

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 18/19

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

MSc Veterinary Epidemiology

This appendix contains Course Director's/Year Leader's responses to 2018/19 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from previous years' External Examiners' report (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 to actions from previous years' reports
b.	2018/19 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director

Individual Report

Exam board meeting: 12-Sep-2019

MSc in Veterinary Epidemiology, 2018/19

Professor Alasdair Cook

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

This course in veterinary epidemiology offers students an excellent foundation in the subject. The shared modules with LSHTM provide excellent teaching in statistical methods in epidemiology and modelling whilst the RVC-specific modules provide training in areas such as surveillance of animal health and economics of animal health which are especially relevant to students aspiring to work in these areas whether in research, policy or other environments.

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

Appropriate learning objectives are clearly defined for all modules and both course materials and outcome from assessments evidence that these are met.

1.3 Teaching methods

The course handbook demonstrates that a range of teaching methods are employed including lectures, seminars and student-led presentations and discussions. The use of moderated web-based discussion boards - for learning and assessment - to encourage student participation is particularly pertinent given the importance of such media

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

There was no evidence that resources were limited in any way to materially affect course delivery

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

The course is to be particularly congratulated for gaining teaching input, data for projects and learning materials from key animal health organisations such as APHA; their willing participation should also be acknowledged and I hope will continue despite any budgetary constraints in the future

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

Having the benefit of some insights into other UK MSc courses, I am confident that students on this course perform at an equivalent or greater level compared to peers elsewhere

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

This year, this was assessed through consideration of exam materials and projects. The median students all showed a good level of technical competence whilst those at the higher end gave at times evidence of excellent understanding and application of epidemiological methods. No clear pattern emerged for poorer students and in some cases, there was an indication that personal issues - which were being suitably considered and supported - were an underlying cause. It was gratifying that no overall area of weakness in any module was observed

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

Whilst overall good or very good projects were prepared and submitted, it appeared that some students had tried to tackle complex and challenging epidemiological analyses. There appeared to be some general issues with presentation and explanation of results possibly because this was the first time students had attempted such a challenging task. However, as external examiner and in the limited time available, it was difficult to make a comprehensive assessment, especially as no printed versions were available, which made comparing similar sections from different projects on a single screen challenging. I would imply ask that the course leaders consider carefully whether any proposed projects are too complex and whether sufficient timely guidance on presentation and explanation of results is available. Despite this comment I emphasise that I was completely satisfied both with the richness of projects provided and with the marks awarded.

Course director response: all proposed projects will be assessed by the course directors to ensure they present the students with an adequate level of challenge, yet are not too challenging.

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

The variety of assessment methods used (presentations, discussion boards, MCQs, long essays etc) ensured that students were able to be assessed on the breadth and depth of their learning.

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

All exams were conducted with appropriate rigour

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

Level of assessment was consistent with FHEQ

3.4 Standard of marking

Marking was generally of a very high standard and student feedback was generally excellent. However, there were two issues for discussion with respect to double marking, which was applied to a sample of papers. Firstly, given the modest number of students, sample marking seems of limited benefit wrt reducing work load. Secondly, where discordant marks were recorded for individual students, there seemed no clear system to achieve a revised mark.

Course directors' response: Sample marking was introduced on this course for the first time this year in line with College requirements, but due to the small number of students on the course, may not be appropriate. Action: Course directors to consider whether to return to double marking of all assessment and exam scripts for this course.

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

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

See comment wrt double marking above (3.4)

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:

4.4 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:

It would be helpful to have more time to look at student projects, ideally in print, to be able to compare between them easily

Course directors' response: External examiners to be invited to attend project vivas (although this will decrease the amount of time they have to look at student projects) and course directors to liaise with Exams Office to see whether it is possible to allow the external examiners more time to review projects.

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 support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

I would like to thank Lauren Christian for her excellent help and support

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:

