

## ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2016/17

### Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

#### MSc Veterinary Epidemiology

This appendix contains Course Director's/Year Leader's responses to 2016/17 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from External Examiners' reports from previous years (if applicable).

As Course Director/Year Leader 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.	2016/17 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director

a. Update to actions from 2015/16:

Report Question	External Examiners' comments & suggested actions	Course Director's response/ update in 2015/16	Update in 2016/17
<p>3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)</p>	<p>There were a few sub-questions which were worth a high proportion of the total marks for that question that could have benefited from more detailed explanation of marks allocation, or by being broken into more discrete subquestions</p>	<p>Most exam questions had clear sub-questions with clear mark allocation. We agree that there were a small number of questions where the allocation of marks could have been made more explicit. We will try to ensure this is done from now on. The recent (July 2016) introduction of a named Exams Office person for the Vet Epi course should help this process.</p> <p>Action Required: Review exam questions in spring 2017 for the end of year exams to ensure all questions have detailed explanation of mark allocation, or are broken into more discrete subquestions.</p> <p>Action Deadline: 31-May-2017 Action assigned to: Course directors (Julian Drewe and Ellen Fragaszy) and Exams Office (Lauren Christian)</p>	
<p>4.4 I was able to scrutinise an adequate sample of students' work and marks to enable me to carry out my duties</p>	<p>... very few papers were annotated by the examiners</p> <p>The in course assessment materials from LSHTM were difficult to work with. We received papers from ALL students undertaking each module, not just those undertaking this course and these were coded with at different code to the one used by the RVC....</p>	<p>1. Emphasise to examiners that markers must annotate papers so that it is clear where marks were awarded.</p> <p>2. Request LHSTM/RVC supplies the exam results next year in a format requested by the externals (i.e. only for the students enrolled on MSc Vet Epi course and using the RVC codes).</p> <p>Action Deadline: 01-Sep-2017 Action assigned to: Maria Johnson and Lauren Christian</p>	

# Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 15-Sep-2017

**MSc in Veterinary Epidemiology, 2016/17**

**Lead examiner: Dr Rob Christley**

**Collaborating examiner(s): Professor Ann Lindberg**

## The Programme

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

### 1.1 Course content

The course content is appropriate for an MSc

**Response from college  
requested: NO**

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

The learning objectives were clear and appeared to be met

**Response from college  
requested: NO**

### 1.3 Teaching methods

A range of teaching methods were used and were appropriate of the course. The course is delivered both by the RVC and LSHTM - the mix of methods used across the Schools is likely to have benefited students.

**Response from college  
requested: NO**

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

We are not aware of the resources used

**Response from college  
requested: NO**

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

The programme has been running for many years and is clearly well "tried and tested". The content is excellent and should give students an excellent grounding in epidemiology.

**Response from college requested:** **NO**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Julian Drewe**

**Course Director Response:**

Good.

## 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

This is a challenging course and the students perform well. I believe the student performance is similar to those of comparable courses in the UK and Europe.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Performance varied across the different modes of assessment, with variation both within and between students, as has been noted in previous years. In many ways this is reassuring, as it implies that the different methods of assessment allow all students to demonstrate their learning, even where they learn and perform best in different ways. However, several students performed quite poorly across multiple assessments - this is likely to reflect their ability rather than a problem with the assessment.

Response from college requested: **NO**

### COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Julian Drewe

#### Course Director Response:

Two students failed as a result of poor performance in more than one assessment. Neither was a surprise as both had struggled (and received extra support) through the course. However, the fact that these two struggled during the course was initially surprising as they had excellent applications and previous academic records, which suggests the rigorous nature of the course and the move to learning at Masters level was more of a challenge to them than their previous training had been. This is borne in mind when reviewing applications for new students, but is hard to predict.

The quality of the students at the top was very good, with 3 students getting merits which is an excellent result.

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

No additional comments

Response from college requested: **NO**

## Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

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

The range of assessment tasks should enable the students to demonstrate their knowledge and to apply skills.

The exams appeared to be of a reasonable length, with some students being able to provide excellent answers to at least most questions. In most cases it should have been clear to the students how marked were to be allocated and this should aid the students when answering. Assessments covered learning objectives well.

Response from college requested: **NO**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Julian Drewe**

**Course Director Response:**

Noted.

### 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Assessment was very rigorous.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

The level of assessment is consistent with the FHEQ

Response from college requested: **NO**

### 3.4 Standard of marking

Marking was fair and objective. In one or two instances the marks of the 1st and 2nd markers diverged considerably, but the agreed mark was usually appropriate. In one instance the agreed mark was somewhat lower than we would have expected.

One student received very divergent marks from the two markers for her project dissertation. It is recommended that all examiners be reminded of, and use, the marking guidance.

**Response from college requested:** **NO**

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Julian Drewe**

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

While it was initially a surprise that some students received initially quite different marks from the 1st and 2nd marker, it was noticeable that the agreed mark (or in one case, the mark of the third marker who was sought) were considered to be very appropriate. This suggests the marking system works well as it does not rely on one marker's opinion. The divergent marking was not a result of markers being unfamiliar with the mark scheme but rather because of them having differing areas of expertise and therefore different perspectives to which they attached differing levels of importance in their marking. The externals were satisfied with the marking overall and did not wish to overrule any. Nonetheless markers will be reminded of the marking guidance (although this might be a good place to suggest the 17-point scheme is overhauled so that different descriptors are provided for all marks, not just every second or third one as is currently the case).

### 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)

Yes. Procedures were sound and fairly conducted.

**Response from college requested:** **NO**

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

The role of the external examiners has changed for this year, with EE observing, rather than participating in viva voce examinations. This worked well and enabled the external to remain a more impartial observer of the assessment process. We recommend this continues, with the two viva voce examiners being drawn from the course directors and the examiners of the dissertation, where possible.

**Response from college requested:** **NO**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Julian Drewe**

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

We note the external examiners' recommendation that each viva is examined by one course director and one examiner of the written dissertation and plan to repeat this in future years as it works well. This ensures a level of consistency and fairness and allows an account of every viva to be provided at the exam board meeting if required.

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

Planning of students projects is difficult as, in common with all research, unexpected problems sometimes arise. One area where many students could have improved their projects dissertations and viva voce performance was to provide a more critical assessment of their work, highlighting both strengths and weaknesses. We recommend students include more reflection within their dissertations regarding the shortcomings of their work, the potential impacts of these, and ways they would suggest improving this if they were to do the project again. These are important areas of learning and students (and examiners) should be made aware that these are likely to be picked up for discussion in the viva voce.

**Response from college requested:** **NO**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Julian Drewe**

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

Students are given project guidance which includes this advice. It will be particularly emphasised in future. Many students did follow it!

#### **Action Required:**

Emphasise to students the importance of reflecting on their study's limitations and weaknesses during the writing of the report and in preparation for the viva.

#### **Action Deadline:**

01-Jul-2018

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

Course director Julian Drewe



## 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:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

**4.2 An acceptable response has been made**

**Yes**

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

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

**Yes**

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

**Response from college requested: 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:**

We received some in course assessment documents in the week prior to the meetings at the RVC, this was helpful and reduced the time pressure during the visit. Please continue this, but see 4.9 below.

**Response from college requested: 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:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

#### 4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: 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:

Response from college requested: 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:

Response from college requested: NO

#### 4.9 I have received enough support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Both external examiners found the RVC online learning system somewhat difficult to navigate. It would be helpful, and save considerable time, if a simple method could be used to share documents - perhaps simple email of a zipped folder (password protected if needed).

Response from college requested: NO

Professor A.L

Alternatively, exact guidance on where all relevant documents are located should be provided (acknowledging that EEs are not familiar with the specific structure of the RVC online learning system).

Also note that the download function for grading sheets exported files as comma separated text files which made them less accessible and added an extra step for importation to make them readable.

These are really simple things but they take focus and time from what is important.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Julian Drewe**

**Course Director Response:**

Examiners' comment noted: Exams office will be asked to do this next year if it is possible.

**Action Required:**

Both external examiners found the RVC online learning system somewhat difficult to navigate. It would be helpful, and save considerable time, if a simple method could be used to share documents - perhaps simple email of a zipped folder (password protected if needed).

**Action Deadline:**

01-Jul-2018

**Action assigned to:**

Exams officer Lauren Christian

**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:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

**Yes**

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

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

**Yes**

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

**Response from college requested: 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:**

No

Response from college requested: **NO**

**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)**

None

Response from college requested: **NO**