Collaborative Report

Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine, Year 1, 2013/14

Professor Alan Baird

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

The course content is appropriate for this stage of an integrated programme of this type.

We acknowledge the development of a new TLAS document as described in the response to last year's comments

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with the led examiner.

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

We note a response to the comments raised last year and our pleased that mechanisms are in hand to give clearer details of the learning objectives.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I cannot comment as this is my first year as external

1.3 Teaching methods

Teaching methodology is broad, commensurate with both the range of teaching material being delivered and the outcomes being assessed, and includes knowledge, understanding and problem solving.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree with these comments

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

ISF orals continue to provide a rich opportunity for students to excel. The external examiners remain impressed with the exemplary running of this part of the assessment including the level of engagement from teaching staff.
We note a potential for disparity with some students being assessed by their tutors. However, this is an inevitable consequence of random allocation of students to examiners and appreciate the difficulties that would be raised were tutors excluded.

There is excellent administrative support for the examination process from the exams office; this extends from drafting and review of papers right through to the board meeting.

Online reporting and joint reporting is efficient.

INSET days offer a valuable opportunity for discussion and reflection.

Response from college requested: **YES**

Dr Paul Loughna

I was unable to attend the ISF orals and therefore cannot comment

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

Agreed: The ISF oral is not only a rich opportunity for students to excel but also where the examiners are able to gauge a student's academic achievement while at the same time interrogating the learning and teaching process. The issue of a student being examined by their own tutors is random but unavoidable. In the first place each student is examined by a set of four examiners drawn from different disciplines. A typical ISF exam oral requires a minimum of about 10 sets of examiners which in itself a mammoth task to fashion together. To superimpose on this arrangement, a matrix to make a student and a tutor (examiner) mutually exclusive is not only a very difficult task but one verging on the impossible. Mitigating measures are however in place to create a level and fair playing field for all exam candidates. Each candidate's performance is assessed by two of the four examiners and a final mark is agreed on their performance.

Action Required:

An improvement in the conduct of the ISF oral has been discussed at the departmental level. In future all candidates will go through the same exam room experience. A candidate will visit a total of four different stations but each examiner will be restricted to a particular type of station with clearly laid out objectives. This will effectively expose every candidate to similar questions and uniformity. A mock trial of this new system will be performed in February and March 2015.

Action Deadline:

April 2015

Action assigned to:

Raymond Macharia

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

The BVM programme structure is complex as a consequence of the integrated, systems approach. To assist stage-specific external examiners, the relationship between, for example, years 1 and 2 could be articulated. We believe such an exercise has been completed for accreditation purposes. This is an aspect which might usefully be tabled at future INSET training.

Response from college requested: YES

Dr Paul Loughna

This seems to be a sensible approach

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The external examiners receive the course handbook in advance of proposed visits. The external examiners also received a briefing on the course content and level of knowledge expected for a particular strand or module for each of the years 1 and 2 at the time of the examination. It is however conceivable that very clear demarcation is not very easy to discern in a spiral curriculum like ours.

Action Required:

To provide an easy to grasp academic snapshot (map) showing interconnection and flow of teaching between years 1 and 2.

Action Deadline:

February 2015

Action assigned to:

Rachmond Marcharia to provide Exams Office with the information

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

The student ability appears to be commensurate with that of similar cohorts at other UK Universities. The three examiners (from three separate Universities) cover most aspects of the course.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr Paul Loughna

I was unable to attend the examinations and therefore cannot comment

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

Reviewing the entire assessment process it appears that the best students achieve high marks across the board and, similarly, weak students display a uniformly weak performance. Thus the strategy of using a wide range of assessment styles appears to be successful in preventing 'strategic learning'. Mark alignment across each of the assessment strategies was broadly linear, however there were occasional exceptions.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr Paul Loughna

I was unable to attend the examinations and therefore cannot comment

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

A high proportion of students gain distinction and merit marks. The Common Grading Scheme can be used to justify outcomes. In contrast, MCQs and Spot Tests are more difficult to calibrate.

The high performance of Gateway students is worthy of comment and indicates the success of this route.

Response from college requested: **NO** Please note that MQCs are calibrated through standard setting.

Dr Paul Loughna

I was unable to attend the examinations and therefore cannot comment

Assessment Process

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

The range of assessment methods appears to be appropriate and aligned to the stated learning objectives.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree

3.2 Extent to which assessment processes are rigorous

Individual assessment processes appear to be rigorously designed and delivered. Careful design of questions and the availability of good model answers are important here. The examiners note the response relating to last year's report and also note this issue was to be raised by the chair of the exam board at the LTAC.

Response from college requested: **YES** Seek clarification if not obvious from last year's report.

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The assessment process as reported is both rigorous and carefully designed. This can be easily explained by the pivotal role taken by the exams office in organising exam paper review with internal examiners and correspondence with the external examiners. Internal examiners thoroughly scrutinize exam questions for suitability and alignment with learning objectives/outcomes in addition to making sure that guidelines such as a clear marking scheme and model answers are provided for problem solving and essay questions before submission to the external examiners for moderation.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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 and is in line with other institutions awarding the veterinary degree through internationally accredited programmes.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree

3.4 Standard of marking

Overall the standard of marking was high and in line with marking guide lines. Transparency and accountability are supported by the helpful application of the common grading scheme.

The marking spreadsheets and the summative analysis performed on specific papers and questions is extremely useful and should be used to specifically flag any potential issues with specific questions at the earliest opportunity

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr Paul Loughna

I was unable to attend the examinations and therefore cannot comment

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

A summary of changes (archived over years) would be a useful tool with which to examine evolution of the programme. Evidence of blue-printing of course material to assessment content would be valuable.

Response from college requested: **YES**

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

Course Director Response:

The mapping and alignment of course materials to the learning objectives /outcomes is a continuous and rigorous but a firmly established process.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Care in marking subjective questions to acknowledge that ethical areas should be treated with balance to both sides of the debate.

Paper three appears to provide a mix of knowledge and interpretation elements. The specific role of paper three needs defining.

Response from college requested: **YES**

Dr Paul Loughna

I agree

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?

Yes.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

Yes

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

Change appear to be quite modest in number and in degree.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I have not examined in previous years

4.3 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

The marks spreadsheet, in addition to its function as a reporting document, offers opportunities for applied pedagogical research. Student engagement patterns, assessment outcomes and mark spreading may be informative to future course review and educational practice.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I was unable to attend the examinations and therefore cannot comment

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia

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:

NB This is a joint report of 3 extern examiners.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

Not applicable

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

Not applicable

5.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Papers were approved by 3 extern examiners working collaboratively.

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:

Access to scripts, in course assessments and spreadsheets made this very effective.

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 I was unable to attend

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 was unable to attend the examinations and therefore cannot comment

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

I was unable to attend the examinations and therefore cannot comment

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:

UK and Ireland.

Response from college requested: NO

Dr Paul Loughna

I was unable to attend the examinations and therefore cannot comment

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:

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

Tes

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:

Much good practice has been highlighted in the previous responses. We are convinced of the benefits, particularly to a systems-based programme, of having coordination of external examiners.

Explore the linkages between year 1 and other years.

Genetics covered in POS, could be expanded based on current areas of research – systems approach to student learning – blueprinting the answer to ensuring coverage of traditional areas and also of developing areas such as functional genomics, epigenetics etc. Research based learning GBV, genetic technologies (including those likely to underpin future diagnostics and treatments), bioinformatics etc. could be introduced through the curriculum.

Response from college requested: **NO**

Dr Paul Loughna

I have no reason not to concur with the lead examiner on all of these aspects

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Raymond Macharia
Thank you for your comments which will be fed back to the CMC.

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**