

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2020/21

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

MSc Wild Animal Biology/Health

This appendix contains Year Leader's responses to 2020/21 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, Senior Academic Quality Officer 'Standards', afilipovic@rvc.ac.uk, 01707666938

Appendix 3 consists of:

a.	Updates to actions from previous years' reports – <i>no outstanding actions!</i>
b.	20/21 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 12-Sep-2021

MSc in Wild Animal Biology/Health, 2020/21

Lead examiner: Dr Javier Lopez

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Linda Penfold

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

The course content and exam questions were adequate for this type and level of course.

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

As in previous year, learning objectives were clearly stated

1.3 Teaching methods

Teaching methods are appropriate and adapted well to circumstances created by pandemic. I agree with collaborating examiners comments.

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

Resources, and especially one on one time with staff, were made available to the students throughout the year.

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

The high number of students achieving either merit and distinction this year is a testament to the interesting yet challenging new exam questions, the structure of the course, and the significant investment by staff into this program.

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

Overall, students' work was of a high standard. The quality of the student work did not seem to decrease significantly despite the changes and difficulties deriving from the pandemic. Some papers were of a standard suitable for scientific publication and overall of the expected quality in a course of this level.

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

During the sampling of exam papers, research talks, project reports and oral exams, there were clearly outstanding students, highly knowledgeable and able to extrapolate this knowledge to answer complicated questions. There were also a small number who did not show as much knowledge in some areas. These closely reflect the final marks awarded.

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

The students performed well considering the challenges of the pandemic, remote lecturing and learning. The overall quality of the work was good considering these challenges which also reflects the efforts from the course staff and teachers.

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Appropriate and relevant to the curriculum; sufficiently varied to assess different skills such as ability to express ideas and make critical analyses through written and oral responses. Learning objectives clearly stated. I agree with collaborating examiners comments.

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Assessment procedures are rigorous, involving two markers and requiring to discuss reach agreement if marks differ substantially, and a third reviewer if this were not possible.

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

The level of assessment is consistent with the FHEQ.

3.4 Standard of marking

Standard of marking is good. Having a set of examiners that read through all the exam answers or that participate in multiple vivas, helps providing more consistent marking. There was degree of confusion in the marking of the vivas with two different forms being used in the earliest sessions and with some examiners using half marks and others not.

Some excellently run vivas were observed but also observed some differences in the intensity and depth of questioning, but this did not have an impact on the final mark for each student.

Course Director's response:

We agree that there was confusion on the day of the vivas between the use of two different marking forms. This was due to a changeover of markschemes. This was discussed during the exam board meeting following the viva to ensure that there was no detrimental effect on students but we agree that this should not be occurring. We will work with the exams office to ensure that this is addressed in good time before the next round of vivas. The use of half marks is something that we have been asked to promote following previous examiner meetings. It is good to hear that some of the examiners are now using them. However, clearly more communication is needed to ensure that these are used by all examiners.

Action:

Stuart Patterson, Associate Dean PG Learning and Teaching, to liaise with Brian Catchpole, Director of Assessment about the use of half marks in the viva-examination briefing and to ensure that the correct paperwork is in place for the vivas across all PG courses.

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 examinations, marking and awards are sound and fair. Meetings of the Board of Examiners are conducted very fairly, and comments of internal and external examiners are fully considered. The attention to detail is excellent as well as the administration support which is complex, giving the remote meeting circumstances.. All information required was available to external examiners to make a good assessment.

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

Short answer question replacing MCQs seem to be working effectively.

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

In previous years, the opportunity to meet the majority of the students immediately after the student presentations was very valuable. This gave the opportunity to hear comments and suggestions made by the students which could be were discussed by the external examiners at the meeting of the Board of Examiners if relevant.

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:

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:

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was 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:

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:

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

There were a number of technical complications which were to be expected in a situation where remote access to meetings and files are required but the support staff, in particular Emma Rosenberg, were excellent in dealing with these.

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:

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:

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:

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)

Course director's response:

Thank you for this report!

