

Board of Directors Minutes

Meeting held on 13th September 2023 at 2pm
Teams online

Attended:

- Rob Cowan – Director, CEO
- Jules Brookes – Director, Head of Provider, Chair
- Anwar Hamad – Director, General Manager (Clerk)
- Mulika Sannie – Non-Executive Director
- Peter Black – Non-Executive Finance Director
- Andrew Gower – Non-Executive Director
- Keith Harris – Non-Executive Director

MINUTES

Item

Section 1: Welcome

1.1. Welcome and apologies

1.1.1. The Chair welcomed members to the meeting.

1.2. Confirmation of minutes from the previous meeting

1.2.1. The committee **confirmed** the minutes from the previous meeting.

1.3. Actions update

1.3.1. Obtaining new renders was considered, but due to cost and the short timeframe for project completion, the decision was that they would not add additional value. Regarding invites for the launch party, the School is in touch with a number of noted industry figures to raise the profile of the launch.

1.3.2. The standard notice period for termination on the MOC is 12 months. However, there is a clause allowing for a potential reduction in this period. It was emphasised that any modification to this notice period should be contingent upon the number of students opting to continue with a Middlesex university award.

1.3.3. Preliminary research indicates the existence of another company that has secured the trademark for "MuSE" in the educational domain. Legal expertise has been sought to provide advice on the matter.

1.3.4. The School has hired an external consultant to help with the project regarding scholarship and research.

1.3.5. Action 3.2.6 was completed.

- 1.3.6. Action 4.1.4. will be completed before the visit from the Office for Students in November.

Section 2: Standing Items (to note unless starred)

2.1. Head of Provider's Report

- 2.1.1. The Head of Provider began with the positive news that the institution has been provisionally awarded TEF Gold. This recognition, effective from October, is a testament to the School's quality and will bolster marketing efforts.
- 2.1.2. While the School missed out on "world-leading" status, Point Blank has been fortunate to receive specialist provider funding from the Office for Students (OfS). Gratitude was expressed to the OfS for the recent accolades and grant funding awarded to the School.
- 2.1.3. Positive results were reported from the National Student Survey (NSS).
- 2.1.4. The Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs) submission is being spearheaded by the Registrar, who was instrumental in the TEF submission that earned the School's Gold rating. The School is taking every opportunity to inform, educate and train staff on what's required to work with DAPs, and is mindful of the challenges of new ways of working.
- 2.1.5. The Non-Executive Finance Director highlighted that a significant financial incentive for staff could be regarding pensions, as other educational institutions offer more lucrative packages in this area.
- 2.1.6. The Head of Provider provided an update on the rebranding efforts. Collaborating with an external agency, the project encompasses the new website, style guide, copy, and banners, ensuring alignment across the organisation's various facets.
- 2.1.7. The Head of Provider announced the launch of two new degrees starting in October 2024: Music Systems Engineering, expected to appeal to a coder-centric demographic, and Songwriting, intended for a more musician-aligned audience given our technological reputation. Additionally, a relaunch of professional courses is on the horizon.
- 2.1.8. The Head of provider elaborated on the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE), a government led initiative. The potential synergy between LLE and professional courses could draw individuals keen on shorter-duration courses, especially those requiring financial assistance.
- 2.1.9. The CEO discussed an initial new concept for professional courses - residential programmes in the Summer term. A Non-Executive Director

noted that this idea could potentially work well in partnership with American colleges.

2.2. Premises expansion update

- 2.2.1. The CEO provided an update on the current status of the new premises. The work is evidently progressing at a commendable pace, and the walls, trunking and conditioning units had all been installed.
- 2.2.2. Despite the promising progress, there have been challenges. The CEO pointed out issues related to the delivery timelines of specific products. Project completion was initially scheduled for September but has seen subsequently postponed to mid-November. Certain items which have a longer lead time than originally expected are being re-considered to avoid any further potential delays.
- 2.2.3. The CEO stressed a strategic shift in their approach to the project, aiming for a more hands-on approach. To ensure the timely completion and to prevent any further delays, weekly meetings have been instituted with the architects and project managers.
- 2.2.4. A Non-Executive Director enquired about the status of the building's security provisions. The CEO confirmed the installation of security grills at both the front and back of the premises. Additionally, he mentioned that the main entrance door is slated for replacement and some interior security enhancements are underway.

2.3. Adopt the Management accounts for the quarter ended 31/03/2023

- 2.3.1. The management accounts were adopted.

2.4. DAPS update

- 2.4.1. This item was covered in the Head of Provider's report.

2.5. Review report from Academic Board

- 2.5.1. A Non-Executive Director welcomed the development of the new governance framework presented by the Academic Board.
- 2.5.2. A Non-Executive Director commented whether the Academic Board would review any recommendations for further enhancement arising from the TEF panel's report. He believed that the board's next report could usefully include reflections on how the Academic Board intends to build on the TEF success.

- 2.5.3. The Head of Provider informed the directors about the Retention Working Group, where he, alongside the CEO, worked to assess student engagement at various touchpoints. He emphasised that despite the achievement of TEF Gold, the School remains committed at a senior level to further enhancing quality.
- 2.5.4. A Non-Executive Director voiced a concern about the potential for complacency amongst staff following the achievement of TEF Gold. The Head of Provider provided reassurance that the pursuit of excellence is continuous, mentioning that the recent TEF Gold award would not change the institution's focused approach and would be highlighted at the next company meeting.
- 2.5.5. The Head of Provider further elaborated that since the Academic Board report was written, there have been efforts to review the delivery of courses, ensuring that recent updates positively impact student engagement.

2.6. Review report from Executive Committee

- 2.6.1. A Non-Executive Director began by noting the increase in CAS allocation. He sought clarity on whether Point Blank is experiencing growth in specific territories.
- 2.6.2. The Head of Provider responded by sharing that Point Blank had recently augmented its CAS allocation. This change came in light of a successful review by the UK Visa and Immigration service (UKVI), and the increased allocation aligns well with the institution's current trajectory.
- 2.6.3. A Non-Executive Director suggested more context in the report in future. The CEO suggested updating the format to match the Academic Board report. The Non-Executive Director is also available for further support and guidance in report writing if required.
- 2.6.4. The Head of Provider shared an update regarding student numbers, highlighting the likelihood of missing the targeted new starter student numbers, with the projection being approximately 270.
- 2.6.5. A Non-Executive Director raised the issue of employability and ensuring students were equipped with the skills necessary to secure employment post-graduation. The Head of Provider recognised the importance of this and mentioned ongoing discussions about expanding the careers department. The goal is to have an adept individual leading the department, ensuring graduates receive ample support to secure employment. The Non-Executive Director stressed the rising demands on institutions to guarantee value for money in their offerings.

- 2.6.6. A Non-Executive Director emphasised the difference between education and training. He voiced the need for an educational approach that moulds students into agents of change, rather than training them for predefined roles.
- 2.6.7. The Head of Provider expressed the need for expert guidance in this domain, specifically someone with strong industry connections.
- 2.6.8. A Non-Executive Director pointed out the transformative effects of AI on current roles, emphasising the importance of considering this rapid evolution in Point Blank's strategic approach.
- 2.6.9. The Non-Executive Finance Director suggested seconding an expert from the industry on a part time basis for this purpose, however it was discussed that this is an important that requires specialised focus.
- 2.6.10. A Non-Executive Director commented on the broader societal context, where more young people are achieving success without traditional education paths. She emphasised the importance of incorporating this perspective into Point Blank's strategic planning.

Section 3: Items to Decide

3.1. Approve Shareholders' quarterly dividends

- 3.1.1. The board unanimously approved the proposed Shareholders' quarterly dividends.

3.2. Confirm dates for next year's meetings

- 3.2.1. The following dates for the next meetings were confirmed:

- Wednesday 13th December 2023
- Thursday 21st March 2024
- Wednesday 19th June 2024
- Wednesday 11th September 2024

3.3. Confirm strategic plan copy

- 3.3.1. A Non-Executive suggested some tweaks to section 4, so it would comprise of three aims and six objectives. Once those changes were made, the plan could be approved.

4.1. Discuss any recommendations from Audit and Value for Money Committee

4.1.1. The Management account pack received approval during the committee meeting.

4.1.2. The committee confirmed that the School should move ahead with the internal audit regarding GDPR.

4.1.3. There was also discussion regarding the following items:

- the process of changing the bank account.
- the issue of the fraudulent payment.
- how the grant funding from the OfS has been allocated.

Section 5: Items to Note

5.1. Students numbers report

5.1.1. There was no further discussion regarding student numbers.

Section 6: Close

6.1. Vote on Shareholders' dividends

6.1.1. The board approved the issue of Shareholders' dividends.

6.2. Confirmation of next meeting date

6.2.1. The next Board of Directors meeting will be taking place on

6.3. AOB

6.3.1. Board congratulated the School on achieving TEF Gold.

Key Contacts

Chair: Jules Brookes
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Clerk: Anwar Hamad
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Actions Table

Action No.	Minute Ref.	Action	Deadline	Responsible Parties
1	2.5.3	For the Academic Board to reflect on and report next steps for quality enhancement informed by the TEF Report.	Next board meeting	Head of Education and Curriculum
2	2.6.3	More context to be included on EXCO report and format to be updated.	Next board meeting	General Manager
3	3.2.5 – June meeting	Registrar be tasked to scope the School's Research and Scholarship Policy in alignment with the requirements for DAPs.	Before next board meeting	Registrar
4	4.1.4 – June meeting	Review Point Blank's external speakers policy and any other related policies to ensure alignment with the HE Freedom of Speech bill.	Before next board meeting	Quality Standards Committee (QSC)