Collaborative Report

BSc and FdSc in Veterinary Nursing, 2013/14

Mrs Andrea Dineen

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

Course content is very satisfactory in that it reflects the full range of subject knowledge and skills that should be covered in this/these degree(s) at these levels (Years 1 & 2 Fd and BSc).

Externs had previously noted the need for more diversification in species selected for exam questions (July 2014) and they were pleased to note that the RVC has addressed this concern across the Year 1 & 2 exams seen on this occasion with good inclusion of equine and exotic questions.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

None

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

The theoretical learning objectives of the course appear to have been well met. The examiners are unable to comment fully upon the practical learning objectives included at this time as they were not yet in attendance at practical exams in 2014.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

The practical aspects of the course are linked to the National Occupational Standards (NOS) and also therefore the Nursing Progress Log (NPL). The taught practical sessions are directly mapped to the NOS. The course will be mapped in future to the RCVS day one competencies and benchmarks once they are available.

Action Required:

Once QAA benchmarks and RCVS day one competencies are finalised the course will be reviewed to ensure alignment.

Action Deadline:

30-Sep-2015

Action assigned to:

HOrpet

1.3 Teaching methods

A wide range of teaching methods appear to have been employed across the course as appropriate to veterinary nursing education. Where appropriate, revision sessions have been provided although unfortunately there appears to not always be a good uptake of these sessions by students.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

The transition from college to HE is not always easy for some students. We do our best to encourage them to attend opportunities that will assist them in their studies – however these are not always taken up by the students.

Action Required:

None

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Resources appear appropriate and satisfactory for the running of the courses. Students appear to have access to a wide range of teaching resources, including electronic facilities. Student feedback is well-provided at present although the external examiners would support the proposal for a move to feedback on written assignments in the drafting /formative stages rather than the present system of providing feedback on completed (summative) written assignments.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

This move towards feedback in the formative stages has been implemented from the start of this academic year. Tutors have been informed and additional training provided where needed

Action Required:

Monitor progress and review impact in 1 year

Action Deadline:

01-Nov-2015

Action assigned to:

HOrpet

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

As suggested by an RVC staff member, the external examiners would support the recommendation that module handbooks and module reviews and other pertinent course information is provided online to the external examiners so as to provide them with current and relevant details of the course and its modules.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Student Evaluations and End of Module Reviews are managed by the ASD office rather than Exams Office, and are not normally presented to Externals with the assessment documentation. As this has not been raised by other Externals we would welcome dialogue with the Externals to identify the precise information required

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

Year 1 and 2 student performance standards meet the external examiners' expectations of students at these levels. There was a good range of performance with some excellent students in the CNP 1 and 2 modules and in the Year 2 examinations.

The pass rates for both Applied Science (VNAS 1 and 2) modules seemed lower than expected (with c. 70% of students passing). However when the external examiners considered the previous three years' pass rates, they found the results to be largely similar with the only exception being in 2013 when the pass rate was c. 84%.
The external examiners' experience of equivalent subjects in the Veterinary Nursing Diploma theory exams and in other degree courses is that the pass rates are c. 60-70%. For example in the 2014 RCVS level 3 VN diploma exams, the pass rate for the equivalent subject (Animal health, husbandry, form and function) was 61%.
The feeling of the externs is that the results reflect how difficult nursing students generally find the subject, rather than reflecting the quality of teaching.
Externs have included a number of suggestions as to how the assessment could be modified so as to potentially address the low pass rate without reducing the academic standards. (See Comments & Recommendations section in Section 3: Assessment below)

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your comments and your suggestions will be reviewed within the team to see how we may apply them where possible.

Action Required:

Review the suggestions with the team at the next CMC in Nov

Action Deadline:

12-Nov-2014

Action assigned to:

HOrpet

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

The knowledge and skills of the average candidate are satisfactory with some candidates showing excellent knowledge particularly in the CNP 1 and 2 exams. The spread of marks in our opinion does appropriately reflect student ability.

In the first year cohort, externs noted that some Foundation students in the bottom third of the group (especially in the VNAS modules) were well below the required standard.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

The course is now a selecting rather than recruiting course and therefore students are selected on the basis of them attaining A level biology to help prepare them for the Applied Science modules. As Course Director I will be looking into the correlation between entry qualifications and exam results to see if we need to make any changes to entry requirements. Additional factors maybe these modules are delivered in the first year when students are adjusting to university and the workload required. The modules are content heavy but perhaps there is scope for additional seminars in helping students to understand the content. This will be implemented into VNAS 1 in November 2014 and reviewed in the module evaluation.

Action Required:

This will be implemented into VNAS 1 in November 2014.

Action Deadline:

03-Nov-2014

Action assigned to:

VNAS 1 Module leader

Assessment Process

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

There are a good range of assessments (MCQs, SAQs and written assignments) for the theoretical components of the course. Externals are unable to comment on practical competencies based upon the material assessed on this occasion as practical exams not witnessed at this time. Please see additional comments/ recommendations section below for externs' suggestions for modifying VNAS exams.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

The externs are welcome to attend the practical assessments held at the beginning of year 2 and 3

Action Required:

None

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.2 Extent to which assessment processes are rigorous

Assessment across a range of methods (MCQs, SAQs, assignments and projects) is of a high quality and well-marked (see below).

Feedback on written assignments varies between modules with some examiners producing extremely detailed feedback forms (which although to be commended must be very time-consuming for staff). At the other extreme, externs noted minimal written feedback provided on the students' written assignments in the Year 2 ECC & Anaesthesia module with no formal feedback forms being utilised. Externs suggest that the course organisers should agree on the format and level of feedback to be given for written assignments in each year of the course to ensure consistency as appropriate across modules. If significant feedback is to be given, this may be more beneficial to the students at the formative/ drafting stages of writing (as being proposed by RVC staff at present).

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

We are moving towards a system of feedback which should ensure more consistency for all students. We will be using Turnitin to provide feedback on draft assignments to ensure we help the students at the formative stage. By all tutors providing feedback using Turnitin – standard phrases can be used. In this way the students will be able to receive feedback which will help them move forward rather than the feedback currently given at the summative stage which often is more about justifying the mark given. Students will be encouraged to seek further face to face feedback after summative results if they require further clarification. With regards to the erroneous feedback – the increased checking processes should eliminate this type of error.

Action Required:

None - already implemented.

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Based upon the work seen and the external examiners' knowledge and prior experience, the level of assessment closely matches the FHEQ.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

None

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.4 Standard of marking

Marking is generally very consistent as illustrated in the double marking. This is aided by common grading scheme (CGS) and 10 point marking schemes. Use of sample marking is good.

Externs suggest that in the absence of an Exam Board meeting and external input after first sits, module leaders should examine the statistics/ metrics associated with the first sit paper to ensure they are alerted to any potential issues with the exam questions and/or processes. Furthermore, externs feel that on such occasions any borderline pass/fail candidates' exams (i.e. at 48 or 49 %) should be carefully reviewed by module leaders to ensure no errors / omissions have occurred. No errors have been found by the externs but there is potential for error given the lack of Board and external examiner input directly after first sits.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

The exams office will liaise with module leaders with regards to the evaluation of the examinations and individual question performance.

Action Required:

The exams office will liaise with module leaders with regards to the evaluation of the examinations and individual question performance.

Action Deadline:

30-Sep-2015

Action assigned to:

exams office and module leaders

3.5 Opinion on changes to the assessment process from previous years in which you have examined

No significant changes are noted apart from externs were pleased that more species diversification has featured in the exam questions.

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.6 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the assessment process

On consideration and following discussion with RVC staff, it seems a number of issues could be addressed that may help improve pass rates in the VNAS modules:
1) Tutors to emphasise to first year students the importance of learning hours matching to module credits
2) Examiners to simplify the wording of exam questions in order to ensure that maximum knowledge is elicited from exam candidates. Externs noted that some VNAS SAQs were abstract in form and therefore suggest that more specific lines of questioning could possibly elicit better student answers.
For example, SAQ 1 on VNAS 2 (1st sit, April 2014) re: the spinal column is more abstract than the SAQ 1 on the VNAS 2 (resit, Sept 2013) exam although largely the same knowledge is being tested. The externs suggest that if the more structured format of questions (as used in the Sept 2103 resit exam) was more generally applied to the VNAS 1 and 2 examinations, the students may have a better opportunity to perform well without compromising academic standards. Also, questions such as "label diagram naming anatomical structures from A-F" may be an additional form of simply examining the required knowledge rather than more abstract essay style questioning. Externs suggest that the more abstract essay question format could be reserved for higher years of the course and also for the BSc course.
3) Perhaps more choice / question options within the SAQs could additionally help students display their knowledge… although this may impact on MCQ availability and/or be unsuitable for use within RVC modules.
4) Feedback from the failed students may be helpful as may be their suggestions for the future (although externs note excellent provision of feedback and revision sessions already exist for failing students even though student uptake of these is poor).

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your additional suggestions for improvement.
1) Each module is introduced by the module leader with regards to expectations and assessment process. We can ensure that emphasis is included with regards to credits and study hours.
2) The exam questions will be reviewed by the VNAS module leaders to ensure consistency. It is important to ensure that questions can also get students to apply their knowledge as well as recall and perhaps structuring the questions better to allow students of different abilities can answer the question.
3) We will discuss the provision of optional questions within the team.
4) Students are encouraged to be proactive in seeking feedback and are signposted to the ways in which they can attain this.

Action Required:

1) Each module is introduced by the module leader with regards to expectations and assessment process. We can ensure that emphasis is included with regards to credits and study hours.
2) The exam questions will be reviewed by the VNAS module leaders to ensure consistency. It is important to ensure that questions can also get students to apply their knowledge as well as recall and perhaps structuring the questions better to allow students of different abilities can answer the question.
3) We will discuss the provision of optional questions within the team.

Action Deadline:

30-Sep-2015

Action assigned to:

Module leaders

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

4.1 In your view, are the processes for assessment and the determination of awards sound and fairly conducted?

Externs looked at a wide range of student work and are satisfied that the marking seems to be fair and transparent.

Generally speaking, all processes appear to be of a very high standard. In addition, the externs wish to thank the RVC staff (especially John in Exams Office) for their help and support in carrying out their role & duties. Any queries raised by the externs were swiftly and efficiently addressed and any issues noted were thoroughly & discussed with the RVC team, leading hopefully to constructive suggestions for future years.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you - I really value the input from the external examiners to ensure we meet the standards required by the award.

Action Required:

None

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

No significant changes are noted.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.3 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

See only comments in other sections of this report. Thanks again to John and the VN teachers and RVC staff.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

General Statements

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

The aforementioned multi species issue much improved. The student blogs issue from previous report (July 2014) also appears to be largely resolved for Years 1 and 2.
Externs were unable to comment at this time on changes to modules' practical learning objectives as they have not attended practical examinations as yet in 2014.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

No changes have been made to practical learning objectives

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

5.2 An acceptable response has been made

N/A

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

No response was requested

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

N/A

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

5.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

5.4 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:

Externs were able to scrutinise a wide range of Year 1 and 2 work.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

5.5 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

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

5.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

5.7 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

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

5.8 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

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

5.9 I have received enough support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

The support provided was superb as always. The team were well-organised and had all marks ready on our arrival.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

5.10 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:

Externs were pleased to receive the internal e-mails from staff to the student body and also to have access to module reviews on this occasion.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

5.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

5.12 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

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

Please see comments above in the rest of the report.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Not needed

Action Required:

none

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to: