

## ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2020/21

### Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

## BVetMed Year 2

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, 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.	20/21 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director

**a. Updates to actions from previous years' reports**

2018/19			
Report Question	External Examiners' comments & suggested actions	Course Director/Year Leader's response & Action	Update in 2019/20
<b>3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous</b>	Oral exam (ISF): .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.	<p>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.</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b></p> <p>Amendment to ISF examiner briefing and training to ensure that examiners know to signpost levels explicitly. Amended briefing to Integrated Concepts examiners</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b></p> <p>01-Mar-2019</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b></p> <p>ISF exam coordinator; Exams office; BVetMed Year 2 Leader</p>	<p>N/A no ISF Orals exams ran in 2019-20. Action rolled over.</p> <p>Update 2020-21 ISF oral exams took place virtually – requests to signpost the level were included in the briefings given to examiners. We will continue to do this ongoingly.</p>
<b>3.4 Standard of marking</b>	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 standard setting should now be adopted to paper 2 and every effort made to have the marking completed for the external examiners to review.	<p>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.</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b></p> <p>Formalise standard setting of paper 2. We will endeavour to remind individuals of the importance of meeting marking deadlines.</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b></p> <p>01-Jun-2020</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b></p> <p>Director of Assessment; Exams Office; Heads of Department where required.</p>	Complete
<b>3.6 Opinion on changes to the assessment procedures from previous years in which you have examined</b>	. 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	<p>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.</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b></p>	<p>N/A no ISF Orals exams ran in 2019-20. Action rolled over.</p> <p>Update in 2020-21 ISF oral exams ran virtually. The mark sheet was converted to an online mark sheet, and this box was removed</p>

		<p>Ensure the use of the communication skills concern box is explained to examiners</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b></p> <p>01-Mar-2020</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b></p> <p>ISF exams coordinator; Exams Office; BVetMed Year 2 Leader</p>	<p>from the marking proforma to ensure a clear and quick form for staff to complete their assessments. Staff were encouraged to write feedback comments in the open comments box for each candidate.</p>
2019/20			
Report Question	External Examiners' comments & suggested actions	Course Director/Year Leader's response & Action	Update in 2019/20
<b>4.1 Comments I have made in previous years have been addressed to my satisfaction</b>	<p>Due to the COVID-19 situation, the format for assessment and the delivery of the programme had to undergo a dramatic adaptation. Comparison to last year is therefore not valid.</p>	<p>We acknowledge that some of our actions from last year that arose in response to your comments will need to be rolled over into the next academic year.</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b></p> <p>Roll over 2018-19 actions from external examiners report into Annual Quality Improvement Report for 2019-20</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b></p> <p>02-Nov-2020</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b></p> <p>BVetMed Year 2 Leader</p>	<p><b>CLOSED</b></p> <p>Both of the rolled over actions have either been completed or are no longer relevant. Specific updates are provided in the Table on Page 1 of this document.</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>At the University of Glasgow, a similar formative assessment exam procedure was adopted for 2nd (and 1st) year students with all progressing to the next year of the programme. At the University of Nottingham veterinary school, the online assessments were completed in an open-book scenario. Mean marks were higher as expected but the assessments were deemed to be a fair judge of students' knowledge. There are variations across the UK based Vet Schools and it would be ideal if the experience of the different institutes so that positive and negative lessons can be shared in the near future.</p>	<p>We are pleased to hear that the necessary modifications that we made to examinations in 19-20 reflect those that occurred elsewhere. Evaluation of the variations in format across the vet schools would make a very interesting project.</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b></p> <p>BVetMed 2 (now BVetMed 1) Year leader to investigate whether such a project is ongoing</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b></p> <p>30-Oct-2020</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b></p> <p>BVetMed Year 1 Leader</p>	<p><b>COMPLETED</b></p> <p>BVetMed 1 leader could not find and is not aware of a project considering variations across the vet schools. Presumably this information would be beneficial. Perhaps someone should take on such a project, but it would need funding presumably, and a time commitment</p>

# Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 05-Jul-2021

**Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 1, 2020/21**

**Lead examiner: Dr David Bainbridge**

**Collaborating examiner(s): Mr David Kilroy, Dr Ian Jeffcoate, Dr Karin Mueller**

## The Programme

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

### 1.1 Course content

The content of the course is entirely appropriate.

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

The objectives are appropriate, and from what we have seen of the assessment outcomes, the course delivered them well,

### 1.3 Teaching methods

These were not directly observed, but again the assessment outcomes suggest they were appropriate and enacted effectively, even during the COVID pandemic.

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

The students are well supported in this regard.

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

n/a

## 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 students' performance is at least as good as students on comparable courses elsewhere.

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

The failure rate among 'non-gateway' students was impressively low (and correctly determined, in our opinion) - especially in a year when many UK students entered having not been selected by the usual mechanism of achieving exam grades in actual public exams at school. Thus the top-scoring students were excellent, and the 'tail' of poor-performers was not long.

Performance of 'gateway' entry students was more variable, with some performing superbly, while their failure rate was relatively high. We believe that this latter observation relates to the inherent (and somewhat unavoidable) heterogeneity of this cohort, rather than any failings in the support with which they are provided. Their progress is also continually monitored, and targeted interventions put in place as necessary. It should also be noted that the first year is the time when these students' outcomes would be expected to differ most from other students, and indeed we were told that the data show that attainment gaps decline as the students progress through this (long) course.

The ISF orals were well-run, wide-ranging and appropriately pitched. The performance of some students was rather lower in this assessment element than in others. This may be due to the transition to online vivas - and it is clear that this COVID-affected cohort will be provided with additional support in preparing for ISF/OSCE/viva-type exams in future years.

## COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Sarah Channon

### Course Director Response:

Thankyou for your comments about the strong performance of our 'non-gateway' students – we are very proud of their achievements, and are grateful to all the teaching staff for ensuring they remain supported during a very challenging year. Whilst we were of course disappointed to see the relatively more variable performance of gateway alumni, we are very confident that the support we are putting in place for these students is high. This year the transition tutor has worked with these students on specific aspects of the programme such as preparation for ISF oral exams; next year this support will continue to be developed through a transition summer school, and other support activities. We would point out that students from disadvantaged backgrounds were most severely impacted by the pandemic, and so it is gratifying that the number of poor outcomes for students in this group was no higher than in previous non-pandemic years (and in fact somewhat improved).

Thankyou for your comments with regards to ISF orals – this was the first time we had run these online, although the students did get a formative experience. We would suggest the lower than usual performance (although, students historically do perform slightly less well across the board in this assessment) would have been impacted by the relative isolation in which some students worked during the pandemic, limiting their exposure to verbal communication and discussion of scientific topics. As you suggest, ensuring students understand the importance of face to face group work sessions in preparing for these types of assessments in 2021/22 will need to be a deliberate effort on our part.

### Action Required:

1. Continued monitoring and efforts to ensure Gateway alumni are supported in transition to BVM1 (Year Leader, Transition Tutor)

2. Students to be reminded that group work and discussions that take place during those sessions prepare them for oral examinations and are vital for developing communication skills (Year Leader)

**Action Deadline:**

31-Oct-2021

**Action assigned to:**

Year Leader; Transition tutor

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

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## Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

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

We would like to compliment the RVC staff on well-run, thoughtful and imaginative assessment, run under trying circumstances.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Sarah Channon**

**Course Director Response:**

thankyou, your support is appreciated

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

### 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

The procedures were wide-ranging and rigorous.

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

The assessment was entirely consistent with that framework.

**Dr I.J**

agree



### 3.4 Standard of marking

Marking was appropriately pitched, consistent and showed no evidence of undue inter- or intra-marker variation.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Sarah Channon**

**Course Director Response:**

this is pleasing to hear, thankyou

**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)**

Yes - certainly.

**Dr I.J**

n/a

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

Most changes related to adaptations due to the COVID pandemic - the RVC examination system seems to have coped with this upheaval very well.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Sarah Channon**

**Course Director Response:**

Thankyou - the exams office team, and teaching staff have been busy, but we are pleased that our efforts and investments have resulted in positive outcomes

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

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

We had an enlightening discussing with the examiners about how they balanced factors relating to online exams - time pressures, examination time windows, IT system 'bandwidth'. This has been an ongoing journey for most universities over the last year.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Sarah Channon**

**Course Director Response:**

We agree that benefits of and issues related to online exams are numerous, and are being considered widely across the sector. We are continuing to monitor sector challenges and advances in this area, and will continue to make changes and updates to our online assessment accordingly.

**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:**

**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:**

**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:**

Assessment represents a large tranche of work for RVC staff - due to the complexity and range of the material examined, and the large number of students. We would encourage the RVC to continually consider how these pressures on staff may be reduced. The modes of examination are diverse and appropriate, but it is worth considering whether it is possible to reduce the size of some exams, and still maintain the current high standards.

Like most higher education institutions, the RVC will also no doubt consider what has been learnt during the COVID outbreak. Were some altered modes of teaching and assessment actually better than what went before?

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

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

Thankyou for your comments, and we agree that our staff put huge efforts and time into assessing our students. We will keep our assessment portfolio under review. It is unlikely that we will return to pencil/paper exams in the future and so we now look to take forward the most beneficial elements of the assessment modes used during COVID19. This will understandably take time as we work through the various benefits and pitfalls of the new methods and consider how compatible they are with existing infrastructure and the ongoing need to satisfy PSRB requirements.

#### **Action Required:**

Continual review and improvement of assessment modes and delivery mechanisms

#### **Action Deadline:**

01-May-2022

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

Director of Assessment; Head of Exams; Director of Learning and Wellbeing

### **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)**

n/a

