

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2015/16

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

BVetMed Final Year

This appendix contains Course Director's/Year Leader's responses to 2015/16 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from 2014/15 External Examiners' report (if applicable).

As Course Director/Year Leader 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

Update to actions from 2014/15:

| Report Question | External Examiners' comments | Course Director's response | Update in 2015/16 |
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| <p>3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)</p> | <p>For detailed comments please refer to 14/15 External Examiners' report at the end of this document (page 30)</p> | <p>For detailed response please refer to 14/15 External Examiners' report at the end of this document! (page 30)</p> <p>Action required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consider 40% minimum pass mark for Part III sections A & B for the 2017 sitting; <p>Consider removing elective questions from Part III for 2018 sitting (A&A reg change for cohort sitting 2018)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aim for balanced qs species spread (exam 2016) | <p>COMPLETED: CMC decision (Feb 2016?) not to implement before some teaching changes relating to paper evaluation teaching have been made, and as electives that contribute to part 3 may be discontinued This change was agreed at CMC 2-11-2016. Change to A&A regs will come into place for 2018 examination (as students sitting in 2017 have effectively commenced their final year already.</p> <p>COMPLETED: This change was agreed at CMC 2-11-2016. Change to A&A regs will come into place for 2018 examination.</p> <p>COMPLETED Ongoing. Finals exam convener will be reminded of this comment.</p> |

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| | | <p>- Introduce DOPS pilot for cohort entering rotations Feb 2016,</p> <p>introduce communication skills DOPS into early y3 for Sep 2016.</p> <p>- The college is pleased that its effort in improving the EMQ performance is being rewarded. The skin EMQ has been reviewed and revised, and its poor performance attributed mainly to question design (questions 1-4); teaching effectiveness in this area will also be investigated.</p> <p>- Liaison for paper setting between year 4 leader & finals convenor re pathology content (2015_16 exam rounds).</p> | <p>DOPS pilot not implemented. <i>I (JM) don't know what this refers to I'm afraid</i></p> <p>COMPLETED: CMC decision (Feb 2016?) to review this plan and opt for other checkpoints for student communication skills during the course.</p> <p>COMPLETED</p> <p>Finals and 4th year exam convener as well as chair of Finals exam board Prof Ken Smith (acting head, Pathology) consulted and no-one can recall what this refers to or why. Please see additional comment about Pathology later in the report. We regard this item as Completed.</p> <p>COMPLETED</p> |
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| | | - Introduce online RP2 marking system (cohort sitting the exam in 2017). | |
| 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous | OSPVE Consistency of scoring observed between different assessors scoring the same station over time. The standard setting is 'by station', using a plotting and regression system to establish cut off score. This seems an entirely reasonable and appropriate way of accounting for the range of (internal) difference between station tasks. However, the number of items per station could be streamlined, bringing score range between stations to closer alignment? | We will review the number of items per station. | COMPLETED: A Director of OSPVE's has just been appointed (David Bolt) and will follow up on this in time for the 2017 sit. |
| 3.4 Standard of marking | <p>Marking in general was consistent within and between markers. There were occasions where some markers appeared to be more lenient than others, or were more lenient or stringent than the actual model answer, however this did not appear to affect overall performance. It was noted that these small differences predominantly occurred when the model answer was unclear about the level of information and interpretation that was expected from a pass, merit, distinction student. Where these minor discrepancies occurred they will have benefitted the borderline student.</p> <p>Legibility of handwriting was poor in many and brilliant in some of the sampled papers, however this did not appear to effect the standard of marking, for which markers should be commended. Electronic assessment is likely to significantly reduce the time markers have to</p> | <p>We are pleased that the introduction of standardised, college-wide marking guidance has gone some way towards an improvement in the consistency and transparency of marking overall, although it is recognised that there is still room for improvement. We currently have no plans for electronic examinations.</p> <p>It's recognized that the quality of model answers is variable but we will circulate examples of good practice.</p> <p>Action assigned to: Exams Office</p> | <p>COMPLETED - This was not really an Exams Office action. However, Christ Lamb and Dan Chan have made progress on this by emailing core rotation leaders with requests for new questions and model answers for Finals, and by discussing this item at the Rotation Leader meeting.</p> |

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| | spend on assessing the Long Answer and Elective questions; with the increasing number of students this may be worth considering. | | |
| 3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures | During future visits it would be valuable for the external examiners to meet and talk to a group of final year students. | We will investigate the possibility of External Examiners meeting a group of students. Action assigned to: Exams Office & Academic Quality Officer 'Standards' | COMPLETED: This wasn't logistically possible to organise this due to the students not being available. We will attempt to organise such a meeting, as for all other courses, when possible. |
| 4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly | All external examiners would recommend to anonymize all exam results until approved by exam board, this to avoid potential influence of knowing who the student, as this may affect a decision. It is acknowledged that having this information during the exam board meeting encourages staff to attend, and this attendance is important and very constructive for further development of the assessment however the potential influence of knowing a student needs to be considered. An alternative would be to anonymize up to exam board, so at least until then the exams office and others are not aware of individual student performance. | We consider the risk of marks being influenced most prominent when work is marked, consequently academics marking students work are presented with candidate numbers only, effectively anonymizing the work. The exams office have no influence over any marks awarded, so we see no reason at present for us to change our process. Action Required: Anonymize all exam data for internal and external review purposes, until review at exam board. Action assigned to: Exams Office | CLOSED This has not been implemented as it is difficult to do across the array of Final Year assessments. The names and candidate numbers have been retained on results sheets for External Examiner's as this ensure that they have the ability to tie all assessments up to individual students if so desired. This is particularly importance for Research Project 2 which is submitted via OCM and is only linked with the students name and not candidate number. It is only the Exams Office who know the name / candidate number of the student and not internal staff (markers, convener or Chair) and these are only ever known to the Chair once results |

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| | | | have been finalised ahead of the Exam Board. |
| 4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed | <p>On occasions the process for marking scripts was not followed in according recommended guidelines. Although the guidelines are clear and provided by the exams office, some markers failed to document where and why marks are awarded. This became particularly important in the research projects where 2 internal examiners initially provided wide ranging marks and then had to agree on a final mark. Although external examiners scrutinized these projects and were in agreement with the final mark provided for all of them, a clear justification by the 2 internal examiners was not provided on all occasions. We don't envisage these justifications to become lengthy paragraphs but a few sentences describing the discussion held with a justification for the final mark would be helpful for student feedback when required. There were some excellent examples of how this was done in a complete and succinct manner.</p> | <p>A new on-line system of project marking has been piloted and aims to improve the documentation of the rationale for allocated mark, and the agreed final mark if the marks of the two examiners did not agree; it is planned that this will also be rolled out for the next cohort.</p> <p>Action Required: Introduce online RP2 marking system (cohort sitting the exam in 2017)</p> <p>Action assigned: RP2 Director</p> | <p>COMPLETED: Online system already used for cohort graduating in 2016, to be developed further for planned marking and feedback in batches for cohort starting rotations in 2017</p> |

Collaborative Report

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 5, 2015/16

Lead examiner: Dr Connie Wiskin

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Rachel Isba, Professor Malcolm Cobb, Dr Philip Scott

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

In so far as we can establish, not having direct oversight of or involvement in the programme, the course content is well-established, and relevant to the demands of veterinary practice. Students experience a mixture of skills-based and theoretical approaches, and have opportunity to undertake practical placements and make (interested) elective choices. NB - The testing process highlighted, tentatively, a need to look at engagement with Pathology teaching (as performance in this domain seemed weaker).

YES

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE

Thank you for your positive comment about the course. We have liaised with the relevant academic staff about the pathology issue. Professor Ken Smith does not believe there is a lack of engagement with pathology teaching in the clinical phase of the course (as judged by the students' comments during the core and track rotations and in their rotation feedback afterwards) and is not sure that there is any evidence from the testing process itself that the students understand that topic less well than other topics. He will certainly be working closely with Michael Day, as our new Finals external specialising in pathology, if Michael or the other externals have any ongoing concerns in this area though.

[Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

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

We did not look specifically at course learning objectives during the assessment period (only assesment objectives) but on reflection more visibility of this would be useful, perhaps in provision of summary educational outcomes for Year 5 for the non-veterinary qualified external examiners (presumably related to expected/established national outcomes for the newly qualified vet) ahead of the summer assessment period? The two veterinary qualified external examiners have a very good understanding of the required Day One Competences and are comfortable that the final assessment is testing students' preparedness for practice.

YES

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE

We are currently locating every learning objective and outcome within the course as part of a competency mapping exercise and creating a unified document so that this information will be easily available to future external examiners. [Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

1.3 Teaching methods

We did not observe teaching. For the future, an opportunity to observe a related piece of educational delivery would be welcome [CW].

Response from college requested: **NO**

Response from college:

Opportunities for External Examiners to observe teaching is possible and should be arranged with the Course Director

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

The resourcing for the examinations was impressive, as appears to be the staff-student ratio. The team running the OSCE stations performed - again - to a very high standard, in terms of organisation, staffing provision and facilities. Examiners were rotated to avoid saturation (fatigue) and animal welfare was considered in terms of numbers of encounters per animal. Good.

p.s. All resources relevant to the assessment review process were in place (ahead of time) and easy to access. We particularly appreciated the availability of staff from academic, programme management and support teams throughout the days leading to the exam board. All requests for information, updates or facilities were met, immediately, and with good humour.

Response from college requested: **NO**

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

As it is currently possible to pass the OSCE based on the process/technical stations (i.e. the more interactive and communications stations can be failed and compensated for) we recommend consideration of a communication/professionalisation screening of some sort earlier in the course (e.g. individual role plays) in order to identify and remediate students with lower confidence and/or skills in this domain. This would address the possibility that students can graduate from RVS without summative interpersonal skills testing? We discussed that this could be backed up by work based (placement) observations and a process by which vets teaching in the community could more clearly communicate concerns to RVS. Current systems we believe do - appropriately - allow for placement tutors to flag issues of professionalism or communication for the attention of senior tutors, but we wonder if a process badged more as an additional support mechanism, rather than 'reporting' a student might encourage more placement vets to come forward and flag possible difficulties at an early stage?

YES

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE

Issue of professionalism and/or poor communication are flagged to us by placement providers and we do follow up through the tutorial system and Academic Progress Committee. We have recently appointed a Director of OSCEs who will work with the Communication Skills team led by Kim Whittlestone and Ruth Serlin to review and revamp the communication/professionalism based OSCE stations. [Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

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

Student score range (performance) was comparative to standards elsewhere in the UK, in terms of observed practice (at the examinations) and subsequent numeric score distribution. We consider the performance adequate for this stage of training.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Again, similar to the standard of other institutions, and broadly comparable to performance in past years at RVC. Modest differences are most likely accounted for by (arguably inevitable) cohort variance.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Performance overall aligned with expectations. Last year's report highlighted the awards of merit and distinction being disproportionately high; in particular the finding that 44% achieved "merit" but with numbers of those "top" students carrying fails in major components. Although apparent ease of compensation for a deficit in a core field still merits scrutiny, we were pleased to note this academic period that the pass-merit-distinction categories were a (healthier) balance of 1:47:174 (student numbers for distinction:merit:pass) for Part II and 9:115:113 for Part III. This preserves the credibility and value of a distinction, and seems a better reflection of cohort ability than previously.

YES

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE

Thank you for this positive comment. The A&A regulations for finals have been amended by the most recent Course Management Committee to implement a 40% threshold for all sections of the examination in 2017-18 and onwards [Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

We include comments on questions in this section:

EMQ PAPER

Overall this paper seems to have performed well. The pass mark was set at 53.71% which is in keeping with previous years. Two hundred and forty candidates sat the paper and 5.4% of them failed. The KR20 value for this paper is 0.775, indicating that it has performed as expected.

Twenty-five of the questions had discrimination scores of < 0.1 . However, most of these were questions that were answered correctly by the majority (i.e. $> 50\%$) of students and this goes some way to explaining the observation. In the context of the paper's overall performance, does not warrant further scrutiny at this stage. Two items showed negative discrimination – 27 (-0.050) and 77 (-0.025) – but both weakly.

SPOT TEST PAPER

Overall this paper does not appear to have performed as well as previously. The pass mark was set at 54.39% which is comparable to previous years. Two hundred and forty candidates sat the paper and 26.7% of them failed which is in stark contrast to previous years where a handful of students have failed. The mean mark for this paper is around 10-15% lower than previous sittings. There are a number of possible contributory explanations for this including student-based and question-based.

The KR20 value for this paper was 0.509 which is lower than previous years and the "target" of 0.70.

Discrimination

Value Number of items

= 0.3 7

0.3 – 0.2 13

0.1 – 0.2 10

< 0.1 10

"Less than chance" questions

Question Answers Notes Recommendation

6 D (10%)

78% answered A

Is it possible that answer A is also correct in that there isn't enough information to distinguish between the two? If there is agreement from one or more subject experts that there is insufficient information to distinguish between D and A, then both should be accepted as correct but the question should remain in the paper. AGREED

15 D (3%)

69% answered B

The image is insufficient to allow student to distinguish between different species.
Remove question from paper as it is not possible to select the correct answer. AGREED
20 C (8%)

40% answered E

39% answered B

Given the spread of answer options this was possibly just a difficult question. No action required.

29 E (10%)

64% answered D

It is not clear but this is possibly also just a difficult question. No action required.

31 B (11%)

46% answered D

This is probably just a difficult question and answers are spread out. The image is not of as high quality as many of the others. No action required.

EMQ 17 had a gender change for the hamster mid-question, but it was felt the principle of taking the first gender reference stood, and that a spotting of the typo could work in the student's favour.

Comment -

There seem to be an over-representation of pathology questions in the questions that students performed poorly on. This is worth reviewing.

LONG ANSWER QUESTIONS

General comments -

Overall there seems to be good consistency between questions in how the marks have been awarded, although the small number of students doing Q4 seem to do better as discussed below.

Use of the common grading scheme means that most questions are marked around the mean.

Looking at the failing students, the majority are failing multiple LAQs, many are failing all of them, a score of 15 for some questions is very concerning at this stage of the course! Only 2 questions from the failing students score 62, which is the highest they achieve. Only one failing student has passed the LA paper.

Generally, much improved marking of scripts with greater clarity of where marks have been awarded, overall very defensible if challenged.

This will be discussed in the final report as a general principle, but it is worrying that a student can score 41.4% in the LAQ paper and still pass Part II, the issue of compensation between different elements of the examination needs further discussion.

Question-specific comments.

LAQ1 – vomiting cat – clear mark scheme, updated post exam, very clear where marks are awarded on scripts. Mean mark 53.7, range 35 – 75.

LAQ2 – lame dog – very clear mark scheme, table provided which clearly shows which mark points each student has been awarded, this is exemplary and evidence of best practice. Mean mark 52.6, range 27 – 75.

Concern from internal examiner about student performance, in that their approach to this case in many cases was not appropriate, but this question is very discriminatory, I suspect students have gone into exam mode and just decided to tell the examiners everything they know about hip dysplasia.

LAQ3 – incontinent dog – again, very clear how marks have been awarded in each case. This was generally poorly done, but each section of the question seems very fair, and marking is appropriate. Mean mark 46.6, range 15 – 68.

LAQ4 – lame horse - clear on scripts how marks are assigned, only done by 49 of the candidates – I suspect the equine keen students. As a consequence, performance is very good, mean mark is 64.3, range 35 – 90, only 2 of the failing students attempted this question, one passed it, one failed it.

Error in paper noted prior to marking it, accounted for and had no impact on student performance (does this mean the students failed to note and react to the apparently low protein level in the sample?).

Are equine-keen students at an advantage in this assessment?

LAQ5 – ketosis in cattle – some evidence on scripts of how marks are assigned, but greater clarity would make marking defensible. Mean mark 56.7, range 35 – 75.

The next two questions are designed to test technical problem-solving. I am not sure how effectively they do this, although we probably should have mentioned this at question review? LAQ7 in particular assigns a lot of marks to the carrying out of a procedure (chest drain placement), which is mostly recall? Asking the students to comment on laboratory results, cytology or diagnostic images etc might test problem-solving better?

LAQ6 – equine castration – some evidence on scripts of assignment of marks, mean mark 51.9, range 35 - 68.

LAQ7 – pleural effusion – not entirely clear how marks are awarded on scripts, mean mark is 55.6, range 35 – 75.

The next two questions are designed to assess population investigations, Q8 was on diarrhoea in lambs, Q9 was on calf pneumonia. Only 16 students answered Q8, while 224 answered Q9! The mean mark achieved is very similar in each case. Is this difference a reflection of the teaching in these areas? Do they get a lot more on calf pneumonia than diseases in lambs?

LAQ8 – reviewed by PS, mean mark 54.8, range 48 – 62 – NB this question was only done by 16 students!

LAQ9 – calf pneumonia – reviewed by PS, mean mark 52.2, range 15 – 82.

MAC comment on elective papers.

As always difficult to assess because of the variety of subjects and different markers, my principle comment is that some papers seem quite harshly marked, on some of the small animal papers, students seem to be getting pretty much all the mark points but scoring 75! We should not be scared of awarding full marks.

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE:

Markers will be reminded of this. There may also be a failure to clearly identify what an outstanding answer would look like e.g. more than just full factual recall but evidence of innovative/creative thinking? [Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

OSCE

The OSCE overall performed well. The achievement level set of 13/20 stations seems reasonable (and raised from the previous 12), although as mentioned previously (and elsewhere in this report) we would invite the RVC team to consider the level of compensation afforded between skills/process tasks and more complex integrated tasks. Is 13 enough given the variance between stations in terms of difficulty level, and the degree to which students are pre-briefed on what the questions are going to be – this is quite generous for an exit level degree.

The 50% pass score (internally standard set by station) and 50% threshold work well. The frequency of achievement of “100” on some of the more basic skills stations merits consideration in terms of the OSCEs value as a discriminatory measure.

BVETMED FINALS CONVENOR:

It is accepted that in its current format the OSCE exam always includes a heterogeneous mix of stations, including simple/robotic manual tasks (e.g. gowning/gloving, draping), technical tasks (e.g. radiography, use of microscope) and more complex integrated tasks, principally communications. It is the opinion of the Finals Convenor that it would be preferable to move assessment of simple/robotic manual tasks from Finals Pt2 to Pt1, and this suggestion has been made to the Course Director and VP (Teaching). It would be more efficient and better educationally if the OSCE were more focussed on integrated tasks. [Chris Lamb, Nov 2016]

- The members of the Teaching Quality Committee believe is still worth re-testing student ability to carry out simple tasks such as handwashing in the later years of the course, and this could be done as part of an OSCE station set up to test more complex skills, as opposed to having a station just for testing handwashing skills.

As expected, and in line with the characteristics of any OSCE, score averages and distributions varied between stations. The communication tasks (Q1 & 18) and the tests where the student had to use deductions and/or reasoning (e.g. Q8 dermatology) achieved the most differentiation statistically. Qs 4, 5, 12, 14 had more score clustering; as expected. It was noticed that students performed well this year with the Farrier. Station suggestions are included later in this report [from PS] under 'other' observations.

Nine candidates passed the OSCE overall carrying fails on both the public interaction stations, including some low scores (student P1466 28.9% and 43.5%). Numbers of students had low scores on these stations, while achieving (perhaps unsurprisingly) 100% for washing their hands.

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE:

We are reviewing the OSCEs and have recently appointed a specific Director of OSCEs to facilitate this. [Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

The running of the OSCE, as usual, was exemplary. A warm, student-friendly, humane environment was created, with attention to timing and detail that others could undoubtedly learn from. The approach was efficient, clear, well-briefed and well-standardised, so lots to commend it operationally.

RESEARCH PROJECTS

These were moderated by 3 EEs, and the fail project seen by all EEs. The assessment method - double blind marking and a moderation discussion over grade boundaries - works well and aligns with expectations. To meet candidate curriculum expectations

around feedback consideration needs to be given to how summary discussions (a consolidated feedback picture relating to the end, awarded grade) may be given to candidates. We appreciate that in the 'real world' (and at some viva panels) academics have different perspectives on what comprises research quality, and acknowledge that the electronic reporting system for comments has limitations once individual examiner scores/comments have been entered, but students might still (reasonably) find it difficult to reconcile very different views (eg feedback relating to scores of 35 and 65 for the same project) without being party to an overall summary. For EE review purposes something more than "We agreed on 52" would be helpful where grades are polarised.

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE:

Isn't this what Agreed Mark means? [Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

There were some strong projects; the overall range seemed to represent a standard cohort well. We agree that further justification would be good where grades are polarised

ELECTIVE A & B

30 scripts were reviewed across markers and second markers to check inter-rater consistency where multiple-raters scored a single question [A]. Variance appeared to relate to credit given for professional style (full sentences vs bullets, grammar/spelling etc), rather than model answer content. This could be addressed with scores for the next year? The inclusion of critical appraisal is important, so we value, and support, the inclusion of this element (given the known importance of evidence-based practice). Some examiners made good notes on the script to justify their marks; others less so (or just occasional ticks, which don't show the points for improvement). Fuller notes are helpful, especially for student remediation.

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE:

Yes – we entirely agree and continue to remind markers of this requirement [Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

A modest hawk and dove effect across papers did not appear to impact on overall student outcomes, and this was checked in particular in relation to fail and borderline candidates. The elective questions [B] varied, as would be expected (this is of course the nature of choice modules, and the diversity adds appeal and character to align with individual curricula and extra-curricular professional interests). Further thought might be given to retention of a wide topic choice (with perhaps more smaller or rarer species inclusion) while accounting for the amount of effort needed to produce the answer. As all candidates have the same time available to produce an answer we did notice that some Part B questions required more concise and/or recall-based answers than others (eg the very strong welfare question) where students had to produce a significantly longer, and more reflective response.

BVETMED FINALS CONVENOR:

It is accepted that the marked heterogeneity of Elective-based Part B questions is problematical because it undermines the aim of a uniform standard of assessment. Furthermore, the marked variation in content and format of Electives, means that a written assessment is not necessarily valid

across the board. My understanding is that Elective-based Part B questions will be removed from Finals and replaced by end-of-module assessment, which can take forms better tailored to module content, or that the assessment of Electives will be scrapped altogether. [Chris Lamb, Nov 2016]

As agreed at the Autumn CMC, regulations will be amended so that assessment of electives will not occur from 2018 onwards (Jill Maddison, December, 2016)

There is room and need of course for both, to capture choice and topic range, so the suggestion relates to the time/endeavour it takes to produce a 'model answer' rather than a topic criticism.

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

The external examiners considered the process/procedure to be robust. The OSCE achieved good consistency (over the days observed) in terms of station standardisation, in relation to performance by clinical examiners and simulated patients. Internal consistency of the exam appears good, based on the psychometric analyses available. Standard setting by station (to establish cut off score) remains a reasonable means of managing and accounting for inter-station difference.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Written components tested a range of knowledge fields; while electives encouraged choice. The emphasis in Year 5 on choice aligns well with the spirit of learner-centredness, but can conversely raise concerns about qualification based on a limited range of species familiarity, however, Parts I and II of the final examination seem to ensure adequate species coverage.

YES

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE:

The written component of Part III is assessing electives which by nature will be influenced by student choice. As it is not core material – they are designed to help students deepen their knowledge and understanding in specific area beyond that expected of a new graduate - we do not believe that this means that overall there are concerns about the species range overall for the qualification. [Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

3.4 Standard of marking

Marking standards were consistent between markers, and the double marking process (where applicable) was commendable. Some differences between markers were observed (e.g. multiple markers of Finals III Elective compulsory question A) and between markers where elective topics (section B) necessarily had different subject specialists grading each component. The latter is of course a well-known phenomenon, managed best by - as you are endeavouring to do - having clear expectations, outcomes and model answers. Over-standardisation of Electives would be a direct challenge to their spirit! Where multiple markers on the same paper differed the discrepancy seemed to be the degree to which the candidate's style/presentation was accounted for, rather than disagreement over crediting content. This could be clarified - e.g. the question of whether a bulleted answer or one with poor grammar should achieve '82', as compared to a more professionally laid out critique? Some of the higher scoring projects were not as well written as one might expect, but overall observed differences (from sample external marking of 40 scripts and the statistics) do not seem to have impacted on outcome.

YES

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE:

The nature of the elective assessment poses challenges. As agreed at the Autumn CMC from 2018 Electives will be formatively assessed during the elective period but will not be summatively assessed in the finals exam. [Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

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)

No procedural concerns. Conduct of The RVC met, and in many cases exceeded, all expected standards in all categories in 3.5. You do this very well. Briefings were clear/timely, administration detailed and efficient, exam board conduct professional, thorough and inclusive. The Board was efficiently chaired, with individual review of all below standard candidates carefully included, and opportunity for well managed comment and questioning. EEs had full and transparent access to every aspect of the process, during the live exams, in terms of script access, and warm inclusion on the Board day. Additional requests for statistical re-analysis, 'what if' scenarios, meetings with subject leads and access to support and academic staff were met in an exemplary (and warm) fashion. Thank you.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

We did not observe any key changes from last year, other than noting the (welcome) rotation of simulated patients between stations mid-point each day, to reduce saturation risk. This was well received by us, and the ladies concerned (who, by the way, did an excellent job on standardisation of prompts/opportunity with appropriate flexibility to differentiate between performances).

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

Primary recommendations are to (1) please consider compensation and the need really for a bona-fide minimum % attempt on every component (we are worried about the risk of students qualifying with key deficits relating to knowledge - or safety - via compensation by a different item) and (2) think about the best use of the OSCE resource in terms of testing competence level that aligns with 'day 1' of professional practice. All 4 EEs noted that skills like hand-washing and draping could potentially be signed off far earlier in the course. Inclusion of such fundamental tasks also, potentially, risks masking deficits in integrated areas, as these 'high scoring' stations can be off-set against others to achieve a pass. We are not challenging the importance of basic skills, or the quality of the teaching of them (clearly dedicated), just the timing of the test. Freed up stations could be used for more complex tasks that reflect Day 1 of professional practice? Your current system (OSCE) is so well run, validated and established that you appear to have opportunity - given those advantages and the enthusiasm and skill of your core assessors - to consider introducing (in a staged fashion) more complex stations. In some cases this could be achieved with minimal procedural change, for example replacing the communication brief of 'what to say about the cow' with a video of a lame cow at risk of digit amputation, or increasing the range of bandaging materials for the lame horse, to make the challenge more consistent with the choices a working vet faces. We also support the motion (CL) to develop and use a rotational bank of pre-validated questions; standard practice in other vet and healthcare contexts.

YES

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE:

40% minimum has been introduced from 2017

OSCEs are to be reviewed – Director of OSCEs has been recently appointed [Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

General Statements**4.1 Comments I have made in previous years have been addressed to my satisfaction****No****Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

The issue of compensation and the need for a minimum acceptable standard (or required component approach) on all core clinical components has been raised 3 years running. we would welcome this being considered in terms of Part II/III and the OSCE.

YES**COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE:**

This has now been addressed by introduction of the 40% threshold. Apologies it has taken so long. [Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

4.2 An acceptable response has been made**Yes****Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

In relation to clearer linking of candidate answers provided to scores awarded, while there remains some variation in quality/clarity of comments we have noticed an encouraging improvement:- clarity, consistency and transparency were noticeably superior to last year. We also note that questions were revised and/or re-considered ahead of the exam based on EE comment and substantial peer review.

Response from college requested: **NO**

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination**Yes****Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

Good advance notice and ample opportunity for review of key papers in advance. Thank you.

Response from college requested: **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:

Outstanding opportunity access to papers. Full provision of all scripts and data, and 48 hours+ access prior to exam board day.

Response from college requested: **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:

CW and MC attended. All results approved, including changes based on pre-analysis and question scrutiny (which ultimately advantaged 2 RVC candidates).

Response from college requested: **NO**

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: **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:

Overall yes, aside from the case highlighted of one candidate (albeit rare) passing with merit carrying a significant fail (29%) in the Spot Test.

YES

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE

Previously commented on - 40% threshold has been introduced [Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

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:

As expected; with improvements from previous years in terms of range distribution (better reflecting educational norms).

Response from college requested: NO

4.9 I have received enough support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Outstanding. Credit to John, Wendy & team.

Response from college requested: 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:

Again, excellent, as orally presented at the Exam Board.

Response from college requested: NO

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: 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 content of final year OSCEs is usually not so clearly positioned ahead of the test, to avoid the phenomenon of students focussing the majority of their endeavours on practicing and 'passing' relatively easily predicted components. Less certainty, and a higher level of challenge, could encourage a more rounded approach to revision, and enhance understanding of what professional expectations are. As examples sheep body condition scoring could be covered earlier on in Animal Husbandry, or a more diverse sheep range could be included. PS has sent example questions to WM, including ultrasound (well tolerated) and scenarios where knowledge from one species, anatomy familiarity, or field, could be extrapolated to a new scenario. This is more reflective of practice. The suggestions also include cadaver specimens, use of video to encourage 'live' interpretations of observations, etc. As a thought, sharing of stations between institutions could diversify and benefit all?

YES

COURSE DIRECTOR'S RESPONSE

Thank you for these excellent suggestions. The new Director of OSCEs will be exploring all options [Jill Maddison, Nov 2016]

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)

No, comfortable with full transparency.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Collaborative Report

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 5, 2014/15

Lead examiner: Dr Wendela Wapenaar

Collaborating examiner(s): Dr Connie Wiskin, Dr Rachel Isba, Professor Malcolm Cobb

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

Overall level of teaching in all areas appeared sufficient when reviewing the assessment; in most areas the range of marks was good, and within expected educational norms, indicating that high marks could be achieved. This of course does not prove that adequate teaching has been delivered but certainly indicates students are able to achieve the desired results with the opportunities provided during the course. n

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Difficult to assess with the material provided. The assessments however covered a wide range of topics.

Response from college requested: **NO**

1.3 Teaching methods

No teaching was observed

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Not aware of any lack of resources

Response from college requested: **NO**

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

Overall level of teaching in all areas appeared sufficient when reviewing the assessment; in most areas the range of marks was good, and within expected educational norms, indicating that high marks could be achieved. This of course does not prove that adequate teaching has been delivered but certainly indicates students are able to achieve the desired results with the opportunities provided during the course.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Comparable

Response from college **NO**
requested:

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

Similar to other institutions and adequate for this stage of the course

Response from college **NO**
requested:

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

Student performance overall was in line with expectations, in terms of spread and distribution of marks. Proportions of students in 2015 being awarded fail, pass, merit and distinction grades align with standard distributions. 44% merit achievement is perhaps still on the high side (especially given that some of these 'top' students have achieved merit carrying a fail in a major component), but that being said the improvement in ratios for 2015 is noted. In 2014 71% of the cohort received merit or distinction, which arguably compromised the value of the achievement, so RVC are to be commended for the improvements to standard setting which have impacted on change.

Response from **YES**
college
requested: **Thank you**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Anke Hendricks**Course Director Response:**

Thank you to the external examiner team for their time and expertise in scrutinising this set of assessments, and providing a detailed report with constructive comments.

These comments appear to refer to part II of the 'finals' assessment package. The 2014 results appeared to have an unusually high proportion of merits/distinction. Compared with 63% (5% distinction, 58% merit) in 2013, a total of 71% merits (62%) or distinctions (9%) in 2014 represented an unusually high figure. Indeed the 2015 results are more in line with previous years with a total of 49% of students achieved a merit (44%) or distinction (5%) in this part of the exam. The colleges strives to improve the standard setting process year on year.

Three students who achieved a merit (none who achieved a distinction) in part II did so whilst failing one component (the long answer question paper 1). Please see comments below regarding compensation between the long answer and EMQ papers

Action Required:**Action Deadline:****Action assigned to:**

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Assessment methods are thorough and cover a wide range of topics. However, the compensation of certain parts of the assessment with other parts (with often less emphasis on independent clinical reasoning) is concerning. Last year we discussed this for Part 3, where a poor mark for the critical appraisal of a clinical research paper (Section A) could be compensated by a high mark in the elective question section B (where there was a choice of >30 questions and only one needed to be answered). A similar trend was noted this year, with regards to a wide range in performance in Section A, but a fail in this section only led to 1 failing student for Part 3, i.e. inadequate skill in critiquing a clinical research paper was often compensated by a high mark in a question related to their elective/area of interest. This 'flexibility' makes it more difficult to be confident all students achieved the 'core components' in their final year assessment. A bonafide attempt (i.e. minimal pass mark of 40% for each section) could be a compromise between the current situation and the other option of making individual elements of the course 'must pass' at 50%.

This year it was particularly noticeable in Part 2 where a significant proportion (>40) of students performed poorly (<50%) in the Long Answer Question part of the exam, but 'made up' for this in the EMQ or spot test which each contribute a third to the final mark for this exam. By giving the students choice (they are required to answer 5 out of 9 questions on the long answer paper) AND giving the opportunity to compensate poor performance (or sometimes even 'dangerous answers, regarding the risk to animals following suggested treatment/advice), leads to students passing final year with an obvious lack of clinical reasoning skills which are predominantly assessed in the long answer questions. EMQs are also aimed to assess clinical reasoning, but results indicate that giving students a set of possible answers (EMQs) appears to be much less challenging than asking the student to formulate an answer themselves (which is more akin their future career in practice) .

This year the Long Answer questions contained more equine oriented questions than previously and one could argue this will have benefitted the equine-keen student, as they could choose to answer multiple questions they felt most familiar with. We would recommend to consider assessing only 5 questions which they all need to answer. These questions should aim to cover a wide range of skills/reasoning. When following that format one can be more confident that students will all be assessed on passing the core components of the curriculum.

OSPVE

The OSCE (as previously reported) was extremely well run, creating a flawlessly times and comfortable environment for candidates. The support team are to be commended. The OSCE methodology has clear relevance to veterinary practice, and it's validity is well established in the educational literature. The OSCE at RVC tests a diverse range of practical skills over a station total large enough to ensure consistency.

There is a question about the degree of usefulness at year 5 level of all of the stations.

Given that only 20 items (of the very many testable) can be scrutinised here the way that content is prioritised is key. Ten score distributions for this years questions varied greatly by station, with some generating a greater mark spread (in line with expected educational norms) than others. Arguably the questions with more diverse distributions are the better discriminators. As examples both communication stations generated a distribution curve of scores, while the radiology station was passed by all but 3 students. Hand-washing technique saw 180 students receiving 35 marks. There is a question as to whether such an obvious and basic skill merits the resource of a year 5 station? This could be tested earlier in the year, eg in a clinical skills passport or practical exam? There is an opportunity to make the question choice keener, and more aligned to the integrated (and more complex) skills a practicing vet needs. Exploring integration of different skills at year 5 level is advisable, if the objective is to graduate well rounded practitioners.

As mentioned last year the specificity of the skill based tasks, in combination with the 12/20 station pass requirement, means that students do graduate with fails in both communication tasks (19 students this year). Double communication fails featured in 7 of your overall failed candidates. Communication deficiency is a good predictor of professional difficulties/complaints in future careers so passing candidates who lack this basic ability is risky. Equally candidates are passing who lack passes in very basic suturing and draping, so a bona fide attempt or means of ensuring that serious deficiency in a whole area is caught would be recommended.

The trend of integrated testing representing integrated practice in the workplace is worth considering. Integrated stations that pick up knowledge, skills and attitudes simultaneously reduce the risk of deficiency in one area being masked by compensation via unrelated stations.

Based on distribution, the strongest stations were the 2 communication stations, the paw bandage, the microscope, IV set up, equine hoof test, and the bovine milk sample. It's interesting that these tend towards the interactive.

The examiners across the days observed were professional, student friendly, and (importantly) consistent, showing very good practice. The OSCE remains a valuable and fit for purpose assessment.

Spot test

The pass mark for the spot test was initially set at 52.08% (see note below) and the mean student score was initially 68.2% (see note below). Seventeen items were answered correctly by = 80% of students. Whilst there were no items that discriminated negatively, only 16 items had 33% item discrimination scores of = 0.2. Three items were identified where the less than 20% of students answered correctly (i.e. worse than chance) and these items were reviewed. Item 3 was just felt to be answered poorly by students but to be at an appropriate level for the assessment, so was left to stand. However, the two other items (13 and 36) were felt, on review, to be set at too high a level for this assessment. A discussion took place as to whether these items should be removed from the paper or standard set to zero. A decision was made to go with the former option and the overall paper metrics were re-calculated using the remaining 38 items. The new pass mark following this process was 51.45% and the mean scaled student score 70.7%. No student had their pass/fail result affected by this change, but an additional seven students received a distinction overall and an additional eight students received a merit overall for this Part II of their assessment. This is likely to have an effect

on overall achievement of honours for the degree as a whole and the examinations office will review this.

The spot test has not performed as well as the EMQ and this is reflected in the Kuder Richardson 20 score of 0.466. This paper might perhaps provide a focus for development for the coming academic year in the same way that the EMQ has over the past academic year.

EMQs

For the EMQ paper the pass mark was standard set at 51.36% and the mean student mark was 68.2%. A relatively large number of items (40) were answered correctly by = 80% of students. However, only three items in the paper had negative discrimination scores and two of these were questions where > 90% of students had answered correctly overall, so the discrimination scores should be interpreted with caution as they are likely to be meaningless in the face of such high student performance. Many of the questions had individual item statistics that indicated they were adequate discriminators (based on the 33% item discrimination being = 0.2) which is an improvement on last year's sitting, especially when taken with the small numbers of negatively-discriminating items. One theme (EMQ 3; Q.11 to 15) "Clinical diagnosis of pruritic skin conditions" performed very poorly – with four out of five of the answers being answered correctly by a relatively small number of students. This may be due to a combination of students performing the questions poorly (in which case a review of teaching in this area may be warranted) and items performing poorly (all were poor discriminators and one was a weak negative discriminator).

This year's EMQ paper has performed well overall and this is reflected in the Kuder Richardson 20 score of 0.766. It is noted that the work mentioned in the RVC's response to last year's examiners' report seems to have had a very positive impact on the paper. The excellent work to improve the quality of items and build up a bank of questions with solid supporting performance data is to be commended.

LAQ

Mean mark was 55%, which was much lower than for the spot test and EMQs

Q1 – 178 students - most scores 52, 55, 58, 62, mean 58 (range 27-75)

Appears to be marked according to CGS; although it did not affect the marking it is unclear how a 40/20/40 proportion split relates to the 17 point CGS?

Q2 – 66 students, high marks, 68 and 75 most common marks (range 35-90)

Classic equine question, equine-keen will do well, see previous comments related to this.

Q3 – 35 students, usually 52/55, (range 27-90), very consistent marking (single marker)

Only few student choose this question, pathology has a limited cover in other parts of the exam, which therefore raises the concern that students could pass being minimally assessed on pathology. This is an issue raised at other schools as well, and may benefit further discussion at inter-school level.

Q4 – 231 students, 48-65, (range 35-75)

Fantastic clarity on where marks are awarded, comments also on why marks are awarded or not. Consistency also between markers.

Unclear if and how negative marks were awarded for NSAID/a/b trt

More marks for important elements e.g. abdominal radiography, prioritising problem list.

Q5 – 207 students, great mark distribution – very discriminating range 27-100 even distribution from 35-90!

No marks on papers!

Although seems to be consistent.

Q6 Students who achieved 50% of all points in the model answer would achieve 75%. This should be indicated as such in mark scheme. As, although still a challenging and valid question, a very good answer appears to be less complete than the model answer suggests.

Q7 Compared to Q6 much more stringent marking is applied, i.e. all answers provided in the mark scheme need to be achieved to get a full mark for that particular section.

Q8 There is room for improvement; additional scenario after part b) gives suggestions for part a and b (which is then worth a mark in part a (infectious disease) and part b (testing for toxoplasma, chlamydia, clostridia) which appears like providing suggestions for a correct answer.

Part 3

Section A (critical appraisal); range 15-82%; wide spread of marks, discussion was held with staff responsible for teaching in this area and student attendance in teaching may have been responsible for the wide range of marks observed. Failing students did not understand the concept of critical appraisal, were too descriptive and not appraising the paper, or were appraising it incorrectly.

Elective questions (Section B)

Variability in quality of marking – some have excellent commentary on answers given, compared to other papers on which no marks or comments have been made.

Some elements of questions in which students get all items from the model answer but were not given full marks! (E.G. 32d).

Research projects

Clarity, if not already existing on format and referencing may help reduce the variety currently presented. Moderation of marks is sometimes an issue as previously mentioned, regarding the justification of the final mark.

A track-changed version appeared to be submitted by one student, it appeared significant input/change to project was provided by the supervisor, highlighting the variety of support that can be given in this part of the assessment, which could affect the mark a student receives for this part of the final year assessment. In an oral defense these issues can be picked up but without it, one needs to put continued effort into a clear, equal and consistent level of support by supervisory staff. We understand the new method for submission may help achieve this, which is excellent.

Response from college requested: YES

Dr R.I

DO you think we should break up this section with some new paragraphs (if this is at all possible in the format that this is submitted) to make it a bit easier to read (as we have made loads of comments)? Just a thought.

The change I mentioned after exam board was that this bit for the EMQ "One theme (EMQ 3; Q.11 to 15) "Clinical diagnosis of pruritic skin conditions" performed very poorly – with four out of five of the questions being answered correctly by less than 20% of students (i.e. worse than chance)." needs to be changed to "... - with four out of five of the answers being answered correctly by a relatively small number of students." as I realised afterwards that there are ten choices therefore chances is 10% so what it currently says is wrong. Sorry!

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Anke Hendricks

Course Director Response:

The assessment strategy of the elective component is currently under review. Section A of the written part III as well as the research report assess learning outcomes related to skills in the application of scientific principles, method and knowledge to clinical practice, population medicine and research and as such aggregation of marks and arguably compensation between these components is justified. The aggregation of marks and compensation between Section A and Section B in its current form, i.e. mostly with a focus on assessing application of clinical knowledge and reasoning, is less well justified. Our regulations do not permit change for the current cohort. Any major change in the assessment of the elective component and composition of finals part II may only be possible for students sitting the exam in 2017. There is a periodic review of the BVetMed course in Dec 2015 during which assessment of this component will also be considered.

Both, the EMQ and the long answer question papers are designed to assess clinical application of knowledge and reasoning. In this highest stake exam a choice of two different formats that assess the same outcome offer an opportunity to students to demonstrate this skill even if they find one of the formats more challenging. The EMQ format provides better sampling and higher reliability, whilst it might be argued that the long answer paper format offers higher validity in terms of the mode of communication required. It is felt that aggregation of marks and compensation between them is justified. The balance of long answer questions was perhaps unfortunate in that equine questions appeared in two sections (section A 2 out of 5; section B 1 out of 2) of the paper, and students were able to answer 3 of the 5 questions relating to the equine species. Production of good clinical reasoning questions is a challenge, but nevertheless the aim is to have a more balanced spread in the future.

The external examiners suggested that the college might consider elimination of choice in the long answer questions. Currently students must answer five questions from a possible nine. It was suggested that there should only be five questions which all students have to answer. In taking this approach it was suggested that "one can be more confident that students will all be assessed on passing the core components of the curriculum."

In finals part II the long answer paper is the only form of assessment in which the students have any element of choice. In the other three elements of the examination; the spot test, EMQ paper and OSCE, students have no choice in the questions that they answer. We feel this variety of assessments already allows us to adequately assess students across the core components of the curriculum. Given that we wish to assess both breadth and depth in students' clinical reasoning and recognition, we feel it is important to retain at least one part of the examination in which an element of choice is available. This is to allow candidates to be able to go into greater depth in their responses in areas in which they feel more confident. It is important that the choices available allow candidates with differing areas of interest an equal opportunity to choose questions they feel able to answer. We take note of the observation that this year's questions had a disproportionate number of equine questions and will ensure a better balance of questions in this paper in future.

The OSCE part of the final exams is designed to assure a minimal level of practical day one skills overall, when students have had an opportunity to practice these, sampled from a large list of skills. The approach has thus focussed on an overall pass/fail of a sample of skills, rather than discrimination between students or performance in defined areas of practice. The college is pleased that the OSCE remain a valuable and fit for purpose assessment, and is happy to be advised to aim to design more and better stations. As more complex/integrated stations may be associated with less reliability, availability of assessors may be a bigger challenge.

The assessment, as a formative pilot, of some 'lower level, basic' skills, such as hand washing, gloving & gowning, as DOPS during clinical rotations is currently considered. This would help to capture & remedy deficiencies early and may allow replacement of those OSCE stations with others in the future. Equally, a wider assessment strategy for communication skills is being considered.

Spot test: The college accepts that there is a need to review question quality based on performance metrics, to continue to review any new questions before the paper is set, and thus to continue to improve the overall quality of spot test questions in the bank. The spot test was standard set by the same team along with the EMQ, so less good performance relates perhaps more to test item quality than the standard setting process.

LAQ: See previous response regarding the balance of long answer questions. Pathology content is assessed in the year 4 exam as well as in this exam. With regard to clinical and anatomical pathology test items, we aim to review draft papers and adopt a more integrative approach to paper setting between both assessments

Q1 (and other questions): The proportions given for the different parts of a question follow guidance given to question authors, and indicate to the student the relative contribution of these parts to the overall answer in terms of time spent on answering it, and thus do not need to correspond to the marking scheme. These figures are meant to guide students so that they don't spend an inordinate amount of time on a part that does not contribute as much to the expected answer overall. This is clarified on the cover sheet to the paper.

We are pleased that the introduction of standardised, college-wide exam paper setting and marking guidance has contributed to an improvement in the consistency and transparency of marking overall, although it is recognised that there is room for improvement for some questions.

The poor performance in the Part 3 Section A (critical appraisal question) indicated that the learning outcomes were not achieved by enough students. Recently, a science investigation and integration strand has been formed to subsume all learning opportunities related to skills in the application of scientific principles, method and knowledge to clinical practice, population medicine and research. The aim is to review, better align and develop the teaching in this area to underline its relevance and increase its effectiveness.

Elective questions: We are pleased that the introduction of standardised, college-wide exam paper setting and marking guidance have gone some way towards an improvement in the consistency and transparency of marking overall, although it is recognised that there is still room for improvement for some questions. The use of the common grading scheme for marking questions that test clinical reasoning is designed to reward not only completeness of the information or clinical conclusions solicited, but also the quality and transparency of the reasoning process that led to those conclusions. It is conceivable therefore that a 100% correct answer in term of diagnosis or therapy will not be rewarded with full marks. Better commentary in these instances will help to clarify where this is the case.

The assessment strategy of the elective component is currently under review. Any major change in the assessment of the elective component and composition of finals part II can only take effect for students sitting the exam in 2017. We will strive to further improve practice in this area for next year.

Research projects: For the cohort starting their projects in 2015 and sitting the exam in 2016, expectations of the supervisors have been revised and clearly communicated to staff and students. A new formalised system of mid-project formative feedback from supervisors to students, and two points of feedback on the supervision received by students, was also introduced and should help to ensure an equal and consistent level of support. It is however recognised that due to the very varied nature of the projects undertaken and the environment these are carried out in, there can never be absolute parity of the experience.

A new on-line system of project marking has been piloted and aims to improve the documentation of the rationale for allocated mark, and the agreed final mark if the marks of the two examiners did not agree; it is planned that this will also be rolled out for the next cohort.

There are clear guidelines in place on the acceptable format of the research report. Within the specific directives on the layout and general structure, the guidance is for the report to be in the format of a research paper being submitted to an appropriate journal in the chosen field of study. In addition to the varied nature of the project types, this may lead to some differences in format and referencing between projects. This flexibility was introduced to facilitate publication of the work.

Action Required:

- Consider 40% minimum pass mark for Part III sections A & B for the 2017 sitting; Done
- Consider removing elective questions from Part III for 2018 sitting (AAreg change for cohort sitting 2018) Done
- Aim for balanced qs species spread (exam 2016) Will ensure this occurs
- Introduce DOPS pilot for cohort entering rotations Feb 2016, introduce communication skills DOPS into early y3 for Sep 2016. Discussed previously
- The college is pleased that its effort in improving the EMQ performance is being

rewarded. The skin EMQ has been reviewed and revised, and its poor performance attributed mainly to question design (questions 1-4); teaching effectiveness in this area will also be investigated.

- Liaison for paper setting between year 4 leader & finals convenor re pathology content (2015_16 exam rounds). See previous response.
- Introduce online RP2 marking system (cohort sitting the exam in 2017). Done

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Completed

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Assessment are considered robust and rigorous

OSPVE

Consistency of scoring observed between different assessors scoring the same station over time. The standard setting is 'by station', using a plotting and regression system to establish cut off score. This seems an entirely reasonable and appropriate way of accounting for the range of (internal) difference between station tasks. However, the number of items per station could be streamlined, bringing score range between stations to closer alignment?

Response from college requested: YES

We will review the number of items per station. The new Director of OSCEs will be alerted to this comment in his review of the OSCEs as a whole

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

The assessment of final year appears to be very student-centred with choices to both answer and avoid certain questions to enable to achieve their best performance. This is excellent from their perspective in particular, but one needs to consider the effect this has on staff having to supply a multitude of questions of which by far not all get used. When only two or three students sit part of the assessment it is difficult to relate their performance to other students having answered a question in a completely different area, which makes the assessment process less rigorous, and may also give an opportunity for students to pass with a serious knowledge deficit in a particular area where they do qualify for (particularly less prominent fields such as meat inspection, veterinary public health).

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Anke Hendricks

Course Director Response:

The review of the assessment of the electives component and its removal from Part 3 of the exam, and careful attention to balance of question topics in Part 2 will greatly reduce these issues (see previous comments).

Action Required:

Completed

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.4 Standard of marking

Marking in general was consistent within and between markers. There were occasions where some markers appeared to be more lenient than others, or were more lenient or stringent than the actual model answer, however this did not appear to affect overall performance. It was noted that these small differences predominantly occurred when the model answer was unclear about the level of information and interpretation that was expected from a pass, merit, distinction student. Where these minor discrepancies occurred they will have benefitted the borderline student.

Legibility of handwriting was poor in many and brilliant in some of the sampled papers, however this did not appear to effect the standard of marking, for which markers should be commended. Electronic assessment is likely to significantly reduce the time markers have to spend on assessing the Long Answer and Elective questions; with the increasing number of students this may be worth considering.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Anke Hendricks

Course Director Response:

We are pleased that the introduction of standardised, college-wide marking guidance has gone some way towards an improvement in the consistency and transparency of marking overall, although it is recognised that there is still room for improvement. We currently have no plans for electronic examinations.

It's recognized that the quality of model answers is variable but we will circulate examples of good practice.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Exams Office

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)

Yes

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Significant improvement of the assessment quality of EMQs in Part 2

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

As always we were impressed by the excellent organisation and availability of material for external examiners.

As highlighted above, there appears to be wide range of topics assessed, however by giving the option to choose you can get away with not knowing any pathology. A solution may be to include more pathology in Long Answer Questions, or perhaps consider an OSPVE station in this area (this could take any form, such as a structured or open viva)?

During future visits it would be valuable for the external examiners to meet and talk to a group of final year students.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Anke Hendricks

Course Director Response:

See previous response regarding the balance of long answer questions. Pathology content is assessed in the year 4 exam as well as in this exam. With regard to clinical and anatomical pathology test items, we aim to review draft papers and adopt a more integrative approach to paper setting between both assessments.

Action Required:

We will investigate the possibility of External Examiners meeting a group of students.

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Exams Office& Academic Quality Officer 'Standards'

General Statements**4.1 Comments I have made in previous years have been addressed to my satisfaction****No****Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

Comments relating to an appropriate model answer were implemented by some but not others. This makes consistent marking and external review of marks much more difficult. In addition, when required to provide student feedback it would be helpful to provide a model answer from which they can understand what they had to achieve to receive a distinction/merit level answer. We are aware this is an ongoing process, and have certainly seen improvement, but it is currently not consistent in the long answer and elective questions.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Anke Hendricks

Course Director Response:

We are pleased that the introduction of standardised, college-wide marking guidance has gone some way towards an improvement in the consistency and transparency of marking overall, although it is recognised that there is still room for improvement. Please see previous comments.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: 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:

Response from college requested: 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:

Response from college requested: NO

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly**Yes****Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

All external examiners would recommend to anonymize all exam results until approved by exam board, this to avoid potential influence of knowing who the student, as this may affect a decision. It is acknowledged that having this information during the exam board meeting encourages staff to attend, and this attendance is important and very constructive for further development of the assessment however the potential influence of knowing a student needs to be considered. An alternative would be to anonymize up to exam board, so at least until then the exams office and others are not aware of individual student performance.

Response from college requested: YES

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Anke Hendricks

Course Director Response:

We consider the risk of marks being influenced most prominent when work is marked, consequently academics marking students work are presented with candidate numbers only, effectively anonymizing the work. The exams office have no influence over any marks awarded, so we see no reason at present for us to change our process.

Action Required:

- Anonymize all exam data for internal and external review purposes, until review at exam board.

Action Deadline:**Action assigned to:**

Exams office

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:**

Response from college requested: **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:

Response from college requested: **NO**

4.9 I have received enough support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: **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:

Response from college requested: **NO**

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed**No****Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:**

On occasions the process for marking scripts was not followed in according recommended guidelines. Although the guidelines are clear and provided by the exams office, some markers failed to document where and why marks are awarded. This became particularly important in the research projects where 2 internal examiners initially provided wide ranging marks and then had to agree on a final mark. Although external examiners scrutinized these projects and were in agreement with the final mark provided for all of them, a clear justification by the 2 internal examiners was not provided on all occasions. We don't envisage these justifications to become lengthy paragraphs but a few sentences describing the discussion held with a justification for the final mark would be helpful for student feedback when required. There were some excellent examples of how this was done in a complete and succinct manner.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Anke Hendricks

Course Director Response:

A new on-line system of project marking has been piloted and aims to improve the documentation of the rationale for allocated mark, and the agreed final mark if the marks of the two examiners did not agree; it is planned that this will also be rolled out for the next cohort.

Action Required:

Introduce online RP2 marking system (cohort sitting the exam in 2017)

Action Deadline:

Completed

Action assigned to:

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: 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:

Do you have any suggestions for improvements based on experience at other institutes? We may use information provided in our annual external examining report:

Compliments to the very efficient exams team - who supported the whole assessment process well, but particularly supported students and external examiners, enabling them to perform to the best of their ability. In the case of the external examining team, this made it possible for us to review all material in a timely and constructive fashion. Materials we had access to in advance (e.g. papers) were very well presented, and the overall experience felt professional, courteous and welcoming.

Response from college requested: **NO**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Anke Hendricks

Course Director Response:

The course leadership wishes to add their compliments to the exams team.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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)

Response from college requested: **NO**

