

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 08-Jul-2024

BSc in Bioveterinary Sciences, 2023/24

Lead examiner: Dr Hossein Ashrafi

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Nick Wheelhouse, Dr Kim Jonas, Dr William Norton, Dr Florencia Cavodeassi

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

Years 1&2: As a general observation, course content is appropriate in all the programmes examined. There is considerable variety and choice available to students and the range of topics provides highly contemporary coverage of the veterinary and biomedical sciences.

Year 3: The third year of the BSc Biological Sciences and Wildlife Health Sciences degree offers students modules that cover a broad range of subjects. There is a good mixture of fundamental science (Advanced Skeletal Pathobiology, Applied Molecular Microbiology, Practical Investigative Biology, Endocrine and Metabolic Systems) with disease modelling (Comparative Models of Disease, Development and Disease, Comparative Animal Locomotion) and translation to real world scenarios (e.g. Advanced Concepts in Bio-business and Advanced Concepts in Reproduction). Students also have the opportunity to select an impressive range of final year projects, and I enjoyed looking through some of these dissertations. The standard of the work produced by your students was excellent across the board. I particularly enjoyed watching some of the video abstracts on the Biodiversity Action Plan module, which were incredibly professional and informative. Overall, I am satisfied that the exams and coursework that I reviewed are suitable for the final year of a bachelor degree.

Comp path: The course offers a comprehensive and engaging curriculum, delivering an in-depth understanding of pathological processes at the molecular and cellular levels, as well as histological changes. It includes both theoretical and practical lectures, making it a valuable resource for veterinary students.

The MSci Bioscience programs are very well designed to provide students with a solid preparation in research skills at level 7

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the External Examiners for these positive comments on the content of each individual year of the programme.

Action Required:

n/a

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Years 1&2: The learning objectives for each course were clearly stated or found on RVC LEARN and readily accessible to us and the students. Exam questions appear to cover the teaching blueprint and learning outcomes. Year 3: The learning objectives for each module are clearly indicated on the Learn website. I like the way that they were linked to each piece of assessment. This both makes it easy for the student to understand the importance of the coursework, and demonstrates how the learning objectives have been met.

Comp path: I found that the learning objectives were successfully met and effectively evaluated against the course's learning outcomes.

MSci: Learning objectives are well aligned with content and appropriately assessed by the variety of assessment items.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the External examiners for these positive comments on the LOs for each year of the programme.

Action Required:

n/a

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.3 Teaching methods

Years 1&2: Teaching methods which include didactic lectures, small group teaching, practicals, guided self-directed learning and research projects appear appropriate.

Year 3: The modules that you offer include a good variety of teaching methods that are appropriate for final year students. As well as lectures, students are provided with many other opportunities to engage with the material including journal clubs, links to short videos and field trips where appropriate. The one-day field trips are particularly appealing, because they allow students to learn about the subject in a more active manner without the time-commitment or cost associated with a longer residential trip. Links to textbooks and journal articles encourage students to carry out independent study.

Comp path: This course has used a variety of engaging and interactive strategies, including lectures, group discussions, problem-solving activities, and seminars. I believe students have greatly benefited from this effective combination of teaching methods.

MSci: Teaching methods are robustly designed allowing students to learn at their own pace and providing a forum of live interactions with educators to consolidate knowledge.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the External examiners for these positive comments on the teaching methods employed

Action Required:

n/a

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Years 1&2: There were no resource issues identified during the review of the examinations.

Year 3: The RVC Learn website is easy to navigate, and the learning objectives, assessment pattern and lectures were signposted clearly. A common grading scheme is included for the coursework, and it was easy to access further learning materials. Although not directly related to assessment, the feedback and employability pages included at the start of each module are very useful, and help students to understand the importance of the material that they are studying. Your resources appear to be excellent and I don't suggest that you change them in any way. I would like to particularly thank the Exams Office for their excellent support throughout the review process, including answering questions in a timely manner when I was reviewing the assessment materials.

Comp path: No resource issues were reported.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the External examiners for these positive comments on the resources employed.

Action Required:

n/a

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

Year 3: The final year of these programmes look both exciting and varied and it offers students the chance to excel in different areas. I am very impressed by the content of the modules that I have reviewed, and I would recommend these degrees to students who wish to study animal biology, zoology or related courses.

Comp path: The program provides thorough knowledge in the selected field of study and greatly enhances career prospects post-graduation.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the External examiners for these positive comments regarding the final year of our BSc course

Action Required:

n/a

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

Years 1&2: The performance of students in all programmes is comparable to what we have observed across the sector with a general and consistent fall in performance across modules.

Year 3: Although this is a relatively small cohort of students, there is a good spread of degree classes, with around 10% of students being awarded a first. I am slightly surprised by the low number of students who achieve a 2.ii or 3rd class degree, but this could be related to the support offered to students on the programme. Does this reflect the entry tariff of students coming onto this course – i.e. do you take students with similar A-level grades or equivalent? The spread of degrees awarded is similar to previous years, suggesting that the teaching and assessment is maintained at a high standard over time. The work produced is comparable in quality to that from students at the University of Leicester, and I am confident that your assessment and marking process is rigorous.

Comp path: As the course leader for the Cancer Biology course at Kingston University London, I have observed that student performance in this course aligns well with our standards. I believe the students have achieved the expected performance levels.

MSci: Students performed very well. There is a range of marks as should be expected but a high proportion of good degrees. Results overall are better for MSci Biosciences as compared to MSci WAB. However, given the small number of students in these cohorts this may just be a cohort effect (but see below in 2.3).

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their positive and constructive comments. In their 3rd year, students benefit from the close support of their project supervisor which might result in increased attainment and the observed spread of results.

Regarding the MSci courses, the small student numbers make it difficult to draw firm conclusions. However, it is worth noting that the MSci WAB course format has recently been changed as it was different to the Biosciences. Once the last students on the old format have completed (end of 24-25), the wildlife students will have the same teaching/assessment structure in year 4 as the other MSci students.

Action Required:

n/a

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

Years 1&2: There were a wide range in quality and skills demonstrated in the student assessments, reflecting the wide range in student attainment. The overall outcomes of students was similar to the previous years. However, there were some notable improvements in attainment for the IGE module. There was a drop in student exam attainment in the Development Module, with coursework remaining stable. Other module averages and attainment across in course assessment and exams were comparable to previous years.

Year 3: The candidates demonstrated a good range of knowledge and skills across the types of assessment, and this is appropriate for the final level of a degree. The difference between the top and bottom of the range was clear. There was some variation in student achievement across modules, but this is to be expected since students find some subject areas more challenging than others.

As to be expected in summative assessments, there is a wide range of quality of answers with students in the top range showing a excellent depth of knowledge and skills which are less apparent or identifiable in student answers with lower marks. The overall outcome of this year's modules show that students were performing less well than previous years. This was a relatively consistent pattern across modules where in particular exam marks were lower. Poor performance was particularly marked in PoP where marks were lower across both ICA and exams (>20% reduction in median module marks) and AAD where the exam marks were nearly 30% lower than the previous year. Conversely WAB was again an outlier if anything were somewhat skewed towards the higher end with an overall median exam mark of 82.50 and module mark above 72%.

Comp path: I observed a noticeable variation in the knowledge and skills of candidates in this course. Those who scored highest on the exam also performed better in their project presentations. Students who scored lower demonstrated a less comprehensive understanding of the course content and performed less effectively in their project presentations.

MSci: Most of students were at the top and middle range, with very few at the bottom. Quality of performance and marks are consistent with each other in all the assessment items reviewed

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their positive and constructive comments. The students performed better at the IGE exam which might reflect some changes in the teaching delivery changes in response to comments from previous years. For example, we have added a directed learning session on transcription/translation which has considerably improved students understanding.

With regards to the drop in performance for the Year 1 Development module and the Year 2 Principle of Pharmacology (POP) and Ageing and degeneration (AAD), it is difficult to draw conclusions based on a single year. We will monitor performance of the students closely this academic year to find out if this trend is maintained. For the WAB pathway, again it may be difficult to interpret due to small numbers. We often find a lot of enthusiasm from students on the year 2 WAB module as this is the first module on the course that is specifically designed for wildlife students. It is common to see markedly increased engagement and efforts from these students at this point, so the skew is perhaps not surprising.

Action Required:

n/a

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Years 1&2: There was a noticeable decrease in the exam grades for students sitting the Development Year 1 Module. Due to the taught component being in the first semester, and exam third, it is recommended that the students receive a revision session or 2 in the second semester, to bolster their revision and enable any questions or particularly tricky parts of content to be revised.

Year 3: The standard of work produced by your strongest students is excellent and reflects well upon both the teaching and assessments methods and the degree programmes overall. I would recommend RVC to prospective students.

Msci: Thinking about the comparatively lower performance of MSci WAB students, I noticed that in those cases with lower marks markers highlighted conceptual problems with data analysis and in particular statistical analysis. This type of analysis seems to be more prevalent in the research projects in the MSci WAB stream, and students struggling with it may contribute to the lower marks of this cohort. Consideration may need to be given to providing more support or better preparation in statistics (this is a topic learners in my institution also struggle with at all levels).

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their constructive comments. The exam arrangements for the development module have not changed this year. Therefore timing may not be the cause for the drop in performance. Furthermore, study skills tutors ran revision sessions which are accessible to all BSc1 and Gateway students. We will ensure that the development session is delivered at the most appropriate time. Incorporation of statistics into WAB teaching is currently being developed.

Action Required:

n/a

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Years 1&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. However, in some modules there is a significant and wider than expected disparity between exam and in course assessment performance. The programme team and module leaders may wish to reflect upon to make sure that they are fully meeting learning objectives and authentically assessing students' knowledge and abilities.

Year 3: The range of assessments is appropriate to the degree programme and the level of award. The assessments were varied, challenging and well matched to learning outcomes throughout the degree programmes. The variety of assessment types is a particular strength, and included both academic (e.g. exams) and authentic (e.g. presentations, posters, grant proposals) assessments that will prepare students well for careers after graduation. The exams were varied and tested different skills, including data analysis, calculation, and understanding of lecture material. The research project thesis in particular is a substantial piece of work that requires independence, time management, and tenacity on the part of the student. It allows students to demonstrate a range of skills acquired during their studies, including data collection and analysis, as well as oral and written presentation. Students can choose between a shorter (30 credit) or longer (60 credit) project, but the length of assessment did not seem to alter the overall degree classification substantially. This suggests that the assessments are both comparable and fair across modules. Each assessment is matched to the ILOs for the module, making it easy to work out how the assessment relates to the overall structure of the degree.

Comp path: The methods of assessment employed in this course were comprehensive and appeared to successfully challenge the students while aligning with the course's learning outcomes.

MSci: Assessment methods are well aligned with learning objectives and are appropriate to assess not only knowledge and technical proficiency, but also a whole range of employability skills essential for the students to be competitive in the job market after graduation.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for these comments. As mentioned, the module ICAs and their learning objectives are assessed using a range of different methods. This includes more academic focussed assessments such as essays and also those which focus on "soft skills" including group working, giving presentation etc... Students often perform well in the latter form of assessments. This could explain why some modules have a larger disparity between the ICA and exam marks than others. However, we will continue to monitor the marks to ensure that all assessments are adequately testing the learning objectives..

Action Required:

To monitor disparity of marks between ICA and exams

This is an ongoing action

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Course directors and year/module leaders

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Years 1&2: These appear to be rigorous in terms of assessment methods.

Year 3: The assessment procedures are rigorous. There is ample feedback provided for the students, and each piece of work has been marked by two academics. Regarding project marking, in a few instances the first marker and second marker disagreed by more than one degree class. It was not clear how the final project mark was agreed upon. In some instances, this was the higher of the two marks, without any indication of why the initial lower mark was disregarded. I would recommend asking a third person to mark the project and indicating clearly (within the feedback box) how this was resolved.

Comp path: The assessment procedures in this course rigorously evaluated the intended learning outcomes, ensuring that the entire examination process adhered to expected standards.

MSci: Assessment procedures are rigorous. Research projects are double marked, and where marks of individual markers are far from each other a rigorous moderation process is in place to decide an agreed mark. Extensive and relevant feedback is generally provided to the students.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the External Examiners for these positive comments. To attempt to address the issue of disparities between markers on BSc3 projects, we will be introducing a marking rubric for the BSc3 project. Given the success of the rubric for BSc2 projects we expect that this will result in more consistent marking. In a first instance, this new marking rubric will be trialed alongside the common grading scheme to assess its robustness. We also would like to highlight that when results between markers do not align, we have the additional input from a facilitator to reach a final agreement. As the facilitation is embedded in Learn, it should be available and traceable for the external examiners to investigate should they wish to do so.

Action Required:

n/a

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Years 1&2: This appears congruent with expectations.

Year 3: The assessments that I looked at are consistent with the FHEQ. In particular, the final year projects allow students to demonstrate a systematic understanding of their field, to devise arguments and solve problems and to comment upon aspects of current research. The guided independent study aspects of your modules builds an appreciation of the limits of knowledge, and helps students to both manage their own learning and make use of primary sources

MSci: Level of assessment aligns with the recommendations in the sector.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the External Examiners for these positive comments.

Action Required:

n/a

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.4 Standard of marking

Years 1&2: The standard of marking was generally good and consistent across the modules though there are a couple of points.

There were some cases of suspected plagiarism that had not been picked up in both Year 1 and Year 2. For example, we noted two projects that had been passed through the plagiarism process that had clear evidence of plagiarism and possible collusion which were awarded 69% and 71% with only positive feedback in the scoring. There were also examples where plagiarism had been picked up and noted in the student feedback, but staff had not progressed this through the College SOP on assessment misconduct.

There was evidence of good practice in many places- it is clear that attempts have been made to standardise feedback style in some modules (rubric etc), but that there are still individual markers who have not conformed to this and it should be noted that while marking sheets are good for uniformity they do not replace quality feedback. It is still noted that for the majority of assessments there is still significant inconsistency between markers in style, mode of delivery and quality of feedback. Again variability in feedback style requires further consideration but also the use of a common method for delivery (e.g. Grademark) both within and across modules.

Year 3: Marking appears clear and fair across all modules. In most cases the feedback provided is exemplary; it is possible to link the grade given to the feedback, and to work out why full marks were not given. The questions have all been marked by the same academic member of staff, removing potential issues with differences in understanding or quality between markers. This is an ideal scenario that improves reliability across the marking, and made me very confident about the grades.

In a few cases there was no feedback provided – this made it much harder to understand the spread of grades. I understand that exam marking tends to be provided for moderators rather than the students, but it is difficult to judge the spread of marks without any input. I suggest that you work with individual lecturers to address this issue rather than implementing a School-wide review. In a few other cases the student's answer has been copied into the feedback box. This makes the information long to read. If the feedback is to be presented to students, then they might benefit from a shorter more focussed explanation of their answer.

Comp path: The course team conducted a comprehensive assessment of the modules, and I completely agree with and endorse the marks assigned by the assessors. I am also pleased to note that both the primary and secondary markers provided detailed and valuable feedback. Furthermore, effective marking schemes were employed for assessing the exam questions.

MSci: There is a reasonable level of consistency in the marking across markers. Substantial feedback is provided to the learners justifying the marks awarded, and aligning well with the course general marking scheme.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the External Examiners for these positive comments.

The importance of picking up plagiarism offences has been highlighted and reporting processes for academic misconduct investigations have recently been revised and communicated with academic staff.

Disparity in feedback provision is an institutional challenge and we are adapting and improving our marking practice year by year. We will continue to expand the use of marking rubrics, where appropriate, to ensure more consistency in marking and feedback. All examiners are asked to provide constructive feedback and to include phrases such as "the mark would be improved by..." for essays and reports.

Action Required:

All staff to be reminded of the need for consistent and constructive feedback, and to consider rubrics or alternative ways to divide marking so that there is a consistent approach for any one piece of work within a module, ensuring parity of feedback provision

Action Deadline:

31-May-2025

Action assigned to:

All 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)

The level of assessment at BSc1 and BSc2 is consistent with the FHEQ.

Year 3: Yes. My only comment is that the student's names were visible on the sheet used to determine awards in the final meeting. This should be hidden until all marks have been agreed, and student numbers used when discussing individual candidates.

MSci: I find the examination cycle and processes very rigorous and well organised. External Examiners had full access to scripts and assessment items, administration staff were very approachable and always available to help, Board of Examiners was conducted in a rigorous way, participation by External Examiners was encouraged and their comments considered.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the External Examiners for these positive comments.

Action Required:

Ensure all students names are removed from mark sheets.

Action Deadline:

31-May-2025

Action assigned to:

Exams office

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

Years 1 &2: The examinations were conducted online but in person at the RVC. There is a sound rationale for that. However, it was noted that in particular at the time of the AAD examination there was disruption that may have affected performance and hopefully the lessons learnt will provide a basis for consistent assessment in future.

Year 3: Not applicable. This is my first year of examining and so I have no comments regarding previous years.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the External Examiners for these positive comments.

Action Required:

n/a

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

Years 1&2: Last year the examiners asked for the exam papers (both Diet 1 and 2) to be produced in a timely fashion to allow for constructive feedback. We note that efforts were made to do this in most modules which was welcome although. The internal moderation was very useful although it would have been clearer if the suggested changes had been implemented prior to being sent to the external examiners and 'clean' non-tracked changes version that had implemented suggestions from internal scrutiny sent to the external examiners.

Comp path: Effective procedures were put into practice.

MSci: Even though in most of the cases a clear justification for marking and moderation was present, there were a couple of cases in which the marks of individual markers were very far apart and it was not clear from the comments the process by which an agreed final mark had been decided. I would just recommend ensuring that extensive moderation comments are always present for the External Examiners to understand the process.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the External Examiners for these positive comments. There is a defined process to follow when examiner marks are divergent. We will ensure that moderation comments are provided to the external examiners, where appropriate.

Action Required:

Moderation comments to be provided to examiners where appropriate

Action Deadline:

01-Jun-2025

Action assigned to:

Exams office

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:

Years 1 & 2 : We feel that our comments have been taken into consideration by the college though work remains on consistency with feedback, plagiarism and marking consistency across the modules.

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:

Year 3: The support from the Exams Office to help with finding papers was excellent. It made my job really easy.

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:

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:

We strongly encourage that staff are made more aware of the issues of plagiarism and a consistent approach across modules and markers is applied throughout the program. Staff training and student sessions with signposted materials on RVC learn pages would aid this.

With regard to the marking and feedback I would strongly advise that an online platform such as Gradermark is used throughout the program to provide consistency in the mode of feedback delivery across and within individual modules and allow markers to see any suspected plagiarism in situ.

Comp path: As stated in the sections above, the course is excellent, featuring up-to-date lectures, and compares very favourably with those from other institutions. However, I have few recommendations/suggestions.

- I was unable to see students' feedback on module delivery, therefore, recommend giving students an opportunity to voice their concerns through "Early or End-of-Module Feedback."
- The feedback on the research project from each assessor was detailed and very useful. However, incorporating marking criteria and feedback through a "Rubric" for project assessments would offer significant advantages. This approach allows assessors to provide individual marks for each section. Consequently, students will have access to marks for each section of their project from assessors, which can serve as a valuable reference for their future activities.
- I suggest that having the project supervisor as an assessor would be beneficial, as they are familiar with the student's performance and the project; this is just a suggestion!

MSci: Areas of good practice include the strong moderation process, and the extensive comments and feedback provided to the learners on their performance. From the operational point of view, I found very useful the pre-board meeting that allowed the External Examiners to ask questions and clarify issues. I think this approach simplifies and streamlines the process.

Ensure that all the feedback given on submissions is in the feedback box for ease of access by the External Examiner. In those cases where the feedback was provided as comments on the submission it was not easy to access.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Caroline Pellet-Many

Course Director Response:

We thank the External Examiners for these helpful comments. Hopefully we have answered them elsewhere within the document.

Regarding end of module feedback, all students are sent a questionnaire at the end of every module to allow them to feedback on teaching delivery etc. The results from this are sent to the module leader to help them develop and improve the modules. They are also used to help the module leaders write the yearly module reviews. Year leaders are also encouraged to meet regularly with the course reps to discuss any issues which may arise throughout the year. The course reps are also invited to the termly course management committee meetings which provides them with another opportunity to provide academic staff with feedback from the student cohort.

Dr Rob Noad (iBSc Comparative Pathology)

Course Director Response: We thank the External Examiners for these helpful comments. To confirm, students have the opportunity for mid-term feedback through their SU course representatives who then pass comments on to the course director. A response to student comments on the course was posted on RVC Learn during the Autumn term and Summer terms in line with external examiner comments from previous years. For the marking rubric for research projects, a trial of a marking rubric is planned in 2024/25, with the intention that it is used for summative marking in 2025/26 assuming there are no major problems identified. We do not currently plan to use the project supervisor to award marks to pieces of work with major credit allocations. We agree that the supervisor is the most familiar with the topic of the project and the day to day performance of the student (which is why there is a component of the mark which is determined by the supervisor) but the project report task is to assess the competence of the student to communicate scientific information in a written report format to another scientist who was not involved in the work. In our opinion this is best assessed by an independent academic.

Action Required:

n/a

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)

Year 3: Two modules that I assessed have high grades for the students – Applied Wildlife Health Sciences and Ecology. In AWHS all the students achieved a first-class grade suggesting that the assessment may not discriminate well between candidates. In both modules this seems to be related to exam performance, and it might be worth looking at the structure of these two exams for next year. It might be worth considering whether careful choice of modules by students could lead to better degree outcome, and if so if the structure of the AWHS and Ecology exam needs to be modified. You may find that this issue resolves itself if you are changing how the assessment will run (in person; open book etc). It is important to note however, that there is a good spread of awards across the year and that students naturally perform better on some module compared to others. This is not a major issue.