

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2019/20

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

FdSc & BSc Veterinary Nursing

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

a. Updates to actions from previous years' reports

Report Question	External Examiners' comments & suggested actions	Course Director/Year Leader's response & Action	Update in 2019/20
2.1 Students' performance in relation to those at a similar stage on comparable courses in other institutions, where this is known to you	Some students do not meet their potential within the 4th year possibly because they are not fully engaged in the programme.	<i>We have problems with students engaging in the modules in the 4th year as many have cited a lack of accommodation and some students taking up full time work (despite our advice not to). We have tried to provide other activities (Advanced Practice Toolkit module discussion forum) for students to engage in if not attending, but with limited success. The Graduate Diploma electives that students are able to access, are delivered online so there may be some confusion over attendance despite clear advice.</i>	ONGOING This year the fourth year is delivered entirely online. We can monitor attendance at live sessions but may not be a true representation of engagement.
3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)	Discuss with course leader in regards to review of the OSCEs. The clinical assessment tool is included to be completed alongside their studies whilst in a practical environment, usually when on placement.	<i>We are reviewing the range of OSCEs provided and looking at providing a wider variety of OSCEs and ensuring they encompass the range of methods rather than encouraging rote learning skill</i>	Ongoing review
3.4 Standard of marking	Where there is a discrepancy between first marker's and second marker's results discussion needs to be documented so that there is a full audit trail. The sample marker should not be annotating scripts and should not be indicating any mark allocation unless a decision has been made to be double marked	<i>The transition to online marking indicates that some areas needed further clarification for some markers especially regarding sample marking. We have discussed with the exams office and they will assign the sample marking.</i>	ONGOING the EE's have mentioned in the recent report that this has improved: "Some changes have been made, the standard and consistency of the annotation in the script have dramatically improved this is to be commended".
3.6 Opinion on changes to the assessment procedures from previous years in which you have examined	Although the process of sample marking is to be commended, however, the consistency and annotation require standardisation.	<i>As in 3.4 and we will ensure the procedures are clear and all markers follow the guidelines. We have attempted standardization in the marking and the feedback policy is currently under review</i>	COMPLETED The EEs have commented that there has been improvement in this.
4.8 The standards of student performance are comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar	Students sitting in higher grading are tracking as to other institutions, low-grade students are to be monitored whilst maintaining a high standard of assessment tools	<i>We will continue to monitor the performance of the students. As identified in the Annual Quality Improvement Report – the cohort where the entry requirements changed (2018 intake) have been performing poorly compared to other cohorts</i>	COMPLETED This particular cohort has undergone formative assessment this year and so they automatically proceed into the 3 rd year. Their progress will continue to be monitored.

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 02-Jul-2020

BSc and FdSc in Veterinary Nursing, 2019/20

Lead examiner: Mr Paul Crawford

Collaborating examiner(s): Miss Victoria Bowes

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

29th July Progress board cohorts 15 & 16

The course content is very good, reflecting the full range of subject knowledge and skills that should be covered in these degree(s) at these levels (Years 1 and 2 Fd & BSc). Externs reviewed and sampled scripts from cohort 15 (diagnostics, anaesthesia and ECC) and cohort 16 (VNAS 1 & 2, CNP 1 & 2) and found the content of all of these to be satisfactory

1st July Exam board cohorts 13 & 14

The course content is very satisfactory reflecting the full range of subject knowledge and skills that should be covered in these degree(s) at these levels (Year 3 Fd & BSc and Year 4 BSc). Externs reviewed and sampled 3rd year 'Applied Nursing' and 'Professional Practice', as well as year 4 'Research methods', elective modules and projects (see 2.3) and found the content of all of these to be satisfactory. Externs were able to observe some presentations and review the OSCE results. With one of the externals who attended for practical OSCEs.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you. The OSCE examinations for the 2019/20 occurred in December 2019 enabling attendance for one of the external examiners. The 4th Year project presentations were delivered via Zoom allowing the external examiners access to join the virtual presentations and observe the students presenting their projects.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

The theoretical learning objectives of the course appear to have been comprehensively met in the work reviewed as above

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

The 1st year (Cohort 16) and 2nd year (Cohort 15) assessments were assessed formatively. Any RCVS day one skills and competencies assessed in the 1st and 2nd yr modules will be revisited in future assessments to ensure they have been summatively assessed. This will involve writing more holistic type short answer questions. In addition all students will have had to complete their final OSCEs sampling the day one skills and also the Nursing Progress Log which covers all the day one skills.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.3 Teaching methods

Evidence of a wide range of teaching methods as appropriate to veterinary nursing education appear to have been employed across the course, although in this instance only scripts were reviewed.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Teaching methods were adapted to online delivery for Clinical Nursing Practice 2 and VN Applied Science 2. All 3rd and 4th yr taught modules had been delivered prior to April.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Students appear to have access to a wide range of teaching resources made available to them, including electronic facilities. Some students even with advice chose not to access additional support.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Students have a range of support systems including tutor feedback on draft assignments, support from the Study Skills team and this year, Smarthinking and 24/7 online assignment support. With the new style of student support on the colleges' virtual learning environment - (Learn) it is hoped that more students will be able to take advantage of the newly developed videos as well as access to previously available support systems via video conferencing facilities.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

The programme continues to meet the needs for day one clinical skills and fitness to practice for veterinary nursing. Overall we continue to be content with the course provided by the RVC.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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 performance of the Year 3 students at both foundation and BSc meet the external examiners' expectations based on their knowledge of students on other courses. The performance of students on BSc 4th year has improved with students gaining first class honours. Some students do not meet their potential within the 4th year possibly because they are not fully engaged in the programme.

Cohorts 15 and 16 had significant lower pass marks for assessments which have been allowed students to progress due to the no detriment policy in place. There has been a plan produced outlining the risk based 3 stages of intervention to support students who had failed one or more element.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

The students in year 1 and 2 were risk banded according to their results. This helped to identify the levels of support required;

For year 1 students (C16)

Group 1 3 or 4 modules failed (less than 50%) - refer to SPD Stage 2 = 7 students

Group 2 Less than 40% in 2 or more individual assessment - refer to SPD Stage 1 = 4 students

Group 3 Failed 1 or 2 modules only (less than 50%) - refer to Tutor for discussion = 15 students

Group 4 Progress as usual = 14 students

For year 2 (C15) students there were only 2 students who were referred to their tutor for academic support. The majority of these meetings have now taken place.

SPD (Student Performance and Development)

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

29th July Progress board cohorts 15 & 16

There were a significant number of fails.

Some of these assessments had been completed pre covid and as such this particular disruption could not be considered a significant impact on achievement in these assessments. Covid has prevented the normal pattern of 're-sits' for these students and they have been permitted to progress. Their on-going progress will need to be monitored .

1st July Exam board cohorts 13 & 14

There has been an improvement in standard at BSc year 4 this reflects the comments made in 2.1. Externs have discussed the progressing students from FdSc to year 4 BSc, will monitor the achievement of these students at the next board in June 2021.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

The risk banding (above) has helped us to identify any students who may be at risk progressing. The no-detriment

policy has allowed all students to progress and the group 1 & 2 students in C16 will be monitored as they progress into year 2.

Several FdSc students undertaking the transfer assessment into the 4th yr of the BSc passed the 50% aggregate but did not achieve above 50% in their written assignments. These students will be monitored over the next year.

Action Required:

Monitor the progress of students in year 1 progressing to year 2

Monitor FdSc performance in the their 4th year

Action Deadline:

01-Oct-2021

Action assigned to:

Course Director and exams team

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

Externs reviewed the following scripts and other written work:

29th July Progress board cohorts 15 & 16

Cohort 15, Anaesthesia and ECC: SAQ Assignments:

Cohort 15 Diagnostics SAQ: Assignment:

Cohort 16 CNP1 Scripts reviewed

Cohort 16 CNP 1 Assignment Scripts reviewed

Cohort 16 CNP2 Assignment 2 BSc Scripts reviewed:

Cohort 16 CNP2 SAQ Scripts Assignments:

1st July Exam board cohorts 13 & 14

Applied Nursing (year 3, cohort 14)

Professional Practice (year 3, cohort 14)

Research methods (year 4, cohort 13)

Surgery elective (year 4, cohort 13)

ECC elective (year 4 cohort 13)

Medicine elective (year 4 cohort 13)

Projects reviewed and presentations attended by externs

In addition to the comments above, the standard of BSc projects and presentations was adequate and reflective of comments in 2.1.

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

On this occasion, only written assessments were reviewed (MCQs, SAQs, written assignments and OSCE results). Overall the externs believe that the combination of these assessment methods fully satisfy and examine the learning objectives and curricula

A wide range of assessment techniques are used (MCQs, SAQs, written assignments and projects with presentations and OSCEs). Overall the externs believe that the combination of these assessment methods fully satisfies and examines the learning objectives and curricula.

We discussed with course leader in regards to review of the OSCEs. Following from review of OSCEs standardisation issues noticed by extern which resulted in an OSCE station being removed. Also discussed the timeframe between OSCEs and results to allow for review.

The clinical assessment tool is included to be completed alongside their studies whilst in a practical environment, usually when on placement.

COVID 19 has affected both theory and practical exams. Changes have been made by the team to reflect this. These changes have been reviewed by the RCVS.

There was a delay in the changes of assessment reaching the external examiners.

Some students referred to a possible difference between the prioritisation of course changes between veterinary medicine students and veterinary nursing students. This was discussed at the board meeting.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

The COVID-19 changes for 2019/20 - all 1st and 2nd-year assessments became formative. Students were encouraged to engage in the assessments and we had good compliance with this. The format of the assessment remained the same but delivered online in a time-restricted period. Assignments were submitted electronically as usual. All assessments were marked anonymously in the usual way and feedback provided to each student. All 3rd-year assessments were summative and delivered online with MCQ assessment being proctored via Proctorio and the short answer questions delivered online with responses required within a restricted period of time.

4th yr elective modules were summative and delivered online in a time-restricted period and presentation of the final year projects occurred via Zoom with each student presenting their poster.

The 3rd and 4th year examinations took place in April soon after the UK went into lockdown. Decisions were made quickly and unfortunately, this meant that agreement from both the RCVS and our external examiners was retrospective. We apologise for not getting the information to the externals sooner.

The OSCEs were undergoing a long term review to ensure consistency and were valid and reliable. This is ongoing. The VN students also reported in the end of year COVID survey that they felt other courses were being prioritised over them.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Assessment across a range of methods (MCQs, SAQs, assignments, projects and OSCEs) is of a high quality and well marked with good consistent feedback.

1st July Exam board cohorts 13 & 14

Recommendation for changes in FdSc to BSc transfer assessments; currently all students have to gain an aggregate of 50% across the 3 assessments, we would recommend changing this to each assessment carrying its own weighting at 50%.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

As stated above even though 1st and 2nd year assessments were formative - we kept to the same format, marking and feedback.

The current system for FdScVN students to transfer to the BSc 4th year is for the students to complete the two additional assignments and the additional BSc examination. The students are required to gain an overall aggregate of 50% which means some students can excel in the examination and be less successful in the assignments. We have previously suggested that attaining at least 50% in each assessment activity should be instigated however for 2020/21 the no-detriment policy will allow students to resit any assessment activity in order to attain a higher final award. This may result in students overloading themselves with additional assessment. The students have also already been informed of the transfer assessment. Going forward, FdScVN students on the new course will be required to attain a merit in their Foundation degree in order to transfer to the 4th year of the BSc degree. We are looking at implementing the idea that FdSc students on track for a merit could, for 2020/21 be allowed to progress without having to do the transfer assessment. Previous results indicate that students who attain a merit in their Foundation award generally do well in the final BSc year.

Action Required:

Consider providing the option for 3rd year students in 2020/21 to progress if they attain a merit or complete the transfer assessment - a paper is going to the November Course Management Committee

Action Deadline:

04-Nov-2020

Action assigned to:

Course directors and exam team

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

Based upon the work seen and the external examiners' knowledge and prior experience, the level of assessment closely matches the FHEQ.

3.4 Standard of marking

Marking is generally of a high standard.

Feedback on written assessments is detailed and very constructive.

Sample marking is in place across all modules, but sometimes the quality can be variable between sample markers. Where there is a discrepancy between first marker's and second marker's results discussion needs to be documented so that there is a full audit trail.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

The sampler is asked to determine only whether they agree or disagree with the mark for each piece of work. It is considered reasonable for a sampler to agree with the first mark if it is adjacent and in the same classification category. Where there may be disagreement in a significant portion (10%) this is reported to the examination officer.

Action Required:

Ensure all markers are aware of the guidance when marking.

Action Deadline:

01-Sep-2021

Action assigned to:

Course director and Exam team.

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 externs are very satisfied with these procedures.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you. The exams team are to be commended in the organisation of the amended assessment procedures this year.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Some changes have been made, the standard and consistency of the annotation in the script have dramatically improved this is to be commended.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you for the feedback we need to ensure the consistency continues particularly when new staff are involved.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

While we are content with the current assessment systems, during our term we have noted there is evidence of some questions having elements where it is very easy to gain points.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

We will review the questions but feel that over an exam paper the range of questions provided the required level of difficulty. Providing an initial easy part to a question which then builds to more application of knowledge is a useful test of the extent of the student's understanding of the topic.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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 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:

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:

none

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)

none

