ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2018/19

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

BVetMed Final Year

This appendix contains Year Leader's responses to 2018/19 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from previous External Examiners' reports (if applicable).

As Year Leader/Course Director 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

Appendix 3 consists of:

a.	Updates to actions from previous years' reports
b.	2018/19 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director/Year Leader

Report Question	External Examiners' comment in 2016/17	Course Directors response and actions	Update in 2017/18	Update in 2018/19
2.2 Quality of candidates' knowledge and skills, with particular reference to those at the top, middle or bottom of the range	Distribution is good for written papers, given the variability of topics, but had a tendency to cluster at the high end for basic procedures in the OSCE. This means candidates can compensate in learned procedure for 'non-rote' integrated tasks, eg by getting 100% in gowning (arguably a lower year basic given) while failing a station that requires diagnostic or communication skill. Several candidates passed overall on the OSCE via compensation through routine process while failing all of the stations that actually has a normal score distribution and reflected some degree of independent thinking.	We entirely agree and are reviewing the OSCE set up with the aim to move some of the more "basic" stations into a DOPs format and to provide more complex stations involving communication and problem-solving. We aim that these changes will be in place for the 2019 final exams as they require modification to rotation activities to accommodate the DOPs which can only be commenced from Feb 2018 **Action Deadline:** 02-Jan-2018 **Action assigned to:** Jill Maddison, Dan Chan and David Bolt	IN PROGRESS DOPS on rotations will be formative for 2019 and summative for 2020.	As stated for 2017/18

Report Question	External Examiners' comment in 2017/18	Course Directors response and actions	Update in 2018/19
1.3 Teaching methods	Students' approach to answering questions in an examination may not necessarily reflect a problem-based approach as taught in the clinics, which is disappointing.	The problem-based approach that is taught at the RVC is explicitly assessed in this finals exam as well as the 4th year exam. The issue with the patchy use of it by some students (or total lack of familiarity by a few) is likely to relate to inconsistent reinforcement in clinical scenarios and rotations and students failure to avail themselves of the extensive learning support material available. We recognise that the approach may need some modification for farm-related questions and will seek guidance from the production animal teaching team. **Action Required:** Discussion with production animal teaching team about how to modify the problem-solving approach taught for individual animals to enhance a problem-solving	This discussion has occurred

		approach that is suitable for production animal/herd level problems. **Action Deadline:** 01-Sep-2018 **Action assigned to:** Jill Maddison	
2.1 Students' performance in relation to those at a similar stage on comparable courses in other institutions, where this is known to you	While the (positive) student focussed environment is duly noted, compensation remains a concern, especially given the nature of independent practice post qualification. It is still possible for a student to fail the CRQ for a particular species badly, for example with scores as low as 27%, but pass overall.	We acknowledge that there is a risk that a student who performs very poorly in one question could still pass. We have analysed the data and no student who received a mark of 27% for a question passed the exam. There was a very small cohort of students who gained 35% in one question who did go onto pass. We have considered the option of imposing a 40% minimum threshold to pass but wished to review student performance over at least 1-2 years while the new exam format was being embedded before doing so. It will remain under consideration. **Action Required:** Review pass statistics for 2018 and 2019 exams with a view to consideration of a minimum threshold mark if necessary **Action Deadline:** 01-Sep-2019 **Action assigned to:** Jill Maddison and John Sanger	It was discussed at the exam board that we would need at least three years of data to evaluate before considering this change
3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous	Mapping of questions to learning objectives might allow better determination of the relationship of the assessment to final year teaching.	Thank you for these comments - they are very helpful. Making explicit how the finals written exam maps to the BVetMed course outcomes is important. They map primarily to three course outcomes rather than learning objectives related only to final year teaching. BVetMed4: Recognise, prevent and diagnose diseases and disorders of animals. Be able to select and interpret appropriate diagnostic test and formulate a treatment plan; considering pain management, client financial status & patient referral when indicated. BVetMed5: Develop a logical problem-solving approach to clinical reasoning in order to effectively solve clinical problems and make decisions.	I am not aware tis has been done so need to check with John as exam convenor

		BVetMed10: Demonstrate knowledge of the principles and behaviours that underpin professionalism, teamwork and ethical decision making (judgement) and apply these in a veterinary setting. **Action Required:** Ensure that it is made explicit to student, assessors and external examiners how the written finals examination maps to BVetMed course outcomes **Action Deadline:** 01-Apr-2019 **Action assigned to:** John Fishwick and Jill Maddison	
3.6 Opinion on changes to the assessment procedures from previous years in which you have examined & **& 4.2 An acceptable response has been made**	Comments have been taken on board, but require actioning.	**Course Director Response:** Action will occur for the 19/20 rotation year **Action Required:** A selection of DOPs to be included in rotation assessment and removed from OSCE assessment **Action Deadline:** 10-Feb-2019 **Action assigned to:** David Bolt, Dan Chan, Brian Catchpole	See response to 2.2

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 13-Jun-2019

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 5, 2018/19

Lead examiner: Professor Malcolm Cobb

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Connie Wiskin, Dr Philip Scott, Dr Joseph Cassidy

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

As stated previously, an appropriate range of modules and a mix of teaching activities continue to be employed. The examination process, rather than course content or learning outcomes, have again been scrutinised.

Response from college requested: NO

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

Response from the College last year states that the finals exam has been mapped to course, AVMA and RCVS competences but we acknowledge this wasn't clear from the paperwork available to the external examiners. We will ensure it is in the future. An action for the College from last year's response was to ensure that it is made explicit to student, assessors and external examiners how the written finals examination maps to BVetMed course outcomes by 01-Apr-2019. Could we have details of how this has been done?

Response from college requested: YES

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

We apologise that the information about how the finals exam had been mapped was not available to you. The finals long answer questions are designed to be a holistic assessment of clinical and professional decision making. The areas the students must study for to prepare for them cover a range of course outcomes, RCVS Day One Skills and AVMA competencies. Specifically, the following outcomes/skills/competencies (or elements of them) may be assessed by the examination in the context of clinical and professional problem solving noting that other outcomes/skills/competencies are assessed in other formats e.g. clinical rotations, OSCES, the research project, animal handling DOPS and 3rd and 4th year written examinations. This mapping has been made available to students preparing to sit finals in 2020.

BVetMed2 Understand the key components that constitute primary healthcare and advise on and implement recommended prophylaxis, nutrition and husbandry programmes in order to improve animal care and client education.
BVetMed3 Advise on animal management and welfare, and safeguard human, animal and environmental health; including principles of biosecurity, food safety, risk assessment & mitigation, zoonosis and surveillance.
BVetMed4 Recognise, prevent and diagnose diseases and disorders of animals. Be able to select and interpret appropriate diagnostic test and formulate a treatment plan; considering pain management, client financial status & patient referral when indicated.
BVetMed5 Develop a logical problem solving approach to clinical reasoning in order to effectively solve clinical problems and make decisions.
BVetMed8 Demonstrate knowledge of the veterinary business environment in relation to the practice, its team, its clients, marketing and financial management
BVetMed9 Communicate effectively with the public, colleagues and other professionals both verbally and in writing; including constructing and updating clinical records and correspondence, using appropriate terminology for the audience concerned.

BVetMed10 Demonstrate knowledge of the principles and behaviours that underpin professionalism, teamwork and ethical decision making (judgement) and apply these in a veterinary setting.
BVetMed11 Engage in life-long learning and self-reflection to improve overall competence. Recognise professional limits and seek support when needed.
BVetMed12 Be able to cope with incomplete information and effectively use information services and information technology.

RCVS 1 Be fully conversant with, and follow the RCVS Code of Professional Conduct
RCVS 2 Understand the ethical and legal responsibilities of the veterinary surgeon in relation to patients, clients, society and the environment.
RCVS 5 Communicate effectively with clients, the public, professional colleagues and responsible authorities, using language appropriate to the audience concerned.
RCVS 8 Understand the economic and emotional context in which the veterinary surgeon operates.
RCVS 12 Demonstrate ability to cope with incomplete information, deal with contingencies, and adapt to change.
RCVS 13 Demonstrate that they recognise personal and professional limits, and know how to seek professional advice, assistance and support when necessary.
RCVS 19 Develop appropriate treatment plans and administer treatment in the interests of the patients and with regard to the resources available.
RCVS 21 Assess the physical condition, welfare and nutritional status of an animal or group of animals and advise the client on principles of husbandry and feeding
RCVS 33 Assess and manage pain.
RCVS 34 Recognise when euthanasia is appropriate and perform it humanely, using an appropriate method, whilst showing sensitivity to the feelings of owners and others, with due regard to the safety of those present;
RCVS 37 Advise on, and implement, preventative programmes appropriate to the species and in line with accepted animal health, welfare and public health standards.
RCVSU 1 Understanding of, and competence in, the logical approaches to both scientific and clinical reasoning, the distinction between the two, and the strengths and limitations of each.
RCVSU 5 The aetiology, pathogenesis, clinical signs, diagnosis and treatment of the common diseases and disorders that occur in the common domestic species in the UK.
RCVSU 7 Legislation relating to animal care and welfare, animal movement, and notifiable and reportable diseases.
RCVSU 10 Veterinary public health issues, including epidemiology, transboundary epizootic diseases, zoonotic and food-borne diseases, emerging and re-emerging diseases, food hygiene and technology.
RCVSU 11 Principles of effective interpersonal interaction, including communication, leadership, management and team working.
RCVSU 12 The ethical framework within which veterinary surgeons should work, including important ethical theories that inform decision-making in professional and animal welfare-related ethics.

AVMA 1 Comprehensive patient diagnosis (problem solving skills), appropriate use of diagnostic testing, and record management
AVMA 2 Comprehensive treatment planning including patient referral when indicated
AVMA 3 Anesthesia and pain management, patient welfare
AVMA 5 Basic medicine skills and case management
AVMA 6 Emergency and intensive care case management
AVMA 7 Understanding of health promotion and biosecurity, prevention and control of disease including zoonoses and principles of food safety
AVMA 8 Client communications and ethical conduct

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.3 Teaching methods

Again, the examination process, rather than the teaching methods and course delivery have been assessed. The response from the College to comments from last year relating to students' approach to answering questions in an examination may not necessarily reflect a problem-based approach as taught in the clinics, confirmed that the problem-based approach that is taught at the RVC is explicitly assessed in this finals exam as well as the 4th year exam, and an action for the College was to discuss particularly with the production animal teaching team about how to modify the problem-solving approach taught for individual animals to enhance a problem-solving approach that is suitable for production animal/herd level problems.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for this constructive comment. This is something we are working on and continuing to progress. We have actioned a number of things during the past year and will continue to do so.

1. There has been discussion with the farm group what other 'non-animal' factors (environment, husbandry, management etc) we should also be discussing within the define and refine framework
2. In the PMVPH intro sessions, we use the down cow, define and refine setup as an example but overlay the above on top of this. This is just an example, but shows how the students need to consider this when we are discussing population medicine with them
3. This is repeated in year 4 (may not be appropriate to keep repeating this but last year this ensured that everyone got it) and again in the exam prep sessions that were held during Electives
5. Farm staff have been asked to signpost this process within their teaching where appropriate
6. Clinical decision making is used in rounds (in particular) at both Synergy and Endell when cases are discussed on the final days of both rotations. A lot of these are scenarios that are potential exam questions and both practices play a hand in writing the questions knowing that they are teaching the students in this way.
7. The farm questions are made a little more complex as we are trying to add in VPH/economics into some and these won't always fit into the clinical decision-making frameworks but often the first part of the question will depending on the question structure.
8. All of the farm finals questions were developed with clinical vets (in practice), so are are common conditions and scenarios that they see.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

02-Feb-2020

Action assigned to:

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

From and external examiner's point of view all resources, including those specifically requested were readily available in a timely manner. Staffing on OSCE days appeared appropriate.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr P.S

Agree

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

Students' performance seems comparable to those on comparable courses in our own institutions. Compensation remains a concern, it is still possible for a student to fail the CRQ for a particular species badly, for example with scores as low as 27%, but pass overall. We note the comment in reponse to this point last year that the College has considered the option of imposing a minimum threshold to pass but wished to review student performance over at least 1-2 years while the new exam format was being embedded before doing so.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr P.S

A minimum threshold of 35% should apply to species-specific questions to gain an overall pass mark with compensation.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your comment. As you know we do recognise the concern and as discussed will review whether to have a minimum threshold when we have three years of results to review. We note that students must pass all clinical rotations to be able to sit finals.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Distribution is very good for written papers, across all species-specific questions, with performance in optional questions being slightly better then in the compulsory questions which is to be expected, no students failed the optional farm animal question (Q5).

Response from college requested: NO

Dr P.S

This question was marked appropriately.

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

Overall reflective broadly of performance nationally. As before, we still feel that the common grading scheme has limitations, as it doesn't map to the percentage score/time distribution in the model answers for written papers, and it is difficult to see how the scheme can be used effectively when the CRQs have multiple sections. The CGS results in marks being awarded between 27 and 82% and even very poor answers rarely are marked below 35%. At the other end of the scale, the scheme might result in the very good
students not achieving marks higher than 82%.
We acknowledge that the College remains content that the CGS delivers the type of assessment descriptors that are appropriate for the finals exam format, but we still struggle to relate model answers to mark assigned by the CGS.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your comments and we note your concerns. As experienced users of the CGS, we feel that it does allow assessment of answers with multiple parts. The assessment of clinical and professional reasoning as opposed to strictly factual recall inevitably means that a model answer must be interpreted in the context of the CGS rather than being applied "mathematically". Our overall aim is to assess whether students are capable of making safe clinical and professional decisions and we feel that the CGS for clinical and professional reasoning questions allows this.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Mixed methods for assessment of final year students are used which are appropriate. We are still of the opinion that some skills and knowledge currently assessed in the OSCEs in final year could be signed off in earlier years. Again, the common grading scheme is not terribly intuitive and is difficult to relate to the model answers. In addition, with the model answers, it is also difficult to see how an answer which delivers elements worthy of merit or distinction but misses elements suggested for a pass are handled. We note the ongoing discussion about OSCEs and DOPS and would be interested to know how skills assessed using DOPs rather than OSCEs in 19/20 are progressing.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr P.S

Strongly agree that the OSCEs do not meet day 1 competence requirements especially in farm animal species. Previous suggestions regarding alternative OSCEs have not bee developed. Communication skills in farm animal subjects should further investigate the use of video recordings of contentious issues presently being debated within the profession.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your comments and we note the concern in relation to inconsistency in relation to some merit/distinction marks if they don't include elements expected for a pass. We will endeavour to improve the model answers to ensure it is clearer about what elements must be included for a pass or to progress to a higher grade. The implementation of DOPs within rotations is progressing and has been started in a formative fashion this current rotation year (19/20). We plan to make the DOPs assessments summative for the 20/21 rotation year if appropriate technology is in place to do so.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

All processes adhered to. Double marking in place for compulsory question. Feedback from examiners on CRQs is again very variable, but there is evidence of team-marking (CRQ1) and comprehensive identification of how marks are awarded for CRQ4, both of which provide evidence of on-going improvement in rigour.
Removal of one OSCE station as a consequence of marking variability – is appropriate. No students were disadvantaged by the removal of this item.
Results calculations (including manual adjustments) seemed reasonable, and no students were disadvantaged. In all cases adjustment - after scrutiny -was in the candidates' favour.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your comments. We will endeavour to continue to improve the feedback from examiners and facilitate team marking. Note that all questions are sample marked rather than double marked.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Consistent with FHEQ level 6/7.

Response from college requested: NO

3.4 Standard of marking

Good evidence of consistent marking and double of CRQs within and between questions. Post hoc analysis of OSCE stations seems appropriate and resulted in removal of one station based on inconsistent marking by one assessor. OSCE scoring was consistent (inter-rater and intra-rater) from significant live observation and paper provisions.

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

No changes in the nature to the assessments since last year. Consideration could be given to requiring a minimum mark for example 35% or 40% in each compulsory CRQ to ensure omnicompetence has been demonstrated and we note the planned results review. This year, a minimum mark of 35% would have resulted in another 6 student failures.
As discussed previously, some of the activities assessed in OSCEs seem inappropriate for final examinations, and we note the planned use of DOPS/more complex OSCEs.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr P.S

Strongly agree

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you. Issue of a minimum threshold under consideration as discussed earlier.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

Re: OSCEs, suggestions:
(a) Move left-right/front-back identification to end of Farrier station checklist, as this question is asked at the end of the exercise, not the start.
(b) Review the awarding of 4 points over 4 stations in The Barn for “appropriate dress” (Qu 19, 23, 24, 25). Students can be advised on this pre-entry in Bootroom. Failure to dress/behave appropriately could be picked up as a professionalism flag rather than a mark point.
(c) As previous please consider visual prompts (video clips; photos) to add engagement, imagination and context. P has offered!
(d) We await with interest the outcome of discussion about fewer stations with longer duration, including combinations that reflect the work context (eg interpret the finding then report its meaning to a colleague or explain implications to a client?)

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for these very constructive suggestions. They will be conveyed to the faculty in charge of the OSCEs.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

01-Dec-2019

Action assigned to:

Nicky Coombes, John Sanger, Brian Catchpole, Matthew Pead

General Statements

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

Dr P.S

Further work on the farm animal OSCEs would be welcomed as previously suggested.

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

We look forward to the outcomes of the proposed changes.

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

Dr P.S

Suggestions/amendments to examination questions were fully addressed by examiners.

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:

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:

All covered in the report above.

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