

## ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2020/21

### Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

### BVetMed Year 3

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 Year Leader/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](mailto:afilipovic@rvc.ac.uk), 01707666938.

Appendix 3 consists of:

a.	Updates to actions from previous years' reports
b.	2020/21 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director/Year Leader

Report Question	External Examiners' comment	Course Directors response and actions	Update in 2020/21
<p><b>1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme</b></p>	<p>This is the second year that Professional Studies have been included in the exam assessment. The marks are added to the written paper marks and may allow students to compensate poor marks in the written papers and advance into the Fourth Year. Last year the external examiners suggested separating the Professional Studies from the written paper and requiring both elements to be passed. The response from the College that the current system of amalgamating marks should continue for three years to provide sufficient data for a considered review is noted by the external examiners.</p>	<p>Following valid concerns from the external examiners in 2019 that combining the BVetMed 3 Professional Studies assignment mark with the marks from the written EMQ and MCQ papers will enable students to compensate for poor marks in the written papers, it was agreed at the 2019 autumn undergraduate course management committee (CMC) meeting that the college would continue to combine the marks for a total of 3 examination cycles in order to gather sufficient data for review. At this time, we will discuss the option of making the Professional Studies assignment a 'stand-alone' compulsory component to the BVetMed 3 exam with a minimum pass mark.</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b></p> <p>Discuss making the Professional Studies assignment in the BVetMed 3 year a 'stand-alone' compulsory component to the exam with a minimum pass mark at the 2021 examination board meeting. Once agreement is reached on the best way forward, a proposal will be submitted for the 2021 autumn undergraduate course management committee (CMC) and learning, teaching &amp; assessment committee (LTAC) meetings.</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b></p> <p>01-May-2021</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b></p> <p>Michael Hewetson and Jill Maddison</p>	
<p><b>3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures</b></p>	<p>Following the Exam Board it was brought to the attention of the external examiners that erroneous results had been presented. The marks on the scripts and the spreadsheet line did not correspond. It appears that there was an error within the formula of both the EMQ and MCQ columns. The results had to be re-calculated by the Head of Exams. The error impacted 30 out of 290 Year 3</p>	<p>The head off examinations, John Sanger, will construct an SOP as you have suggested</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b></p> <p>Construct an SOP to ensure that there is a fail-safe mechanism in place to check a) the transcription of marks, b) individual formulas within the spreadsheet and c) the final marks awarded. This should include a system of cross checking amongst specific members of the exam admin team.</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b></p> <p>01-Mar-2021</p>	<p>COMPLETED</p>

	<p>students. The external examiners recommend that an SOP be developed to ensure that there is adequate checking of: a) the transcription of marks, b) individual formulas within the spreadsheet, c) final marks awarded as well as cross checking amongst specific members of the exam admin team.</p>	<p><b>Action assigned to:</b> John Sanger (Head of examinations, Academic registry)</p>	
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# Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 18-May-2021

**Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 3, 2020/21**

**Lead examiner: Dr Bryan Markey**

**Collaborating examiner(s): Dr John Keen, Dr Dan Batchelor**

## The Programme

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

### **1.1 Course content**

The course content is appropriate for students in the third year of their five year veterinary medicine course and is generally similar to that in other institutions known to the external examiners.

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

The external examiners are satisfied that the learning objectives are clearly laid out, appropriate for students at this stage of their course and that they have been fully met.

### **1.3 Teaching methods**

The external examiners are satisfied with both the variety and the appropriateness of the teaching methods used

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

The resources available to students on RVC Learn are extensive and considered by the external examiners to be highly satisfactory.

## 1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

The online learning resource RVC Learn was found to be somewhat hard to navigate, containing enormous amounts of information and a myriad of modules and subunits. It was also slow to respond when the external examiners attempted to review the Professional Studies assignments.

This is the third year that Professional Studies have been included in the exam assessment. Compensation is possible between the written papers and the Professional Studies assignment. It was agreed at the 2019 autumn undergraduate course management committee meeting that the college would continue to combine the marks for a total of 3 examination cycles in order to gather sufficient data for review. There would then be a discussion of the option to make the Professional Studies assignment a 'stand-alone' compulsory component in the BVetMed 3 exam with a minimum pass mark. This was discussed at the Exam Board and it was pointed out:

1. That only a small number of students were advantaged by this compensation mechanism (<20 students).
  2. A new curriculum is being introduced in September 2021 in BVM Year 1 which will move to a Portfolio system. Therefore, the present system will only run in BVM year 3 for a further two years.
- The consensus opinion at the Exam Board was not to change the marking system.

### COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Michael Hewetson

#### Course Director Response:

RVC Learn is constantly being upgraded and improved, and while we recognize that this is still a work in progress, the recent migration of RVC learn to the cloud has enabled the IT team to be far more flexible in their capacity to accommodate the RVC demands, including the use of the OCM platform for submission and marking of the professional studies assignments. This has resulted in faster and smoother user experience which I am confident you will notice when you access RVC learn next year.

#### 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**

The students performance was considered comparable to previous years despite the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. In addition, the students performance was considered comparable to students at a similar stage in other institutions known to the external examiners.

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

Student performance ranged from exceptional to poor. Standard setting was applied using three calculation methods and the mean of the three calculated pass marks was taken as the final pass mark. For this year the EMQ pass mark was 52% while for the MCQ exam the pass mark was 43%. The latter is a relatively low pass mark suggestive of students being weaker this year compared to other years. This might be due to several factors, possibly including isolation, lack of engagement, remote learning, online teaching and exams, Covid restrictions. However, only 16 students failed. In addition, there were 84 distinctions and 69 merits.

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

Students appear to have coped extremely well with the move back to closed book, proctored exams.

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

### **3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)**

The external examiners consider the assessment methods appropriate.

### **3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous**

The external examiners consider the assessment procedures to be suitably rigorous and robust.

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

The level of assessment is consistent with FHEQ.

### **3.4 Standard of marking**

The marking is automatic for MCQs and EMQs. There is extensive statistical analysis of question performance. The questions had been planned to be used in May 2020 but were held back due to the formative nature of last year's exam. The questions performed well with only a very small number needing to be withdrawn, following extensive consultation with academic staff and external examiners.

The Professional Skills assessment marking involved a large amount of staff time and a proportion of double marking to check for consistency. The marking was considered fair and robust.

### **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)**

The Examinations Office team communicated very effectively and efficiently with the external examiners, keeping them abreast in a timely manner of all changes occurring in the examination process this year. The process was well explained, transparent and very well documented. The Board of Examiners met virtually. The external examiners were very satisfied with all the arrangements and considered the assessment procedures to have been conducted very fairly. All staff involved were extremely helpful and cooperative. It is a strength of the assessment procedures that there is oversight by three experienced external examiners from different institutions and different academic backgrounds.

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

The exams were digitally proctored, on-line and remote. The digital proctoring system worked well with exams being limited to one hour blocks to facilitate this remote proctoring as once an exam had started a student could not move from in front of their screen/camera.

This year the students only had one chance to pass their DOPS in March 2021 (normally they would have had a first attempt in September 2020). A second attempt will be offered in July (this is usually the time for the re-sit DOPS). A third session in September 2021 may have to be arranged for anyone considered not competent by then. It was noted that students that do exceptionally well in their DOPS stations are not informed of this. This might be considered in the future.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Michael Hewetson**

##### **Course Director Response:**

Following their DOPS assessment, students receive feedback in several ways. Firstly they receive verbal feedback from the examiner at the end of each station. In addition to this, a breakdown of their performance for each station is published on the intranet. This consists of a descriptor for each station which gives them an idea of how well they performed. These descriptors are as follows: (1) exceeds expectation; (2) meets expectation; (3) below expectation; (4) borderline; and (5) fail.

##### **Action Required:**

##### **Action Deadline:**

##### **Action assigned to:**

### **3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures**

At the Exam Board, an update was provided on the successful implementation of an SOP to ensure correct calculation and transcription of marks.

It was noted that as part of the introduction of a new curriculum in September 2021, the EMQ section will be replaced by clinical reasoning single best answer MCQs.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Michael Hewetson**

##### **Course Director Response:**

The proposed change was approved by the the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC) on the 16th June and will be ratified at the next academic board meeting

##### **Action Required:**

##### **Action Deadline:**

##### **Action assigned to:**



## General Statements

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

**Yes**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

**4.2 An acceptable response has been made**

**Yes**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

**4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination**

**Yes**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

**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:**

**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:**

**4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly**

**Yes**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

**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:**

**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:**

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

**Yes**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

**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:**

**4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed**

**Yes**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

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

**Yes**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

## 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:**

Continuous assessment and feedback does not routinely take place in each learning module but is provided through the Professional Studies assignment completed in January and a formative exam in March, which helps to familiarise students with EMQ style questions. It may be worth exploring additional ways to enhance and monitor student engagement in the first half of the academic year.

It would be helpful to have historical data provided regarding the performance of questions that have been used in previous years. This could be very helpful when decisions are required regarding the removal of questions which appear to have performed badly in a particular year. It could also help indicate if there is an issue with either the teaching or the construct of the question.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Michael Hewetson**

**Course Director Response:**

Thank you for your valuable comments. While students do get formative assessment opportunities in each strand via the computer aided learning (CAL) quizzes, we recognize that we need to find additional formative opportunities to enhance and monitor student engagement more closely. This will be addressed in the new curriculum that will be rolled out for BVetMed 3 in 2023.

We do have historical data regarding the performance of questions used in previous years and will be happy to provide this information for those questions that are reused in the exam next 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)**

