

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

Examiner Comment	RVC Response	Actions
Dr James Moffatt	<p>Note: Please remember to directly quote (copy and paste) our regulations/procedures e.g. from the intranet</p> <p>http://intranet.rvc.ac.uk/StudentsAndTeaching/RegsAndProcs.cfm</p>	RVC list of actions for 2013-14
<p>3. Assessment Process Paper 1</p> <p>I had some reservations about this MCQ paper at the draft stage (see earlier report), as some of the questions were not framed appropriately. Some of these problems have been addressed, and I understand what a difficult task it can be to get a multitude of setters to change/reformat questions. Interestingly, some of the more (ideologically) problematic questions (“Which of the following is NOT true...”) appear to discriminate between the different abilities of the cohorts quite well. However, the following questions appeared to punish the brighter students and reward the less able: 1, 2, 4, 27, 31, 41, 48. I could see no obvious reason why brighter students appeared to “overthink” these questions and get them wrong, probably because I am not sufficiently familiar with the taught</p>	<p><i>We are currently compiling a database of all MCQ that have previously been used in summative examinations. The database will include any available statistics on how students answered the questions and if they are able to discriminate between students achieving better scores overall in the exam.</i></p> <p><i>We will endeavour to ensure at the question setting stage that we do not use questions in this format.</i></p>	<p>Action (if any) date & name: Preparation of a database for all Gateway MCQ is being carried out as part of a pilot project in the Examinations Office. This should be completed in time to be consulted when papers are set for June 2014 (examiner recommendation 1 below) We will review all questions to ensure that papers in the future will not contain questions of this format.</p> <p>Action. Charlotte Lawson, March 2014</p>

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

<p>material. The chief examiner may wish to investigate this further with the individual setters. If MCQ questions were stored in a database with the analysis of student performance, it would be simple to refine and reuse these questions (see Recommendations) year on year. We have found this to be a very useful and time-saving procedure at my own institution once a bank of refined questions has been accumulated.</p>		
<p>Papers 2 & 3: The clinical markers more reluctant to use the upper end of the marking scheme/ marking too closely</p>	<p><i>The course director reviews all marks and ensures that any unusual skews and clusters on individual questions are reviewed.</i></p>	
<p>Recommendations: (1) Putting single best answer questions into a database, and using the analysis of answers to improve discrimination between different quintiles. (2) The generic marking scheme for the problem solving paper does not appear appropriate. The structure of the questions into subsections worth different proportions of the full ten marks makes such a document</p>	<p><i>Recommendation 1 – please see comments above</i></p> <p><i>Clarification on the use of the marking scheme for problem solving papers will be addressed at the next meeting of Learning Teaching & Assessment Committee.</i></p>	<p><i>Action. Charlotte Lawson, Feb 2014</i></p>

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

<p>redundant, and it is clear that markers simply add up the different sections mathematically. I suggest that continue this practice and that the generic marking scheme is dropped.</p> <p>(3) Although I understand that it is not RVC policy to standard set MCQ questions, I suggested at the exam board that the Cohen method (used at SGUL) is a relatively simple method for this purpose and might be considered in the future. My quick analysis at the Board meeting revealed an overall pass mark of 48.1% for Paper 1 had this method had been used, which would probably not have changed the overall marks to any significant extent.</p>	<p><i>Clarification on use of single method of Standard Setting across the College for all summative MCQs will be sought from LTAC.</i></p>	<p><i>Action. Charlotte Lawson, Feb 2014</i></p>
<p>Dr Jennie Litten-Brown</p>		<p>RVC list of actions for 2013-14</p>
<p>4. Assessment Procedures <i>Over the past few years I have commented upon the importance of annotation on the exam scripts, even</i></p>	<p><i>We will continue to instruct that markers annotate their examination scripts in an appropriate manner – to aid during the second/sample marking</i></p>	<p>Action. Exams Office prior to exams and at INSET Day, Dec 2013</p>

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

<p><i>last year there were still cases when there was no evidence to show how the marker has arrived at the mark awarded. It is vital that this continues to be raised so that the internal examiners continue to improve on the situation. As I commented before, the sector is moving to a position where students may well ask to look at their scripts and thus the annotation is vital.</i></p>	<p><i>process and during scrutineering of papers by External Examiners</i></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:

- (1) Professional organisation and communications from the exams team have made performing my role very straightforward.
- (2) Collating the different scripts by each candidate into individual folders made the job of finding particular papers very simple.
- (3) The model answers are again to be noted as an area of good practice.

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

**FOR COMPLETION
AFTER THE
EXAMINATION**

THE ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

Name of Examiner Dr Jennie Litten-Brown

Programme Gateway

Year of appointment Fourth

Year of Examination 2013

Examination All Gateway papers

Dates of attendance at the RVC

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

I was not able to attend the board due to a stay in hospital so my comments are based on documents I have seen prior to the board sitting. The course remains of a high standard where the learning objectives, teaching methods and resources continue to support the programme. Students are well prepared for their future studies on the Veterinary Medicine degree with full support throughout the programme. Staff are professional and dedicated to making sure the students are as successful as possible.

Prepared by: Ana Filipovic

Date: 15th July 2013 (edited with JLB comments on 13th August) Edited by TQC Subgroup 3rd Dec 2013

5 of 14

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

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

I am not able to comment on the success of students in this year's cohort but know from the past that students are well supported and the full range of marks are used. The assessment is fair and covers a range of different techniques thus resulting in students being fully and appropriately assessed. The assessment is comparable with other institutions I am and have been associated 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 continues to be rigorous and appropriate to the learning objectives set for the course. Throughout my time as external examiner for this course I have seen good descriptive feedback on the in-course assessment enabling the students to use the information to improve their future work. I have also found the model answers provided with the exam papers extremely useful both in the checking of the assessment prior to the students sitting the papers but also whilst checking through the students papers prior to the exam board sitting. I note the production of model answers as an example of good practice.

4. Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

- 4.1 the administration of the examinations, e.g. time available for marking and moderation

Prepared by: Ana Filipovic

Date: 15th July 2013 (edited with JLB comments on 13th August) Edited by TQC Subgroup 3rd Dec 2013

6 of 14

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

- 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

Over the past few years I have commented upon the importance of annotation on the exam scripts, even last year there were still cases when there was no evidence to show how the marker has arrived at the mark awarded. It is vital that this continues to be raised so that the internal examiners continue to improve on the situation. As I commented before, the sector is moving to a position where students may well ask to look at their scripts and thus the annotation is vital.

5. Please delete responses as appropriate

- | | | | | |
|-----|---|----------------|---------------|-----|
| 5.1 | Comments I have made in previous years have been acted upon | YES | NO | N/A |
| 5.2 | An acceptable response has been made | YES | NO | N/A |
| 5.3 | I approved the papers for the Examination | YES | NO | N/A |
| 5.4 | I was able to scrutinise an adequate sample of students' work and marks to enable me to carry out my duties | YES | NO | N/A |
| 5.5 | I attended the meeting of the Board of Examiners held to approve the results of the Examination | YES | NO | N/A |
| 5.6 | Candidates were considered impartially and fairly | YES | NO | N/A |

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

I was unable to attend the Board due to a stay in hospital hence I have not seen the papers and am not able to comment on them.

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

The model answers are again to be noted as an area of good practice.

Prepared by: Ana Filipovic

Date: 15th July 2013 (edited with JLB comments on 13th August) Edited by TQC Subgroup 3rd Dec 2013

7 of 14

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

As this is my final year I would like to take this opportunity to thank the team for making this a rewarding experience.

Signed

J Litten-Brown

Date 17th July 2013

**FOR COMPLETION
AFTER THE
EXAMINATION**

THE ROYAL VETERINARY COLLEGE

EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT

Name of Examiner	Dr James Moffatt
Programme	Gateway
Year of appointment	2013
Year of Examination	2013
Examination	June 2013
Dates of attendance at the RVC	3/7/2013, 4/7/2013

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

Prepared by: Ana Filipovic

Date: 15th July 2013 (edited with JLB comments on 13th August) Edited by TQC Subgroup 3rd Dec 2013

8 of 14

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

Type here

The course content is broad and appropriate for the intended cohort of students. This exam is a good mixture of different assessments, challenging the students in different ways. There is an even spread of marks reflecting this. As I suggested during my initial consideration of the draft exam, some of the MCQ questions have been edited/reformatted although there is room for additional improvement. Unless otherwise noted, I have found the marking of the papers to be fair and consistent.

I found the quality of the students to be impressive; indeed two achieved distinctions. Some of the taught material is quite complicated (involving e.g. complex cell signalling pathways) and the students have mostly risen to the challenge.

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

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

Type here

The range of student performance is fairly wide, as might be expected from this cohort of students. Many students struggled particularly with Paper 3, which required more detailed and lengthy responses. Some of the better students from this cohort are probably no different academically than B.Sc. (Biomedical Science) students at my institution or indeed the RVC B Vet Sci students.

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

Type here

Paper 1

I had some reservations about this MCQ paper at the draft stage (see earlier report), as some of the questions were not framed appropriately. Some of these problems have been addressed, and I understand what a difficult task it can be to get a multitude of setters to change/reformat questions. Interestingly, some of the more (ideologically) problematic questions ("Which of the following is NOT true...") appear to discriminate between the different abilities of the cohorts quite well. However, the following questions appeared to punish the brighter students and reward the less able: 1, 2, 4, 27, 31, 41, 48. I could see no obvious reason why brighter students appeared to "overthink" these questions and get them wrong, probably because I am not sufficiently familiar with the taught material. The chief examiner may wish to investigate this further with the individual setters. If MCQ questions were stored in a database with the analysis of

Prepared by: Ana Filipovic

Date: 15th July 2013 (edited with JLB comments on 13th August) Edited by TQC Subgroup 3rd Dec 2013

10 of 14

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

student performance, it would be simple to refine and reuse these questions (see Recommendations) year on year. We have found this to be a very useful and time-saving procedure at my own institution once a bank of refined questions has been accumulated.

Paper 2

Questions 1 & 2 (Pneumonia in cows/pregnant bitch) were outside my area of expertise but seemed fair and discriminated between the different students and their abilities. Some students had written quite lengthy answers but received few marks. I presume this is because much of what they wrote was irrelevant? Or are the clinical markers more reluctant to use the upper end of the marking scheme?

The remaining questions ranged in the quality of responses and the numbers of students attempting them. Many students opted for Q5 (uterine contractility) and Q8 (changes in gait), which were relatively straightforward question and the average marks were fairly high. Only four students attempted Q6 (teratogenic effects), but there was a clear spread in the quality of the answers. Of the eight students attempting Q7 (frogs grips), one tried to write an essay based on the photo in the question rather than the data presented and was probably lucky to get 4/10 for their efforts.

Paper 3

This paper clearly challenged the students more than paper 2 (average mark 52% *versus* 64%), and it is not surprising given the detailed knowledge required to answer the questions in this paper.

It is probably unsurprising that almost all students opted for Question 1 (lambing) since the subject material is related to one of the ICA. It is a little surprising that none was awarded a mark above 68% though, and again this examiner wonders if clinical academics are marking a little too closely. That said, very few students achieved 70% on any question from this paper.

Some questions were selected by only a few students (e.g. Q2 (dairy industry), Q 5 (extracellular matrix)), although the spread of marks appeared similar to those questions which were more popular choices. I was impressed by the depth of some of the questions, and the range in the quality of answers: FGF signalling pathways, cytoskeletal proteins, punctuated evolution, body plan evolution. Question 8 (micro versus macroevolution) was a popular choice, and the spread of marks is similar to other assessments (48-75%).

Recommendations:

- (4) Putting single best answer questions into a database, and using the analysis of answers to improve discrimination between different quintiles.
- (5) The generic marking scheme for the problem solving paper does not appear appropriate. The structure of the questions into subsections worth different proportions of the full ten marks makes such a document redundant, and it is clear that markers simply add up the different sections mathematically. I suggest that continue this practice and that the generic marking scheme is dropped.

Prepared by: Ana Filipovic

Date: 15th July 2013 (edited with JLB comments on 13th August) Edited by TQC Subgroup 3rd Dec 2013

11 of 14

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

- (6) Although I understand that it is not RVC policy to standard set MCQ questions, I suggested at the exam board that the Cohen method (used at SGUL) is a relatively simple method for this purpose and might be considered in the future. My quick analysis at the Board meeting revealed an overall pass mark of 48.1% for Paper 1 had this method had been used, which would probably not have changed the overall marks to any significant extent.

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

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

Type here

The administration of the exam seemed very satisfactory and the meeting of the Board of Examiners was conducted to a high professional standard. I was given plenty of opportunities to comment on the examination process and had minor questions answered to my satisfaction. The full range of assessments was made available to me for a thorough examination before the meeting of the Board and the organisation of the different materials was clear and simple.

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

Course: Gateway

Examination: June 2013

5. Please delete responses as appropriate

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| 5.1 | Comments I have made in previous years have been acted upon | N/A |
| 5.2 | An acceptable response has been made | N/A |
| 5.3 | I approved the papers for the Examination | N/A |
| 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 |

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

Type here

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

Type here

- (4) Professional organisation and communications from the exams team have made performing my role very straightforward.
- (5) Collating the different scripts by each candidate into individual folders made the job of finding particular papers very simple.

Signed James Moffatt

Date 10/7/2013

Prepared by: Ana Filipovic

Date: 15th July 2013 (edited with JLB comments on 13th August) Edited by TQC Subgroup 3rd Dec 2013

14 of 14