

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2022/23

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

MSc One Health

This appendix contains Course Directors' responses to 2022/23 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from previous External Examiners' reports.

As Course Directors 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 – n/a
b	2021/22 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director

Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 17-Sep-2023

MSc in One Health, 2022/23

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

The course content continues to be very diverse, covering a broad range of topics relevant to One Health, including principles of One Health, endemic and emergent infectious disease agents, epidemiology, surveillance, economics, interventions and policy aspects. The new module Research Skills and Statistical Analysis delivered at the beginning of the course is an excellent addition and likely enables the students to approach the project phase with more confidence. These are also skills that will support the students in their future career choices. As usual, the final projects offer opportunities to address wide-ranging topics and study methodologies, including primary data collection, analysis of secondary data and literature reviews.

Dr G.B

One area that could be strengthened is the challenge of implementing a one health approach and cross-sectoral collaboration. This is increasingly recognised as a missing element in much thinking about one health. One important example is AMR, in which the WHO is strongly shifting its emphasis from the formulation of national action plans to their implementation.

Course director response

Thank you for your valuable feedback. We acknowledge the importance of delving into the complexities of implementing the One Health approach and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration. Throughout our course, we address these critical topics in numerous sessions, with a particular focus on the Foundations of One Health module.

Within this module, we extensively explore real-world examples illustrating the successful implementation of One Health, including various interventions and related policy frameworks. Our Problem-Based Learning (PBL) sessions within this module are designed to actively engage students in grappling with the challenges inherent in applying a One Health approach to multifaceted problems.

Moreover, we offer dedicated sessions that delve into the nuances of cross-sectoral collaboration. These sessions include discussions led by experts such as Liz Mumford from WHO, who sheds light on institutional collaborations, and Dr. Barbara Haesler, who explores the dynamics of One Health networks. The situation of AMR is also presented in one of the 'OH issues' sessions where medical and animal perspective are provided.

While we appreciate your suggestion for further enrichment. As part of our ongoing efforts, we intend to incorporate additional examples of One Health interventions in future iterations of the course. Notably, for the cohort 23-24, we have established a journal club specifically aimed at facilitating discussions on One Health interventions, providing students with a platform to delve deeper into these critical issues.

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.

Dr G.B

i agree with these comments.

1.3 Teaching methods

The course content is delivered using an excellent combination of methods, from core lectures, lectures delivered by external guests, practical sessions and exercises, group discussions and problem-solving learning. There is a nice range of interactive sessions, from outbreak investigations to system thinking to tackle One Health disease scenarios. The assessments are varied and enable the students to gain a wide range of skills from the more academic to the more practical. Good to see full return to face-to-face delivery.

Dr G.B

. I found a good mix of assignments. Some focused on specific technical skills and others encouraged students to think creatively about what a one health approach means.

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

The resources available to students are comprehensive.

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

1. The examination part of the new module Research Skills and Statistical Analysis Exam consists of questions where students are assessed on their understanding of statistics and their interpretation. However, there is no assessment of their ability to conduct statistical analyses themselves. This is something that the module leads might want to consider as it would provide them with a better sense of practical understanding on the part of the students.

2. There have been efforts to capture students' feedback but participation in formal surveys is still low. Mechanisms to collate this information during lectures, for example using interactive and inclusive software such as Mentimeter, should be considered. Brief surveys could be conducted at the end of each module in class to gauge the opinions of all attendants. These materials could be made available to external examiners to enable them to better understand the students' perspectives.

Course director response

Thank you for these comments. We appreciated that one of the assessments in the Research Skill module, which was an exam on statistical analysis, did not test their capacity to perform statistical analysis but merely their knowledge and interpretation of analysis. This has now changed for the academic year 2023-24. Instead of an exam, the new assessment is based on students receiving a dataset (unique to each student) and they have to perform statistical analysis and submit a report. This new assessment will be testing not only their knowledge, but their data management and statistical analysis skills.

Regarding students' feedback from students. Other than the surveys, feedback is captured by some module leaders in a session at the end of the module or based on comments provided by student during classes. This information is presented in the academic year reports. Course directors meet once a term with students to capture this feedback. The initial idea was to minute these meetings to capture this feedback, but this has not been possible this current year. We will explore the use of tools as suggested by external examiners in such meeting for the following academic years.

Dr G.B

The external examiners were given very little time to review the material. This arose because of technical difficulties in providing access to the exams and then the very short time between releasing the final dissertations and the meeting of the Exam Board.

Course director response

We apologize for the short time given. This year we had many students requesting extensions for the research project submission. These extensions delayed the marking process, which reduced the time these were available for review with external examiners. We discussed the possibility to move the exam board to later stage, and this may be done in subsequent years.

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, although we tend to see more students in the merit range than this particular cohort.

Course director response: The number of merits is quite variable between years. Below a table that we extracted from the academic quality report showing how this varies over the years. Last year indeed the number of merits was lower, but the overall pass rate was higher than in previous years.

Table 1. Student performance on the MSc One Health across the last four academic years

Academic Year	Pass	Fail	Incomplete	Withdrawn	Distinctions	Merits	Pass Rate
2019-2020	17	4	0	2	5	7	80.95%
2020-2021	14	6	3	0	2	4	70.00%
2021-2022	13	2	7	0	2	4	86.67%
2022-2023	12	1	4	0	2	2	92.31%

Dr G.B

Student performance was good.

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

Normal distribution.

Dr G.B

The range of marks reflected the differences in the quality of knowledge and skills.

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

It seems that there are wide-ranging resources in place and staff's support to address issues that under-performing students face. This includes provision of information regarding academic misconduct at the start of the course. In terms of the latter, perhaps further reminders, tailored quizzes and individual support might prevent problems later on in the course, particularly at final project phase. While assessors can express concerns at this point, these come at a rather late stage at which point individual conversations with students can no longer be held and referral to Senate is the only available option.

Course director response: For the next academic year, we have incorporated two new meetings of students with course directors during project time. One in late April to help students discuss the start of the project, and particularly potential issues with ethics application and communication with supervisors. The other meeting will be in July which will help discussing challenges in thesis writing and submission. In both meetings we will provide reminders for students to reach out to the different support centers if needed.

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.

Dr G.B

There is a good mix of methods.

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 with some differences related to second/double marking. More clarity on requirements for second/double marking and procedures related to mark moderation and agreement would be valuable as these do not appear to be consistent across modules.

Course director response: Thanks for this. Marking procedures are explained at the start of the course, and sometimes is discussed with students during course director meetings. We will consider providing further signposting and clarification to these in the next academic year.

Dr G.B

The marking strike created special difficulties with regard to second marking. The arrangements put in place were appropriate and provided adequate quality assurance.

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

Consistent

Dr G.B

I agree.

3.4 Standard of marking

Quality of marking is high across modules, although there are variations in the extent and quality of feedback. The format of feedback differed too, i.e. only in some instances there seemed to be a given template or marking rubric.

Dr G.B

The quality of marking was high and in most cases there was substantial feedback.

Course director response: Although general guidelines for marking as set by the college are followed, some markers do indeed provide more structure and extensive feedback than others. We will have a discussion with module leader to consider whether an agreed structure for the marking feedback can be used.

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.

Dr G.B

These are sound. It would be good to give the External Examiners more time to carry out a review before the scheduled meetings.

Course director response: See previous response regarding time for review of assessments before the exam board.

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

These have improved

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

The main point to consider relates to more consistency in the format and depth of feedback. Specific feedback forms with mark descriptors seem to be used only in a few modules. In some instances, students receive two feedback reports by two independent assessors, in other cases combined feedback is provided. You may want to consider: (1) using well defined feedback forms or rubrics in LEARN (e.g. Feedback Studio) with clear headings and mark descriptors (similar to what you use for marking of presentations); (2) providing only one set of feedback points agreed upon by the two assessors that clearly justify the overall mark; and (3) for the sake of the external examiners, providing an explanation of how marks are agreed and what the basis for giving a certain mark is - for each student, you could provide a few summary lines to explain how the final grade was agreed.

Course director response: Given that we are two colleges providing feedback, we follow different marking procedures between modules run by LSHTM and those by RVC. LSHTM modules are double marked and hence students get feedback from two independent assessors. RVC modules have one marker and one moderator (Note that for research project, these are double marked). It is not possible to change the current marking system, as this is a system done for all the courses within the colleges. However, we agree that more clarity may be needed when communicating this to students. On the other hand, we will discuss with module leader regarding markers using more structure template for the provision of feedback.

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:

Dr G.B

This is my first 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:

Dr G.B

YES

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:

Yes, I was able to but it would have been helpful to have access to key materials in advance, especially to help me prepare for the final exam board more fully.

Dr G.B

YES - I made similar comments about the need for more time to prepare.

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:

Dr G.B

YES

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Dr G.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:

Dr G.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:

Dr G.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:

Dr G.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:

Dr G.B

YES

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Dr G.B

YES

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Dr G.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:

This is a high-quality programme that prepares students for a career path in the field of One Health. Continuous efforts should be made to expand upon environmental aspects to provide the students with a clear understanding of the implications of changing environments for people, their livestock and the broader society, especially in food systems facing rapid modifications due to climate and population changes. The interdisciplinary perspectives students are exposed to through modules offered by two different institutions are an invaluable asset and place them in an ideal position to embark on a range of career paths. The programme is delivered by a highly committed team of academics that bring to the course varied expertise and experiences.

Dr G.B

The course provides a good combination of skills development and encouragement of creative thinking. This was reflected in a number of assignments and also in the dissertations. This is important in an area of study that involves a number of disciplines and work across sectors, As the One Health Approach becomes increasingly accepted by countries and international organisations, it may make sense to give more emphasis to the challenges of implementation.

Course director response: Thanks for these comments and for the effort in reviewing our course. These are helpful to continue improving our course.

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)

