

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 09-Sep-2015

MSc in Wild Animal Biology, 2014/15

Lead examiner: Professor Oswin Perera

Collaborating examiner(s): Ms Rana Parween

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

The course content is very good and covers all aspects of the two fields in very good depth and breadth.

**Response from college
requested: NO**

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

Very good and clearly stated; well met through the teaching and learning activities.

**Response from college
requested: NO**

1.3 Teaching methods

Good variety of teaching methods. The use of many lecturers and tutors from a wide variety of disciplines and institutes has enriched the teaching methods.

**Response from college
requested: NO**

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

Good

**Response from college
requested: NO**

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

**Response from college
requested: NO**

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

Overall the students' work was of a very high standard, and were at or above those on other MSc courses known to the examiners. Papers written on research projects were in general of a high standard, with some of a standard suitable for scientific publication. The students were highly motivated and innovative, and achieved a great deal in the short time allocated to these projects. The recommendation made last year to limit the number of projects that relied mainly on analyses of retrospective data sets appears to have resulted in a marked reduction of such projects. There was an increase in the number of projects dealing with behaviour, which is attributable to the relatively higher numbers of students in the Wild Animal Biology course.

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

This year's cohort of students was of a high standard, with one distinction and a high proportion of merit passes. Even those students receiving the lowest marks were comfortable passes, except for one student who passed in the project and oral, but failed in two modules. Students generally demonstrated a good level of critical understanding and insight of their project's strengths and limitations, but some had a limited understanding of the applicability of findings from captive collections to those under free-living conditions.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

As in previous years, the opportunity to attend the Student Conference on the day before the oral exams was valuable to the examiners. The presentations were in general well prepared and delivered with confidence. The formal oral exam provided further opportunity to assess in greater depth the knowledge and understanding of students on key issues relating to their project than was apparent from the written report.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Appropriate and relevant to the learning objectives and the curriculum; sufficiently varied to assess different skills such as ability to express ideas and make critical analyses through written and oral responses.

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Suitably 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

Consistent, with good use of the scale of marking.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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 procedures for examinations, marking and awards are sound and fair. Meetings of the Board of Examiners are conducted very fairly, and comments of internal and external examiners are fully considered in making decisions. The assessment forms from supervisors of research projects are valuable to the external examiners, and in general were completed well. A few supervisors failed to submit these forms, and supervisors should be reminded that this is one of their responsibilities, and that these are highly appreciated by the external examiners.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Michael Waters

Course Director Response:

This is a continuing problem since many of the supervisors are external to both the RVC and ZSL. All supervisors are requested to send their reports to the course coordinator and, if not, are reminded (perhaps pestered is a better word here!) that these are a necessary part of the supervisory process.

Action Required:

Exams Office will send final reminders to all defaulting supervisors

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Exams Office

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

No changes were perceived.

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

The opportunity provided this year to meet a sample of the students immediately after the student presentations was very valuable to the external examiners. It was a much better arrangement than that of the previous year, when only a brief meeting was possible at lunch time on the day of the oral examinations. The relevant comments and suggestions made by the students were discussed by the external examiners at the meeting of the Board of Examiners.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Michael Waters

Course Director Response:

This format shall be repeated in the future.

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:

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:

Only the lead external examiner approved the papers for examinations, as the second external examiner was appointed later, in July 2015.

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

No

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

The external examiners did not scrutinize a sample of students' work in the exams, but had access to their marks at the meeting of the Board of Examiners. With respect to the papers written on student projects, the externals each reviewed one-third of the papers, which was fully adequate.

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:

Response from college requested: 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:

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:

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 holding of a Student Conference for making presentations on the research projects on the day preceding the oral examinations is an excellent practice that enables the external examiners to fully assess student performance in the research project. The opportunity provided for the externals to meet with a sample of students immediately after the Student Conference in order to discuss issues relating to academic as well as administrative aspects of the course and examinations is also very valuable. The process of oral examination and external examiners' visit was very well organised, and all relevant information and procedures were well communicated prior to the visit.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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)

Perhaps the availability of some exam scripts and in course assessments for the external examiners to scrutinize during their visit could be considered.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Michael Waters

Course Director Response:

We will investigate introducing this in 2016 cycle

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to: