

# Collaborative Report

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 1, 2014/15

Lead examiner: Dr Geoff Pearson

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Paul Loughna, Dr Michael Lee

## The Programme

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

### 1.1 Course content

The course content is appropriate for this stage of an integrated programme of this type.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

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

The learning objectives appear appropriate and comprehensive. The content and quality of the students assessed work indicates that the objectives are clearly met for a very high proportion of the cohort.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

### 1.3 Teaching methods

Teaching methodology is broad, is commensurate with both the range of teaching material being delivered and the outcomes being assessed, and includes knowledge, understanding and problem solving.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

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

Resources appear more than adequate.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

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

Having access to RVC LEARN is an excellent means by which external examiners can appreciate and study course content etc. Currently, this access is restricted to BVetMed Yr 1 only. It would be good to have access to the whole programme on-line, but particularly years 2 and 3. Given the Strand structure of the course, having greater access would allow a much better understanding of how the learning objectives in each year build upon each other.

**Response from college requested: YES**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

Privileged access to RVC Learn can be provided to external examiners. It will however be important for the external examiners to understand the nature and the structural interconnections in our 'spiral curriculum' especially between year 1 and 2 (and year 3 in some cases) as opposed to Year 1 as a standalone.

**Action Required:**

Request RVC Learn in conjunction with exams office to provide access to liaise with exams to obtain the names and addresses of external examiners.

**Action Deadline:**

30-Nov-2015

**Action assigned to:**

Completed

## 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 ability appears to be commensurate with that of similar cohorts at other UK Universities. The three examiners (from three separate Universities) cover most aspects of the course.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

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

A high proportion of students gain an overall mark in the either distinction- or merit-level category. From scrutiny of the various elements of the assessed work for these students, it is clearly evident such awards are deserving. In contrast, it is also clear that the relatively small group of students in the bottom range display a uniformly weak performance across the board.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

### COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

#### Course Director Response:

The observation that " a relatively small group of students in the bottom range display a uniformly weak performance across the board" is worthwhile noting. Such students should be monitored through Academic Progress Committee (APC) in a view to institute mitigating measures to help them succeed.

#### Action Required:

APC committee to be informed of this weak student group.

#### Action Deadline:

05-Nov-2015

#### Action assigned to:

Mark Cleasby

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

Response from college requested: **NO**

## Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

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

The range of assessment methods is appropriate and aligned to the stated learning objectives.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

### 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

For the most part, the individual assessment processes appear to be rigorously designed and delivered. Areas of concern that the external examiners wish to flag:

Strategic learning

The structure of Papers 2 and 3, which both offer question choice, could allow strategic learning with students able to avoid assessment in major threads of the first year curriculum e.g. animal husbandry and alimentary system. Our analysis of student question choices in the June 2015 examination lends support for this possibility. A remedy would be to introduce a section in each examination paper that contains compulsory questions addressing the major strands, with a free choice in separate sections for strands covered more superficially within the first year.

ISF orals

These oral examinations continue to provide a rich opportunity for students to excel and the external examiners continue to be impressed by the level of teaching staff engagement in this part of the assessment. However, we continue to note a potential for inequity in the assessment as some students are examined by their tutors which results in a different experience than when examined by a non-tutor. Furthermore, we suggest more consistency is sought when informing students about the transition to level 3 questioning during the oral examination

Transition to level 3 questions needs to be different between areas/strands which have been covered in lectures superficially as opposed to areas/strands which have been covered in greater depth, i.e. the transition needs to take into account the extent of study in a particular strand.

Response from college requested: **YES**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

#### Course Director Response:

The alignment of learning objectives and teaching in the BVetMed course aims at achieving learning irrespective of depth covered in each part of spiral curriculum. While our assessment exercise in the whole course is very robust, it is conceivable that in giving choice in papers 2 and 3 allows for a student to selectively avoid answering a question (s) from specific strands. It is equally important to note on the other hand that making some questions from particular strands compulsory allows the student to deem other parts of the course to be less important. This is a sure recipe for strategic learners to conveniently avoid studying or applying themselves to do a wholesome study of all the topics covered in the year something that the course does not advocate for.

#### Action Required:

A set of a 'must answer' questions drawn from strands covered in detail be introduced in sections of the exam question sheet.

#### Action Deadline:

30-Mar-2016

**Action assigned to:**

Raymond Macharia/Exams office/CMC

**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 and is in line with other institutions awarding the veterinary degree.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

**3.4 Standard of marking**

Overall, the standard of marking was high and in line with marking guidelines. However, it was noted that in regard of one essay question (Paper 3, June 2015) the marker failed to adhere to the Common Grading Scheme (CGS), to the detriment of numerous students. It should also be noted that the outline answer given for this question included the marker's own marking criteria, which differed from the CGS. The external examiners raised this at the examination board and, as the mean for this question was significantly different from those of the other questions on the paper, a decision was made to remove it from the assessment. Findings from a preliminary study by an internal member of board (B Catchpole) of the methodologies available for statistical analysis of assessment results provided unequivocal support for the question being removed. The external examiners highly commend this initiative.

Whilst we commend the process of sample marking it is important to use it also in the process to identify outlying questions for which the marking may not align with the CGS. It is vital it does not become a simple tick box exercise. A way around this is to reconsider the departure from blind marking that was done previously.

The absence of Speedwell analysis data for Paper 1 (MCQ) was disappointing, as this would have been very useful in gauging the efficiency and accuracy of the MCQ standard setting (performed for the first time in 2014-2015).

**Response from college requested: YES**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

The common grading scheme is generic in nature and the descriptors in different categories or grades may not always conform 100% with a marker's own model answer both in quality and quantity—in some cases there are grey areas between one grade and the next. However, irrespective of these inherent issues, lack of adherence to the requirements of the CGS cannot be condoned. It is imperative that a marker should note 1) selection and coverage of material, 2) understanding and 3) clarity in an essay and carefully gauge it against the CGS.

**Action Required:**

Careful selection of the exam questions (and inspection of the model answer) is carried out by a team of internal experts before submission to the external examiner. Application of statistical tests (as explained by the external examiners) ideally could be helpful in cases where an obvious outlier median mark for an individual question is encountered. However, a more marker-specific approach to applying CGS descriptors is to be encouraged other than resorting to statistics.

The exams office will provide Ripley analysis data for MCQ paper to gauge the efficiency and accuracy of the MCQ standard setting.

**Action Deadline:**

04-Mar-2016

**Action assigned to:**

Raymond Macharia/ Exams office

**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)**

There is excellent administrative support for the assessment process provided by the examinations office; this extends from the timely drafting and review of papers right through to the board meeting.

The minor issue (discussed in Section 3.4) regarding the adherence to the CGS marking arrangements was dealt with efficiently by the examination chair, both with the support of the examinations office administration and in full consideration of the views of the external examiners. As such, no candidates in the examination were disadvantaged and the procedures for assessment and the determination of awards were therefore sound and fairly conducted.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

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

The examiners were impressed that each of the various types of summative assessment have a preceding formative-only component. The major difference from the previous year being that the extended essay was now a formative-only assignment.

The standard setting of MCQ's is to be commended. However, the examiners noted a wide discrepancy between individual's opinions within the process and the taking of a mean seems rather arbitrary and lends itself to wide discrepancy

**Response from college requested: YES**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

The extended essay as a summative assessment while standing abolished after extensive consultations has equally been adopted formatively as a platform for training and preparing the students for research project 1 (RP1), a component that is examined summatively in year 2 of the course. The purpose of standard setting of the MCQ is to achieve an average rather than individual biased view of question difficulty.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

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

INSET days continue to provide an excellent forum for discussion and reflection on assessment methods for the veterinary programme.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

Was unable to attend the INSET day.

## General Statements

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

**No**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

Comment made in last year's report:

'Care in marking subjective questions to acknowledge that ethical areas should be treated with equal respect to both sides of the debate'

The examiners consider this has not been addressed and this was a significant factor in the problem encountered in the marking of an essay question in Paper 3, June 2015 (see Section 3.4). Subjective questions should be avoided in essay style questions.

**Response from college requested: YES**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

The observations made were valid.

**Action Required:**

That the concerned internal examiner (s) as well as the staff in PS strand be made aware of the need to provide model answers that allow for the alternative views in questions dealing with ethical issues.

**Action Deadline:**

05-Nov-2015

**Action assigned to:**

Elizabeth Chan/ Raymond Macharia

### 4.2 An acceptable response has been made

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

### 4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

**Yes**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

Yes



**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:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

Yes

**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:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

Yes

**4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly**

**Yes**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

Yes

**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:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

Yes

**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:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

Yes

**4.9 I have received enough support to carry out my role**

**Yes**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

Yes

**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:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

Yes

**4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed**

**Yes**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

Yes

4.12 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**

Dr P.L

Yes

## 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:

Response from college requested: **NO**

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**