Individual Report

RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice, 2014/15

Ms Carole Clarke

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

Course content is set by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons for the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice A and B modules.

Response from college requested: NO

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

Set out in the Module descriptors for the RCVS CertAVP and in the RVC published module outlines. Clear and comprehensive and relevant to general veterinary practice.

Response from college requested: NO

1.3 Teaching methods

The modules are assessment only, although candidates have access to online resources, an annual study day and detailed feedback on each piece of submitted work, with clear evidence of improved performance where essays are resubmitted following feedback. Essay plans can be submitted for comment and students comment that this is helpful.

Response from college requested: NO

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

Module outlines are clear and published tips from previous candidates offer good pointers for self-management through the assessment process. Not all candidates make use of the resources, however. Detailed feedback does refer the candidate to the resources where appropriate. Several instances of plagiarism were observed with candidates referred to appropriate training and assessment before resubmitting work. It may be appropriate to offer this training to all candidates before they submit their first essay, particularly if they have not been familiar with academic writing recently.

Response from college requested: YES

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

All candidate currently have access to the plagiarism test and training on Learn but we will advise all new candidates specifically that they should undertake it.

Action Required:

To amend candidate information to include requirement to undertake plagiarism test and training.

Action Deadline:

31-Mar-2015

Action assigned to:

Joanne Jarvis

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

Response from college requested: NO

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

I am not involved with assessment at other institutions, but there is evidence of students choosing RVC modules to complement those from other institutions and vice versa, to complete the CertAVP. I consider this to indicate that the RVC modules are offering students a valued choice of assessment route to the CertAVP, with choice an important issue for students with differing needs who are also working full time in practice. Comparison of results from the different institutions would be helpful if available.

Response from college requested: YES

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

We agree that comparison of results would be useful and are working with the RCVS to help them develop appropriate QA procedures that include this.

Action Required:

Discussion with RCVS

Action Deadline:

31-Jul-2015

Action assigned to:

Jill Maddison

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

The knowledge and level of reflective writing at the top of the range is very good, with fair assessment of candidates at all levels against the grading scheme used.

Response from college requested: NO

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

A candidate suggestion from the module A survey - to help candidates 'benchmark' themselves by knowing the range of marks achieved for the essays - could be considered to enhance candidate feedback.

Response from college requested: NO

This is a suggestion from one candidate. We can place the range of marks achieved for each module in the CertAVP information on Learn but query the academic value of this (encourages candidate competitiveness?) – perhaps TQC could provide guidance. However, if this is done for other courses then we can do it easily after each exam board as such data is compiled for it.

Assessment Process

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Assessment methods are appropriate and feedback is relevant to the specific learning objectives.

Response from college requested: NO

3.2 Extent to which assessment processes are rigorous

The inclusion of additional criteria in the common grading scheme used for CertAVP is helpful. Candidates in the top, middle and bottom of the range all receive directed feedback to improve their performance.

Response from college requested: NO

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

Assessment is consistent with the framework.

Response from college requested: NO

3.4 Standard of marking

Good

Response from college requested: NO

3.5 Opinion on changes to the assessment process from previous years in which you have examined

Response from college requested: NO

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

4.1 In your view, are the processes for assessment and the determination of awards sound and fairly conducted?

The processes for assessment are sound and fair.
The course management committee and exam board meetings were well attended and conducted with adequate data collation and discussion. Both external examiners attended these and the RVC inset day. Administration is generally efficient, although some delays have occurred in delivering feedback to candidates following delays in assessment. 1 module A candidate reported only 2 of 6 essays returned within the 8 week period. Consideration should be given to minimising delays, particularly with the 2 year module deadline as candidates often submit essays one at a time. Information on adherence to deadlines would be helpful.
There is a lack of clarity over the appeals process for resubmission for a third time in the A and B modules and written examination, which was highlighted by the appeals in this examination year.
The hearing of appeals by a subcommittee appears appropriate for this type of award where candidates need prompt feedback in order to progress quickly through the modules. It would be helpful if the external examiners are made aware of the results of the appeals as conducted.
With most candidates including either general time pressures from work and other studies or lack of initial insight into the quality of work needed in their appeal, a review of the permissible grounds for and process for considering requests for a third attempt would be useful.
Information given to candidates regarding appeals should be clarified to ensure fairness, and the quality and quantity of feedback to candidates following failure in the examination could be reviewed to facilitate improvement in performance.

Response from college requested: YES

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Yes - we need to clarify the appeals process and ensure that both external examiners are made aware of the outcomes. In relation to the delays reported in return of some work, we acknowledge that this occasionally occurs for Module A essays. The CertAVP administration team do their utmost to remind and cajole hard working academic faculty in relation to timely marking of essays and the vast majority are able to meet the deadlines set.

Action Required:

Meeting with the Academic Registrar, communication of the process to candidates and consistent communication of the outcomes of appeals to the external examiners.

Action Deadline:

31-Jul-2015

Action assigned to:

Jill Maddison and Joanne Jarvis

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

The revised grading scheme for the CertAVP improves the assessment for this award. The grading scheme is very clear. The changes to the Assessment and Award Regulations for 2014-15 are significant and consideration should be given to clarifying the position for current candidates enrolled under the previous regulations that may feel disadvantaged if they fail a module with borderline marks that they would have passed under the new Regulations.

Response from college requested: YES

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

We will be discussing this with the Academic Registrar. Currently RVC regulations require that a student be assessed under the regulations that were in place when they enrolled. The change to the regulations so that the CertAVP is harmonised with the RVC's regulations for all Master's modules has created some issues of perceived fairness and we need to find a way to address this as I can entirely appreciate how a candidate may feel being assessed to a different requirement. Students under the old regs can see the new regs on Learn and so are aware that there is a lower “pass” mark applied to individual pieces of work in the new system. However, there have also been changes to the grading descriptors for case reports so it is unlikely that the standard required to achieve an overall module pass will substantially change. They also will be subjected to new regulations when they enrol in a new module so will be aware of the differences.

Action Required:

Discussion with the Academic Registrar and specific guidelines developed.

Action Deadline:

31-Jul-2015

Action assigned to:

Jill Maddison and Joanne Jarvis

4.3 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

Response from college requested: NO

General Statements

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Thank you

Response from college requested: NO

5.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Thank you

Response from college requested: NO

5.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

5.4 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:

Response from college requested: NO

5.5 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:

Response from college requested: NO

5.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Please see comment 4.1 regarding the appeals procedure.

Response from college requested: NO

5.7 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:

Response from college requested: NO

5.8 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:

Response from college requested: NO

5.9 I have received enough support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

I appreciate the prompt attention received to my requests from the Cert AVP administration team

Response from college requested: NO

5.10 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:

Response from college requested: NO

5.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: 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:

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

Areas of good practice:
In many examples seen, individual essay feedback to students at all grade levels is constructive and specific with clear guidance for the students to help them improve their knowledge and writing. Module surveys encourage freehand comments from students on many aspects of the programme and this is considered and discussed at the Course Management Committee meetings.

Response from college requested: NO

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)

Improved signposting within the CertAVP resources to appropriate RVC CPD provision, particularly for A and B modules would be helpful for candidates.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for an excellent suggestion and we will improve this information we give to candidates. Each CPD course at RVC does have the CertAVP module it is relevant for in the course description but we need to turn the information around and provide it based on CertAVP module.

Action Required:

Develop list of CPD courses available at RVC with specific reference to modules they would be useful for.

Action Deadline:

31-Jul-2015

Action assigned to:

Joanne Jarvis