

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2016/17

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

MVetMed

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, 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
2.3 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the students' performance	Since students who perform poorly in the statistics module do poorly in their application of statistics in their dissertation, consideration should be given for how to support those who struggle (or struggle to engage) in this aspect of their core teaching.	<p>Whilst we have not specifically compared performance on the statistics module with performance on the research project, it was still disappointing that some students in this cohort struggled with statistics. As part of the restructured MVetMed, statistics teaching will form part of the Research Module (that will run for the duration of the 3yr course), and the content of all modules is in the process of being refreshed, prior to the anticipated delivery of the new curriculum in July 2018. It may be that part of the reason for the poor performance in the statistics module was due to some misunderstanding by some candidates as to what was to be expected in the assignment. Efforts were made during the course to clarify the nature of the assignment but these will be developed further. we will continue to review the content in order to improve delivery and understanding. It should be noted that this year the sessions were much more interactive than last year as even more effort was made to encourage all residents to bring a laptop and undertake the session exercises and engage with the statistical software under the supervision of the lecturer. We are revising the timing of the delivery of these sessions for 2018 to make them all during the day (wed 9 am) such that the majority of residents can always attend, rather late in the day on a Monday (5pm original timing).. In addition, we will remind students about the additional support that they can access for statistical help, either from faculty statisticians (D Brodbelt and VEEPH colleagues) or from a group of postgraduate mentors (who have received statistics training from Dr Ruby Chang).</p> <p>Action Required: Revision of statistics content of Research Module is part of the ongoing restructuring exercise. Action Deadline: July 2018 Action assigned to: Dr Vicky Lipscomb (new course director) and Dr David Brodbelt</p>	Please note the deadline is July 2018, no update available yet
3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to	The assessment methods are appropriate for the research projects and when questioned on individual	The flexibility with regards to how students can format their research submissions can raise issues regarding to parity. We thank the examiner for raising this as a potential issue, and can reassure them	Please note the deadline is July 2018, no update available yet

learning objectives and curriculum)	<p>modules these appear appropriate as well. Given the extensive offering of elective modules these have not been evaluated thoroughly.</p> <p>Candidates who submit a short publication are sometimes disadvantaged by not including background work or negative results. Where author guidelines restrict the written submission significantly, candidates should be advised to include additional information</p>	<p>that as part of the restructured MVetMed, the module leader and deputy module leader for the Research module are already looking at the suitability of the Common Grading Scheme to mark dissertations and manuscripts with parity. We are also examining whether a move towards a manuscript format would be more appropriate, given the requirement for (almost all) residents to submit manuscripts for publications as part of attaining their credentials. As an aside, we have already performed an initial correlation of project performance vs protected time for research (as the amount of off-clinic time varies significantly depending on the specialty); from an analysis of 50 students (from the past 3 years), there is no significant correlation between these two parameters.</p> <p>Action Required: Ongoing monitoring and revision of assessment format for the research project</p> <p>Action Deadline: July 2018</p> <p>Action assigned to: Dr David Brodbelt and Dr Rob Fowkes</p>	
3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous	<p>There is a rigorous process for assessment of projects. However some paperwork is inconsistent in its completion (declarations not present for all candidates).</p> <p>One project co-supervisor was assigned this project to mark, which is unsurprising given the small pool of examiners in some sub-specialties. Where possible this should be avoided. Given that both markers scored similarly and that we have also reviewed each submission this is more of a theoretical rather than an actual problem,</p>	<p>Whilst we note that the examiners have not requested a response, we thank them for raising this particular incident (which we believe to be an isolated case). For the past few years, the College has implemented a requirement for two independent examiners to assess major pieces of coursework – neither of whom should either be supervisors or involved with the project in any way.</p> <p>Action Required: Ongoing monitoring and implementation of assessment process</p> <p>Action Deadline: July 2018</p> <p>Action assigned to: Dr Vicky Lipscomb & Mr John Sanger</p>	Please note the deadline is July 2018, no update available yet
3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations	Some candidates have high Turnitin Plagiarism scores. Evidence that such high scores have been acted on should be mentioned.	Turnitin has been used extensively at the RVC for several years, partly as a tool to assist in detection of plagiarism, but also as an online coursework marking system. Both staff and students are given guidance and training on how to use Turnitin (for marking, or for submission purposes, respectively). Research conduct, plagiarism and	Please note the deadline is July 2018, no update available yet

<p>regarding the procedures</p>	<p>Might want to consider whether students with higher or equivalent qualifications (e.g. PhDs) can use the APL route for some aspects of the core modules</p> <p>Submission by publication sometimes limits the extent of work and can appear like a very small body of work, especially where pilot work is not available to examine. Guidance and an ongoing review of intentions to submit should be considered by the course director to ensure that candidates do not inadvertently disadvantage themselves by a desire for publication</p>	<p>use of Turnitin is specifically covered in the taught research courses and will continue to be in the new MVetMed research module. As internal examiners, the Turnitin similarity score is an initial guide, not a sole indicator – concerns as regards to plagiarism are initially raised with the exams office and then followed up with the Course Director and Academic Registrar, if required. There are often very straightforward explanations for a high Turnitin similarity score (so, either the fact that the research project has already been published by the student, or occasionally students will have submitted a draft version through Turnitin and then re-submitted the final version, in which case the score is high - in both cases, these are easy to identify).</p> <p>Action Required: Update content of Research Module (ongoing) with regards to scientific writing and research ethics</p> <p>Action Deadline: July 2018</p> <p>Action assigned to: Dr Dave Brodbelt & Dr Rob Fowkes</p>	
<p>4.1 Comments I have made in previous years have been addressed to my satisfaction</p>	<p>Declaration forms not always present and therefore contributions not always clear.</p>	<p>Unclear how this could happen because Exams Office will not normally accept a project without the necessary accompanying forms.</p> <p>Action Required: Remind Exams Office and Internal Examiners to look for the declarations.</p> <p>Action Deadline: 30-Sep-2016</p> <p>Action assigned to: Course Director</p>	

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 24-May-2017

Master of Veterinary Medicine, 2016/17

Lead examiner: Professor Carmel Mooney

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Mark Bowen

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

Adequate. The course contains sufficient modules, a research component and clinical/pathology skills with both formative and summative assessment.

Response from college requested: NO

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

The course meets its objectives allowing study for residency programmes and through its research and modular components providing a foundation for developing clinical research skills.

Response from college requested: NO

1.3 Teaching methods

Appear adequate.

Response from college requested: NO

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

Appear adequate.

Response from college requested: NO

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

None at present.

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

The final marks were 8 distinction, 13 merits, 1 pass, 1 fail and 1 incomplete. The number of merits/distinctions reflect the calibre expected of this type of cohort of postgraduate students.

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

Adequate.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

23 students were required to take the core A modules. It is notable that of 21 students undertaking the Applied Statistics and SPSS module, 6 achieved a mark < 50 %. Given its importance in devising and analysing a research project, the course content, learning outcomes, assessment methodology and student engagement should be examined to ensure that it is of an adequate standard for the calibre of students and intended outcomes.

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE

The new research module for the 2018 cohort of students has revised content and objectives. The applied statistics teaching has been streamlined and the assignments clarified. Additionally, the students will not be undertaking any other taught courses concurrently whilst attending the applied statistics teaching.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Adequate. Candidates were assessed using a variety of methods.

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

The research component was marked by two people with an agreed final mark. Most marks from each of the two examiners were comparable.

One student submitted published work out with the regulations. This should be avoided and resubmission of the original project required if this occurs again.

In many cases no feedback was available from the examiners for the candidates. In some cases the feedback was minimal and in others the feedback did not reflect the final mark awarded e.g. 'an excellent research project' awarded pass/merit.

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE

The course director will liaise with the course administrator so that each internal examiner assigned a project to mark receives a reminder that they must provide some appropriate feedback.

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

Consistent.

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.4 Standard of marking

Although the spread of distinction and merit were high as expected in this cohort of postgraduate students, the spread of marks awarded for the project report was narrow with only three marks exceeding 75 % for this component. There was wide variation in the student input required of each research project with vastly different case numbers available for interrogation, statistical analyses used and research methodologies carried out. As such it is suggested that the complete spread of marks is applied and recognition given for the varying student input.

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE

The projects are marked using the RVC common grading scheme which provides descriptors to allow accurate marking across a variety of submissions quality. 75% is a distinction mark and only 3 marks exceeding this seems appropriate given the descriptor for the next distinction mark of 82%. The wide variation in project submissions is expected because of the varying board specialty requirements.

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)

All soundly and fairly conducted.

On-line access to student projects to be commended.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Not applicable.

Response from college requested: NO

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

See above regarding spread of marks. It would also be advised that a standardised marking descriptor be devised to allow better assessment of each examiners marks, that would also provide more detailed feedback to the students.

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE

“This is covered in the RVC common grading scheme descriptors, see [Common Grading Scheme](#)”

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

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: **NO**

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: **NO**

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

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:

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:

Excellent support both before and during visits to RVC.

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:

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:

See suggestions regarding spread of marks and marking descriptors.

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)

Response from college requested: **NO**

