

## ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2018/19

### Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

#### BVetMed Year 4

This appendix contains Course Director's responses to 2018/19 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from previous years' External Examiners' report.

For support or advice please contact Ana Filipovic, Academic Quality Officer 'Standards', [afilipovic@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:afilipovic@rvc.ac.uk), 01707666938

a. Updates to actions from previous year

b. Collaborative report for 2018/19

**Please note that the updates (a) and responses to Collaborative report for 2018/19 (b) have been considered and approved by TQC in Spring 2019.**

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## BVETMED YEAR 4 EXTERNAL EXAMINERS REPORTS

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Responses to 2018/19 External Examiners' Comments and an update to previous years' Actions

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### To be considered at the Spring TQC Meeting

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a. Update to actions from previous years - the full report available [here](#)

External Examiners' comments (2016/17)	Year Leader's response	Update
<p>1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme</p> <p><i>Comments on Integrated Reasoning question ( full comment in 16/17 report)</i></p>	<p>Action Required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To instigate further formative opportunities in preparation for Integrated Reasoning questions, including the emphasis on Professional Studies for students before the Year 4 Exam</li> <li>- To bring to the attention of the Working Party on BVetMed Assessment the comments and observations of external examiner on the Year 4 exam.</li> </ul> <p>Action Deadline:</p> <p>01-Jun-2017</p> <p>Action assigned to:</p> <p>Dan Chan</p>	<p><b>This has been completed.</b> The Year 4 Exam Info page has a number of formative exam questions with model answers, previous student exemplars, both for the Professional Studies question and the Integrated Clinical Reasoning questions with Professional reasoning component. There are also formative activities embedded in Strand teaching to help students prepare for the summative exams.</p> <p>Give most recent performance of students on the Year 4 exam, in which there was significant improvement on the performance of the professional studies question, we believe these actions have already benefited student preparation.</p> <p>The working party on BVetMed Assessment have been briefed on the comments from external examiners as mentioned in the previous report.</p>
<p>2.2 Quality of candidates' knowledge and skills, with particular reference to those at the top, middle or bottom of the range</p> <p>... the level of assessment in some of the clinical reasoning questions may be too advanced for the level and experience of students at this stage in the course (<i> full comment in 16/17 report</i>)</p>	<p>The expectations of Year 4 students before they enter clinical rotations and what the Year 4 Exam and Finals should look like will be explore as the BVetMed Course undergoes a Curriculum Review this year. A special working party on BVetMed Assessment is being formed and will be tasked with resolving these issues.</p> <p>Action Required:</p> <p>To bring to the attention of the BVetMed Curriculum Review committee and the BVetMed Assessment Working Party the concerns raised by the External Examiners on the Year 4 Exam</p> <p>Action Deadline:</p> <p>01-Jun-2017</p> <p>Action assigned to:</p> <p>Dan Chan</p>	<p><b>This has been completed.</b> Exam question authors were briefed and given specific instructions for composing exam questions including comments from external e</p>

External Examiners' comments (2017/18)		
5.2 External Examiners' comments on exam questions/paper (see detail in the published version on line)	<p>We thank the External Examiners for their comments acknowledging continued improvement in the processes and questions used in our examination. We also thank the examiner for their extensive and detailed comments which we have taken note and plan to distribute these to question authors in time for the next examination. Of note, as our responses to External Examiners are published on the Intranet and are viewable to students, we cannot go into details about into how we would modify each question. The external examiners have also brought up their concern that many questions did "not pass the cover up test" and we would like to respond that we have evaluated every single question in which this question structure was used prior to finalising the exam. When possible, the question was reworded. However, there were questions, when it was deemed an appropriate question format. We also looked at the performance of these questions when used previously and we were fully satisfied that the question structure did not appear to negatively impact how candidates answered the questions. We will continue to refine our question with these very constructive comments. The feedback on the Integrated Reasoning Questions are also very detailed and we will be providing these to question authors in time for the next exam compilation. We appreciate the insight provided by the External Examiners and will consider these in the next iteration of the delivery of this teaching.</p> <p>Action Required: Distribution of detailed External Examiner comments to exam question authors in time for preparation of the next exam</p> <p>Action Deadline: 27-Aug-2018</p> <p>Action assigned to: Dan Chan Year 4 Leader</p>	<p><b>Completed.</b> Questions that required to be re-written had comments from external examiners sent to question authors for consideration</p>

# Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 13-Dec-2018

**Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 4, 2018/19**

**Lead examiner: Professor Robert Foale**

**Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Clare Allen, Dr Mickey Tivers, Mr Lorenzo Viora**

## The Programme

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

### 1.1 Course content

Appropriate

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

Appropriate, as far as could be assessed. A summary (blueprint) of areas that need to be covered (learning outcomes) matched to the areas assessed would be helpful.

Having access to RVC learn facilitates provides this information but is difficult to navigate in the amount of time available.

**Response from college requested:**

**NO**

**Response from the College**

We will endeavour to provide external examiners with blueprints in future. External Externals may request additional information at any time and the College will happily oblige

### 1.3 Teaching methods

Appropriate

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

Appropriate

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

Compared to the previous two years, the performance of the students in the integrated reasoning papers was better, although the results in this section of the examination were still lower than for paper 1. However, the work undertaken by staff to improve performance in these questions is to be applauded and we urge formative opportunities in preparation for Integrated Reasoning questions, including the emphasis on Professional Studies for students before the Year 4 Exam, to be continued.

We noted that the Professional Studies question was very well structured this year and that students performed better in this than in previous years. It was also pleasing to note that aspects of professional studies were used by some students (usually those with higher marks) in their answers to other questions, indicating that this learning is being integrated well into the course and their understanding.

One area of concern for us was in relation to the farm animal and public health aspect of the exam, in that not many of these topics were included in the examination and that all the questions in the long answer papers were related to small animal or equine topics. Specifically, in relation to the MCQs, 19 out of 60 (32%) were related to population medicine, veterinary public health, infectious disease control and biosecurity. Furthermore, only two EMQs out of 12 (17%) were related to these subject areas but one of these questions needed to be discarded from the overall marking, bringing the overall total down to 9%. A suggestion therefore for future years would be to increase the weight of farm animal medicine and veterinary public health-related questions and to make sure that these appear in each aspect of the examination.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Dan Chan**

### **Course Director Response:**

Thank you for the comments regarding the composition of the exam. As explained to the Examiners during the Exam Board, the composition of the exam follows a blue-print that reflects the amount of time devoted to Strands and species. Therefore, the greater number of questions devoted to small animals and horses compared to farm, is a reflection of the content of the course. For the Integrate Clinical and Professional Reasoning questions - there is always a small animal question, and either an equine or farm animal/public health question. This year, the first sit had a small animal question and an equine question. On the resit, there was one small animal question and one public health question.

**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

In our opinion, the students' performance was similar compared to courses at the Universities of Cambridge, Glasgow and Nottingham

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

As we have noted previously, the level of knowledge was acceptable to excellent for students at middle and top of range, but the failing students had obvious gaps in knowledge which need addressing. Integrated reasoning skills (particularly regarding data analysis) were limited for many students, although this does appear to be improving.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

The student performance in the Integrative Reasoning questions has improved further from last year, but it may be worthwhile to evaluate again the discussion/actions put forward by both the curriculum review committee and the working party on assessment to see if this can be improved further still.

One aspect that was pleasing compared to previous years was that the marks gained in paper 2 (Integrative Reasoning) appeared to correlate a little more closely to overall student performance and that our previous concerns that distinction levels had been solely obtained because of EMQ/MCQ performance have reduced.

Response from college requested: **NO**

## Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

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

Appropriate

Response from college requested: **NO**

### 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

The College provides all information required to review the assessment process, both internally and also for external examiners, and we have again been impressed by their rigorous and professional approach

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Consistent

Response from college requested: **NO**

### 3.4 Standard of marking

The structure and detail of model answers to help both internal markers and external examiners understand how answers were marked have again improved compared to last year. We would however urge that internal examiners are encouraged to annotate the scripts to help see where marks had been allocated where appropriate.

However, with regard to question 2 of paper 2, although this was a well written and constructed question that was very fair, it was poorly answered by the students, who seemed to have a lack of relevant knowledge. It was surprising that so few of them were able to correctly identify the use of median and range or define incidence and prevalence. It seems that there is still a lack of engagement in this topic amongst the student. The scripts were clearly marked and there seemed to be good correlation between different markers. However, it struck the external examiners that the nature of this sort of question does not lend itself as well to the common grading scheme. Many of the answers required in this question are simple statement of facts or brief descriptions and this may be easier to mark with a simpler mark scheme, using a 10-point scale for example. We believe that this was suggested and discussed at the exam board in 2017 and we would suggest that this idea is revisited.

We also had concerns that the model answer for question 3 of paper 2 was possibly too detailed and made marking it using the CGS challenging for new examiners, which led to an over-engineered solution and excessive time spent marking for the internal examiners; We noted that the model answer had been modified to incorporate a detailed 100-point marking scheme that was then converted to the common grading scheme. This seemed like a complicated and time-consuming additional step for the marking process. However, we were happy that the results were fair and accurate. It was however noted that marker 3 was more generous than the other markers. This was obvious from the marker averages but this was not picked up by the sample marking. Perhaps the sample marking should be modified so that the sample marker independently grades the papers rather than checking that the way that the paper was marked makes sense? We are therefore satisfied that the marking was fair and consistent but we would recommend that if possible, internal examiners need to be granted protected time to enable them to meet at the beginning of their marking time to ensure that they understand the model answer and how to apply the CGS fairly and consistently.

Response from college requested: **NO**

## COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Dan Chan

### Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their comments and observations. The structure of the Paper 2 is being reviewed to better reflect the aspects of the course that require higher level analysis. Question 2 which is commonly referred as the "Data Analysis" question may be modified and comments from the external examiners

will be taken into consideration. If such a question is retained, we may employ a different College-approved marking scheme such as the 10-point scale.

We also recognise that further training of internal examiners in applying the CGS to long-answer papers would be beneficial. We also appreciate that model answers should avoid being restrictive. These suggestions will be incorporated in the training of new examiners ahead of next year's exam composition.

**Action Required:**

Set up training sessions for internal examiners in setting questions and applying CGS to marking of exam scripts.

**Action Deadline:**

01-Oct-2019

**Action assigned to:**

Year 4 Leader - Dan Chan

**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)**

In our view, the procedures for assessment and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

This year saw improved model answers for the long answer paper as well as improved EMQs and MCQs although there is still room to further develop the quality of questions. This year the internal exam team had gone through the MCQ and EMQ results and screened for any poorly performing questions prior to our arrival and they had then made recommendations on which questions should be removed; this was extremely helpful and greatly speeded up our assessment of the examination process.

Questions 7 and 24 of the EMQ were discussed as the students had performed poorly. These questions had been discussed previously as students generally got them wrong. The examiners were happy that the questions were specific, and the answers were correct. However, it was felt that question 7 and possibly question 24 were very hard for 4th year students. Question 7 was therefore removed, and it was recommended that this was revised for future use.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Dan Chan**

**Course Director Response:**

We thank the external examiners for their comments. Comments regarding appropriateness of inclusion of questions are fed back to question authors who teach the content of the exam.

**Action Required:**

Question 7 from this exam has been removed from the Question Bank preventing future use. A replacement question on the topic to be composed and submitted for inclusion in Question Bank

**Action Deadline:**

01-Oct-2019

**Action assigned to:**

Year 4 Leader - Dan Chan

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

Five MCQ were removed as felt to be poor questions or if they did not discriminate well.

There were still a number of MCQ that do not pass the cover-up test and some questions asking: 'which of the following is not the case'. Ideally, these questions should be revised.

Questions 51-55 were identified as being poor questions and the students had performed badly on these. All but question 54 were removed; these should not be used again in their current form.

We identified one question (Qu 18 MCQ) in which we feel that it should have specified specify 'in a UK farm', as different legislation may be applicable in other countries (i.e North America)

As a note, although questions 1 and 3 of paper 2 were very different questions testing different knowledge, they both involved cases of canine osteosarcoma; in future years we would recommend the questions involve different pathologies.

#### Question 1 (Professional studies)

This was a well-written question with a well structured and clear model answer from which the mark allocation can be easily established. As we have noted previously, we feel that the internal examiners are to be congratulated for creating a question that is based on an accurate, real-life scenario that encourages the students to reason through the issues using the theoretical frameworks they have been taught and be able to show their understanding in an authentic manner. The model answer also balances the needs of all the stakeholders well and it is encouraging to see students being asked to consider and resolve the potential conflicts between a business and the medical care the patient required

The students appear to have performed slightly better on this question this year compared to previous years, with the majority of the marks clustering around 58-62 of the CGS, although the most commonly awarded mark was 55, as was noted last year. However, the fact that aspects of professional skills teaching were also used to answer parts of the other questions in paper 2 suggests that the students are engaging in this area and the staff involved are to be applauded for this. Better differentiation of the mark distribution could be achieved if more clarity regarding their decision making was displayed by the students, but the external examiners recognise that this comes with experience of actually being in the situation and then having opportunity for reflective learning. In particular, the students with lower marks appeared reluctant to be as definitive in their decision making for the animal as would be required in real-life to resolve the situation. Further actor-facilitated learning would potentially be of benefit in this regard and help cement the students' practical application of their theoretical framework.

All of the papers from the failing students, plus five of the "just pass" along with eight of the pass/merit and merit/distinction candidates were assessed and marked by the external examiner, who found the marks correlated well, so we are satisfied that the marking has been fair and consistent.

#### Question 4:

A total of 30 scripts were reviewed and remarked by the external examiners - in specific all the scripts from the students who were failing at the time (17), five borderline pass students, the two highest pass mark students, the two lowest merit mark students, the two highest merit mark students and the two lowest distinction students. There was a 78% correlation between the external examiner and the RVC markers for the 30 scripts on this question.

The general agreement was that the questions were relevant and well written. The follow-on questions in part b were appropriate, well-structured and overall the students performed better. A small comment should be made that no farm animal or public health questions were part of long answer questions – making sure one of these topics is covered each year could be beneficial.

Paper 4, part 2 or b (Welsh pony with laminitis)

Overall a good and fair follow-on question from Papers 1, question 4a. The 30 scripts were assessed by the externals, as per the other long answer papers. The CGS mark scheme worked well and it was appropriately applied. The question was appropriate, well-structured and overall the students performed better than in part 4a. The model answer was good and overall applied well by the three different markers. For part a of the question (worth 20% of the mark) though, there was a discrepancy between markers, in specific regarding the radiographic views displayed – for one marker 'lateral view' (instead of latero-medial) was considered correct, while the other two markers did not consider it enough for pass (fail, mark lower than 52). After consultation with the other external examiners it was decided that 'lateral view' should be considered a correct answer.

Both part c and d of the question asked for the management of the case. In fairness, part d asks about the ongoing management, but most of the recommendations are very similar and could be repeated

**Response from college requested: NO**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Dan Chan**

**Course Director Response:**

We thank the external examiner for the very detailed comments regarding the exam. Comments regarding specific MCQs will be logged in the Question Bank. Removed questions from the exam will be censored from Question Bank. Questions flagged for revision will be highlighted on the Question Bank.

Although Questions 1 and 3 of Paper 2 did feature the same disease, the questions explored different learning outcomes (professional reasoning/communication vs clinical reasoning), nevertheless future exams will avoid use of the same pathology whenever possible.

Other comments will be fed back to internal examiners and be used in further training of internal examiners

**Action Required:**

Comments from External Examiners on specific questions to be added to Question Bank

Questions removed from exam will be censored from the Question Bank

Comments from external examiners to be fed back to internal examiners

Further training sessions of internal examiners to be scheduled before next exam

**Action Deadline:**

31-Oct-2019

**Action assigned to:**

Year 4 Leader - Dan Chan

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

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:

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**

**No**

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

We have commented in previous years that Wi-fi internet access is either poor or non-existent in the external examiners room. Eduroam worked on one day but not on all days and the RVC Guest internet access did not work at all.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Dan Chan**

**Course Director Response:**

We apologise to the External Examiners for this unforeseen problem. We will inform our IT infrastructure team to investigate and correct this issue before next examination.

**Action Required:**

Inform IT Infrastructure team to investigate wi-fi access in the External Examination room before next examination

**Action Deadline:**

31-Oct-2019

**Action assigned to:**

Year 4 Leader - Dan Chan

**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:**

We are of the opinion that there was a thorough marking procedure of long answer papers and the scripts were well annotated in most cases, which was very helpful. Third markers and remarking was carried out where necessary on a very short time frame and we are also grateful to the staff who made themselves available to us at very short notice to discuss questions with them.

**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**

