

Note that in these pages, each paragraph is a separate comment, and comments from those who have previously attended a McGL Open Feis are interspersed with those from people who have not. Many comments are therefore targeted at feiseanna in general.

What is important to you (apart from the fixed categories given)?

Facilities for people to watch the footy!

Making sure that there are vegetarian options!! Easing congestion in the main hall - gets very crowded (helps atmosphere, but can't put gear down anywhere). Places for girls to change. Marks pack - % to a named charity. You always make sure number/order of dancers for championship is drawn out of hat. That's brilliant. Wish others would do this!! Adds a real sense of 'fairness'... Well done!

Ensuring that there are sashes for top 5!! (Sorry, I can't remember if you do or not!)

The championship hall is very cramped. I think you have the screens too far down which makes accessibility a problem, and creates a horrendous bottleneck at the very back of the hall with only a two-person width for hundreds of people going to and fro. I would suggest that you only screen halfway down and therefore people sitting near the front/middle could just slip in discreetly, this would alleviate the back of the hall from being a complete nightmare! I think this will still protect the dancers onstage and not distract them! Otherwise a fantastic feis and keep up the good work. P.S. Love the idea of the extra set for non recallers.

Your feis is always a pleasure to go to. How about having a championship for dancers who haven't qualified for the worlds. I know that's splitting hairs but you normally lead the way for other feis organizers as you are super efficient. It would be a great boost for the other open dancers who didn't get through. Even one for the kids who recalled but didn't place. Have you seen how we break our hearts when we have spent months leading up to the Q then to miss out by a few points.

Most importantly to me and my dd is that we are always spoken to with respect. Also if the feis runs over time which they mostly do (can't be helped I know) please keep us informed. Other than that I think it's great that you are even asking us for our opinions. Well done. Wish we were from your region instead of the very rude NW. Looking forward to attending your feis (our 1st time).

Don't separate boys and girls in championships. Hate to travel all the way and have only 3 boys in a competition!

Have noticed that too many feis are putting the older age groups together and so they don't want to know about doing "local" feis and stick to just doing the Major comps. By the way my car got stuck in the mud in the car park at your feis a few years ago and all the dads/helpers were excellent in helping me out. Thanks.

I think it's a great idea to have the set dance competition for the non recall dancers. It can be very disheartening if you regularly fall just outside the recall group.

Double age groups for boys... could you still have winner of each age group and trophy awarded? It gets harder as they get older to dance in these double age groups and do well. Would prefer mixed championships or a 3/4 or more boy competition as a 2 year age difference is a HUGE difference.

I do find the number system is and can be very impersonal, but I also understand due to the

numbers of dancer that names would take longer and be harder to track correctly. I would like to see a detailed breakdown after a feis as to the winners etc etc. I can never find these online or anywhere. Being of non Irish descent I cannot often hear the results as they are rushed and unclear.

Accessibility and transport - traveling from overseas. Healthy food options and choice. Good atmosphere and help + information, (know this can be hard when you have people grumbling + complaining).

WELL DONE on all the good work so far.

You should allow more vendors as we would like to see more choice and not just the same old.

I feel double age groups are putting dancers off attending feis, next year the u18 and u19 age groups are quite big, and I usually attend your feis but I will think twice about attending if its a double age group and I usually do well in my age group. Is it to save on cups, medals, etc?

Please have single age groups especially with older girls. If numbers are lower than 10 then join.

I feel you should not double up the older grade dancers age groups as it is not fair. Also sashes would be a lovely award to give to some of the grade dancers. Maybe if there was a traditional set dance or a preliminary there could be sashes for the winners of those competitions.

It would be great to have an under 19 and under 20 separate competitions, as you get older the competitions are all combined.

The [your] feis is great but the grades gym is too small and the acoustics are not clear. It is very difficult to hear people talking on the microphones. I think this gym really lets your feis down. I am surprised you would not be trying to find a better venue as you spend so much time and effort on the feis.

We have always found the parents of your school very friendly and helpful. My only comment would be that the main championship hall can become very crowded. That would be my only criticism. Always enjoyed this feis, and will be back again this year. And also as with all feises a family fee is always appreciated. A good idea that one of the other S. Region feises had was to charge a one off payment on advance for family members accompanying dancers. As it can work out quite expensive.

Enough seating and space especially for younger ages groups in the grade dances where there are hundreds of parents all trying to see their child.

I think it is nice when there is lively music during presentations to ease the atmosphere and to help celebrate the placing the dancers have achieved.

How can we make life easier for overseas visitors?

Pay for their travel and accommodation!

Airport shuttle runs. As high a percentage recall as possible considering the effort these families have gone to in order to attend.

Possibly a venue which is closer to an airport. I realise the current venue is quite close but I would still find it a hassle. A venue 10/15 mins away would be wonderful.

By having clear signposts to feis EXTREMELY HELPFUL.

Offer a range of hotels and let them know in advance when they're expected to dance so they can book flights etc.

Maybe have all grades with most of overseas dancers on first thing in morning or mid morning nothing worse than if it does run late to be panicking about whether you will get your flight on time.

Shuttle buses to and from airport arranged.

Most schools attending have a number of dancers. It would be great if transport was arranged for them at airport. Even if they had to wait for another flight to arrive at least we could relax knowing transport won't be a nightmare when we get off the plane.

Affordable taxi/shuttle from hotel to feis venue.

Good reasonably priced accommodation.

We like the way the firm days for certain age groups are printed well ahead of time, as we travel from Ireland and have 3 girls dancing in 3 different age groups, so it is great to plan ahead. Thank you.

Get good rate on local hotel and organize feis volunteers to meet and greet and help with directions. Host feis at hotel if possible or near hotel. Signs at major crossroads to steer drivers in right direction.

To at least put provisional days up for dancers and families and to stick with them however late feis runs.

An early timetable is essential when trying to book flights & accommodation. We regularly have to book an extra night's accommodation & spend a full weekend away from the rest of the family because we have to try to balance getting value for money with flights etc.

Personally think you do a good job already, much better than most.

Accessibility with good transport options and accom. Early release of time table... Day on which age groups dance would do so we can book flights.

Keep everyone informed with what is going on.

Give provisional timetable based on last years entry numbers to enable flights and accommodation to be booked.

Don't change the provisional dates. Some feises do that when people are given Saturday so they fly back on Sunday but the feis changes their date to Sunday. I have seen it happen so many times.

Get a discount at a local hotel.

Since I'm from mainland Europe this appeals to me a great deal. The planning of feiseannas is difficult in view of travelling. You want to know when the DS dances so you can schedule flights far ahead. This is important to reduce absence from school. An early indication of the schedule is greatly appreciated. I realize that it's difficult but a statement of the day and a "before or after 13h00" would already greatly help.

Give accommodation suggestions.

Early release of timetable permits people to make travel arrangements - you can't do this at the last minute.

Maybe regularly mention how grateful you are that people have come all this way to compete at the McGLees feis! Always make them feel comfortable to be there.

How can we improve awards (/ceremonies)?

Give them real gold medals.

Your feis award ceremonies and trophies are always the best. Even when my daughter doesn't recall.

Have a podium and offer sashes for first place.

Podium was a lovely idea at Murchu Duiggin, or sash for first place maybe.

Have a podium for top 3 makes them feel important and a sash for top 3 as well.

Having a podium for the children to stand on makes them feel special.

Make it more of a big deal.

Presentation hall or podium used.

Give the dancers a sash - it means more to them than anything else - perhaps a smaller trophy.

Heard you do a fabulous job anyway.

It is nice to have a podium for the grade dancers to make them feel special.

By making sure the person on the microphone gets silence before announcements made and to keep reminding them to clap all competitors.

Podium/rostrum is always nice.

Podiums are always nice, with sashes/pennants for winner. Just a bit of fuss over their results makes it special.

Be more personal and slower so as to allow dancers and family to take in the pleasure of the results.

Your awards are usually spot on.

Always good.

Give them a podium too.

Sashes and podiums makes grade dancers feel a bit like champions and a bit more special. It is also a lovely photo opportunity for the photographers. Also I love it when they call the name and the dance school of the winner in each competition as they go up for their trophy.

Speed them up. Try doing results in a different hall if poss. but this takes a long time and very frustrating when you cannot hear a thing.

Make them feel special, boxes [podiums?], sashes.

Organised, good atmosphere i.e. music playing, audience clapping, dancers all on stage to see each other, maybe reverse order?

All kids whatever age like a podium.

Background Music. Maybe for musicians 2 be playing during the presentation. They get paid alot of money! Make them earn it!

Do you think numbers are falling? If so, why might that be?

Numbers fall for a number of reasons - including some dissatisfaction with Irish dancing, people leaving to go to university, etc.

In older ages, more dancers would attend if heavy round is cut by eight bars! Many miss a feis if they feel unprepared fitness-wise, but it is worth the trip if it is slightly shorter dance.

Dancers going to shows earlier. Dancers find Uni and dancing together a strain. Unfairness at some competitions. Not achieving results they think they should be getting.

Not been aware in the championships... In grades often they were too big, and felt had to do a lot to get noticed.

The overall cost of dancing.

Personally I think a lot of times it's the unfair adjudicating.

Generally dancers losing interest in Irish Dancing, or having to give up for personal reasons!

How most of the time you can assume who the winner of a competition is!

Pre-entering a competition for two dancers not knowing the day or rough time they are dancing affects my decision of whether to enter. It is very expensive then you can't make it and lose your money. This all adds up and now I tend to go for pay on the day feises or the ones that will accommodate a late entry once I know the timetable. This hobby is sucking up all our money!

I am only attending half the amount of comps. The reason is I am sick of paying out for the entry and then when the timetable comes out we are unable to attend. Much prefer to pay on the day and run late. Although it does help a bit to know the days for each age group. I have a boy and trying to juggle footy and rugby is becoming a nightmare, so to pay for an entry 2 months before is just not on. So I just don't bother to go much.

Double age groups at some feis' (not from my point of view, as I'll dance up or down any age) but the u17/18's when grouped into double seem to worry about the number of recalls etc.

Expense. You're looking at at least £24 for entries and programme, then adding on for 2 adults to watch their children perform, plus food and petrol costs people find it a difficult expense in the current economic climate. With regard to timetable if as my child is in Primary and Intermediate and they are scheduled at different times e.g. before and after lunch.

Politics!!!!

The expensiveness of costumes etc. as well as feis expenses.

People are reluctant to pay for a feis if they are not sure what day and what time they are dancing, especially if they have other commitments on that weekend. So a good idea of day each age group will dance would be great.

Politics in Irish dancing. Older dancers realising dancing is very short term and they have decided to concentrate on university etc.

I haven't noticed a fall in attendance, but kids change, exams happen, dresses get too small - it could be any number of reasons Politics - kids look at who is judging before they decide if they are going. When we attend week after week and see the same dancers win we get despondent. Not anything to worry about we are used to getting a few knocks. Thats life.

More than one feis on the same day in a different area.

As dancers get older they have more commitments, ie education and/or work.

Exams and work and of course her social diary for my daughter make it not a easy to attend as many feis's.

I think some people, to be honest, expect things for nothing! Cheaper feiseanna, (but still with great prizes!)

Dancers feeling they haven't been judged fairly and parents and dancers being spoken to very rudely. ID is not a cheap hobby and so regardless of the result on the day I do expect to be treated better at times. This is the reason I am travelling away from my region to feis in 2008.

Economy drives many of our choices but if viewed as unique or special then will fork out more money and look forward to it. Also, a party at the end of day can entice greater attendance. Cash prizes rather than trophy for winning champs can really interest some (me)!!

Have only been involved for a year or so now and am amazed as to how popular these events are.

In my daughter's age group numbers are fairly consistent.

A lot of feises happening around the same time.

Here I go again, double age groups, studying, work.

Times if very late in evening. Double age groups.

Expense as many small feiseanna are held coming up to a major (expense).

Dissapointing venues and facilities, filthy toilets and grubby canteens. I think people accept "running late" and minor hiccups, if you are in good surroundings with food and drink in good supply and a friendly atmosphere. I have to say your Feis is one of the best!

Well we go to feises that we have had a good time at in past years because a lot of the parents at our school including mine hate going to feises.

In the older age groups the competitions are all combined. I can't be bothered to drive a long way when I may be competing agains lots of different age groups.

Too many feis's close together.

Interesting ;-) There could be many reasons - costs (lower the entrance fee, get deals with hotels etc etc) - dropping interest (you can't do much about that, it's natural) - to many feiseanna (feis organizers should talk more with each other).

Personally I think it is the expense.

Cost and politics.

Times of dances and whether people can get accomodation. So there has to be hotels/holiday inns near by.

The expense, not every family can afford to attend as many feis' as others. Also my dd is in U17 and now she's finding it difficult to fit in her studies with a little part time job and dancing, and she is therefore not attending classes as much, so therefore if she can attend a feis she doesnt always want to as she feels she's not up to her personal best.

Cost, and quality of adjudicators.

Expense, old question of politics! in open competition and probably lack of success particularly on the part of individual older dancers. Dancers get to an age where they feel they are not going to get anywhere.

Beginner dancers in full costume is very offputting for parents and dancers. I think a non-costume rule for beginners/primary is a good idea. Venues that are dirty/cramped and have limited parking are also offputting.

Same old Judges adjudicating feises. If a judge did not particularly like a dancer in the previous feis, whats the point in going to the next one where the same judge is adjudicating?

How do you decide which feiseanna to attend?

Quality of competition and atmosphere play a big part, along with venue, stage, ease of travel, etc., but the biggest factor is whether the feis has seemed 'fair' in previous years.

By Adjudicators You get to know the biased ones. Glad to see you are trying to do something about this. Well Done.

Reputation, location, if the stage practice is needed before a major championship.

On recommendation.

Any feis within 2 hours I generally go to. When deciding about a UK feis I would look at how close it was to a major, how affordable it was, what the standard was likely to be like.

Travelling distance... Try to support all London/Southern region. Sometimes adjudicators, where known! Percentage in recall.

Distance to travel.

Location, as I'm not a driver, timetable, adjudicators.

Have been "feising" for 10 years now, not interested in attending feis where older age groups are all put together as seniors, in speaking to dancers in my age group they are not interested in double age groups and so only do the Majors which is a shame.

Distance from home, who is judging, teacher input, previous feis experience (cleanliness/friendliness etc).

We go to them all! We're mad people!!!

Local, well-run [feis] such as yours.

Who is judging, see a lot of same names and it gets a bit boring.

[I] go to as many as possible, if I respect the school I go, no problem. Distance for me is no issue. In the new year I will be avoiding the Manchester feis' as they ran far too late, entry fees ridiculous, awards awful, judges poor and some of the organisers 'questionable'! Will continue to support Liverpool and Clan Na nGael feis however! Love the London area feis', always well run, you're a friendly bunch!

[I] go to feises which I have liked going to enjoying the atmosphere etc. and I do reasonably well at them is a factor in me going to the next years one.

Timetabling - will it fit in with public transport.

It is difficult when your child wants to get in the next grade and as the age group is so big, wants to attend every feis available to try to do this. Decisions therefore have to be made based on location, cost, timetable, previous experience of a well run feis.

The venue, the judges - if they are fairish ones and the prizes.

I usually go for the feis which has prelims and a choice of dance.

Will always try to attend if [we] have been to previous ones that have been easy to get to and well run, and always if it runs as close to time as possible its a bonus.

Usually based on past experiences or adjudicators.

We prefer the larger feis's as they are well run. Adjudicators are a big issue and after that the location. And finally who is running it. We look at the feis's from the year before and decide if that was a good feis or not. If it was we go.

Prefer bigger championship feis's with better competition.

[We] look at syllabus, timetable, adjudicators... go to the feis, and if its good (McGL is our fave of the year) we come back next year!

The time of year the feis is held, the adjudicators, the distance from home and the timetable.

Championships and reputation of the feis this is a major factor when choosing a feis and also timings because of uni/college and work.

With 3 Open dancers, we try to get to as many as possible for the practice and experience, but as we are travelling from Ireland we usually opt for the 'bigger, more worthwhile' ones, of which your feis is one of the best!

Adjudicators on the day (I must admit there are some I avoid). Venue and facilities, timetable (this could mean the difference between needing a hotel room or not).

When a competition is mixed boys/girls and has high profile feel to it I will make the effort to go. Also, the dance of champs like Murphy Diggins draws many to attend due to being seen as a 'mini worlds'.

Which school, who is judging, unpolitical.

Been feising for many years - if it was decent last year then I will be back.

We have to travel abroad to all feiseanna so we have to limit our choice to 1 or 2 per month with particular emphasis on major feiseanna & dates in relation to majors. We go to most majors, some UK, occasional Irl & some mainland Europe feiseanna.

Where they are and distance to travel. Adj panel? Cost involved.

Location and time... Distance to go etc etc.

TCRG makes final decision... We're very happy with this.

Enjoy high standard of good dancing esp. if overseas dancers participate.

Ones that are easy to travel to, especially in winter. Will travel further afield in summer time.

Timetable, double age group, distance to travel so I get home before midnight which is not often.

Just do as many as a I can - almost all.

On past experience and distance - where timetable comes in...

Good, large feis, with reputations attract good competition, so we aim for those. But, we do smaller feis if we know that the atmosphere and standards will be high. We like to support people who make an effort.

If there is an age group that isn't too large for me to compete in. Distance to the feis. Who is adjudicating the competition.

Distance and if it was a good or bad feis the year before ie did it run on time, was it organised.

We can do about 6 or 7 feises a year due to the costs. We pick the easy reachable venues which have a fair price. Price is mainly dependant on flights and hotels. Costs for feis entry etc is only a small part of that. Secondly the schedule is very important to minimize absence from school.

Panels and the timetable.

Teacher decision.

If been before and thought it was good.

If a lot of people from my school are attending and we can make a little weekend of it. If we've had a good response when we've been there last year. Remember every dancer counts it's not just your top open dancers that you should keep happy but everyone. The organisation and the standard of stages and floors, if the floor is very hard it often puts me off as it causes injury. Lastly I would just like to wish you a huge good luck with your feis, I'm sure it'll be a huge success!

Accessibility, timetable and adjudicators.

Sometimes based on who is adjudicating - other times can incorporate a social event with a feis (visiting family) or just plain old nearby!

Distance is not so much of an issue only if your child is in the first set of dancers. So an 8.30 start for a 6 yr old at a venue an hours drive away is not feasible as it would mean after getting them up early, they are tired before they've even danced.

How local they are to home. Who is judging. Reputation of the feis. School who is running it.

Do you have other ideas for improvements?

Great idea to hold set dance competition for those who don't recall.

It would be great if there was a feis which had brilliant disabled access!!!!

I feel that one parent should be allowed in free with a dancing child any others to pay a fee. You cannot let your young child go on their own and after paying for entry fees, programmes, petrol and food it becomes expensive.

The crowdedness of the main championship hall is ridiculous, especially for the dancers waiting for their results people just don't have the common sense to move! This isn't a dig at the feis organisers I just feel it could help you improve your feis and make life easier for dancers trying to get their results.

Just a general upgrade for all dancers it won't matter if entry is higher the amount we pay is not an issue. The great number of dancers attending each age group is. Some kids never get a medal.

Dancers dance in numerical order to avoid those who 'hold back'. If three rounds being danced the 2nd round to start a 3rd of the way down then final round 2 thirds of the way down.

I have not attended this feis before but other dancers I know have and say the standard of this feis venue etc is like a major comp. I would love to attend in 2008, hopefully commitments will allow this next year good luck and well done to all.

Thought the set dance special in all black at the Surrey feis was a great idea and would like to see more of this, or, fancy dress treble reel is always fun.

Just would like to see the older age groups kept to a single age group more.

The idea re the different adjudicator for each round is great.

I think your feis is the best run feis in UK! Think it's wonderful that the provisional day programme allows us to do two comps that weekend. Liked the all black set dance comp in Surrey recently... might be an idea?

Yes could we have the older age groups a little earlier in the day. We are always last to dance and some of us are studying still and the others have early starts for work. Promise I will stop moaning now.

Love the [your] feis.

Have championships results more frequently. DS has missed many ceremonies because we had to leave for the airport. Dancing was already over for hours but the organizers waited for 3 or 4 championships results to put them together.

I think friendliness of the helpers is top priority and then atmosphere and running to time and then the awards.

Where there are sufficient entries please keep older age groups separate rather than doing a double age group. This puts a lot of older dances off from competing.