ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2020/21

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

UG Biosciences

This appendix contains Year Leader/Course Director's responses to 2020/21 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from previous External Examiners' reports (if applicable).

As Year Leader/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, Senior Academic Quality Officer 'Standards', afilipovic@rvc.ac.uk.

Appendix 3 consists of:

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

great value to the overall rigour of the assessment process to set up simple macros within marking spreadsheets and analyse grades according to the marker. We appreciate that there is a solid moderation process in place, but this knowledge would help shed light on the instances where a module grades are observed to be high or lower than others.

recommendations regarding the Programme	obtain the missing marks but these had been unsuccessful at the time of the exam board. It wasn't clear why this delay had occurred. A 'no detriment' approach had been taken to resolving this, which is acceptable in the circumstances, but we recommend that the viability of this arrangement is considered carefully if this situation is likely to occur in future, or contingencies put in place to avoid this arising in future years.	Exams Office electronically rather than by mail, thus RVC will be able to process the results in a more timely manner	
2.2 Quality of candidates' knowledge and skills, with particular reference to those at the top, middle or bottom of the range	Gateway - Interestingly, there was a marked improvement in student performance in the "Inheritance, Genes and Evolution" (IGE) module which, despite producing lower marks than the other modules (median was 45%, while all other modules produced medians above 50%) was much higher than last year's equivalent IGE score (26.63%). While some of the overall improvement may have been linked with the different circumstances under which these exams were taken, the IGE exams were undertaken in the normal way and did not involve open books. As IGE has been a problem module for several years in terms of low exam marks, it seems that the lecturing staff have managed to adapt their (ng 1 (f)-1( )]TJT7.157 TD[W)2.2 (h))-1( )]TJT7.157 TDnvee e		

students obtaining either 1st class or 2.i class degrees this year compared with the previous year. The proportion is not vastly different 54% vs 64% last year; a more thorough examination of previous years would be warranted before conclusions are stated. The overall outcome of this year's examinations show that students were doing generally well or very well.

number of students improved their

	pandemic on their learning and ability to perform effectively in assessments in subsequent years. Most examinations were already sat by the time national lockdown implementations were introduced; however, this had an impact on some research project work which could not be completed. The RVC agreed and published a 'No detriment' policy for graduating students for summative assessments which was clearly communicated and adhered to in the following assessment procedures. The college should consider if the no detriment approach they have adopted will need to be adapted to a changing style of deliver for the coming academic year and when these changes should be made such that they are transparent for the students.		
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 clarity and detail of feedback for students for their project work in BSc Comp Path is commendable. Consistency of feedback and alignment to the common marking scheme is very good for BSc 1 library projects. Further value would be derived from annotations on work.	We thank the EE for these observations and positive comments and will pass these on to the Bioscience examiners. The team will continue to look at the opportunities for providing annotations on electronically submitted written work whilst maintaining anonymity of marking	COMPLETED
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)	Using a full online assessment system would make the assessment procedure less prone to mistakes like wrong counting of marks/points, resolve the handwriting issue and facilitate reporting and analysis of results.	We thank the EE for these comments and will evaluate the success and benefits of our changes made in light of COVID, including use of remote proctoring and more use of open book exam styles to enable online examinations in the future	IN PROGRESS College wide

Collaborative Report

Bioveterinary Sciences, 2020/21 including:

BSc Biological Sciences
BSc Bioveterinary Sciences
BSc Biological Sciences or BSc Bioveterinary Sciences with a Certificate in Work-Based Learning and Research
BSc Animal Biology, Behaviour, Welfare and Ethics
MSci Applied Biological Research
MSci Applied Bioveterinary Research
MSci Biological Sciences
MSci Bioveterinary Sciences
MSci Wild Animal Biology
Intercalated BSc Bioveterinary Science
Intercalated BSc Comparative Pathology

Lead examiner: Dr Nick Wheelhouse

Student performance

3.3 Consistency of the level of assessment with the Framework for Higher

BSc 3 and MSci
The standard of marking is good overall and a number of developments in recent years have continued to improve consistency and clarity. There continues to be a variety in the degree of feedback amongst markers and subjects. This would appear to be aligned with the depth of mapping of exam questions with individual learning objectives. It would be a good thing to slowly migrate all questions towards this complex mapping of learning objectives against questions. This would in time allow for feedback to be aligned with LOs and make the process easier for staff.
Course Director's response: We thank the EE for these observations, the college is considering new curriculum mapping software that will enable us to fully map assessments against LOs.

Very clear marking rubrics were available for some assessments – for example the posters and grant applications for the MSci – others this was less well-defined, particularly the research projects.
Course Director's response: We thank the EE for these comments and will feedback to the MSci Pathway Leader.

This was discussed with the course leaders and several examples looked at; the examiner was satisfied that there was sufficient consistency in marking and the marks awarded were fair. Feedback was quite mixed in terms of style, but overall the level of feedback given to students on their assessments is excellent.
Course Director's response: We thank the EE for these observations. As noted above consistency of feedback is a college wide issue, but if the rubric used for BSc2 projects is deemed suitable we will look to prepare something similar for BSc3 projects in the future.

In BSc Comp Path, marking appears fair and discriminatory with a good practice of detailed feedback for the students.
Course Director's response: We thank the EE for these comments and will feedback to Comp Path Course Director

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 employed by the College were fair and all carried out with great efficiency by the Examinations Office. External examiners were given ample opportunity to ask questions or express their opinion despite the necessary move to online scrutiny of papers and online meetings due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We are grateful to the exams office for their clear communication around the time of exam paper scrutiny, preparation for external examining, and clear links / access to the online systems. Feedback for the MSci Applied programme was particularly detailed.

Course Director's response: We thank the EE for these comments and agree that the Exams office are to be applauded for ensuring that all aspects of the assessment run smoothly.

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

It is quite difficult to comment on this in light of the COVID circumstances. The assessment procedures had to be adjusted to the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak from 2020 onwards. As noted, it will be important for the College to keep an eye on the pathway of individual students to mitigate impact of the pandemic on their learning and ability to perform effectively in assessments in subsequent years.
Course Director's response: We thank the EE for this observation and will ensure that students who have been affected by necessary changes to teaching delivery and assessment are appropriately monitored and supported.

MSci – the addition of new components to the research skills module was seen as a positive development, adding additional employability skills training and diversifying the assessments.
Course Director's response: We thank the EE for these positive comments and will feedback to MSci Pathway Leader

General Statements

4.1

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:

Completion