RVC Teaching Quality Committee – AGENDA ITEM

Executive Summary & Report: MSc WAB WAH External Examiners report 19/20

Prepared by: *Stuart Patterson* **Presented by: n/a**

To be considered at Teaching Quality Committee meeting on: 9th March 2021

Action: *to consider/to approve*

Approval obtained from other committees/or pending: *n/a*

Reserved item: *No*

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TQC is asked to consider and approve responses to External Examiner report for 2019/20 in the absence of Annual Quality Improvement Group meeting since the course is undergoing a periodic review in 2021.

Documents included: Collaborative External Examiners report written by Dr Linda Penfold (Lead writer) and Dr Javier Lopez.

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2019/20

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

MSc Wild Animal Biology/Health

This appendix contains Year Leader's responses to 2019/20 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from previous External Examiners' reports (if applicable).

As 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, 01707666938

Appendix 3 consists of:

a.	Updates to actions from previous years' reports
b.	2019/20 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director

a. Updates to actions from previous years' reports

Report Question	External Examiners' comments & suggested actions	Course Director/Year Leader's response & Action	Update in 2019/20
1.4 Resources	Students commented on that the RVC's online library did not include access to a good number of relevant journals	Whilst there are a wide number of appropriate wildlife health-related journals available through the RVC, there are some journals that the students might wish to access that are outside of the scope of the college. However, between the RVC and ZSL, where the students also have access, they ought to be able to access everything that they ought to have. Part of the problem though may be not knowing where to look. This will be passed onto the leaders of the research module (Monika Bohm and David Brodbelt) to highlight the joint provision during the research preparation week. Also during a student rep-staff meeting with the 2018-19 cohort, this was brought to the attention of the course directors who requested which extra journals the students wanted access to. Unfortunately there was no feedback to this request. It would be worth surveying the current class. ACTION POINT: Course Directors to consult with current student reps to check if they are missing access to any particular titles	COMPLETED: The 2019-20 course reps were asked about this issue and asked to confer with their colleagues. At our next meeting they reported that nobody had identified any journal titles that they had needed access to which they couldn't get.

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 21-Sep-2020

MSc in Wild Animal Biology, 2019/20

Lead examiner: Dr Linda Penfold

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Javier Lopez

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

Course content was diverse and appropriate

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

This is pleasing to hear, thank you.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Learning objectives were clearly stated

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

Learning objectives is something that we have been actively working on with teaching staff this year - so this comment is a relief!

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.3 Teaching methods

The online vivas seemed to work very well.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

Agreed

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Resources were available

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

This supports ad hoc comments that we received from students.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

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

Not known

Dr J.L

The quality of the research projects varied but me levels expected and seen in similar courses. Some of the written work on research projects was of a standard suitable for scientific publication.

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

A range of knowledge and skills was apparent throughout the assignments. Students towards the top of the range gave consistently more information and displayed more knowledge and deep understanding of the subject matter.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

I'm pleased to hear that the students at the top were perceived as "different" and that we have agreement on the top students. Some of our exam questions this year were designed to stretch the better students, as discussed at the exam board.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

The students performed very well considering the challenges of Covid-19 and virtual learning. The overall quality of the work was good considering these challenges.

Dr J.L

The opportunity to attend part of the Student Conference online, before the oral exams was valuable to the examiner. The presentations were very well prepared and delivered with confidence.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

The students adapted well to the changes.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Learning objectives are clearly outlined in the coursework and assessments are clearly focused on the learning objectives and the curriculum.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

As mentioned previously this is something that we have been actively promoting over the last year and will continue to do so.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Assessment procedures are rigorous involving two markers and a third review if results differ. Where appropriate, specific differences in marks are discussed by the External examiners and any questions brought to the board meeting.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

We try to avoid a third review. Rather, we ask examiners to come to their own agreement and we moderate that process.

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 consistent with FHEQ

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

Good to hear, thank you.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.4 Standard of marking

Standard of marking is excellent. There is good agreement between marks and when marks differ, clear explanation is given to justify or amend.

Dr J.L

Assessment of exams and course work is consistent, with both external examiners in general agreement with markers and sample markers.
Half marks have been in use this year.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

Justification of that agreed mark is again something that we have worked on actively recently.

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 procedures for assessment and determination of awards is sound and fairly conducted. The quality and consistency of the marking is robust. The input of the External examiners is welcomed and any points raised are completely explained and justified by the Board of Examiners. The attention to detail is excellent.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

We are fortunate in the high level of support from the examinations team and are grateful to the external examiners for their input. It stops us from getting too blinkered!

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

The board agreed that future assessments should attempt, where appropriate, a wider range of scores to encourage the likelihood of more merits and distinctions. This has been achieved.
This year, a second tier of marking introduced as a result of Covid-19 allowed students the additional benefit of being give the higher of the two grades. This gave the students an additional way to gain merit or distinction. Of note, the student in the first position in the two classes, remained the first irrespective of marking system.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

Consistency of opportunity in the Covid-affected year was important to us and something that we've pushed both within the course and across the college.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

The examiners and Board of examiners took special care this year regarding the assessments to allow for the Covid-19 disruption. Examiners made every allowance for students for the WAB and WAH courses. The student marks were considered scrupulously and fairly.

Dr J.L

Because of circumstances, there was no opportunity this year for discussion between the students and the external examiners so not feed back on this could be provided.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

This is satisfying to hear.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was 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:

Exam questions, assessments, projects and papers were reviewed through the portal

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for all of your support with review of all of these aspects.

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:

Attended virtually

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

The examiners and board were meticulous in the discussions and candidates were treated impartially and fairly

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

This is good to hear, thank you.

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:

4.8 The standards of student performance are comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.9 I have received enough support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Emma Rosenberg did an excellent job providing us with all the exams and grades. Questions were answered quickly and any login issues resolved speedily.

Dr J.L

Totally agreed.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

Agreed. Thanks have been passed on to Emma and her line manager.

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:

See above

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

There was good discussion to ensure this was a fair and sound process

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

Thank you- we felt that in the Covid - affected year that this was particularly important.

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:

RVC was extremely aware and sensitive to the enormous challenges caused by COVID-19 and have done a phenomenal job in adapting to the change and supporting the students appropriately. The students should be assured that the degree earned completely maintained the quality and standard associated with the WAB and WAH programs.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stuart Patterson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for these comments. I agree that we feel that standards were maintained and that all of the teams pulled together very well on this.

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)