
External Examiners' report template (Subject Assessment Board)

Purpose of the External Examiner's report

Please read this section before writing your report

External Examiner reports are an integral part of the University's quality monitoring and enhancement process and play an important role in the programme review cycle. External Examiners are required to submit annual written reports.

Reports should be submitted within **four weeks** following the final Assessment Board. Report submission should not be delayed until re-sit boards have taken place.

The report should be linked with programme aims and outcomes, and the assessment criteria for each module, as described in the programme/module handbook(s). Reports should be objective and make positive criticism and/or recommendations where appropriate.

External Examiners' reports are the property of the University. The University will circulate reports as it sees fit, in accordance with legislative requirements. External Examiner reports are public documents, and are seen by students at Programme Voice Group meetings. **Please do not reference individual students and members of staff by name.**

Under the Freedom of Information Act, the University will provide copies of External Examiners' reports to third parties who have made a lawful request. Reports will normally retain External Examiners' names. The University will consider any reasonable request from External Examiners to anonymise their reports. Such a request should be made in writing and submitted with the report.

Full details of the procedures, and the use of the reports is outlined in [LQEH section 4](#).

Submission of the report

Please submit your report via email to the following email address:

externalexaminer@mdx.ac.uk

Your annual fee will be processed once we receive a copy of your annual report.

External Examiner Report – Subject Assessment Board

External Examiner name	Ken Foreman
Academic Year (period covered by report)	2020-21
Date report submitted to Externalexaminer@mdx.ac.uk	23/10/2021

Programme(s) reviewed	BA Honours/DipHE/CertHE Music Production and Sound Engineering		
Apprenticeship standard (if applicable)	N/A		
Module(s) moderated	All		
Name of Programme Leader/ Module Leader	Alex Phountzi		
Date(s) of subject assessment board(s) attended	1. 07/01/2021 2. 08/04/2021 3. 08/07/2021 4. 14/10/2021		
Programmes/module delivery arrangements – tick all that are applicable	Apprenticeship		
	Hendon Campus		
	Dubai Campus		
	Malta Campus		
	Mauritius campus		
	Collaborative partner:	Yes/ No	Partner(s) name
	Franchise		
	Joint		
Validated	y	Point Blank Music School London N1	

To be completed by all external examiners by ticking the appropriate box:

OVERALL STANDARDS	Yes	No
1. In your view, are the standards set for the award(s) appropriate for the qualification(s)? <i>For apprenticeship programmes, consider whether they reflect the apprenticeship standard.</i>	/	
2. In your view, are the standards of student performance equivalent to other UK institutions with which you are familiar?	/	

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Support for the role of External Examiner	Yes	No
<i>(For new external Examiners)</i> Did you find the induction arrangements effective in helping you understand your role and the University's expectations of you?	N/A	
The Faculty and Programme Team communicated effectively with me throughout the year	/	
I was given sufficient information concerning my role as an External Examiner	/	
I was given sufficient information concerning the modules for which I am appointed to enable full consideration of delivery, including collaborative partner provision, franchises and overseas campuses, if applicable	/	
I was given sufficient time to approve draft examination papers (where appropriate), with assessment criteria for approval	/	
Did you receive formal written feedback on your report for the previous academic year? (N/A for EEs completing their first report)	/	
Were you satisfied with the response to the issues raised in your report for the previous academic year?	/	
Comments (if 'no' to any of the above):		

Report

Please use the following headings and guidance notes:

Programme/ Subject design, content and standards

Please comment on;

- the extent to which standards (apprenticeship standards; PSRB requirements; Professional benchmark statements) are appropriate to the qualification, or qualification element under consideration on comparable UK Higher Education programmes
- the curriculum, its aims, content, and development
- Does the course content remain relevant and up to date?
- please comment only on those modules that have strengths, weaknesses or areas of good practice that you would wish to highlight
- Where the programme has a vocational element or link, please comment on the content of the course in terms of preparing students for employment in that sector

Standards are appropriate and comparable to other UK HE programmes. I examined detailed evidence of moderation for each of the four examination boards I attended in 2021. I am satisfied that the standards are being maintained in the assessment process.

The BA (Hons) Music Production and Sound Engineering programme (and Cert HE and Dip HE) is a specialist course with industry currency and credibility in the electronic dance music sector.

The programme aims and curriculum content are appropriate for a programme that has been designed to meet the needs of students aspiring to be music producers/engineers and seeking professional instruction on up-to-date, industry-standard production tools.

October 2021: reflecting on the challenges of the past 18 months, it is evident that Point Blank Music School's experience and expertise in online learning left it well placed to manage the challenges of learning, teaching and assessment during the Covid.19 lockdowns.

The VLE at Point Blank Music School is an excellent platform for online teaching and learning with a very good student interface and high-quality resources. The in-house developer has done a first-class job of building a platform appropriate to a modern HE institution.

The VLE has improved significantly since my appointment 5 years ago. The Point-Blank team have responded positively to external examiner feedback and the VLE has continued to develop with increased functionality. The improvement cycle continued during my final year.

In 2020-21, I was impressed by the new way of accessing moderation records. This improvement was very welcome and made the job of external examining easier.

Finally, programme handbook is fit for purpose and meets key requirements in communication of information on standards and policies. Programme and module aims are clearly set out and assessments are designed to test the learning outcomes.

Student achievement (please avoid reference by name to individual students)	Yes	No
Are you satisfied that the level of student achievement is comparable across all locations of programme delivery (eg. overseas campuses, franchise programmes)	/	

Please comment on:

- *standards achieved by students*
- *student performance in relation to their peers on comparable courses*
- *student performance in modules taught at overseas campuses (Dubai, Mauritius) and modules on franchised and joint validated programmes at UK and overseas sites*
- *student performance in relation to clinical/professional practice (if applicable)*
- *student performance in relation to PSRB requirements (if applicable)*
- *the effectiveness of employer engagement (if applicable)*
- *foundation degrees: Are there sufficient and effective opportunities for work based learning and work related learning?*
- *strengths and weaknesses of the cohort*
- *factors that the External Examiner is aware of that have positively or negatively affected student performance (e.g. resources, field trips etc.)*

2020-21 was a challenging academic year for the HE sector. The Covid.19 pandemic continued to disrupt the learning experience in all institutions, including Point Blank Music School. Although, students have now been able to return to a certain degree of normality, the pandemic undoubtedly had

an impact on overall student performance. It is a credit to the Point Blank education team that they were able to take actions to mitigate the impact. Modules adjustments and other accommodations allowed most students to complete their assessments and progress. External examiners were consulted and approved necessary module amendments to facilitate online assessment. As I noted above, the school's expertise and experience in online learning helped it manage the challenges of learning, teaching and assessment during the lockdown

Variations of student performance in 2020-21 are reflected in the broad range of grades awarded. The assessment decisions for the work I examined, and grades awarded at L4, L5 and L6 are in line with other institutions in the sector. There were, as in previous cohorts, examples of very high-quality work at the top of the grade scale. This is a pleasure to examine and the very best examples at L6 included work that was close to professional standard. I reviewed work across all the grade bands and found it to be comparable to standards on other HE programmes.

Assessments: structure, design and marking	Yes	No
I was given the opportunity to see samples of marked work (including written assignments and examination scripts) covering the full range of marks	/	
I saw evidence of internal moderation in the assessment process and confirm it was used effectively and consistently	/	
See evidence of adequate student feedback being provided to students?	/	
I saw samples of work from across all programme sites of delivery including overseas campuses and franchises where applicable	/	

Please comment on:

- *appropriateness of assessment for measuring achievement of standards*
- *The appropriateness and rigour of the course assessment strategy and methods of assessment;*
- *standards of marking and moderation (please comment on all overseas campuses and sites)*
- *procedures for assessment and examination.*
- *effectiveness and quality of feedback to students*
- *Are the processes for assessment, examination sound and fairly conducted in line with the University's/ Collaborative partner's (where applicable) regulations?*

Comprehensive evidence of moderation was made available to me in advance of each assessment board. It was rigorous and transparent.

I was able to access all assessment briefs and grading criteria in advance through the Point Blank VLE

Assessment Boards	Yes	No
Did you attend the Subject Assessment Board (this could include attendance via Microsoft Teams)?	/	
Did you receive relevant meeting, board, deadline dates and board paperwork in a timely manner?	/	

Please comment on:

- *The organisation and conduct of Assessment Boards and, in the event of non-attendance, whether you were fully involved in the assessment process..*

All assessment boards in 2020-21 took place online. The boards were well-organised and conducted professionally. Screen-sharing of grade profiles worked effectively and operating online did not present any significant problems.

Communication leading up to each board was very good.

Mark Hunter streamlined the awarding process for the final 2 boards of 2021 and this worked well.

Apprenticeship programmes (if applicable)

Please consider and comment on:

- *Do the programme and module learning outcomes mirror the knowledge, skills and behaviours (KSBs) set out in the apprenticeship standard and prepare apprentices for end-point assessment (EPA)?*
- *Is teaching and learning delivered in the context of on-the-job and off-the-job training?*
- *Are apprentices receiving a good level of support from the University?*
- *Does the partner work collaboratively with the apprentices' employers?*
- *Does the apprenticeship include an integrated or non-integrated degree?*

N/A

Collaborative Programmes

Please add any comments relating to the links between the University and the collaborative institution.

The final two assessment Boards in 2020-21 were attended by Mark Hunter, the Middlesex University Deputy Dean.

I am not aware of any problems in the relationship between Middlesex University and Point Blank Music School.

Recommendations

Please use this section to provide the programme team with suggestions that you would like them to consider, arising from the comments within your report matters where, in your opinion, there is potential for enhancement.

The ongoing improvement cycle and the responsiveness of the team means that I have no significant recommendations to make in 2021.

My final recommendation relates to the anonymising of student names in the *Assessment Board Report for External Examiners*. The report is distributed in advance of the board. My comments on this are noted in the minutes of the October 21 board and reflect my preference to see the student names rather than just numbers. This would permit me to correlate names with my examination of moderation evidence. This will now fall under the remit of the new external examiner.

My extended tenure as EE has now ended.

Actions

Please use this section if you require the programme team to take further action relating to issues which have a serious impact on academic standards or academic quality.

N/A

Commendations / Good practice

Please comment here on any particular strengths, distinctive or innovative features of the programme(s)/ modules

- Consistently positive response to my feedback.
- All points I raised in assessment boards have been responded to and solutions proposed.
- Interaction with the education/quality team at Point Blank is very good.
- Accessing moderation has been made very much clearer and easier by improvements to the VLE during 2020-21. I commend the development team for their efforts..

Final Report – only applicable if you are completing your term as an External Examiner

Please consider and comment on:

- *Your overall experience of being an external examiner*
- *The overall development of the Programme/Modules during this time.*

14th October 2021 was my final assessment board and the end of my tenure as external examiner.

I would like to thank everyone at Point Blank Music School for making it an enjoyable and productive five years. We developed an effective working relationship and significant progress was made between 2016 and 2021.

The assessment process was the key area of focus in the first two years of my tenure. I recommended the development of robust, transparent grading criteria for all assessments on the programme. I also recommended the development of marking rubrics clearly linked to grading criteria.

Another key recommendation was training for assessment staff to align feedback language to grades awarded and to run calibration activities in marking teams to ensure all assessment staff were marking in alignment.

All of these recommendations were acted upon by the Point Blank Music School team. Angela Foo and Ski Oakenfull ensured that actions were swiftly and effectively put in place. The assessment process was transformed, and standards improved.

All HE institutions have been under sustained pressure during the past 18 months. The start of my tenure in 2016, and life before the pandemic seems like another world now. I have observed the efforts made by the PB team to manage the challenges of learning, teaching and assessment during the Covid.19 lockdowns and have always been impressed. They have made every effort to consult the EEs and keep us informed of necessary adjustments.

I hand over my role to John Meredith with my very best wishes for the future.