
Certificate of Advanced Veterinary Practice – EXTERNAL EXAMINERS REPORTS

Responses to 2015/16 External Examiners’ Comments and an update to 2014/15 Actions

To be considered at the Teaching Quality Committee Meeting on: 8th March 2016

a. Update to 2014/15 Actions:

External Examiners’ Comment 2014/15	CD response/Action 2014/15	Update Feb 2016
<i>Mike Herrtage</i>		
<p>1.5 It seems that candidates who fail are given feedback, but to ensure this is taken on board by the candidate, they should have to write a reflective comment on how they intend to address their deficits before they are allowed to resit the examination. I also believe that requesting an additional attempt at an examination should not be classed as an appeal. An appeal should be a challenge against the conduct of the examination. Currently most individuals are allowed a third attempt, which is fine for this type of professional qualification provided the candidate shows improvement at each attempt. This change in requiring a reflective comment should help.</p>	<p>We will ensure that candidates who are asking to resit an examination or resubmit a piece of work for the 2nd time i.e. 3rd attempt (they are automatically allowed to resubmit once) are advised to include this reflective statement in their letter requesting the resit. The issue of what to call this if not an appeal is to be discussed with the Academic Registrar in a meeting scheduled for the end of March. Currently RVC students can appeal the conduct of an examination or they can appeal to be allowed back onto a course (after a failed resit). So the word Appeal in the RVC context does apply to both circumstances but I agree it can be confusing. I appreciate the recognition that this is a professional qualification and as such allowing a well justified 3rd attempt is reasonable.</p> <p>Action Required: To discuss with the Academic Registrar the specific concerns of the current appeals process for</p>	<p>The issue has been discussed with the Academic Registrar and the decision made that the word appeal in this context was acceptable and that the structure of the appeal process for 3rd submissions for the CertAVP was acceptable.</p>

	<p>the CertAVP and to consider the renaming of the request for a 3rd assessment.</p> <p>Action deadline: July 2015, Jill Maddison and Joanne Jarvis</p>	
<p>4.3 The Appeal Process should be separate from 'Requesting permission for an additional attempt at a module' and clear 'case law' should be available to ensure a consistency of decisions.</p> <p>It was sad that cases of plagiarism were being uncovered. More emphasis is required on the professional impact of plagiarism and this should be included in the earlier modules.</p> <p>The gender distribution for C modules does not correlate with those for the A and B modules, which are in line with the profession. Attention should be paid to this and if it becomes a consistent trend then the situation should be explored in depth and remedies suggested.</p> <p>Bringing an 'appeal' to the full Board of Examiners was new. Previously all 'appeals' had been considered by a</p>	<p>We will be reviewing the Appeals process with the RVC's Academic Registrar. We will enhance the information given in relation to plagiarism and advise all candidates they must complete the plagiarism course and test online before submitting any work. The issue of gender distribution for C modules vs A and B will be monitored. If there is evidence of a continuing problem we will raise this issue with the RCVS to work them to find remedies.</p> <p>Action Required: Meeting with RVC Academic Registrar planned for late March. Increase information about plagiarism on Learn. All candidates have been advised to do the plagiarism test and it is now compulsory for them to do so. Most instances of plagiarism involve academic sloppiness rather than intent to deceive and arise from the candidates engaging with academic scholarship after a long break from study or indeed with the type of academic scholarship they have had little or no experience of (depending on where they graduated from). The instances of plagiarism are few considering the large numbers of pieces of work submitted for assessment.</p> <p>Action deadline: June 2015, Jill Maddison and Joanne Jarvis</p> <p>The issue with the appeal being dealt with at a full board was noted. It was a very useful opportunity to receive the</p>	<p>Completing the plagiarism test is now compulsory for all candidates enrolled from 1st August 2015. There is more information about plagiarism and academic writing on Learn.</p> <p>All appeals are continuing to be heard via the mini exam board.</p>

small group and the result of the 'appeal' relayed to the External Examiner. The risk of bringing an appeal to the full Board might allow bias to dictate the outcome because the 'appeal' was being addressed differently.

The Board however discussed the grounds for allowing a third attempt in this case and referred it back to the smaller group for a decision.

Carole Clarke

1.4 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.

board's views on such matters and will inform future appeal decisions.

Action Required: Appeal to be heard by mini exam board as for previous appeals.

Action Deadline: February 2015 Jill Maddison, Joanne Jarvis, relevant Module leader, Matthew Pead or deputy

All candidates 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: March 2015, Joanne Jarvis

All new enrolees from 1st August 2015 are instructed to take the plagiarism test, and no work is accepted until the test is passed.

2.1 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.

4.1 ...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

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: July 2015, Jill Maddison

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: July 2015, Jill Maddison and Joanne Jarvis

The RCVS is collecting statistics from each CertAVP provider on pass rates, resubmission rates. These have not yet been considered by the RCVS CertAVP subcommittee

The external examiners are informed of the outcome of appeals. Candidates who wish to apply to submit for a 3rd time are clearly informed about what is required, the need for a reflective statement etc.

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

4.2 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

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

The current Assessment and Award (A&A) regs for CertAVP are not meeting the needs of the award in that, even with amended marking descriptors, seriously deficient work is being permitted to contribute to the weighted module mark. It now appears that when the advice was given that the CertAVP modules needed to confirm to the Masters A&A regulations it was not taken into account that the CertAVP is not an RVC award and

<p>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.</p>	<p>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 enroll in a new module so will be aware of the differences.</p> <p>Action Required: Discussion with the Academic Registrar and specific guidelines developed.</p> <p>Action Deadline: July 2015 Jill Maddison and Joanne Jarvis</p>	<p>therefore the overall rules about the restriction on the number of modules where work less than 50% could contribute to the final grade cannot be applied. An amendment to the Masters Assessment and Awards regulations is currently being discussed to enable designated “clinical work” to be given the same status as practical work and therefore a 50% pass mark to each element applied.</p>
<p>Improved signposting within the CertAVP resources to appropriate RVC CPD provision, particularly for A and B modules would be helpful for candidates.</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>Action Required: Develop list of CPD courses available at RVC with specific reference to modules they would be useful for.</p> <p>Action Deadline: July 2015, Joanne Jarvis</p>	<p>Some of the RVC CPD courses specifically address CertAVP learning objectives and in addition, many other RVC CPD courses cover topics relevant to veterinarians enrolled on the CertAVP. On the CertAVP area of the website there is a list of CPD courses which link to CertAVP modules.</p>

b. 2014/15 Collaborative Report written by External Examiner:
Mike Herrtage,

RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice, 2014/15

Professor Mike Herrtage

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

The course content is clearly defined.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

The learning objectives are clear and generally the objectives are met by most candidates.

Response from college requested: **NO**

1.3 Teaching methods

Support for candidates has improved with more feedback given, in particular the formative feedback on one case report per discipline for all C modules.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Candidates who failed their written exam, did receive extensive written feedback from assessors to help them in their future attempts.

The input by assessors in providing feedback is massive and care should be taken not to overload enthusiastic assessors so that they become disillusioned. Notice should be taken of this.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

We will continue to monitor the feedback provided to failing candidates to ensure that it is supportive but also encourages personal development and learning and does not prove too onerous for the module leader to provide.

Action Required:

Continued monitoring

Action Deadline:

01-Sep-2016

Action assigned to:

Jill Maddison and Joanne Jarvis

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

Similar performance to other students at the same level.

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 top range have a good grasp and understanding of the information required for advanced clinical practice in their discipline. The middle range have above average understanding of the subject as befits their achievement. Some of the lower range candidates have not yet understood the complexity of clinical reasoning fully and this their approach is often erratic and illogical.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

The assessment is fair, but the introduction of the new Common Grading Scheme for clinical cases is causing difficulty. Concerns were raised that in some instances candidates that passed this year would have had to re-submit their work under the old regulations. The criteria need to be adjusted if 40% is considered a pass so that poor practice is more appropriately penalised. There should be more descriptors below the pass mark to ensure that, as this is a professional exam, poor clinical practice is not incorrectly rewarded with a pass.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

We agree that this issue is of real concern for the CertAVP where the feedback provided to candidates is a very important part of the learning experience. There are two options - to have the Masters Assessment and Award regulations modified so that the mark threshold to contribute to the weighted module mark is higher (e.g. above 45%) or if this is not possible, to amend the marking descriptors so that there is an additional grade between 35% and 38% to improve the grading options in this mark range and the descriptors are appropriate for a professional exam.

Action Required:

Discussion with appropriate RVC committees to progress this

Action Deadline:

31-Jul-2016

Action assigned to:

Jill Maddison

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

The assessment is rigorous, but the descriptors under the new Common grading Scheme are incorrectly scaled for a professional exam. See above.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

As discussed above

Action Required:

As discussed above

Action Deadline:

31-Jul-2016

Action assigned to:

Jill Maddison

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

There is good consistency of assessment between the modules.

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.4 Standard of marking

The marking is of a high standard and the consistency between modules is good.

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)

Yes.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

See note above about the introduction of the new Common Grading Scheme, which in my view either needs to be adjusted or disbanded.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

As discussed above

Action Required:

As discussed above

Action Deadline:

31-Jul-2016

Action assigned to:

Jill Maddison

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

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Response from college requested: **YES**

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Course Director Response:

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There is good consistency of assessment between the modules.

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.4 Standard of marking

The marking is of a high standard and the consistency between modules is good.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

No

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

I was not asked to approve the Examination papers.

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:

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:

Ample helpful support is provided.

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

No

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

The new Common Grading Scheme has introduced anomalies which need to be addressed.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

As previously discussed. The seriousness of the issue is noted and agreed with.

Action Required:

As discussed previously

Action Deadline:

31-Jul-2016

Action assigned to:

Jill Maddison

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:

No. The Modules are well managed and provide a good training platform.

Response from college
requested:

NO

