## **Programme Voice Group Operational Details and Procedure**

### Organisation of meetings

Programme Voice Groups (PVG’s) are the main student engagement function by which Student Voice Leaders (SVL’s) can represent the views of their cohort to Academic and Service staff, although in practice representation should not be confined simply to these meetings. PVG’s should run twice a year and are a forum within which a dialogue can take place between students and staff to discuss ways of feeding back on and improving programmes.

This procedure relates to all Programme Voice Groups. Where procedure differs for some meetings these are detailed separately. The meetings are usually organised by the PVG Officer (usually the Programme Administrator) in conjunction with the PVG Chair (Ideally a Student Voice Leader (SVL), supported by their Head of Department (HoD)/Director of Programmes (DoP) or Programme Leader (PL) depending on the set up and clustering of the PVGs).

It is expected that, in order to maximise attendance, meetings will be held either online (through University supported platforms) or via a hybrid delivery (with some members meeting in person and others in the meeting virtually). Support for setting up and delivering these meetings is provided by CAPE and guidance is available in appendix 9j.

Details on the roles within the Programme Voice Group can be found in appendices 9a, 9e and 9f. A code of conduct is also available on the expectations from both staff and students at the PVG’s and can be found in appendix 9g and 9h. It is the responsibility of the Chair to ensure that the principles outlined in the code are upheld at the meetings.

PVG’s should aim to keep a balance between the number of students and staff. The groupings of each PVG will be agreed annually with the Faculties, MDXSU and CAPE and reviewed to ensure that they are running effectively. They should aim to encompass similar programmes and subject areas where possible. **Where cohort size permits, apprenticeship PVGs should also be conducted separately to their non-apprenticeship counterpart.**

1. **What information should be shared?**

There are four groups of information that can and should be discussed at Programme Voice Groups. These are:

* Student and Staff Feedback (Employer Feedback for apprentices)
* Updates from University services
* External Examiner reports
* Data from student surveys and actions identified

Staff should make use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to allow SVLs access in advance of the meeting to External Examiner reports/responses (with details redacted where appropriate), and survey results (and associated Actions).

Individual External Examiner reports do not have to be part of Programme Voice Group papers; a summary of key points can be submitted instead. However, the full reports must be stored on the VLE so they can be accessed and read by all students on a programme.

It is important to note that simply informing Student Voice Leaders that these reports are available during a Programme Voice Group is not meeting the PVG’s requirements. Reports, or a summary of reports, should be circulated with the Programme Voice Group papers following the timescales set out below to allow participants to read them in advance of the meeting and prepare any comments or questions. Staff should encourage discussion of the reports at the meeting.

Given that the main student surveys take place once a year, and that External Examiner reports tend to be submitted over the summer period in most instances, it may be suitable to include these sources of evidence at one (rather than both) Programme Voice Group. If so, reference should be made in the minutes of the second Programme Voice Group to the location of these reports and that they were discussed at the previous meeting. It is essential that the reports and action plans are considered and discussed within an academic year.

Similarly, the agenda, minutes and action plans should also be uploaded to the VLE (programme space in MyLearning) in accordance with the timings detailed below.

### Frequency and timing of meetings

There should be a minimum of 2 Programme Voice Groups in an academic year for each student intake. **The PVG meetings should be held no later than the end of the relevant semester.** Ideally, they should be held after module surveys to enable key themes to be considered.The dates should take into consideration the programme start date, should be set before the start of the academic year where possible and communicated to all members as early as possible, as well as being posted on the programme space in MyLearning for students or Aptem for apprentices.For **January Start programmes, PVG’s should be held in the relevant Semesters e.g. 2 and 3.**

1. **Attendance**

Attendance at a Programme Voice Group is one of the core responsibilities of a Student Voice Leader. SVL’s who cannot attend a PVG for unforeseen reasons, should be given the opportunity to submit a written report in lieu of attendance. However, it is expected that SVL’s attend all PVG’s and have adequately surveyed the views of their cohort on their programme prior to the PVG’s taking place. Similarly, it is expected that SVL’s attend MDXSU-run Student Voice training and events to help prepare them for their role within Programme Voice Groups.

**Should no SVL’s be in attendance, and the Officer is aware of this in advance, action should be taken to re-arrange the meeting**. If the Officer is not aware, and students fail to attend, the Programme Voice Group should still go ahead especially if written reports have been submitted. The Officer should note any apologies (where SVL’s have sent apologies) and absences (where SVL’s have not sent apologies) in the minutes so that MDXSU and CAPE can follow up.

The PVG’s should still afford the opportunity to Programme and appropriate University staff to feed back on the programme; this will then be shared with the cohort via the minutes being hosted on the VLE. Agenda-setting meetings (if held) and Programme Voice Groups should make allowances for student attendance and engagement to ensure a constructive dialogue can take place, therefore staff should remain flexible in re-arranging meetings or conducting online meetings if preferred.

1. **Agenda**

The agenda should be drawn up by the Officer in consultation with the Chair and SVL’s – either via an informal meeting, email or online platform. The agenda should follow the template in 9i.

The ordering of items may be changed to reflect the format of the meeting and the time of year, however all the items should be covered at least once within a single academic year. The template gives further advice on the timing of items.

Where student representatives raise similar issues they should be included as one specific item, with sub-items relating to the specific feedback;

*Example;*

*2.4 Module Feedback*

*2.4.1 Pathway Linking to the Programme of Study and Teaching Style and Attendance Issues (MOD1234)*

*2.4.2 Attendance on Module Seminars (MOD1122)*

*2.4.3 Late Students (MOD4321)*

*2.4.4 Assessment Changes in Year (MOD3344)*

1. **Timetable**

The dates for the Programme Voice Group should be scheduled before the start of the academic year where possible and made available on the programme space in MyLearning.

* **Start of Term –** Calendar invites for the Agenda-setting meeting (if held) and Programme Voice Group should be sent to the Student Voice Leaders (SVLs), PVG Chair (Student Voice Leader, Head of Department/Director of Programmes, and Programme Leaders as appropriate). MDXSU must also be invited to all PVG meetings .
* **2 weeks prior to the PVG Agenda Setting**– SVLs should be reminded and encouraged to engage in obtaining feedback from their cohort. The PVG Chair should be reminded of the pre-meeting date (if held) or to contact SVLs for agenda items.
* **PVG Agenda Setting –** Here the agenda, members and Chair(s) for the main meeting should be agreed, either in an informal meeting or via email/online .
* **2 days post PVG Agenda Setting –** Additional staff should be invited to the Programme Voice Group, and the feedback should be given to relevant staff to develop feedback and actions for the main meeting. Programme staff (including library, CCSS and technical staff) should be contacted regarding possible agenda items and papers. CAPE will circulate any reports to Programme Administrators as these are received.
* **1 week prior to the Programme Voice Group -**  the agenda should be circulated to all agreed members (ideally additional staff should be invited directly after the pre-meeting) with all the papers (including reports from professional services), ideally by email. Instead of circulating actual External Examiner reports, a summary of key points with responses can be used. However External Examiner reports must be stored electronically in a secure area which students can access and read the reports in full if they wish, and the link to this should be provided.
* **Programme Voice Group to take place**
* **1 week post meeting -** the list of actions should have been circulated, ideally within 1-2 days (see below).
* **4 weeks post meeting** **-** the minutes, with the list of actions as a reminder, should have been circulated (see below).
1. **Ensuring a productive Programme Voice Group**

In practice, Programme Voice Groups should be productive meetings, useful for both students and staff. Student Voice Leaders should be encouraged to contribute and receive guidance before the meeting –through training from MDXSU. It is recommended that Chairs and Officers engage with SVLs throughout the year to build up a relationship with them.

Care should be taken to ensure that Student Voice Leaders do not feel intimated, especially when attending Programme Voice Groups for the first time; it would be useful in this regard to be mindful of the student/staff ratio. However, it is also important that SVLs understand the remit of their role and the type and content of evidence they are being asked to submit.

Whilst a Programme Voice Group should be a forum for discussion and an exchange of views, it should not be an environment for individual criticism or blame. A Programme Voice Group should allow students and staff to work together to improve the experience – for both staff and students – on a programme or group of programmes. Please refer to the Programme Voice Group Code of Practice (Appendix 9g) for more information.

#### Circulation of the minutes and action plan

It is important that action tables are included with the minutes and used correctly. Programme Voice Group minutes need to be drawn up regarding the format of the PVG’s and the content of the agenda. The Chair should ensure appropriate minutes are taken. The minutes should note areas of discussion, resolution and decision. They should not attribute a particular statement to any individual but rather note comments made by or actions being taken by a role, for example; “the Fine Art Programme Leader” or “the Student Voice Leaders”.

**The list of actions should be circulated within 1 week of the meeting,** so individuals are reminded of their actions promptly and have the maximum period to complete them.

**Minutes should be circulated within 4 weeks of the meeting**. The minutes and actions should be circulated to the following:

* Entire membership (as above) including ex-officio members, and those unable to attend;
* MDXSU (studentvoice@mdx.ac.uk);
* Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement (CAPE) (pvgs@mdx.ac.uk);
* Centre for Academic Partnerships (collaborative programmes and overseas campuses only);
* Centre for Apprenticeships and Skills (apprenticeship programmes only; apprenticeship@mdx.ac.uk);
* Those mentioned in action points – especially relevant Heads of Service;
* All students on the programme(s) by posting the minutes and action plan to the programme area(s) on the VLE/MyLearning and notifying students to this effect.

#### Minute writing

The minutes should be prepared using the template 9ii, and using guidance produced by CAPE. Each set of minutes includes an action plan which shows the action agreed, the minute reference, individual responsible and timeframe for completion. Each action should be updated within the table when circulated in advance of the subsequent Programme Voice Group meeting.

The University wishes to make the decisions and discussion points of these important meetings freely and widely available so that students and staff can be well informed and the University’s processes and operations can be open to the widest scrutiny and understanding. However, the University has no wish to curb honest comment and debate for those who might not wish comments attributed to them to be widely published. Therefore, names should only be mentioned at the start of the minutes to confirm attendance, throughout the rest of the minutes there should only be reference to titles i.e. Student Voice Leader, Programme Leader etc.

Minutes should be written in such a way that a person not in attendance at the meeting can follow the decisions made as minutes are read by a variety of individuals and groups who are external to the PVG’s and the University, including students, Faculty staff, Deputy Dean, CAPE staff, Review Panels (including External Assessors), the Quality Assurance Agency, the OIA and members of the press and public via a Freedom of Information request.

1. **Procedure for Pre-sessional PVGs**

Due to the nature and timing of pre-sessional courses, the arrangements for PVGs are adjusted as follows:

* Elections/nomination of Student Voice Leaders take place in class (rather than via online ballot) in a confidential manner.
* Pre-sessional SVLs are provided with online training and a guide for SVLs instead of attending in-person training.
* The PVG Agenda Setting and main meeting are combined so that one meeting takes place per term.
1. **Procedure for Professional Practice Dance programmes PVGs**

Due to the nature of the programme design and the distance education, the arrangements for PVGs are adjusted as follows:

* The programme team gathers student feedback on a weekly basis via online platforms.
* The main PVG meeting is held annually to ensure feedback from all cohorts at both UG and PG level is captured.
* The programme team uses weekly class time and online platforms to feedback on actions taken in response to student feedback.
1. **Procedure for Degree Apprenticeships PVGs**

Due to the nature of the programme design and the blended education, the arrangements for PVGs are adjusted as follows:

* SVL recruitment, training and PVG meeting dates are in line with the relevant programme start date (rather than the start of the academic year).
* Dates of PVGs throughout the training period are shared with both employer and apprentice at the tripartite discussion during the apprentice on-boarding process. This is uploaded to Aptem.
* All students on a programme are invited to contribute to the pre-discussions and the main meeting via adobe connect/skype.
* PVG minutes are disseminated to the University Centre for Apprenticeships and Skills to then pass on to individual employers for reference.
* Additional online support is available to SVLs throughout the year provided by MDXSU.
1. **Procedure for undergraduate LSI programme PVGs**

Due to the nature of the programme, the arrangements for PVGs are adjusted as follows:

* To streamline the current system into a one day event and increase the frequency from 2 to 4 meetings per year in line with the programme weeks.
* Indicative Delivery Method:

**9.00am – 9.30am SVL Feedback Session** – All key stakeholders (inc. DoP, SVL’s, MDXSU) are re-taken through the actions from the previous PVG (inc. new amendments when actions have taken longer) and provided with a written report to take back to their student groups to highlight the impact their feedback has had on their education.

**9.55 – 10.15am SVL Feedback and PVG cohort meeting (Pre-meeting)** – A scheduled meeting for the SVL to meet (without academic supervision) with their fellow students to go through the actions in response to previous issues and to collect current feedback.

**12.15 – 1.00pm Pre-Meeting** - A ‘pre’ meeting is organised with MDXSU as a forum to collate all the responses from the various cohort meetings. The five sections are then written up and passed to the DoP to facilitate a response from the relevant staff. All feedback is collated under headings: 1) Learning and Teaching 2) Facilities 3) Support Services 4) Assessment & Feedback 5) Extra Curricular

**4.00 – 5.00pm** **Programme Voice Group** – The PVG meeting follows the normal guidelines.

1. **Procedure for arranging online Programme Voice Groups or equivalent**

It is possible to hold an online Programme Voice Group for Distance Education programmes and programmes with students who find it difficult to attend meetings because they live at a distance (UK/International) or cannot be released from their place of work to attend. By using the following approach students can contribute to the meeting by providing their comments electronically including the use of discussion forums and skype.

The procedure as laid out in **section 6** should still be used but with the following adaptations:

####  Timetable

* **2/3 weeks prior to the PVG Agenda Setting** - create a secure discussion using the VLE. This should be secure enough that discussion is restricted to those invited to participate but also easily accessible by students. Send an invitation to Head of Department/Director of Programmes, Programme Leader and student representatives with details of the discussion and request feedback items to be submitted prior to the meeting.
* **1 week prior to the Programme Voice Group -**  the agenda and all papers should be circulated to members, by email, as well as being posted on the discussion board.

 **Agenda**

Include as a standard item on the agenda “review how effectively the online meeting format is working”.

1. **Supporting Documentation**

For further information and guidance on the operation of the Programme Voice Group, please refer to section **9a of the LQEH Section 9** on Student Engagement. Please also refer to appendices **9a-9i** to support the operation of the Programme Voice Group.