

Dr. Lisa Boden
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28 June 2018

Dear Dr. Boden

External Examiner’s report for MSc and PG Diplomas in Livestock Health and Production, and Veterinary Epidemiology and Public Health (International Programmes) 2017

On behalf of the Royal Veterinary College Board of Examiners for Veterinary Epidemiology and Public Health, and Livestock Health and Production, I would like to thank you for your External Examiner’s report for the University of London International Programmes MSc and PG Diploma and Certificates in Veterinary Epidemiology and Public Health, and Livestock Health and Production for the 2017 academic year.

The External and Intercollegiate Examiner reports form an integral part of the assessment and quality assurance processes. All comments and points raised in the report have been considered and our formal response to key points is outlined below:

Examiner Comment	RVC Response
<p>Marking and sampling:</p> <p>One course highlighted a potential pitfall with the model answers and allocated scoring. There were numerous (n=13) significant (ranging from 20-30 points) discrepancies between examiners. Paradoxically, questions in which there were allocated points to model answers, suffered the greatest numbers of discrepancies. This is perhaps linked to 2 issues:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The use of a 10 point marking scale: deciding whether or not to penalise a minor error has large consequences. 2. Succinct model answers that allow for variable interpretation of allocation of marks between examiners. 	<p>The onus of allocating marks to sections of exam questions is on the two examiners acting, at the time of writing the question and time of marking. Large discrepancies would suggest a misunderstanding between the examiners on the requirements and/or the wrong application of the marking scheme. Examiners on the programme will be made aware of this as a concern that has been raised and therefore an issue to pay attention to when preparing and marking exam questions. The issue of model answers and allocation of marks will be flagged as an area to address at the next College-wide inset day for assessment.</p> <p>It will be strongly recommended that the 0-10 marking scheme is no longer be used for any of the modules, as the board of examiners agrees that this</p>

<p>A separate, but related point, is that on occasion there appeared to be inconsistent use of the marking guidelines (i.e. size of the discrepancy between examiners' marks did not always correlate well with % points that should have been attributable to the specific error).</p> <p>TMA: Relatively robust assessment. There was 1 inconsistency observed in TMA marking (i.e. awarding 100%, when there were critical comments made).</p>	<p>marking scheme presents a number of difficulties and is not a better option (for these particular assessments) than the widely used 17-point marking.</p> <p>Examiners marking TMAs have been made aware of the need to pay attention to the correct application of the descriptors in the marking scheme and the importance of correlating their feedback to the marks awarded.</p>
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Thank you again for your comments and for the support you provided to the programme during your term as an external examiner.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. Christine Thurania-McKeever

Cc: Professor Javier Guitian (Exam Board Chair)
 Ms. Carol Worsfold (Project Administrator, RVC)
 Ms. Jessie McGavin (Programme Manager, International Programmes)
 Ms. Annemarie Dulson (Quality Manager, International Programmes)

Professor Neil Donald Sargison
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Dear Professor Sargison

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Examiner Comment	RVC Response
<p>Standards:</p> <p>There are differences in the overall levels of performance between certain courses, exemplified by: one pass, one excellent pass and 4 fails in Animal Diseases; compared to 20 mostly excellent passes in Research Design, Management and Grant Application Writing. Most of the examiners in the Animal Diseases course consistently commented that their reasons for awarding poor marks were that answers did not demonstrate standards or levels of understanding commensurate with a Master’s qualification. I tend to agree with this evaluation, and also with the examiners’ positive comments pertaining to the Research Design and Grant Application Writing papers. Nevertheless, the situation raises questions about what the correct level of understanding should be for different courses, and for the different MSc degree, and Postgraduate</p>	<p>Responses to comments:</p> <p>All the courses in this programme are of level 7, regardless of the qualification the student is enrolled for. The variability in the performance can only relate to the specific modules. In this case there has been poor performance in the Animal Diseases module, and examiners feel that students did not answer the questions at the required level.</p> <p>The Animal Diseases module will be revisited to determine whether the content that is taught is of the right level and if so, determine where the problem lies between the teaching and the assessment. This review of the module will also address issues raised about the standards of the Tutor Marked Assessments for this module, vis a vis the standards achieved by students in the exam. The review will be undertaken by the module leader and the Programme Director.</p>

<p>Diploma and Postgraduate Certificate qualifications in Livestock Health and Production.</p> <p>Programme and assessment design:</p> <p>1). Model answers were long and extremely detailed. This is helpful from an evaluator's perspective but unfortunately can create issues with regards to the precision of marking and the interpretation of the marking scheme. Where students were asked to give examples, the detail provided in the model answer inevitably overlooked certain pertinent and appropriate responses, inadvertently portraying an emphasis on regurgitation of facts ahead of demonstration of understanding of principles in the marking scheme. Criticism is unintended and unhelpful, but could be avoided by providing general headings and lists of key points to be included in the answer, rather than essay style model answers.</p> <p>2). There is a need to be clear about the protocol for the role of observer in the assessment of this module: the observer should not be hidden during an electronically conducted oral examination, and candidate should be made aware of the observer's presence and role. There is a need for the examiners to be clear about each of the headings in the marking scheme for the oral examination, and to conduct the oral examination accordingly. The candidate should be given the opportunity to defend his/her work in each of the areas of the wider context of the work, study design, data analysis, or practical conclusions.</p>	<p>Examiners write model answers to cover the key points, with the expectation that occasionally there will be some responses from students that are appropriate but not covered by the model answer. Marks are awarded accordingly for such responses. The recommendation to write the model answers in general heading and key points rather than in essay style, will be made to the examiners.</p> <p>The external examiner acts as an observer in the oral examinations. Exam candidates should certainly be aware of the presence of the observer and this will be made clear in future oral examinations.</p> <p>The use of prescribed marking schemes is disseminated to examiners at College-wide inset days. A specific reminder will be given to those examining these vivas, that they should give candidates the opportunity to defend their work in all areas identified by the marking scheme and not only focus on single technical areas.</p>
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Thank you again for your comments and for continuing to support the programme.

Yours sincerely,



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