

## ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2022/23

### Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

## MVetMed

This appendix contains Course Director's responses to 2022/23 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](mailto:afilipovic@rvc.ac.uk), 01707666938

Appendix 3 consists of:

|    |   |
|----|---|
| a. | Updates to actions from previous years' reports                   |
| b. | 22/23 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Year Leader |

| Report Question  | External Examiners' comment in 2021/22   | Year Leader's response and actions  | Update in 2022/23   |
|--|--|---|---|
| <b>1.4 Resources (in so far as they affected the assessment)</b> | We would request in the future that if possible, MCQs are:<br>1. Internally checked before being sent to external examiners;<br>2. Are uploaded to a central server which the examiners can then access at a planned time to review, rather than being emailed the questions as and when they are ready. | Will discuss with exams office how better to facilitate this process - and will action internal examiners to internally check.<br><br><b>Action Required:</b><br><br>Will ask internal examiners to check questions and discuss assisting with external examiners logistical requests with exams office.<br><br><b>Action Deadline:</b><br><br>01-Jun-2023<br><br><b>Action assigned to:</b><br><br>Course director and Head of Exams | The Exams Office will create a Teams area to manage the MCQs - this will allow for the Relevant Residency Specialist Team to check and review papers prior to being sent to the External Examiners. EEs will also be added to the Teams area to allow for moderation of the MCQ paper, rather than the papers being shared via email. |
| <b>3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous</b>    | As we have commented before, there are very few MCQs for each discipline which brings into question the robustness of this part of the assessment.   | Will discuss with discipline leads to see if this can be scaled up over the next few years, though keeping high standards of quality.<br><br><b>Action Required:</b><br><br><br><br><b>Action Deadline:</b>   | We will discuss a plan going forward with the 5 year annual review.   |

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|   |  | 01-Jun-2023<br><b>Action assigned to:</b><br>Course director   |  |
| <b>3.4 Standard of marking</b>  | <p>When marking posters, only the final amalgamated mark was given, but there is scope on the feedback form to mark each section individually which would improve feedback to the student seemingly without significantly increasing marker workload.</p> <p>In the WPBA there were points left blank or marked as N/A but it is not clear if they were N/A as not relevant to the discipline or not observed on that occasion, or if blank meant N/A. Also in some disciplines, there may be areas which do not seem on face value to be relevant but actually can be - for example communication with the client in anatomic pathology could be assessed if a referring veterinary surgeon was considered to be the client</p> | <p>The College oral presentation/poster mark sheet was used this year 2022 as the posters were again presented in person which enabled greater feedback to be provided by the internal examiners. Will discuss with discipline leads regarding WPBA and making sure all boxes are checked, with the example given we will clarify that communication is important even in non (public) client facing disciplines. Have assumed that N/A is not observed/relevant on that occasion for that assessment.</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b><br/>Clarify finer points when using WPBA.</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b><br/>01-Jun-2023</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b><br/>Course Director</p> | I have asked to be involved in inset days for examiners to share best practice and enable new examiners to learn what is expected with WPBA.   |
| <b>3.6 Opinion on changes to the assessment procedures from previous years in which you have examined</b> | <p>We have previously commented on the standard (for example failure to pass the cover up test) and number of MCQs for each discipline and there do not appear to have been changes made here.</p> <p>We have previously commented on the disparity between numbers of distractors in the different disciplines as this would affect how difficult the different papers are to pass, when all students are aiming for the same award. The response has been that the number of distractors for each discipline maps to the number the students will later meet in the board exams for that discipline. This is fair as regards meeting the ILOs for the individual disciplines, however the</p>                                  | <p>Thank you for your comments. We appreciate that the award being assessed here is different to the board examinations, though we think that it is important to align to board examination style where possible. We will discuss with the relevant teams to make the changes that are suggested to the AA regulations.</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b><br/>Discuss with head of exams, registrar regarding changes suggested.</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b><br/>01-Jun-2023</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b></p>   | We have changed the regulations to make the number of distractors flexible. We consider this is important for the flexibility for each specialty that it reflects the questions that they will receive. We are not aware of any literature mentioning significant mark or grade boundaries for different number of distractors which are used in the MVetMed. We have discussed this at the course |

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|  | students are not sitting their boards but the same Masters'. We would advise adding an explanatory comment in the exam regulations by expanding section 6.10 to ensure this was not an area where an unsuccessful candidate could challenge the outcome. | Course Director  | management meeting.  |
| <b>4.1 Comments I have made in previous years have been addressed to my satisfaction</b> | Yes other than numbers and quality of MCQs   | <p>Will encourage the individual disciplines to improve their MCQs and consider a plan for question numbers.</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b></p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b></p> <p>01-Jun-2023</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b></p> <p>Course director</p> | Will discuss with at the 5 year review (early 2024) increasing the number of MCQs. Regarding the quality, we are continuing to offer staff MCQ writing skills and support, as well as at inset days. |

# Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 22-Jun-2023

**Master of Veterinary Medicine, 2022/23**

**Lead examiner: Dr Zoe Belshaw**

**Collaborating examiner(s): Miss April Lawson**

## The Programme

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

### 1.1 Course content

The course content is appropriate, engaging and relevant to the candidates' clinical progression to become veterinary specialists.

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

Learning objectives are appropriate, and met.

### 1.3 Teaching methods

Teaching methods are appropriate for the course, and to support the progression of candidates through their clinical residency training.

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

The support from Shona Lavelle was good. However, the External Examiners' area on Learn was still under construction a week before the Exam Board, and some viva reports were not uploaded until 48 hours before the Exam Board meeting. We would ask that in future, if possible, the materials are available to review sooner.

In addition, as per requests in previous years, it would be helpful if the MCQs for review could be collated and uploaded to a folder on Learn rather than being sent to us in separate emails across multiple days.

### 1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

It was disappointing to hear that a year 1 candidate in Equine Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation was not provided with their formative MCQs at the right time. Communication between the course administrators and residency supervisors should be tightened to prevent this occurring again.

### Course director's response:

This was actually not flagged, as far as I am aware with the admissions process and the graduate school. It has been noted and rectified to make sure that it does not happen again.

## Student performance

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

### **2.1 Students' performance in relation to those at a similar stage on comparable courses in other institutions, where this is known to you**

The students perform very well on this course, as evidenced by their progression rates.

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

As in previous years, the candidates are high achievers and there is little difference between those at the bottom versus the top of the range.

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

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

### 3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

The assessments are varied, reflecting the range of skills the students will need to have as clinical specialists. The WBPAs are regularly performed, and relevant, providing the students with multiple timepoints at which specific feedback is provided.

### 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

As we have commented in previous years, the MCQ question quality is variable between disciplines and in some papers could be substantially improved with multiple questions failing the cover-up test and/or including negative wording. We were pleased that some of our detailed feedback about the questions had been adopted before the MCQs were used in assessment this year, but this was not the case in all disciplines. As discussed in the Exam Board, we recommend making a decision about how references can be consistently included in MCQs across all disciplines. Otherwise the rigor of the process appears good.

#### Course Director's Response:

We have asked our exams office to ask for references for written MCQs for the MVetMed going forward this year and this will be included in the information pack provided. We hope to see this issue improve as the general standard for the written MCQs. Writing MCQs is an iterative process and with new staff members we need to improve everyone's MCQ creation not just for the MVetMed course. Thank you for highlighting this as it is important that this is bought up so that more resources can be made available for staff training

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

The level of credits for this course is appropriate for the FHEQ guidelines for taught Master's degrees.

### 3.4 Standard of marking

The standard of marking appears broadly good. The year 3 project written feedback does not always reflect the mark scheme, instead commonly reading like a peer review. Where feedback was given as per the mark scheme, it appeared to provide a better basis for the candidates to understand where marks had been dropped, and to improve their writing in the future. We question whether the Common Grading Scheme which assumes candidates will perform at a similar level across selection and coverage of material, understanding and structure and clarity of presentation reflects reality. Adopting a more stratified approach as used in the poster assessment could be considered and may increase the scope for highlighting specific areas for improvement in study design, statistics and/or scientific writing. The apparent "ceiling" mark of 75% for written work was discussed in the Exam Board in relation to the PGDipVCP, and applies also to project scores in the MVetMed; potential reasons for this were discussed. Inclusion of a centralised check that ethical approval for the research conducted has been granted, and the review number included in the project report, is recommended as good practice for publication.

Suggestions for improvement are not always provided in the poster feedback; this could be improved.

Feedback to students from the other assessments is of a very high standard - individualised, specific to the assessment made, and with a good mix of suggestion for improvement and praise. Rarely, the "action points" sections and/or assessor name and job description were left blank in the multisource feedback, and one year 3 candidate had all their feedback from interns or other residents which may not be appropriate. We would encourage more veterinary nurses to be included in the multisource feedback processes, where appropriate. We were pleased to see the use of the N/A box substantially decline this year in MSF.

**3.5 In your view, are the procedures for assessment and the determination of awards sound and fairly conducted? (e.g. Briefing, Exam administration, marking arrangements, Board of Examiners, participation by External Examiners)**

Yes.

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

It was pleasing to see the individual aspects of the poster mark scheme being used this year, as per our feedback last year. However, the continuing poor quality of some MCQs, despite our feedback on this for several years, is disappointing. It would be good to see an action plan in place to ensure all questions next year pass the "cover up" test, are not negatively worded and have been checked for typographical errors/incomplete stems before submission. Our recommendation last year to add a comment in exam regs section 6.10 to explain why some MCQs have only three distractors and others have four in case this is challenged by a candidate still stands.

**3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures**

The team should again be commended on running an excellent programme.

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

**Yes**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

Yes other than the MCQs which remain of variable quality

**4.2 An acceptable response has been made**

**Yes**

**Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

As above

**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:**

Huge thanks to Shona for all her help pulling things together for us. Earlier access to a complete set of documents in a finished Examiners Area on Learn would be very much appreciated.

**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:**

Yes, from Veronica Roberts the previous lead external, which I have in turn passed on to April Lawson. We were grateful that Shona was able to produce a summary document overviewing the submissions we should be expecting to see per year. It would be useful to have the up-to-date exam regs and marking schemes for all assessments uploaded into the External Examiners Area with the reports, and access to any collated marks available for the three cohorts in advance of the Exam Board would be very helpful.

**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:**

No

**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)**

We will reflect on Mike Cathcart's comment re the ability for specific candidates to attain prizes whilst assessing the materials next year.

