

**SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' COMMENTS, 2012/2013**

Course BSc Bioveterinary Science

Examiner Comment	RVC Response (Please remember to directly quote (copy and paste) our regulations/procedures e.g. from the intranet <a href="http://intranet.rvc.ac.uk/StudentsAndTeaching/RegsAndProcs.cfm">http://intranet.rvc.ac.uk/StudentsAndTeaching/RegsAndProcs.cfm</a> )	Actions
Craig A McArdle and Paul Loughna		
<p><b>3. Assessment Process</b>  <i>The marking of 3<sup>rd</sup> year projects is particularly rigorous, with all being double marked and extensive comments making it easy to see how the marks were arrived at. However, we noted a number of projects with considerable differences between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> marks, where the average (or nearest to average in the scheme) was taken as the final mark. These included a project for which 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> marks were 4 points apart on the common grading scheme. With the large proportion of marks allocated to the projects and the lack of granularity at the extremes of the scheme, this can have a major influence on overall marks. We recommend you consider 3<sup>rd</sup> marking of projects where 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> marks differ by 20% or more (two instances this year)</i></p>	<p>We would like to thank the External Examiners for fair assessment of examination processes and for their constructive suggestions. The Common Grading Scheme, which is used for all RVC courses, was recently reviewed and a revised version introduced for use from the start of the 2013-14 academic year. Currently all projects are blind double marked and where marks are in a close range, the higher mark will be awarded. However, where markers disagree over a broader range, the markers should discuss the work and come to an agreed mark. Please see the “section 4.5.1 of the instructions for examiners under the College Regulations” below. In exceptional cases as noticed by the External Examiners where there is significant differences between the marks and the markers fail to reach an agreement to a common mark the course leader will ask a 3<sup>rd</sup> marker for the project. This was discussed at the BSc pre-exam board this year and is expected to be implemented in future circumstances.</p> <p>4.5.1 All MSc projects, BSc 2nd and final year projects, BVetMed elective projects and other major projects should be blind double marked. Where markers have arrived at <i>adjacent marks both</i></p>	

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	<p><i>within a classification range, the higher mark should become the mark awarded. Where markers disagree over a broader range, the markers should discuss the work and come to an agreed mark.</i></p>	
<p><i>Sample marking was extensive and well documented this year. Our understanding is that when sample marking indicates “systematic” over-marking or under-marking by 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> markers, this triggers remarking for the entire cohort. This seems appropriate but begs the question of what constitutes a systematic difference. Where no systematic difference is seen the 1<sup>st</sup> mark is accepted. We noted an instance where 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> marks on a year 2 exam question differed by 8 points in the marking scheme (62% and 30%) and because the sample marking showed no systematic difference, the first mark was accepted. We recommend you consider better defining the systematic difference that triggers 3<sup>rd</sup> marking, and also the possibility that major differences between individual marks should trigger 3<sup>rd</sup> marking.</i></p>	<p>The system for sample marking used for at present requires random sampling of a set proportion of the scripts for each question, and if discrepancies are revealed the whole cohort is re-marked. However, the first marker’s marks are not changed on randomly sampled scripts as this is deemed to be unfair to candidates whose scripts were not sampled. The Academic Director of Assessment is currently drawing up a policy when a remark will be triggered.</p>	

**List of any particular strengths or distinctive or innovative features in relation to standards and assessment processes that would be worth drawing to the attention of external audiences:**

Prepared by: Ana Filipovic

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> August 2013

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*It is perhaps worth restating the point made last year, that emphasis on the project work is a strength of the course. It is unusual to provide such a substantial project in year 2 and this experience no doubt contributes to the strong year 3 project performances. Project supervision places considerable extra demands on academic staff, who are to be commended for meeting these demands. Marking of projects is also very thorough*

**FOR COMPLETION  
AFTER THE  
EXAMINATION**

**THE ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE**  
***EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT***

**Name of Examiner** Craig A McArdle and Paul Loughna

**Programme** BSc Bioveterinary Science

**Year of appointment** 2010 (CAM) and 2012 (PL)

**Year of Examination** 2013

**Examination** 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year (2<sup>nd</sup> July Board) and 3<sup>rd</sup> year (1<sup>st</sup> July Board)

**Dates of attendance at the RVC** 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2013

Please comment on the areas detailed below. If you have no comments in a particular area, please state "Satisfactory", "Good" or "Excellent".

**1. The Programme**

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

- 1.1 course content
- 1.2 learning objectives, and the extent to which they were met
- 1.3 teaching methods
- 1.4 resources (in so far as they affected the assessment)
- 1.5 the overall quality of the Programme, as revealed by the student performance, with specific reference to particular strengths and weaknesses
- 1.6 the recommendations from this Examination for the curriculum, syllabuses, and teaching methods
- 1.7 the effects of any changes made to the Programme in the last 12 months

*The programme and course content are good-excellent. The course makes good use of teaching staff research expertise and offers appropriate coverage of the discipline as well as considerable breadth and choice (notably in the final year). The learning objectives are appropriate and are clearly stated. There is a broad range of teaching methods that are appropriately used, and we are unaware of resource issues affecting the assessment.*

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*The overall quality of the programme is very good for all 3 years, as evidenced by student performance. Final year grades included 6 1<sup>st</sup> class degrees, with over 65% receiving 2.1 or 1<sup>st</sup>. There was a reasonable distribution of marks across the modules with RVC module means of 56-71%. The range of the final year project topics offered was very good and the projects inspected ranged from satisfactory to excellent.*

*Students completing in 2013 had total mean marks of 55% and 59% in years 1 and 2. These are comparable to the year means for the current year 1 and 2 students (54% and 57%), indicating maintenance of high standards*

## **2. Candidates**

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

- 2.1 impressions of candidates' specific areas of strength and weakness, as revealed by the assessment process
- 2.2 the quality of candidates' knowledge and skills, with particular reference to those at the top, middle or bottom of the range
- 2.3 the candidates' overall performance in relation to students at a similar stage on comparable courses in other institutions, where this is known to you

*We have not identified any specific areas of weakness, with the candidates' knowledge and skills varying in accord with the variance in their grades.*

*Projects are an area of strength as borne out by a mean project marks of approx. 62% (year 3).*

*The range of knowledge exhibited by the students and the overall levels of performance in years 1 and 2 are comparable those expected for the Biovet and Biomed BSc courses we are familiar with.*

## **3. Assessment Process**

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

- 3.1 the appropriateness of the assessment methods to the subject matter and their relevance to the learning objectives
- 3.2 the extent to which the assessment processes are rigorous
- 3.2 whether the assessments reflected the syllabus adequately
- 3.3 the overall standard of marks
- 3.4 any changes from previous years in which you have examined

*The assessment processes are rigorous and appropriate and adequately reflect the syllabus.*

*Overall, the standard of marks is appropriate for this type of course.*

*The marking of 3<sup>rd</sup> year projects is particularly rigorous, with all being double marked and extensive comments making it easy to see how the marks were arrived at. However, we noted a number of projects with considerable differences between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> marks, where the average (or nearest to average in the scheme) was taken as the final mark. These included a project for*

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*which 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> marks were 4 points apart on the common grading scheme. With the large proportion of marks allocated to the projects and the lack of granularity at the extremes of the scheme, this can have a major influence on overall marks. We recommend you consider 3<sup>rd</sup> marking of projects where 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> marks differ by 20% or more (two instances this year).*

*Sample marking was extensive and well documented this year. Our understanding is that when sample marking indicates "systematic" over-marking or under-marking by 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> markers, this triggers remarking for the entire cohort. This seems appropriate but begs the question of what constitutes a systematic difference. Where no systematic difference is seen the 1<sup>st</sup> mark is accepted. We noted an instance where 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> marks on a year 2 exam question differed by 8 points in the marking scheme (62% and 30%) and because the sample marking showed no systematic difference, the first mark was accepted. We recommend you consider better defining the systematic difference that triggers 3<sup>rd</sup> marking, and also the possibility that major differences between individual marks should trigger 3<sup>rd</sup> marking.*

*Compared to previous years we have noted an increase in the proportion of scripts being sample marked.*

*We had previously expressed concern about variability in marks obtained for the King's modules, the fact that the board has no opportunity to moderate these marks, and the fact that we have no access to feedback from students on these modules. This was less of a concern this year, as so few students took the King's modules.*

#### **4. Assessment Procedures**

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

- 4.1 the administration of the examinations, e.g. time available for marking and moderation
- 4.2 arrangements for marking
- 4.3 procedures followed by the Board of Examiners
- 4.4 the participation of External Examiners in the process
- 4.5 adequacy of External Examiners' briefing
- 4.6 comparison with previous years in which you have examined

*As far as we're aware there was sufficient time for marking and moderation. These were fair and efficiently run boards with very good procedures. Participation of external examiners in the process is generally appropriate, with ample opportunity to check exam questions. The external examiner briefing was also good.*

*In previous years we had found the process rather rushed (particularly for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year board). This was improved this year by having more complete documentation available from the outset, and by having projects posted to us for moderation in advance of the board visit. In previous years there had also been some confusion regarding remit - we felt that we were being invited to re-mark borderline script whereas this would not normally be expected of external examiners. This was clarified and we were better able to focus on our remit. In general, these were minor improvements to these well-run boards.*

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**5. Please delete responses as appropriate**

- |     |   |     |
|-----|---|-----|
| 5.1 | Comments I have made in previous years have been acted upon   | YES |
| 5.2 | An acceptable response has been made  | YES |
| 5.3 | I approved the papers for the Examination   | YES |
| 5.4 | I was able to scrutinise an adequate sample of students' work and marks to enable me to carry out my duties                               | YES |
| 5.5 | I attended the meeting of the Board of Examiners held to approve the results of the Examination   | YES |
| 5.6 | Candidates were considered impartially and fairly   | YES |
| 5.7 | The standards set for the awards are appropriate for qualifications at this level, in this subject  | YES |
| 5.8 | The standards of student performance are comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar | YES |
| 5.9 | The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted                                  | YES |

*If you have replied No to any of these questions, please comment more fully:*

*If you have identified any areas of good practice, please comment more fully:*

*It is perhaps worth restating the point made last year, that emphasis on the project work is a strength of the course. It is unusual to provide such a substantial project in year 2 and this experience no doubt contributes to the strong year 3 project performances. Project supervision places considerable extra demands on academic staff, who are to be commended for meeting these demands. Marking of projects is also very thorough.*

Signed

Date 15/08/2013

