

ANNUAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2022/23

Appendix 3: External Examiners' report

PgDip Veterinary Clinical Practice

This appendix contains Course Director's responses to 2022/23 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.	22/23 Collaborative Annual Report with responses from Course Director

Report Question	External Examiners' comment in 2021/22	Year Leader's response and actions	Update in 2022/23
3.7 additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures	It would be good to see the use of workplace-based assessments (Mini-CEX and DOPS) further expanded within the programme to gain a more comprehensive body of evidence as to the competency of the interns. WBA are currently not differentiating between candidates (all are able to meet the relatively low requirement for completion) but neither are they affording a linear or progressive evaluation of learner development. Some of the DOPS undertaken by the interns are verging on more comprehensive Entrustable Professional Activities (EPAs), which would be a more appropriate form of WBA for PG trainees. A small number of EPAs could be developed which focus on core transferable competences and would therefore be applicable to all modules, allowing interns opportunity to accrue multiple observations of the same competency within their discipline, enriching the WBA data collated for each trainee. Opportunities to improve the	This is a very interesting point and something that will need to be look at carefully. We agree that identifying some Entrustable Professional Activities for postgraduate students is a logical next step that might help standardizing and levelling the WPBAs across the students cohort and to allow monitoring progression of the interns over the course of the year for certain skills that the profession would require from a graduate with this level of qualification. Before actioning this, we would need to identify the most common procedures used for DOPs over the year and identify which ones are achievable across the different modules. It will be essential for these DOPs to be achievable for all the interns, if we are making them compulsory. <b style="color: purple;">ACTION: Actions to be considered to the intern 2023-24 intake. The comment on the Mini-CEX including the interaction with a real client is an interesting point and we would agree that we will remind the students to use this opportunity to invite the assessors in the room so that a	Completed. A list of DOPs that are achievable has been published on Learn for the small animal cohort. Course director has emailed other pathway leaders to create similar lists for their cohorts.

	<p>construct validity of the Mini-CEX by observing the interaction with a real client/case (as opposed to simulated discussion with senior clinician) would also greatly benefit the programme's assessment strategy</p>	<p>more valid assessment (and therefore more comprehensive feedback) can be obtained</p> <p>ACTION:</p> <p>Action for the 2023-24 intake but reminder to be sent in this academic year).</p>	
<p>5.1 suggestions for improvements</p>	<p>A review of the case report rubric would be warranted to ensure that the grading criterion fully align to the assessment brief, and adjustments made to ensure that there is no redundancy at the higher levels of grading within the rubric for this level of PG training. Where possible, initiatives to standardise the expectation of markers, and their application of the rubric in the case reports would further enhance an already robust assessment process, and also allow wider dissemination of the excellent approaches used to provide feedback, feed-forward and developmental guidance to the interns.</p>	<p>This a good point; we will review the rubric and try to modify the descriptors for the higher categories in order to stratify the distinction students. This will need to be done in concert with exam office and will require some coordination, as the current rubric is aligned to the CertAVP (which also have a reflective component). At the moment we have several marking rubric and some focus on the reflective component whilst others focus on the clinical/understanding component. At the moment we don't have necessarily a specific rubric, but need to check that we don't want to end up using a specific rubric for every single course across the RVC.</p> <p>We agree about raising the opportunity of inset day on assessment; we can try to raise this with the team at the next opportunity available.</p> <p>Action:</p> <p>To be implemented for the new intake 2023-24.</p>	<p>Completed.</p>

Pg Dip in Veterinary Clinical Practice , 2022/23

Dr Mike Cathcart

The Programme

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

1.1 Course content

The PGDip in Veterinary Clinical Practice is a well-structured programme which is agile and flexible to meet the needs of learners engaging in different post-graduate training environments. This is not a taught programme, and so there is no taught content or syllabus to review, however the use of

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

Thank you, we are please to see this course is meeting the needs of learners.

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

As per last year, the aims, objectives and expectations for the workplace-based assessments used in the programme are clearly articulated to the students.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

Many thanks

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

1.3 Teaching methods

n/a

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Having been able to attend the Exam Board in person this year, I was able to gain a better understanding of the resources available to the interns, which are more than adequate to meet the needs of the programme. On speaking with some Intern representatives, it was clear that they were very happy with the resources provided.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

Many thanks, it is great to hear that students seem satisfied with the course.

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

Performance of the interns enrolled in the PGDipVCP, as evidenced by the quality of the case reports sampled, and the feedback given from observers in the workplace-based assessments, is at a level commensurate with those veterinary professionals undertaking this early career postgraduate training

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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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

As per last year, students who were graded higher in the case reports, in general, evidenced more advance scientific writing technique, better integration of literature and critical evaluation. This differentiated the students across the ranges, and those which had failed case reports were under performing in this area relative to their peers.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Whilst grade allocation to the individual case reports did seem to differentiate between students, the grade progression for students across the four case reports did not always show development or improvement in performance. Some students were given the same grade for each of the 4 reports, whilst some appeared to perform less well in case reports submitted later in the programme. Much of this can be attributed to the students moving into 4 different contexts/areas of practice, and also to inter-examiner variability (See below), however it would be useful to track the student progression over the course of the programme to gain a better understanding of whether their case report grades are improving or not. The data provided to me did not allow for this chronological plotting of the student grades, in order in which the reports were submitted, but this would be easy for the programme team to do and collate prospectively next year.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

This is a great point and we can have a discussion with the course management team to allow tracking progression of anonymised students for each module to monitor for any concerns and eventually support who does not seem to be progressing as expected. This has been inserted as an action.

In addition we can remind to the students that they should contact the module leaders if they need any advice on case reports. As highlighted by the examiner, I agree that the inter-examiner variability and the students' competence and knowledge in the topic of each case report will have a significant impact on the final results. In particular, despite case reports are similar in structure, there will be a significant diversity between each case report topic, and this can affect the different, and perhaps not always progressing, results over the course of the year.

Action Required:

Course director to contact course support managers to find a solution that would allow tracking of the students performance for the case reports.

Course director to ask module leaders to inform students that they can approach them if they feel they are not progressing.

Action Deadline:

31-May-2024

Action assigned to:

Course director and course support manager/team

Please comment, as appropriate, on:

3.1 Assessment methods (relevance to learning objectives and curriculum)

Methods of assessment remain relevant and appropriate to the nature of the post graduate internship, allowing for students to develop within their chosen areas of practice. The focus on workplace-based assessments is an asset to the programme. A standardised approach to the WBAs would further enhance ability to progressively, programmatically assess the students.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

Many thanks; this aspect probably links to last years' comment on entrustable professional activities. We are currently elaborating a list of DOPs that we can provide to the students for them to use as activities that allow monitoring their progression over the year.

Action Required:

Discuss with module leaders to provide a list of DOPS that can be considered as entrustable professional activities. To be used for 2024-25 interns cohort for the modules where this can be implemented

Action Deadline:

31-May-2024

Action assigned to:

Course Director

3.2 Extent to which assessment procedures are rigorous

Marking, grading, provision of feedback and moderation are all rigorous with all processes meticulously adhered to

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

Many thanks

Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

Level and nature of assessment is consistent for Level 7 studies

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

3.4 Standard of marking

As per last year, the full range of the grading rubric is not utilised, with 16% of the case reports (104 in total) being graded at 75%, and only 2 reports being graded above 75%. One discipline (diagnostic imaging) was disproportionately represented in this highest grade banding. The use of the same rubric being used across both the internship (PGDip) and residency (Masters) may be driving a redundancy in this higher grading bracket. Consistency of marking remains the primary issue in the programme, with wide inter-examiner variability identified through the case report marking. There is still considerable variance in the 'weighting' that different markers ascribe to different aspects of the case reports. Key areas that require attention to standardise the marker approach include;

- Variability in focus on reflective writing aspects. Some reports are graded highly despite lacking in any reflective writing, whilst others with extensive reflective elements may be graded at lower end of rubric.
- Inclusion of 'reflective writing' in the generic rubric (due for implementation in 2023-24 academic year)
- Variability in attention to referencing
- Tendency to downgrade due to issues with clinical case/case approach, rather than scientific writing. The students should not be assessed on their approach to the case in this format of assessment.

The challenge of standardising approach to marking across such a wide number of markers is acknowledged. The programme team could consider utilising a core 'marking team' to mark all reports, whom have undergone a standardisation process, and whom could mark across disciplines to avoid focus on the clinical aspects of the case, and avoid any inherent biases that may exist.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

This scrutiny of the case reports and comments is really useful, thank you.

For the reflective writing, we have modified the rubric to insert the reflective component from this year, so hopefully for the 2023-24 cohort there should be noticeable improvement in including reflection in the overall justification for the final mark.

The course support team has kindly and promptly (as usual!) provided the list of markers and we have identified 34 markers for the overall 4 modules of each of the 4 disciplines. Because the level of this case reports is relatively high and specific I think we still need markers that are considered specialists in that specific disciplines; however there are some modules where 4 or more markers are marking and I have emailed the module leaders to see if it would be possible to limit to 2 markers each module (e.g equine anaesthesia; small animal diagnostic imaging...) that is being marked. This was we would reduce the markers number to aim at reducing this difference.

Action Required:

Course director to liaise with module leaders to try to reduce markers for each module

Action Deadline:

31-May-2024

Action assigned to:

Course director to contact module leaders

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

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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

No changes have been made.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.2 An acceptable response has been made

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.6 Candidates were considered impartially and fairly

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.9 I have received enough training and support to carry out my role

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

Additional comments, particularly if your answer was no:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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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:

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

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Action Required:

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

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:

5.2 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 college may wish to consider how it could support the creation of a core team of markers for the case reports. This would greatly enhance the standardisation of grading, but needs due consideration to workloads and clinical pressures the supervisors will be under.

COURSE DIRECTOR: Dr Stefano Cortellini

Course Director Response:

Thank you again for taking the time to analyse our data and suggesting this great idea.
Course director to try to reduce the number of markers per module as discussed previously.

Action Required:

Course director to liaise with module leaders to try to reduce markers for each module

Action Deadline:

Action assigned to:

Course director

