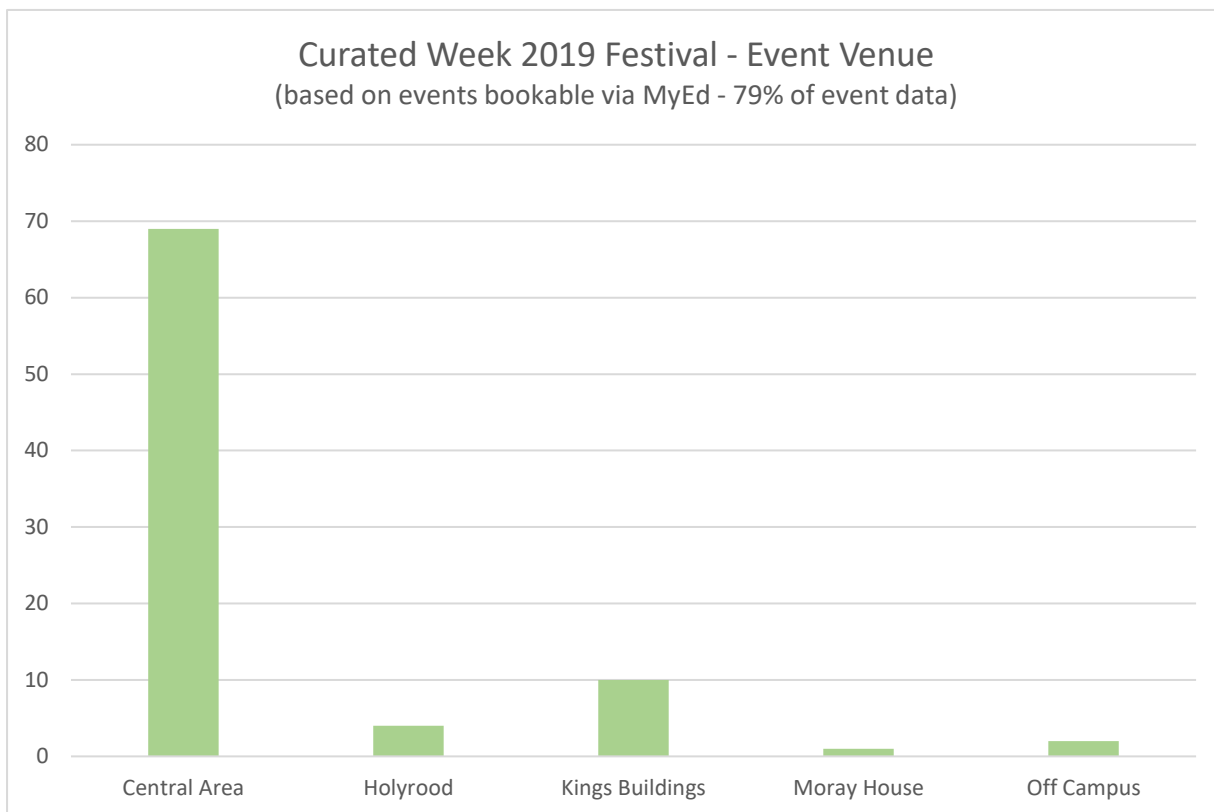
Events (AY18/19)	
Total number of Curated Festival events: internal and external	86
Total number of Curated Festival event occurrences: internal and external	119
Total number of Curated Festival events: internal	39
Total number of Curated Festival event occurrences: internal	51
Total number of Curated Festival events: external	47
Total number of Curated Festival event occurrences: external	68
Total number of Pop-up events: internal and external	26
Total number of Pop-up event occurrences: internal and external	48
Total number of Pop-up events: internal	4
Total number of Pop-up event occurrences: internal	4
Total number of Pop-up events: external	22
Total number of Pop-up event occurrences: external	44

The following stats treat the Dialogues Festival as one event, rather than 11 separate events.

Tickets	
Tickets available over whole Festival*	3993 (based on 94.06% of data)
Tickets booked over whole Festival	1993 (based on 91.09% of data)
Tickets booked (before cancellations) over whole Festival	2820 (bookings made plus cancellations)
Cancellations made over whole Festival	827 (based on 79.21% of data)
Attendance over whole Festival	2039 (based on 94.06% of data)
No shows over whole Festival	812 (based on 86.14% of data)

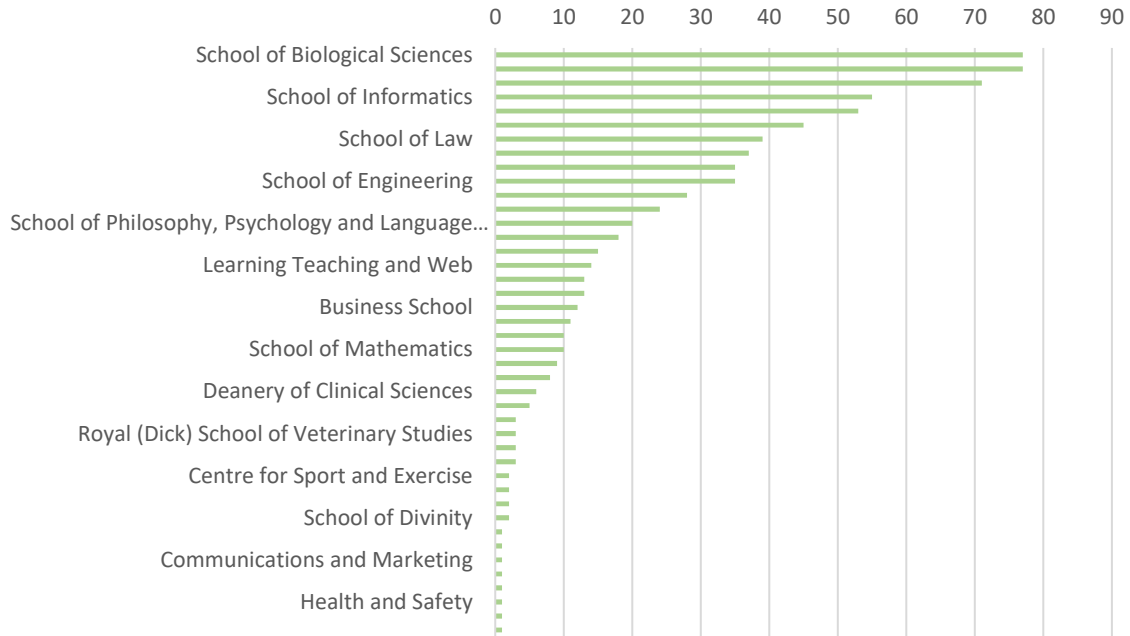
**This number is also determined by venue size and may not be an accurate representation of the realistic demand for events. This number also does not include tickets which were available as part of Dialogues Festival.*

2019 FESTIVAL STATISTICS REPRESENTED GRAPHICALLY



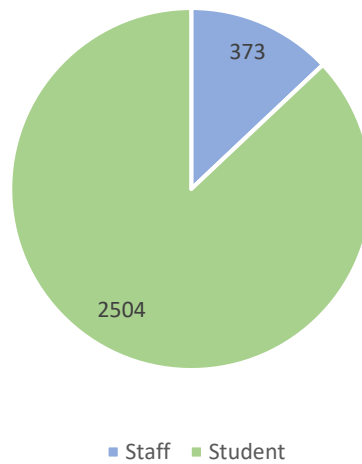
Curated Week 2019 Festival - Breakdown of Organisational Unit

(based on 41% of data available via PowerBI - data does not include those who booked and cancelled)



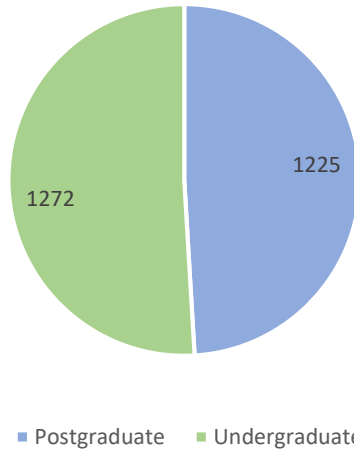
Curated Week 2019 Festival - Attendee Type

(based on events bookable via MyEd - 79% of event data. Includes those who subsequently cancelled.)



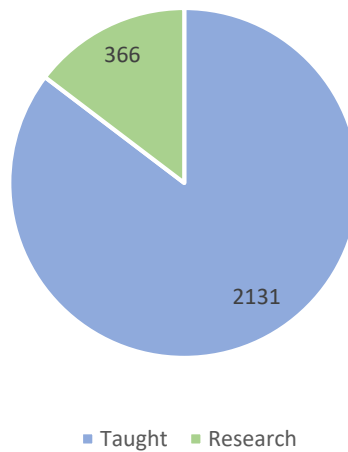
Curated Week 2019 Festival Student Booking - Level of Study

(based on events bookable via MyEd - 79% of event data. Includes those who subsequently cancelled.)

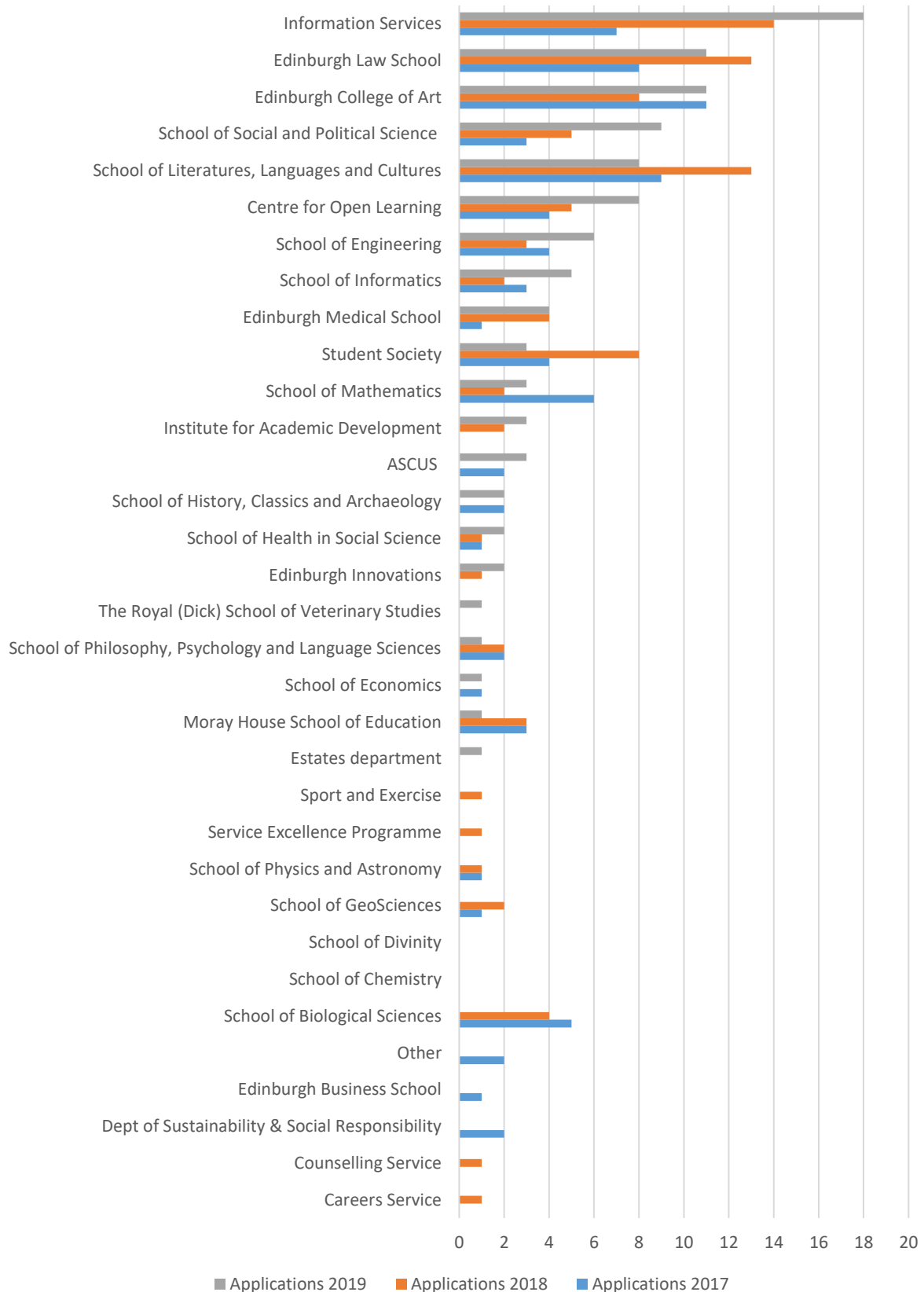


Curated Week 2019 Festival Postgraduate Booking - Type of Study

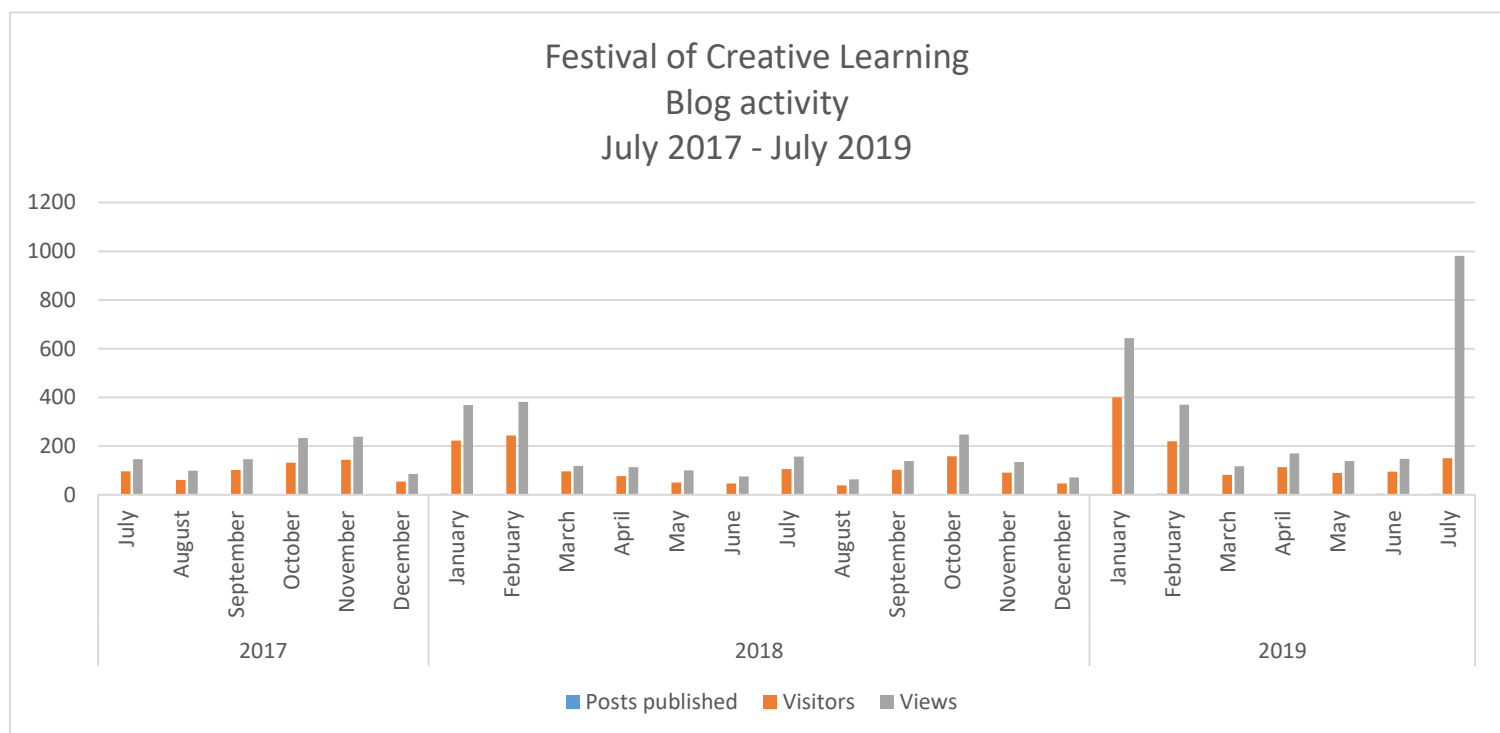
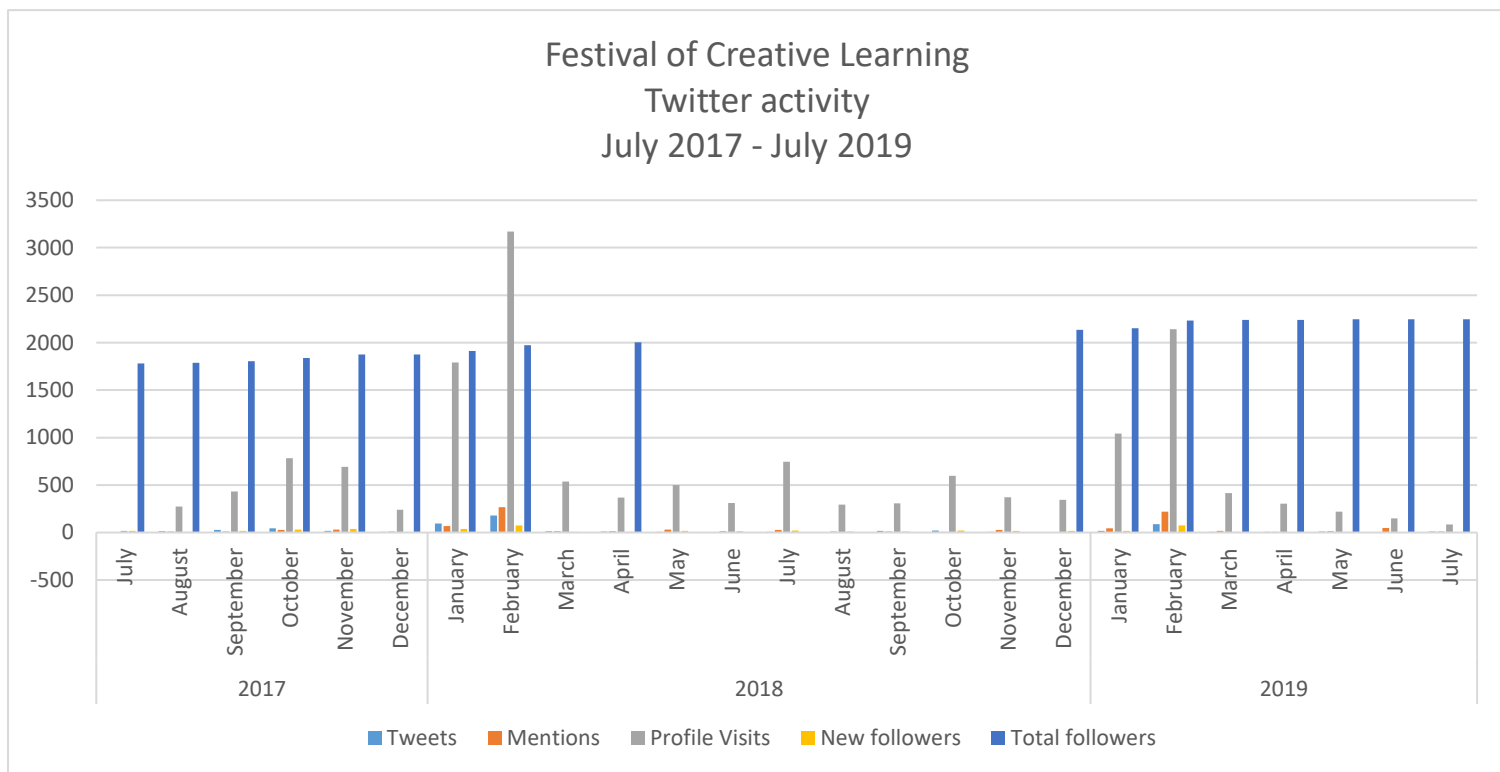
(based on events bookable via MyEd - 79% of event data. Includes those who subsequently cancelled.)



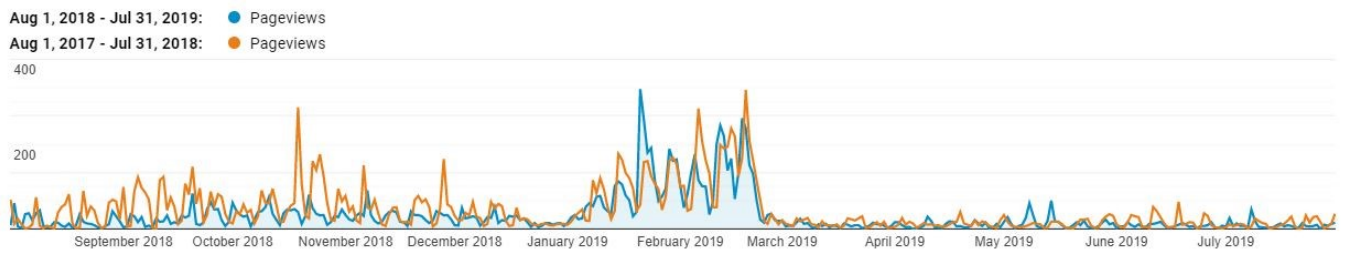
Number of Curated Week 2019 Festival event applications by organisation 2017-2019 (ordered by number of applications in 2019)



SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE STATISTICS

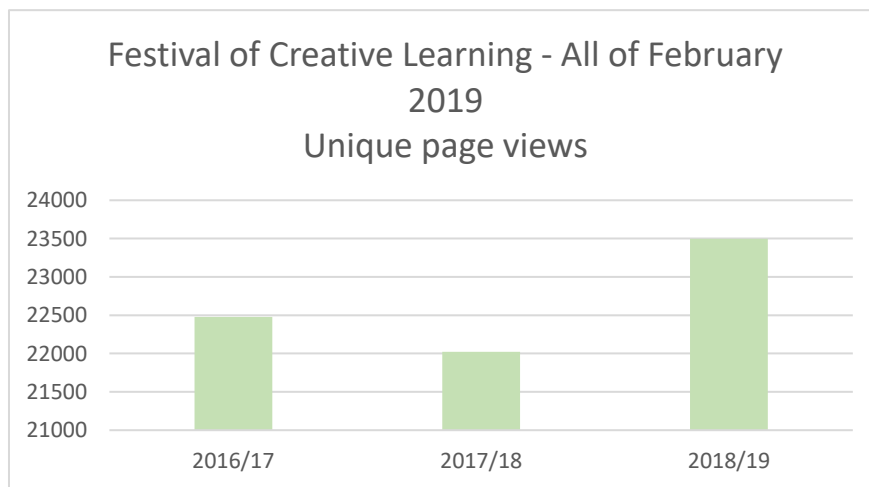


Total Pageviews Comparison 2017-2019

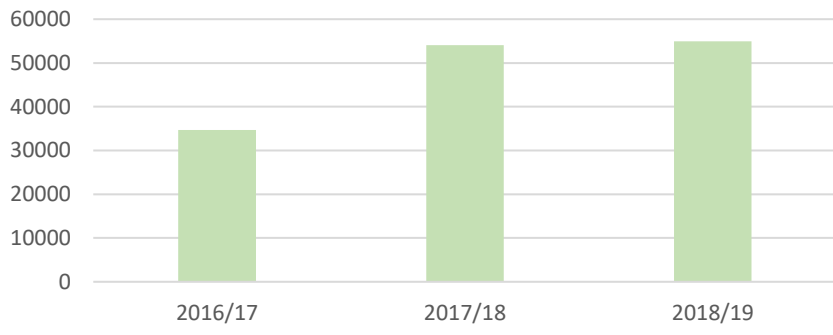


Website views (unique page views) increased from 16/17 to 17/18 (by 55%) and increased from 17/18 to 18/19 (by 1.7%). Total increase of unique page views from 2016/17 to 2018/19 of 58%.

	August 1st – July 31 st	Unique page views	Curated week date	February Page Views (1 st – 28 th)	February Unique Page Views (1 st – 28 th)
2016/17	46521	34712	20 - 24 Feb 2017	28904	22479
2017/18	73786	54051	19 - 23 Feb 2018	26848	22024
2018/19	57239	54969	18 - 22 Feb 2019	23880	23499



Festival of Creative Learning Website
August 2018 - July 2019
Unique page views



FESTIVAL STATISTICS (FEBRUARY 2017/FEBRUARY 2018)

Category	AY 2018	AY 2017
Events and Tickets		
Number of events	133	132
Number of events open to public	52	28
Number of tickets booked	3,000+	2,200+
Number of pop-up events per academic year	16 (to 1 June 2018)	7
Online and Social	Feb 14 – Mar 15, 2018	Feb 19- Mar 23, 2017
Tweets (Hashtracking)	1312	1007
Timeline Delivery (Hashtracking)	2,345,268	1,544,279
Reach (Hashtracking)	672,413	205,639
Website Avg Page Views (Google Analytics)	15,471	11,585
Blog		
Number of Blog visitors/views Jan – March 24 th	547/846 from 23 countries	438/712 from 17 countries
Number of Blog visitors/views February	244/382	203/344

FESTIVAL STORIES

Numbers only tell part of the story. We have made extensive use of social media and a range of blogging, photography and filmmaking to gather examples of Festival activities and the impact they have made. We also gather feedback from our organisers, and share it wherever we can, especially when it is as positive as the following story:

On a positive note, I want to share with you that the narrative portraits project that the FCL funded a couple of years ago has developed into something fantastic. I'm organising an art exhibition on the work of narrative portraits in collaboration with an artist and this has attracted the attention of Creative Scotland, which is going to fund the exhibition. Similarly, I've developed a professional relationship with one of the participants of the workshop I piloted at the FCL back in 2017, and we wrote an article together, which is currently under peer review with the International Journal of Social Research Methodology. That same workshop has now taken me to the University of Granada, where I delivered an extended version last week and I'm happy to say that students and senior academic staff found it useful. And finally, there's a possibility that this transforms into a book, as I'm now in conversations with one of the senior editors at Routledge and she's interested in the project. All these marvellous things are happening thanks to that trust that the FCL team deposited in me and the project. I thought it's important to share this with you because the work you do can make a real difference in people's careers. Thank you so much!

2019 (and previous) Festival Organiser, Academic Staff

You can view our website, peruse our photographs and watch our film showcasing the 2019 Festival of Creative Learning here:

www.festivalofcreativelearning.ed.ac.uk

You can read stories about our Festival here:

www.festivalofcreativelearning.wordpress.com



'I received great feedback on the game that I developed through this event. I am now going to take this forward: I have already submitted this game to be played and demonstrated at two national gaming conventions in Scotland, and also as part of an international gaming exhibition.' 2019 Festival Organiser, Postgraduate Student

ISSUES REPORTED BY ORGANISERS

The main difficulties reported by organisers had to do with a disappointing number of no shows in some cases compared to high levels of booking and waitlist numbers, as well as issues getting the space they needed to deliver their event.

We will continue to work on strategies to improve no show rates and are regularly in communication with Timetabling to improve the room booking process. As previously mentioned, we will revert to a more hands-on approach to negotiations for AY2019/20.



'I think that the Festival helped me to improve my organisational skills; planning and coordinating with people in different departments in the University proved to be the most difficult aspect of running the event.' 2019 Festival Event Organiser, Undergraduate Student

FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS: 2020 FESTIVAL OF CREATIVE LEARNING

We will continue to strengthen the Festival and raise its profile both within and beyond the University of Edinburgh. We will do this by sharing our positive stories and creating resources of use to staff and students who would like to explore creative learning, innovation, collaborative experiments, events management and more. Our branding, website and social media are major vehicles for this work. We will continue to improve the reputation of the Festival within the University by sharing our learning stories, having conversations with and listening to people across the University and responding to what they need in order to engage with and benefit from the Festival. This will include further development of our community of practise based on those who have had positive experiences of working with the Festival and attending Festival events.

We are exploring the possibility of adding more video resources to the Festival website, and are keen in future to find ways to make more Festival events available online to open our work to global audiences.

Due to financial and other issues, we have decided to pause the curated Festival week for AY2019/20, however will put more resource into the Festival Pop-up Programme which will continue to run. We actually view this as a positive experiment, in that if successful we may continue down this path and focus our resources and energy on running the Pop-up Programme each year, with its benefits of added flexibility and targeted scheduling.

We must also support experimentation in ways that mean more typical signposts of success are not our key measures (audience numbers, ticket sales, easy/short-term learning experiences). While we have events that display these successes, we want to make room for those which struggle, attempt the impossible, break new and difficult ground and take risks that might result in what some would call failure, but what we see as a vital component of real innovative learning. Our year-round programme of Pop-up events will continue to allow us to develop and expand the presence of the Festival in new ways. These ground-breaking events and projects will focus on research areas that will feed back into the development of the work of the IAD to improve the understanding and enjoyment of University life. Ongoing evaluation will allow us to continue to develop and innovate the Festival of Creative Learning.



'I think the Festival of Creative Learning is one of the coolest things in our University. Well done!' 2019 Festival Event Organiser, Academic Staff