

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2015/16

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

Accelerated BVetMed

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

As Course Director/Year Leader 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, 01707666938

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 08-Jul-2016

Accelerated Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, 2015/16 (Graduate Year)

Lead examiner: Professor Alan Baird

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Gura Bergkvist

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

The content is appropriate for graduate entrants. Total coverage, in terms of assessment, of such a broad programme is challenging to achieve. A wide range of assessment modalities is used.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Learning objectives are well established. Efforts at blueprinting questions to learning objectives are ongoing.

Response from college requested: **NO**

1.3 Teaching methods

We were given access to all relevant learning material on LEARN, which was very useful. A good range of teaching methods are used to good effect.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

The amount of staff time committed to assessment is high. This includes a very well run set of ISF orals and of Spot tests. Exam setting and marking is thorough.

Response from college requested: **NO**

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

We understand that the RVC is undertaking a review of assessment which will further enhance blueprinting and assessment analysis.

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

This is commensurate with students enrolled in similar programmes in other Schools of Veterinary Medicine. Those students who failed to achieve the required standard were not very far from so doing and are likely to benefit from the opportunity of retaking the examinations.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

The nature of the examination (particularly in the Essay type questions) lends itself to strategic engagement by individual students. Some signs of this were evident. (for example a high proportion of individual essay scores achieved a poor or very poor score). However, assessment modalities which offer no selection by individual students does buffer this to some extent.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Compared with the previous year, there is more evidence of spreads of mark which distinguish between performance of individual students.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

The broad range of assessment modalities remains a feature of this stage of the programme and is to be complimented. One of the externs (AB) attended the ISF orals and confirmed the integrity of process. We understand that future plans include revision of assessment structures (including removal of 'Spot' exams). We are concerned that this is undertaken using blueprinting guidelines to ensure that students retain an element of choice in essay questions but have thorough assessment over the entire course material to avoid the cherry picking which was mentioned in our previous report. The high number of essays which achieved quite low marks is something the Programme Board might consider if the RVC aspires to allow an element of choice whilst discouraging 'cherry picking' revision strategies.

Where choice is a feature (essays and problem-solving) students select specific questions and avoid others. This is not the case for elements such as In Course Assessment, Spot exams and the Integrated Structure and Function Orals.. However, item analysis of the Oral exams showed a bias in the subject areas which were selected by the Examiners. The ISF reporting sheet (which makes this clear) could be usefully further revised to offer students an even greater opportunity to demonstrate integrated knowledge. Similarly the Problem Solving Questions could include more integrative materials.

Course Director response: The length of MCQ papers has been extended to test the core factual knowledge which was previously tested through spot tests.

Course Director response: These issues should be addressed in 2016/17 with further formal blueprinting of examinations and reduction in choice in Problem Solving and Essay papers (the latter already approved by the Course Management and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committees').

Course Directors response: Internal examiners are unaware that there is any bias in the subject selection for oral exams and would welcome further clarification of this topic from external examiners.

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

In general assessments are well run, well organised and comprehensive. Examiners use of the Common Grading Scale continues to increase. Comments on scripts do not always align to RVC Guidance on recording marks (Appendix 1).

There remains a minority of internal examiners who do not annotate scripts as per College policy. Also we identified scripts on which the annotated description did not align to the Common Grading Scale mark. These were flagged at the Exam Board with the intention that feedback is provided to individual marker(s) on how to improve their annotations in the future.

Response from college requested: **NO**

The Exams Office are undertaking work to provide even clearer guidance to internal examiners to emphasize the requirement for annotation on all scripts.

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

Same as previous year (2014-15). The programme stage appears to be consistent with Level 6 and the final outcomes of the degree meet the expectations of Level 7.

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.4 Standard of marking

Standard of marking was on the whole appropriate to the programme. The broad range of assessments lends itself to meaningful analysis. We were happy to see that an initiative has been taken by one academic to develop standard-setting routines for assessment components which furthermore show that all aspects of assessment provide similar patterns of reliability and of discrimination between individual student achievement across what is a very exhaustive and complex programme of study.

Response from college requested: NO

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)

These remain mature, fit for purpose and functional. Administrative support from assessment design right the way through to Exam Board was excellent. The actual exams, particularly the ISF orals, are very well run. Issues which arose (typical for any such complex activity) were competently managed. Summary spreadsheets and access to manuscripts and original materials is well coordinated. Procedures were discussed to identify and prevent potential (e.g. transcriptional) errors in spreadsheets.

Response from college requested: NO

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

A new standard setting procedure was introduced for the MCQ component (Paper 1). This tool established patterns of student outcome were consistent and reliable across various elements of the programme.

The question/marker analysis performed on results from Papers 2 and 3 is a useful initiative. Furthermore, this approach enabled retrospective analysis of discriminatory value of individual questions which could be very meaningful if used to inform assessment design (as has already been done with systemic item analysis of MCQs which has reinforced the power of this assessment).

Response from college requested: NO

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

Response from college requested: NO

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

No

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

The comments in the previous Section 3.1 remain unresolved. We agree with the stated aspiration to cover breadth with an element of choice. However, there is evidence of strategic management of learning by students. For example, many of the essay questions were very poorly answered yet students could compensate by excellent marks in even one of the 6 essays attempted.

[see section 3.1 response](#)

We are grateful for the positive comments to Section 4.4

Response from college requested: NO

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

This was a matter of deep discussion during the examiners visit.

Response from college requested: NO

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

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

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Internal examiners and academic administrators (including Course Directors) should be applauded for their sense of academic justice and fairness to students.

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

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

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

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

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

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

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:

Banking MCQs is under way.

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**

