

Dr. Ed G.M. van Klink  
School of Veterinary Science  
University of Bristol  
Langford House  
Lower Langford  
BS40 5DU

Tuesday, 12 May 2015

Dear Dr. Van Klink

**External Examiner's report for MSc and PG Diplomas in Livestock Health and Production, and Veterinary Epidemiology and Public Health (International Programmes) 2014**

On behalf of the Royal Veterinary College Board of Examiners for Livestock Health and Production, and Veterinary Epidemiology and Public Health, I would like to thank you for your External Examiner's report for the University of London International Programmes MSc and PG Diplomas in Livestock Health and Production, and Veterinary Epidemiology and Public Health for the 2014 academic year.

The External and Intercollegiate Examiner reports form an integral part of the assessment and quality assurance processes. All comments and points raised in the report have been considered and our formal response is outlined below:

Examiner Comment	RVC Response
<p><b>Standards:</b> As for the "difficult" subject: it is probably useful to manage expectations. It may be helpful to inform students about the difficulty of the subject. That may already assist in improving results.</p> <p>The performance of the candidates is good and certainly comparable to those on other courses. Obviously there is a spread in performance, as can be expected. One subject seems to be more difficult, but as already remarked, preparing the students for that could already make a big difference.</p>	<p>The Programme recognises that students' performance on the module referred to, is markedly poorer than that in other modules. A number of measures to help improve this have been discussed with the module leader and course tutor. The measures include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- An increase in the number and duration of online tutorials at the beginning of the academic year, so that students get a good grounding at the beginning of their studies.</li> <li>- Tutors should emphasise to students, at the beginning of their studies, the importance of using an integrated approach to the different sections of their study material, as this is what they are required to do in their exam.</li> </ul> <p>In direct response to the suggestion that prospective students should be made aware of the content of the</p>

	<p>module, it would certainly be useful to provide a sample of some of the content to applicants so that they can more fully appreciate the type of material covered, before they register for the module. The Programme will look into ways that this can be made possible for future (potential) students.</p> <p>It is worth noting that this is a core module and students have to undertake it to achieve the MSc; the sample material is therefore likely to be of most help to those intending to take the module as an individual module.</p>
<p><b>Information:</b> In earlier years I have recommended that simple statistics would be drawn up about the performance of the students. Doing that will give good insight in subjects that are more difficult for students. We have discussed this again in the Exam Board and the administration has every intention to do that, but could not do it this time as they did not have enough time before the exam board. As it is very informative for the teaching staff, it is still useful to draw these statistics up after the Exam Board.</p>	<p>As remarked in previous years, it is logistically difficult to provide performance statistics for individual questions in time for the exam board meeting. However the Programme appreciates the value of such statistics and will aim to provide them to course tutors after the exam board, as a means of gauging areas of difficulty for students. In the first instance this will be done for core modules.</p>

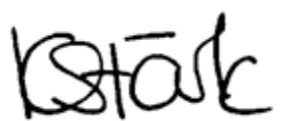
We were pleased to note the following examples of good practice:

**Strengths in relation to standards & assessment procedures:**

- (1) Double-marking and examiners' detailed justification of the marks awarded.
- (2) The scope of the exam papers

Thank you again for your comments and for continuing to support the programme.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Katharina Stärk

Cc: Dr. Christine Thurania-McKeever  
Ms. Carol Worsfold (Project Administrator, Royal Veterinary College, University of London)  
Mr. Matthew Cox (Programme Manager, International Programmes)  
Ms. Annemarie Dulson (Quality Manager, International Programmes)

Professor Neil Donald Sargison  
 University of Edinburgh  
 Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies  
 Easter Bush Veterinary Centre  
 Roslin  
 Midlothian EH25 9RG

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<p><b>Design &amp; Structure of assessment:</b></p> <p><b>Research Projects:</b> The two Research Projects that I examined orally were both really interesting, albeit the assessment criteria were unclear and there were difficulties in setting the standards. The layout of the reports with separate literature review and research project sections was slightly confusing and repetitive, and in my opinion the former might be better integrated with the latter. Both projects were probably too ambitious and might have benefited from being more focussed.</p>	<p>The Programme recognises that that research project module in its current form is a challenging piece of work to accomplish in the time available; the weight of the marks awarded for the project are also an important element when considering the requirements of the module.</p> <p>The Programme will carefully consider the current format with a view to making changes where possible and in keeping with other MSc courses offered in the College.</p> <p>The existing assessment criteria for the Research Project are in line with those of other MSc courses offered in the RVC. The assessment criteria are contained in the Common Grading Scheme (CGS), which applies to all courses, except where specified. The CGS is applied to</p>

	essay-style questions and to project reports, hence its usage for the Research Project in this case.
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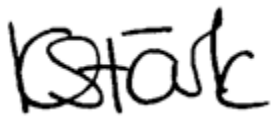
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