

## ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2021/22

### Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

#### BVetMed Year 1

This appendix contains Year Leader'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](mailto:afilipovic@rvc.ac.uk), 01707666938

Appendix 3 consists of:

a.	Updates to actions from previous years' reports (n/a)
b.	2020/21 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director

Report Question	External Examiners' comment in 2020/21	Course Directors response and actions	Update in 2020/21
<p><b>2.2 Quality of candidates' knowledge and skills, with particular reference to those at the top, middle or bottom of the range</b></p>	<p>Performance of 'gateway' entry students was more variable, with some performing superbly, while their failure rate was relatively high. We believe that this latter observation relates to the inherent (and somewhat unavoidable) heterogeneity of this cohort, rather than any failings in the support with which they are provided. Their progress is also continually monitored, and targeted interventions put in place as necessary. It should also be noted that the first year is the time when these students' outcomes would be expected to differ most from other students, and indeed we were told that the data show that attainment gaps decline as the students progress through this (long) course.</p>	<p>Whilst we were of course disappointed to see the relatively more variable performance of gateway alumni, we are very confident that the support we are putting in place for these students is high. This year the transition tutor has worked with these students on specific aspects of the programme such as preparation for ISF oral exams; next year this support will continue to be developed through a transition summer school, and other support activities. We would point out that students from disadvantaged backgrounds were most severely impacted by the pandemic, and so it is gratifying that the number of poor outcomes for students in this group was no higher than in previous non-pandemic years (and in fact somewhat improved).</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b></p> <p>1. Continued monitoring and efforts to ensure Gateway alumni are supported in transition to BVM1 (Year Leader, Transition Tutor)</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b></p> <p>31-Oct-2021</p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b></p> <p>Year Leader; Transition tutor</p>	
<p><b>2.2 Quality of candidates' knowledge and skills, with particular reference to those at the top, middle or bottom of the range</b></p>	<p>The ISF orals were well-run, wide-ranging and appropriately pitched. The performance of some students was rather lower in this assessment element than in others. This may be due to the transition to online vivas - and it is clear that this COVID-affected cohort will be provided with additional support in preparing for ISF/OSCE/viva-type exams in future years.</p>	<p>this was the first time we had run these online, although the students did get a formative experience. We would suggest the lower than usual performance (although, students historically do perform slightly less well across the board in this assessment) would have been impacted by the relative isolation in which some students worked during the pandemic, limiting their exposure to verbal communication and discussion of scientific topics. As you suggest, ensuring students understand the importance of face to face group work sessions in preparing for these types of assessments in 2021/22 will need to be a deliberate effort on our part.</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b></p> <p>2. Students to be reminded that group work and discussions that take place during those sessions prepare them for oral examinations and are vital for developing communication skills (Year Leader)</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b></p> <p>31-Oct-2021</p>	

		<b>Action assigned to:</b> Year Leader; Transition tutor	
<b>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:</b>	Like most higher education institutions, the RVC will also no doubt consider what has been learnt during the COVID outbreak. Were some altered modes of teaching and assessment actually better than what went before?	<b>Action Required:</b> Continual review and improvement of assessment modes and delivery mechanisms <b>Action Deadline:</b> 01-May-2022 <b>Action assigned to:</b> Director of Assessment; Head of Exams; Director of Learning and Wellbeing	

# Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 15-Jul-2022

**Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 1, 2021/22**

**Lead examiner: Mr David Kilroy**

**Collaborating examiner(s): Professor William Holt, Dr Karin Mueller, Dr Erica Gummery**

## The Programme

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

### 1.1 Course content

The content is suitable for the first year of the BVetMed degree course.

### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

#### **Course Director Response:**

This content for the curriculum introduced in 2021/22 academic year is a revision of the previous curriculum. The previous course content has been reorganized and streamlined to provide a systematic flow that is sensitive to the needs of incremental learning, preparation for AHMS and integration within and across strands.

#### **Action Required:**

None

#### **Action Deadline:**

#### **Action assigned to:**

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

The examiners were supplied with a comprehensive list of learning objectives which are appropriate and were met by the range of assessments. Animal Husbandry was well represented, with a fair assessment, reflecting the course and expected knowledge base of students.

### COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

#### Course Director Response:

As part of the assessment system, the external examiner is furnished with the course handbook and the draft exams that are blueprinted against the course content and learning outcomes.

The introduction of Direct Observation of Procedural Skills (DOPS) assessment, a must pass Animal Husbandry exam before undertaking specific AHEMS placement is a new introduction to the course in line with RCVS requirements.

#### Action Required:

#### Action Deadline:

#### Action assigned to:

## 1.3 Teaching methods

While direct observation of teaching did not occur, the assessment outcomes and overall exam performance suggest that the methods employed are highly successful.

### COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

#### Course Director Response:

As part of RVC's duty to provide a wholistic training, assessments are always mapped onto taught content and learning outcomes. The course is emphatic on providing learning outcomes for all the content delivered to students. The alignment of the learning outcomes with assessment therefore is a great support to student learning and achievement.

#### Action Required:

#### Action Deadline:

#### Action assigned to:

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

The classes and students are more than adequately resourced, which is a major achievement with so many students.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

##### **Course Director Response:**

The provision of academic resources is paramount to great achievements. Various resources such as adequate staffing, library learning materials and learning spaces though not completely optimized have accorded the students an environment conducive to learning and achievement.,

##### **Action Required:**

##### **Action Deadline:**

##### **Action assigned to:**

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

#### **Professor W.H**

I was impressed that as an external examiner I was able to read emails sent to the students notifying them about activities and deadlines, etc. This information provided some general background about the course and the teaching.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

##### **Course Director Response:**

##### **Action Required:**

None

##### **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 was similar to other veterinary schools.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

##### **Course Director Response:**

Course materials and examination content are evaluated by both internal and external experts for conformity with required academic standards.

##### **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

There were many high grades, which is a tribute to the students and the staff who teach them. Some of the failing students performed very poorly overall.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

##### **Course Director Response:**

A significant number of students performing extremely well is a good tribute to the staff who work so hard to help the students to achieve good grades. Most of the students who fail the exam in the first sit do pass their resits.

##### **Action Required:**

To assess the possible reasons for failure in a subset of the students exposed to the same teaching conditions doing very poorly overall.

##### **Action Deadline:**

01-Jan-2023

##### **Action assigned to:**

BVetMed Course Director, Director for Access

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

The overall failure rate of Gateway students was higher than the non-Gateway group. We realise that the college provides considerable support for this group of students which we hope will improve their performance.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

##### **Course Director Response:**

The issue of a significant number of Gateway pathway students failing overall is a concern to the RVC. While the observation per se would indicate a large percentage of Gateway students failing overall, comparisons between Gateway and non-Gateway under the categories of distinction, merit, pass and fail indicates an increase in the number of Gateway students achieving a pass this year compared to the last academic year.

##### **Action Required:**

A clear guidance on the demands of the BVetMed course will be advised to the Gateway students as well as other options available in the pathway.

##### **Action Deadline:**

01-Jan-2023

##### **Action assigned to:**

BVetMed Course Director, Gateway year leader and Director of Access.

## Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

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

A wide-ranging and appropriate range of assessments is used which provides a good test of the students' knowledge and ability.

KM: ISF Orals: well conducted, putting students at ease as much as possible; fair questioning, incl. good attempts to tease out knowledge and understanding

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

#### Course Director Response:

We provide a diet of exams that test factual recall, problem solving and interpretation of information. The Integrated Structure and Function (ISF) orals systematically test a students knowledge on factual recall and higher order thinking including integration of information by systematically applying 3-levels of testing.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

### 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Entirely appropriate and suitable.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

#### Course Director Response:

We provide assessments that are robust and rigorous.

**Action Required:**

None

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

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

Fully consistent with the Framework.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

##### **Course Director Response:**

I concur with the external examiner's remark.

##### **Action Required:**

##### **Action Deadline:**

##### **Action assigned to:**

### 3.4 Standard of marking

The marking was conducted in a careful and consistent manner with few differences among internal examiners. Grades were fairly awarded.

KM: I scrutinised in particular candidates sitting on 48-49% - no errors or inconsistencies identified that would materially impact their score. I could not identify any particular issue of concern for questions with slightly weaker performance stats, and overall each paper performed satisfactorily with good range of difficulty across individual questions. One MCQ (Q14) (dietary starch effect in dairy cow) may be worth reviewing teaching and/or question as only 23% got it right.

Paper 2: I agree that the lower means for some questions are acceptable, and the carry-on-effect in one question was overall suitably dealt with. You may wish to review the weighting between paper 2a and 2b. Both are worth 60 marks, with 2a attracting 30% vs. only 10% for 2b.

The problem-solving component of the in-course assessments may need more scrutiny, with close to half and  $\frac{3}{4}$  failing, respectively. This could be the 1% difference borderline candidates need.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

##### **Course Director Response:**

Thank you for the positive comments on the conduct of the exams. The observation of the little difference between the scores given by internal and external examiners is a testament of a stringent and rigorous grading scheme across all papers. Passing students as well as those failing obtain the grades they are worth.

The performance in the first in-course assessment (ICA) is somewhat always variable among students especially so because this is the first exam the students undertake at the university. In many cases there is a marked improvement in the second ICA.

##### **Action Required:**

To review the MCQ question and if necessary expunge it from the MCQ bank. As recommended, we shall also review the weighting of paper 2a and paper 2b (now paper 2 and 3 respectively)

**Action Deadline:**

01-Dec-2022

**Action assigned to:**

Director of Assessment

**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. Every aspect of the exam process was well organised and ran smoothly. The external examiners were grateful for the help of the examinations officer and the clearly-presented student grades.

KM: The executive summary for paper 2 was very useful. Thank you for clarifying your decision not to SS paper 2.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia****Course Director Response:**

The Credit goes to Lauren Christian who has done an exemplary job of the exams every year.

**Action Required:****Action Deadline:****Action assigned to:**

None

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

A return to in-person exams is most welcome and the student performance is impressive, especially as this the first 'real' exam for many of them.

KM: In the DOPS exam, it looks like 'borderline fail' in one criterion can achieve a pass overall.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

##### **Course Director Response:**

The organization, staffing and logistics especially those of conducting virtual ISF exam is particularly challenging. A return to in-person for ISF is appreciated by the staff.

##### **Action Required:**

##### **Action Deadline:**

##### **Action assigned to:**

None

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

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

We endeavor to address all matters raised by external examiners because they are key to the delivery of the high standard of exams observed each year.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

**4.2 An acceptable response has been made**

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

Thank you

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

#### 4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

Your quick turn around of the exam draft papers sent out for reviewing is deeply appreciated.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

#### 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:

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

The Exams office as always has done a commendable job in availing all the papers and materials requested by the external examiners.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

**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:**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

We are indebted to the external examiners for their commitment and hard work.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

**4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly**

**Yes**

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

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

The external examiners' comment is a testimony of the thoroughness and the clear processes applied in the grading of exams.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

**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:**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

The categories of Distinction, Merit , Pass and Fail are applied after aggregations of marks from various papers and applying the requisite rules governing such awards.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

**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:**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

We take pride in this comment that demonstrates the robustness and rigor of our teaching and assessment methods.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

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

**Yes**

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

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

We invite external examiners to Inset days and any other forums where discussions on assessment are deemed useful or instructive to the external examiner's duties.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

**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:**

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

The external examiners receives draft exam materials, course outlines and other relevant information such as exam dates well in advance.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

**4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed**

**Yes**

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

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

We are dedicated to uphold high standards of procedures and processes.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

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

**Yes**

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

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

The framework of assessment and award is spelt out in the Assessment and Award Regulations of the RVC.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

## 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 commendable and suited to such a diverse group of students. The amount of marking and the limited time for this process is a concern, especially with such large numbers of students. The staff do an outstanding job in maintaining the high standard of assessment.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia**

**Course Director Response:**

The examiner's concern on the amount marking to be done within a limited time is noted. The examiner to student ratio has remained constant over time, however the examiners have always risen up to the challenge despite the amount of assessment loads. I would like on behalf of the RVC to pass a vote of thanks to the external examiner for working hard and producing results under very restricted timelines.

A big thank you to the internal examiners and exams office also for stellar performances in setting, scheduling and grading the various forms of exams, from the ICAs to the end of year exams.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**