ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2020/21

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

BVetMed Year 2

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
b.	20/21 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director

a. Updates to actions from previous years' reports

2018/19			
Report Question	External Examiners' comments & suggested actions	Course Director/Year Leader's response & Action	Update in 2019/20
3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous	Oral exam (ISF): .There remain some differences in the information provided to the students regarding the level of questions and when this is achieved. We suggest that it is mandatory that the students are informed when they have achieved a level 1, 2 or 3 as there was a lack of consistency in providing this information.	Your comments regarding the ISF are taken on board. We will highlight to examiners that signposting of a student's progress through the various levels of the exam is an expectation. **Action Required:** Amendment to ISF examiner briefing and training to ensure that examiners know to signpost levels explicitly. Amended briefing to Integrated Concepts examiners **Action Deadline:** 01-Mar-2019 **Action assigned to:** ISF exam coordinator; Exams office; BVetMed Year 2 Leader	N/A no ISF Orals exams ran in 2019-20. Action rolled over. Update 2020-21 ISF oral exams took place virtually – requests to signpost the level were included in the briefings given to examiners. We will continue to do this ongoingly.
3.4 Standard of marking	A question in paper 2 was late being marked which did delay the ability to review the student performance data across the assessments…… ….. The application of standard setting should now be adopted to paper 2 and every effort made to have the marking completed for the external examiners to review.	Thankyou for your comments. It is our intention to standard set paper 2 for future assessments. We apologise for the late marking of one question, which did delay the availability of accurate mark sheets for the externals on this occasion. We will endeavour to remind individuals of the importance of meeting marking deadlines. **Action Required:** Formalise standard setting of paper 2. We will endeavour to remind individuals of the importance of meeting marking deadlines. **Action Deadline:** 01-Jun-2020 **Action assigned to:** Director of Assessment; Exams Office; Heads of Department where required.	Complete
3.6 Opinion on changes to the assessment procedures from previous years in which you have examined	. A new box on the ISF oral mark sheet which aims to identify those students who may benefit from support in development of their communication skills is a useful addition, though staff may require guidance on its function and use	We agree that guidance on the level of concern required to generate use of the communication skills box would be useful for examiners. We will seek to clarify this for next year. **Action Required:**	N/A no ISF Orals exams ran in 2019-20. Action rolled over. Update in 2020-21 ISF oral exams ran virtually. The mark sheet was converted to an online mark sheet, and this box was removed

		Ensure the use of the communication skills concern box is explained to examiners **Action Deadline:** 01-Mar-2020 **Action assigned to:** ISF exams coordinator; Exams Office; BVetMed Year 2 Leader	from the marking proforma to ensure a clear and quick form for staff to complete their assessments. Staff were encouraged to write feedback comments in the open comments box for each candidate.
2019/20			
Report Question	External Examiners' comments & suggested actions	Course Director/Year Leader's response & Action	Update in 2019/20
4.1 Comments I have made in previous years have been addressed to my satisfaction	Due to the COVID-19 situation, the format for assessment and the delivery of the programme had to undergo a dramatic adaptation. Comparison to last year is therefore not valid.	We acknowledge that some of our actions from last year that arose in response to your comments will need to be rolled over into the next academic year. **Action Required:** Roll over 2018-19 actions from external examiners report into Annual Quality Improvement Report for 2019-20 **Action Deadline:** 02-Nov-2020 **Action assigned to:** BVetMed Year 2 Leader	CLOSED Both of the rolled over actions have either been completed or are no longer relevant. Specific updates are provided in the Table on Page 1 of this document.
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:	At the University of Glasgow, a similar formative assessment exam procedure was adopted for 2nd (and 1st) year students with all progressing to the next year of the programme. At the University of Nottingham veterinary school, the online assessments were completed in an open-book scenario. Mean marks were higher as expected but the assessments were deemed to be a fair judge of students' knowledge. There are variations across the UK based Vet Schools and it would be ideal if the experience of the different institutes so that positive and negative lessons can be shared in the near future.	We are pleased to hear that the necessary modifications that we made to examinations in 19-20 reflect those that occurred elsewhere. Evaluation of the variations in format across the vet schools would make a very interesting project. **Action Required:** BVetMed 2 (now BVetMed 1) Year leader to investigate whether such a project is ongoing **Action Deadline:** 30-Oct-2020 **Action assigned to:** BVetMed Year 1 Leader	COMPLETED BVetMed 1 leader could not find and is not aware of a project considering variations across the vet schools. Presumably this information would be beneficial. Perhaps someone should take on such a project, but it would need funding presumably, and a time commitment

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 05-Jul-2021

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 2, 2020/21

Lead examiner: Dr Charlotte Miller

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Mark Mclaughlin, Dr Richard Payne, Dr Hanne Jahns

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

Staff are to be commended for their efforts in converting in-person to high quality online content throughout this academic year. The examiners are satisfied that wherever possible content has been covered as in previous years. There is no additional content which we would suggest including at this time.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

The recognition of our efforts to deliver our curriculum with minimal change to content is appreciated very much.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

These appear to have been conserved wherever possible and clear plans are in place for students to cover ILOs in relevant practical skills (eg working with dissection instruments) later in the course where appropriate.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

Similar to my comment under 1.1., we appreciate the recognition of our efforts to minimise changes to our learning objectives.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.3 Teaching methods

Appear to have been appropriate to the move online.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

The collective effort of our staff (both academic and non-academic) in doing this was immense.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Students have not had access to physical resources as in previous years, but the ISF orals in particular were re-designed well to examine the students using the types of digital resources they will have been learning from.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

This experience of conducting viva examinations online will be invaluable to us in the future.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

We congratulate the whole programme team on successful completion of the Programme during a under very difficult circumstances this academic year.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

Thank You - this recognition has been relayed to all involved.

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

Performance in examinations (on individual exam questions, in orals and overall) appears consistent with those seen this academic year in students being examined on similar material in other institutions.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

My experience as an External Examiner is that we have not experienced grade inflation as other institutions have as a result of online contingencies, which I regard as a positive.

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

It has been noted this year that in the ISF orals in particular students rarely reached level 3 questioning in the time available and 33% failed this element. It is unclear whether this was due to students having less depth of learning, less practice in expressing themselves concisely (due to lack of discussion experience in eg practicals) or an effect of the orals being conducted online. The number of students that have failed the year overall seems in line with or slightly higher than in previous years under non pandemic conditions, however this cohort will also include all students that were automatically progressed without going through the summative assessment procedure in 19/20.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

These are all observations with which we agree.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

On the whole, students appear to have engaged well with this year's online learning and while the proportion failing the year may be above average, some students have also been able to achieve excellent marks in various elements, including the research project.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

This observation reflects our experience of the considerable range of student adaptation (or not) to the extraordinary circumstances of 2020-21

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

All assessments were carried out with methods appropriate to the learning objectives and curriculum followed. This necessarily excluded more practical assessment methods, however examiners who observed the online ISF orals were impressed with the way these had been organised and implemented.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

This experience of conducting viva examinations online will be invaluable to us in the future.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Assessment procedures appear appropriately rigorous – examiners have had good access to observe and comment on examination papers and procedures (including the ISF orals) throughout the academic year.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

We are very pleased that our efforts to maintain our academic standards under difficult conditions were successful and have been recognised.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Assessment level appears appropriate to second year (level 5) work

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

We were very conscious in our contingency planning of not changing our learning outcomes or objectives.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.4 Standard of marking

Appears consistently high across exam papers. The examiners note that the quantity, quality and methods of feedback are not always consistent across markers in the research project, and while this assessment is being discontinued this is something to bear in mind if similarly marked assessments are introduced in the future.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

The replacement for RP1 (critical analysis / writing exercises within Scholarship and Evidence-Based Medicine) will provide guidance to tutors / markers that should encourage consistency of feedback.

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)

Yes

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

This positive comment reflects considerable effort by, in particular, RVC Examinations Office staff.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Changes made for this academic year have been necessary and appropriate to the move online

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

This positive comment reflects considerable effort by both academic and non-academic staff.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

External examining remotely continues to be somewhat challenging, but staff have been very helpful in resolving technical difficulties quickly and answering queries.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

The comment made under section 3.5 applies equally here.

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

This reflects the robustness of our examination- and examination reporting systems.

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 Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

The comment made under Section 4.1 applies here also.

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:

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:

in some ways this is more difficult to do remotely, but good access has been provided.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

This positive comment reflects considerable effort by, in particular, RVC Examinations Office staff.

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 Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

We are very grateful for our External Examiners' engagement with our examination processes.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

We were very conscious in our contingency planning of not changing our learning outcomes or objectives.

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:

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:

Dr R.P

Yes

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:

None

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stephen Frean

Course Director Response:

Our External Examiners' confidence in our teaching- and assessment systems is extremely gratifying as they are the result of a huge institutional effort of many parts.

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)

None