

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2018/19

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

BVetMed Year 1

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 (<i>There were no actions from previous years</i>)
b.	2018/19 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director/Year Leader

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 09-Jul-2019

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 1, 2018/19

Lead examiner: Mr David Kilroy

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr David Bainbridge, Dr Ian Jeffcoate, Dr Karin Mueller

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

This is appropriate for the course and the qualification awarded at its end.

Response from college requested: NO

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

These are appropriate for the course and the qualification awarded at its end. Learning objectives were achieved and candidates were able to demonstrate this achievement.

Response from college requested: NO

1.3 Teaching methods

The standard achieved by the majority of the candidates suggests that the teaching is appropriate and of high quality.

Response from college requested: NO

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

These are sufficient. The range and quality of specimen available for the ISF oral component of the exam continues to be excellent.

Response from college requested: NO

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

Both neuroanatomy and pathology are prominent parts of the Year 1 BVetMed course. While these areas are well taught by expert staff, it is quite early in a five-year course to embark on such complex material.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Victoria Waring

Course Director Response:

As part of the curriculum review process we are aiming to move some parts of this teaching to second year of the course to allow students to develop their underpinning scientific knowledge and understanding and study skills further. This should help students develop a deeper understanding of neurology and pathology that they can integrate with other areas/clinical relevance.

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

This is similar to performance at comparable institutions.

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

Most candidates had a satisfactory or good standard of knowledge and were able to apply this knowledge to solve problems in a reasoned way. Overall, learning objectives were achieved and candidates were able to demonstrate this achievement.

The distribution across the top, middle and bottom achievements were as expected.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Essay writing ability was good overall, in particular for Year 1 students.

It was notable that few students scored marks at advanced level 3 of the ISF Orals. First year ISF Orals offer a good experience for students, and we would assume that their performance improves as they progress through the course.

The failure rate was higher this year than in previous years. Two-thirds of failed students were from the Gateway pathway: a review of the pastoral and academic support these students receive may be appropriate, as well as continued analysis of particular student cohorts that under-perform. Gateway students achieving a pass appear well represented across all pass-grades.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Victoria Waring

Course Director Response:

All students are invited to a review session following in course assessments and those who score below 55% are highly encouraged to go and engage. Additional support for struggling students is signposted at this stage. This encompasses all students on the course, including ex gateway students. It is not uncommon to see gateway students represented in this population of students as they still work to bridge the gap but this gap closes as ex gateway students continue throughout the course. Additional support and formative experiences are being incorporated into the year this time around to help prepare students for the new exam format, which sees the removal of essays and an increased focus on PSQs. We will continue to monitor the support that students need including ex gateway students specifically.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

There is a good range of assessments, testing different skills of the students. The major learning objectives are appropriately assessed. Paper 1 (MCQ) seems to be weighted too heavily for its scope and type of exam.

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

You may wish to consider standard setting for Papers 2 and 3 (PSQ and essay) components purely to check for any anomalies (e.g. misunderstanding of concepts or failure to deliver teaching material for a particular cohort). We welcome your move to analyse the ISF Oral marks with regard to particularly harsh or lenient marking. It is not entirely clear how the performance of the ICA is scrutinised.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Victoria Waring

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your comments. We will continue to analyse results statistically for anomalies and aim to standard set PSQs going forward.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

This was consistent with that framework.

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.4 Standard of marking

You may wish to consider a common policy for marking a question where a proportion of students have misunderstood the task set, so that each marker will treat such a situation in the same way. This is particularly relevant for the Essay paper, where students can choose from multiple questions.

More leniency may be considered where a student fails to state a specific term but describes the feature correctly (e.g. Paper 2 Q 2a: rugae vs. abomasal folds).

We acknowledge the laborious annotation of scripts. This, combined with the tutorial system that we understand you have, provides a good level of feedback, in particular to failed students.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Victoria Waring

Course Director Response:

Whilst we do aim for leniency in our marking this is available between markers and sometimes necessitates that we amend the original model answer for each question. This does happen but may not always be updated on the master copy of the model answer. We can ask all markers to make any amendments to the model answer clear to exams office so that master copies can be updated.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

While across all assessments, the content of animal health and husbandry (AH) is acceptable, we recommend standardisation of the AH component so that every student is examined on this area during the ISF Oral. The AH component seemed minimal for a number of students in this exam.

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Victoria Waring

Course Director Response:

It is difficult to ensure that every student gets examined on animal husbandry based on the staff available to examine on ISF day. We do aim to achieve this for anatomy and can aim to increase this for animal husbandry going forwards. If more students were examined on animal husbandry then the message would act as a driver for students to study animal husbandry. That said animal husbandry is examined extensively in other exam formats so this itself drives learning of the topic.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

We welcome receiving responses to external examiner's comments on draft papers, as requested. It provided good insight into the process and reassurance. However, for some questions (Paper 1: MCQ 27 and 29) no response was received which should be rectified in future years.

Paper 2 Q 1c - extern suggested additional clarity regarding what was required for answer, question setter responded that was not necessary, but most students did indeed seem unclear about what was required

Paper 2 Q 3b - extern noted that when 'why' is used in a question about a biological process, it can refer to mechanism OR effect, but the question setter did not alter the question or the model answer; as a result, many students' answers received no marks.

The quality of the MCQ was improved. For some questions, previous recommendations to aim for a high level of clarity (e.g. clear labelling, short sentences) were implemented, and we encourage question setters to continue to aim for this.

We strongly recommend to move to a question database that facilitates MCQ options to be listed in alphabetical / numerical order (to avoid answer spotting).

We are aware that changes to the components of the exam are being discussed, in particular replacing the Essay (paper 3) component. We encourage the college to consider this as an opportunity to reduce marking load on staff. Also, if the contribution of PSQs to the total mark is to increase, accept the likelihood of lower marks or higher fail rate (based on historic performance in the PSQ component).

Response from college requested: NO

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Victoria Waring

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your feedback. We will continue to work towards achieving these goals and the upcoming changes with removal of essays and curriculum review should provide opportunities to improve our examination structure and remove marking load. We are working to ensure that students are equipped to deal with PSQs which require a higher level of learning than essays such that failure rate does not increase.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

No

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

Dr D.B

Most comments have been addressed -just a few require further work, e.g. amount and standardisation of AH in the exam, responses to examiners' comments on papers.

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

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:

In the ISF Oral, examiners managed to create an atmosphere conducive to candidates demonstrating their knowledge. We were impressed with the examiners' commitment to the ISF oral process, including making themselves familiar with the taught material.

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:

We received great help from the Chair of the exam board (R Abayasekara) and from Lauren Christian (Exams Officer) who had to deal with our many questions.

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:

But please see comment under 3.7

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:

As highlighted before, we would encourage discussion on whether the marksheet should still be anonymous at the examiners' meeting when the marks are approved. It seems more defensible if the two processes of mark approval and consideration of extenuating circumstances are separated more clearly. Although individual cases are discussed at the meeting, no fair decisions can be made as only some tutors are present, and all the relevant information is not (and probably cannot be) disclosed to the attendees.

Response from college requested: YES

Response

During an Exam Board extenuating circumstances are not taken into account when results are being approved. Extenuating circumstances can only be put forward by students should they enter the appeal process following the publication of their results. Student names are displayed on Exam Board final marksheets for all courses at the College and, as extenuating circumstances are not taken into account, this does not present any conflict. The discussion of individual students, in terms of their circumstances, is more an attempt to understand why the student failed academically. This discussion also helps to highlight to key members of staff (Senior Tutors, Year Leaders, etc) any student who they need to be aware of for either further support or referral.

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:

The range of assessments is impressive as is the commitment to retaining the ISF oral format.

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)

