

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2021/22

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

BVetMed Final Year

This appendix contains Course Director's responses to 2021/22 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from previous External Examiners' reports (if applicable).

As 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.

Appendix 3 consists of:

a.	Updates to actions from previous years' reports
b.	2021/22 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director Exam board meeting: Lead examiner: Dr Joseph Cassidy Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Harold Bok, Dr Amanda Boag, Professor Gayle Hallowell, Professor Nicholas Jonsson

Report Question	External Examiners' comment in 2017/18	Course Directors response and actions	Update in 2018/19 & 2019/20	Update in 2020/21
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.	<p>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.</p> <p>Action Required:</p> <p>Discussion with 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.</p> <p>Action Deadline:</p> <p>01-Sep-2018</p> <p>Action assigned to:</p> <p>Jill Maddison</p>	This discussion has occurred	As indicated – this discussion has occurred and the production team continue to work on this issue. Next action would be to assign this to Richard Booth for further comment.

Report Question	External Examiners' comment in 2018/19	Course Directors response and actions	Update in 2019/20	Update in 2020/21
1.3 Teaching methods	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	<p>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.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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 	As notes above under 1.3 of 2017/18 report, discussions continue	As above

	<p>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.</p>	<p>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</p> <p>this when we are discussing population medicine with them</p> <p>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</p> <p>5. Farm staff have been asked to signpost this process within their teaching where appropriate</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>8. All of the farm finals questions were developed with clinical vets (in practice), so are are common conditions and scenarios that they see.</p>		
--	---	---	--	--

Report Question	External Examiners' comment in 2020/21	Course Directors response and actions	Update in 2021/22
<p>2.1 Students' performance in relation to those at a similar stage on comparable courses in other institutions, where this is known to you</p>	<p>We note and welcome the introduction of minimum thresholds in Finals Part II to be implemented in the 2021-22 academic year. This should mitigate against the small number of academically weaker students who</p>	<p>Thank you. We will monitor the impact of the new minimum thresholds to be introduced in 2021-2022.</p> <p>Action Required:</p> <p>Assessment of pass rates under new regulations to be assessed with past pass rates.</p>	

	<p>compensate for weaknesses in particular species using marks attained on questions on other species. An example at this assessment was a student who passed overall having failed three of the four Finals part II clinical and professional decision making questions.</p> <p>The objective of this modification is to assist in maintaining the goal of 'potential omnicompetence'. Given that students have a somewhat limited question choice in Finals part II it will be important to carefully review the impact of this modification.</p>	<p>Action Deadline: 01-Sep-2022</p> <p>Action assigned to: Head of Exams</p>	
<p>2.3 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the students' performance</p>	<p>The externs considered that the phrasing of the vignette in the compulsory equine question (Q3) was somewhat ambiguous resulting in a considerable proportion of students following an incorrect course of action in answering the question, potentially disadvantaging them. This ambiguity (and its potential consequences) had been pointed out when the question had been initially reviewed by externs but this advice was not acted upon. Only limited remedial action could be taken given the time available once marking was complete to address the negative impact on student performance - this resulted in one less student failing overall. There were likely impacts on many student grades within the greater cohort. Perhaps such a</p>	<p>Thank you for your comment and we will ensure that all comments from external examiners are considered formally in the future, arbitrated when appropriate and that a formal response is provided by the assessor should they not agree with feedback provided by the external examiner. We apologise if this did not occur this year. The issue was discussed in some detail by the examiners and myself and the relevant teaching was reviewed to ensure that it was consistent with that aspect of the assessment under discussion. Examiners are experienced with the CGS. There is inevitably a level of examiner judgement but as there is also a great deal of interaction between examiners within teams so that collective judgement is applied for exam answers that may not fully fit the model answer guidance.</p> <p>Action Required:</p> <p>Ensure that all external examiner comments are formally responded to and arbitration used if there continues to be disagreement</p>	<p>Completed. This is an SOP</p>

	situation could be avoided in the future if some form of arbitration was in place prior to finalising questions?	Action Deadline: 01-May-2022 Action assigned to: Exams Office	
3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)	A number of the skills assessed in the OSCEs are not 'stage appropriate' and could be moved to earlier in the course - e.g. paw bandaging, blood smear, instrumentation packaging... or could become DOPs As indicated earlier (1.4), we are very aware of substantial resource implications in running the current range OSCEs. Given this clear commitment to student learning by the College we would like to make sure this effort is optimised and that OSCEs taken by final year students are updated and focussed on topics/procedures relating to day-one competencies.	The set of the OSCEs this year was severely impacted by the pandemic. We acknowledge that there are some stations that are more appropriate as DOPs and earlier in the course and future OSCEs will not contain such stations. Action Required: Action Deadline: 01-Feb-2022 Action assigned to: OSCE convener	Ongoing and that it is being considered as part of the new curriculum planning as moving assessment of skills to earlier years means it needs to be part of the new curriculum. Until the assessment strategy of early years for new curriculum are fully implemented, there is a limit to removal of skills in the Final Year OSCEs until we can finalise assessment across the curriculum

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 15-Jun-2022

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 5, 2021/22

Lead examiner: Dr Joseph Cassidy

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Harold Bok, Dr Amanda Boag, Professor Gayle Hallowell, Professor Nicholas Jonsson

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

The style, standard and content of the questions posed in Finals Part II and the student answers would indicate the course content is appropriate for Final year veterinary training.

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

Final assessments have been mapped to course outcomes, RCVS day-one skills and AVMA competences
Finals Part II questions assess the key objective of clinical and professional decision making.

1.3 Teaching methods

Evidence from final assessments suggests these reflect the teaching philosophy/methodology within the final clinical years:

1. practical skills (OSCEs and DOPs) - Finals part I
2. integration of clinical and professional reasoning - Finals part II
3. self-directed learning/research - Finals part III

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

Public health restrictions have continued to impact on the running of assessments (esp. OSCEs and Finals Part II). Challenges remain to the proctoring of remotely-taken, on-line, written assessments

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Yes - this is an ongoing challenge

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

As in the previous two academic years, The RVC has risen to the significant challenge of creating fair, transparent and educationally appropriate assessments in 2021-22, despite ongoing public health restrictions. We trust that an improving public health situation will allow the return of a more normal/conventional assessment environment next academic year.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

we hope that we will be able to do so but still retain some of the advantages of online assessments. A work in progress.

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

Student performance is very similar to that in the external examiners' Schools.

The externs welcome the introduction of minimum thresholds/qualifiers in Finals Part II this academic year (2021-22).

These new regulations have not had a significant impact on the overall numbers of students failing Finals Part II (9 in 2022, 11 in 2021) and will mitigate against the small number of academically weaker students who compensate for weaknesses in particular species by using marks attained on questions on other species. These minimum thresholds should also assist in encouraging the engagement of students with species that they may not currently consider their top priority. As such, they may also play a role in maintaining the 'potential omnicompetence' of RVC graduates.

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

Good overall quality of knowledge and skills reflected in the marks distribution in Finals Part II (overall mean 57.7/median 57.6).

This mean/median is strikingly similar to the performance of last year's cohort (i.e. 58). The percentages of students achieving Passes, Merits and Distinctions has not significantly changed. Candidates were particularly strong in answering the three small animal/small mammal questions (means of 60, 59 and 63). Overall performance in the compulsory farm animal question dipped to a mean of 54 and only 2.4% took the optional farm animal (pig) question. As in previous years, the majority of students (~60%) took the small animal question as their optional fourth. Students performed well in the optional small animal (rabbit) question (mean 62.8). Examiners noted the large (96 in total, 40 in the compulsory farm Q) number of '48s' awarded and discussed what this mark represents in terms of a 'barely competent graduate' within the 17 point grading system - we presume a student is awarded a 48 when a major issue around patient safety arises in their perhaps otherwise passable answer?

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Yes - the mark of 48% is almost always given when the answer is flawed by a planned action or lack of understanding that would place a patient, owner or vet at risk.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

The performance of this student cohort is similar to that in the external examiner 'home' Veterinary Schools and this group of students has not be unduly impacted by the introduction of 'minimum thresholds/qualifiers' in Finals Part II

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Yes - it is pleasing to see that the thresholds that have been put in place have not significantly affected the success rate of the students at this exam and hopefully have focused their minds on ensuring they are able to make reasonable clinical and professional decisions regardless of the species.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Assessment methods used are appropriate.

As highlighted in previous reports, a number of the skills assessed in the OSCEs could be moved to earlier in the course or could become DOPs. Examiners were particularly impressed with the 'communication skills' OSCE stations

Given the substantial resource implications in running Final year OSCEs, it is essential that this assessment format is regularly updated

to focus on topics/procedures relating to day-one competencies. An improving public health environment may facilitate such updating

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Yes - we are very hopeful that in 2023 we will not be as restricted by public health issues and hope to ensure that the OSCE stations are of a suitable standard and complexity relevant to a Finals capstone skills exam.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Double-marking, moderation and data analysis ensure a rigorous approach.

Where there is some uncertainty around the grading of a particular script, external examiners discussed the merits or otherwise of these scripts being graded by a 'collective'/group of examiners or whether it might be more objective (from the perspective of decision-making) to ask colleagues unaware of the mark awarded, to provide an independent assessment of the script before any discussion/moderation.

Examiners discussed what the '48' mark represents in terms of a 'barely competent graduate' within the 17 point grading system - presumably a '48' reflects an answer that compromises patient safety in some significant manner?

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Yes - have responded to this earlier. The team marking that occurs does mean that more than one pair of eyes sees the scripts of concern. Blind marking as suggested would not be feasible within the time and resource constraints we face. However, as such scripts are usually reviewed by at least two on the marking team, often the sample marker and the external examiners we are confident the marks are sound. The course director does, however, believe that the RVC needs to have a discussion about making the guidance to marking teams explicit that failed scripts are reviewed by more than one marker on the team and/or that all failed scripts are sample marked.

Action Required:

Guidance in relation to failed scripts be discussed by the Exam Convenor, Course Director, Head of Exams, Director of Assessment, Undergraduate Associate Dean and Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning with a view to considering a proposal to be discussed at CMC/LTAC

Action Deadline:

01-Mar-2023

Action assigned to:

Ana Filipovic to coordinate

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

Consistent with FHEQ level 6/7

3.4 Standard of marking

External examiners were very impressed by the rigor of the marking process including the statistical comparisons of individuals marking the same question and the double marking of a subset of scripts. Post hoc analysis of OSCE marks (Finals Part I) was also utilised to identify possible anomalies/inconsistencies.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison**Course Director Response:**

Thank you for your very positive comments

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

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

We welcome the introduction of minimum thresholds/qualifiers in Finals Part II. These have not unduly affected assessment outcomes and should help in encouraging students to engage with species that are not their main interest as well as assisting with the attainment of day 1 'potential omnicompetence'

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

We await the results of the investigation of the 8 students with discrepancies in their scripts as highlighted by the Turnitin plagiarism detection system

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

The results of this communication will be communicated with you.

Action Required:

Registrar and/or VP for Teaching and Assessment to communicate with the external exam team if this has not already been done.

Action Deadline:

01-Nov-2022

Action assigned to:

Ana Filipovic to coordinate

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

External examiners appreciate that public health restrictions have limited/delayed the updating of OSCE stations
We welcome the introduction of 'minimum thresholds/qualifiers' in Finals Part II this academic year.

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was 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:

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:

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was 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:

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:

4.9 I have received enough training and support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was 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:

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.12 The processes for assessment and the determination of awards are sound

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was 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:

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)

