

Course Director Response:

We thank the external examiner for these comments. The level of expectation of students at this stage on an examination such as this will be further considered as the BVetMed undergoes a Curriculum Review. The observation that the performance on the Integrated Reasoning questions was more disappointing than the performance on Paper 1 may be due to a number of factors. In recent years there have been more formative MCQ and EMQ questions provided during the course, there has been more instruction about how to approach such questions, a mock exam under exam conditions and feedback sessions. However, similar approaches with Integrated Reasoning questions or the Data Analysis question has not been undertaken. The plan going forward includes providing additional opportunities to have formative questions, including of Professional Studies and Data Analysis questions. In regards to the format and composition of the Year 4 exam and Finals, and in particular, to include Professional Studies in such examinations will most certainly feature in our discussions during our Curriculum Review. A working party on BVetMed Assessment has been formed and they are tasked to better define the assessment strategy of the course. The suggestion to make the Professional Studies mandatory or to require at least 40% mark is interesting and will be considered in our discussions.

Action Required:

- To instigate further formative opportunities in preparation for Integrated Reasoning questions, including the emphasis on Professional Studies for students before the Year 4 Exam
- To bring to the attention of the Working Party on BVetMed Assessment the comments and observations of external examiner on the Year 4 exam.

Action Deadline:

01-Jun-2017

Action assigned to:

Dan Chan

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

Specifically for Paper 2 (integrated reasoning): Students seemed to struggle with organising their thoughts regarding the problem. Knowledge good but problem solving / putting information into context may not be at the same level? Students tended to approach the questions by giving as much information as possible without putting into context or specifically relating to the question. There appeared to be a lack of professionalism in answering the questions, the general structure of students' essay writing was poor. The students need to be taught that clinical questions are not best answered by just regurgitating everything they can think of; rather the aim of these questions is to show that they can apply their knowledge in the way that they will have to every day if they enter clinical practice. Working logically through the problem is essential, so structuring the questions in a logical way to ask the students to solve the problems in a logical order will help them understand what is being asked of them. We did discuss whether the format of the exam may be challenging for 4th year students with limited clinical experience and may be more suited to final year students that have been on rotations. We suggest considering focus on the question being asked. This will also facilitate marking, which we recognise must be challenging.

Response from college requested: YES

COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Dan Chan

Course Director Response:

We thank the External Examiners for these observations and suggestions. As we have done recently with MCQ and EMQ questions, a more concerted effort will be undertaken to provide more guidance and instructions about how to answer Integrated Reasoning and Data Analysis questions before the examination. The Year Leader has already held a Feedback session on the Year 4 exam (in January of 2017) which focused solely on Paper 2, highlighting what students tended to struggle with and the expectations of the examiners. Feedback was provided in all 6 parts of the Long Answer Paper. In preparation for next year, at least 3 questions used in the recent examinations will be released to the students to help them understand the expectations in terms of organisation, depth and scope of answers. As mentioned in previous responses, the format of the exam and expectations for Year 4 students will be explored during the Curriculum Review and by the working party on BVetMed Assessment

Action Required:

- Schedule a session on strategy for tackling Integrated Reasoning Questions for students taking the exam
- Release some of the questions used in the exam with the model answer to help students understand the expectations of the examination
- Bring to the attention of the BVetMed Curriculum Review Committee and the BVetMed Assessment Working Party the concerns raised by External Examiners

Action Deadline:

01-Jun-2017

Action assigned to:

Dan Chan

3.7 Please provide any additional comments and recommendations regarding the procedures

EMQ and MCQ papers: Passmarks for these papers were standard set at 44.60% (EMQ) and 47.33% (MCQ) respectively, which reflected some quite difficult questions. The EMQ standard set passmark was adjusted from 43.82% to this new level, due to moderation of questions as described below. The external examiners recommend that the question writers and examiners critically read the questions and review the examination statistics including those questions that have been used on previous occasions. This is because questions are

been used previously without any problems.

Also, although it is appropriate to have some more difficult questions to discriminate between high performing and low performing students a little more, some of the more difficult questions also had low Point Biserial scores

expected. In these cases, it may be worth querying if students have been taught the relevant material appropriately for the level of performance required, and/or if the more difficult questions were testing material appropriate for 4th year students.

Response from college requested: YES

COURSE DIRECTOR: Mr Dan Chan

Course Director Response:

We appreciate the comments by External Examiners. The item analysis of each question will be fed back to Strand Leaders to coincide with call of questions, allowing question authors and subject teachers to refine/improve previously used questions. Guidance notes on interpreting item analyses (e.g. facility score, point biserial) have been created to help internal examiners understand how questions performed.

General Statements

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

Yes

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:

4.11 Appropriate procedures and processes have been followed

Yes

A

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 transparency, speed and clarity by which the exams team assists us during the external examiner process at RVC is to be commended. Below more detailed comments with regards to Paper 1 and Paper 2:

Paper 1

EMQ

Overall the paper was well balanced in terms of subject area when seen in context of the whole exam. There was also a good range of academic knowledge interrogated. However, there were some specific issues identified:

In question 1, the answer options contained a mixture of diagnostic tests and treatments as possible answers; we would prefer to see answers restricted to one area of knowledge if possible to reduce the opportunity for guesswork on an easily narrowed down answer selection

On review of question 4, we identified that four parts had performed poorly and on discussion with a member of the academic staff, it was clear that these four questions contained information that had not been taught yet and that these questions dealt with material that would be addressed on rotation, so we withdrew four of the six parts in this question

questions (53) related to which drug was appropriate under the cascade system and one of the questions (52) clearly had two possible answers. We therefore elected to accept two possible answers for these two questions (a similar problem was identified for one MCQ question that also related to local anaesthesia)

MCQ

The MCQ paper covered a good range of subjects and included some questions that tested interpretation of information as well as factual recall. There was a good range of questions in terms of topics and difficulty. This was fair and inclusion of some questions that are challenging is appropriate and gave the good candidates a chance to demonstrate this.

Many questions were very well written, however, the external examiners noted a number of questions that did not
 - s not ideal. These kinds of questions can be confusing to interpret, and therefore

the question.

Q36 - this question performed poorly, although the answer is clear. This may be due to the difficulty of the question. Consider

Q47 this question performed poorly, although the answer is clear. This may be due to the difficulty of the question.

Q49 - this question performed poorly, although the answer is clear. This may be due to the difficulty of the question, especially for the stage of student experience and development. There appears to be a typographical error in the stem

Q55 a significant group of students answered C incorrectly. While ropivacaine may be clinically appropriate, it is not licensed in dogs, unlike lidocaine. We assumed that this was because the examiners were intending to include knowledge of the cascade in the question, which makes this an appropriately discriminating question.

Q57- this question performed poorly, and the answer is the only correct option. However, is it possible to judge if
sentation? Consider rewriting this
question for future use to avoid these descriptions in this context.

Paper 2 Integrated Reasoning

We thought that the questions were well written and relevant. Parts a and b worked well. Students seemed to perform better in second parts. We assessed all papers of the students who failed along with six of the pass/merit students, six of the merit/distinction students and six other randomly chosen passing students. As only brief answers were needed to receive full marks, the length of the questions were appropriate for the time allocated. Insufficient time to complete the exam was unlikely due to breadth of information requested, and was appropriate at this stage of the course.

Question 1

This was a good question about an important topic, but students performed relatively poorly on this question and seemed to struggle with structuring their answers. We understand that the professionalism part of the course is often poorly attended, and that students did not use opportunities to practice these types of questions. This is a shame, although not a problem unique to RVC. As much as possible, students should be encouraged to engage more with the professionalism curriculum and opportunities to practise these types of exam questions.

How students performed on this question did not map well to how they did overall this may be a reflection of the material, or an implicit perception amongst the students that it is possible to pass the exam despite not engaging with the professionalism curriculum. There was a good discussion of this problem at the Exam Board meeting, which we hope will continue amongst the examiners and teaching staff.

Finally, there seemed to be some inconsistency in the marking of this question. This is understandable with such a large number of students, and may be particularly understandable with a professionalism topic. But there was

recommend being more precise in the instructions so that they match the model answer better in the future. The external examiners recommend reminding students to read and answer the question, rather than just writing down everything they know about the general topic, and consider whether students need more help in learning to structure their answers through the structure of the question.

Question 2

Mark scheme (combination of model answer and CGS) worked well to award appropriate marks. Model answer was good, more structure and transparency compared previous years and it was easier to see how to award marks to receive merit/distinction.

Limited annotation on certain papers (red marker average, pencil marker provided good detailed feedback which will be useful for feedback to students)

When double marking (failing students and borderline students in all categories) it appeared one marker was more strict and the other marker more lenient in their marks compared to external examiner officials (r)-3()-10(m

effort to ensure a consistency of marking, which was great. Often students seemed to miss the point of the question or fail to deliver the pertinent points. Many students took the approach of putting as much information down as possible but failed to put the information into context.

Question 4 a & b

This question presents the clinical scenario of a male West Highland white terrier with a urethral obstruction caused by urolithiasis. The question was well constructed and very clear and required a significant degree of clinical knowledge and clinical interpretation ability 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)

Response from college requested: **NO**

