Provider name: Point Blank Music School

Hello from the Point Blank Student Union!

Hi! This is   representing the Point Blank Student Union and I will be writing the Student submission for TEF 2023. My role is the Student NUS Officer for Equality Diversity and Inclusion and because of my involvement in student feedback sessions over the past year, I feel very happy to be able to convey the student's voices and share their experiences of this brilliant institution. Due to Point blank being a small school, I do my role alongside my studies and I have written this submission in my own time. The support I have received from the school has been excellent during this process; I have been provided with resources without any intervention on what the submission contains. Of course, conducting the submission alongside my final year studies has been challenging in terms of time management but I am proud of the work that has been done and the number of students I have managed to connect with.

1. Approach to evidence-gathering

The students at point blank

There were 979 students on a higher education course between 1 August 2021 and 31 July 2022 which includes both in-person and online students. I have only collected feedback from in-person students as there is a specific student representative responsible for gathering feedback from online students.

Point Blank runs many short music industry courses such as DJ, vocal, radio and sound engineering courses. For the purpose of this submission, I have focused on students studying one of Point Blank's in-person Higher education courses (all courses are available to study completely online as well). These include BA (Hons) Music Production and Sound Engineering, BA (Hons) Music Production and DJ Practice, BA (Hons) Music Production and Vocal Performance, and BA (Hons) Music Industry Management. There are four terms per year, terms commencing January, April, July and September. The July term is usually the quietest and the September term is usually the busiest.

Over the course of collecting feedback, I have attempted to gather a representative sample of students to convey their voices and opinions about the school which means this submission is as accurate as possible.

Methods of collecting feedback used

1. Module feedback

Point Blank collects module feedback and conducts surveys throughout the year. I have had access to the module feedback from the start of January 2022 through til September 2022. This feedback option is available to all students who complete a module, on our virtual learning environment (VLE). The feedback is collected in the form of a multi-choice survey plus open-ended questions where students can convey longer answers.

Over the course of 2022, 544 students submitted comments via this method of feedback making this source of feedback the most popular. Due to the fact this feedback is collected from all higher education students, it can be considered to be representative of students from all backgrounds. I have used this specifically to evidence the opinions of students regarding teaching, course content and assessments. The feedback is broken down further into positive and negative comments and percentage satisfaction.

2. In-person Drop-in Feedback sessions

In order to specifically collect feedback from students about their general experience my fellow student officers and I ran multiple 'drop-in' feedback sessions. The drop-in style helped give a relaxed atmosphere where students could openly express their feedback without any staff being present. Point Blank also kindly provided pizzas for the sessions, which I can confidently say the

students appreciated. The sessions were completely anonymous and mostly minuted by either myself or the NUS Student Officer for Education. Following each meeting, all feedback points would be gathered into 5 or 6 main points and shared with staff members at termly meetings. Here we had an opportunity to present our findings and get answers to any questions we had. Most feedback presented to staff would be turned into an action list to be reviewed at the next meeting and this helped us as student officers, to then reconnect with students and close the feedback loop by telling them what Point Blank has done with their feedback.

Please see the table below to give an idea of how many students we gathered feedback from during these sessions.

| Feedback session	Focus of feedback	Number of students
3rd March 2022	Career feedback	21
4th March 2022	General drop in feedback	20
19th May 2022	Genral drop in feedback	15
15th August 2022	General drop infeedback	9
1st December 2022	General drop in feedback	15
		80

3. Paper surveys

To collect feedback in different formats, we utilised paper surveys. These were distributed around the two campuses (Orsman Road and Penn Street) and collected and collated by myself. There were 15 multi-choice questions that asks students to select how much they agree with a statement from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree as well as an option to expand on all answers given. All 16 people who completed the paper surveys were studying a higher education course

Q1. Are you currently studying a London HE course?
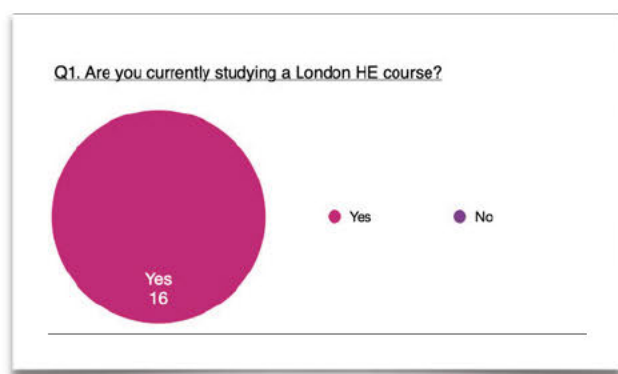
4. Online surveys

We also utilised the same survey on google forms to collect more feedback. On both the paper and online surveys there were 15 multiple-choice
There were 19 responses from this survey, with 18 completing the feedback on a higher education course. The student who selected no has been discounted from further results as the submission is focused on those studying a HE course.

Are you currently studying on a London HE course?
19 responses
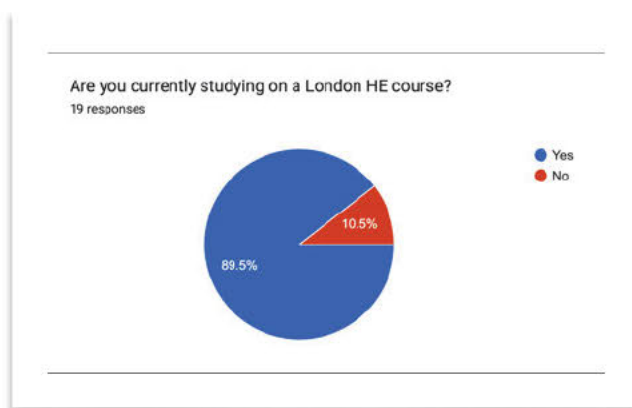
2. Student experience

From the evidence gathered, I will apply comments to the relevant student experience feature…

SE1 *How well teaching, feedback and assessment practices support students' learning, progression, and attainment.*

From module feedback collected for the term commencing January 2022, there were 594 comments from 221 students; 38% of the total comments were positive comments relating to the teaching at Point Blank. Comments regarding specific lecturers include;

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- "always offered support" - Music Entrepreneur
- "very understanding" - Music Entrepreneur
- "constantly engaging students in the lecture" - Music Industry
- "10/10 would deffo give him free tickets to my show" - Music Industry
- "completely fulfilled my expectations" - Sound Design
- "bloomed my knowledge." – Sound Design

From module feedback collected for the term commencing April 2022, there were 568 comments from 208 students. 41% of total comments were positive comments relating to the teaching practices at Point Blank;
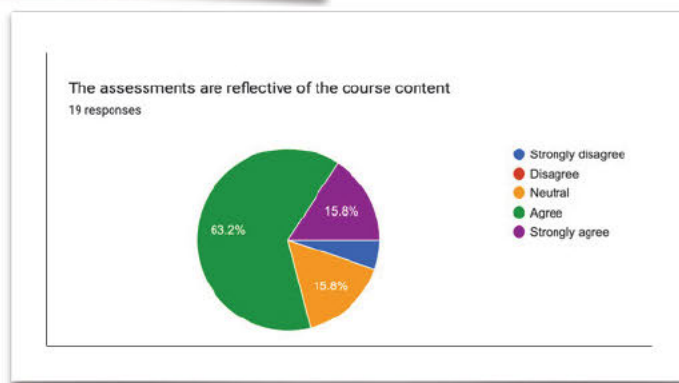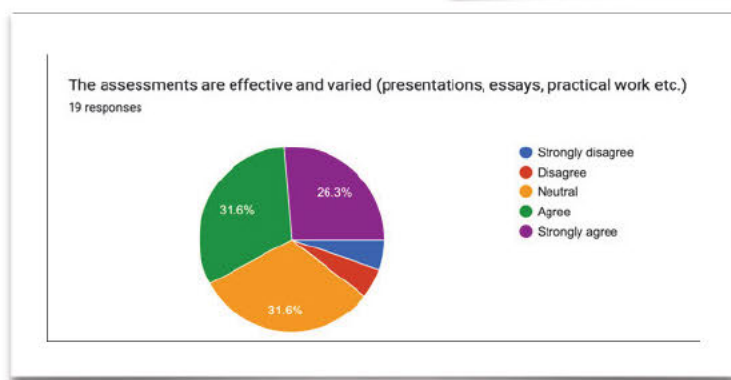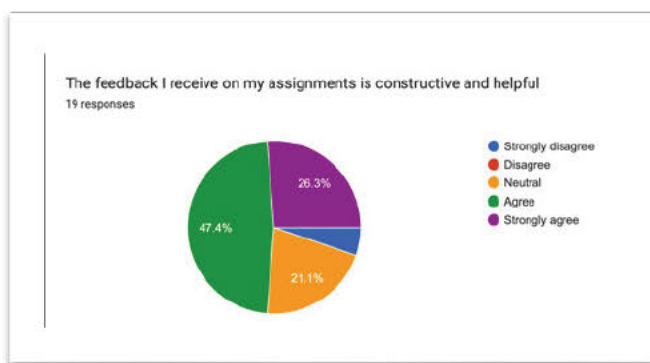
- "The delivery made it easy to put the work." – Composing for Film and TV
- "The lecturer helped us grow and discover our sound and even connect us with some people in the industry." – Electronic Music Performance

From the module feedback collected for the term commencing July 2022, there were 208 comments across 115 students and 29% of total comments were positive.

- "The explanation and application of different production techniques to different genres provided a holistic understanding of the module." – Creative Production and Remix
- "the way that the lecturer delivered information made things sound intriguing." – Mastering

In regards to the assessments, looking at the online surveys, 63.2% of students agree that the assessments are reflective of the course content and 57.9% of students agree or strongly agree that the assessments are effective and varied

In terms of feedback provided to students on their assessments, most students agree that it is both constructive and helpful

The feedback I receive on my assignments is constructive and helpful
19 responses

The assessments are effective and varied (presentations, essays, practical work etc.)
19 responses

The assessments are reflective of the course content
19 responses

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Also included in the extra comments from the online surveys one student commented
- "The quality of teaching and resources is really rich and someone with talent can easily create good sounds from learning all the techniques provided"

From all this feedback it is very possible to assume that there is a very high standard of teaching and assessment practices at Point Blank that students are benefitting from.

SE2 *How well course content and delivery engages students in their learning, and stretches students to develop their knowledge and skills*

From module feedback collected for the term commencing January 2022, 19% of the total comments mentioned positive things about the course content.
- "I learnt so much during this module" - Advanced Recording & Mixing
- "I also got a deeper understanding of mixing, recording and editing recordings" - Advanced Recording & Mixing
- "The best thing about the module was how detailed the content was" - Advanced Sound Design
- "The level of detail in this module was very high and I almost felt a bit overawed at first" - Record Deals and Branding

From the module feedback collected for the term commencing April 2022, 20% of total comments were positive regarding the content delivery
- "We got to be hands-on a lot letting us explore the programme" - Intro to Music Production (Ableton)
- "So far this has been the most interactive and enjoyable module. I have learnt so much." – Composing for Film and TV
- "This module was very immersive and opened my mind up to new ideas regarding composition & song writing" - Music composition

From the module feedback collected for the term commencing July 2022, 23% of total comments positively reflect on how the course content positively impacted students' own personal development.
- "It was interesting to develop a larger portfolio of work that I can utilise when the course has finished." – Production Portfolio
- "I really enjoyed how this module gave me the opportunity to experiment with a lot of crazy things that Ableton can do. I think this took my creativity to the next level." – Creative Audio (Ableton)

From the online surveys, most students are inspired by the knowledge learnt in lessons and believe that the lectures care for and support their learning. Below you can see the responses to the question 'Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements'.

I feel inspired by the knowledge and skills I have gained in lessons
19 responses

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

36.8%
47.4%
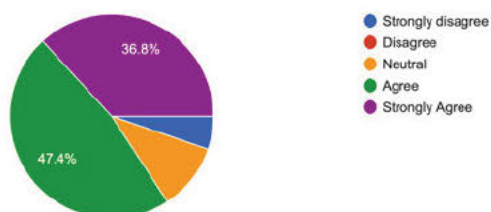
The lecturers care about and support my learning
19 responses

- Strongly disagree
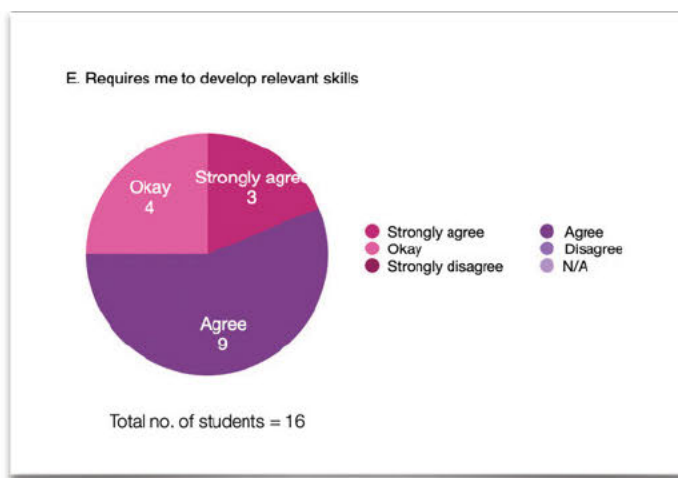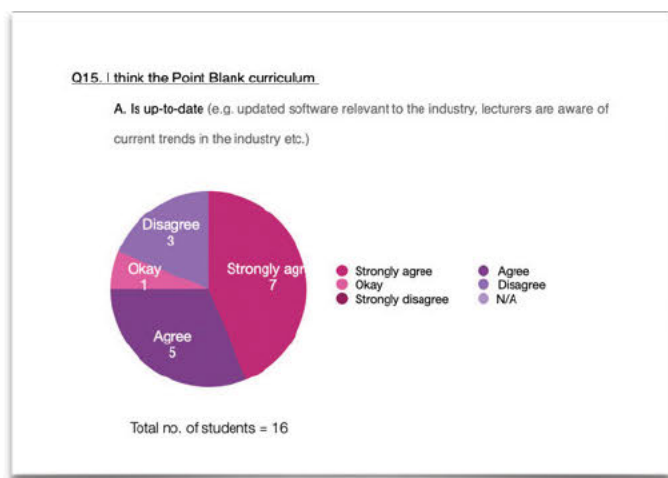- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

31.6%
31.6%
31.6%
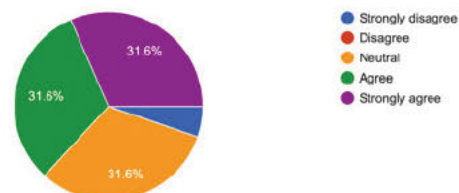
SE3 *How far does research in relevant disciplines, innovation, scholarship, professional practice and/or employer engagement contribute to the student academic experience*

In order to provide accurate information on the state of the music industry, research into trends needs to be up to date and reflected in the course content.

To measure the extent to which this research impacts the overall student experience I will refer to both the online survey and the paper survey. Referring to questions 15 (A) and 15 (E) in the collected paper surveys, 12/16 students agreed or strongly agreed that the curriculum is up-to-date and all students surveyed thought that the curriculum requires them to develop relevant skills.

Q15. I think the Point Blank curriculum

A. Is up-to-date (e.g. updated software relevant to the industry, lecturers are aware of current trends in the industry etc.)

Strongly agree 7 · Agree 5 · Disagree 3 · Okay 1

Legend: Strongly agree, Okay, Strongly disagree, Agree, Disagree, N/A

Total no. of students = 16

E. Requires me to develop relevant skills

Strongly agree 3 · Okay 4 · Agree 9

Legend: Strongly agree, Okay, Strongly disagree, Agree, Disagree, N/A

Total no. of students = 16

Referring to the online surveys where 19 responses were recorded, in the same questions, 11/19 either agreed or strongly agreed that the curriculum is up-to-date and 16/19 of students agreed to some degree that the curriculum required them to develop relevant skills.
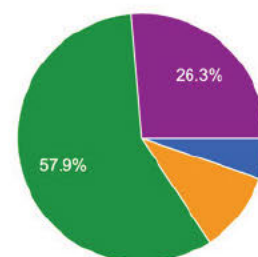

A. Is up-to-date (e.g. updated software relevant to the industry, lecturers are aware of currenttrends in the industry etc.)

19 responses

36.8% · 21.1% · 26.3%

Legend: Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, Strongly agree
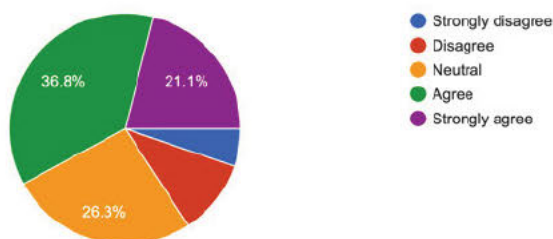
E. Requires me to develop relevant skills

19 responses

57.9% · 26.3%

Feedback from the drop-in student feedback session held on Monday 15th August 2022, all students present agreed that the course content on the higher education courses (notably Music Production and Sound Engineering and Music Production and DJ Practice) was "relevant to their personal development in the music industry".

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To continue to provide students with content that is both relevant and motivates students to be enthusiastic about their learning, the Program Voice Group was created where students are consulted about their feelings towards the content. This is an example of Point Blank making student feedback a priority in their creation of a quality student academic experience.

From these answers plus the in-person feedback gathered, it can be gathered that the course content is relevant and reflective of up-to-date research.

SE5 *How supportive the learning environment is, and how far students can access the academic support they need*

Most students feel like point bank creates a supportive learning environment when referring to question 10 of both the online and paper surveys (the below pictures showing the online survey responses on the left and the paper survey responses on the right).
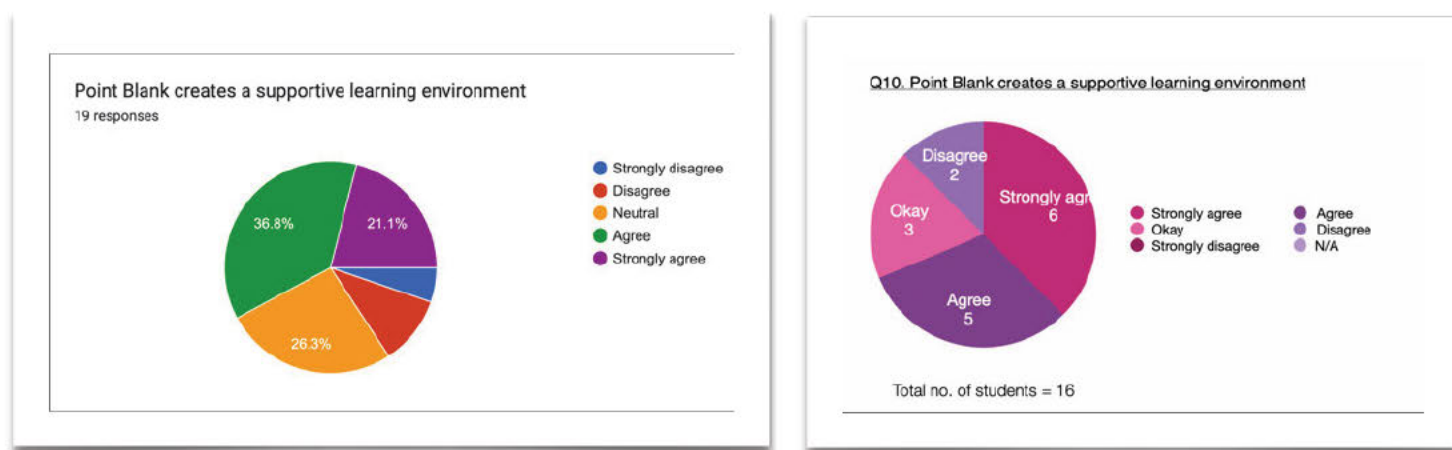
The drop-in session ran on the 4th of March 2022 had multiple students mention the incredibly good support from the wellbeing team at Point Blank.

Except from the meetings minutes;

"The well-being team was described as "fantastic", which was backed by all students who reported extremely positive experiences with the well-being team.

Examples include supporting students needing extensions and arranging mental and financial support for students."

Good well-being support can help create a supportive atmosphere at the school and it is noticed and appreciated by the students at Point Blank.

SE6 *How well physical and virtual learning resources support teaching and learning*

Due to Point Blank being a school more focused on practical learning, sometimes students can find the blended method of learning difficult. For example, 10/14 students mentioned in the January 2022 feedback, how blended learning had a negative effect on their experience in the classroom and one student commented that "DJ practice is not really 'double' through zoom." - Advanced DJ Skills.

Despite the difficulties throughout the pandemic, the school was still able to provide the lessons and resources for all students and gradually as campus learning was phases back in, the general satisfaction of students increased. Notably, the feedback session held on the 1st of December 2022, had many students commenting that the increase of in-person lessons, masterclasses and events has "improved the community at Point Blank".

SE7 *How well the university or college engages with its students, leading to improvements to the experiences and outcomes of its students*

The school is fantastic at involving students in shaping the overall experience at Point Blank; there are multiple feedback opportunities and chances for students to express their opinions to staff members. What is even more fantastic is the way Point Blank actually listens carefully to all feedback that comes their way. There is current feedback from the most recent feedback session on the 1st of December 2022 regarding preferred communication techniques.
Excerpt from meeting's minutes:
"All 15 students in attendance were keen to improve the communication channels between the university and the students. Emails are being read by SOME students but a majority said they DO NOT read emails.
some alternative suggestions brought up included
• *Use of WhatsApp group chats with ONLY event notifications from the SU*
• *More posters being put up in the hub in Orsman Road and Penn street*
• *More text communications (students really like this form of communication)*
• *More pop-up style notifications from the VLE (comments included that this style of communication is an "improvement from just emails or just putting events on the VLE page")"*
There are already actions to improve communication and introduce a notification 'BulletBoard' on the VLE. This type of reaction is exactly what the feedback is suggesting and it helps the students know their voices are being heard.

From module feedback collected for the term commencing January 2022, there was negative feedback regarding the course content for the module Advanced Recording and Mixing which is a module studied at the end of the higher education courses;
"The recording and mixing content was very interesting, and   enthusiastic approach was inspiring. However, learning the content whilst getting to grips with an unfamiliar DAW (Digital Audio Workstation; Pro Tools) made understanding the content confusing and overwhelming at times".
This same comment was also mentioned in the module feedback from the drop-in feedback session in the term commencing April 2022, with many students feeling "unsatisfied with the module" and their grades.
The response to this feedback was to introduce the software ProTools in first-year studies and also allow students to use alternative DAWs when completing the module assignments. This change was implemented in September of 2022 which is a fast

turnaround and again demonstrates how committed Point Blank is to helping students succeed in their higher education.

Conclusion

From reading the module feedback overviews from 2021 to 2022,

- In terms of general feedback, in Jan 22 There was a 15% increase in positive comments compared to Jan 21.
- April 22 saw a 22% increase in positive comments compared to April 21.
- And overall between the years of 2021 to 2022, negative comments dropped by 22% and neutral comments dropped by 48%.

This indicates that Point Blank is always improving and responding to student feedback which is leading to an increase in positive comments from students regarding their experience.

3. Student Outcomes

We held a drop-in session on the 3rd of March 2022 focused on gathering student feedback regarding outcomes and career opportunities for students after graduation. There was a general feeling among the 21 students that gave feedback, that there was a lack of career guidance being presented to them and many students felt unaware of what steps to take to further their careers. Many different topics and ideas were raised in this meeting.

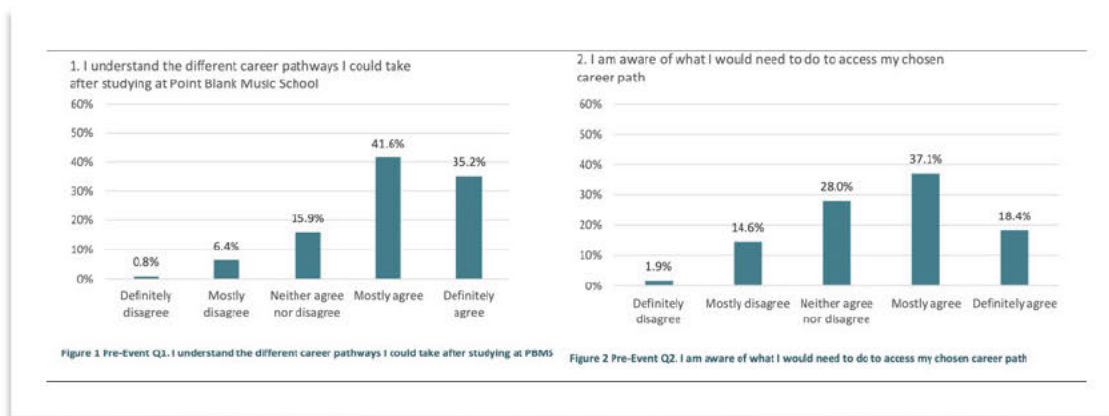Here is an excerpt from the meetings minutes

Topics raised

- ***Getting partnerships involved*** *eg. Ableton, Adam Audio, Pioneer. Students expressed not just wanting discounts but wanting to see them and hear from them regarding potential career opportunities*
- ***Mixing/mastering engineer careers*** *- Students were enthusiastic about hearing about careers in this area with female students expressing the need to hear from other females in this field which is traditionally very male-dominated.*

Following this feedback and with the introduction of the current careers advisor, there was a careers event called Music Futures hosted at the nightclub Fabric in May of 2022.

This event included talks from industry experts, opportunities for students to have 1-2-1 meetings with industry professionals, opportunities for students to play music for feedback and presence from other industry brands such as Focusrite, AIAIAI, pioneer, Adam audio and UK music.

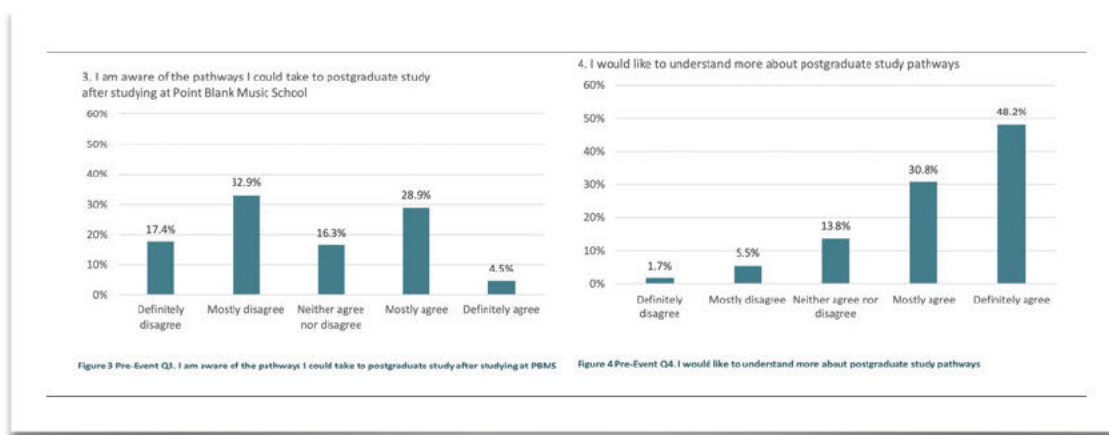Referring to the evaluation of the event, which was conducted by Applied Inspiration's SEER service, I was able to access both pre and post-event surveys completed by students. The pre-event feedback echoed the drop-in feedback session feedback; the pre-event survey received 484 responses and for the most part, students understood "progression pathways available to them" but were "less confident about the steps they

needed to take to realise these opportunities" (SEER, 2022). In the below graphs, this can be seen with fewer students definitely agreeing to question 3.

Figure 1 Pre-Event Q1. I understand the different career pathways I could take after studying at PBMS

Figure 2 Pre-Event Q2. I am aware of what I would need to do to access my chosen career path

Graphs from the evaluation of Music Futures Career Festival conducted by SEER

Figure 3 Pre-Event Q3. I am aware of the pathways I could take to postgraduate study after studying at PBMS

Figure 4 Pre-Event Q4. I would like to understand more about postgraduate study pathways

The feedback following the event was mostly positive and showed that the event not only benefitted current students but also their confidence in progressing beyond the university. The post-event survey had significantly fewer responses with 26 students supplying feedback. The responses below show that students are mostly confident to engage with music industry professionals and the range of panel discussion topics with the industry professionals was rated as mostly good to very good.

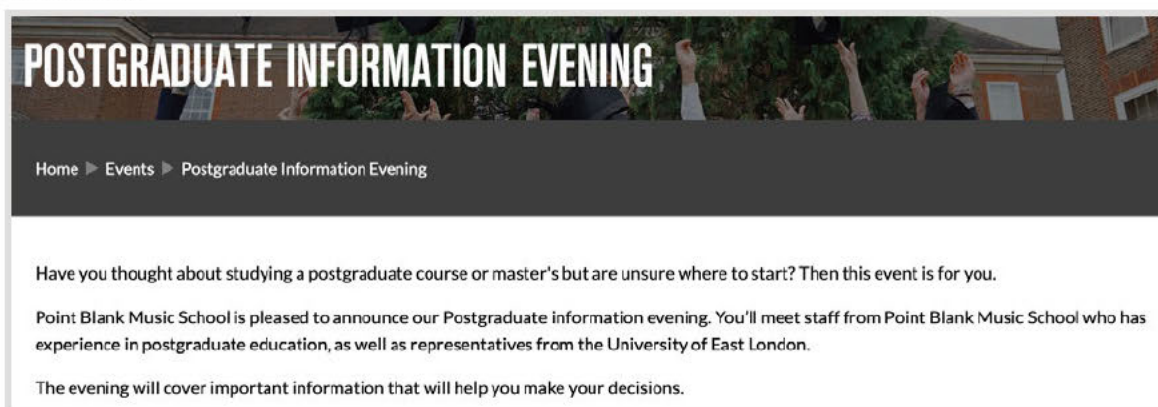Figure 33 post-event survey Q8 counts

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The survey showed that there was still doubt about applying for further education in music and SEER made the suggestion to provide more information to students regarding this. In the below graphs, students indicate that they are generally not very confident in applying for further study.

Figure 19 post-event survey Q1 counts

Figure 25 post-event survey Q4 count
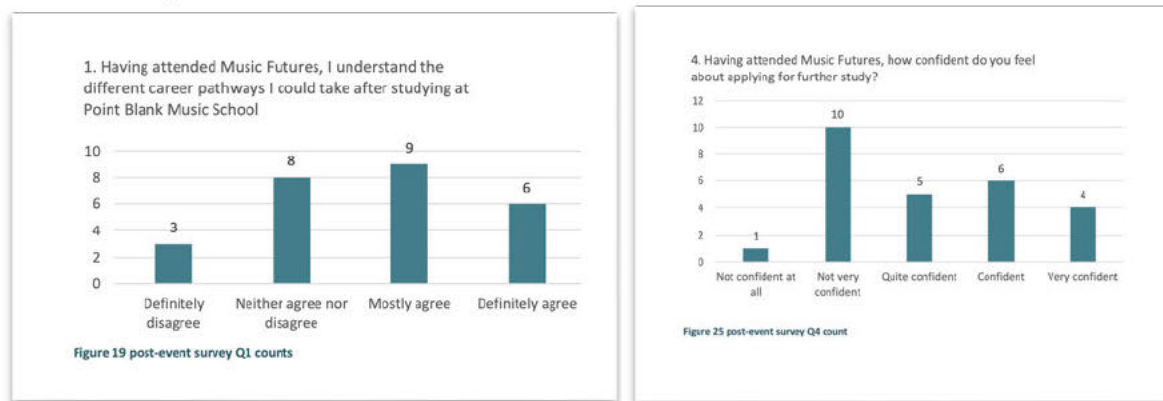
Point Blank has responded by planning specific postgraduate information events like this one taking place on the 19th of January. The below image is a screen capture from Point Blank's website

POSTGRADUATE INFORMATION EVENING

Home ▶ Events ▶ Postgraduate Information Evening

Have you thought about studying a postgraduate course or master's but are unsure where to start? Then this event is for you.

Point Blank Music School is pleased to announce our Postgraduate information evening. You'll meet staff from Point Blank Music School who has experience in postgraduate education, as well as representatives from the University of East London.

The evening will cover important information that will help you make your decisions.

SEER also ran focus group sessions to evaluate the success of Music Futures with 12 more students. Here almost all students mentioned the two things they enjoyed about the event were the networking opportunities that come with a large-scale event such as this, as well as the "interesting, valuable and inspiring" presentations from the speakers. From these groups, most students commented on the need for 'more' of these events with areas of improvement focused on providing more work opportunities instead of opportunities to just 'buy products' from brand representatives.

All in all the SEER report concluded that students highly rate their experience at and relationship with Point Blank and the Music Futures event was successful in providing students "useful insights and inspiration" and much appreciated "opportunities to network with guests, staff and students". There was a strong preference for more time and access to guests and alumni including "at the cost of some of the more commercial elements present".

There are currently future plans to re-create the event in the year 2023, improving on all the feedback points raised by students. This is another example of Point Blank responding to student feedback and acting upon it to provide students with the best opportunities possible.