Collaborative Report

MSc in Wild Animal Biology/ MSc Wild Animal Health, 2013/14

Professor Anna Meredith & Professor Oswin Perera

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

The course content is excellent and covers all aspects of the field in very good depth and breadth. The diversity of research projects reflects the wide ranging and multidisciplinary syllabus.

Response from college requested: NO

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

Excellent, clearly stated and well met

Response from college requested: NO

1.3 Teaching methods

Good variety of teaching methods. The large number of different lecturers/tutors from a wide variety of disciplines is to be commended

Response from college requested: NO

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

Good

Response from college requested: NO

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

The modular credit based system (Certificate/Diploma/Masters) appears to have embedded and is functioning well.

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 the students were of a very high standard and at a level or above those on other MSc courses known to the examiners. Written research projects were in general strong and of a high standard, with a good topic choice with no borderline candidates and some of a very high standard indeed and suitable for scientific publication. The students were highly motivated and innovative, and achieved a great deal in the short time allocated to these projects. As commented last year a few projects still relied on analysis of retrospective data sets of relatively poor or highly variable quality which limited the scope and degree of student involvement possible - it is recommended that these type of projects are discouraged in future as they are in general unrewarding and frustrating and contribute little to the knowledge base.

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Michael Waters

Course Director Response:

The Course Directors advise students to find projects that do not rely on retrospective datasets. Whilst some datasets may be of variable quality, analysis of such data can make a valuable contribution to scientific knowledge without the need to conduct lengthy and expensive studies, providing the data collected are of high quality. Any requests to examine such datasets will be very carefully scrutinised in future.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Generally this student cohort was of a high standard and even the lower marking students were comfortable passes. Students generally demonstrated a good level of critical understanding and insight of their project's strengths and limitations, but some had a limited understanding of the statistical methodology.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

The examiners welcomed the opportunity to attend the student presentations the day before the oral exam; this was a very valuable exercise in gaining a better appreciation of the students' performance and understanding of their project. In general oral responses in the formal exam were confident and many students were able to give a much better impression of their knowledge and understanding of key issues relating to their project than was apparent from the written report

Response from college requested: **NO**

Assessment Process

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Appropriate and relevant to learning objectives/curriculum, sufficiently varied to assess different skills (written/oral/critical analysis etc)

Response from college requested: **NO**

3.2 Extent to which assessment processes are rigorous

Suitable 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

Good consistency and use of scale

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

Response from college requested: **NO**

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

It was very useful to the examiners to have the new statement on the dissertation report outlining which aspects the student conducted themselves and which were conducted by others.

Response from college requested: **NO**

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?

All processes for assessment and award determination are conducted fairly. The Course Co-ordinator communicated efficiently and the external examiners felt included in the assessment process. The research project supervisor assessment forms are valuable to the external examiners and in general were completed well although some simply ticked the boxes and did not add any comments. Supervisors should be reminded again that this is one of their responsibilities and how much appreciated it is appreciated by eth externals.
The conduct of the Board of Examiners meeting is very fair and comments of internal and external examiners are fully considered in making decisions.

Response from college requested: **NO** The Exams Office will continue to encourage supervisors to make comments.

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

The scheduling of a 5 minute break/changeover in the oral examination timetable as requested is very welcome and allows for a brief preparatory discussion with the internal examiner and a summing up period to decide on a final mark. We recommend that this is continued next year.

Response from college requested: **NO** This practice will continue.

4.3 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

There was some discussion about the necessity for the oral examination in addition to the presentations on the previous day and whether the report is thus over-examined. An option would be to increase the time for the oral presentations and make them formally assessed by internals and externals. It is recommended that consideration is given to this option for next year

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Michael Waters

Course Director Response:

The requirement for BVetMed oral examinations of their research projections has been dropped for the 2014-15 academic year so a precedent has been set for FHEQ Level 7.

Action Required:

This recommendation will discussed at the next MSc Course Management Committee meeting with the view of making a recommendation to the following MSc Coordinating Committee meeting. It should be noted however that a similar recommendation was discussed at the October 2013 meeting and it was agreed the oral examination should be retained.

Action Deadline:

03-Feb-2015

Action assigned to:

Michael Waters

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:

the student statement on contributions to the project,and supervisors assessment sheet and the timetabling haveall been addressed

Response from college requested: NO

5.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

5.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

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:

Response from college requested: NO

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

5.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

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

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

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

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

5.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Response from college requested: NO

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

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:

An opportunity to meet the students to discuss their overall experience and feedback about the course was given at lunchtime on examination day. Although at very short notice for the externals it was beneficial to meet them and discuss the course but in future externals should either have notice of this and more time to meet the whole cohort, or arrange another time during the year when the externals can do this (as done at another institute for which one external examines a Masters)

Response from college requested: **YES**

COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Michael Waters

Course Director Response:

Action Required:

Whilst appreciating the Externals wish to attend the College on another day for this purpose there is no budget to support this at present. We will ensure that the time identified to meet the students is specified on the oral examination timetable in the future.

Action Deadline:

31-Jan-2015

Action assigned to:

Michael Waters and Paul Probyn

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Michael Waters

Course Director Response: