

# Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 10-Dec-2014

**Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 4, 2014/15**

Lead examiner: Dr Neil Hudson

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Wendela Wapenaar, Ms Rachel Burrow, Mr David Walker

## The Programme

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

### 1.1 Course content

Appropriate and comprehensive

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Appropriate. See comments in section 2 regarding students.

Response from college requested: **NO**

### 1.3 Teaching methods

The success of the majority of candidates suggests that learning and teaching objectives are being met.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Sufficient resources were available for the assessments to be completed to a good standard.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

No major changes suggested.

Response from college requested: **NO**

## 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

Whilst it is difficult to compare students between universities when different examination techniques are used for student assessments, the candidates' overall performance was considered to be comparable with veterinary students at a similar level of their training at Universities of Liverpool, Edinburgh and Nottingham.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

We sampled candidates from the different boundaries (pass-fail, pass-merit, merit-distinction). Overall the standard of most of the candidates was good and the RVC is to be congratulated on the calibre of students in this cohort. The examination covered a wide subject area and the students appeared to cope well with answering questions on a wide range of subject areas in several different formats.

The quality of the answers from the students attaining distinction level passes was high and it was clear to us how these answers were much better than candidates in lower categories. If there is the perception marks are improving year on year over the coming years, it may be useful to compare different cohorts when questions are re-used.

Response from college requested: **NO**

### COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Dan Chan

#### Course Director Response:

The comments by the external examiners are appreciated and the Year Leader in collaboration with the Exam Chair and the Exams Office plan to monitor the performance of individual questions as they may be re-used to gauge how certain question perform over time. This will be an ongoing process that will take place during exam paper preparation.

**Action Required: Review of performance of previous exam questions to be carried out by BVetMed Year 4 Leader, Exams Chair and Exams Office during composition of exam paper**

**Action Deadline: 11/09/2015**

**Action assigned to: BVetMed Year 4 Leader, Exams Office, BVetMed Year 4 Exam Chair**

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

We noted the difference between performance in the MCQ&EMQ exam and the integrated reasoning exam. It appears that there has been excellent student support with developing their clinical reasoning skills, although despite this it appears knowledge is good but the application of that knowledge still needs developing. We acknowledge the difficulty with this and it is something experienced in the external examiners' respective institutions. We would expect all students clinical reasoning to significantly improve during clinical rotations.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Dan Chan**

**Course Director Response:**

We thank the external examiners for this observation. When we compare the performance of clinical reasoning exercises in the BVetMed Year 3, 4 and BVetMed Finals, we can appreciate significant improvement in this area as one would hope. Therefore we do believe that students are learning to apply clinical reasoning as they progress through the course.

**Action Required: No**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

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

#### Paper 1a - MCQ

We would suggest the use of terms 'not', 'least', 'false', 'except' is avoided when new questions are written. We would also recommend that examiners consider re-writing questions from the current bank that contain these terms. A lot of these questions were highlighted by external examiners prior to the examination. According to the questions statistics some questions using negative terms were removed by the external examiners, highlighting that these terms are sometimes confusing.

There was a good selection of dermatology MCQs that discriminated well.

Looking at the student performance there were some challenging questions (Q6, Q25, Q31, Q44) and some easier questions (Q8). Overall we felt the paper was well balanced.

Our comments below are based upon how the students answered the questions and the question statistics. These comments are to help for future and are not a criticism of what we acknowledge is an extremely difficult task.

Q2 - The question stem was confusing ('least') and statistics suggested this question was a poor discriminator. Question removed.

Q8 – We felt this question was too easy and a based upon statistics was a poor discriminator. We did not feel it examined a key fact. We would recommend the question is re-written if it used again.

Q18 – Despite comments made by the external examiners during paper review, we remain concerned about the image quality. We question whether discriminating between a large and a small lymphocyte is advanced knowledge for a vet student at this level. We appreciate the use of images as a good way of assessing students.

Q26 – This is a good question but we would have hoped more people would have got this correct. We feel this is an important welfare consideration when students are visiting an abattoir. It may be that the key facts from the lecture need reinforcing.

Q27 – We are uncertain of the relevance of this question and it was poorly answered. Perhaps it would be better to assess students on toxicity rather than legality. Question removed.

Q36 – This question was removed based upon the question statistics. We can see the principle of the question and feel the topic area is relevant but we feel the students should be told the intermediate step (i.e. what is the product).

Q41 – From the students answers we feel the teaching may need to be addressed as to why distractor 'E' is not correct +/- perhaps consider changing the question if used again. We recognise this is a difficult area to question.

Q42 – The typical management of anal sac adenocarcinoma would not include castration and perhaps the question stem should be reworded for future use. We appreciate it does not impact the answer but may confuse some students.

Q45 – Question removed. We appreciate the examiner is trying to test across species; however, based upon statistics the question differentiated between students poorly. The question stem may have confused some candidates ('except'). We suggest the question is reworded if used again.

Q57 – We are concerned that the use of the word 'valuable' (with connotations of cost) has led to some confusion. We would suggest this question is reworded to 'most appropriate' or 'most useful'.

Q59 – We feel 'most appropriate' may be better than 'most informative' within the question stem given the question statistics. We recognise the difficulties in wording these questions.

Q60 – We are not sure of the relevance of this question. We understand the background to why this is an important question and part of the teaching but perhaps more clinical relevance to the question would be beneficial (i.e a picture).

#### Paper 1b - EMQ

Many topic areas tend to lend themselves to pattern spotting and not good clinical reasoning. EMQs 4 and 8 are examples of good questions that stimulate consideration of first principles and apply knowledge. The ophtho and neuro questions were answered very well and were good questions, this no doubt reflects excellent teaching; however, the question statistics suggest some scenarios could be changed to better differentiate students.

The use of photographs, radiographs etc may be useful to avoid pattern spotting in the EMQ paper.

EMQ 1 - We suggest that orthopaedics questions concentrate on principles rather than specific fracture fixation methods (although we agree that difficult questions should remain - see similar comments made in 2013). Some of the individual questions/scenarios were pertinent and apply principles.

Scenario 4 was removed based upon question statistics. It was deemed too complicated for this level and the question statistics suggested students had guessed.

EMQ 9 - This is a good question that stimulates thought. It may be useful for the scenarios to be tabulated or have

bullet points as a lot of text that may confuse some students.

EMQ 9, scenario 45 – We would suggest the end of this question is reworded to 'optimum treatment' for the future. After reviewing the question statistics and after helpful discussion with the question setter we came to the decision that 'C' would also be accepted as an answer.

EMQ 10, scenario 46 - After reviewing the question statistics we felt this was a very difficult question. An image may be helpful if this question is used again.

EMQ 10, scenario 49 – We would suggest the addition of the word 'raised' – '.....raised, ulcerated mass of 2cm'. This question was removed as it appeared some students had misunderstood the question.

EMQ 11, scenario 53- We were a little surprised by the question statistics. We question whether this is something that is not covered specifically in the teaching. The question was removed.

EMQ 11, scenario 55 – This question was removed. The statistics suggested this was a very difficult question that may have led the students down a different path.

EMQ 12. We understand this topic area is difficult to ask questions on but is none the less an important topic. As an example scenario 59 is an excellent question testing the application of an important piece of knowledge.

Scenario 56 – We felt this question was too basic. It may be occupying room for a question that would be a better discriminator

Scenario 57 – This question was removed. What advice is needed? Advice about the fracture or advice to help manage your colleague who perhaps wants to fix the fracture when you feel he/she does not have the necessary experience.

Scenario 58 – The examiners do not feel initially approaching the practice manager is an incorrect thing to do. Distractors 'F' and 'G' were also accepted.

Scenario 60 – Distractor 'C' was also accepted. We did not feel this was critical knowledge and would not impact on what sort of vet a student will become.

## Paper 2

We acknowledge the value of the Integrated Reasoning papers to assess logical clinical reasoning and ability to use clinical information appropriately. Previous years comments have been applied and have improved the assessment process. We acknowledge the huge effort that has gone into this.

### Question 1

We thought this was a good and relevant clinical scenario and despite this being a challenging question to mark, the marking was consistent and the markers are to be congratulated. A few students achieved very high marks and were incredibly thoughtful in their responses, this is credit to those students and their teachers.

### Question 2

This was a challenging question for the students but was generally well answered. There were inconsistencies between internal examiners in the marking of part a of the question. Assessors need to be careful that students are not being penalised for missing things that were not asked for in the questions. The model answer should be agreed by all markers prior to examination and the application of this model answer should be agreed before marking. This marking issue was responded to swiftly and efficiently on the days of our visit and this part of the question was remarked to ensure fairness. Overall this inconsistency would have a small effect on likely overall performance but could have importance for borderline students.

### Questions 3 and 4

These were excellent questions but were not answered well by many students. Some students were not able to integrate clinical facts. We acknowledge and congratulate the fact the students receive a lot of tuition on this type of question. Some internal examiners were felt overly generous with their marking but overall this was felt acceptable.

### General comments

It is useful for the external examiners when internal examiners make comments on the scripts so we can see when credit has been given.

It may be logistically challenging but consideration could be given to the questions being unidirectional i.e answer part 'a' then scripts removed and then answer part 'b'. This may stop candidates trying to pattern spot which then influences later answers. Part a) and part b) could then be marked by the same person removing marking inconsistencies.

A compartmental approach (breaking questions into sub-sections) to writing these IR questions (as in question 2) is an alternative as this is likely to make it easier for students to address all areas required and will allow easier marking.

The mean marks for Part 2 of questions 3 and 4 were only 1 or 2 CGS grades higher than for Part 1 of these questions. Authors and markers are to be commended on this as it suggests that marks were being allocated for logical approach rather than knowledge recall acquired over the intervening weekend.

We suggest consideration is given to integrating professional studies, epidemiology and data analysis into clinical questions rather than generating free standing questions in these areas. This should result in increased credibility for these areas amongst the student body and reflects what happens in veterinary practice. It would also allow a greater breadth of species coverage in the integrated reasoning papers.

**Response from college requested: YES**

**Mr D.W**

This was formatted prior to submission, can this be done again prior to distribution to the internal examiners please?

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Dan Chan**

**Course Director Response:**

We are extremely grateful for these very detailed and specific comments made on exam questions. The comments made by external examiners on specific questions are being fed back to question authors along with the item analysis statistics and guidance notes on how to interpret exam statistics. We believe that revision of question and/or teaching should be guided by various factors including item analyses - however, there should be caution moderating exam question solely based on exam statistics from single cohort of students. As questions are re-used we amass greater information about the ability of a question to discriminate between students and this should provide more information to examiners (both internal and external) that would allow more informed decisions about how questions or teaching should be adjusted. Comments about the use of terms 'not', 'least', 'false', 'except' in exam questions will certainly be discouraged if not completely eliminated. We will also ask the Exams Office to flag these comments in the question bank so that question authors can consider rewriting their questions. We are also providing greater clarity to internal examiners about writing comments on exam scripts to make it clearer how marks were assigned to individual answers. Comments regarding the format of the exam in terms of making more questions unidirectional will be considered by a special subcommittee charged with streamlining and aligning the examination strategy of the entire BVetMed Programme. We also appreciate comments regarding integration of professional studies, epidemiology and data analysis into clinical questions and will consider this in future examination

**Action Required:**

Feedback on specific questions made by external examiners, along with item analysis and guidance notes, to be sent to question authors

**Action Deadline:**

01-Jun-2015

**Action assigned to:**

Exams Office

### **3.2 Extent to which assessment processes are rigorous**

We are satisfied that the assessment processes are rigorous

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

**Response from college requested: NO**

### **3.4 Standard of marking**

We are satisfied with the standard of marking

**Response from college requested: NO**

### **3.5 Opinion on changes to the assessment process from previous years in which you have examined**

We have been satisfied with the changes made based upon previous comments.

**Response from college requested: NO**

### **3.6 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the assessment process**

We acknowledge that despite questions being reviewed by a number of people, including the external examiners, unforeseeable problems with questions are only apparent when students answer the questions. The examination process continues to improve each year and we recommend all examiners review the statistics for their questions to continue to improve the examination process.

Consideration should be given to the same examiner marking the whole of one part of a question (when appropriate) for the whole year group.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Dan Chan**

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

We appreciate the comments by the external examiners. As noted in response to 3.1, feedback regarding specific questions, along with item analyses and guidance on interpretation of item analyses are sent to question authors. Additional training on exam question writing and use of item analyses are provided as part of INSET day on Examination yearly.

We will consider the feasibility of having the same examiner mark the whole of one part of a question for the whole year group.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

## Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

**4.1 In your view, are the processes for assessment and the determination of awards sound and fairly conducted?**

The processes for assessment and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted.

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

It was very useful for external examiners individual comments to be distributed to all external examiners prior to the external examiners meeting.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**4.3 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures**

**Response from college requested: NO**

5.1 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

5.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

5.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

5.4 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

5.5 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

5.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

5.7 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

5.8 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

5.9 I have received enough support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

5.10 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

5.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

5.12 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:**

**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 organisation was excellent and the external examiners are grateful for the time allowed to review the examination papers this year. Provision of exam papers with and without answers was very useful and we would like to continue with this.

The help given to the external examiners by Kim Whittlestone, Ruth Serlin, Wendy Mace and the other academic registry staff has been excellent. We recognise the enormity of this task for the RVC and the teaching and marking staff are to be congratulated.

**Response from college requested: YES**

**Mr D.W**

This computer programme has caused additional work including losing pieces of text as we wrote.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Dan Chan**

**Course Director Response:**

We thank the External Examiners for their comments. We will endeavor to provide exam papers with and without answers as these proved helpful to External Examiners and we would like to continue this. We have also fed back the issues raised by the External Examiners regarding the computer program for External Examiner reports to the Teaching & Quality Assurance Office and IT support.

**Action Required:**

Ensure External Examiners receive exam papers with and without answers.  
Request IT support to improve the computer program that is used to manage External Examiner Reports

**Action Deadline:**

31-Mar-2015

**Action assigned to:**

Year 4 Leader -Daniel Chan

**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**

