

Last Defence Lounge Future Options

The Last Defence Lounge (LDL) is the restaurant owned and run by the Graduate Students' Association (GSA) which is located on the third floor of MacEwan Student Centre. The LDL has been closed since March 2020 due to the pandemic.

Over the years, the LDL experienced annual net losses, but to some extent these losses were the cost of the service it provided as a gathering space for graduate student activities and events. If we didn't have the LDL, the GSA would have had to pay to host events at other locations so we can look at some level of annual net loss as a reasonable cost of this service.



This graph represents the annual net losses that the LDL has experienced since 2011.

For off-campus restaurants, weekends and summers are busy revenue generating times. On campus, foot traffic reduces greatly on weekends and through the summer which causes us to be closed on weekends and reduce our hours in the summer. This is a challenge

in general for all on-campus restaurants.

Work was done at the LDL over the years to cut costs and increase revenues; however, when costs of food increase, we can only increase menu prices so much before it is unreasonable for our campus community.

The idea in the past was that if we could get the loss to a more reasonable level, it would be worth it to graduate students to keep the Lounge operating as it provides a venue for graduate student events and activities. Losses in 2018 and 2019 were considered reasonable by management and the Board, at approximately \$25,000 each, however a renovation closure and a Covid-19 closure resulting in deeper losses returning in 2020.

The pandemic has impacted demand on campus. The Students' Union has opened their Black Lounge but the Den, their larger restaurant, has remained closed. We understand from SU management that they have seen a decreased interest in dining-in among the university community. If we open the LDL, we expect to see a significant drop in revenues. In order to limit losses, we will have to reduce operating hours, staffing, and menu size from pre-pandemic levels.

At the October GRC, GSA VP Finance and Services, Mary Zhang, presented options for the use of the LDL space along with estimated costs associated with the options.

Options	Cost Considerations
1) Reopen the LDL Restaurant Reduced hours, reduced staffing, limited menu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estimated \$20,000 cleaning, repairs, and maintenance costs after long closure. Annual net loss ranging from \$70,000 to \$113,000

<p>2) Event space for graduate students available for booking Industrial kitchen for professional use</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Estimated \$20,000 cleaning, repairs, and maintenance costs after long closure
<p>3) Student study and gathering space</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment write off \$74,000 • Renovation cost \$100,000
<p>4) Student study and gathering space with shared GSA office</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment write off \$74,000 • Renovation cost \$100,000+ • GSA has office opening in 2022 at MacKimmie
<p>5) We asked you to share your ideas!</p>	

We asked you for your feedback and ideas! Here is a summary of what we heard:

- Majority of feedback was in support of reopening the Last Defence Lounge
- Increased publicity for affordable event space available to graduate students
- Study spaces already exist on campus
- Integrate arcade or board games option
- Integrate coffee shop, bistro, snack bar options
- Restaurant pop-up with local Calgary restaurants
- Hire graduate students

Based on your feedback we are proposing to reopen the LDL in Winter 2022 with some changes.

- Snack bar style menu so you can pop in for a quick bite or stay awhile for a full meal.
 - (10-15 items with variations available. The old menu had 40+ items)
- QR Code menus (some paper copies available when necessary)
- Reduced hours of operation
- Main campus delivery options
- Reduced Staff count
- Special consideration given to graduate students when hiring
- More coffee/tea options
- Board games may be available in the future when risk associated with sharing items is reduced
- Booking the space may become available once staff, process, and policy is in place and affordability determined.

At the GRC meeting on November 30, Mary Zhang, VP Finance and Services, will motion to reopen the LDL in Winter 2022 following all Provincial and University Covid-19 requirements. If you have any questions your concerns you would like to raise prior to the meeting you can send them to Mary Zhang at vpfs.gsa@ucalgary.ca.