

## ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2020/21

### Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

## Grad Dip Equine Locomotor Research

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

# Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 07-Jun-2021

## Graduate Diploma in Equine Locomotor Research, 2020/21

Lead examiner: Dr Lance Voute

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Connie Wiskin

### The Programme

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

#### 1.1 Course content

The course's content is arranged into two sections, "Contemporary Study Skills" and "Applied Equine Locomotion", which are delivered using a combination of online teaching and short residential courses. The first section aims to equip farriers with the skills required to engage successfully with the course and to develop their academic writing & presenting skills. The second section, which features five modules, prepares the students in stepwise fashion to undertake the capstone assessment – an applied research project in the field of equine locomotor biomechanics. Additional assessments are scheduled in Section 1 and in each of the other modules of Section 2.

The course seems appealing and well targeted, and the content is aligned with the aim to be accessible to individuals who may have had little involvement in formal education for several years and to enable farriers to undertake research, and thereby contribute to the evidence-base of farriery.

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

The learning aims and outcomes are clear, appropriately expressed and can be easily accessed by the students. The assessments are well aligned with the outcomes both with respect to overall strategy, individual tasks and marking rubrics.

"Write of Data Analysis Results" (nine students, 2018-19 cohort) and research project write-ups (three students, 2018-19 cohort) were available for review. There was a range in level of attainment demonstrated but it was apparent that students were well prepared, making the outcomes achievable.

#### 1.3 Teaching methods

The course uses a blended approach to learning, which is now "well tried and tested". The approach is sympathetic to the needs of the students, who are working farriers, to fit learning around busy schedules and the stepwise structure should assist students returning to formal education after a considerable break (as many are). Face-to-face teaching for the 2018-19 cohort had been completed prior to the need to introduce COVID-19 restrictions.

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

Considerable resources are available to the students via the RVC's virtual learning platform and the course is well-supported by enthusiastic teaching staff and an effective administration. Student performance in assessments suggested that resources themselves, or how they are delivered, are not a limiting factor.

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

The comments made in the 2020 report still apply – a student perspective on course performance (through review of feedback and direct contact with representative students) would help the external examiners to calibrate their views.

The submission the deadline for the Research Thesis was extended for most of the student cohort because of the effect of COVID-19 related restrictions, especially on field work. It is possible that the restrictions have persisted for longer and have had much wider effects than was envisaged at the time the extensions were granted, and I (LV) therefore wonder how this situation might be managed. Is there the flexibility to enable projects to be modified or further extensions to be granted, as well as to ensure that the students remain well supported during any further extension

## 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**

Although this is my (LV) first involvement of a diploma-level course aimed at healthcare professionals (previous experience has been of master's-level courses) and I therefore do not have a ready comparator, the overall performance of the students was impressive. This is much to their credit, especially given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also reflects the high quality course design and delivery.

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

Although the number of assessments reviewed was relatively low (2018-19 intake: nine data analysis write ups; three project reports), it was sufficient to see a level of student attainment which ranged from fail (very poor) to excellent (distinction). Some of the work produced by the students was exceptional; all produced work which demonstrated knowledge and skills consistent with the course intended learning outcomes.

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

It was evident that developing scientific writing skills is a considerable (and understandable) challenge for several of the students and therefore reassuring to see the resources devoted to this area. Continued provision is obviously important to maintaining the inclusivity of the course.

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

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

The assessment methods were relevant to the curriculum and its intended learning outcomes. The majority of assessment tasks required the students to produce a written piece of work (seven from nine tasks) but each had a clear purpose which aligned with module outcomes, such as demonstrating understanding of functional anatomy or data analysis, as well as the more general, collective purpose of monitoring the development of critical thinking and scientific writing skills. It was easy to appreciate how the rich feedback provided (using the Write up of Data Analysis Results and Research Thesis as exemplars) enabled the students to use the assessment tasks as learning.

### 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Assessment procedures, which included double marking of work and use of an established marking rubric, were rigorous and were followed consistently. The Examinations Board meeting was well run and facilitated open discussion.

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

The level of assessment was consistent with the FHEQ Level 7 descriptor for postgraduate diplomas.

### 3.4 Standard of marking

The grading scheme used for the assessments reviewed (Common Grading Scheme; Write up of Data Analysis Results and Research Thesis) was applied appropriately and consistently between students and between the two markers. There appeared to be little, or no discrepancy, between markers.

It was straightforward to appreciate why marks were awarded and I (LV) agreed with the markers, including for the Write up of Data Analysis Results which failed (second submission by the student achieved a pass mark).

### 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)

In my (LV) opinion these procedures were rigorous, robust, valid, and fair. The support for External Examiners was excellent – kind, timely, proactive, responsive, provision of access to all course materials. The Board of Examiners meeting was well run using the Microsoft Teams video conferencing platform for realtime interaction and sharing of documents by the group.

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

The RVC's no detriment policy was applied to the student required to resubmit an assessment task after their first submission had not achieved the passing standard. Similar policies are in operation at other institutions for students whose studies have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

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

Any procedures introduced because of the COVID-19 pandemic, ran smoothly and effectively.

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

N/A

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

This is the 1st year of my appointment (LV).

**4.2 An acceptable response has been made**

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

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

**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:**

Good Practice: The course design in relation to inclusivity (recognition of the needs of individuals who are likely to have not had recent educational experience) and the quality of feedback provided for written assessments were exceptional (LV).

Improvements: No suggestions at present. There was some discussion at the Board of Examiners meeting about adjusting the weighting of the two assessments used for the Research Thesis but this was not instigated by me. I am, however, in favour of increasing the weighting of the presentation relative to the write up to ensure that there is not excessive compensation by the latter.

**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)**

