

**ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2015/16**

**Appendix 3: External Examiners' report**

**MVetMed**

This appendix contains Course Directors' responses to 2015/16 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from 2014/15 External Examiners' report (if applicable).

As Course Directors 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](mailto:afilipovic@rvc.ac.uk), 01707666938

Actions from 2014/15 with Course Director's updates:

External Examiners Comment	Course Director's response and Action	Course Directors update in 2015/16
<p><b>3.4 Standard of marking</b></p> <p>The standard of marking was consistent and appropriate</p> <p>There is a very considerable discrepancy in the contribution made to the project by students varying from 40% to nearly 100%. We suggest that a level is set which should be regarded as a minimum and that this is clearly stated on the student declaration. The percentage contribution made by the primary supervisor should also be stated and consideration given to a maximum value for this contribution. Other contributors could be named but unless their contribution exceeds a certain amount the precise level (in terms of %) probably does require a numerical value.</p> <p>We request that the marks given by the internal examiners for the project are shown individually (as well as their average) in the summary table so that they can be assessed at a glance.</p>	<p>An alternative approach would be to accept that the student's contribution is sufficient if it is the largest of any collaborators. It will be possible to show individual examiner's marks as requested.</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b></p> <p>For consideration at next CMC</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b></p> <p>15-Sep-2015</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b></p> <p>C. Lamb</p>	<p>The project declaration form was modified to enable SCTS to confirm they were principal investigator and form was approved at CMC 9 Nov 2015.</p>

# Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 24-May-2016

Master of Veterinary Medicine, 2015/16

Lead examiner: Dr Mark Bowen

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Angus Anderson

## The Programme

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

### 1.1 Course content

The course is delivered through a series of modules and research. Examiners were not given detailed information the modules, however when challenged over specific modules (book clubs) at the examination board meeting, satisfactory answers were given that indicate that these are delivered at Masters level.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr A.A

Agreed

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

Response from college requested: **NO**

### 1.3 Teaching methods

Teaching methods are variable and dependent on the module but appear to challenge the candidates appropriately. Some modules show clear discrimination, in that candidates who do poorly in the Applied statistics module often apply poor statistical analysis in their dissertation.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr A.A

Agreed

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

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

The quality of candidates is very high and the quality of work meets appropriate descriptors. There are a very large number of modules with sometimes small numbers of students. It is a credit to the College that these continue to be delivered as they represent a considerable additional burden for small numbers.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr A.A

Agreed

## 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 level of work submitted is comparable or higher than other programmes in other institutions where I examine (internally and externally)

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr A.A

Agreed

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

All students achieve high overall marks, typical for clinical veterinary post-graduate taught courses. The candidates work represents the high level of commitment from themselves and the staff delivering on this course

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr A.A

Agreed

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

Since students who perform poorly in the statistics module do poorly in their application of statistics in their dissertation, consideration should be given for how to support those who struggle (or struggle to engage) in this aspect of their core teaching.

Response from college requested: **YES**

Dr A.A

Agreed

## ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR POSTGRADUATE TEACHING & LEARNING: Dr Rob Fowkes

### Associate Dean for Postgraduate Teaching and Learning Response:

Whilst we have not specifically compared performance on the statistics module with performance on the research project, it was still disappointing that some students in this cohort struggled with statistics. As part of the restructured MVetMed, statistics teaching will form part of the Research Module (that will run for the duration of the 3yr course), and the content of all modules is in the process of being refreshed, prior to the anticipated delivery of the new curriculum in July 2018. It may be that part of the reason for the poor performance in the statistics module was due to confusing instructions provided with the assignment – therefore, we will make sure that the new/revised material is clearly delivered. In addition, we will remind students about the additional support that they can access for statistical help, either from faculty statisticians or from a group of postgraduate mentors (who have received statistics training from Dr Ruby Chang).

#### Action Required:

Revision of statistics content of Research Module is part of the ongoing restructuring exercise.

**Action Deadline: July 2018**

**Action assigned to: Dr Vicky Lipscomb (new course director) and Dr David Brodbelt**

## Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

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

The assessment methods are appropriate for the research projects and when questioned on individual modules these appear appropriate as well. Given the extensive offering of elective modules these have not been evaluated thoroughly.

Candidates who submit a short publication are sometimes disadvantaged by not including background work or negative results. Where author guidelines restrict the written submission significantly, candidates should be advised to include additional information.

**Response from college requested: YES**

Dr A.A

Agreed

**ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR POSTGRADUATE TEACHING & LEARNING: Dr Rob Fowkes**

**Associate Dean for Postgraduate Teaching and Learning Response:**

The flexibility with regards to how students can format their research submissions can raise issues regarding to parity. We thank the examiner for raising this as a potential issue, and can reassure them that as part of the restructured MVetMed, the module leader and deputy module leader for the Research module are already looking at the suitability of the Common Grading Scheme to mark dissertations and manuscripts with parity. We are also examining whether a move towards a manuscript format would be more appropriate, given the requirement for (almost all) residents to submit manuscripts for publications as part of attaining their credentials. As an aside, we have already performed an initial correlation of project performance vs protected time for research (as the amount of off-clinic time varies significantly depending on the specialty); from an analysis of 50 students (from the past 3 years), there is no significant correlation between these two parameters.

**Action Required: Ongoing monitoring and revision of assessment format for the research project**

**Action Deadline: July 2018**

**Action assigned to: Dr David Brodbelt and Dr Rob Fowkes**

### 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

There is a rigorous process for assessment of projects. However some paperwork is inconsistent in its completion (declarations not present for all candidates).

One project co-supervisor was assigned this project to mark, which is unsurprising given the small pool of examiners in some sub-specialties. Where possible this should be avoided. Given that both markers scored similarly and that we have also reviewed each submission this is more of a theoretical rather than an actual problem,

**Response from college requested: NO**

Dr A.A

Agreed

**ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR POSTGRADUATE TEACHING & LEARNING: Dr Rob Fowkes**

**Associate Dean for Postgraduate Teaching and Learning Response:**

Whilst we note that the examiners have not requested a response, we thank them for raising this particular incident (which we believe to be an isolated case). For the past few years, the College has implemented a requirement for two independent examiners to assess major pieces of coursework – neither of whom should either be supervisors or involved with the project in any way.

**Action Required: Ongoing monitoring and implementation of assessment process**

**Action Deadline: July 2018**

**Action assigned to: Dr Vicky Lipscomb & Mr John Sanger**

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

Work meets the standard expected of a Masters.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr A.A**

Agreed

### **3.4 Standard of marking**

Marking standards are generally high but with variable quality of feedback. Given that the quality is generally good or very good it is unlikely that lack of feedback will be an issue

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr A.A**

Agreed

### **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

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr A.A**

Agreed

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

More declarations are present this year, but higher rates should be expected

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

Some candidates have high Turnitin Plagiarism scores. Evidence that such high scores have been acted on should be mentioned.

Might want to consider whether students with higher or equivalent qualifications (e.g. PhDs) can use the APL route for some aspects of the core modules

Submission by publication sometimes limits the extent of work and can appear like a very small body of work, especially where pilot work is not available to examine. Guidance and an ongoing review of intentions to submit should be considered by the course director to ensure that candidates do not inadvertently disadvantage themselves by a desire for publication.

**Response from college requested: YES**

**Dr A.A**

Agreed

#### **ASSOCIATE DEAN FOR POSTGRADUATE TEACHING & LEARNING: Dr Rob Fowkes**

##### **Associate Dean for Postgraduate Teaching and Learning Response:**

Tur Turnitin has been used extensively at the RVC for several years, partly as a tool to assist in detection of plagiarism, but also as an online coursework marking system. Both staff and students are given guidance and training on how to use Turnitin (for marking, or for submission purposes, respectively). Research conduct, plagiarism use of Turnitin is specifically covered in the taught research courses and will continue to be in the new MVetMed research module. As internal examiners, the Turnitin similarity score is an initial guide, not a sole indicator – concerns as regards to plagiarism are initially raised with the exams office and then followed up with the Course Director and Academic Registrar, if required. There are often very straightforward explanations for a high Turnitin similarity score (so, either the fact that the research project has already been published by the student, or occasionally students will have submitted a draft version through Turnitin and then re-submitted the final version, in which case the score is high - in both cases, these are easier to identify).

**Action Required: Update content of Research Module (ongoing) with regards to scientific writing and research ethics**

**Action Deadline: July 2018**

**Action assigned to: Dr Dave Brodbelt & Dr Rob Fowkes**

## General Statements

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

No

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

Declaration forms not always present and therefore contributions not always clear.

**Response from college requested: YES**

Dr A.A

Agreed

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Prof Chris Lamb**

**Course Director Response:**

Unclear how this could happen because Exams Office will not normally accept a project without the necessary accompanying forms.

**Action Required:**

Remind Exams Office and Internal Examiners to look for the declarations.

**Action Deadline:**

30-Sep-2016

**Action assigned to:**

Course Director

### 4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

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

**Response from college requested: NO**

Dr A.A

Agreed

### 4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

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

**Response from college requested: NO**



**4.4 I was able to scrutinise an adequate sample of students' work and marks to enable me to carry out my duties**

**No**

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

Submissions from modules are not made available to examiners. While it would not be sensible to review all of these, access to some samples may be useful especially in understanding borderline scores

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr A.A**

Agreed

**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 A.A**

Yes

**4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly**

**Yes**

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

**Response from college requested: 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:**

**Response from college requested: NO**

**Dr A.A**

Agreed

**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 A.A**

Agreed

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 A.A

Agreed

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 A.A

Agreed

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

Dr A.A

Agreed

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 A.A

Agreed

## 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:

Response from college requested: **NO**

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)

Response from college requested: **NO**

