

## **ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2015/16**

### **Appendix 3: External Examiners' report**

#### **MSc Wild Animal Biology/Health**

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

As Course Directors please ensure you reflect on External Examiners' comments in the Course Review section. Please ensure that any actions to be taken in response to these comments have been recorded in your Annual Quality Improvement Report.

For support or advice please contact Ana Filipovic, Academic Quality Officer 'Standards', [afilipovic@rvc.ac.uk](mailto:afilipovic@rvc.ac.uk), 01707666938

Update to actions from 2014/15:

External Examiners Comments	Course Directors Response	Course Directors update in 2015/16
<p><b>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)</b></p> <p>The procedures for examinations, marking and awards are sound and fair. Meetings of the Board of Examiners are conducted very fairly, and comments of internal and external examiners are fully considered in making decisions. The assessment forms from supervisors of research projects are valuable to the external examiners, and in general were completed well. A few supervisors failed to submit these forms, and supervisors should be reminded that this is one of their responsibilities, and that these are highly appreciated by the external examiners.</p>	<p>This is a continuing problem since many of the supervisors are external to both the RVC and ZSL. All supervisors are requested to send their reports to the course coordinator and, if not, are reminded (perhaps pestered is a better word here!) that these are a necessary part of the supervisory process.</p> <p><b>Action Required:</b> Exams Office will send final reminders to all defaulting supervisors</p> <p><b>Action Deadline:</b></p> <p><b>Action assigned to:</b> Exams Office</p>	<p><b>Completed</b></p>

# Collaborative Report

Exam board meeting: 14-Sep-2016

**MSc in Wild Animal Biology, 2015/16 (MSc WAB WAH)**

**Lead examiner: Ms Rana Parween**

**Collaborating examiner(s): Professor Oswin Perera**

## The Programme

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

### 1.1 Course content

The course content is varied, up to date and covers all aspects of the two fields in great depth and breadth. Learners interviewed on the day of oral presentations, unanimously were of the same opinion.

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

Very good and clearly stated in most lectures, and for those lectures, they were well met through the teaching and learning activities.

**Response from college requested: NO**

### 1.3 Teaching methods

Good variety of teaching methods. The use of many lecturers and tutors from a wide variety of disciplines and institutes has enriched students' learning process. Learners positively commented upon the exposure to specialist lecturers who are well known in their own fields

**Response from college requested: NO**

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

Majority are good with some excellent ones, such as the availability of a range of animal species and various types of data from ZSL and a range of other zoos.

**Response from college requested: NO**

### 1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

**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

Overall, students' work was of a very high standard, and they were at or above those on other MSc courses known to the examiners. Papers written on research projects were mostly of a high standard, with some of a standard suitable for scientific publication. The students were highly motivated and innovative, and achieved a great deal in the short time allocated to these projects. The recommendation made last year to limit the number of projects that relied mainly on analyses of retrospective data sets appears to have resulted in a marked reduction of such projects. There was an increase in the number of projects dealing with behaviour, which is attributable to the relatively higher numbers of students in the Wild Animal Biology course.

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

This year's cohort of students was of a high standard, with three distinctions and a high proportion of merits and passes. One student was a borderline fail on her project write up but had relatively better grades for the Grant Application and Orals. Due to mitigating circumstance put forward and the overall grades for this learner, it was decided that although the project report remains a fail, increase of a couple of marks will allow the student to pass. Majority of the learners demonstrated a good level of critical understanding and insight of their project's strengths and limitations.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

As in previous years, the opportunity to attend the Student Conference on the day before the oral exams was valuable to the examiners. The presentations were very well prepared and delivered with confidence. The formal oral exam provided further opportunity to assess in greater depth the knowledge and understanding of students on key issues relating to their project than was apparent from the written report.

Response from college requested: **NO**

## Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

### 3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Appropriate and relevant to the learning objectives and the curriculum; sufficiently varied to assess different skills such as ability to express ideas and make critical analyses through written and oral responses.

Response from college requested: **NO**

### 3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Suitably rigorous.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

The level of assessment is consistent with the FHEQ.

Response from college requested: **NO**

### 3.4 Standard of marking

Mainly consistent, with good use of the scale of marking. Students will value and benefit from more annotated feedback on their assignments.

Response from college requested: **NO**

### 3.5 In your view, are the procedures for assessment and the determination of awards sound and fairly conducted? (e.g. Briefing, Exam administration, marking arrangements, Board of Examiners, participation by External Examiners)

The procedures for examinations, marking and awards are sound and fair. Meetings of the Board of Examiners are conducted very fairly, and comments of internal and external examiners are fully considered in making decisions. The assessment forms from supervisors of research projects were valuable and highly appreciated by the external examiners in the previous years. There is a recommendation for this to continue for the coming year.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

No changes were perceived. The new grading criteria for the oral examination was very useful and fair.

Response from college requested: **NO**

### 3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

The opportunity provided this year to meet a sample of the students immediately after the student presentations was very valuable to the external examiners. It was a much better arrangement than that of the previous year, when only a few students were able to meet the external examiners. This year there were around 15/16 students present. The relevant comments and suggestions made by the students were discussed by the external examiners at the meeting of the Board of Examiners.

Response from college requested: **NO**

4.1 Comments I have made in previous years have been addressed to my satisfaction

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

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:

The external examiners were able to scrutinize most of students' exams scripts on the day of oral examinations and had access to their marks at the meeting of the Board of Examiners. They also received scientific papers written on student projects, and recommend that access to these should be provided one to two weeks in advance.

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:**

**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:**

**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**

**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 holding of a Student Conference for making presentations on the research projects on the day preceding the oral examinations is an excellent practice that enables the external examiners to fully assess student performance in the research project. The opportunity provided for the externals to meet with the students immediately after the Student Conference in order to discuss issues relating to academic as well as administrative aspects of the course and examinations is also very valuable. The process of oral examination and EE visit was well organised.

Students positively commented upon the variety of interesting modules offered on the course. They also appreciated the help offered by the Course Leaders and the newly appointed administrator.

**Response from college requested: NO**

**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)**

Although only in a minority of cases, we would recommend more timely and detailed feedback on student work as requested by the learners.

**Course Director's response:**

Thank you for your comments regarding feedback. The College is in an ongoing process of making sure that feedback across the board on all RVC courses is of a standardised timeline. Please note that MSc WAB WAH Students receive formative feedback on all written in-course assessment (ICA) submissions within a week. This has been recognised as good practice

**Response from college requested: NO**

