

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2017/18

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

BVetMed Final Year

This appendix contains Course Director's/Year Leader's responses to 2017/18 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from External Examiners' reports from previous years (if applicable).

As Course Director/Year Leader 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 from Course Director/Year Leader to actions from previous years' reports (if applicable)
b.	2017/18 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director/Year Leader

a. Update to actions from 2016/17:

Report Question	External Examiners' comments & suggested actions	Course Director's response/ update in 2016/17	Update in 2017/18
<p>1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme</p>	<p>Further consideration, perhaps, of placement and academic tutors knowing when and how to flag a concern, to enable timely remedial intervention for issues of communication and professionalism. In particular the sort of seemingly 'low level' issues of organisation, language, paperwork submissions and punctuality that can add up to a later more serious overall problem. We would be curious about the remedial support mechanisms in place, given - eg - the poor quality of writing from some final year candidates and the existence of outstanding paperwork, even after finals.</p>	<p>Monitoring issues relating to communication and professionalism in relation to EMS, especially in relation to assembling appropriate paperwork, is an ongoing activity overseen by the EMS team in Registry and the Director and Deputy Director of EMS. Student tutors are notified as well when there are particular concerns. The poor quality of writing for final year candidates is an entirely different problem which is perhaps not so easily monitored or solved. We hope to be able to provide a greater level of formative feedback after the 4th year exam (which involves essay type questions on clinical and professional reasoning) but the logistic difficulties of doing this remain to be solved. We will certainly be providing examples of model answers to a greater degree than previously for the 2018 finals exams.</p> <p>Action Deadline: 02-Jan-2018 Action assigned to: Jill Maddison, Dan Chan and Brian Catchpole</p>	<p>COMPLETE</p>
<p>2.2 Quality of candidates' knowledge and skills, with particular reference to those at the top, middle or bottom of the range</p>	<p>Distribution is good for written papers, given the variability of topics, but had a tendency to cluster at the high end for basic procedures in the OSCE. This means candidates can compensate in learned procedure for 'non-rote' integrated tasks, eg by getting 100% in gowning (arguably a lower year basic given) while failing a station that requires diagnostic or communication skill. Several candidates passed overall on the OSCE via compensation through routine process while failing all of the stations that actually has a normal score distribution and reflected some degree of independent thinking.</p>	<p>We entirely agree and are reviewing the OSCE set up with the aim to move some of the more "basic" stations into a DOPs format and to provide more complex stations involving communication and problem-solving. We aim that these changes will be in place for the 2019 final exams as they require modification to rotation activities to accommodate the DOPs which can only be commenced from Feb 2018</p> <p>Action Deadline: 02-Jan-2018 Action assigned to: Jill Maddison, Dan Chan and David Bolt</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS DOPS on rotations will be formative for 2019 and summative for 2020.</p>

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 14-Jun-2018

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 5, 2017/18

Lead examiner: Dr Connie Wiskin

Collaborating examiner(s): Professor Malcolm Cobb, Dr Philip Scott, Dr Joseph Cassidy

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

As far as can be established, an appropriate range of modules and a mix teaching activities employed. The examination process, rather than course content or learning outcomes were scrutinised - these would appear to align.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your comments. No action has been suggested.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Transparency around questions in the OSCE, is well established, so given the students' prior knowledge of what is expected it is hard to see how any candidate could claim lack of familiarity with outcomes for that component. We did not see specific (published in advance) outcomes for the new format written papers. Mapping LO to questions would allow a determination of what elements of the final year are being assessed and how.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

The finals exam has been mapped to course, AVMA and RCVS competences but we acknowledge this wasn't clear from the paperwork available to the external examiners. We will ensure it is in the future.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.3 Teaching methods

As far as can be determined teaching methods are appropriate, the importance of knowledge of disease pathophysiology and an ability to reason clinically have been highlighted by ourselves and by experienced internal examiners in their CRQ feedback. Students' approach to answering questions in an examination may not necessarily reflect a problem-based approach as taught in the clinics, which is disappointing.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

The problem-based approach that is taught at the RVC is explicitly assessed in this finals exam as well as the 4th year exam. The issue with the patchy use of it by some students (or total lack of familiarity by a few) is likely to relate to inconsistent reinforcement in clinical scenarios and rotations and students failure to avail themselves of the extensive learning support material available. We recognise that the approach may need some modification for farm-related questions and will seek guidance from the production animal teaching team.

Action Required:

Discussion with production animal teaching team about how to modify the problem-solving approach taught for individual animals to enhance a problem-solving approach that is suitable for production animal/herd level problems.

Action Deadline:

01-Sep-2018

Action assigned to:

Jill Maddison

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

Assessment resourcing was high. All materials were easily available, with full staffing (academic, support and invigilation) witnessed on all observed examination days.

Response from college requested: NO

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

EEs are happy with the changes made to the nature of the assessments this academic year. Discussions with students who took the exams were carried out broadly reflected the EE opinions, in particular relating to what is assessed in the OSCEs and the nature of some of the CRQs.

Response from college requested: NO

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

Students' performance seems comparable to those on comparable courses in our own institutions. While the (positive) student focussed environment is duly noted, compensation remains a concern, especially given the nature of independent practice post qualification. It is still possible for a student to fail the CRQ for a particular species badly, for example with scores as low as 27%, but pass overall.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

We acknowledge that there is a risk that a student who performs very poorly in one question could still pass. We have analysed the data and no student who received a mark of 27% for a question passed the exam. There was a very small cohort of students who gained 35% in one question who did go onto pass. We have considered the option of imposing a 40% minimum threshold to pass but wished to review student performance over at least 1-2 years while the new exam format was being embedded before doing so. It will remain under consideration.

Action Required:

Review pass statistics for 2018 and 2019 exams with a view to consideration of a minimum threshold mark if necessary

Action Deadline:

01-Sep-2019

Action assigned to:

Jill Maddison and John Sanger

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

Distribution is very good for written papers, across all species-specific questions, with performance in non-compulsory questions being slightly better than in the compulsory questions which is to be expected, although 11 of the 36 students which chose to answer the second farm animal question failed this. There is still a tendency to cluster at the high end for basic procedures in the OSCE.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Overall fine, and reflective broadly of norms. However it is still possible for a student to fail all 3 compulsory questions and pass Part 2 overall by compensating with a good performance in their chosen subject. We still feel that the common grading scheme has limitations, as it doesn't map to the percentage score/time distribution in the model answers for written papers, and it is difficult to see how the scheme can be used effectively when the CRQs have multiple sections. The CGS results in marks being awarded between 27 and 82% and even very poor answers rarely are marked below 35%. At the other end of the scale, the scheme might result in the very good students not achieving marks higher than 82%.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

This relates to 1.2 and will be kept under review. The college remains content that the CGS delivers the type of assessment descriptors that are appropriate for the finals exam format.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Mixed methodology approach still seems to work well, although we are still of the opinion that some skills and knowledge currently assessed in the OSCEs in final year could be signed off in earlier years (3-4 to allow remediation?). Again, the common grading scheme is not terribly intuitive. It may be that this is fixed, but a problem (looking at assessor notations of scripts) seems to be that examiners score the papers based on their expertise and knowledge of that subject and then have to retrospectively 'fit' their impressions to the 'common grading' scale, as discussed above this is especially problematic when a student does one section of a CRQ well, and another section less well.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

This is an ongoing discussion and we are grateful for the examiners focus on this area. For the 19/20 rotation year we will be assessing some skills as DOPs rather than OSCEs to enable more complex OSCEs to be set. We acknowledge the examiners concern about the CGS but the consistency of marking that is demonstrated by the sample marking process would suggest that most assessors are using the scheme without great difficulty

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

All processes adhered to. Double marking in place for compulsory question. Feedback from examiners on CRQs is very variable, and often did not reflect the actual performance of the students in some cases. Other examiners provided very useful and insightful feedback for example CRQ3.

Mapping of questions to learning objectives might allow better determination of the relationship of the assessment to final year teaching.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for these comments - they are very helpful. Making explicit how the finals written exam maps to the BVetMed course outcomes is important. They map primarily to three course outcomes rather than learning objectives related only to final year teaching.

BVetMed4: Recognise, prevent and diagnose diseases and disorders of animals. Be able to select and interpret appropriate diagnostic test and formulate a treatment plan; considering pain management, client financial status & patient referral when indicated.

BVetMed5: Develop a logical problem-solving approach to clinical reasoning in order to effectively solve clinical problems and make decisions.

BVetMed10: Demonstrate knowledge of the principles and behaviours that underpin professionalism, teamwork and ethical decision making (judgement) and apply these in a veterinary setting.

Action Required:

Ensure that it is made explicit to student, assessors and external examiners how the written finals examination maps to BVetMed course outcomes

Action Deadline:

01-Apr-2019

Action assigned to:

John Fishwick and Jill Maddison

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

Consistent with FHEQ level 6/7.

Response from college requested: NO

3.4 Standard of marking

Good evidence of consistent marking and double of CRQs within and between questions. Post hoc analysis of OSCE stations seems appropriate and resulted in removal of one station based on inconsistent marking by one assessor. OSCE scoring was consistent (inter-rater and intra-rater) from significant live observation and paper provisions.

Response from college requested: NO

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

Response from college requested: NO

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

Consideration could be given to requiring a minimum mark for example 35% or 40% in each compulsory CRQ to ensure omnicompetence has been demonstrated.

As discussed previously, some of the activities assessed in OSCEs seem inappropriate for final examinations, and could be assessed earlier in the course or through a workplace-based assessment, allowing more complex and integrated OSCE stations which might test students' preparedness for practice better.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

. Note that if a minimum mark of 35% had been set this would not have changed the overall results. If a minimum mark of 40% had been set a very small cohort would have failed. Commented on previously and under review

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

Response from college requested: NO

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

No

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

See previous comments regarding OSCE stations.

Response from college requested: NO

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Comments have been taken on board, but require actioning.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Action will occur for the 19/20 rotation year

Action Required:

A selection of DOPs to be included in rotation assessment and removed from OSCE assessment

Action Deadline:

10-Feb-2019

Action assigned to:

David Bolt, Dan Chan, Brian Catchpole

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: 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:

Response from college requested: 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:

Response from college requested: NO

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: 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:

Response from college requested: 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:

Response from college requested: NO

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

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

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

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

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:

As discussed, concerns highlighted by external examiners about particular questions when circulated have not always been addressed,

Response from college requested: NO

Apologies for this oversight. In the future, we will make sure that the External Examiners receive feedback to their questions raised and, if so, the reasons for why their comments were not acted upon. We would like to encourage the External Examiners to raise such concerns with course management and Exams office during their visit at the College and in meetings.

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)

Response from college requested: NO

