Individual Report

Veterinary Gateway Programme, 2013/14

Dr Lynda Moore

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

The content of the Gateway year is entirely appropriate for preparing students for the BVetMed course. The mix of science with the more applied, animal-based practical work and transferable skills amounts to a stimulating year and provides an excellent platform from which to launch widening participation students into the veterinary degree. The balance of the different topics is good.

Response from college requested: NO

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

The learning objectives for the topics are sound and the examinations are well designed to assess whether the students have met them. The high standard of the students' answers and the pass rate confirms that this is the case.

Response from college requested: NO

1.3 Teaching methods

I particularly like the spread of teaching methods employed in the Gateway year. The mix of lectures, practicals, small group work etc. is well balanced and allows students to develop regardless of their particular learning style. This is good practice for any course but is even more important for widening participation students who come from varied educational backgrounds.

Response from college requested: NO

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

N/A

Response from college requested: NO

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

I am a total supporter of this type of Programme and commend the RVC for keeping this going through the recent financial climate. Dr Lawson has done an extremely good job as Programme Director and should be given much credit for making it such a success.

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

I am aware of the Bristol Pre-Vet course which, whilst it has a different design, is a similar widening particiaption year. I have also taught widely on science degrees and on the veterinary degree course at Bristol and am therefore familiar with the standards expected at the different stages. I believe the Gateway students benefit massively from the supportive nature of their year at the RVC and the standard reached by the year as a whole is impressive. The students moving into the BVetMed have been given every opportunity to progress successfully.

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

I read numerous scripts during my visit to the RVC on 3rd July and was genuinely impressed with the students' knowledge. Those at the top of the range were also well written and a pleasure to read. Most scripts in the top and middle range gave a feeling that the student had understood the material rather than simply regurgitating it. Those at the lower end were either very sparse or in some cases had gone down the wrong track! Only 4 students failed the examination overall and these were genuinely weak across all papers and will benefit from revising for the resit examinations.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

I understand that the overall pass mark next year will remain at 50% but there will be a 40% rule introduced. I think this will help the students when they move into the BVetMed although it will likely mean a few more fails in the Gateway Year initially.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Assessment Process

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Spot on! MCQs for factual recall, essays for greater depth of understanding, data handling to instill the importance of underlying scientific principles, must-pass animal handling and poster/project/report work to allow students to develop and demonstrate wider skills. A fantastic mix and the high level of feedback provided to the students on both course work and assessments must be very useful to them.

The MCQ and written papers covered a wide range of topics and the requirement to answer four from eight essay-style questions allows the student some degree of choice whilst preventing "cherry picking". Students have to have a good overview of the course material in order to do well and they have to understand it rather than simply recalling it.

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.2 Extent to which assessment processes are rigorous

Good!

A typing error had been noted in one exam question and I was impressed to see that this had been recorded on the marks sheet and that it had been taken into account in the marking. This process is acceptable and no students were unfairly affected by the mistake.

Looking at the numbers of students answering each question in the written papers it is obvious that a couple of the topics are much less popular than others. I would like to be assured that the teaching staff analyse this type of discrepancy to ensure that this is not related in any way to the delivery of the topic in question.

One examiner failed to annotate the scripts in any way - including the actual mark on the front cover! This is poor practice because there is no indication that the scripts have even been read!

The slightly different balance of marks making up the resit paper (course work excluded) provides additional rigour in making sure that candidates progressing after an initial failure do so on the strength of their knowledge and understanding.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

We would like to thank the external examiner for her positive comments on our assessment process
The papers are scrutinised by a group comprising Course director (CD) exam board chair (EBC) and module leaders (or their deputies) to ensure that there is a good balance of question style within each section for paper 2 and paper 3 and there is appropriate coverage of the material based on the amount of teaching on each module for paper 1 (MCQ). The papers' structure ensures that all modules are assessed in either the PSQ or essay style questions as well as factual knowledge in the MCQ. Looking back at the popularity of some questions over others this year there is no obvious reason for this as the material was all taught by the same lecturers and in a similar way to previous years where this disparity was not noted.
Exams office always remind staff of the importance of annotation of scripts and we will ensure that they continue to do so. We agree that this is extremely useful for the external examiners and also for the students who are encouraged to reflect on their exam performance and discuss ways to improve revision and exam technique during a timetabled session with Learning Development during the first term of BVetMed1.

Action Required:

Exams office to continue to remind staff to annotate their scripts
CD to ensure that papers have the right balance of material and question styles

Action Deadline:

01-Feb-2015

Action assigned to:

course director (incoming)

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

The assessments are completely consistent with level 4 of the framework. Students are given ample opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding together with interpretation, communication and presentation skills.

Response from college requested: NO

3.4 Standard of marking

It was noticeable that within a question the marking was consistent and examiners generally used the whole 1-10 scale; no question stood out as providing students with an unfair advantage or disadvantage based on the way they were marked. Consistency between questions was controlled through the use of very good model answers provided by the internal examiners and the marking descriptors. Together these help to ensure that the standard of marking is maintained at a high level across all the different elements.

Response from college requested: NO

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

N/A this was my first year

Response from college requested: NO

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

The weighting of the MCQ at 20% versus 80% for the written papers is, in my view, correct. Whilst it is good to have the different exam formats, the heavier weighting in favour of papers which assess understanding over recall is good practice and will certainly help to prepare students for the BVetMed course where assimilation of different topics is vital.

Response from college requested: NO

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?

Yes. The random double marking process is good practice, resulting in an agreed mark if there is a slight difference or a third marker if the difference is large. Adam Osgood from the exams office was very efficient when I found a discrepancy in the overall marks sheet and quickly altered the information and produced new sheets for the exam board. The board itself was well run and it was nice to see so many of the teaching staff present. The process was fair and sound.

Response from college requested: **NO**

To clarify we use sample marking, not random double marking. A mechanism(from BvetMed2)

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

N/A this is my first year

Response from college requested: **NO**

4.3 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

No comments

Response from college requested: **NO**

General Statements

5.1 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

5.2 An acceptable response has been made

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

5.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

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:

Response from college requested: NO

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

5.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

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

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

5.9 I have received enough support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

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:

Response from college requested: NO

5.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

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

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:

I believe that I have covered areas of good practice already in the bulk of my report.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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**