

# Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 29-Jun-2015

**UG Biological Sciences, 2014/15**

**Lead examiner: Professor Alireza Fazeli**

**Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Paul Loughna**

## The Programme

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

### 1.1 Course content

The course content is comprehensive and in year 3 offers a wide choice of modules for students to choose from. The majority of lectures are provided by academics who are experts in their particular subject which increases the quality of the course delivery. In general, quality and the depth of the course content is impressive.

**Response from college requested: YES**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson**

**Course Director Response:**

We would like to thank the external examiners for the time taken to thoroughly assess our course learning outcomes and for their positive comments regarding the quality of the course.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

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

The learning objectives are clear and well explained in the course materials.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

### 1.3 Teaching methods

A wide range of teaching methods is employed. This is a good practice and allows different means of educational techniques and technologies be used.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

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

No resource issue to affect the assessment process was identified.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

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

In the third year, a diverse choice of modules is provided. Examiners hoped that adequate information and guidance is provided for students to make the best choice between all the modules provided.

**Response from college requested: YES**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson**

#### **Course Director Response:**

We provide outlines for the range of third year modules during Spring term of year two of the course as well as holding a "modules fair" where module leaders are available to discuss the different options with students. Current 3<sup>rd</sup> year students are also encourage to attend the Modules fair Students are also encouraged to discuss their choices with tutors and lecturers prior to making final decisions.

#### **Action Required:**

#### **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

We expect a similar performance (if not better) compared to other BVETSci elsewhere.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

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

To best of our knowledge the quality of the candidates' knowledge and skills with respect to those at top, middle and bottom is similar to that of students in other institutions.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

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

Comparing the student grades to the last year, in general not a very large variation can be noticed. The main variation is a 16% increase in achieving the third grade compared to last year and an increase of around 5% in achieving first grade between students attending year one. A 10% increase was also visible in the first and the third grades achievements in the year 2 compared to the year before. The year 3 grades did not change much compared to the last year.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

## Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

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

Assessment methods are appropriate and in accordance with the learning objectives and curriculum.

**Response from college requested: NO**

### 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

The assessment processes are precise and very well thought. It often involves several check point and quality assessments to assure the students are not disadvantaged. The college should be congratulated for establishment of such well thought assessment processes as well as rigours quality control applied.

**Response from college requested: YES**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson**

**Course Director Response:**

We would like to thank the external examiners for their input to our examinations and assessments. Their observations during setting of papers are invaluable and help to maintain our rigorous standards.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

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

We found the assessment process consistent with the FHEQ guidelines.

**Response from college requested: NO**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

### 3.4 Standard of marking

Marking standard is high, consistent and rigorous through the curriculum in all the three years we had the opportunity to look at the exam paper. In the majority of the cases the first and second marker results were very similar. Occasionally a difference of more than 5% between the first and second mark was present. We particularly looked at a sample of those papers and find ourselves in agreement with the final mark.

**Response from college requested: NO**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

**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, the process for all the years is fair and sound.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

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

No change is required.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

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

Some of the marked essay had no annotation by markers to show how the particular mark is achieved. It is important that the marker would annotate his/her marking. This allows a fair assessment of the marks by the second examiner and subsequently by the external examiner.

**Response from college requested: YES**

**Dr P.L**

I agree with lead examiner.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson**

**Course Director Response:**

We will continue to remind all examiners of the importance of annotation of scripts during marking.

**Action Required:**

Exams office to remind all examiners of the importance of annotation of scripts during marking in the information sheet that is sent out with scripts.

**Action Deadline:**

31-May-2016

**Action assigned to:**

Adam Osgood

## General Statements

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

N/A

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

Prof Fazeli and Dr. Scase were not involved in this process last year. Any such comments need to be provided by Prof. Loughna.

**Response from college requested: NO**

Dr P.L

The comments have been addressed to my satisfaction.

### 4.2 An acceptable response has been made

N/A

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

Prof Fazeli and Dr. Scase were not involved in this process last year. Any such comments need to be provided by Prof. Loughna.

**Response from college requested: NO**

Dr P.L

An acceptable response has been made.

### 4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

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

**Response from college requested: NO**

Dr P.L

Yes

### 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:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

Dr P.L

Yes

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:

Response from college requested: NO

Dr P.L

Yes

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

Dr P.L

yes

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:

Response from college requested: NO

Dr P.L

Yes

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:

Response from college requested: NO

Dr P.L

Yes

4.9 I have received enough support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

Dr P.L

Yes

**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:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

Yes

**4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed**

**Yes**

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

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr P.L**

Yes

**4.12 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**

**Dr P.L**

Yes

## 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:

We found the quality of the material provided in the course and the rigour of assessment outstanding and of very high quality. The examinations were on the whole, carried out to a good standard and to an equivalent level to similar examinations at other UK veterinary schools.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr P.L

I agree with lead examiner.

**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)**

Quality control of the questions for year 3.

We would recommend setting up review groups for each of the modules, such that questions can be reviewed prior to them being finalized and sent to the external examiners. This would enable better quality control of each question for each of the modules.

We would suggest that each of the problem solving questions is answered by someone who has not set the question prior to being sent out to the external examiners. In addition forming a quality control meeting to check the balance and quality of the questions set for each exam in each year once the exam papers are set up would assure production of a good quality exam paper.

Format of questions for Year 3

There was no clear standardization of question format between modules. The external examiners were concerned that this would lead to differences in perceived difficulties of individual modules. The external examiners felt there was too much reliance on open-ended essay questions. For instance, some were very open-ended. For instance: "Write about the role of angiogenesis in bone physiology" compared to more structured questions such as: "Using the canine roundworm as an example 1) list the hurdles that a parasite has to overcome in order to complete its lifecycle, 2) etc."

In some cases, the questions could be answered with general biological knowledge and did not appear to really test information that may have been imparted during the taught component of the module. For instance "Discuss, using examples, particular challenges that you might face when conducting epidemiological research on disease of free-living wildlife."

Some highly specific essay questions may have been more appropriately assessed in a different format, such as using multiple choice questions or as a short answer question.

Specific questions

In year three exam

1. PHVTD Qu.2

a. Question removed due to it being impossible to fully interpret the data based on the figure supplied. The figure was also very small when reproduced in the examination paper. The copy that was sent to the external examiners was much larger and consequently considerably clearer.

b. The question was also overly long.

c. The external examiners agreed that removal of the question and averaging of the remaining questions that the student answered for that module was the most appropriate course to take. The final marks were only slightly altered for each candidate, and no candidate was penalized by this process.

2. PHVTD Qu.3

a. There are 2 boxes missing from the diagram in part b – for the DALYS values. It is not apparent from the question that the DALYS values were required to gain full marks, as there are no boxes for them. Those candidates that might have otherwise scored full marks did not as they did not provide this information.

In the Year 2 exam:

1. Some of the problem solving questions had multiple parts, of which some were interlinked. In such cases, if the student answered one of the first parts incorrectly, then all subsequent parts would inevitably be incorrect. We would suggest altering such questions, so that all parts of the question are independent of each other. For example on the EWI paper, Qu 3 had interlinked parts, whereas Qu 4 had independent parts to the question.
2. Some of the questions required the students to graph data. We felt that this was very easy for the majority of candidates.
3. There may have been a typographical mistake Qu4 of PPPP, in the question regarding 'platelet induction in monocytes'. As written, the sentence does not make a great deal of sense and it may have affected students ability to answer the question. However, based on our analysis of the results we could not see that it affected the written answers to this question, and hence it does not appear to have altered the students ability to answer this question.

In the Year 1 exam:

1. In contrast to the year 2 exam, the problem solving questions were excellent, with each question containing independent parts, such that no parts were dependent on obtaining the correct answer for the preceding part.
2. Two of the students that failed, failed to provide a Library Project and hence also were unable to provide an oral examination. However, one student that failed both the library project and the oral examination, still passed with a third. We would wish to confirm that the students were told that if they did not submit a Library Project, that they would automatically also score zero on the oral examination.
3. One student had a lateness penalty on the Library Project. We would want to confirm that the students were made fully aware of the penalties of submitting a project after the deadline.

**Response from college requested: YES**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Charlotte Lawson**

**Course Director Response:**

We would like to thank the external examiners for their careful scrutiny of the questions they have highlighted. Comments will be passed to the relevant module leaders.

The students who did not submit library projects also did not present themselves for their oral presentation, hence no mark was returned. Our current Assessment and Award Regulations would permit a student to give an oral presentation without submission of a written report, so this is not an automatic zero score. Students are made aware of the lateness penalties during induction week, and they are referenced in the Assessment and Award Regulations (section 13) referring students to the College's General Assessment Regulations. However, we will ensure that this policy is restated in the instructions for the library projects (and for all submission of written work).

**Action Required:**

The external examiners' comments on specific questions will be sent to module leaders (Adam Osgood - Exams Officer). As the external examiners have suggested we will set up a question review meeting for third year module papers similar to the review meetings for years one and two and suggest (i) that it is held early in term 2 to enable sufficient time to review and refine questions; (ii) that the panel is comprised of module leaders from all modules and that they scrutinise papers from all module as is the model for year two. This should enable sufficient time for editing and modification of unsuitable questions to a satisfactory level prior to submission to external examiners for final approval. (Adam Osgood - Exams Officer; Rachel Lawrence - 3rd year leader)

The General Assessment Regulations referring to late submission of work will be clearly stated in instructions for written work and will be restated to students prior to submission deadlines of all summatively assessed pieces of work. (Adam Osgood - Exams Officer; Hannah Croall - BSc course coordinator; All module leaders and year leaders)

**Action Deadline:**

02-Oct-2015

**Action assigned to:**

Adam Osgood; Rachel Lawrence; Hannah Croall; All module leaders and year leaders

