

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2022/23

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

BVetMed Year 3

This appendix contains Year Leader's responses to 2022/23 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from previous External Examiners' reports.

As Year Leader 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
b.	2022/23 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Year Leader. Report written by: Lead examiner: Dr John Keen Collaborating examiners: Dr Dan Batchelor, Prof David Barrett

2021/22 action:	External Examiners comments	Year Leaders response	Update:
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:	I would continue the general improvement in technical quality of items where needed (e.g remove or reduce unnecessary reading, keep options homogeneous and short, remove cues that can be picked up by test-wise candidates). Please carry on the high quality post-exam processes including question scrutiny.	We will indeed keep working to improve and maintain the standard of this exam. a call has gone out for new questions, with clear instructions and advice on question writing. We are pleased that you feel there was good information and support available, even if this was rather long in places on learn. We will look to see if we can get hold of historical data about questions. Action Required: Discussion with exams convener and exams team about analysis of historical data on questions. Action Deadline: 01-Mar-2023	Completed. Director of Assessment is currently updating Ripley and adding a facility score to all questions that have been used in the past

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 16-May-2023

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 3, 2022/23

Lead examiner: Dr John Keen

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Dan Batchelor, Prof David Barrett

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

This is the 3rd Year of the BVetMed course. This comprises examinations in practical skills (DOPS) professional studies (reflective essays) and multi-species MCQs. The content in general appears appropriate for this stage of the course. The exception is the DOPS which examines essentially basic clinical skills more appropriate for earlier years. This was discussed in the Board Meeting and has been addressed as the curriculum develops: these are being moved to earlier years.

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

Based on previous years, learning objectives are clearly laid out and appropriate

1.3 Teaching methods

The external examiners are satisfied with the range of teaching methods used in this course

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

The information on LEARN for the students' examination process are clear and detailed for all components

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

We had some discussion about the new curriculum being introduced. This will involve smaller term examinations (basic factual and clinical reasoning) throughout the year along with a replacement for the Prof Studies component (PVP). Given the amalgamation of marks from each assessment (rather than each being standalone pass) we feel that it is important that minimum scores must be attained from each component. There were some concerns voiced about whether students who did badly early in the year would then suffer as a result, as the year progressed (feeling that they had no chance to pass overall for the year).

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Michael Hewetson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your constructive comments. For the written summative assessment in the new curriculum, an aggregated average mark of 50% or more from the written MCQ papers and the PVP reflective assignment combined must be attained. In addition, students must achieve at least 40% in the Basic Factual MCQ and at least 40% in the Clinical Problem Solving MCQ components when the marks are combined for the 3 terms. There is therefore in effect, a minimum score that must be attained from each component of the MCQ assessment, however we feel it would be unreasonable to apply minimum scores to each individual exam. Students can

compensate to some extent between the Basic factual and Clinical reasoning papers, so long as they achieve 50% overall.

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 was as expected for this level and comparable to our College, with a good range of scores in all written components, and similar fail rate. The failed candidates comprised a mixture of those that had failed practical components (not yet safe in DOPS) and the written components (not above 50% in written papers)

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

Spread of marks was consistent with the pattern in previous years with the majority percentage passing, while percentage of distinctions is reducing to a more realistic level (<20% of cohort).

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

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

2 x MCQ papers: basic factual knowledge and clinical reasoning. Both are of direct relevance to curriculum, with the clinical reasoning paper requiring the students to display higher levels of learning

DOPS: as we discussed at the Board meeting, the type of skills being assessed is more suited (on many of the DOPS) to earlier years of the course. This has however already been noted and for future years the DOPS will move to earlier years

Professional Studies Assessment: an assessment of students ability to reflect on their experiences as a veterinary student. This is directly relevant to their development as veterinary clinicians and this is at an appropriate stage in their training

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

MCQs: both are well managed before and after the process by the assessment team. There is a blueprint for question inclusion, and scrutiny of questions both prior to use and after the examination. The external examiners wondered whether some consistency in the papers (e.g. question format, nomenclature) could be attained by a group of experienced examiners scrutinising the chosen questions prior to delivery of the draft papers to the external examiners.

Prof Studies: Process for examination of this assignment, where there is potential for some degree of subjectivity, is well managed, with a good percentage of sample (dual) marking. The examiners were impressed by amount of feedback the examiners give students on their work.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Michael Hewetson

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your constructive comments. All questions are carefully scrutinized by the exam convener and the appropriate strand leader (or question writer) for quality and to ensure that the question is factually correct and is aligned to a specific LO prior to be set to the external examiners. Having said that, we are aware that the quality of questions in the bank can be improved and updated; and are therefore in the process of auditing our question bank. All MCQ questions in the bank have been tagged in terms of the strand they belong to and categorised in terms of BF vs CR and whether or not they can be used in a resit paper (i.e. with an MCC Facility Score). The next phase has been to extract strand-specific questions and map these to individual lectures and LOs. An experienced examiner is currently busy doing a first pass on all these questions in terms of quality assurance. Questions that pass this first quality control step are (or will be) sent to individual lecturers (or the responsible member of academic staff) who are then asked to review/revise the questions alongside their new curriculum LOs and also to focus on writing new questions for LOs that are not covered in the current bank. We hope that with time (recognizing that this will be an iterative process), the quality and consistency of the questions will improve and will be reflected in the exam papers submitted to the external examiners for scrutiny.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Assessments appropriate for a level 7 FHEQ qualification

3.4 Standard of marking

MCQs: exams are well proctored, despite being online remote. Excellent QA process in place to scrutinise questions that have indices suggesting they are poorly performing/not discerning. Robust and defensible (composite) method for creating cuts-off/pass mark scores

Prof Studies: as noted above, amount of feedback to students on their performance is excellent, and marking is backed up by sampling by other examiners

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)

The whole process is fair, robust and defensible. Administration of the process by the teaching administrative team is excellent and external examiners are kept well informed at all stages, with useful summaries provided.

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

No significant change to format for last 4 years, other than those imposed by Covid pandemic. The move to online assessments seems to have been well managed with the examinations remotely proctored. There was some discussion of how this will be managed going forwards, with likely requirement for invigilated computer based examinations rather than examinations in the students own home/computer

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

Good amount of information on LEARN for students explaining the written MCQ examinations. The opportunity for a formative examination beforehand seems very wise to iron out any glitches people may have with access to software etc

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:

Prof D.B

NA

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Prof D.B

NA

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

as described above: some inconsistencies in question format (not aligned to current consensus on 'good MCQ writing') and consistency of terminology and nomenclature etc could be ironed out prior to draft papers being formatted. But we appreciate the difficulties and all find this hard

Prof D.B

YES

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Michael Hewetson

Course Director Response:

Please refer to previous comments regarding updating and auditing our question bank

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:

Prof D.B

YES

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:

The meeting as well managed and thanks to the whole Examination Team

Prof D.B

YES: Thank you to the RVC team for a very efficient and professional process.

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

All candidates were anonymised for this meeting. The process and discussion was fair

Prof D.B

YES

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:

Prof D.B

YES

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:

Prof D.B

YES

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Prof D.B

YES

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:

As noted above: timely and useful information always provided

Prof D.B

YES

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Prof D.B

YES

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Prof D.B

YES

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:

Lots of evidence of good practice around these examinations: excellent preparatory information on LEARN, formative examinations prior to the summative ones, extra time provided to account for any problems with online format, good support available

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)

Reassessment of your processes around getting good MCQs to use in examinations would perhaps be worthwhile. We all know it is hard to get and maintain good question banks, especially as guidelines for what constitutes a good question have changed. Question writing training, group writing sessions, scrutiny of draft papers by a panel to ensure consistency are some suggestions that may help.

Prof D.B

There is a clear need for examiner training in good MCQ writing. While recognising this is difficult, it is essential if high quality, robust and fair MCQ exams are to be delivered. A panel reviewing draft papers prior to External Examiners' scrutinising them would not only improve the papers but create a training opportunity for those writing questions. Peer review of your questions and discussion is a good learning environment once 'best practice' has been agreed and examiner training delivered

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Michael Hewetson

Course Director Response:

Please refer to previous comments regarding updating and auditing our question bank.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

