

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2019/20

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

Cert AVP

This appendix contains Year Leader's responses to 2019/20 External Examiners' comments and updates to actions from previous External Examiners' reports (if applicable).

As Course Director 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

Appendix 3 consists of:

| | |
|----|--|
| a. | Updates to actions from previous years' reports |
| b. | 2019/20 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director Feb 2020 Report for Modules A&B by Anna Judson Oct 2020 Report for Module C by Ed Hall |

Updates to actions from previous years' reports

| Report Question | External Examiners' comments & suggested actions | Course Director/Year Leader's response & Action | Update in 2019/20 |
|--|--|---|---|
| <p>2.3 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the students' performance</p> | <p>A bank of 'before and after' examples of short pieces of text rewritten into a reflective style might support students new to this style of writing early on with their studies</p> | <p>Thank you for this suggestion. We will definitely work toward supplying such examples for our candidates who are struggling with reflective writing.</p> <p>Action Required:</p> <p>Module A leader, Liz Chan to be asked to create some "before and after" examples of reflective writing.</p> <p>Action Deadline:</p> <p>01-Sep-2019</p> <p>Action assigned to:</p> <p>Liz Chan and Joanne Jarvis</p> | <p>We have added extensive support for reflective writing on the CertAVP site.</p> |
| <p>3.6 Opinion on changes to the assessment procedures from previous years in which you have examined</p> | <p>Essays and assessment reports are now online. The time taken to mark essays has been reduced from 8 to 4 weeks which has addressed negative student feedback in the module survey report. Could the RVC note over time whether this improved marking turnaround has any impact on student motivation, length of time taken to complete modules and student retention for further modules?</p> | <p>We will certainly endeavour to although the factors influencing student motivation and feedback for a totally "distant" course such as the CertAVP are multifactorial. We are instituting several initiatives to help with student engagement at a distance and to prepare candidates for this type of academic endeavour so if there is an improvement in completion rates it may be hard to tease out what elements have had the most impact.</p> <p>Action Required:</p> <p>Comparison of completion times and dropout rates for 2019/202 academic year vs 2018/2019 academic year to be presented for consideration at the next A and B module exam board.</p> <p>Action Deadline:</p> <p>03-Feb-2020</p> <p>Action assigned to:</p> <p>Joanne Jarvis</p> | <p>In 2018, enrolment numbers vastly reduced as inactive candidates, who had reached their 10-year enrolment limit, were removed from our enrolment records.</p> <p>Therefore, the requested statistics will be compared from the academic year 2019/2020 onwards and presented at the Feb 2022 A and B module exam board (to enable 2019/2020 to be compared with 2020/2021).</p> <p>We also feel the introduction of the new style assessment for Module A will help with student motivation, length of time taken to complete modules and student retention for further modules.</p> |

Individual Report

Exam board meeting: 11-Feb-2020

RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice, 2019/20 (Modules A & B)

Mrs Anna Judson

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

Course content is set by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons for the Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice A and B modules.

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

These are set out in the module descriptors for the RCVS Cert AVP and in the RVC published module outlines. The objectives are clear and relevant to veterinary practice.

Taking into account extensive feedback received from teachers, assessors and examiners, course organisers and candidates, the RVC Cert AVP team undertook a review of the A-FAVP.1 Foundations of Advanced Veterinary Practice module outline in 2018-19. The objectives were to make the A-FAVP more attractive to candidates, improve student learning experience and outcomes and better prepare candidates for success in B/C modules and synoptic exams, thereby developing better Advanced Practitioners. Launched in August 2019, the new course module has 65 enrolled candidates to date.

Detailed monitoring of candidate performance and feedback from all involved will be essential to ensure that the new module structure delivers on its intentions.

1.3 Teaching methods

The modules are assessment only.

Candidates have access to a wide range of resources including an online induction day, webinars, podcasts, specific course articles, extensive links to further reading, a regular newsletter, course forums and one to one verbal reviews and support.

Every candidate on the new module is allocated a tutor who will support, review and assess written course submissions. Past monitoring has shown clear evidence of improved performance where essays have been resubmitted following feedback. It is now a requirement that the first essay submitted has to have a written and verbal review to ensure that from an early stage candidates expectations are managed regarding the quality and level of work required and methods available for them to continually improve.

The verbal review and consistency of essay assessor is designed to provide a greater human element to the course teaching and support candidates through what can be discomfiting feedback.

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

See 1.3

Module outlines are clear. Not all candidates fully utilise the resources provided despite extensive efforts by the Cert AVP team to increase engagement. There is a recognised link between resource use and candidate performance. The new A-FAVP module tutor structure has the potential to increase candidates uptake of the resources.

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

Monitoring the impact of the new module on student, assessor and course team satisfaction and results will be important to ensure that it meets its objectives and evolves as needed.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for this comment and we agree that monitoring the impact will be important.

Action Required:

Module A leader and CertAVP manager to report on student, assessor and course team satisfaction for the new A-FAVP module to the yearly Module leaders in Feb 2021 (interim) meeting as well as the Christmas term 2021 PGCMC meeting (year report)

Action Deadline:

01-Nov-2020

Action assigned to:

Liz Chan and Joanne Jarvis

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

I have no data for student performance on comparable courses in other institutions.

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

The quality of candidate knowledge and reflection is excellent at the top of the range. Whilst the majority of students show improvement in their essay marks with the detailed guided feedback and experience, there is a small cohort that seem unable to progress with their learning and struggle to meet the required standards particularly with respect to reflective learning. The new A-FAVP module structure is designed to add to the measures already in place to identify these lower performing candidates and help all involved understand what the barriers are to their learning progression and how to raise these.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you. We are helpful that the new system will allow candidates to come to grips with reflective academic writing more quickly with greater support.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

I am looking forward to seeing how the new module structure helps develop all candidates and in particular those who initially struggle to achieve the required standard.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you. We too look forward to this.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Assessment methods are appropriate and assessment is fair at all levels.

Detailed high quality feedback is given with every essay submitted to enable candidates to progress their learning. A template is used that ensures consistency of content and style of feedback reporting making it easier for candidates to evaluate the information and use it appropriately to develop their work.

Continual professional development takes place regularly for all the assessors regarding how to give feedback. The latest training focused on how assessors can be mindful of the ways recipients perceive and respond to feedback and the effect this can have on candidates learning from that feedback.

Not all students had used the opportunity to submit a draft essay for feedback despite this showing measurable benefits in the quality of future submissions. The new module seeks to address this by making a written and verbal review of the first essay compulsory.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your very positive comments which will be conveyed to the assessors.

Action Required:

A Module assessors to be congratulated on their consistently high-quality feedback.

Action Deadline:

01-Jun-2020

Action assigned to:

Joanne Jarvis

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Assessment procedures are rigorous.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you. The RVC works hard to ensure that every assessment is rigorous but fair and relevant to clinical practice.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Assessment is consistent with the framework for postgraduate level 7

3.4 Standard of marking

Good and consistent with the common grading descriptors

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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, Candidates are considered fairly and administration is conducted efficiently with adequate data to inform discussion at exam board level. The Cert AVP team and assessors have responded sensitively to individual candidate needs regarding appeals and re-submissions.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you. This very positive feedback will be conveyed to the CertAVP team and assessors

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

01-Jun-2020

Action assigned to:

Joanne Jarvis

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

Changes to the assessment procedure started in August 2019. It is too soon to fully evaluate the effects of these changes.

Whilst the same tutor in the new module will assess all their allocated candidate's essays, a sample will be double marked by a single examiner to ensure that individual tutors are neither too strict or too generous in their grades, and to ensure that feedback is consistent.

Monitoring Cert AVP course outcomes including feedback from candidates, assessors and the Cert AVP team is well established at the RVC. I look forward to seeing the results of future monitoring of the recently adopted new A-FAVP course.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

Since becoming an External Examiner the assessment system has developed with more consistent and detailed feedback and tighter marking turnaround times. Appeals have all been conducted with appropriate rigor yet with sensitivity to individual candidate situations. The student experience is good.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for these very positive comments. The CertAVP team and assessors have worked hard to improve the candidate experience while providing rigorous and fair feedback on submitted work.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.3 I approved the papers for the Examination

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was 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:

I reviewed module work from across the range of ability levels and in different subject areas.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your commitment to the quality assurance process and consistently sound advice and guidance.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Appeals are dealt with fairly with due sensitivity to individual candidate's circumstances.

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:

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:

4.9 I have received enough support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

Any information I have needed has been readily supplied by the helpful Cert AVP team.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you. Your thanks will be conveyed to the team.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

01-Jun-2020

Action assigned to:

Jill Maddison

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:

I have been supplied with all necessary information to carry out my role.

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was 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:

None

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)

The recent introduction of the new A-FAVP module is an important development for the RVC. The key element of reflective learning has been retained, whilst allowing for greater flexibility with essay titles to ensure that candidates can learn with reference to their particular fields of work. Greater support for candidates at the start of the module is now in place with the new tutor system and compulsory initial feedback. Monitoring outcomes and candidate satisfaction and comparing this to the old module will be important and I shall look forward to this with considerable interest.

Many candidates in their reflective essays comment on how their reflective and critical thinking processes have developed as a result of taking the A module and I congratulate the Cert AVP team for their hard work in developing these skills in the next generation of Advanced Practitioners.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you. Your very positive comments will be conveyed to the CertAVP team and A module assessors.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

01-Jun-2020

Action assigned to:

Joanne Jarvis

Individual Report

Exam board meeting: 31-Oct-2020

RCVS Certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice, 2019/20

Professor Ed Hall

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

The CertAVP is a postgraduate online assessment, modular programme consisting of three sections, each with 10 credit modules:

- A and B modules develop the students' professional, clinical and reflective skills;
 - C modules are discipline-based covering a number of clinical disciplines (e.g. small animal medicine, cardiology, surgery, anaesthesia, ECC, etc.) and require the student to advance their knowledge and reflect on their clinical practice in at least three areas of their choosing.
- A total of 60 credits is required for the award.

I am the External Examiner for the C modules.

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

The learning objectives and expected outcomes are stated on the programme website:

- 1) a thorough understanding of the knowledge base and a critical awareness of developments at the forefront of their area of professional practice;
- 2) a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own area of practice;
- 3) application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and clinical enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in their professional area;
- 4) conceptual understanding that enables them to:
 - evaluate critically current literature and research in their professional area and
 - evaluate clinical methodologies and techniques, and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate to propose new approaches to professional practice.

Students successfully completing the CertAVP meet these objectives; not only is their knowledge and understanding of their relevant disciplines advanced, but they develop critical and reflective learning skills that are important for improving their clinical practice.

1.3 Teaching methods

This programme and assessment is delivered online but is basically self-taught, although with extensive support and feedback from the RVC staff. There is no formal teaching, although students are notified of relevant but optional CPD opportunities at the RVC. Each module requires at least 100 hours of self-study and requires submission of essays, case reports and reflective diaries. Formative feedback on one case report can be requested before final submission, and detailed feedback is given on every piece of work submitted. Failed submissions can be re-submitted after helpful feedback on how to improve is given, and results indicate that marks almost invariably improve with the second submission.

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

The most important resource available to students is the extensive and helpful feedback they receive on their written submission for both work that passes as well as any fails. Remote one-to one coaching is available if needed. Access to the RVCLearn website provides a large number of resources including information on how to improve learning and reflective skills through webinars, videos and written material. The site also allows a buddy system and peer-to-peer group learning groups to be established. Links to the RVC Library offers access to a vast number of relevant scientific publications.

1.5 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the Programme

The strength of this programme is the support and feedback for staff to enhance learning and the development of reflective practice.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your very positive comments.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

A CertAVP is offered by two other veterinary schools, but their approach to learning is not as focussed on self-direction and development of reflective practice. Feedback from graduating students is that they have developed professional and reflective skills that have helped them improve their clinical practice and will continue into the future.

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

Students in the top range produce written work of outstanding quality, whilst students in the middle tier show clear evidence of improved knowledge and development of reflective clinical practice. Students at the bottom of the range may have poor problem-solving skills and/or have failed to understand the importance of reflection. They may be hampered by the caseload in their practice, although there is adequate time (2 years plus one year before the module) to fulfil the caseload requirement for each module. There is also evidence that they can improve when given helpful feedback. Third submissions are rare but may be allowed upon appeal.

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

Overall, the students' performance is generally very good. It is clear some of them underestimate the time and effort to achieve a pass, although the majority improve their performance as they progress through the modules.

Students who pass the programme with relevant modules can potentially sit a synoptic examination held by the RCVS. Passing this examination allows the awarding of a designated Certificate in a specific discipline, and the potential to apply for Advanced Practitioner status.

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Understanding and critically appraising new, relevant information and reflecting on how to apply this to their clinical practice is the key objective of the programme and is achieved by the varied types of written assessment and the requirement for the candidate to demonstrate their ability to reflect.

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

As External Examiner, I have been given access to a range of submissions and am impressed by the rigorous and fair nature of the assessment as well as both the detail of the feedback given and how it informs students on ways to improve. There is a broad-band marking scheme applied by the markers and available on RVCLearn for viewing by the students.

I review all failed submissions which are also double-marked.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for your positive comments

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

The assessment is rigorous and fair and matches the FHEQ Level 7.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.4 Standard of marking

The marking is of a high standard with the grading scheme consistently applied.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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)

In my view, the procedures for assessment and the determination of awards are sound and fairly conducted.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

The two significant changes that have been made whilst I have been External Examiner are:

- 1) The requirement to pass the A and B modules before starting C modules ensures students have the necessary skills to complete the C modules.
- 2) The ability to fail submitted work because of critical clinical issues was welcomed as it safeguards the reputation of the qualification

There have also been changes in the time permitted to complete the programme

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for supporting these important changes to the programme.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

None

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

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was 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:

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:

Due to COVID, the Board was held online but there was adequate time for discussion and agreement of marks.

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was 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:

FHEQ Level 7

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:

4.9 I have received enough support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

I wish to thank the RVC staff for their support.

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:

I have been kept fully informed of issues surrounding failed students and appeals.

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

No

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

A case of suspected plagiarism was initially managed outwith the RVC's approved pathway for dealing with such academic issues. The particular instance was then dealt with satisfactorily, and the Programme now follows the approved process.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you. We will ensure that due process is strictly followed should we have any further concern in relation to potential academic misconduct.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

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:

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 programme is unique in using online assessment and feedback to develop students' reflective clinical practice. It relies on dedicated staff input but is to be commended.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you. Your support for the programme and wisdom and insight when required is greatly appreciated.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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 at the end of my appointed term, I have agreed to remain External Examiner for one further year because of the COVID situation.

The Programme needs to appoint a new External with some overlap to allow a seamless transition.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Jill Maddison

Course Director Response:

Thank you for agreeing to continue for a further year - it is very much appreciated.

Action Required:

Begin the process of identifying a replacement external examiner

Action Deadline:

01-Mar-2021

Action assigned to:

Jill Maddison

