Collaborative Report

BSc in Bioveterinary Sciences, 2013/14

Professor Craig McArdle and Paul Loughna

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

Course content is good-excellent. The discipline is well covered with good range of options (particularly in final year with King's modules adding breadth). Research expertise of teaching staff is used well, not only in projects but also in taught material.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Donald Palmer

Course Director Response:

We are delighted that our External Examiners view our programme in this manner which reflects the dedication and hard work of RVC and Kings staff.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Appropriate and stated clearly in hand-book.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

1.3 Teaching methods

Good range, appropriately used.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

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

We know of no resource issues affecting the assessment.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

Emphasis on research projects (in both 2nd and 3rd years) is a real strength of the course. The broad and interesting range of topics offered in these (and library coursework), along with the quality of supervision and marking are very impressive.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Donald Palmer

Course Director Response:

We find these comments encouraging and will continue to emphasise the research element within our programme.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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 to what we would expect based on knowledge of other BioVet and Biomed BSc courses.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

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

We did not identify and specific areas of weakness in knowledge or skills, and their distribution (top/middle/weak) is much as we'd expect for this or related courses.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

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

Overall, this is a very good programme as evidenced by the strong student performance in all 3 years. Final year grades included two 1sts for the BioVet Sci and, although this is a little lower than in the last 3 years, over 60% received 2.1 or better degrees. This was the cohort that unusually had a drop in overall mean from 60 to 57% from year 1 to 2 but as anticipated/hoped this increased to 63% in the final year so that the overall mean (and percentage receiving 1st or 2.1) has remained relatively consistent for the last 4 years. There was a reasonably even distribution of mean mark across all final year modules (although see 3.6 below) and overall mean marks for years 1 and 2 were also much as expected for the course (approx. 55% and 56%) indicating maintenance of high standards. we had thought that final year project marks generally exceeded written exam marks but this is not actually the case as the final year project mark mean was 30.4/50 and this is similar to the last two years 30.2 and 31.2.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Donald Palmer

Course Director Response:

We are grateful and appreciative of these positive comments.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Assessment Process

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Assessment methods are well aligned and appropriate for the curriculum and learning objectives.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

3.2 Extent to which assessment processes are rigorous

Assessment is rigorous in all 3 years of the course. Second and sample marking was extensive (often exceeding minimal requirements). Detailed comments on scripts, together with marking schemes, meant that it was usually easy to see how marks were derived.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

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

Very good consistency.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

3.4 Standard of marking

Very high.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

3.5 Opinion on changes to the assessment process from previous years in which you have examined

No major changes.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

3.6 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the assessment process

It was noted that the Infection and Immunity module has had the lowest average mark of all year 3 units for the last 3 years, whereas the Wild Animal Biology module has been 1st/2nd highest over the same period. The reason for this is unclear and there was relatively little feedback evident on the WAB scripts for assessing how marks were derived. This may be a self-selection issue (i.e. best students chose WAB) but we recommend that the College looks into this.

Response from college requested: YES

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Donald Palmer

Course Director Response:

We are aware that WAB had a higher proportion of ICA which may have accounted for the higher marks and are in the process of ensuring parity across the final year modules with regard to the proportion of marks attributed to ICA and the written exams. This will also apply to the style of the written exams and the duration time.

We always expect marking on the scripts and there will be a workshop this on the INSET Day on Assessment Dec 2014.

Action Required:

The previous and current BSc Yr 3 Leader is in discussion with Module Leaders with the aim to harmonise the examination process.

Action Deadline:

24-May-2015

Action assigned to:

BSc Yr 3 Leader

Assessment Procedures

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

4.1 In your view, are the processes for assessment and the determination of awards sound and fairly conducted?

The assessment processes are rigorous, appropriate and generally very good.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

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

Only 1 week is allowed for the first external examiner's report. This is considerably lower than in previous years and is insufficient as it falls within the holiday season.

The online form for external examiners is a positive change but the section labels confusing. It is not entirely clear what belongs where and this is not helped by the fact that Section 3 'Assessment Process' actually asks about Methods and Processes whereas Section 4 'Assessment Procedures' also asks about Assessment Processes.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I have to agree with this as I have been away and then on holiday. The time frame should be addressed.

The time frame will be reviewed. This is the first year we have used this system and we will review the headings.

4.3 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

As far as we're aware there was sufficient time for marking and moderation.

These were fair and efficiently run boards with very good procedures.

Participation of external examiners in the process was generally appropriate, with ample opportunity to check exam questions.

The external examiner briefing was also good.

Projects were posted to us before the boards leaving time to inspect coursework and exam scripts on the days of the Exam Boards.

Access to VLE Learn well in advance of the Exam Boards was very helpful.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

General Statements

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Last year the externals raised the point that where there was a major discrepancy between 1st and 2nd marks for any given piece of work, the first mark would be used unless there was a systematic difference triggering remarking of all scripts. We recommended the College should consider better defining the systematic difference that triggers 3rd marking, and also the possibility that major differences between individual marks should trigger 3rd marking. The College response was that the Academic Director of Assessment is currently drawing up a policy when a remark will be triggered. I'd hoped to see this policy but understand it is still in preparation.

In previous years I've commented that it would be helpful to see student feedback. Specifically, I'd hoped to see feedback on how adequately the 3rd year students felt prepared for the King's modules but generally it would be good to have the additional insight that student feedback provides. I still have not seen student feedback.

In the 2013 Exam Board we discussed the high proportion of BTech educated students failing year 1 and how exam preparation might be better tailored to their needs. I understand this has been done (tutorials and workshops) and the current year 1 and 2 marks suggest that this problem has been solved/reduced.

Response from college requested: YES

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Donald Palmer

Course Director Response:

We are finalizing the policy regarding the process that triggers 3rd marking and when complete we will make it available to our External Examiners. We have now produced a student evaluation form, specifically for students who have attended King's module, and will make the data available to our External Examiners when it has been analysed and reviewed.

Action Required:

Exams Office to request Kings module student survey results from Academic Quality Officer (Student Engagement) and share with External Examiners.

Action Deadline:

End of Summer 2015

Action assigned to:

5.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

Yes

5.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

These were provided in ample time and marking schemes were very helpful.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

Yes

5.4 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:

I particularly appreciated having project scripts posted to me for advance inspection.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

Yes

5.5 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

Dr Paul Loughna

No as I was not in the country

5.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I am sure that the lead examiner ensured this.

5.7 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

Dr Paul Loughna

Yes

5.8 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

Dr Paul Loughna

Yes

5.9 I have received enough support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

Yes

5.10 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:

Although I would like to have seen student feedback.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

Yes

5.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

Yes

5.12 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

Dr Paul Loughna

Yes

Completion

If you have identified any areas of good practice, please comment more fully here. We may use information provided in our annual external examining report:

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

Provision of projects in years 2 and 3, the broad and fascinating range of topics, the quality of supervision and rigour of marking are all exemplary. The strong emphasis on PBL in year 2 is another distinctive and positive feature of the course.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments.

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**