

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2021/22**Appendix 3: External Examiners' report****Biosciences**

This appendix contains Year Leader's responses to 2021/22 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.	2021/22 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director

Update to actions from 2018-19				
Question	External Examiners comment	CD's response & Action	Update 2019/20	Update 2021/22
1.4 Resources (in so far as they affected the assessment)	Linked to this are examiner observations on variable feedback style (see later) and potential time/resource savings that might be made by a more uniform approach.	c. Variable feedback style and quality is a College wide issue. Some Module Leaders are in the process of developing online rubrics which it is hoped will unify the approach, eg Dev (Bsc1/ Gateway) This has been brought up in teaching committee. LTAC have agreed an updated feedback policy which will need to be implemented in 2020-21. The BSc team have tried to implement rubrics but this was not approved in 2019-20	This has been brought up in teaching committee. LTAC have agreed an updated feedback policy which will need to be implemented in 2020-21. The BSc team have tried to implement rubrics but this was not approved in 2019-20	Completed – implemented in 2021-22 for BSc2 Research projects
3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)	For Gateway/ BSc1 /BSc 2 - The removal of essay style questions for gateway/ BSc1 /BSc 2 now brings the programmes in line with other Russell Group courses. Testing for integration and synthesis of knowledge plus demonstration of extensive study beyond the syllabus of lectures is now fulfilled only by in course assessment, e.g. report writing. As already noted, the examiners feel that this must have been of benefit to staff assessment time, and we would imagine that students will find the short answer / MCQ styles to be a more rigorous test of their knowledge. It would be good if the impact of these changes were to be assessed in some way. Certainly from the examiners' perspective, review of examination papers was much more straightforward.	College response: a. We would like to thank the External Examiners for positive comments about the recent changes made to the assessment diet for Gateway/BSc1/2 and will endeavour to provide some analysis from the Departmental Teaching Coordinators regarding staff time (as above) and academic achievement between modules/years of study (as above)	Please see comments above regarding delay to work allocation model publication due to covid	WAM data are being collected and being assessed in 2022-23

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous	For Gateway/ BSc1 /BSc 2 - Examiners observed modules in which the median was lower (IoD) or higher (OH) relative to other modules in that cohort (also noted by 2nd marker on one of these). These observations suggest that it would be of great value to the overall rigour of the assessment process to set up simple macros within marking spreadsheets and analyse grades according to the marker. We appreciate that there is a solid moderation process in place, but this knowledge would help shed light on the instances where a module grades are observed to be high or lower than others.	College response: We thank the External Examiners for the suggestion to analyse grades from individual markers within the marking spreadsheets and will consult with Exams team to set this up (Course Director, Exams Office)	Not complete – will try to carry out analysis 2020-21	Not completed
3.4 Standard of marking	For the BSc 2 project, it was noted that several assessors arranged their feedback comments according to the sections of the report. On the face of it this seems logical, but it may not serve the students as well as if it arranged according to 'features' or 'qualities' – for example categories like 'context', 'analysis', 'critical evaluation', 'presentation' (each with a different weighting) and some of which will cut-across project write up sections. The nature and uniformity of feedback should be reviewed.	bii) Thank you for these comments regarding the feedback of BSc2 projects and suggestions to ask for written comments under different qualities rather than sections of the report. Course Director will raise this at the next CMC. Development of a straightforward feedback rubric for research projects may aid consistency which can then be carried over into BSc3 and MSci research projects (Course Director, BSc2 project co-ordinator?)	Not complete BSc2 year leader and project co-ordinator devised a rubric but this could not be used for marking as has not been approved at all academic committee level (although would have been used formatively for 2020)	Completed – use of rubric for 2021-22 for BSc2 research projects
<u>Update to actions from 2019-20</u>				
Question	External Examiners comment	CD's response & Action	Update in 2020/21	Update in 2021/22

<p>1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme</p>	<p>It was noted that one candidate had not received marks for work undertaken as part of a placement in Singapore. It was reported that efforts had been made to obtain the missing marks but these had been unsuccessful at the time of the exam board. It wasn't clear why this delay had occurred. A 'no detriment' approach had been taken to resolving this, which is acceptable in the circumstances, but we recommend that the viability of this arrangement is considered carefully if this situation is likely to occur in future, or contingencies put in place to avoid this arising in future years.</p>	<p>We will review the collaborative agreement to ensure that clear steps are laid out for NTU Exams Office to send results to RVC Exams Office electronically rather than by mail, thus RVC will be able to process the results in a more timely manner</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS 2020-21 Noted for review of MOA with NTU</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>Gateway - Interestingly, there was a marked improvement in student performance in the "Inheritance, Genes and Evolution" (IGE) module which, despite producing lower marks than the other modules (median was 45%, while all other modules produced medians above 50%) was much higher than last year's equivalent IGE score (26.63%). While some of the overall improvement may have been linked with the different circumstances under which these exams were taken, the IGE exams were undertaken in the normal way and did not involve open books. As IGE has been a problem module for several years in terms of low exam marks, it seems that the lecturing staff have managed to adapt their style of teaching or exam formats in ways that are more suitable for these students. It is also possible that the cohort of students has a generally higher level of ability than those of previous years.</p>	<p>The IGE module leader has worked hard with other question setters on the module to ensure that the framing of the questions within the exam paper are not ambiguous in any way, without reducing the academic quality of the questions.</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS 2020-21 IGE module leader continues to work on the format of the PSQ and will introduce a consolidation session for students for 2021-22</p>	<p>Completed</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>BSC 1 - It is noted that overall performance in the IGE module continues to be poor relative to other modules (13 qualified fails and 4 fails). It could be that this performance is due to the students settling in to University, although it could also reflect the way in which they are engaging with this module's specific content / style of teaching. Having said this, the median exam mark of 40% is a slight improvement on last year BSC1 median (37.5%).</p>	<p>as for Gateway) the IGE module leader has worked hard with other question setters on the module to ensure that the framing of the questions within the exam paper are not ambiguous in any way, without reducing the academic quality of the questions.</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS 2020-21 IGE module leader continues to work on the format of the PSQ and will introduce a consolidation session for students for 2021-22</p>	<p>Completed</p>
<p>3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)</p>	<p>Due to COVID-19, BSc1 and Gateway assessments are formative only and all students progress to year 2. In all programmes, there is a good range of assessment methods; this variety provides students with several ways to demonstrate their knowledge and there is no reliance on a single method of assessment. This is in line with the sector. The heavy reliance on the essays seen in previous years appears to become less which we welcome. BSc Comp Path and other courses: A continuing move towards full online assessments would eradicate a few remaining issues with poor handwriting (students as well as markers occasionally) in short answers questions and project write- ups.</p>	<p>We thank the EE for these positive comments We are using remote proctoring software for MCQ/SAQ/PSQ and OCM dropbox for essay style papers (BSc3 only) this year. If successful then this assessment style could persist beyond COVID-related changes to the examinations</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS College Wide</p>	<p>Closed</p>
<p>3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous</p>	<p>For BSc 1 and 2, we note previous examiner steer to analyse marking according to marker. This was being investigated but the outcome of these analyses is not known to the examiners. We note that for pre-COVID exams the moderation / sample marking was working effectively</p>	<p>Analysis of individual markers was not carried out in 2019-20, with electronic marking now in place this may be more straightforward in the future</p>	<p>Not completed due to the volume of work the exams office were required to do</p>	

3.4 Standard of marking	<p>Gateway, BSc 1 and 2 – There was evidence of good practice in many places. Notably, the quality of feedback for Gateway and BSc 1 library projects was high. Overall the standard of has improved over the last few years. It is noted, however, that for some assessments there is still inconsistency between markers in style and quality of feedback. We understand from the exams office that steer was given to staff to avoid annotation of work so that feedback to students could be automated. This is an understandable practical approach but has disadvantages in the precision of feedback that can be offered to the students. As previously noted, a consensus between markers on style will maximize the value to the students. It is almost as if this needs a structured audit, to bring home the point to markers. Also, prior to marking it may be worth asking the module leads to provide an example of the marking style expected</p>	<p>We thank the EE for this observation. We are working towards introduction of consistent rubrics for certain pieces of work including the BSc2 projects, which will somewhat allay this.</p> <p>We will disseminate the comments to the Biosciences examining teams</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS</p> <p>Formative rubric for BSc2 projects in 2020-21 – will seek approval for use summatively for 2021-22 then roll out to BSc3 for formative use etc.</p>	
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)	<p>For BSc 1, data on performance in previous years (by module) was included in module handbooks. This was helpful in certain instances (e.g. IGE) and would be of use in BSc2 as well.</p>	<p>We thank the EE for this. We will ask course support and exams office to provide this information in a similar format for BSc2, BSc3 in future</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS</p>	
5.2 External Examiner comments: For College	<p>Using a full online assessment system would make the assessment procedure less prone</p>	<p>We thank the EE for these comments and will evaluate the success and benefits of</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS</p> <p>College wide</p>	<p>closed</p>

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)	to mistakes like wrong counting of marks/points, resolve the handwriting issue and facilitate reporting and analysis of results.	our changes made in light of COVID, including use of remote proctoring and more use of open book exam styles to enable online examinations in the future		
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To note: Actions from [2020-21 Report](#) have been progressed on.

Collaborative Report

Bioveterinary Sciences, 2021/22:

BSc Biological Sciences

BSc Bioveterinary Sciences

BSc Biological Sciences/BSc Bioveterinary Sciences with a Certificate in Work-Based Learning and Research

BSc Animal Biology, Behaviour, Welfare and Ethics

MSci Applied Biological Research

MSci Applied Bioveterinary Research

MSci Biological Sciences

MSci Bioveterinary Sciences

MSci Wild Animal Biology

Intercalated BSc Bioveterinary Science

Intercalated BSc Comparative Pathology

Lead examiner: Dr Robin Flynn

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Dan Lambert, Dr Nick Wheelhouse, Dr Hossein Ashrafi, Dr Kim Jonas

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

For years 1 to 3 plus MSci students the course content reflects an appropriate range of available subjects to suit almost all student subject/discipline interests within this broad degree area. Importantly the course content allows students to obtain in-depth exposure to subject matter within each module, this reflects the interests and expertise of those delivering the modules. This is supplemented with material that is largely drawn from primary research publications, ongoing research, and where relevant examples from applied/translated research efforts, e.g. vaccinations/diagnostic assays. The knowledge of a student successfully completing year 3 would equip them to undertake employment in their chosen area or suitable position them to pursue further study. Furthermore the MSci course is well constructed with different methods of assessment testing different knowledge and skillsets. Some aspects remain quite innovative, such as the job description, and particularly the grant proposal assignment which I think is really helpful for developing transferable and employability skills.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

thank you for your positive comments. We are striving to include more authentic and innovative assessments across the course so it is good to hear that we are heading in the right direction with our MSci assessments.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

For all years from 1 to 3 and MSci the learning objectives are clearly mapped within the examinations and vice versa. The learning objectives for year 3 are examined in an unbiased manner and the examinations are a fair representation of the learning objectives to which the students are exposed. It is clear that the learning objectives are being met when they are considered within the context of the student performance at both an individual and cohort level. Particularly the examiners noted the wide range of assessments used and the careful and critical scientific review of these.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your positive comments

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.3 Teaching methods

Year 1 to 3 continues to demonstrate a flexible approach to the use of diverse teaching methods. Importantly this is done to ensure optimal outcomes for students as opposed to reflected a perceived favorable trend. Continued uncertainty as it relates to COVID19 disruption will need to be considered both in terms of its impact on the learning of students and the future implications of this in later years. The quality of the work produced by students in the MSci pathways would evidence the suitability of the teaching methods employed.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your positive comments. As with other institutions we continue to monitor the after effect of COVID disruptions and note this as an action to monitor student learning, for those students affected and still on the programme (entry in 2020 and to some extent 2021 as well as students who interrupted their studies due to COVID or for other reasons, at this time)

Action Required:

Continue to monitor student learning for students who entered the programme 2020, 2021 who may have been adversely affected by measures put in place due to government COVID restrictions. Where appropriate seek ways to offer additional support

Action Deadline:

01-Jun-2024

Action assigned to:

Course Director, Year Leaders, Pathway Leaders, Module Leaders

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

Year 1 to 3 plus MSci examiners have no concerns with regard to the availability of appropriate resources in how examination of the course content/learning objectives was performed. There are some good examples of how the shift to online delivery of research projects continues to be used/reflected in the dissertations.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your positive comments. We plan to continue to offer a proportion of desk / online research projects as this continues to reflect the needs of some of our students

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

With regard to years 1 to 3, examiners would like to note the great effort has been made to ensure the quality of feedback is uniform both within modules and across modules. However, there are still some additional gaps evident. A final push from colleagues could ensure that task is completed. In particular the MSci projects demonstrated an excellent level of feedback which was very detailed and constructive, with helpful facilitation comments where needed; this was supported by an examiner area where feedback/assessments are easily reviewed. Overall this should be approached with a view to aiding the learning of all students but is of particular need to those who may need to resit subjects.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your positive comments. We are pleased to hear that quality of feedback is improving. We will continue to advise examiners to provide detailed and constructive feedback, especially on longer pieces of work in the early years.

Action Required:

Remind examiners to provide feedback and where appropriate suggest subheadings especially for longer pieces of work. Module leaders should inform all their examiners of the structure of the feedback they should be leaving and are asked to make sure the Exams Officer is included on emails sent to examiners to inform them of what is required. This will ensure that feedback is uniform for any given piece of work

Action Deadline:

01-Jun-2023

Action assigned to:

Court director, Module leaders, exams office

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

In Year 1, the proportion of 1st class marks awarded was lower than previous years, however, a higher percentage of 2(i)'s was awarded, with 1st and 2(i) collectively achieved by ~50% of the cohort, which appears consistent with other UK higher education institutions. In year 2 there were overall a lower number of 1st class and 2:1 marks this year. These general decreases in marks appears to be consistent with other institutions in UK Higher Education.

For year 3 students remains comparable with similar degrees/cohorts at the University of Liverpool. The distribution of grades attained seen in year 3 is consistent across years internally, and remains stable in comparison with external benchmarks. Superficially some modules would appear to achieve a minor uplift in the average grade, however when considered against the student overall performance and/or the cohort performance this is not significant. This trend is also evident elsewhere. As in previous years there was a range of performance in the MSci, but generally students performed well on what is quite a challenging programme.

Overall, the distribution of grades in all years is in line with those trends evident at other institutes.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your analysis of the overall marks and constructive comments regarding the differences between individual module marks. It is something we continue to monitor especially in BSc year 3 where students take a range of different modules. harmonising assessment weightings across all Yr3 modules so all have 50% in course assessment and 50% examination based has hopefully narrowed the gap but will continue to monitor

Action Required:

monitor marks between different modules to ensure parity, where required to consult with module leaders to ensure that all ICAs are of similar length and should be completed in a similar time frame

Action Deadline:

01-Jun-2023

Action assigned to:

Year 3 leader, module leaders, course director

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

The number of Yr1 students has increased from last year by ~20%. The proportion of 1st class marks awarded was lower than previous years at ~13% versus ~20% in 2020-21, and 2019-20. However, a higher percentage of 2(i)'s was awarded, with 1st and 2(i) collectively achieved by ~50% of the cohort. A trend for an increase in the number of students requiring resits has been observed, with ~25% of students undertaking resits in 2021-22, increasing from 19% in 2020-21, and 10% in 2019-20. Gaps between ICA and exam median marks were particularly marked for IGE and TMA modules, whereby performance on coursework was substantially better than in the exam, in line with observations for 2020-21. In line with the Examiner's report from 2020-21, for TMA, the ICS Quiz still appears to be found easy by the students (quite a few achieving 100%, with median grade 86.1%). We would encourage these to be carefully considered and disparities between the ICA quiz and exam preparation examined. For IGE, the exam median was 47%, the same as the previous year last year (45%). Although students that didn't perform well in the exam tended to perform not so well in other modules, there are a notable number of students that this was a 'blip' for. Additionally, the high number of students that either failed (15%) or achieved a qualifying fail (15%) for the module is out of step with the other modules that average typically <10% of students failing. This warrants further investigation into the module attainment gap, and discrepancy in marks between the ICA and exam.

For YR2, overall the breadth of the course is excellent and the variety of assessment methods was very good. Marks appeared to be largely consistent across modules. However, the marks from the CID module were lower (Mean 50.4%) than the other modules this year. Of note this year was the general similarity in ICA performance across modules despite differences in assessment type. The anomalies to this were the AAD module (mean mark 76%) and CID (Mean mark 52%). Both of these relied on the critical analysis of a research paper with similar formatted questions. It is uncertain as to why the differences are so marked with similar assessments and the MLs may wish to reflect on their delivery.

The examinations in year 3 are clearly able to discriminate student knowledge and skills. This is an obvious distribution within modules and within cohort. Students sampled from each portion of this distribution are largely attaining similar outcomes across all modules. Within year 3 this is clearly evident amongst the grades achieved within the research project module. Those students obtaining grades in the upper ranges of the distribution display knowledge that can be mapped to all of the learning objectives and displays a depth of knowledge exceeding that of those students elsewhere in the distribution. Within the context of the year 3 research project, those students at the upper end of the distribution again reflect excellent outcomes and produce work that is "publication ready". Conversely those students at the lower end of distribution are producing work that reflects a sometimes superficial depth of knowledge of the subject.

The variety of assessments in the MSci pathways provides opportunities for students to demonstrate different skillsets and there was evidence of quite a range of abilities, but overall performance was good and indicative of generally a good level of knowledge across the cohort.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

Many thanks for your in depth analysis and positive comments relating to Yr3 and Yr4. Thank you also for highlighting the discrepancy between TMA and IGE for the ICA and exam. We have previously discussed a modification of the ICA for TMA and will review further. The failure rate for IGE was also of concern and module leader implemented additional activities for 2022-23 cohort to help with revision. Thank you for highlighting the discrepancy between the CID and AAD ICA median marks especially since these are similar assignments. The module leaders will be asked to share their instructions for students if the ICA types remain the same for 2022-23

Action Required:

IGE module leader to implement further revision activities (November 2022)

TMA module leader to review the ICA to make it more discriminatory (March 2023)

CID and AAD module leaders to compare and review their instructions and marking schemes for the critical analysis of journal paper review ICA (January 2023)

Action Deadline:

01-Mar-2023

Action assigned to:

various module leaders (IGE, TMA, AAD, CID)

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

The examiners have nothing additional to add.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

n/a

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

The assessments successfully evaluated the learning outcomes of each module. The samples examiners viewed represented a range of qualities and marks which examiners found to be broadly accurately critiqued by the assessor. There were clear corrective markings within the scripts as well as helpful feedback text by the assessors.

Specifically, for BSc 1 & 2 the assessment methods cover a good range and ways for students to demonstrate knowledge. This is in line with the sector as a whole. During year 3 there is a diverse set of assessment methods, allowing for in course and end of module assessment points. This is a fair approach for students and one which avoids excessive work loading for staff into a single timepoint. The mode of in course assessment is adopted for each specific module and this works well, with a key theme that these in course assessments test some of the transversal skills of year 3 students. They also allow students to demonstrate some of the deep knowledge that they have/should have acquired at this point in the degree. This is a very reassuring measure of student attainment. The end of module assessments are clearly linked to learning objectives and the provision of model answers allows external examiners to benchmark the expectation of staff vs performance students. The MSci examiner wishes to note the impressive range and innovative nature of some of the MSci assessments - really helpful to developing transferable skills. The applied pathway also provides more opportunities for developing employability skills in a sector in which understanding of the commercial world is likely to be beneficial.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your positive comments

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

The procedure for exam script scrutiny appear to be effective. The disruptions and uncertainty of COVID-19 seem to have substantially impacted on BSc 1 and 2 student learning, and it seems likely that it will continue to be felt in the subsequent years by some students. The examiners would like to draw the colleges attention to the need to monitor and mitigated where possible these impacts.

For year 3 the assessments remain extremely rigorous. It should be noted that the move to online examination has not lowered the standard of the responses from students or the rigour of the assessments themselves. This is a continued trend/observation. This is evidenced in the % of students who achieve a 1st class honours award and conversely the number of students who are required to resit. The rigour of assessments is supported by provision of detailed feedback evidencing efforts to constructively assess submitted work.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your positive comments

Action Required:

We continue to be mindful of the legacy of COVID-19 related impacts and continue to monitor students' attainment and engagement overall and take steps where required, with support from colleagues in Learning and Wellbeing and requesting additional Study Skills support for students (one to one, class workshops, additional online advice and guidance) as appropriate

Action Deadline:

01-Jun-2023

Action assigned to:

Course Director, Year Leaders

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

For all examinations the learning objectives and their assessment are consistent with the guidance provided by the FHEQ. Moreover the interpretation of these by the RVC remains consistent from year to year and when compared with experiences at other HEIs.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your positive comments

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.4 Standard of marking

For years 1 and 2 the examiners noted evidence of good practice in many places and that attempts to standard feedback style in most modules, but that there are still individual markers who are not conforming to this approach.

For BSc 1, evidence of proforma use was in place for Biology of the Cell, however, not all markers used this, creating disparities in the volume and structure of feedback students received for the same assessment. General types of issues noted are as follows: 1) Inconsistency in whether work was annotated or not 2) Not all markers indicate where / why a mark has been lost by adding comments 3) Some feedback comments are very vague / gestural Moderation of marking was largely evident, however the justification for agreement/disagreement with the 1st marker was not always given. There were occasions when it was unclear if moderation had taken occurred/taken place offline, as it was not evident on the online system. For BSc1, there were additional counts of plagiarism that were identified by the external examiners for the PDI abstracts, initially prompted by high Turnitin scores and scrutiny of the scripts. Moving forward, we would encourage more detailed scrutiny of similarity checks, Additionally to use online flagging of student assessments that are undergoing investigation for assessment irregularities. For YR 2 It is noted however that for the majority of assessments there is still significant inconsistency between markers in style and quality of feedback. Variability in feedback style requires further consideration but also the use of a common method for delivery (e.g. Grademark). A commendation on the marking of BSc2 projects was the incorporation of a rubric marking scheme which provided a degree of clarity to the marks awarded. However, despite this the feedback was very variable in style.

In year 3 the standard of marking remains high, this is obvious when comparing across modules. Students are provided with appropriate feedback dependent upon their grade to tailor their own efforts to improve this mark. The use of facilitation comments, e.g. within dissertations, was really helpful where there was disagreement between markers. Overall there are very good procedures for obtaining marking and performing moderations by providing a combined sheet with marks awarded and markers' comments to students.

The level/quality of feedback is overall very good, however there remains variation from module to module. The college may seek to provide some further guidance to markers to ensure consistency in this regard. Specific suggestions may include, but are not limited to, development of a consensus approach between markers on style will maximize the value to the students and avoid unnecessary confusion. It is perhaps worth considering providing a structured proforma to add consistency between individual markers.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your positive comments. We acknowledge there are still inconsistencies with feedback provision. The use of the rubric for the Yr2 projects is a step in the right direction and we hope to roll this out to other assignments and assessments.

We will remind module leaders to make it clear for their individual in course assessments what feedback is expected and in what format, ideally with subheadings or pro-forma

Course Director will discuss use of grademark with Registrar

Examiners are required to confirm that they have reviewed the Turnitin scores and reports before they are able to enter a mark for any work marked through OCM. They should be reminded of the importance of flagging work that has a high similarity for further investigation.

CD will ask Academic Conduct / Registrar if work that is under investigation can be flagged to EEs when they are assessing the Examiner packs

CD will ask exams officers to make the evidence available to EEs where there have been marking discrepancies that have then been agreed

Action Required:

Year leaders to ask module leaders to be very clear about what feedback they need markers to include and in what format so that feedback is consistent for any given piece of work.

CD to discuss use of Grademark with Registrar - there are some inconsistencies even taking this approach

CD to discuss how to make it clear when work is under investigation for academic misconduct

Action Deadline:

01-Mar-2023

Action assigned to:

Course Director, Year Leaders, Module Leaders

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)

For all external examiners the arrangements remain extremely satisfactory. There is ample opportunity to review papers, responses, and course material both in the period before exams are delivered and afterwards. In particular the examiners noted the clear communication provided around the time of paper scrutiny and in the lead-in to examination itself. There is clear direction and points of contact should there be further questions. The online systems are a clear benefit to the external examiners and the examiners would commend Mr Adam Osgood for his work in assisting external examiners. The chair of the board can make themselves available as necessary and this is always appreciated.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your positive comments. We agree that the excellent work from the Exams Officer team must be commended!

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

The examiners noted that the assessment procedures were consistent with those employed last year except that the online exams were summative rather than formative. As noted previously, it will be important for the College to keep an eye on the pathway of individual students to mitigate impact of the pandemic on their learning and ability to perform effectively in assessments in subsequent years.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

We agree that it is important to monitor the legacy of COVID-19 as it continues to impact student well being and could affect academic achievement for individual students. Advice Centre regularly signpost their services to students via different channels and tutors are also asked to remind students of available support during tutorials. The Student Union also has a dedicated Welfare officer and there are a number of projects to support well being.

Action Required:

Remind tutors to signpost Advice Centre during tutorials

Action Deadline:

01-Jun-2023

Action assigned to:

Senior Tutor Camden

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

The move to online examination would appear to have been successful for staff involved. If online examinations are to continue, examiners would suggest careful consideration of the use of questions requiring factual recall towards questions requiring a deeper level of understanding, i.e. asking for explanations rather than just facts. In most cases this has already occurred but there are still a few factual recall questions.

There are few if any systematic issues with the proctoring system used. However, students will be subject to technical problems beyond their control. It might be advisable for the college to consider, if not already doing so, producing a resource for students/staff and what to do should this arise. This would ensure a uniform approach for all and help to minimize the stress should it occur.

The college should consider how the level of feedback given on student assessment can be made uniform.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for these comments we agree that it is important to assess the question types used during open book assessments and this is an ongoing discussion across the RVC. Course Director will discuss with Registrar and Director of Assessment for further guidance and training around question setting for these types of assessments. A good suggestion around ensuring students have resources for problems with Proctorio. There is some guidance and CD will ask Exams Office to remind students to review this when they send out information and links for exams.

Action Required:

CD to discuss format for online exams to ensure they are not based solely on factual recall

CD to ask Exams Office to send links to resources for Proctorio issues and ask students to review them

Action Deadline:

01-Jan-2023

Action assigned to:

Course Director, Director of Assessment, Registrar, Exams Office

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

n/a

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

n/a

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

n/a

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

Yes - the online examiner area is excellent and easy to use.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

thank you and commendation to Exams Officers for providing all the necessary information for External Examiners

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

Yes

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

n/a

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

The procedures for handling candidates are fair in their design and implementation.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

n/a

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

n/a

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

n/a

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.9 I have received enough training and support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

n/a

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

n/a

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

n/a

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.12 The processes for assessment and the determination of awards are sound

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

n/a

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

The RVC processes are robust and the help provided to external examiners exemplary

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your positive comments

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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)

