

Bloomsbury Theatre and Studio

Bidding Guidelines 2024/25

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Introduction

Welcome to the Bloomsbury Theatre and Studio Bid Guidelines 2024-25! Are you thinking about bidding to put on a show in one of our theatres? If so, this document is for you – it details everything about how shows in the Bloomsbury Theatre and Studio work, how the bidding works, when the deadlines are, and how the decisions are made. If you are thinking of bidding for a show, please do read carefully!

We want all students to feel they can propose a Bloomsbury show, and we want the information around how the bidding works to be open and transparent. We hope this document will help you if you are thinking about bidding for a show in the Bloomsbury Theatre or Studio season for academic year 2024/25.

Before we start, what are the important deadlines I need to know?

The deadline dates are the most important thing! We have three bidding cycles. One for the **Bloomsbury Theatre** (for the whole year), which happens in March. And two separate cycles for the **Bloomsbury Studio** (one for each term) – bidding for the Studio happens in June (for Term 1) and November (for Term 2). Here are the deadlines and panel dates. We will remind you of these again on p. 10, and let you know when the opening dates are too. But these ones are the important ones!

Bloomsbury Theatre (all terms)

Bidding Deadline – 11th March 2024, 5pm

Panel – 21st March 2024

Bloomsbury Studio Term 1

Bidding Deadline – 3rd June 2024, 5pm

Panel – 6th June 2024

Bloomsbury Studio Term 2

Bidding Deadline – 18th November 2024, 5pm

Panel – 21st November 2024

1. What you are bidding for

So, let's start at the beginning. This section is all about what you are bidding *for*, or 'what you'll get' if you are successful. It gives you information about the theatres, so you can make sure they are the appropriate spaces for your bid. It also tells you about how the technical support works during a production week, so you can make sure the vision behind your bid is achievable.

Can you tell me about the theatres?

UCL owns two state-of-the-art theatres – the Bloomsbury Theatre and the Bloomsbury Studio. Both theatres sit within the Bloomsbury Building on Gordon Street. They are managed by the UCL Bloomsbury Theatre team in the Library, Culture, Collections and Open Science (LCCOS) department. The theatres are professionally run to industry standards, and receive a number of commercial shows each year. In addition, a certain number of weeks each year are allocated to departmental use and, of course, to Students' Union UCL.

Bloomsbury Theatre

The Bloomsbury Theatre is UCL's flagship 541-seat West End theatre. It's a beautiful, proscenium arch theatre, with orchestra pit, cinema screen and projector. It's a big space with the audience sitting on two levels – stalls and circle. It was refurbished in 2018, has luxurious seats, exceptional sightlines and can feel both epic and intimate at the same time.

Things to remember when thinking about the Bloomsbury Theatre:

- There are lots of seats! Are you confident you'll sell enough tickets to make the show viable?
- Only one bidding process for the whole academic year, a long way in advance (March in the previous academic year)
- All bidding happens through Societies
- No more than 65 in a show

Bloomsbury Studio

The Bloomsbury Studio is a small, flexible space for more intimate performances. Seating up to 70, it is a 'black box' theatre that naturally opens itself to more experimental work. It can accommodate a number of different seating configurations, and has a projector and screen.

Things to remember when thinking about the Bloomsbury Studio:

- It's small! 70 seat maximum but sometimes less, depending on the seating configuration you choose
- Two bidding processes, the first in June (for Term 1), the second in November (for Term 2)
- Most of the bidding happens through Societies, but there are also 2 open slots in Term 2 for students to bid direct

When are the performance weeks?

Every performance is allocated one week in the theatre, which includes 3 days of set up/technical rehearsal and up to 3 evening performances. For the academic year 2024/25, we have 12 performance weeks in the Theatre, and 9 weeks in the Studio. *N.B. We also have three additional non-performance weeks, which are dedicated to Stage Crew Society training and SU Awards.*

Here are the performance weeks for 2024/25:

| Term | Show week | Theatre | Studio |
|--------|------------------------------------|------------|----------|
| Term 1 | w/c 11 November 2024 | Theatre 1 | Studio 1 |
| | w/c 18 November 2024 | Theatre 2 | Studio 2 |
| | w/c 25 November 2024 | Theatre 3 | Studio 3 |
| Term 2 | w/c 27 th January 2025 | Theatre 4 | Studio 4 |
| | w/c 3 rd February 2025 | Theatre 5 | Studio 5 |
| | w/c 17 th February 2025 | Theatre 6 | |
| | w/c 24 th February 2025 | Theatre 7 | Studio 6 |
| | w/c 3 rd March 2025 | Theatre 8 | Studio 7 |
| | w/c 10 th March 2025 | Theatre 9 | Studio 8 |
| | w/c 17 th March 2025 | Theatre 10 | Studio 9 |
| Term 3 | w/c 24 th March 2025 | Theatre 11 | |
| | w/c 19 th May 2025 | Theatre 12 | |

How much time do we get in the theatre?

Every show, regardless of what theatre you are performing in, gets 3 days of set up technical rehearsal (technical days), and up to 3 evening performances (performance days). On each technical day, the stage must go to 'quiet tech' at 7.30pm (Theatre) or 7pm (Studio), to enable the show in the other theatre to be performed without sound disruption.

Basic performance week schedules

These schedules are designed as a guide to show you how much time you will normally have in the theatre, and to enable you to plan your bid accordingly. If successful you will receive a more detailed schedule for your performance week.

Bloomsbury Theatre – production week starts on Monday – based on a 3 performance week

| Bloomsbury Theatre | 10-11 | 11-12 | 12-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | 5-6 | 6-7 | | 7-8 | 8-9 | 9-10 |
|--------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|-----|------|--|------------|------------|------------------|
| MON | | | TECH | TECH | TECH | TECH | TECH | DIN | TECH | | QUIET TECH | QUIET TECH | QUIET TECH |
| TUE | TECH | TECH | TECH | LUN | TECH | TECH | TECH | DIN | TECH | | QUIET TECH | QUIET TECH | QUIET TECH |
| WED | TECH | TECH | TECH | LUN | TECH | TECH | TECH | DIN | TECH | | QUIET TECH | QUIET TECH | QUIET TECH |
| THU | TECH | TECH | TECH | LUN | TECH | TECH | TECH | DIN | PREP | | PERF 1 | PERF 1 | PERF 1 |
| FRI | | | | LUN | WT | WT | WT | DIN | PREP | | PERF 2 | PERF 2 | PERF 2 |
| SAT | | | | | | | | | | | PERF 3 | PERF 3 | PERF 3 + GET OUT |
| SUN | Sunday – Day off – Theatre Closed | | | | | | | | | | | | |

TECH = technical time (including set up and dress rehearsals)
 QUIET TECH = quiet technical time (no stereo sound, loud dancing or shouting – see p.5)
 LUN = compulsory lunch break for all
 DIN = compulsory dinner break for all
 PERF = public performance
 WT = Working time available (need to book)

Bloomsbury Studio – production week starts on Thursday

| Bloomsbury Studio | 10-11 | 11-12 | 12-1 | 1-2 | 2-3 | 3-4 | 4-5 | 5-6 | 6-7 | | 7-8 | 8-9 | 9-10 |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|------|-----|------|------|------|-----|------|--|------------|------------|------------------|
| THU | | | | | TECH | TECH | TECH | DIN | TECH | | QUIET TECH | QUIET TECH | QUIET TECH |
| FRI | TECH | TECH | TECH | LUN | TECH | TECH | TECH | DIN | TECH | | | | |
| SAT | TECH | TECH | TECH | LUN | TECH | TECH | TECH | DIN | TECH | | | | |
| SUN | Sunday – Day off – Theatre Closed | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| MON | TECH | TECH | TECH | LUN | TECH | TECH | TECH | DIN | PREP | | PREP | PERF 1 | PERF 1 |
| TUE | | | | LUN | WT | WT | WT | DIN | PREP | | PREP | PERF 2 | PERF 2 |
| WED | | | | | | | | | | | PREP | PERF 3 | PERF 3 + GET OUT |

TECH = technical time (including set up and dress rehearsals)
 QUIET TECH = quiet technical time (no stereo sound, loud dancing or shouting – see p.5)
 LUN = compulsory lunch break for all
 DIN = compulsory dinner break for all
 PERF = public performance
 WT = Working time (need to book)

Performance start times

In 2024/25 performance start times will be standardized in each theatre. They will be as follows:

| Theatre | Start time |
|--------------------|------------|
| Bloomsbury Theatre | 7.30pm |
| Bloomsbury Studio | 8pm |

How does the technical support work?

Each Bloomsbury show is a collaboration with UCL Stage Crew Society, who will allocate technical roles and provide technical design and support to the production. UCL Stage Crew is a student-led society dedicated to enabling other UCL societies to put on productions in the Bloomsbury Theatre and Studio, the Roaming Garage Theatre and other venues. Every student show will be allocated a Stage Crew Production Manager, where possible, responsible for your production's technical requirements in the theatre. If Stage Crew are unable to fill certain roles, artsUCL will make arrangements to provide alternative support. All stage crew members undergo training with Bloomsbury Theatre technicians, and work directly under their guidance during production weeks.

Collaboration with Stage Crew begins long before the production week, and they will work with you to understand your vision for the show, and distribute roles accordingly. Lead stage crew roles (such as lighting/sound design) will then work with you in advance of the production week to work collaboratively to realise the show.

What is 'Quiet Tech'

'Quiet Tech' is a time during technical rehearsals when all activity in the theatre needs to become 'quiet', to enable the performance in the other theatre to go ahead without noise disruption. Because of the sound bleed between the Bloomsbury Theatre and Bloomsbury Studio, it's important that we schedule this carefully, and you'll need to plan this into your scheduling. Lots of areas of technical activity can continue, such as lighting, rigging, plotting, programming, video work, blocking, focussing, workshop work, working actors notes. However there will also be a number of areas that will not be permitted during this time, such as using the pa system, shouting, building steeldeck on stage, dance rehearsals, live music etc. If you are successful you will receive a detailed list of what can and can't be done in 'quiet tech' as part of your offer.

How do the finances work?

If your bid is successful, you'll need to create a comprehensive budget for your production. This year, for the first time, we are not asking you to do this as part of your bid, because we understand that you don't know a lot of the information at this time, however we want to give you some information for you to be aware of as you think about your creative vision.

Bloomsbury Theatre

When you do a show in the Bloomsbury Theatre, your society receives 100% of ticket sales revenue, and gets to set the ticket prices for the production. So, for example, if you sell 50% of tickets at £8 for a 3 night run in the Bloomsbury Theatre, you will receive about £6500 in income. We expect this to cover a standard budget for the production. Please note that ticket prices are at the Producer's discretion - £8 is an example, not a suggestion.

N.B. In previous years, we have offered a £1500 performance grant from the SU, but this will now only be offered if you are expecting to make a loss from the production. Societies will be able to apply for a £1500 grant-loan if they need to, which will be reclaimed if the production makes over £1500 in profit.

Please also note that Bloomsbury Theatre productions are highly unlikely to receive Friends Trust funding.

So, it is up to the Society Treasurers to allocate production budgets in the Bloomsbury Theatre, but we do not expect societies to see a Bloomsbury Theatre show as a 'profit maker', and to allocate funds within a reasonable projected revenue from ticket sales. Your production budget should be created in collaboration the Society Treasurer and submitted in the form of an Activity Registration Form, at the very latest eight weeks before your production week begins.

The SU has a funding stream for specialist creative roles such as intimacy directors and fight directors, and other specialist creative roles that require professional support.

Bloomsbury Studio

All productions in the Bloomsbury Studio will be given a £500 budget from artsUCL (if applied for). Ticket revenues from studio productions are small, and we allocate this budget because we do not expect productions to break even on ticket sales alone. Studio productions are expected to be simple, with minimal set.

2. How the bidding works

This section is about the process of submitting a bid for a Bloomsbury show. It gives you information about the different pathways to the bidding panel, what you might need to prepare, and the deadlines for bids in each theatre.

What is 'bidding'?

Bidding is the process of students pitching proposals for productions in the Bloomsbury Theatre and Studio. Each bid will have a coherent plan for a production, including the name of the show, a description of the creative vision behind the production, the allocation of major roles (producer, director, treasurer), the availability of performance rights, any particular financial implications, and a vision of how it will provide opportunities for UCL students. It will usually be drawn up by the producer and director, alongside the president and/or treasurer, if bidding through a society. Once the bidding deadline has passed and artsUCL have received all the bids, the Theatre Allocation Committee (TAC) will be convened for students with viable bids to pitch their ideas. This is an in-person meeting in the SU, for producers and directors to pitch for a slot (please see p.8 for dates and deadlines). The committee will then make decisions as to which bids are offered performance weeks in the theatre. Those productions will form part of the Bloomsbury Theatre & Studio Seasons for the academic year 2024/25.

Do I need to bid as part of a society or can I bid directly?

For the majority performance slots (and all in the Bloomsbury Theatre), the bid needs to be endorsed by a UCL society.

Arts societies sometimes hold their own **internal bidding processes** where their members pitch production ideas for society endorsement. Internal bidding processes will often mirror the bidding process itself, with society members pitching their ideas against the bidding criteria. The society committee will then decide which bids they are going to bid at the bidding panel. So, for example, Drama Society might choose a production of *Romeo and Juliet* directed by Joe Bloggs and produced by Jane Smith to bid at the Bidding Panel. Drama Society might have chosen the bid through their internal bidding process because of the strength of the creative vision, the coherence of the planning and budgeting, and the opportunities it is going to offer its members.

This year, we are introducing a new initiative in offering two **open slots** as part of the bidding process. These are performance weeks that students can bid for directly, without the endorsement of a society. This can be a pathway for anyone who may be unsuccessful at the internal bid stage, or for anyone who would like to put something on without being attached to a society. The criteria will be exactly the same, but the access for students will be direct.

| Theatre | Society-bid slots | Open slots | Total shows |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Bloomsbury Theatre | 12 shows | No open slots | 12 shows |
| Bloomsbury Studio | 7 shows | 2 shows | 9 shows |

Can I bid for specific weeks?

Unlike previous years, we don't have 'priority weeks' for certain societies. We've stopped doing this because we feel it's important that everyone has an equal opportunity to bid successfully. You can include your preferred week as part of your bid, and offer any supporting reasons for the panel to consider as to why you should be allocated this week. However please note, there is no guarantee you will get your preferred week.

Ok, how do I start?

1. **Producer and director!**

Make sure you have a committed producer and director; your core team.

2. **Clear creative vision!**

Make sure you have a clear idea of your creative vision – which show, why you want to do it, what it offers an audience, what opportunities it offers for creative students, the main creative decisions which could define the show, how you'll promote it, how you'll sell tickets.

3. **Performance rights!**

Check the availability of the performance rights for the piece for an amateur production in London. Normally, the contact details for this will be in the front of the book or manuscript. Google is also a useful tool to find publishers. You do not need performance rights for any show where the writer has been dead for 70 years or more. But sometimes it's worth checking!

4. **Speak to your society!**

If you are bidding for a society-bid slot (all slots in Bloomsbury Theatre and the majority of slots in the Studio), get in touch with the President and Treasurer of the society you would like to bid on behalf of, to get their support. They will be able to tell you about any internal bidding process, if applicable.

5. **Complete the bid form!**

If the society chooses to proceed your bid to the panel, the President of the society must then submit the form on the society's behalf. The President must complete the online bid form by **5:00pm** on **Monday 11th March 2024**. Here's the link to the [form](#)!

How do I pitch my proposal?

Once your bid has been submitted, the producer and director named on the proposal will be invited to give a 10-minute presentation to the Theatre Allocation Committee, which will then be followed by questions from the committee. These presentations will be in-person and will take place on the

panel dates on p. 2 (and repeated again below). Time slots will be allocated once the proposals have been submitted.

What does my presentation need to include?

The way you present your pitch is completely up to you. Some people chose to use power point or handouts, and others don't. We are very open to different forms of presentation, and whatever works for you. We would advise you to prepare it thoroughly and have a clear structure. Your presentation should cover the following areas:

- The title of the production
- A synopsis of the story (if relevant)
- The number of performing opportunities you are hoping to offer
- A marketing blurb for the production that captures your offer to the public in no more than 100 words
- Why you want to put the production on, and why you're passionate about it
- What you think it will bring to an audience, and how it will speak to an audience today
- Your ideas around equity, inclusion and representation and how these values feed into your vision
- Initial ideas around any creative interpretation (if relevant)
- Set and costume ideas
- Your ideas for marketing the production

Can you remind me when the dates and deadlines for bidding for 2024/25?

Of course. Here they are again...

| Theatre/term | Bidding opens | Bidding deadline | Bidding panel |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Bloomsbury Theatre (all terms) | 12 th February 2024 | 11th March 2024 | 21 st March 2024 |
| Bloomsbury Studio (term 1) | 6 th May 2024 | 3rd June 2024 | 6 th June 2024 |
| Bloomsbury Studio (term 2) | 21 st October 2024 | 18th November 2024 | 21 st November 2024 |

3. How the decisions are made

This section is about how the decisions are made about which bids are successful, as well as who makes the decisions and where you can get more information and support.

How do we decide who is given a slot? What's the criteria?

We have five main criteria for allocating Bloomsbury slots.

1. The coherence and strength of your creative vision

We are looking for proposals which will connect with an audience today and speak to them, whatever the genre or whatever the material. We are looking for productions that will excite audiences, move them and get them talking about the theatre.

2. The professionalism of your presentation, and the viability of your proposal

We want to see evidence that you are serious about your proposal, and we want to feel confident that you will collaborate effectively with your fellow students and the professional team at the theatre. We also want to have confidence that your vision is realistic and achievable.

3. How appropriate your bid is for the relevant theatre space

We want to be confident that your proposal is appropriate for the spaces you are bidding for. The Bloomsbury Theatre, for example, is a 541-seat proscenium arch theatre, designed for a live performance in a shared space. That is not to say that a multi-media or film performance wouldn't work. It's also not to say that an intimate play wouldn't work. But it's important that the work is being conceived specifically for the space, and that the spaces are being used to their full potential.

4. Inclusivity, representation and sensitivity

The Bloomsbury Theatre and Studio are for everyone. We want the productions to be representative of all our students, and in particular groups that may in the past have been under-represented or marginalised. We want to see that you are connected to these values, and want to tell stories that further progress and platform those whose stories are under-represented in our society. This might be in the decisions around the choice of material, your creative interpretation, and your plans for casting or selection for what will be on stage. We also want you to have considered any themes within the piece that could trigger audience members, and how you will create a culture of care around your production – for cast, creatives, production teams and your audience.

5. Opportunities to UCL students

We are looking for proposals which offer a wide range of opportunities for UCL students to have rich and meaningful experiences. Whether it be through performing, producing, working as part of the production team, writing, choreographing or marketing the show, we will be looking at how your production will offer opportunities for students to be involved, and their access to all students. This is particularly relevant to Bloomsbury Theatre bids.

We also take into account previous productions by the society (if applicable), and in particular the levels of organisation, professionalism and collaboration.

Who is on the Theatre Allocation Committee?

The Theatre Allocation Committee is student led, and comprises of the Activities & Engagement Officer, the Equity & Inclusion Officer, the Arts Officer and the President of Stage Crew. After the presentations and discussion, these roles will vote for which bids are successful. artsUCL and Bloomsbury Theatre staff also sit on the bidding panel as non-voting members to ask questions, contribute to discussion and offer specialist input where relevant and helpful. The non-voting panel members are the Head of Arts, the Arts & Media Coordinator, the theatre's Commercial Venue Hire & Bookings Manager and Technical Manager.

Who can I ask for more information and support?

If you would like more information then please contact Dan Edge, our Arts & Media Coordinator. Dan is here to support anyone who is interested in making a bid for the Theatre or Studio. Dan is more than happy to act as a soundboard for some of your initial ideas, take you through the process, advise you on what you need to consider and explain anything you might not understand.

Dan can be reached by email at d.edge@ucl.ac.uk