

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO EXTERNAL EXAMINERS' COMMENTS, 2012/2013

Course: BVetMed Year 1

Examiner Comment

RVC Response (Please remember to directly quote (copy and paste) our regulations/procedures e.g. from the intranet <http://intranet.rvc.ac.uk/StudentsAndTeaching/RegsAndOperationOfProgrammes>)

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| <p>skills' elements and problem -based exam questions have provided an added dimension to the first year of the programme. It is unclear which elements of previous years have been cut or moved to enable such changes.</p> | <p><i>Professional skills and problem-based exam questions have always been a feature of the new curriculum. However, hitherto, this element of the curriculum has not been explicitly examined in this format in BVM1. In order to encourage students to take the professional skills elements that are taught in year 1 seriously, it is now being explicitly examined. As such, teaching of the BVM1 curriculum continues to be as laid out in the "new curriculum". In effect, the apparent change is an intended consequence of attempting to examine a greater proportion of curriculum content.</i></p> | <p>Action (if any) date & name:</p> |
| <p>1.2 The global learning objectives appear relevant and comprehensive, The level of detail, particularly since the course is introductory in nature, is sometimes not obvious. This is relevant when a subject or system is introduced in year 1 and developed at later stages of the course. Some</p> | <p><i>We accept that on occasion, the level of detail expected of a student following the 1st visit to a given strand may not always be clear to external examiners. We will endeavour to provide the external examiners with documentation that explicitly states (a) the material that has been taught in a</i></p> | <p>Action (if any) date & name: Dr Raymond Macharia: 1 March 2014</p> |

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| <p>issues inevitably occur as a consequence of 'blueprinting' exams.</p> | <p><i>given strand and (b) the level it has been taught. As an example, BVM1 students are introduced to "reproduction" using an exemplar species (e.g. sheep). So BVM1 students will be expected to know the outlines of reproductive processes only as applied to the sheep.</i></p> | |
| <p>3.2 individual assessment processes appear to be rigorously designed and delivered. Careful design of questions and the availability of good model answers are important here. The value of good marking to subsequent student feedback was discussed at the Examiners Board Meeting. The process regarding a student who has failed (for whatever reason) what is deemed to be an essential component of the ICA seems quite harsh, in the absence of an alternative mechanism for remediation. While we accept the rigour of the assessment process there will inevitably be slight variations in the between-candidate assessments. For that reason we suggest that there should be a</p> | <p><i>We thank the examiners for their positive comments with regard to our assessment processes. With respect to feedback, all examiners will continue to be encouraged to provide appropriate annotations of ALL scripts.</i></p> <p><i>The exam regulations as they stand do allow students to miss a summative ICA (in circumstances such as illness) and to not be penalised for such an absence.</i></p> <p><i>We understand the External Examiners concern about ensuring the marks of candidates at all borders are reliable.</i></p> <p><i>If any change to existing procedure to assure the reliability of such marks is to be introduced it must be College wide and therefore discussed in the appropriate committees.</i></p> | <p>Action (if any) date & name:</p> <p>Action: Chair of Exam Board to submit a paper for discussion at Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee (Spring 2014)</p> |

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| <p>detailed internal re-assessment of all candidates who fall around the 50% pass mark before the Board of Examiners.</p> | | |
| <p>4.5 The examination board may wish to consider a review of the mechanism through which a student absent from a component of the examination is awarded an automatic fail mark. This relates specifically to those students with certificated (and/or unequivocal) mitigating circumstances (e.g. sudden illness). For students with legitimate reasons for their absence and when the component missed represents a minor percentage of the total marks available (e.g. Spot exam at 10.6%), the current procedure appears punitive and inappropriately unsympathetic.</p> | <p><i>The regulations with respect to missing a component of the exam itself as currently framed and the actions that should result in such circumstances are being reviewed</i></p> | |

2. **Candidates**

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

- 2.1 impressions of candidates' specific areas of strength and weakness, as revealed by the assessment process
- 2.2 the quality of candidates' knowledge and skills, with particular reference to those at the top, middle or bottom of the range
- 2.3 the candidates' overall performance in relation to students at a similar stage on comparable courses in other institutions, where this is known to you

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- 2.1 As external examiners we only directly monitored the ISF orals and so these comments are based largely on observation rather than direct engagement. The students performance ranged from exemplary to very weak.
- 2.2 Reviewing the entire assessment (primary material including exam scripts and the overall broadsheets) it appears that the best students achieve high marks across the board and, similarly, weak students display a uniformly weak performance. Thus the strategy of using a wide range of assessment styles appears to be successful in preventing 'strategic learning'.
- 2.3 The student ability appears to be commensurate with that of similar cohorts at other UK Universities.

3. **Assessment Process**

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

- 3.1 the appropriateness of the assessment methods to the subject matter and their relevance to the learning objectives
- 3.2 the extent to which the assessment processes are rigorous**
- 3.2 whether the assessments reflected the syllabus adequately

- 3.3 the overall standard of marks
- 3.4 any changes from previous years in which you have examined

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- 3.1 the range of assessment methods appears to be appropriate as well as aligned to the stated learning objectives.
- 3.2 **individual assessment processes appear to be rigorously designed and delivered. Careful design of questions and the availability of good model answers are important here. The value of good marking to subsequent student feedback was discussed at the Examiners Board Meeting. The process regarding a student who has failed (for whatever reason) what is deemed to be an essential component of the ICA seems quite harsh, in the absence of an alternative mechanism for remediation. While we accept the rigour of the assessment process there will inevitably be slight variations in the between-candidate assessments. For that reason we suggest that there should be a detailed internal re-assessment of all candidates who fall around the 50% pass mark before the Board of Examiners.**
- 3.2 the assessments reflect the syllabus adequately.
- 3.3 Marking guidelines (including descriptors on various scales) are useful to examiners and students (particularly at the time of feedback).
- 3.4 There have been relatively few changes from previous years.

4. **Assessment Procedures**

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

- 4.1 the administration of the examinations, e.g. time available for marking and moderation
- 4.2 arrangements for marking
- 4.3 procedures followed by the Board of Examiners
- 4.4 the participation of External Examiners in the process
- 4.5 adequacy of External Examiners' briefing
- 4.6 comparison with previous years in which you have examined

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- 4.1 the administration including time available for marking and moderation has been extended in recent years, in part as a response to previous examiners' comments. The time allocated now seems adequate for

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academic and administrative staff without being overly long for students to wait for the results.

- 4.2 arrangements for marking include compilation of actual marks (where simple transcriptional errors may occur). It seems that this process is rigorously checked. Double marking checks seem to confirm uniform standards are applied. It is recognised that External Examiners have no role in moderation of individual marks.
- 4.3 the formal meeting of the Board of Examiners (which was well attended) afforded good opportunities for global, systemic and individual issues to be discussed in depth.
- 4.4 we recognise that the RVC is currently reviewing its use of External Examiners. Thus the role of examiners is a matter of current discussion.
- 4.5 The examination board may wish to consider a review of the mechanism through which a student absent from a component of the examination is awarded an automatic fail mark. This relates specifically to those

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for qualifications at this level, in this subject

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| 5.8 | The standards of student performance are comparable with similar programmes or subjects in other UK institutions with which I am familiar | YES |
| 5.9 | The processes for assessment, examination and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted | YES |