

## ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2018/19

### Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

#### BVetMed Year 2

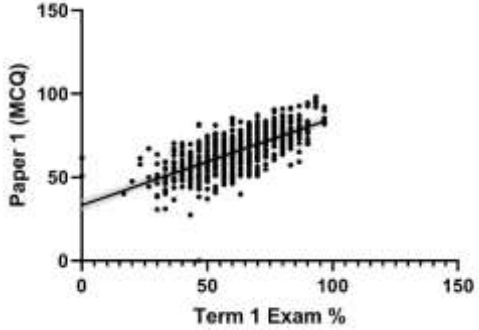
This appendix contains Year Leader's responses to 2018/19 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from previous External Examiners' reports (if applicable).

As Year Leader/Course Director 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](mailto:afilipovic@rvc.ac.uk), 01707666938

Appendix 3 consists of:

a.	Updates to actions from previous years' reports
b.	2018/19 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director/Year Leader

Report Question	External Examiners' comment	Course Directors response and actions	Update in 2018/19
<p><b>3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous</b></p>	<p>The entire comment available <a href="#">online</a></p>	<p><b>Action Required:</b></p> <p>Example Level One questions to be circulated to staff ahead of ISF oral exams, and a hard copy made available during the exam. Use of feedback comments, and 'signposting' during the exam to be emphasised in pre-exam briefing to staff (ISF coordinator; Exams office).</p> <p>Analysis of relationship between MCQ ICA and MCQ summer marks (BVetMed Year 2 Leader).</p> <p>Recommend to LTAC that RVC marking scheme for research and library project oral presentations should be amended or replaced. (BVetMed Year 2 leader; Director of Assessment; Exams Office; BVetMed Course Management Committee)</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b></p> <p>01-Jun-2019</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b></p> <p>ISF coordinator; Exams office; BVetMed Year 2 leader; Director of Assessment; Exams Office; BVetMed Course Management Committee</p>	<p><b>Update in 2018/19</b></p> <p><i>“Example Level One questions to be circulated to staff ahead of ISF oral exams, and a hard copy made available during the exam. Use of feedback comments, and 'signposting' during the exam to be emphasised in pre-exam briefing to staff (ISF coordinator; Exams office).”</i></p> <p>This action needs to be ongoing and highlighted again in 2019-20 since the ISF coordinator role will change hands this year.</p> <p>An analysis of the relationship between ICA and summer exam MCQ marks has been undertaken. There a significant (<math>p &lt; 0.05</math>) and positive (<math>R = 0.66</math>) correlation between in-course MCQ exam marks and June MCQ exam marks. This knowledge is helpful, since we will now confidently follow up with tutors and students performing poorly at the December MCQ.</p>  <p>A new marking scheme for integrated concepts presentations was devised and introduced for 2018-19 exams. This action is complete.</p>
<p><b>3.4 Standard of marking</b></p>	<p>The entire comment available <a href="#">online</a></p>	<p><b>Action Required:</b></p> <p>Provide clear instructions to all examiners to ensure model answer amendments are formally documented and passed back to the exams office, and that the copies provided to external examiners are updated with any changes (Exams office).</p> <p>Include the standard error of the regression and also</p>	<p>This was done this year as far as we are aware – we would welcome feedback from the externals as to whether they felt that any changes to model answers were clear this year, and if the data provided on the reports were as required.</p>

		<p>maximum and minimum marks for each question on future reports (Director of Assessment).</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b> 01-Jun-2019</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b> Exams office; Director of Assessment</p>	
<b>3.6 Opinion on changes to the assessment procedures from previous years in which you have examined</b>	<p>The external examiners are concerned that 60 MCQ questions may not be sufficient to test practical content in addition to factual recall across such a large range of subject areas and recommend that the widely praised ISF oral exam be given a greater weighting (15 – 20%).</p>	<p><b>Action Required:</b> Ongoing assessment review, and changes made to Assessment and Award Regulations for BVetMed 2 2020-21</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b> 01-Nov-2019</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b> Director of assessment; BVetMed Course Management Committee; BVetMed Year 2 Leader</p>	<p>We are still in the process of outlining changes in assessment. We do intend to increase the weighting of the ISF oral exam, probably to 15%, however the exact figure has not yet been agreed upon. Assessment and award regulation proposals will go to Course Management Committee for approval in November 2019. We will keep the external examiners informed of our discussions.</p>
<b>3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures</b>	<p>... marking these essays in a fair and consistent manner is challenging. The requirement for the essay paper could also be questioned as the material being assessed does appear to cross over with paper 2 on some instances. Perhaps the essay paper could be removed and to compensate, paper 2 could be expanded, either to cover additional areas or increase the time/marks for each question?</p>	<p><b>Action Required:</b> Paper to BVetMed course management committee; amendment to Assessment and Award regulations for 2020-21</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b> 31-Oct-2018</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b> Director of assessment; BVetMed Course Management Committee; BVetMed Year 2 Leader</p>	<p>Essays will no longer be a part of this examination in 2020-21 – Assessment and award regulations to go to Course Management Committee in November 2019.</p>
<b>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:</b>	<p>The ISF orals. In particular the external examiners would like to praise</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Student briefing</li> <li>2. The calm atmosphere that was created which helped to alleviate any student anxieties.</li> <li>3. Provision of samples in as clean and hygienic a manner as possible.</li> </ol> <p>Application of statistical evaluation of the students' performance</p>	<p><b>Action Required:</b> Feedback positive comments to Head of Anatomy Services, CBS and PPS HoD, Director of Assessment, Exams office, Exam board chair</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b> 21-Dec-2018</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b> Chair, TQC</p>	<p>Action complete</p>

	<p>Provision of all written material for consideration by the external examiners and the conduct of the exam board meeting are also, we would consider, examples of 'good practice'.</p>		
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# Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 03-Jul-2019

**Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 2, 2018/19**

**Lead examiner: Dr Mark McLaughlin**

**Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Harriet BrooksBrownlie , Dr Karen Noble, Dr Richard Payne**

## The Programme

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

### 1.1 Course content

The course continues to cover a wide-range of disciplines that include the core subjects of anatomy, physiology, immunology, general pathology, pharmacology, microbiology, animal husbandry and communication skills. The students also gain exposure to veterinary related research with experience of data handling and interpretation, and generating a report.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr H.B**

Second sentence: suggest minor amendment to .'.....data handling and interpretation, and generating a report.'

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

The successful delivery of the learning objectives of the course was assessed by the comprehensive and in-depth examination of the students using a range of assessment formats.

**Response from college requested: NO**

### 1.3 Teaching methods

Teaching methods include didactic lectures, practical classes (including demonstrations and dissections), student directed learning through individual assignments (research project 1), group activities (ICA presentations) and tutorials. They appear appropriate and effective.

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

The course appears well resourced and benefited by the recent refurbishment providing a dedicated student area to greatly enhance the learning environment.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Sarah Channon**

**Course Director Response:**

Thank you for your comments. It is pleasing to see that you agree the refurbishments have enhanced the student learning environment.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

### **1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme**

The staff successfully delivers a course that builds on learning from earlier parts of the degree programme and that is well-aligned to assessment methods. Quality assurance is robust.

**Response from college requested: NO**

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 second year course is an integrated course which is similar to other UK vet schools although each school has their own variations in programme content and teaching delivery methods. The distribution of the marks suggest the various assessment formats are collectively discriminatory. The fail rate, although somewhat higher than anticipated for this cohort compared to previous cohorts, is acceptable when compared to similar courses in other institutions. The external examiners were in agreement with the list of students who were deemed to have failed their second year exam.

**Response from college requested:** The College will monitor the fail rates of this cohort and future Year 2 cohort.

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

The overall distribution of marks appeared consistent with previous years. The fail rate was in the higher end of the expected range but acceptable and the distinction and merit students performed well across the different aspects of the exam.

**Response from college requested:** NO

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

The overall performance of the students was appropriate for this level. In general, the students that failed had performed poorly across the majority of the assessment components. The introduction of a rubric for the ICA (student group presentations) has improved the discriminatory potential of this component and has better aligned marking and feedback procedures with other parts of the course.

**Response from college requested:** NO

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

### 3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

The final examination mark consists of the sum of the following components (weighting in brackets) although students are required to achieve a minimum standard in some components. These criteria was particularly relevant for a few failed students and the external examiners were satisfied this was applied appropriately.

MCQ paper (28%),

Problem –solving paper (20%),

Essay paper (20%)

ISF oral (12%)

In course continuous assessment (ICA:- 10%, Group presentation 5% and MCQ in first term 5%)

Research project (10%)

Each assessment method and the individual parts of these assessments are linked to the specific learning objectives defined in the BVM2 course document and presented to the external examiners during the paper review period (pre and post exam). The range of topics examined and the depth of knowledge required to pass or excel was presented across these different assessments. The co-ordinated interaction of the two staff members at the ISF orals, together with the linking of related but distinct subject areas in the problem solving paper, provided a fair examination of the ability of the students' knowledge expected for a level 2 student of veterinary medicine. Notwithstanding the staff commitment of this examination, we particularly commend the ISF orals as a method for assessing the integrated knowledge of the students and in particular their ability to communicate this knowledge vocally.

**Response from college requested: NO**

### 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

The examination process is largely well-documented allowing for a full review of the performance of individual candidates. Some modifications to the results spread sheet were required during the external examiners review process and this was performed efficiently.

Paper 1 (MCQ):

This paper tests factual recall. An internal review of the question bank has been undertaken and the external examiners agree that the phrasing of questions, image selection and quality are appropriate. This exam was standard set and statistical analysis demonstrated that the paper was fair and discriminatory on the whole, however some non-discriminatory questions were present. Staff reported that most students completed this exam well within the time limit (90mins). Based on the atypical behaviour of the statistical data of three questions, the following moderations to the paper was agreed by the external examiners (i) a question was removed due to the labelling of one image could potentially cause confusion and was considered to be unfair, (ii) The correct answer to one question was listed incorrectly on the spread sheet and this was amended, (iii) the wording of a question could theoretically result in two correct answers and it was agreed to award full marks to each of these answers.

Paper 2 (problem-solving):

The paper assessed the breadth of knowledge and the students' ability to integrate knowledge across different areas and assess raw data. The questions are composed of several related parts covering a breadth of material and each part has assigned marks. Statistical analysis identified one question that was problematic; it was impossible for the student to progress should they fail to answer the first part correctly. It was agreed to remove this question. This paper was then standard set using an appropriate statistical method. The external examiners agreed with this moderation and the rationale for applying standard setting to this paper.

Paper 3 (essay paper):

The students selected one from three essay titles in four separate sections. Statistical analysis revealed that marks were significantly decreased across one section in comparison to the other sections. Staff identified one question that was problematic with a very high fail rate and very low marks in general. The external examiners were informed that the markers had initially used an inappropriate and restrictive marking rubric and the paper was re-marked using the agreed criteria marking schedule. The data from this question was then considered to be acceptable. No students were disadvantaged by this process of moderation and the conclusion to uphold the



grade was appropriate. As previously presented in external examiners' report for this examination, this does highlight the difficulties with this format of assessment with regards to presenting a fair and equal examination of the student's knowledge across different topics set by experts in their field.

#### Oral exam (ISF):

The examination was well organised with multiple components/aspects that test the students' communication skills while discriminating between students of different depth of knowledge. Mock ISF orals are arranged in term 1 to provide the students an opportunity to gain insight to the procedure. The use of an automated marking sheet has improved the efficiency of marking. There remain some differences in the information provided to the students regarding the level of questions and when this is achieved. We suggest that it is mandatory that the students are informed when they have achieved a level 1, 2 or 3 as there was a lack of consistency in providing this information. There is clearly an aptitude amongst staff for relaxing the students to give their best performance. On occasions the external examiners had the impression that some stations/examiners may be more challenging than others. However, statistical analysis of the marks awarded at the various stations found no significant difference in the data sets and the process is therefore considered fair.

#### In-course assessment (ICA):

The ICA is composed of an end of term 1 MCQ exam (5%) and a group research and presentation on a topic (5%). The students have in general performed well in this component which can potentially skew their grades. The introduction of a rubric for the presentation has however improved the discriminatory aspect of this activity. The consistency and standard of marking of the in-course assessment (ICA) is now more robust although some marking sheets were incomplete regarding feedback. The external examiners recognise the value of this exercise and agree with the response to the 2018/19 report from the course leader that this component and its weighting be retained.

#### Research projects:

The grading of the research projects seemed appropriate and the feedback sufficient. The students do have a dedicated supervisor and tutorials on how to prepare a research report. This is a valuable experience and will particularly benefit students with ambitions to have a research dimension to their career though undoubtedly a population of students are less enthusiastic. The issue of plagiarism became apparent and the external examiners were satisfied that the College's policy on this is appropriate.

**Response from college requested: YES**

### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Sarah Channon**

#### **Course Director Response:**

Thankyou for your comments. In response to the comment regarding non-discriminatory questions, we agree that many questions should be discriminatory, however for some MCQs, which require basic recall of key essential knowledge, we would not necessarily expect these to discriminate effectively - as we would expect and hope the majority of students to perform well on such questions. The standard setting process takes the difficulty of such questions into account, and ensures that the assessment is reliable and fair.

We are grateful for the efforts of the externals in helping us moderate the assessments pre-exam board. It is not always possible to predict how a question will perform, even given the large amount of internal and external scrutiny that these receive. These pre-board processes are therefore crucial to ensure that our assessment is as high quality as possible and we thank the externals for the important part that they play in this.

Your comments regarding the ISF are taken on board. We will highlight to examiners that signposting of a student's progress through the various levels of the exam is an expectation. [We should correct the externals' impression that mock ISFs occur in term 1 - this is not the case. They occur in Term 2 of Year 1.]

With regards to the ICA, we will brief examiners that provision of complete feedback on this component is a requirement.

#### **Action Required:**

Amendment to ISF examiner briefing and training to ensure that examiners know to signpost levels explicitly. Amended briefing to Integrated Concepts examiners

#### **Action Deadline:**

01-Mar-2019

#### **Action assigned to:**

ISF examcoordinator; Exams office; BVetMed Year 2 Leader

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

The assessment process effectively and objectively examined a broad range of subjects in an integrated and aligned manner differentiating the depth of knowledge and understanding of individual student.

**Response from college requested: NO**

### **3.4 Standard of marking**

Overall marking was consistent and generally of a high standard with, in general, clear feedback annotation on papers 2 and 3. A potentially ambiguous question was identified and it was agreed that the model answer should be modified and additional mark awarded where appropriate and this was performed efficiently. Staff had also identified one question in paper 3 that deviated from the standard marking schedule and this was corrected. A question in paper 2 was late being marked which did delay the ability to review the student performance data across the assessments. The application of a statistical analysis to standard set the MCQ paper appears to be very successful and the pass mark identified considered appropriate. A statistical analysis was also applied to standard set paper 2 and the identified pass mark was considered appropriate. The application of a statistical paradigm to standard set these papers appears to be robust and the staff responsible for applying this analysis and making adjustments to the spreadsheets should be commended.

The external examiners welcome the changes to the examination process which have in part been made in response to our feedback in previous years. The application of standard setting should now be adopted to paper 2 and every effort made to have the marking completed for the external examiners to review.

**Response from college requested: YES**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Sarah Channon**

#### **Course Director Response:**

Thankyou for your comments. It is our intention to standard set paper 2 for future assessments. We apologise for the late marking of one question, which did delay the availability of accurate mark sheets for the externals on this occasion. We will endeavour to remind individuals of the importance of meeting marking deadlines.

#### **Action Required:**

Formalise standard setting of paper 2.

We will endeavour to remind individuals of the importance of meeting marking deadlines.

#### **Action Deadline:**

01-Jun-2020

#### **Action assigned to:**

Director of Assessment; Exams Office; Heads of Department where required.

### **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)**

The procedures are expertly and comprehensively carried out and well-documented.

The external examiners were asked to review draft questions and were sent specific responses to their feedback. When problems had surfaced, the external examiners were kept informed (when possible prior to their visit), appraised of the intended course of action and asked if the proposed course of action was appropriate.

The external examiners were given an introductory briefing with the chair of the exam board the year lead, the academic member of staff responsible for statistical analysis and the course administrator. This meeting was informative, highlighting potential problems or delays and these members of staff were generous with their time in the lead up to the exam board meeting. Excellent support was provided by the exam office throughout. There were changes to the data during the review process and these were all justified and approved by the external examiners. We appreciate these events can occur when the process is dependant of the co-ordinated interaction of so many staff members.

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

The introduction of a rubric for the ICA group oral presentations has made this component more discriminatory although the grades awarded still tend to be high. This is common for these assessments where the more engaged students can drive the group. The feedback annotation on the scripts (papers 2 &3) was more extensive which made the rationale for awarding marks easier to appreciate. A new box on the ISF oral mark sheet which aims to identify those students who may benefit from support in development of their communication skills is a useful addition, though staff may require guidance on its function and use.

**Response from college requested: NO**

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Sarah Channon**

##### **Course Director Response:**

Thankyou, it is pleasing to see that we have improved our processes and examination based on your advice and guidance in previous years. It is especially pleasing to hear of the extensive annotation on scripts, since this is an area we have been working to improve on for many years now.

We agree that guidance on the level of concern required to generate use of the communication skills box would be useful for examiners. We will seek to clarify this for next year.

##### **Action Required:**

Ensure the use of the communication skills concern box is explained to examiners

##### **Action Deadline:**

01-Mar-2020

##### **Action assigned to:**

ISF exams coordinator; Exams Office; BVetMed Year 2 Leader

### 3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

The external examiners have previously acknowledged the challenges of setting and marking scripts in a fair and consistent manner for a class of this size, particularly the essay format questions. This has again been highlighted with one essay question that required complete re-marking. While we acknowledge the value of essays, especially for the high achieving students who can present some wonderful work, we do believe it is correct to remove this component (paper 3) in future years and we acknowledge that this is proposed for academic year 2021/22. We also suggest that with the removal of paper 3, paper 2 (that has aspects that overlap paper 3) can be expanded to represent a higher percentage of the overall grade and we strongly feel that the ISF oral examination should also be increased as recommended last year. We also acknowledge that such changes are under discussion and we would be keen to know the outcome of the intended changes in relation to the weighting of these components.

**Response from college requested: YES**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Sarah Channon**

**Course Director Response:**

As the external examiners state, we are currently modifying this assessment. 2019-20 will be the last year in which essay questions are part of this examination. 2020-21 will be the first year of the new exam format.

Changes to the weightings will be incorporated in the new assessment and award regulations - which will be progressed through our committee structure this year so we would welcome the feedback of the external examiners on our plans.

We should explain that whilst the external examiners have recommended the increase of the mark allocation of the ISF oral, and whilst we agree with this sentiment, we have chosen to increase this only by a small percentage.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

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:

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:**

The external examiners would like to praise the following aspects of the BVM2 examination process:-

As in previous years in relation to the ISF orals;

1. Student briefing and the general organisation of students going through the process
2. The calm atmosphere that was created which helped to alleviate any student anxieties.
3. Provision of samples in as clean and hygienic a manner as possible and the use of live animals.

In general, we would like to commend the following which we would consider as examples of 'good practice'.

- The application of statistical evaluation of the students' performance.
- The provision of all written material for consideration by the external examiners.
- The apparent integrity of the examination system with full and open communications between academic and examination staff and the external examiners.
- The conduct of the exam board meeting.
- The overall efficiency of the administration team and the organisation of the examination process.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Sarah Channon**

**Course Director Response:**

Thankyou for your positive feedback, we will ensure this is passed on. It is pleasing to see so many areas of good practice highlighted in our assessment processes.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

**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**

