

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2019/20

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

BVetMed Final Year

This appendix contains Year Leader's responses to 2019/20 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, 01707666938

Appendix 3 consists of:

a.	Updates to actions from previous years' reports
b.	2019/20 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director Exam board meeting: 11-Jun-2020 Lead examiner: Dr Joseph Cassidy Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Philip Scott, Dr Harold Bok, Dr Amanda Boag

Report Question	External Examiners' comment in 2016/17	Course Directors response and actions	Update in 2017/18	Update in 2019/20
2.2 Quality of candidates' knowledge and skills, with particular reference to those at the top, middle or bottom of the range	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.	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 Action Deadline: 02-Jan-2018 Action assigned to: Jill Maddison, Dan Chan and David Bolt	IN PROGRESS DOPS on rotations will be formative for 2019 and summative for 2020.	COMPLETED This has been implemented

Report Question	External Examiners' comment in 2017/18	Course Directors response and actions	Update in 2018/19	Update in 2019/20
1.3 Teaching methods	Students' approach to answering questions in an examination may not necessarily reflect a problem-based approach as taught in the clinics, which is disappointing.	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:	This discussion has occurred	Discussions continue

		<p>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.</p> <p>Action Deadline: 01-Sep-2018</p> <p>Action assigned to: Jill Maddison</p>		
<p>2.1 Students' performance in relation to those at a similar stage on comparable courses in other institutions, where this is known to you</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Action Required: Review pass statistics for 2018 and 2019 exams with a view to consideration of a minimum threshold mark if necessary</p> <p>Action Deadline: 01-Sep-2019</p> <p>Action assigned to: Jill Maddison and John Sanger</p>	<p>It was discussed at the exam board that we would need at least three years of data to evaluate before considering this change.</p>	<p>COMPLETED We now have three years of data and will be preparing a paper for CMC and LTAC re setting at 40% minimum mark for each essay +/- requiring 3 out of the 4 essays to be passed. If approved, this will come into effect for the 2022 finals exams.</p>
<p>3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous</p>	<p>Mapping of questions to learning objectives might allow better determination of the relationship of the assessment to final year teaching.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>I am not aware tis has been done so need to check with John as exam convenor.</p>	<p>COMPLETED Examiners are aware of the learning outcomes being tested by the examination, The external examiners persist in thinking the exam aligns with specific teaching in final year which it does not – it aligns to</p>

		<p>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.</p> <p>BVetMed5: Develop a logical problem-solving approach to clinical reasoning in order to effectively solve clinical problems and make decisions.</p> <p>BVetMed10: Demonstrate knowledge of the principles and behaviours that underpin professionalism, teamwork and ethical decision making (judgement) and apply these in a veterinary setting.</p> <p>Action Required:</p> <p>Ensure that it is made explicit to student, assessors and external examiners how the written finals examination maps to BVetMed course outcomes</p> <p>Action Deadline:</p> <p>01-Apr-2019</p> <p>Action assigned to:</p> <p>John Fishwick and Jill Maddison</p>		<p>clinical and professional decision making as identified by the BVetMed course outcomes.</p>
<p>3.6 Opinion on changes to the assessment procedures from previous years in which you have examined &</p> <p>4.2 An acceptable response has been made</p>	<p>Comments have been taken on board, but require actioning.</p>	<p>Course Director Response:</p> <p>Action will occur for the 19/20 rotation year</p> <p>Action Required:</p> <p>A selection of DOPs to be included in rotation assessment and removed from OSCE assessment</p> <p>Action Deadline:</p> <p>10-Feb-2019</p> <p>Action assigned to:</p> <p>David Bolt, Dan Chan, Brian Catchpole</p>	<p>See response to 2.2</p>	<p>COMPLETED</p> <p>This has been implemented</p>

Report Question	External Examiners' comment in 2018/19	Course Directors response and actions	Update in 2019/20
<p>1.3 Teaching methods</p>	<p>The response from the College to comments from last year relating to students' approach to answering questions in an examination may not necessarily reflect a problem-based approach as taught in the clinics, confirmed that the problem-based approach that is taught at the RVC is explicitly assessed in this finals exam as well as the 4th year exam, and an action for the College was to discuss particularly with the 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.</p>	<p>This is something we are working on and continuing to progress. We have actioned a number of things during the past year and will continue to do so.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There has been discussion with the farm group what other 'non-animal' factors (environment, husbandry, management etc) we should also be discussing within the define and refine framework 2. In the PMVPH intro sessions, we use the down cow, define and refine setup as an example but overlay the above on top of this. This is just an example, but shows how the students need to consider this when we are discussing population medicine with them 3. This is repeated in year 4 (may not be appropriate to keep repeating this but last year this ensured that everyone got it) and again in the exam prep sessions that were held during Electives 5. Farm staff have been asked to signpost this process within their teaching where appropriate 6. Clinical decision making is used in rounds (in particular) at both Synergy and Endell when cases are discussed on the final days of both rotations. A lot of these are scenarios that are potential exam questions and both practices play a hand in writing the questions knowing that they are teaching the students in this way. 7. The farm questions are made a little more complex as we are trying to add in VPH/economics into some and these won't always fit into the clinical decision-making frameworks but often the first part of the question will depending on the question structure. 8. All of the farm finals questions were developed with clinical vets (in practice), so are common conditions and scenarios that they see. 	<p>As notes above under 1.3 of 2017/18 report, discussions continue</p>
<p>3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures</p>	<p>Re: OSCEs, suggestions: (a) Move left-right/front-back identification to end of Farrier station checklist, as this question is asked at the end of the exercise, not the start. (b) Review the awarding of 4 points over 4 stations in The Barn for "appropriate dress" (Qu 19, 23, 24, 25). Students can be advised on this pre-entry in Bootroom. Failure to dress/behave appropriately could be picked up as a professionalism flag rather</p>	<p>Thank you for these very constructive suggestions. They will be conveyed to the faculty in charge of the OSCEs.</p> <p>Action Deadline: 01-Dec-2019</p> <p>Action assigned to: Nicky Coombes, John Sanger, Brian Catchpole, Matthew Pead</p>	<p>COMPLETED</p> <p>The team appreciated the comments to improve the students' experience of OSCEs. AS noted in 2019/20 report no OSCEs ran for the final year in 2019/20 but have been replaced by the Personal Skills Audit which External Examiners thought to be appropriate. Some of the suggestions would be considered for 20/21 OSCEs. Double stations have been considered before and the team is of an opinion that this way would not allow objective</p>

	<p>than a mark point. (c) As previous please consider visual prompts (video clips; photos) to add engagement, imagination and context. P has offered! (d) We await with interest the outcome of discussion about fewer stations with longer duration, including combinations that reflect the work context (eg interpret the finding then report its meaning to a colleague or explain implications to a client?)</p>		<p>assessment of individual skills with one station.</p>
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The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

Appropriate range of modules and a mix of teaching activities employed. Course content appropriate for training veterinary graduates.

It is the examination process, rather than course content or learning outcomes, that are being audited.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you. Noting that the BVetMed is not a modular course.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Response from the College to last year's external examiners report indicates how final BVetMed examinations map to RCVS and AVMA competences.

External examiners would also like to see at a more granular level how Final year module learning objectives map to these assessments.

1.3 Teaching methods

Examination process, rather than teaching methods assessed. Following last year's external comments RVC has provided information on the teaching of a problem-solving approach suitable for production animal/herd level problems.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you. This is an ongoing dialogue with our teams to ensure that the decision-making framework for production animal/herd problems is clear to the students.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Assessment resources were made available to us in a timely manner. The on-line availability of student scripts this year worked well - while there are some short 'buffering' delays in accessing individual scripts these were ultimately much easier to read than hand-written answers.

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

Student performance is largely similar to other Veterinary Schools in UK and internationally.

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

Clinical and Professional reasoning examination (Part II) did discriminate overall student performance: the cohort were reasonably distributed.

However, two of the three compulsory questions did have a distorting effect on overall grades.

No students failed one of these questions while ~24% failed one of the other two questions (in turn about half of this 24% were graded as '48'). Further statistical analysis will no doubt assist in determining significance.

As would be expected, student performance in optional CPR questions was better than in the compulsory questions.

It remains possible for a student to fail a particular species CPR question (or number of Qs) quite badly (35%) but still pass overall.

Is the RVC still considering the introduction of minimum thresholds (e.g. a student must achieve >40% in all questions and not fail more than 2 questions) to pass overall ?

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Yes - now that we have three years of data on exam performance we are considering introducing a minimum qualifier of 40% for each question. We will be bringing a paper to the Course Management Committee in relation to this for the 2022 graduating year (the 2021 graduating year had started their final year in February 2020 prior to the results of this examination).

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

01-Jun-2021

Action assigned to:

Brian Catchpole, John Sanger, Jill Maddison

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

The COVID19 pandemic necessitated a reconfiguration of both Part I and II assessment components. In particular the conversion of the Part II Clinical reasoning assessment from 'closed' to 'open' book format and the provision of additional time to complete this assessment would appear to have improved overall student performance - statistical analysis of the data and its comparison with previous Final year cohorts is recommended to further elucidate.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Yes - the failure rate was less than in previous years (2018 = 9%, 2019 = 7%, 2020 = 1%) and this was statistically significant. This is noted and will inform plans for the 2021 Finals exam if it does need to be conducted online. Should the 2021 final year exams need to be conducted online, there are processes in place for other exams such as limited time access and random release of questions to mitigate the pitfalls of 24h exams which may allow collusion between students.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

01-Mar-2021

Action assigned to:

John Fishwick, John Sanger, Jill Maddison

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

The broad mix of assessment methods was appropriate.

The PSA was a novel, and in the circumstances appropriate, replacement for the OSCEs.

Basic farm animal economics may require greater emphasis in Clinical and Professional reasoning questions in Part II. The definition of 'clinical reasoning' may need to be broadened in this context.

The Part III Research projects are to be commended: many were of a very high standard and their assessment was very thorough.

*PSA Personals Skills Audit

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your comments. The issue of greater emphasis on farm animal economics will be discussed with the appropriate academic staff.

Action Required:

This concern to be discussed with the Finals exam convenor and relevant staff in the production animal teaching team.

Action Deadline:

01-Feb-2021

Action assigned to:

Jill Maddison and John Fishwick

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Procedures are well formulated and implemented particularly given the many challenges posed this academic year.

Appropriate random moderation of a proportion of scripts is carried out.

Can we clarify how moderation is achieved if there is disparity between the marks awarded by the two assessors?

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Moderation is done by sample marking of 10% of the scripts. Sample marking does not involve the sample marker providing a 2nd mark. They are asked to indicate whether they are happy that the rationale for the mark given is clear and fits within the Common Grading System. They will also indicate if they substantially disagree with the mark awarded. If there is a significant disagreement about this then all of the scripts for that primary marker are re-marked.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Consistent with FHEQ level 6/7

3.4 Standard of marking

Overall, this fair, rigorous and consistent in all three components of BVetMed Final year assessment. For Part II (Clinical and professional reasoning), each written question should have particularly clear rubrics around differentiating distinction, merit, pass and failing students. This will likely need further adaptation if the open-book format is to be repeated.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

We believe that all of the model answers have provided this clear distinction between grades and would appreciate specific examples of where the examiners did not believe this was the case so we can consider moderation for following years.

Action Required:

Further input require from the external examiners please

Action Deadline:

01-Feb-2021

Action assigned to:

External examiners

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

Previous suggestions to replace many of the current OSCEs (particularly Farm animal) with Final year-appropriate DOPs

This was clearly not possible this academic year.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Formative DOPs were introduced for the graduating class of 2020. Summative DOPS have been introduced into the final year rotations for the graduating class of 2021

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

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:

Examination administrative support was to a high level, as always.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

Replacement of many of the OSCEs with DOPs - this would benefit assessment should an unexpected situation similar to this academic year occur again: i.e. ongoing, in-course assessment of practical skills rather than a single period of practical assessment. The incorporation of practical skills assessment in some form may also be worth considering.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

DOPs have been introduced into the clinical rotations for the graduating class of 2021. These assess several practical skills. There is currently no plan to replace OSCEs although their emphasis may change as several of the assessed skills are now DOPs.

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)

This year's examinations were extra-ordinary in many respects - in particular the forced switch from OSCEs to PSAs and the Clinical and Professional Reasoning examination becoming open-book. We congratulate all RVC staff involved and acknowledge their creative and considered responses to this significant challenge.

The challenge for future years will be to learn from this experience and potentially incorporate the best of these forced innovations into the assessment process.

(e.g.)

1. Will Part II remain open-book ? if so attention will need to be given to the style of question set and how such questions are graded.
2. Replacement of some/all OSCEs with DOPs and PSAs?

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your positive comments. We will be reviewing all aspects of the assessment required during this extraordinary year and how they may inform future assessment plans.

Action Required:

