

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2020/21

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

FdSc & BSc Veterinary Nursing

This appendix contains Year Leader's responses to 2020/21 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.	2020/21 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director

a. Updates to actions from previous years' reports

2019/21 Report Question	External Examiners' comments & suggested actions	Course Director/Year Leader's response & Action	Update in 20/21	
<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>Covid has prevented the normal pattern of 're-sits' for these students and they have been permitted to progress. Their on-going progress will need to be monitored</p>	<p>The risk banding (above) has helped us to identify any students who may be at risk progressing. The no-detriment policy has allowed all students to progress and the group 1 & 2 students in C16 will be monitored as they progress into year 2.</p> <p>Several FdSc students undertaking the transfer assessment into the 4th yr of the BSc passed the 50% aggregate but did not achieve above 50% in their written assignments. These students will be monitored over the next year.</p> <p>Action Required:</p> <p>Monitor the progress of students in year 1 progressing to year 2 Monitor FdSc performance in the their 4th year</p> <p>Action Deadline:</p> <p>01-Oct-2021</p> <p>Action assigned to:</p> <p>Course Director and exams team</p>	<p>COMPLETED</p> <p>The module results will be reported and commented on in the AQIR (Annual Quality Improvement Report) regarding their progression</p>	
<p>3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous</p>	<p>Recommendation for changes in FdSc to BSc transfer assessments; currently all students have to gain an aggregate of 50% across the 3 assessments, we would recommend changing this to each assessment carrying its own weighting at 50%.</p>	<p>As stated above even though 1st and 2nd year assessments were formative - we kept to the same format, marking and feedback. The current system for FdScVN students to transfer to the BSc 4th year is for the students to complete the two additional assignments and the additional BSc examination. The students are required to gain an overall aggregate of 50% which means some students can excel in the examination and be less successful in the assignments. We have previously suggested that attaining at least 50% in each assessment activity should be instigated however for 2020/21 the no-detriment policy will allow students to resit any assessment activity in order to attain a higher final award. This may result in students overloading themselves with additional assessment. The students have also already been informed of the transfer assessment. Going forward, FdScVN students on the new course will be required to attain a merit in their Foundation degree in order to transfer to the 4th year of the BSc degree. We are looking at implementing the idea that FdSc students on track for a merit could, for 2020/21 be allowed to progress without having to do the</p>	<p>COMPLETED</p> <p>This paper was approved at autumn CMC - it was decided that this would also apply for 2021-22 and would be the last time transfer assessments will be offered as the course is changing.</p>	

		<p>transfer assessment. Previous results indicate that students who attain a merit in their Foundation award generally do well in the final BSc year.</p> <p>Action Required:</p> <p>Consider providing the option for 3rd year students in 2020/21 to progress if they attain a merit or complete the transfer assessment - a paper is going to the November Course Management Committee</p> <p>Action Deadline:</p> <p>04-Nov-2020</p> <p>Action assigned to:</p> <p>Course directors and exam team</p>		
3.4 Standard of marking	<p>Sample marking is in place across all modules, but sometimes the quality can be variable between sample markers. Where there is a discrepancy between first marker's and second marker's results discussion needs to be documented so that there is a full audit trail.</p>	<p>The sampler is asked to determine only whether they agree or disagree with the mark for each piece of work. It is considered reasonable for a sampler to agree with the first mark if it is adjacent and in the same classification category. Where there maybe disagreement in a significant portion (10%) this is reported to the examination officer.</p> <p>Action Required:</p> <p>Ensure all markers are aware of the guidance when marking.</p> <p>Action Deadline:</p> <p>01-Sep-2021</p> <p>Action assigned to:</p> <p>Course director and Exam team.</p>	<p>COMPLETED</p> <p>A standardisation meeting for the team is planned on the 20th sept 2021 to consider marking and feedback consistency</p>	
PREVIOUS REPORTS	<p>External Examiners' comments & suggested actions</p>	<p>Course Director/Year Leader's response & Action</p>	<p>Update in 2019/20</p>	<p>Update in 20/21</p>
2.1 Students' performance in relation to those at a similar stage on comparable courses in other institutions, where this is known to you	<p>Some students do not meet their potential within the 4th year possibly because they are not fully engaged in the programme.</p>	<p><i>We have problems with students engaging in the modules in the 4th year as many have cited a lack of accommodation and some students taking up full time work (despite our advice not to). We have tried to provide other activities (Advanced Practice Toolkit module discussion forum) for students to engage in if not attending, but with limited success. The Graduate Diploma electives that students are able to access, are delivered online so there may be some confusion over attendance despite clear advice.</i></p>	<p>ONGOING</p> <p>This year the fourth year is delivered entirely online. We can monitor attendance at live sessions but may not be a true representation of engagement.</p>	<p>We have tried to provide flexible opportunities for students undertaking the 4th yr as we are aware some are undertaking part time work. Attendance at live sessions continues to be variable but the students access the material at other times. When we had face to face teaching we also had poor attendance. With the CertAVN</p>

				modules being online we feel that continuing the blended approach is best.
3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)	Discuss with course leader in regards to review of the OSCEs. The clinical assessment tool is included to be completed alongside their studies whilst in a practical environment, usually when on placement.	<i>We are reviewing the range of OSCEs provided and looking at providing a wider variety of OSCEs and ensuring they encompass the range of methods rather than encouraging rote learning skill</i>	Ongoing review	We have removed the skill sheets and explained to the students the reason why. We will continue to review and update where necessary. There is currently an RCVS consultation regarding the day one skills/ competencies and so we can ensure that they align with any changes to these.
3.4 Standard of marking	Where there is a discrepancy between first marker's and second marker's results discussion needs to be documented so that there is a full audit trail. The sample marker should not be annotating scripts and should not be indicating any mark allocation unless a decision has been made to be double marked	<i>The transition to online marking indicates that some areas needed further clarification for some markers especially regarding sample marking. We have discussed with the exams office and they will assign the sample marking.</i>	ONGOING the EE's have mentioned in the recent report that this has improved: <i>"Some changes have been made, the standard and consistency of the annotation in the script have dramatically improved this is to be commended".</i>	We have undertaken examiner training within the team to ensure a more consistent approach

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 08-Sep-2021

BSc and FdSc in Veterinary Nursing, 2020/21

Lead examiner: Mr Paul Crawford

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Jane Furness

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

The latter years of the course were reviewed in preparation for the 30th June Exam Board which reviewed the progress and assessment of cohorts 14 and 15 and the early years prior to the 8th September Board when cohorts 16 and 17 were considered.

The following modules were reviewed:

Applied Animal Health & Welfare 1
Applied Animal Health & Welfare 2
Academic & Professional Development 1

Diagnostic Techniques
Anaesthesia and Emergency Critical Care

Applied Nursing Care
Professional Practice
BSc Transfer Results

Advanced Practice Toolkit
Research Methods
Surgical Nursing Elective Module
Medical Nursing Elective Module
ECC Elective Module
Pathology Elective Module
Final Year Project

In addition one external examiner was present on each day of the OSCEs held in December. In addition to exam scripts and submitted assignments for the above modules the external examiners were also able to view live and review recorded presentations delivered by students in the first and final year.

Overall, and throughout the modules, the content reflected the full range of material needed to meet the course requirements. Through the provision of elective modules students were given the opportunity in the latter part of their course to study areas of particular interest in additional depth. The research projects showed a wide range of areas of professional and clinical interest what the students were supported to investigate.

The new course structure delivery appears to have bedded in well despite the continuing upheaval of the past academic year due to the Covid pandemic. This is testament to the hard work and careful design, planning and delivery of this new model by the Vet Nursing team and they should be commended for delivering this change as well as continuing to deliver and assess the rest of the student's modules to the usual high standard.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your comments - it has been a difficult year but rolling out the new version was an important step in the development of the course.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

All learning objectives were met by the work reviewed as above. It is clear that there is not only a desire by the team to deliver the basic minimum to achieve the learning objective but they encourage the students to explore more widely the relevant subject material but without overloading the students with unnecessary additional compulsory material.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you we will continue with this.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.3 Teaching methods

Evidence was reviewed and discussed pertaining to a wide range of teaching methods. Legislative restriction on meeting face to face, and even when such was permitted, in group size, did impact on the initial plans of the team but their hard work, ingenuity and dedication has resulted in a novel blended delivery structure of which they can be proud.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you for recognising the hard work that went into delivering the course this year.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

As Covid restrictions relax it is clear that the team, when faced with the opportunity to bring students back on campus for face to face teaching will find it difficult to resource the teaching with the team numbers they currently have. In addition, the number of rooms of a suitable size for their practical teaching is limited and this is a resource shared with other student groups on the campus. The external examiners are concerned that stretched physical and human resources will affect teaching delivery and thus assessment. Further, increased hours dedicated to teaching practical tasks to smaller groups and having to deliver the same material to multiple groups will drain staff time. Additional time spend in teaching has to be taken out of the time budget elsewhere. It is a concern of the examiners that there is the potential for staff to have insufficient time to continue to develop and deliver the assessment portfolio to the same standards as they currently do, with the same levels of feedback and student support to increased student numbers without appropriate uplift in staff numbers.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

We agree with the concerns of the external examiners regarding both the physical and human resources available to continue to deliver the course. We have informed the Head of Department (HoD) and the Vice Principal for Learning Teaching and assessment of these concerns. The date for interviewing for maternity cover and a 5th Clinical Educator have been set. The HoD has agreed to fund external markers. The delay in the new building work has meant a delay in obtaining new teaching rooms at least for term 2.

Action Required:

This will be highlighted in the Annual Quality Improvement Report

Action Deadline:

24-Nov-2021

Action assigned to:

Course Directors

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

The external examiners would note the departure of the Professor of Veterinary Nursing. Prof Gregory was a strong advocate for the profession and the course team as well as significant contributor to the course delivery and assessment. We would further note that this departure was announced in June and there appeared to be uncertainty among the team about the vacancy this has created both at a strategic and management level as well as at the 'coal face' in delivery of teaching and assessment. The team needs brought into the journey by senior College management as they develop a plan to fill these roles.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

We agree with these comments and recognise the impact the loss of this position has had already. We have discussed the role of what is required and provided draft job descriptions. We envisage the new role will encompass a more wide ranging and strategic responsibilities for veterinary nurses at the RVC. We are awaiting confirmation of the timeline for this new role from senior management.

Action Required:

Course Directors to alert head of department to these comments

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Student performance

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

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

The performance of the Year 3 students at both foundation and BSc meet the external examiners' expectations based on their knowledge of students on other courses. The performance of students on BSc 4th year has continued to improve with commendable numbers achievement first class and upper 2nd class honours this year.

Previously identified disengagement of some final year students, who then did not meet their potential appears to have decreased.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

We agree and commend both 3rd and 4th Year students on their hard work in attaining such good results during this difficult period.

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

There were exceptionally good students in all cohorts.

The plan outlined last year as part of No Detriment (risk based 3 stages of intervention to support students who had failed one or more element) was delivered but has not prevented several students continuing to perform below the hoped level. Further tough conversations will be required in the interests of the students themselves as well as the rest of the cohort, delivery team and wider College. Even some students passing demonstrated significant weaknesses in knowledge in examinations with their overall pass being possible only because of compensation from their assignment marks.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

It has been recognised that some students did not benefit from the Safety Net policy and delayed the inevitable lack of success for these students. We will continue to monitor the students progress through the course and performance meetings have been planned for students wishing to repeat a year of study.

Action Required:

Continue to monitor the students progress.

Action Deadline:

30-Sep-2022

Action assigned to:

Course Directors

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

The continued outworking of automatic appeals and the legacy of no detriment will put a strain on the team as they support students who in other circumstances may have been transitioned into an alternative route. Sufficient resourcing must be made available to prevent this impacting the teaching and assessment of the remainder of the student cohorts.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

We agree and feeds into the earlier concerns regarding resourcing. We will continue to raise these concerns at appropriate committees.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Written assessments were reviewed (MCQs, SAQs, written assignments). One external examiner had attended the majority of the OSCE sessions in December 2020. Recordings of student presentations were sampled and reviewed (including the questioning of students following their presentation).

Overall, the externs believe that the combination of these assessment methods fully satisfy and examine the learning objectives and curricula.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Across all the assessments there has been a consistent, fair and rigorous approach to marking, balanced with constructive feedback. There is sufficient sample marking, and evidence of debate between examiners, to confer confidence that sample marking is conducted seriously.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

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

3.4 Standard of marking

Marking is generally of a high standard.

Feedback on written assessments is detailed and very constructive. A variety of styles and mechanisms are used with the course to deliver feedback - even between similar styles of assessment. A consistent approach might be beneficial both to the markers, students and the external examiners.

Occasionally it was felt that the examiners were trying to find a mark, which if they had not given, the external examiners would have been content for that lower mark to have been awarded. This was not at a level that compromised the fairness nor the integrity of the assessment process but should not creep wider into marking.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your comments and we have organised a standardisation meeting within the team to discuss how we ensure parity in marking and feedback.

Action Required:

Meeting organised to discuss standardisation of marking and feedback

Action Deadline:

20-Sep-2021

Action assigned to:

VN team

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

It is the view of the external examiners that the procedures and determinations of the awards are sound and fairly conducted.

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

The effects of Covid restrictions have continued impact upon but not affect the quality of the assessment process. The new project presentation and questioning introduced to the first year of the new programme appears to be well received by the students as well as being an effective tool to determine the understanding of the students on their chosen topics.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Ms Hilary Orpet

Course Director Response:

Thank you for the comments regarding the presentations - the students also performed well and engaged with the assessment.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

One external examiner completed the Advance HE external examiner training in the past year. No specific RVC led training events were delivered in the past year.

Dr J.F

As a new external examiner, I have been provided with sufficient online training from the RVC. The administration team at the RVC have been supportive and always willing to assist and provide guidance when necessary. The lead examiner has also guided me through the different steps and processes during the year.

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

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Dr J.F

As a new external examiner I have received sufficient information throughout the year to carry out my role.

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Completion

If you have identified any areas of good practice, please comment more fully here. We may use information provided in our annual external examining report:

5.1 Do you have any suggestions for improvements based on experience at other institutes? We may use information provided in our annual external examining report:

None

Dr J.F

I would like to praise the teaching team for creating a safe, inclusive and supportive environment for their students to deliver and discuss their assessments through online presentations. Their enthusiasm from student one or group one to the final group or individual did not waver and enabled each student to have their 'time' to shine. The students engagement and enjoyment in these assessments was clearly evident via recordings, fantastic job Team, well done.

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)

Comments redacted and can be obtained by emailing Ana Filipovic, Senior AQ Officer afilipovic@rvc.ac.uk

