

# Individual Report

Exam board meeting: 18-Jun-2024

## Veterinary Gateway Programme, 2023/24

Dr Jennie Litten-Brown

### The Programme

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

#### 1.1 Course content

The course content is appropriate for the Gateway course. It has been well designed and continues to enable the students to have a wide range of modules which are well matched to the veterinary science area and our general scientific understanding of the world. Evidence shows that the course is clearly enabling students to progress in their chosen career path.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston**

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

We thank the external examiners for their positive comments and will continue to develop the Gateway Programme in response to advances in scientific and/or pedagogical fields.

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

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

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

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

The Learning objectives were clearly stated on RVC LEARN for the students and examiners to see.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston**

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

We thank the external examiners for recognising that all learning objectives are clearly signposted on Learn to students for each learning activity.

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

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

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

### 1.3 Teaching methods

There is evidence of a wide variety of teaching methods and styles which are employed in the delivery of this course – partly by design but also due to the range of academics who deliver content. This is clearly appreciated by the students on the course and personally I think it is appropriate as there are many different learning styles present in our students. I think care needs to be taken that the quality, quantity and style of feedback on the other hand is not as varied, indeed what is needed as far as feedback is concerned is consistency. Currently there is still a variety of feedback forms used ranging from using the feedback box to comments on the word document to scanned in handwritten. Focus needs to be on all students having feedback which is useful for them going forward in their course and improving their work. Some members of the team should be commended for giving a large amount of detailed feedback which contains guidance which can be used to improve future work. I can see the time and effort that has been spent on this.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston**

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

We thank the external examiners for their positive comments on the quality and variety of teaching methods used on the Gateway Programme.

We note the external examiners concerns regarding the consistency of feedback styles on some assessments. The use of online marking has enabled us to provide greater consistency when marking examinations, requiring staff to provide feedback on each sub-section of a question and so, providing the students with a more detailed understanding of the reasoning behind their mark. However, there remains variation between markers in the method and occasionally the quality of the feedback provided for in-course assessments. In order to address this, all staff attended an Inset Training Day in April 2024, where they were instructed on best practice and on how to provide useful and consistent feedback. In 2023-24, we introduced a marking rubric for the Gateway Development module in-course assessment, which has helped markers to standardise their feedback. At present, the RVC assessment policies allow markers to choose the form of their feedback with individual markers opting to provide either a summary feedback report or in-document edits, as they see fit. While this policy remains, it is likely that we will see variation in feedback methods. Regardless of the method of feedback, we will continue to provide staff with guidance on how to write detailed and reflective feedback, providing all students with an understanding of the mark awarded and suggestions on where to improve in the future.

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

Provide staff with guidance on how to write detailed and reflective feedback, providing all students with an understanding of the mark awarded and suggestions on where to improve in the future.

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

01-Nov-2025

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

Exams Office, L Thurston, D Palmer

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

I have not seen evidence of an issue with resources.

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

No additional comments

#### **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**

Overall the performance of the students continues to be similar to other institutions which I am familiar with.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston**

**Course Director Response:**

We are reassured that our students are performing at a level comparable with partner institutions.

**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**

Evidence I have seen during my exploration of the information is that in most modules the whole range of marks were used and there were clearly students who showed high ability as well as those who exhibited much less aptitude. It is clear that the students have been performing better in the IGE module due to a rethink and rework of the way students are prepared for the assessment, unfortunately the same amount of work now needs to be applied to the Development module. To clarify though I feel it is important that the focus is on preparing the students for the assessment as fully as possible rather than changing the rigorousness of the assessment – the students still need the same knowledge but may need more help preparing. It is clear that this can be achieved with the knowledge and experience of the staff.

### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston**

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

We thank the external examiners for their positive comments regarding the success of revision support, teaching interventions and assessment reviews provided for students, that have facilitated improved performance in the Inheritance, Genes and Evolution module. We note the external examiners comments regarding a drop in performance in the Development module and the potential need for similar interventions for this module going forward. This has mirrored our own analysis of performance across the Gateway modules. In advance of the August 2024 resit examinations, students will be invited to revision and subject consolidation sessions with particular emphasis on the Development module. It is interesting to note that the 2024 drop in student exam performance for the Development module coincided with a change in the format of the Development examination which changed to a combination of 15 MCQs and 2 short-answer questions. This meant that the Development module examination was the first time that students were exposed to this type of question (all other modules use a combination of 15 MCQs and 1 problem solving question). In order to address this, the module leadership and year leadership team will review whether the assessment should be better aligned with the other Gateway modules. If it is decided to keep the Development short answer question format, then students will be supported in advance of the examination with additional training on how to approach and successfully answer questions in this format, via the Gateway Support module (Vet Careers and Communication) and as part of the Development module teaching sessions.

#### **Action Required:**

Development module leadership and year leadership team will review whether the assessment should be better aligned with the other Gateway modules. If it is decided to keep the Development short answer question format, then students will be supported in advance of the examination with additional training on how to approach and successfully answer questions in this format, via the Gateway Support module (Vet Careers and Communication) and as part of the Development module teaching sessions.

#### **Action Deadline:**

01-Dec-2024

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

L Thurston, D Palmer, C Russell

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

As discussed above, the IGE module has been replaced with the Development one as the outlier in terms of student performance. I think it is a credit to the EE process and the positive working relationships between the EEs and the staff that has helped put the focus on IGE which has resulted in a positive change for the students. I hope that a similar scenario may happen with the Development module.

There are cases of plagiarism occurring which appear to not be being picked up and a detailed discussion occurred at the pre-board around this topic and I know that discussions and action is already being taken by staff within the RVC.

#### COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

##### Course Director Response:

We agree that the partnership between the external examiners and RVC staff has had a positive impact on the Inheritance, Genes and Evolution module, and in particular on student performance - many thanks to all involved in this collaborative effort!

Issues with the identification of plagiarism by RVC staff discussed at the pre-board meeting, were mainly focussed on the BSc1 cohort, but we will continue to be involved in the investigative processes and will be vigilant for similar issues on the Gateway Programme. At present we are confident that the plagiarism investigation processes are working well for the Gateway Programme. During the pre-board discussions (and later in this document) the external examiners asked about the processes in place for investigating cases of possible plagiarism and the recording of data where students have been found to have plagiarised to a large or smaller extent. In summary, when staff identify a potential case of plagiarism, the exams office is alerted via the AM02 plagiarism reporting form, and the script is sense checked by another member of RVC academic staff. If plagiarism is confirmed by 2 staff members, the student is interviewed via Academic Misconduct. Records of the outcome of the misconduct investigation are held by the Academic Misconduct Office.

##### Action Required:

##### Action Deadline:

##### Action assigned to:

#### Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

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

There continue to be a wide variety of assessment methods employed which is similar to other HEIs within the sector. I believe the online assessment has been embraced by the students and continues to be popular. I have a slight concern, as I commented about earlier, about the quality and quantity of some feedback – in order for our students to alter their work in a positive way going forward they must be given enough feedback to be able to build on.

#### COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

##### Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their positive comments. As noted by the external examiners, the online assessment format is popular with staff and students alike. Please see previous comments on the quality and quantity of feedback.

##### Action Required:

##### Action Deadline:

##### Action assigned to:

### 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

I believe the assessment procedures are rigorous and fair, colleagues are well aware of where additional student support is needed and they provide it. The concern I have is around the issue of plagiarism and whether or not it is being identified and dealt with according to the RVC's own guidelines, I am aware that discussions have already started and look forward to seeing evidence of changes for next year.

#### COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston

##### Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiners for their positive comments on the assessments and the student support interventions. Please see previous comments on plagiarism and the related RVC guidelines.

##### Action Required:

##### Action Deadline:

##### Action assigned to:

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

The level of assessment in all programmes is consistent with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston**

**Course Director Response:**

We thank the external examiners for their positive comment.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

### **3.4 Standard of marking**

I was able to see evidence of double marking and discussions around marks, the full range of marks are being used appropriately and documented evidence of discussions.

### **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 procedures for assessment and determination of awards were conducted extremely professionally and my thanks go to the Exams office who were always fully communicative and supportive in order for me to perform my role as external. Papers were sent in plenty of time for proof-reading prior to the exam being set and during the preparation for the final exam board we had additional meetings to ensure the procedures were fully followed. I find the boards being conducted online very useful in terms of balancing other elements of my job.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston**

**Course Director Response:**

We would like to thank the RVC Exams Office staff, in particular Emma Rosenberg, for her efficiency in running the Gateway assessments and assisting the External Examiners.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**

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

As far as my analysis shows there haven't been changes to the assessment procedures this year. I would like to see the focus on consistency for feedback to students and also in terms of processing cases of possible plagiarism and the recording of data where students have been found to have plagiarised to a large or smaller extent.

#### **COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston**

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

We note the external examiners concerns on consistency of feedback and the identification and processing of cases of plagiarism, and hope that the actions discussed earlier in this document will improve the assessment process going forward.

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

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

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

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

No additional comments

## 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:**

**4.2 An acceptable response has been made**

**Yes**

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

IGE was a great concern to me over the past couple of years and it is now much improved.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston**

**Course Director Response:**

Thank you for these positive comments.

**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:**

**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:**

With many thanks to the exams team, the histograms and other analysis which come on the spreadsheet with the exam marks are very useful .

#### 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:

The extent of use of the online platforms for assessment and also for exam boards and meetings is a very positive element to the way of working.

**COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Lisa Thurston**

**Course Director Response:**

We agree that the online format works well for assessment and exam boards.

**Action Required:**

**Action Deadline:**

**Action assigned to:**