

Veterinary Gateway Programme, 2024/25

Dr Jennie Litten-Brown

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

The course content continues to be appropriate for the Gateway course. It has been well designed and enables the students to have a wide range of modules which are well matched to the veterinary science area and our general scientific understanding of the world. Evidence shows that the course is clearly enabling students to progress in their chosen career path and is therefore successful in that respect.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their positive comments and will continue to develop the Gateway Programme in response to advances in scientific and/or pedagogical fields.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

The Learning objectives were clearly stated on RVC LEARN for the students and examiners to see, they also appear on other relevant documentation, and they are well met in terms of the delivery of course content.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for recognising that all learning objectives are clearly signposted on Learn to students for each learning activity. During 2024-25 we have mapped all learning objectives to course aims and will track all changes in future years.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.3 Teaching methods

I can find evidence of a wide range of teaching methods and styles which are employed in the delivery of the course content, I think the wide range of academics delivering content has a lot to do with this but I see that as a strength of the course. Attention needs to be given to the feedback as there is still a wide range of the volume of feedback and consistency there is needed, progress has certainly been made in this area and I found evidence of very constructive feedback with 'for example' extensions for clarity. This positive progression needs to be across all members of the team to ensure all students receive the benefit of this. I can appreciate the time and effort that has been spent on these improvements and commend the team for this.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their positive comments on the quality and variety of teaching methods used on the Gateway Programme.

We also thank the external examiners for commenting on the efforts made over the past year to improve the consistency and quality of feedback in assessments. We note however that there is still work to be done in this regard and will continue to train and encourage staff to provide useful and informative feedback. Regarding consistency in the format of feedback across markers, at present, the RVC assessment policies allow markers to choose the form of their feedback with individual markers opting to provide either a summary feedback report or in-document edits, as they see fit. While this policy remains, it is likely that we will see variation in feedback methods.

Action Required:

When marking is assigned to staff they will be reminded of the need to write detailed and reflective feedback, providing all students with an understanding of the mark awarded and suggestions on where to improve in the future.

Action Deadline:

01-Nov-2026

Action assigned to:

Exams Office, L Thurston, D Palmer

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

Appear to be suitable from what I could see.

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

n/a

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

Overall the performance of the students continues to be similar to other institutions which I am familiar with.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

Course Director Response:

We are reassured that our students are performing at a level comparable with partner institutions.

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

I have seen evidence that the whole range of marks are used and the assessment is discerning in enabling students to perform to a wide range of abilities. The IGE and The moving animal appear to be the modules which have been most challenging in terms of achievement this year. It is difficult to see if this remains a course focused solution or whether it is a cohort issue, there where the students who do not perform well in these 2 modules there are often additional modules where they do not perform as well. Development, which was noted last year, continues to challenge but is no longer an outlier.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their positive comments. While successful performance in the 'Inheritance, Genes and Evolution' and 'Development' modules have continued to be challenging, the support strategies in place have shown improvements in performance this year. We note the external examiners comments regarding a drop in performance in the 'Moving Animal' module and will ensure that intervention strategies are reviewed for 2025-26 to ensure students are appropriately supported. In advance of the August 2025 resit examinations, students will be invited to revision and subject consolidation sessions with particular emphasis on the IGE, Development and Moving Animal modules.

Action Required:

Review intervention strategies to support students. Evaluate the engagement with the additional revision support sessions for resit students.

Action Deadline:

Sept 2026

Action assigned to:

D Palmer

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

As discussed above, outlier modules in terms of student performance appear to be the IGE module and The moving animal. I am aware, and can see evidence, that the team work hard to improve and adapt modules and have taken on board the comments over the years which has seen positive change for the students. There is evidence of a much more detailed plagiarism policy, during a detailed discussion at the pre-board it became evident that some additional staff training may be offered to ensure all staff apply the policy in the same way, in addition staff will be encouraged to comment on the feedback document so that the external examiner can see due diligence has been followed.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their positive remarks regarding improvements to modules as a result of their feedback.

As stated, the RVC plagiarism policy has been reviewed and descriptors tightened. In order to implement this successfully, in 2025-26, staff will be trained in applying the new policy consistently.

Action Required:

Deliver staff training to ensure that all staff can recognise plagiarism and will consistently apply the RVC policy across assessments.

Action Deadline:

01-May-2026

Action assigned to:

L Thurston, D Palmer, V Brewster

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

The modules use a wide variety of assessment methods similar to other HEIs within the sector, each are clearly thought about and made relevant to the curriculum and learning objectives. Going forward I would encourage colleagues to ensure that the quantity as well as the quality of the feedback is similar across all members of the marking team ensuring that all students receive similar support. Some feedback follows headings which is very useful to both the student and marker encouraging fairness across all staff in terms of feedback quality. Much progress has been made and I commend colleagues on all the improvements made so far.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their positive comments.

We also thank the external examiners for commenting on the efforts made to improve the consistency, quality and quantity of feedback in assessments. We agree that those assessments using headings to signpost feedback structure, such as the library project, help to improve consistency and quality across markers. We will explore similar structured feedback opportunities across the modules as part of the module review processes.

Action Required:

Encourage module leaders to provide suggested feedback headings (similar to those in the library project marking guidelines) when sending model answers to staff marking assessments.

Action Deadline:

01-Apr-2026

Action assigned to:

L Thurston, D Palmer, Gateway and BSc1 module leaders

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

I am satisfied that the assessment procedures are rigorous and fair, I am aware, from discussions at the boards over the years, that colleagues are continually reflecting on practice and altering assessment where necessary.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their positive comments on the assessments.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

The level of assessment in all modules is consistent with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their positive comment.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.4 Standard of marking

I saw evidence of double marking and spot marking enabling moderation to occur as well as discussions around the marks. The full range of marks are appropriately used and bell shaped curves can be drawn to demonstrate this.

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)

I am aware of the changes that have been made within the exams office and the additional pressure the team there were under was showing in terms of some elements not being available until quite last minute such as the final mark spreadsheet, this reduced the time for scrutiny before the exam board however as this is the first year in the new system I am sure lessons will be learnt for future years. The exam board was professionally conducted and very open and fair discussions took place, I have found the addition of a pre-board the last two years very useful in terms of sharing initial findings with key members of the team and giving them the opportunity to feedback straight away.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their positive comments and also thank them for their patience this year as the RVC Exams Office transitions to new staff and organisational structures.

We agree that the pre-board meetings are extremely useful for highlighting any issues in advance of the exam board and providing timely feedback to the external examiners.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

I am not aware of any changes to the assessment procedures since last year. Going forward I would like to see the focus on consistency for feedback to students and also in terms of processing cases of possible plagiarism ensuring that it is clear to the external examiner, and indeed to the student, what action has or has not been taken.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

Course Director Response:

We note the external examiners concerns on consistency of feedback (discussed previously).

We note that it would be useful to improve the communication of the outcome of plagiarism investigations to the external examiners. Students, tutors and the exams office are copied into the outcome letters, which include any actions taken. Thus, the exams office and/or year leader can provide the external examiners with a summary list of investigations and outcomes going forward.

Action Required:

Exams office to provide the external examiners with a list of students who have attended plagiarism investigations, their outcomes, and actions taken. The EEs to be provided with links to the Academic Misconduct section: <https://www.rvc.ac.uk/about/the-rvc/academic-quality-regulations-procedures#panel-student-resolution-and-compliance> regarding the process for plagiarism detection and subsequent investigation.

Action Deadline:

01-Sep-2026

Action assigned to:

L Thurston, Exams Office

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

No additional comments

General Statements

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.4 I was able to scrutinise an adequate sample of students' work and marks to enable me to carry out my duties

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.5 I attended the meeting of the Board of Examiners held to approve the results of the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.7 The standards set for the awards are appropriate for qualifications at this level, in this subject

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.8 The standards of student performance are comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.10 I have received sufficient information to carry out my role (where information was insufficient, please give details)

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

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: