

# Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 23-May-2019  
Approved by TQC Chair 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2020

## Graduate Diploma in Equine Locomotor Research, 2018/19

Lead examiner: Dr Connie Wiskin

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Sarah Taylor

### The Programme

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

#### 1.1 Course content

The course content appears appropriate across the 3 stages. A range of resources is offered, primarily online (with periodic contact days). Content seems well suited to the vocational nature of the course.

We would add perhaps a guide to reflective tools at the top of Stage 0. Learners did not cite (or reference) their method for the communication reflective case, so an introduction to Kolb, Gibbs etc. could provide a useful framework? We believe this is covered in teaching elsewhere, but thought it would be a useful on-line resource. A guide to literature reviewing could also be welcome?

At the exam board it was clarified that this was covered during the periodic contact days. The importance of photographic inclusion was agreed by all examiners particularly for stage 1 case report and gait analysis assessments and it was recommended this should be stressed to students in their guidelines before undertaking these assessments.

Response from college requested: **NO**

TP: The guidelines for the gait report now explicitly mention photographic evidence (“.. for example, comprise photographic evidence of what you have assessed accompanied by a description of your findings and if applicable any measurements that you have performed”)

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

Objectives were appropriate at this level, and in the main evidenced as met, A challenge is the standard setting in general. The current assessment framework (common grading scheme) is designed for a different learner group altogether, so it appears compromises are having to be made to calibrate the degree to which this learner group have met expectations. We recommend an internal - formal - calibration exercise for consistency (internal standard setting). This was discussed & reiterated at the exam board meeting.

Response from college requested: **NO**

#### College Response:

*The College Common Grading Scheme has now been adapted to provide different rubrics and descriptors to match different styles of assessment (research project, long answer question, reflective essay, clinical and professional reasoning). These documents are currently under review by the Director of Assessment in terms of how they can be applied more effectively from Level 4 to Level 7 courses. We will continue to encourage examiners to discuss marking criteria, alongside provision of detailed model answers indicating expectations for pass/merit/distinction, to ensure consistency in their marking, aligned with the descriptors in the Common Grading Scheme.*

### 1.3 Teaching methods

Learners have access to a range of resources on a helpful, up to date and well-maintained website. The resources include a mix of guidance, tips, video clips and quizzes, which appear engaging and relevant. Access to one on one teaching appears to be via the "tutor" , as synonymous with "project supervisor". We wondered therefore about consistency of coaching in areas such as essay planning, feedback on early essay plans/drafts of work, and so forth. The Academic Support Team seem to make a useful contribution in terms of study methods and consistency of contact.

**Response from college requested: NO**

TP: The consistency across tutors/supervisors is not managed in a formal manner. However, the number of supervisors/tutors is small (<10) and the course director is communicating with all of them.

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

No comment in relation to learning resources.

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

This is a very well designed, and a clear incremental approach. Good range of topics, tasks and submissions. It was recommended that any conversations regarding internal calibration should be recorded throughout stages 0, 1 and 2.

Out of curiosity, are horse names anonymised (to protect owner ID?)

**Response from college requested: NO**

TP: I generally encourage all my students (in all cohorts) to anonymize horse names and replace them by sequential numbers. The original data that are kept by the supervisor in a locked cabinets and/or encrypted form and allow going back to the original data should this be required at a later stage e.g. in order to implement different types of analysis.

## 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 programme is difficult to calibrate, given the uniqueness of the target group. The vocational nature of farriers' work, diversity of age and experience within the group, and distance learning approach make it incomparable to the standard UG (BSc, or similar) programmes against which it is bench-marked. As expected, there was a spread of performance. Top candidates perform above the expectations of a bachelor's degree, weak candidates below. In a programme with learners as diverse as those who already hold a clinical degree and those decades out of education it would be unwise to attempt to compare to more homogeneous groups. As a point of interest, a numerical comparison of Stage 1 between the USA & UK cohorts showed significantly higher scores given to the USA on ELB&O and CSESL. The mark spread evened out to a core comparable distribution on SD&ELMA.

Response from college requested: **NO**

TP: This is an interesting observation regarding the numerical comparison between the USA and UK cohorts. It is, however, too early (and too small a sample size) to draw firm conclusions from this. Another opportunity for comparison will arise with the new set of students from the current (second) UK cohort. From initial experience with the latest UK cohort, it appears (to me; personal opinion) that the spread within the cohort is very wide in terms of academic and in particular writing ability.

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

In the main this was as expected. Between us we have looked at all reports for some components, and a sample (minimum 5-6) for all remaining components. A challenge is the constriction of the grading scheme, and the making of 'allowances' for the group being Farriers rather than clinicians/science students. In some cases performance awarded mid-range (58) arguably better fitted a lower score. The work read from candidates at the top of the range was outstanding. The work at the bottom of the range appeared to have been given some 'allowances' for the group being farriers as described by the Lead Examiner.

Response from college requested: **NO**

#### *College Response:*

*The challenge is to ensure that the assessments are constructively aligned with the learning outcomes of the course, such that these demonstrate inclusivity and do not discriminate on the basis of the learner's background (clinician vs farrier). Academic standards need to be maintained for this Level 6 course and although reasonable adjustments are permitted in examinations, no 'allowances' are permitted from an academic perspective, based on the nature of the learner.*

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

Overall good, with some extremely impressive submissions at the "top end". The physical presentation (diligence) was very good overall.

We would recommend students are given more guidance on searching the literature (including wider comparable healthcare literature) and are taught how to reference appropriately, using " " for quotes,

Response from college requested: **NO**

The students are given extensive guidance on literature and referencing in both the CSS and the literature module. We are continually monitoring how we can make use of best practice in marking, e.g. making use of 'comments in the submitted word documents' rather than 'offline comments' to increase the learning effects seen in the majority of students.

## Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

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

The assessment methods are appropriate to a distance learning focused research programme.

**Response from college requested: NO**

No comment

### 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

There was some variability. We would advise routine double marking of all assignments, given that numbers are modest (manageable). Moderation reports existed for some - but not all - work. If markers are making allowances (eg knowledge, writing style) for this group then that premise needs to be internally agreed, and consistent, via an internal calibration system. The risk (albeit borne of good intent) is lack of parity. We did find some examples of projects receiving the same score, where one had clinical inaccuracies and the other did not. However, these incidents were relatively isolated.

**Response from college requested: NO**

TP: Double-marking should definitely be possible with this comparatively small cohort. We are aiming to implement this for the next cohort.

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

Consistent with assessments at the University of Edinburgh

**Response from college requested: NO**

No comment

### 3.4 Standard of marking

In the main marking was good, and the practice of having the same markers across each cohort represents best practice.

We would encourage more detailed feedback, including notes for high performers. We advise caution of stock phrases like "well-written", given that the same comment appeared in relation to both a 58 and an 82 scored report. The former was not 'well written' so this is an area where students would benefit from more detailed - ie specific & evidenced - feedback. Confidence and consistency in relation to marking was higher at the top end than lower end, with seeming reluctance to give weaker work (clinical uncertainty, poor writing style, inappropriate referencing) very low marks.

Marking of presentations seems high; candidates with feedback about lack of audience contact/reading from slides are receiving 7 (70)? Hard to judge of course without being present - they may well have been an outstanding bunch. (Record for EEs?)

**Response from college requested: NO**

TP: The markers are being encouraged to be more detailed in their feedback and to make use of commenting facilities within word processing software wherever possible.

**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**

No comment

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

Word count clarity amendment from previous board duly noted, thank you.

**Response from college requested: NO**

No comment

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

Would a formative assignment be useful to help the weaker learners develop their writing style early on?

**Response from college requested: NO**

Good point. Our concern is the additional work load for the students, some of whom have in the past voiced concern about the workload alongside their job. This however will not prevent us from implementing this.  
In addition, we are of the opinion that there is some potential sequential effect with current assignments: e.g. we aim to comment on their writing in our feedback on the data analysis assignment, in preparation for the later project report. Although this focuses on writing of methods and results rather than the more extensive writing required e.g. for discussion or lit review. However, making use of the commenting features in the word processing software can be used effectively through all assignments and is now the encouraged feedback style recommended to all markers.

## 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

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**

**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:**

The support offered by JS and the examinations office team is outstanding.

**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:**

Excellent information provision and exchange, including access to one on one pre-board meeting with relevant senior stakeholder(s).

**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:**

Yes, but please see recommendations - particularly in relation to marking calibration.

**Response from college requested: YES**

TP: See above comments regarding marking scheme, which is currently under review. In the meantime, markers are informally agreeing to adjustments to the marking criteria that are relevant for each assessment.



## 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 double marking where used is good practice. Having an external examiner trained in educational methods paired with a specialist clinician felt well placed to serve the course.

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**

