

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2022/23

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

BVetMed Year 1

This appendix contains Year Leader's responses to 2022/23 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from previous External Examiners' reports (if applicable).

As Year Leader 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, 01707666938

Appendix 3 consists of:

a.	Updates to actions from previous years' reports
b.	22/23 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Year Leader

Report Question	External Examiners' comment in 2021/22	Year Leader's response and actions	Update in 2022/23
2.2 Quality of candidates' knowledge and skills	...Some of the failing students performed very poorly overall.	<p>Course Director Response: A significant number of students performing extremely well is a good tribute to the staff who work so hard to help the students to achieve good grades. Most of the students who fail the exam in the first sit do pass their resits.</p> <p>Action Required: To assess the possible reasons for failure in a subset of the students exposed to the same teaching conditions doing very poorly overall.</p> <p>Action Deadline: 01-Jan-2023</p> <p>Action assigned to: BVetMed Course Director, Director for Access</p>	
2.3 ...students' performance	The overall failure rate of Gateway students was higher than the non-Gateway group. We realise that the college provides considerable support for this group of students which we hope will improve their performance	<p>Course Director Response: The issue of a significant number of Gateway pathway students failing overall is a concern to the RVC. While the observation per se would indicate a large percentage of Gateway students failing overall, comparisons between Gateway and non-Gateway under the categories of distinction, merit, pass and fail indicates an increase in the number of Gateway students achieving a pass this year compared to the last academic year.</p> <p>Action Required: A clear guidance on the demands of the BVetMed course will be advised to the Gateway students as well as other options available in the pathway.</p> <p>Action Deadline: 01-Jan-2023</p> <p>Action assigned to:</p>	

		BVetMed Course Director, Gateway year leader and Director of Access.	
3.4 Standard of marking	...review of MCQs..	<p>Action Required:</p> <p>To review the MCQ question and if necessary expunge it from the MCQ bank. As recommended, we shall also review the weighting of paper paper 2a and paper 2b (now paper 2 and 3 respectively)</p> <p>Action Deadline:</p> <p>01-Dec-2022</p> <p>Action assigned to:</p> <p>Director of Assessment</p>	

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 1, 2022/23

Lead examiner: Professor William Holt

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Maureen Bain, Dr Erica Gummery, Dr Gearoid Sayers

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

As a general observation, course content is appropriate to the programme examined (BVetMed Year 1). The range of topics provides highly contemporary coverage of veterinary and medical sciences.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The BVetMed course at the RVC is reviewed regularly for quality assurance through internal and external mechanisms to ensure that it meets with the standards set out by regulatory and accrediting bodies. The course content for the BVetMed Year 1 which is in its second iteration since the introduction of a new curriculum in 2021/22, is streamlined to provide a systematic flow between subject strands. It provides a hierarchical and integrated learning process; and provides regular week-long breaks within the academic year for reflection and review of taught content.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

The learning objectives were clearly stated and readily accessible to both the external examiners and students via the "RVC Learn" online system. Exam questions appear to cover the teaching blueprint and learning outcomes. Learning objectives were stated in the draft examination papers in association with model answers where appropriate.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The learning objectives (LOs) are made available to the students through the course handbook on Learn. The LOs are also presented against individual lecture outlines on Learn and reviewed annually for concordance with those in the handbook. The LOs are made available to the external examiners together with draft examination questions as part of our quality assurance process.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.3 Teaching methods

Teaching methods, which include didactic lectures (both in person and via recordings), small group teaching, practicals, guided self-directed learning and research projects, appear appropriate. The examiners note, via anecdotal reports from the lecturers, that some students did not take full advantage of the lectures, even when these were available as recordings.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The teaching methods employed at the RVC for year 1 teaching comprise of lectures, small group learning, self-directed learning and practicals. Five week-long breaks referred to as 'review and reflect' (R&R) weeks are provided within the teaching calendar and are specifically for the consolidation of learning and with no didactic learning taking place. In-built within the R&R weeks are forms of self assessment that is aligned with the teaching content preceding each R&R week. Students are advised to attend lectures as a part of the teaching and learning process but this is not mandatory. Some students may not attend a lecture or lectures for various reasons but majority of students do attend lectures in person. Lectures are recorded and made available on Learn for students who may wish to revisit the content after the in-person delivery.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

There were no resource issues identified during the review of examinations.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

Students are signposted to various such as the Library, the Museum and other learning opportunities that are available on Learn such as videos and podcasts.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

No further comments.

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

The student performance is comparable to what we have observed in other Russell group universities offering similar or related programmes of study (Liverpool, Glasgow, Nottingham). The recent introduction of DOPS into the BVetMed year 1 is welcomed and in line with RCVS requirements.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

It is gratifying to note that the RVC standards and specifically those of BVetMed year 1 course are rated equivalent to those in other universities offering similar programmes. This is a testament to the high quality assurance standards applied at the RVC in line with the regulatory and accrediting bodies.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Overall, the student performance was very good; this cohort of students (>210 individuals) achieved an impressive 22% of distinctions, 17% of merits, while 40% of the students passed the year. Notably, one of the distinction students had reached the BVetMed course via the Gateway course, but there was some concern expressed at the examinations board that this was unusual among the Gateway students, many of whom had performed poorly. Some of the lecturers who had experience of the Gateway students expressed their concern about this outcome, and pointed out that, owing to the COVID pandemic, some of the Gateway students may never have taken a formally invigilated (online or in-person) examination in the past.

It was of interest to note that students who failed to meet the DOPS requirement to progress spanned the full range of performance in the written exam.

One of the external examiners (WVH) had attended the "ISAF Orals", and noted that while some students were extremely knowledgeable and had clearly focused on their studies and revision, a small number had apparently gambled that certain topics might not arise and had ignored them. This issue really stretched the range of marks awarded and, given the enormous diversity of topics that the students might face in the exam, strongly illustrated the discriminatory power of this type of examination. It is, of course, likely that some students are extremely nervous in this situation, but I noted that the internal examiners were at pains to make them relax so that they could cope with the questions.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The performance of the cohort followed a normal distribution pattern with the majority of students lying in the middle (pass) category. The comment regarding student on the Gateway programme as not having had an invigilated exam is perhaps an overriding observation on students who are now in their second year of the BVetMed course. The the current gateway have been on-campus in 2021/22 academic year and therefore have experienced invigilated exams.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

During the formal examination board meeting some staff members expressed suspicions that some students had used artificial intelligence software during their "non-proctored" examinations. This was noted, but it was also noted that would be unlikely to arise again as the 2024 examinations are planned to be held under more formal circumstances.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The students read and sign a statement of 'academic honesty and integrity' to abide by the exam regulations governing non-proctored exams. The nature of the non-proctored exam allow students to use all resources available to them including lecture materials, books or online information but with caution on plagiarism. The non-proctored exam in its very nature derives from the student's prior knowledge base and every effort is made to ensure the exam is non-googleable. That notwithstanding, the suspicion that some students used artificial intelligence (AI) to generate answers was raised and subsequently investigated with no overt use of AI noted. It is proposed that going forward the exams will be invigilated as happened in the pre-Covid times to mitigate the use of AI.

Action Required:

To explore a return to in-house invigilated exams in 2023/24 Academic year.

Action Deadline:

01-Nov-2023

Action assigned to:

Director of Assessment and Exams office.

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

There was a good range of assessment methods, so that students are provided with a variety of ways to demonstrate their knowledge and are not reliant on a single method of assessment. This is in line with practice across the sector. It is noteworthy that the BVetMed course requires students to pass an "in person" examination (DOPS) that tests not only their animal handling abilities but also their ability, as future vets, to sum up a situation quickly and deal with it efficiently, calmly and professionally. Considerable weight is given to this particular examination as students must pass every individual component. Students are, however, given an opportunity to resit one or more specific components if necessary.

Dr M.B

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The diet of exams employed for the BVetMed 1 exams test both day one skills such as the direct observation of procedural skills (DOPS) and basic science knowledge that underpin clinical and skill training in the later years of the course. The DOPS examination is a 'must pass' exam in order to undertake AHEMS in compliance with RCVS requirements.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

The examiners were impressed by the rigorous approaches to the analysis of exam marks across different topic and questions. The methodology was presented to the examiners in detail and it was clear that highly objective statistical analyses were used, not only to establish pass marks for individual examinations but to detect any inconsistency between individual markers. Consistency of the level of assessment with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)

Dr M.B

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

We give huge credit to Professor Brian Catchpole, the director for assessment for his role in the scrutinizing of all the exam results by applying bespoke statistical analysis and providing post-analysis guidance in the correction of any observed inconsistencies or anomalies..

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

The level of assessment is entirely consistent with the FHEQ.

Dr M.B

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

. A huge vote of thanks to all internal and external examiners in making sure that the assessments are consistent with the FHEQ.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.4 Standard of marking

The marking itself was undertaken by two different members of staff, where the second marker's role was to sample and mark a number of examination outcomes. No inconsistencies were detected, but it was clear that had such problems been detected they would have been resolved and corrected. The standard of feedback provided by the primary examiner was exemplary and is available through the student advisor to those students who request it once the grades are published.

Dr M.B

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The exam blueprinting require for the purposes of Paper 2 and 3, that each exam question is accompanied by a model answer and that marks for each question or parts of a question are clearly indicated. There is a strict adherence to the marking scheme and hence problems of inconsistencies rarely occur. Students who fail exams and wish to receive an individualized exam feedback do so through their tutor or the year leader. The availability of model answers is very helpful and significant in highlighting where a student went wrong or misunderstood a question(s).

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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 procedure employed by the college were fair and all carried out with great efficiency by the Examinations Office, External examiners were given ample opportunity to ask questions and express their views during the preparation of exam questions and papers. We are grateful to the exams office for their clear communication around the time of the exam paper scrutiny and for the clear links and access to all the marking data via the RVC Learn system.

Dr M.B

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The external examiners receive examination briefings, marking arrangements and examination results ahead of the exam board meeting. We deeply appreciate a job well done by the exams office and and very specifically Johnson, in this regard.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

As noted above, it will be important to keep an eye on the potential use of artificial intelligence (AI) software during exams in forthcoming years. It is recognised, however, that AI may eventually become an important aid to learning and diagnostics, and it might even be necessary to introduce some additional tuition around this topic.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The potential use and implications of the use of AI in education is already being discussed at the RVC.

Action Required:

The Learning and Wellbeing team to look at the challenges posed by the potential use of AI in assessment and provide a roadmap to mitigate its use.

Action Deadline:

01-Nov-2023

Action assigned to:

Dr Michelle Milner - LWB team

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

No further comments

General Statements

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

We endeavor to respond to all matters raised our external examiners in a timely and speedy manner.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

Noted with thanks.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The draft examination papers were made available to external examiner and any comments arising thereof were addressed by the internal examiners.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The external examiners were provided with the cohort's completed and marked exam scripts for scrutiny and for any potential moderation.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

We are grateful for the services provided by our external examiner and the seriousness with which they treat our assessments.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The examination scripts are anonymous to the markers and students are only identified by their candidate numbers. The use of model answers along with the respective mark makes the process fair and impartial.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The examination results are graded against the criteria published assessment and award regulation (AAR), with distinction, merit, pass and fail categories clearly defined.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

Thank you

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.9 I have received enough training and support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

We invite the external examiner to the Induction and training of External Examiners as part of the annual RVC Examiners Forum.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The Examinations office provide information and guidelines to the external examiners before and during the exam period.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

Thank you.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.12 The processes for assessment and the determination of awards are sound

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The internal examiners adhere to laid down examination guidelines in all the processes of assessment and award.

Action Required:

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:

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:

It would be useful to see a complete blue print of the ILOs being examined across the different papers and methods of assessment – this may also be useful in identifying gaps in knowledge when providing feedback to students

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

This is a very useful suggestion. This would provide a bird's eye view on the coverage of taught content and also demonstrate the amount of integration teaching across and within strands.

Action Required:

To compile the LOs and present the same to the external examiners along with examination drafts.

Action Deadline:

01-Apr-2024

Action assigned to:

Year Leader/ Exams office

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)

