

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2020/21

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

Accelerated BVetMed

This appendix contains Year Leader's responses to 2020/21 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from previous External Examiners' reports (if applicable).

As Course Director please ensure you reflect on External Examiners' comments in the Course Review section. Please ensure that any actions to be taken in response to these comments have been recorded in your Annual Quality Improvement Report.

For support or advice please contact Ana Filipovic, Academic Quality Officer 'Standards', afilipovic@rvc.ac.uk, 01707666938

Appendix 3 consists of:

a.	Updates to actions from previous years' reports – n/a
b.	20/21 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 05-Jul-2021

Accelerated Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, 2020/21

Lead examiner: Dr Catrin Rutland

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Emanuele Ricci

The Programme

Please comment, as appropriate, on the following aspects of the programme:

1.1 Course content

The programme satisfies the requirements as an internationally recognized programme and one that needs national accreditation. The programme is detailed and covers the areas in accordance with national and international requirements and guidelines.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The RVC's Quality Assurance office ensures that high academic standards are maintained in the Graduate Accelerated BVetMed Program.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.2 Learning objectives, and the extent to which they were met

Learning objectives were highlighted in the paperwork and teaching, were taught and also blueprinted within the exams. The standard setting throughout the exams from this year, and comparisons to previous years, showed that the students had learnt the learning objectives.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The learning objectives are pivotal to teaching and assessment and their centrality to learning are explained to the students at the beginning of the academic year and also reinforced during individual lectures.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.3 Teaching methods

Despite COVID19, a number of teaching methods both traditional and innovative, have been used throughout this course. Due to the nature of the course the students were still able to participate in practical sessions too. Staff have consistently provided extra sessions/information/support in order to compensate for COVID19. Credit must go to all teaching and support/administrative staff, and to the students, for adapting to the situations and their continued perseverance, energy and hard work.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The challenge of COVID-19 was the greatest obstacle in providing the normal diet of practicals and lectures. However, the cooperation between staff and students helped to provide some limited but adequate amounts of in-person practicals, online lectures supported with 'question and answer' sessions, and virtual anatomy practical sessions.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.4 Resources (in so far as they affected the assessment)

Resources required this year were more substantial than usual due to the extra resources needed due to COVID19. Additional software was utilised for teaching and assessment. Extra resources were also used to ensure COVID19 security. These were in addition to the excellent resources already in place for teaching, learning and assessment.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The Learning and Wellbeing team provided assessment software and training of staff. All assessments were done online and which necessitated the need for extra staffing. The conduct and integrity of the exams was not compromised in any way.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

Although staff and students were under COVID19 conditions, the teaching and assessments conducted were comparable to previous years, support was enhanced to take into account the learning conditions.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The students were provided with adequate academic support. The views from student's termly survey views in regard to teaching, learning and assessment were responded to and where necessary acted upon.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Student performance

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

2.1 Students' performance in relation to those at a similar stage on comparable courses in other institutions, where this is known to you

There were a comparative number of fails, passes, merits and distinctions to other years and other veterinary degrees within the UK. If anything the bell curve had shifted towards higher grades but not at a rate that was of concern. This perhaps reflected the excellent teaching, and student preparation during the year and for these examinations. There was a good range of marks across the cohort, indicating good differentiation of the exam process.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The student performance reflected the good enhancements made to supplement the face to face learning that took place.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

2.2 Quality of candidates' knowledge and skills, with particular reference to those at the top, middle or bottom of the range

Students who failed overall were clear fails, all exams were checked at a number of levels for those who had failed and were also checked by the external examiners in addition to the usual checks conducted on all exams. In essence we can be confident that students progressed with their learning, indicating good outcomes for the teaching. There was clear differentiation between not only pass/fail students, but also those in the differing grade allocations.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The distribution of students in the distinction, merit, pass and fail categories was similar to previous years and the exams provided good discriminations in regard to individual student abilities.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

2.3 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the students' performance

As is normal under both COVID19 and non-COVID19 times, more students failed the oral examinations but this reflects the depth of knowledge tested and was not a concern. Oral exams are often seen as high stake for students and therefore grades are often lower in all subject areas/universities.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The oral exams were done online but there was no significant difference in performance between the online and in-person examination. The examiners provided good quality exam props and no complaints were made to their suitability or features.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Examinations were taken under proctored situations with students also given 15 minutes extra time to allow for technical difficulties, in addition care was given to ensuring that students who required extra time due to educational needs/learning plans got that extra time in addition to the 15 minutes. In addition students who encountered more severe difficulties could present this as exceptional circumstances under a case by case situation.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The multiple choice paper was fully proctored while problem solving paper was not. For the problem solving paper (2A and 2B), students provided an electronic scanning of their exam room before the start of the exam. The students had previously undertaken proctored exams during their formative and summative in-course assessment and as such students did not experience any difficulties in the remotely taken exams. In case of technical difficulties such as internet dropping during the exam, there was a clear protocol in reporting such difficulties to the exams office.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Exams were either proctored or live oral examinations. They were based upon the entire curriculum.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The multiple choice paper was fully proctored while the Integrated structure and function (ISF) oral was purely a live online exam.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.3 Consistency of the level of assessment with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)

Prior to the exams, all exam questions were checked internally and by the externals. Full feedback was provided by the staff regarding all external feedback. At all stages the FHEQ was referred to and adhered to.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The exam questions are thoroughly scrutinized by internal and external examiners to reflect the level of assessment required and the alignment with the learning objectives. The external examiners made recommendations on the suitability, alignment and rigour of exam questions.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.4 Standard of marking

The standard of marking was consistent throughout. External examiners could check every exam and were invited to oral examinations too. Model answers were always provided where applicable, with a clear marking structure. Students also receive extensive feedback which supports their continued development and progression.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

We are grateful for the observations of the external examiners on the standards of the exam marking.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.5 In your view, are the procedures for assessment and the determination of awards sound and fairly conducted? (e.g. Briefing, Exam administration, marking arrangements, Board of Examiners, participation by External Examiners)

Any decisions/issues with any exams or exam questions or individuals were presented to the exam board and decisions made upon full agreement of the exam board. Every detail of assessment and determination of awards was transparent and fairly conducted. In addition as external examiners we were briefed very well and exam administration was extremely organised.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

Our external examiners showed great commitment to the exam process. I take this opportunity to congratulate Lauren Christian for her sterling performance in administering the exams.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.6 Opinion on changes to the assessment procedures from previous years in which you have examined

The online oral/MCQ/short answer exams worked very effectively this year which is down to your organisation, preparation, supporting students and a huge amount of investment relating to staff time.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The current assessment procedures are effective and thorough and no change has been recommended for the coming year.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

What an outstanding year for all of your staff. You provided us with the information we needed, managed to guide students through and successfully taught your students and looked after their welfare despite the challenging conditions.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

There were many challenges due to Covid-19 pandemic but student and staff showed great resilience and which culminated in a successful academic year.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.1 Comments I have made in previous years have been addressed to my satisfaction

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The comments were responded to in a timely manner.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The comments made by the external examiners were responded to appropriately.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

We are grateful for the thorough scrutiny and speed in certifying the exam.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.4 I was able to scrutinise an adequate sample of students' work and marks to enable me to carry out my duties

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Congratulations on making these accessible despite the newer formats.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The exams office deserve praise for providing access to all the paperwork required by the external examiners.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.5 I attended the meeting of the Board of Examiners held to approve the results of the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The external examiners were involved in the deliberations of the exam board and in the certification of exams.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Commendation: A great deal of thought has been given to student welfare throughout the year on all levels but even with exam results release which was conducted on a Monday to ensure maximum support for students who needed it. Students receive clear communications around resits and the processes needed and a dedicated advice centre is available for support. In general even students who have passed can resit components if they feel they have been disadvantaged, however that is not applicable here as the grades are 'must pass' rather than counting towards the degree, so students who pass cannot be disadvantaged and students who fail already resit.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The students were supported throughout the academic year and in particular received adequate information regarding the conduct and administration of their exams.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.7 The standards set for the awards are appropriate for qualifications at this level, in this subject

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The training and assessment in the preclinical year of the Graduate Accelerated BVetMed program prepare the students for entry into the clinical years of the course.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.8 The standards of student performance are comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The excellent student performance is a reflection of the high academic standards at the RVC.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.9 I have received enough training and support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

A huge thanks to the exam office staff who are so organised and provide information from module leaders/academic staff. Thank you to you all. We recognise just how difficult your jobs have been this year yet everything has run so smoothly.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

I join the external examiners to thank the exams office and in particular Lauren Christian for a job well done.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.10 I have received sufficient information to carry out my role (where information was insufficient, please give details)

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

As noted elsewhere, the external examiners are provided with access to all information needed in the fulfilment of their roles.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

Every effort is made to ensure that all the procedures and processes regarding exams are followed.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.12 The processes for assessment and the determination of awards are sound

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The process of assessment is rigorous and thorough.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Completion

If you have identified any areas of good practice, please comment more fully here. We may use information provided in our annual external examining report:

5.1 Do you have any suggestions for improvements based on experience at other institutes? We may use information provided in our annual external examining report:

The external examiners have been very impressed with the adaptations made this year and your continued additional teaching and welfare.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The administration and teaching staff of the RVC have done a commendable job to maintain high academic standards in a very challenging year.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

5.2 External Examiner comments: For College information only (Responses to External Examiners are published on the College's website. Please only use this box to add any comments that you wish to remain confidential, if any)

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

No comments

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

