



Quality Assurance Manual

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Foreword

This Manual outlines the means by which Point Blank Music School (Point Blank hereafter) assures and enhances the academic quality and standards across all Higher Education (HE) provision it offers.

Point Blank makes all best efforts to ensure that this Manual is understood by its employees, and that its procedures are implemented. This Manual has been produced in accordance with the requirements of the Quality Code for Higher Education. All components of the Quality Cycle shall be periodically and systematically reviewed (at least annually) in line with both internal and external Quality Audit procedures and cycles.

Point Blank's Quality Standing Committee is responsible for the control of all matters relating to the implementation of this Manual.

1. Quality Assurance at Point Blank Music School

1.1 External Reference Points

For the purposes of this Quality Assurance Manual, the Quality Code shall be taken to mean those components and expectations set out in the QAA Quality Code for Higher education that are currently in place for the UK Higher Education Sector.

1.2 Quality Mission Statement

Point Blank is committed to the continuous improvement of the Point Blank Student Experience. As such, we engage in self-reflective, evaluative processes openly, looking to engage with all stakeholders so a rounded view can be gained. We evaluate our actions regularly in an open, supportive, data driven environment where frank and honest views can be freely expressed.

1.3 Principles

The structure of Point Blank's Quality Cycle is defined in this Manual. Specifically, Point Blank is committed to:

- Developing and seeking to continually improve the effectiveness of Point Blank.
- Ensuring that reviews take place within each key Committee at the end of each Academic Year to review operation against (and effectiveness of) the terms of reference.
- Reviewing the Quality Assurance Manual regularly against the Quality Code to ensure it remains in accordance with sector expectations.
- Embedding the requirements of the Quality Cycle throughout Point Blank by ensuring that all personnel are aware of and operate in line with contents of this Manual.
- Ensuring that this Manual is made available to all members of staff and students and that the minutes of key Committees, or extracts thereof, are made available to all stakeholders.
- Complying with all relevant statutory and regulatory requirements.
- Ensuring students contribute to the Quality and Enhancement of their experience and are informed of resulting actions planned to improve Quality.

1.4 The Quality Cycle Aim & Purpose

The aim of the Quality Cycle is to enhance the quality of the Student Experience for all Point Blank students by identifying Point Blank's development needs and measuring our progress to correct them against set goals and key performance indicators. To this end, the Quality Cycle:

- Works to assure the maintenance of Academic Standards on behalf of Middlesex University (our Awarding Body).

- Uses reliable, valid and up-to-date evidence to evaluate (and where identified) improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.
- Assures that information published about Point Blank student learning opportunities is reliable and accurate.
- Works with our Students and uses their feedback to plan and implement initiatives to enhance their learning opportunities and experience at Point Blank.

1.5 The Point Blank Quality Standards

This Manual establishes Point Blank's quality and standards, which in turn have been developed through adherence to the Quality Code. Point Blank ensures that it meets the 19 'Expectations' of the Quality Code by regularly reviewing its activities against the Quality Code.

Point Blank has established an academic governance structure that ensures that adherence to the Quality Code is effectively achieved throughout the organisation through the implementation of this Manual. This structure is detailed in Section 2 and comprises a series of committees and panels, each of which with clear 'terms of reference' (ToR) to guide its operation and its responsibilities. These ToRs are periodically reviewed on an annual basis.

2. The Governance Structure

2.1 Introduction

Point Blank seeks to incorporate clear lines of responsibility and accountability within the Quality Cycle, by means of the following Governance Structure. This Manual details the locus of responsibility for implementation and monitoring of the various elements of the Quality Cycle detailed within.

2.2 Corporate Governance vs Academic Governance

The development, approval and implementation of Point Blank's framework for managing standards and quality is achieved through a blend of corporate and academic governance responsibilities.

Fundamentally, the academic governance responsibilities for the quality assurance of the student experience rest with the Committees and Panels that make up the Academic Governance Structure. Whereas corporate governance responsibilities rest with the Board of Directors and the Executive Committee.

This ensures that academic decision-making is separated from corporate decision-making, and allows each framework to act as a balance and check on the other.

2.3 Academic Governance

At the centre of the academic governance structure sits the Academic Board. This Board holds overall accountability for the development, management, oversight, monitoring and quality of all HE programmes at Point Blank. The Academic Board is the academic authority of Point Blank and guardian of the academic standards. The Academic Board produces the Annual Monitoring Document for Middlesex approval. The complete Academic Governance framework can be described thus:

Academic Governance Structure:

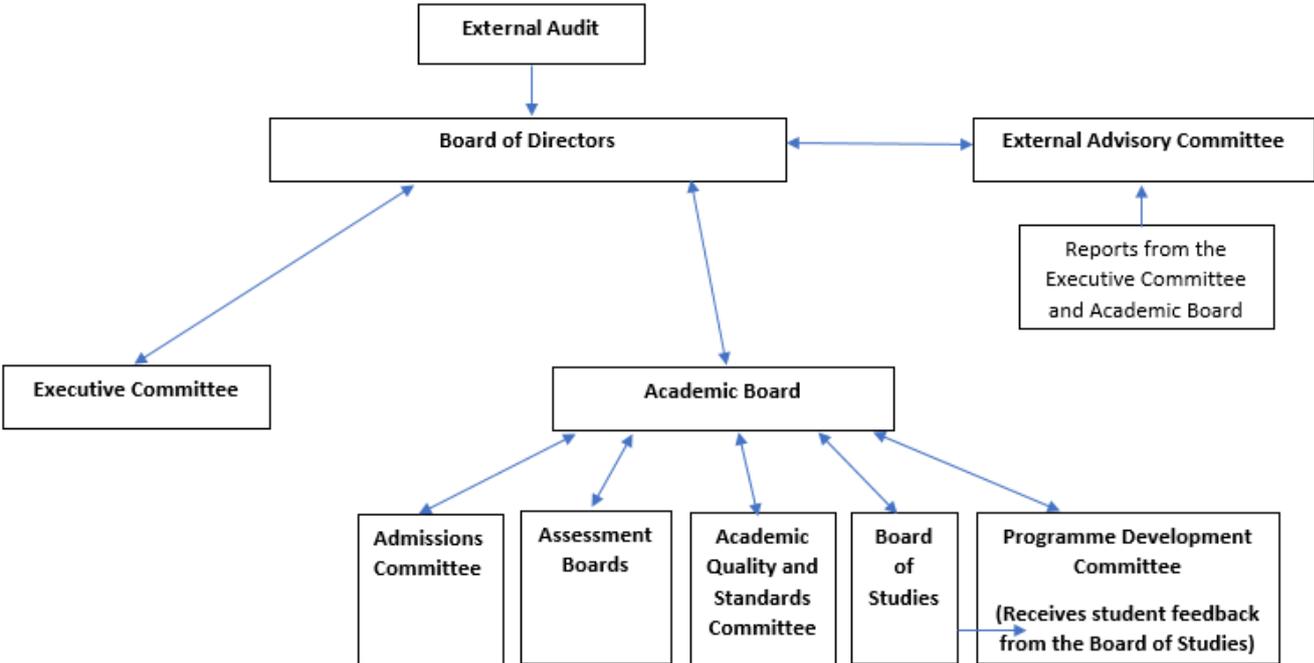


Each committee has its own clearly stated Terms of Reference (ToR) and regularly reviews a range of Key Performance Indicators on aspects of the Point Blank Student experience. This enables the monitoring of academic activities via the use of data and information.

2.4 The Quality Cycle

The Academic Governance Structure is embedded in a wider structure of Governance Committees designed to strike a balance between corporate and academic decision making. This structure undertakes an annual cycle of activity that maps against the Middlesex processes.

Feedback and accountability is shown here via the arrows, which display the reporting and amendment/approval process, with the Board of Directors at the senior level. External Audit and the External Advisory Committee provide additional checks and balances.



3. Procedure Overviews

3.1 Admissions (Quality Code B2)

Programme Specifications set out indicative requirements for admission. However, Point Blank welcomes students from non-traditional backgrounds. As such, Point Blank's Admissions team are best placed to advise on an applicant's suitability for a qualification. This includes the acceptability of overseas qualifications, drawing on its own expertise and the advice of recognised authorities such as NARIC if necessary. Minimum standards for English language competence are set in line with UKVI requirements.

Point Blank intends that its selection and recruitment procedures are fair and transparent. Recruitment to undergraduate courses is managed by the Admissions Team in accordance with the Admissions Policy.

Point Blank produces intake profiles, analysing cohort characteristics (such as Equality and Diversity information) with a view to determining the effectiveness of recruitment and widening participation activity.

3.2 Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Quality Code B3 & B6)

Point Blank places considerable focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment activities. The Teaching and Learning Strategy is developed by the Academic Board as a ongoing plan encompassing how to improve the quality of TLA activity based upon the analysis of data. The implementation of the Teaching and Learning Strategy is monitored through all Point Blank committees. Aspects of the strategy are updated year on year to take account of developments in Industry, the HE Sector, and analysis of data collected and used by Point Blank.

3.3 Assessment (Quality Code B6)

Under the validation agreement with Middlesex University (MDX), Point Blank is contractually bound to use the MDX Assessment Policy and Regulations. While working within these regulations, Point Blank ensures a range of assessment methods are used, and the assessments are appropriate to the FHEQ level of the course and module.

The design and implementation of assessment strategies is monitored institutionally by the Programme Development Committee (PDC). The PDC makes use of student and staff feedback, as well as student performance data to gauge the effectiveness of assessments used, and will make planned adjustments to practice where required. Where a change requires approval via the MDX quality procedures, these are undertaken in accordance with those procedures before the change is enacted.

Point Blank uses the MDX regulations and procedures regarding the investigation and penalisation of Academic Misconduct when identified. Point Blank also uses the MDX Regulations and procedures in relation to claims for extenuating circumstances/deferral of assessment from students.

3.4 External Examining (Quality Code B7)

External Examiners are appointed by MDX. Their chief responsibility is to ensure that academic standards are maintained and that individual students are assessed fairly.

3.4.1 External Examiner Appointment

While MDX carries the chief responsibility for training the external examiner, Point Blank staff work closely with the examiner to ensure they have a sound understanding of the course they examine. Point Blank also treat each examiner as a critical friend, seeing the feedback they provide as vital in the process of developing and enhancing teaching, learning and assessment practice at Point Blank.

3.4.2 External Examiner Reports

Each external examiner is required to submit an annual report to MDX commenting on the standard of marking and the quality of candidates' work, in relation to the level of the award, with reference to standards at other institutions. In addition to Examiner feedback, External Examiners' reports are a key component in Point Blank's standards and quality assurance procedures. All External Examiner reports, once received, are used in conjunction with datasets to triangulate areas for development or to identify areas of good practice.

3.5 Annual Monitoring and Review (Quality Code B8)

Point Blank is subject to the MDX Annual Monitoring and Enhancement process. The purpose of the Annual Monitoring and Enhancement (AME) process is:

- To support staff in maintaining academic standards;
- To evaluate the student experience and student outcomes;
- To assess the quality of educational support and to enhance it;
- To inform the University of generic quality assurance issues;
- To identify good practice in learning, teaching and assessment and to share it widely to facilitate quality enhancement.

The Annual Monitoring Review is conducted by the Academic Board and takes account of Board of Study outcomes and minutes, student and instructor feedback, module and course performance data and the wider context of the previous academic year of operation.

Any recommended changes to course structures are based upon the Annual Monitoring Review and taken through the relevant MDX procedures, including revalidation procedures where required.

3.6 Complaints and Appeals (Quality Code B9)

Point Blank is contractually bound to adhere to MDX regulations and procedures in terms of academic complaints and appeals. Complaints about local issues (such as facilities and resources) are dealt with under the Point Blank Student Complaints Procedure.

If in doubt about where a case falls, please contact a member of the Education Team for clarification.

Point Blank is committed to listening to the views of our students and continuously learning. Therefore we are committed to supporting our students in any complaint or appeal they wish to make, and subscribe to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) as an oversight body should the case fail to be resolved through the procedures in place at Point Blank, or MDX.

Complaints Monitoring

Point Blank sees the value in learning from all complaints cases. As such, periodic reports detailing the nature, outcomes of and investigating officer's recommendations, arising from complaints made against Point Blank will be delivered by the Head of Education to the Quality Standing Committees. All such reports will be appropriately redacted to protect the confidentiality of all parties involved.

3.7 Accuracy of Public Information (Quality Code Part C)

The Point Blank Terms & Conditions govern the process for authoring, approving and publishing content to each of Point Blank's designated public information outlets (including, but not limited to, the Website, VLE, Prospectus, Social Media outlets and Programme Handbooks). In addition to this, all Programme Handbooks must adhere to the MDX public information requirements and are monitored annually by MDX for compliance.

4. Committee Terms of Reference

Membership

- Robert Cowan – CEO (Chair)
- Jules Brookes – Managing Director
- Peter Black – External Finance Director and Consultant

*Members of the wider Management Team may be required to attend to present specific proposals and cases to the Committee.

Terms of Reference

The Directors are responsible for preparing the annual report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

The Directors are also responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The Directors are responsible for:

- Setting and approving the mission, vision, aims and strategic plan of the institution. In conjunction with this, ensuring that the educational nature of the Company remains independent and that academic freedom is maintained.
- Governing all affairs and setting long-term academic and corporate plans and key performance indicators, whilst maintaining the interests of stakeholders
- Ensuring that the Company's aims, academic plans and corporate plans meet the interests of all stakeholders and that student value for money, protection and financial sustainability is always considered
- Enabling the achievement of the Company's mission and aims
- Providing for the welfare and wellbeing of the School's students
- Appointing the auditor of the Company
- Preparing the annual report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations, which provide a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company

In preparing these statements, the Board are required to:

- Select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently
- Make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent
- Prepare the financial statements and keep accounting records that show and explain the company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company

- Safeguard the assets of the company and take all necessary steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities
- Ensuring the Company meets all external regulatory compliance requirements
- Ensuring (in consultation with the External Advisory Committee) that the Company's academic Governance structure is effective and fit for purpose
- Establishing and maintaining fit for purpose systems for monitoring, control and accountability of risk and operational management
- Receive reports from the Academic Board and Executive Committee, review the progress of the Company's academic operations and propose and delegate actions to ensure effective operation and continual enhancement of the provision of teaching and learning
- Review, amend, or refer back for reconsideration the decisions of the Academic Board or Executive Committee before the approval of those actions
- Appointing members of the Academic Board
- Appointing of senior managers
- Ensuring and providing for the welfare of staff members in the employment of the company, or formerly in employment through the provision of salaries, pensions or other schemes and welfare support
- Strategic oversight and decisions in relation to entering into collaboration with other academic institutions, companies, or joint ventures in the interest of activities or services consistent with the mission and strategic vision of the Company. The Board is also authorised to sever all collaborations and partnerships whilst safeguarding the company's and stakeholders' interests at any time
- Approving, amending or repealing regulations, policies, byelaws or processes of the Company which hold no effect on academic standards or quality
- Approving, amending or repealing regulations, policies, byelaws or processes of the Company which affect academic standards or quality, subject to report or consideration by the Academic Board

External Advisory Committee

Frequency

Twice a Year

Membership

- Managing Director (Chair)
- External Advisory x2
- Head of Curriculum
- Quality Assurance Manager

* Members of the wider management team and external advisors may be invited to attend as necessary

Terms of Reference

1. Act as an external counterpoint to Point Blank's Board of Directors, offering impartial advice and guidance and on decisions highlighted by the Board of Directors as requiring external input
2. Ensure that Point Blank's decision making processes hold the students' interests at their core
3. To consider and advise on Point Blank's management and strategic planning, and ensure continuous value for money in the School's use of public funds. Concerns raised will be recorded and accessible in the minutes
4. Provide external input into the evaluation of the Point Blank Governance Framework to gauge that it remains fit for purpose and fully compliant with all statutory and regulatory requirements
5. Provide external oversight of Point Blank's Academic Governance procedures, specifically to provide the Board of Directors assurance that they are effective in safeguarding academic standards and student interests
6. Provide external oversight and input into Point Blank's Risk Management Procedures, ensuring they remain fit for purpose
7. Advise on Point Blank's strategic plan and priorities
8. Objectively evaluate student protection arrangements as outlined in Point Blank's Business Continuity Plan
9. Challenge the Board of Directors to evaluate and report its effectiveness when necessary, providing advice on best practice that could be incorporated into the Board's procedures

Membership

- Managing Director (Chair)
- Creative Director
- Head of Marketing
- Admissions Manager
- Music School Manager
- Head of Curriculum
- Data Manager
- Quality Assurance Manager

Terms of Reference

1. Produce an annual Operational Plan to be agreed by the Board of Directors
2. Execute and maintain operational oversight of the Operational Plan on behalf of the Board of Directors, producing regular reports for the Board of Directors
3. Monitoring the resource needs of the business, including facilities (e.g. the learning environment), staffing, capital expenditure and operational budgets. Escalating any additional resourcing requests to the Board of Directors for final approval.
4. Formally considering and approving small to medium scale proposals for collaboration with other institutions e.g. partnering with Royal College etc. (Note: major proposals, such as investments, acquisitions or significant expenditure would come before the Board of Directors, with input from the External Advisory Committee)
5. Highlighting the need for approval by Board of Directors contracted staff posts and the filling of contracted staff vacancies
6. Managing and monitoring operational risk registers and periodically reviewing the Risk Management Procedures to ensure they are fit for purpose
7. Managing and monitoring safeguarding, health and safety, security and disciplinary processes and procedures
8. Monitoring and evaluating all major projects e.g. degree development, new partnership developments e.g. Trinity, or manufacturer partnerships, undertaken by Point Blank on behalf of the Board of Directors
9. Ensuring that action is taken in response to institutional issues identified through external regulatory engagements and monitoring procedures

Membership

- Head of Curriculum (Chair)
- Quality Assurance Manager
- Module Leaders of the programmes represented
- Music School Manager
- Student Representatives (2 minimum)
- University Link Tutor
- Institution Link Tutor
- Programme Administrator (Clerk)

Terms of Reference

1. To consider, discuss and respond to feedback from student representatives
2. To consider and discuss student survey results, the formal responses of the School, and associated action plans
3. To consider and discuss the provision of facilities and resources (both academic and non-academic, physical and electronic)
4. To consider and discuss External Examiners' reports and the responses and actions plans arising from these
5. To consider and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of all aspects of the curriculum and any proposed changes
6. To consider and evaluate the development of School and University academic policies, in particular the effectiveness of teaching, learning and assessment strategies
7. To promote effective systems of quality assurance and enhancement within the programmes and spread good practice
8. To consider and contribute to the Annual Action Plan of the programmes
9. To ensure effective liaison with other programmes and students
10. To produce, evaluate and monitor a table of actions
11. To share, discuss and disseminate good teaching practice

Membership

- Head of Curriculum (Chair)
- Content Development Officer
- Music School Manager
- Module leaders
- Institution Link Tutor
- Programme Administrator (Clerk)

Terms of Reference

Term 4

1. Oversee learning & teaching at Point Blank
2. Plan module updates and course development plan
3. Revisit assignment tasks and evaluate effectiveness of each assignment
4. Consult on any new videos which need created
5. Plan any systems changes needed for the online school
6. Evaluate whether any major changes, communicable to Middlesex, are required for the forthcoming academic year

Term 1, 2, 3

1. Communicate updates that have taken place for that term's modules
2. Update the action plan for the next module content updates
3. Consider and respond to subject representative reports
4. Review student engagement for each module
5. Identify good practice amongst teaching and assessment, to promote via the 'Good Practice Newsletter'

Membership

- Head of Curriculum (Chair)
- Admissions Manager
- Music School Manager
- Quality Assurance Manager
- Data Manager
- Content Development Officer
- Programme Administrator (Clerk)

Terms of Reference

Programme Review

1. Success, achievement, retention data
2. Impact on changes from the previous year
3. Student recruitment for the forthcoming academic year
4. Summary of changes for the forthcoming academic year

Academic standards and Quality

5. Monitor effectiveness and implementation of both University and School's policies and regulations
6. Review Internal verification and second marking
7. Review of external examiner report

Teaching and Learning

8. Ensure the school's policies in relation to teaching and learning are reviewed and implemented appropriately
9. Monitor and review the effectiveness of the teaching and learning strategy
10. Identify examples of good practice in relation to teaching and learning (reports from module leaders, student feedback, College Manager reports)
11. Update on teaching staff

Assessment and Academic regulations

12. Review appeals and academic malpractice for the year

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13. Review articulation activity
14. Review number of students who needed resubmission opportunities

Student Experience

15. Review any student complaints subject to the complaints procedure
16. Assess students' engagement in programme
17. Monitor and review of the learning environment including student support services, learning resources and the effectiveness of the IT support

Membership

- Head of Education (Chair)
- Quality Assurance Manager
- Music School Manager
- Head of Curriculum
- Programme Administrator (Clerk)

Terms of Reference

1. Maintain ownership, responsibility for updating and the monitoring of progress of the annual Quality Enhancement Plan
2. Maintain ownership, responsibility for updating and the monitoring of the risk management log
3. Consider EE report and ULT response to plan changes and updates for the forthcoming academic year
4. Update Point Blank action tables
5. Add new actions onto tables resulting from student feedback
6. Review student feedback from module surveys
7. Look at how results from changes resulting from student feedback can be effectively communicated to the student body
8. Analyse trends in feedback data

Membership

- Admissions Manager (Chair)
- Head of Education
- Admissions Officer
- Programme Administrator (Clerk)

Terms of Reference

1. Report on recruitment cycle for each term
 - a. Breakdown of student body at course level
 - b. Report on acceptance ratio
 - c. Provide statistics on student details for annual monitoring purposes
2. Highlight any outstanding payments or students of interest
3. Highlight any pastoral/Additional learning support needs identified
4. Complete the cohort tracker

Membership

- Head of Education
- Quality Assurance Manager
- Subject Representative for the programmes under discussion
- Institution Link Tutor
- Programme Administrator (Clerk)

Terms of Reference

1. To collate module grades and form recommendations for progression or classification at the 2nd tier assessment board
2. To identify students who need to re-sit modules in order to progress or complete

2nd Tier Assessment & Progression Board

Week

12

Term(s)

1 ,2, 3,
4**Membership**

- Head of Education
- Quality Assurance Manager
- Subject Representative for the programmes under discussion
- University Link Tutor
- Institution Link Tutor
- Programme Administrator (Clerk)

Terms of Reference

1. To award, in the light of recommendations from the 1st tier assessment board, qualifications in respect of the programmes under discussion
2. To approve progression from one level to the next for the programmes under discussion
3. To approve module re-sits for students unable to progress to the next level
4. To consider the implementation of University assessment policy and related matters of principle and to make any recommendations to the Academic Board

New Programmes Working Group	Frequency	Monthly / As required
Membership		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative Director (Chair) • Managing Director • Content Development Manager • Head of Education • Programme Administrator (Clerk) 		
Terms of Reference		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To consider and develop new programme proposals. 2. To ensure all proposal developments engage with the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education 3. To consider the resources needed to support proposed programmes and advise the Executive Committee of any additional resource requirements 4. To ensure that all proposals are developed in accordance to Middlesex University regulations 5. To encourage, promote and disseminate good practice in the design of programmes 		