

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' COMMENTS, 2012/2013

Course: BVetMed Year 1

Examiner Comment	RVC Response (Please remember to directly quote (copy and paste) our regulations/procedures e.g. from the intranet http://intranet.rvc.ac.uk/StudentsAndTeaching/RegsAndProcs.cfm)	Actions
Geoff Pearson , Peter O'Shaughnessy, Alan Baird		RVC list of actions for 2013-14
1.1 Incorporation of 'professional skills' elements and problem-based exam questions have provided an added dimension to the first year of the programme. It is unclear which elements of previous years have been cut or moved to enable such changes.	<i>Professional skills and problem-based exam questions have always been a feature of the new curriculum. However, hitherto, this element of the curriculum has not been explicitly examined in this format in BVM1. In order to encourage students to take the professional skills elements that are taught in year 1 seriously, it is now being explicitly examined. As such, teaching of the BVM1 curriculum continues to be as laid out in the "new curriculum". In effect, the apparent change is an intended consequence of attempting to examine a greater proportion of curriculum content.</i>	Action (if any) date & name:
1.2 The global learning objectives appear relevant and comprehensive, The level of detail, particularly since the course is introductory in nature, is sometimes not obvious. This is relevant when a subject or system is introduced in year 1 and developed at later stages of the course. Some	<i>We accept that on occasion, the level of detail expected of a student following the 1st visit to a given strand may not always be clear to external examiners. We will endeavour to provide the external examiners with documentation that explicitly states (a) the material that has been taught in a</i>	Action (if any) date & name: Dr Raymond Macharia: 1 March 2014

Prepared by: Ana Filipovic

Date: 13 August 2013

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' COMMENTS, 2012/2013

Course: BVetMed Year 1

<p>detailed internal re-assessment of all candidates who fall around the 50% pass mark before the Board of Examiners.</p>		
<p>4.5 The examination board may wish to consider a review of the mechanism through which a student absent from a component of the examination is awarded an automatic fail mark. This relates specifically to those students with certificated (and/or unequivocal) mitigating circumstances (e.g. sudden illness). For students with legitimate reasons for their absence and when the component missed represents a minor percentage of the total marks available (e.g. Spot exam at 10.6%), the current procedure appears punitive and inappropriately unsympathetic.</p>	<p><i>The regulations with respect to missing a component of the exam itself as currently framed and the actions that should result in such circumstances are being reviewed .</i></p>	<p>Action:Dr Julie Clark: 31 March 2014</p>

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**FOR COMPLETION
AFTER THE
EXAMINATION**

THE ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

Name of Examiner **Geoff Pearson , Peter O'Shaughnessy, Alan Baird**

Programme **BVetMed**

Year of appointment **2000(AB/POS); 2013 (GP)**

Year of Examination **2013**

Examination **BVM1**

Dates of attendance at the RVC **June 20, June 21, July 4, July 5th**

Please comment on the areas detailed below. If you have no comments in a particular area, please state "Satisfactory", "Good" or "Excellent".

1. The Programme

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

- 1.1 course content
- 1.2 learning objectives, and the extent to which they were met
- 1.3 teaching methods
- 1.4 resources (in so far as they affected the assessment)
- 1.5 the overall quality of the Programme, as revealed by the student performance, with specific reference to particular strengths and weaknesses
- 1.6 the recommendations from this Examination for the curriculum, syllabuses, and teaching methods
- 1.7 the effects of any changes made to the Programme in the last 12 months

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1.1 As in previous years, the course content and objectives remain appropriate for an integrated course of this type and dovetail together well. Incorporation of 'professional skills' elements and problem-based exam questions have provided

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an added dimension to the first year of the programme. It is unclear which elements of previous years have been cut or moved to enable such changes.

The range of teaching methods used is commensurate with the range of teaching material being delivered and to the outcomes being assessed and include knowledge, understanding and problem solving.

1.2 The global learning objectives appear relevant and comprehensive, The level of detail, particularly since the course is introductory in nature, is sometimes not obvious. ~~This is relevant when a subject or system is introduced in year 1 and developed at later stages of the course. Some issues inevitably occur as a consequence of 'blueprinting' exams. For example, the subjects of Animal Husbandry and Embryology are paired on the Spot test. This was drawn to our attention on account of extremely poor outcomes on one of the (embryology) questions.~~

1.3. Teaching methodology is broad, and the staff appear to be well supported with respect to VLE and ongoing training/development programmes.

1.4. Resources appear to be adequate. The external examiners toured the Camden facility during a visit. We were shown the range of rooms, the set up for 'spot' examinations, physiology and histology teaching labs. This was in addition to the well staffed and well run dissection room which was set up in a thorough and exemplary manner for the ISF orals.

1.5. The range of performance in the broad range of assessments reflected a particularly high number of distinctions as well as a high (but not extraordinarily high) number of fails. Thus it would appear that the assessment protocols provide a useful discriminator function for achievement.
We do not recommend changes to the examination resources for next year.

1.6. We have no specific recommendations for the curriculum, syllabuses, and teaching methods

1.7. With regard to assessment, we were pleased to see that the changes made to the ISF oral exams include responses to previous comments. We believe that the level one questions protocol is now fairer. Notwithstanding previous reports, all 3 external examiners attended RVC on two occasions. On this, the first time that external examiners did not actually examine students, we used the time to focus more on the process, including tours of the teaching facilities (see 1.4) and we had enough time to properly review In Course Assessment.

2. **Candidates**

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

- 2.1 impressions of candidates' specific areas of strength and weakness, as revealed by the assessment process
- 2.2 the quality of candidates' knowledge and skills, with particular reference to those at the top, middle or bottom of the range
- 2.3 the candidates' overall performance in relation to students at a similar stage on comparable courses in other institutions, where this is known to you

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- 2.1 As external examiners we only directly monitored the ISF orals and so these comments are based largely on observation rather than direct engagement. The students performance ranged from exemplary to very weak.
- 2.2 Reviewing the entire assessment (primary material including exam scripts and the overall broadsheets) it appears that the best students achieve high marks across the board and, similarly, weak students display a uniformly weak performance. Thus the strategy of using a wide range of assessment styles appears to be successful in preventing 'strategic learning'.
- 2.3 The student ability appears to be commensurate with that of similar cohorts at other UK Universities.

3. **Assessment Process**

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

- 3.1 the appropriateness of the assessment methods to the subject matter and their relevance to the learning objectives
- 3.2 the extent to which the assessment processes are rigorous**
- 3.2 whether the assessments reflected the syllabus adequately

- 3.3 the overall standard of marks
- 3.4 any changes from previous years in which you have examined

Type here

- 3.1 the range of assessment methods appears to be appropriate as well as aligned to the stated learning objectives.
- 3.2 **individual assessment processes appear to be rigorously designed and delivered. Careful design of questions and the availability of good model answers are important here. The value of good marking to subsequent student feedback was discussed at the Examiners Board Meeting. The process regarding a student who has failed (for whatever reason) what is deemed to be an essential component of the ICA seems quite harsh, in the absence of an alternative mechanism for remediation. While we accept the rigour of the assessment process there will inevitably be slight variations in the between-candidate assessments. For that reason we suggest that there should be a detailed internal re-assessment of all candidates who fall around the 50% pass mark before the Board of Examiners.**
- 3.2 the assessments reflect the syllabus adequately.
- 3.3 Marking guidelines (including descriptors on various scales) are useful to examiners and students (particularly at the time of feedback).
- 3.4 There have been relatively few changes from previous years.

4. **Assessment Procedures**

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

- 4.1 the administration of the examinations, e.g. time available for marking and moderation
- 4.2 arrangements for marking
- 4.3 procedures followed by the Board of Examiners
- 4.4 the participation of External Examiners in the process
- 4.5 adequacy of External Examiners' briefing
- 4.6 comparison with previous years in which you have examined

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- 4.1 the administration including time available for marking and moderation has been extended in recent years, in part as a response to previous examiners' comments. The time allocated now seems adequate for

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- academic and administrative staff without being overly long for students to wait for the results.
- 4.2 arrangements for marking include compilation of actual marks (where simple transcriptional errors may occur). It seems that this process is rigorously checked. Double marking checks seem to confirm uniform standards are applied. It is recognised that External Examiners have no role in moderation of individual marks.
- 4.3 the formal meeting of the Board of Examiners (which was well attended) afforded good opportunities for global, systemic and individual issues to be discussed in depth.
- 4.4 we recognise that the RVC is currently reviewing its use of External Examiners. Thus the role of examiners is a matter of current discussion.
- 4.5 The examination board may wish to consider a review of the mechanism through which a student absent from a component of the examination is awarded an automatic fail mark. This relates specifically to those students with certificated (and/or unequivocal) mitigating circumstances (e.g. sudden illness). For students with legitimate reasons for their absence and when the component missed represents a minor percentage of the total marks available (e.g. Spot exam at 10.6%), the current procedure appears punitive and inappropriately unsympathetic.
- 4.6 the External Examiners' briefing, along with the Training Day afforded an excellent opportunity to plan the visits to obtain maximal usefulness.
- 4.7 In comparison with previous years, the spread of results has been broader than before. In broad terms the MVB 1 programme seems to be fulfilling its objectives.

5. Please delete responses as appropriate

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| 5.1 | Comments I have made in previous years have been acted upon | YES |
| 5.2 | An acceptable response has been made | YES |
| 5.3 | I approved the papers for the Examination | YES |
| 5.4 | I was able to scrutinise an adequate sample of students' work and marks to enable me to carry out my duties | YES |
| 5.5 | I attended the meeting of the Board of Examiners held to approve the results of the Examination | YES |
| 5.6 | Candidates were considered impartially and fairly | YES |
| 5.7 | The standards set for the awards are appropriate | YES |

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8 of 9

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' COMMENTS, 2012/2013
Course: BVetMed Year 1

for qualifications at this level, in this subject

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| 5.8 | The standards of student performance are comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar | YES |
| 5.9 | The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted | YES |

If you have replied No to any of these questions, please comment more fully:

Type here

Alan Wth Baird

Signed

Date 18 July 2013