Collaborative Report

MSc in One Health, 2023/24

Lead examiner: Dr Tiziana Lembo

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Gerald Bloom

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

It is always excellent to see such a diverse range of modules taught in this course. These provide the students with a unique opportunity to develop a broad skillset, from the more generic skills to the more specialised. The taught materials combined with multiple types of assessment expose the students to a stimulating learning environment that will likely enhance their ability to work both independently and as part of a team. It would be interesting to understand what type of career opportunities graduates from this course are able to pursue.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

Thanks for your comments. There are numerous career opportunities for students after completion of the MSc One health. Every year we ask several ex-students to provide a small seminar to showcase the type of careers available to them. This includes from careers in academia, policy and in agencies implementing interventions. This year, we had one student working a 'Friendship' NGO who is managing interventions and funding plan for projects in Bangladesh. We had several students who have been working for FAO and WHO, and discussed their experience with the current cohort. It is necessary to highlight that One Health is a broad area and hence opportunities are very diverse. We prepare our students with a unique set of skills to apply multi-disciplinary and system thinking approach into their work. The field of One Health is growing, with more government implementing One Health working groups and activities. As consequence, the competitions for MSc One Health is growing around the world.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

These were all met. Very high standards have been set and maintained over the years. These are comparable to other peer institutions.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

Thanks for the comments.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.3 Teaching methods

These remain varied and rich, including a combination of more traditional lecture-based teaching, practical sessions and exercises, as well as opportunities for active learning through group work and problem-based learning, and for collaborative learning through group presentations. The course includes a good mix of assessment methods for different modules that reflect the skills the modules intend to impart to the students.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

Thanks for the comment. Indeed we take care to ensure we use a variate of teaching methods, and sufficient practicals and discussion exercises.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

The resources available to students are comprehensive.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

Thanks for the comment

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

1. Good to see that the examination part of the module Research Skills and Statistical Analysis Exam has been expanded to include a set of practical questions.

2. There is still no mechanism for the examiners to assess student satisfaction with their studies related to the overall course or individual modules. If collating formal feedback from the students continues to prove problematic, an informal session where the examiners have an opportunity to talk to the students directly could be organised to better understand the students' overall experience, including what is working well for them and areas for improvement.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

Thanks for the suggestion. Feedback is collected via surveys for each module and one main overall survey for the whole course, done in July/August. We as course director meet regularly with students representative to get further feedback and have 3-4 session of course directors with students throughout the year to also discuss student feedback. We plan to have a mechanism to make this feedback available to examiner, but it has not been possible this year. The idea of setting a meeting with external examiners seems useful, and we will discuss it internally.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

31-Jul-2025

Action assigned to:

Course directors

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 was good and comparable to what we experience in other peer institutions.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

Thanks for the comments

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

Normal distribution.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

No response needed

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Good to see many students performing at distinction and merit levels this year. One student failed but the examiners were satisfied that all necessary measures had been taken to support the student in improving their performance. Despite these measures, the student continued to perform below the standard required to obtain an MSc degree.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

Thanks for the comment

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

These are wide-ranging in nature and sufficiently challenging for postgraduate learning.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

Thanks for the comment

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.2   Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Assessments are undertaken with rigor. Very high standards for assessment have been set and maintained. These are comparable to other peer institutions. The feedback related to individual modules and the final project was consistently thorough, explaining the reason for the grade and providing suggestions for improvement.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

Thanks for the comment

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Consistent

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

No response required

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.4 Standard of marking

Quality of marking is high across modules. The extent and quality of feedback is more consistent across markers than noticed in previous years. For some assignments, templates/marking rubrics for assessments are particularly well designed, for example for oral presentations. Similar templates could be considered for other/all modules.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

Thanks for the comment

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)

These are sound and appropriate.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

Thanks for the comment

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

There has been improvement in the quality and depth of feedback provided to students.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

No response required

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

1. The assessment of one of the modules (One health: Situation analysis and systems thinking) involves a group presentation. This is a very valid assignment but lends itself to the challenge of assessing group work. It seems that students have raised questions about the equity of assigning a single grade to a group, in which some may have contributed more than others. There is a need to balance and recognise individual contributions with the need to encourage and reward one's ability to work in a team. These two components could potentially be marked separately and combined into an overall grade.

2. There was a small number of cases in the marking of the final reports where the markers differed substantially. In these cases, the facilitation appears to have been effective resulting in an agreed mark. Although this seems to have had a reasonable outcome, it might be useful to review the cases with the widest disparity to ensure that the examiners involved have a common understanding of the requirements for different marks.

3. Improvements should be considered in mechanisms to identify instances of academic misconduct and to document an assessment of the problem in assignments with a high Turnitin score.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

Thanks for the comment.
1/ The module OHSAST indeed has two assessments, a group work and an individual assessment. The group work counts only a small proportion of the mark, so there is more weight on the individual performance. We agree with the comment regarding group mark and we will discuss the possibility to have these two marks within that group assessment.
2. Research projects can have very wide topics, and we attempt to bring experts in each field to mark these. There is always some challenges, as we bring quite different type of markers from different specialties (e.g. a human nutritionists and a veterinary epidemiology). There is always differences in criteria between fields, and hence why in some cases marks can be quite difference and it is important to bring a moderator.
3. At the moment, it is up to markers to evaluate the turniting score and decide on whether plagiarism could be happening. If they suspect of this, then the student is subject to a missconduct investigation to decide whether this was actually the case. The system is design this way for all RVC courses, and we will discuss internally whether there is a needed to better document the potential high scores obtained.

Action Required:

1. Discuss with module leader marking done for the group work assessment of the OHSAST module. Consider giving two marks that are then combined in one. One mark could be related to individual performance and the other related to capacity to work in a group.
2. Set a meeting with markers for the research project to explain marking criteria for MSc OH projects
3. Discuss with CMC meeting possibility to better document problems due to high turnitin scores.

Action Deadline:

31-May-2025

Action assigned to:

Course directors

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:

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:

There was sufficient time to assess students' work related to the coursework phase of the course. However, like in previous years, timelines to assess students' final reports were tight. This year, many students had asked for extensions which delayed things further. An issue seems to be the time required to obtain ethical clearance at the start of the independent project. At the exam board, we discussed the possibility of making ethics applications an assessed assignment with a strict deadline. Alternatively, the range of project options could be restricted to projects that do not rely on primary data collection.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

This year we have provided a deadline for project ethics to be submitted. If the ethics is not submitted by then, an alternative plan B project needs to be carried out. For the next years, we will discuss how to better include project ethics submission into the system to avoid issues.

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:

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:

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:

As always, both examiners were impressed with the quality of the teaching provided by the two different institutions involved in delivering this course. This has resulted in excellent student's performance. The course will need to keep evolving in line with fast-paced AI developments and specifically:

1. Teaching on research methods should include the appropriate use of AI tools. This could include a discussion of how to identify the use of these tools in written work.

2. Assessment methods need to take into account the increasing use of AI tools. It may become necessary to give greater weight to oral presentations and discussion and defence of these presentations. For example, in the case of the final project, the viva currently counts towards only 10% of the mark, with the report making up the remaining 90%. The viva provides an opportunity to fully assess the student's understanding of the topic and of the research performed, and could therefore comprise a greater proportion of the final mark.

3. One implication of the increasing use of AI tools is that the skills required for post-course employment will change. It may be useful to carry out a review of the implications for the key skills the course should provide to students and redesign assessment approaches with this in mind. It may be better to address this issue in a systematic way, rather than look for quick fixes to the spread of AI tools.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Pablo Alarcon

Course Director Response:

Indeed, the AI tools are providing a challenges to academia. This is wide-college issue. We have change some of the assessments done to better adapt our course to the use of these AI tools. Yet, further discussions are being held within RVC to continue adapt to this, and I suspect these discussions and actions will become a yearly routine as AI tools keep evolving.
We will consider with module leaders potential to add a session on the use of AI tools in research.
We will consider changing the weight to the oral viva for the research project for next year

Action Required:

1. Discuss with module leader of the research skills regarding having a session on the use of AI tools in research.
2. To review the project guidelines to include elements of the use of AI in the research projects
3. To review the weighting of the oral viva for the research project and get it discuss at the CMC meeting.

Action Deadline:

31-May-2025

Action assigned to:

Course director

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)