



SOUTH EAST TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

COURSE EVALUATION 2

ASSESSORS' REPORT TO ACADEMIC COUNCIL

COURSE EVALUATED: Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine (Honours) (Level 8, 360 credits)

FACULTY: Science and Computing

1. INTRODUCTION

The following is a review report to Academic Council from the panel of assessors on the proposal from the Faculty of Science and Computing at South East Technological University to develop a Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine (Honours) (Level 8, 360 credits). In accordance with the regulations governing the evaluation of new programme proposals, as set out in the South East Technological University *Programme Quality Assurance Enhancement Policy and Procedures*, the programme proposal was reviewed by a panel of assessors.

The panel of assessors who contributed to this report were:

- Majella O’Shea, Education Policy and Organisation Development Consultant and Executive Coach (Chair)
- Prof. Darrell Abernethy, Dean of Veterinary Science, University of Aberystwyth
- Dr Heather Bacon, Dean of Veterinary Medicine, University of Central Lancashire
- Charles Chavasse, Veterinary Consultant, Former Area Veterinary Manager, Zoetis, Dungarvan
- Prof. David Connolly, Professor in Cardiology, Department of Clinical Science and Services, The Royal Veterinary College, Hawks Head Campus
- Tom Hanley, Veterinary Surgeon, former Veterinary Inspector Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
- Dr Colette Moloney, Assistant Registrar, South East Technological University
- Chris Stewart, Student Representative, University of Galway
- Michael Tobin, Academic Council Representative, South East Technological University
- Izzy Wild, Equine Veterinary Locum and Animal Welfare NGO Consultant, Nottingham,

In accordance with the regulations set out in the aforementioned *Programme Quality Assurance Enhancement Policy and Procedures*, a review meeting took place on 14 May 2025. The review meeting was conducted virtually via Teams. In the course of the meeting, the panel of assessors met with the programme development team. The following members of the South East Technological University team were present:

- Prof. Peter McLoughlin, Head of Faculty of Science and Computing, South East Technological University
- Eleanor Kent, Head of Department of Land Sciences, South East Technological University

- Tim Ashmore, Principal, Teagasc Kildalton College, Piltown
- Dr Amanda Barry, Lecturer, Department of Science, South East Technological University
- Dr Michael Breen, Lecturer, Department of Science, South East Technological University
- Dr Samuel Browett, Lecturer, Department of Land Sciences, South East Technological University
- Mary-Kate Burke, Veterinary Medicine Programme Development Lead, South East Technological University
- Dr Paula Carroll, Lecturer, Department of Sport and Exercise Science, South East Technological University
- Emma Corbett-Coffey, Clinical Director and Veterinary Surgeon, O'Connor Julian Veterinary Hospital, Cashel
- Dr Ann Derham, Equine Surgeon, Fethard Equine Hospital, Co. Tipperary
- Dr Gillian Gardiner, Lecturer, Department of Science, South East Technological University
- Lucy Jerram, Large Animal Director, Highfield Veterinary Unlimited, Naas
- Dr Bill Keogh, Lecturer, Department of Land Sciences, South East Technological University
- Dr Edel McNeela, Lecturer, Department of Science, South East Technological University
- Shay Murphy, Technical Officer, Computer Services, South East Technological University
- Rachel O'Dowd, Lecturer, Department of Management and Organisation, South East Technological University
- Mick O'Neill, ICT Technical Officer, South East Technological University
- Dr Sean Roche, Lecturer, Department of Science, South East Technological University
- James Ryan, Vice Principal, Teagasc Kildalton College, Piltown.
- Anne-Marie Taylor-Jenkins, Clinical Director, The Pet Hospital (IVC), Waterford
- Liam Walsh, Veterinary Surgeon, Suirside Veterinary Clinic, Clonmel
- Dr Siobhan Walsh, Interim Operations Manager for Veterinary Medicine, South East Technological University

The assessors wish to thank the members of the development team for engaging generously and openly with the review process.

2. SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONDITIONS

2.1 General Remarks

The panel commends the faculty on their commitment to developing a programme to meet the current need to train professionals in veterinary medicine and for the quality of the documentation. The panel **recommends approval of the Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine (Honours) (Level 8, 360 credits)** until the next Review in the Faculty of Science and Computing. **Approval is conditional on the submission of a revised programme document that takes account of the conditions and recommendations outlined below; and the submission of a summary document describing the responses and actions of the faculty to address the conditions and recommendations made by the review panel.**

Areas for attention have been emboldened in the text for convenience of reference. Action is required on items marked ‘Conditions’ and such action is mandatory if the programme is to be approved; action is highly recommended on items marked ‘Recommendations.’

2.2 Conditions

- There are a number of derogations to SETU academic regulations included in the programme proposal, particularly in the areas of progression, repeat attempts, compensation, failed components, pass mark and award classification, capping of repeat mark *et cetera*. Approval of such derogations is not within the remit of the current panel and the **faculty should submit any proposed derogations to SETU Academic Council for consideration**. There were a number of programme-related policies and codes of conduct referenced in the document, particularly the Code of Conduct for Veterinary Medicine Students, Veterinary Medicine Health and Safety Policy, Student Fitness to Practice Policy, and Use of Animal for Teaching and Research Ethics *et cetera*. **The faculty should ensure that any programme-specific policies are submitted to, and approved by, SETU Academic Council prior to the first student intake on the programme. The proposal re a progression pathway from the existing Bachelor of Science (H) in Agricultural Science is an internal progression route and the faculty should engage with the Vice President for Academic Affairs (Teaching and Learning) re the feasibility of same.**

- The volume of credits a learner is required to successfully complete in each academic semester/year is not clear from the proposed programme schedules. **The programme schedules should be revised to include the credits required in each academic semester. The document should be reviewed to ensure that when a SETU support service/office is referenced that the most appropriate service is selected** e.g. the SETU Disability Support Service, rather than the SETU Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Office, for assessing appropriate accommodations for learners with a disability *et cetera*. **The module learning outcomes, particularly those proposed at ‘Advanced’ level, should be reviewed to ensure that all are expressed in language appropriate to the level and use measurable verbs. The modules should be inputted into the SETU module catalogue once access to same is available.**
- **The proposed exit/embedded award titles should be in the format Bachelor of Science in Animal Health Science and Bachelor of Science (Honours) in Animal Health Science and the programme schedules and programme learning outcomes for both should be included in the document.**
- Currently, many of the module titles appear similar and their precise topic area(s) is not immediately discernible. **The module titles should be reviewed to be more distinctive and to better reflect the content of the module. The order of the content in the modules ‘Animal Management 1’ and ‘Animal Management 2’ should be reversed to ensure that animal behaviour is covered prior to animal handling.**
- There was a lack of clarity re the requirements *vis-à-vis* insurance and host Health and Safety Policies, and whose responsibility it is to ensure same is in place, for placement modules, particularly the ‘Pre-Clinical Extra Mural Studies’ module. **There should be a formal requirement articulated in the document re the insurance, and Health and Safety Policies in placement settings, including guidance as to what documentation is required and the process for submitting and recording same.**
- The Faculty team provided a sample assessment schedule for the programme at the review meeting and from this, and the volume of assessment proposed in the module descriptors, it appeared that learners would be over assessed. The high volume of summative assessment proposed would allow insufficient time for independent learning and formative assessment.

There also appeared to be some confusion on terminology in that the terms formative and summative assessment were interchanged. **The proposed assessment should be reviewed to ensure that sufficient space is given for formative assessment experiences, including for SAQs, and that the volume and timing of summative assessment is considered to ensure that learners are not over assessed, and that they have a balanced workload across the semester. The balance of assessment between continuous assessment and terminal examination should be reviewed, particularly in years 1-4 of the programme, to ensure the assessment is not unduly skewed towards final examinations. The nature of the proposed assessment of the OSCEs should be clarified, particularly pass mark and pass/fail criteria, learning outcomes achieved, proposed remediation opportunities, and how the assessment will be managed if a single OSCE assessment is contributing to multiple modules i.e. if learners fail an OSCE assessment overall do they fail all modules to which the OSCE is attached or only the modules to which the individual failed elements apply? The proposed 50% mark cap for repeating OSCEs should be reconsidered, particularly given that OSCEs apply across multiple modules and all could be capped. A proposed detailed assessment schedule, which utilises the full 15 weeks of semester for continuous assessment, should be included in the revised proposal.** A number of modules have a substantial percentage of the assessment proposed as ‘attendance and participation’ e.g. 30% of assessment for the module ‘Animal Management 2’. **Attendance and participation, as an assessment method, can be subjective and difficult to operationalise hence the faculty should replace same with a more objective form of assessment.**

2.3 *Recommendations*

- In the introductory sections of the proposal document, a progressive and innovative approach to teaching, learning and assessment methodologies is described, and a programme design based on key themes and a holistic approach to personal development and resilience is proposed. The programme description, curriculum and schedules which follow, however, is quite traditional and does not reflect the innovative approach and aspirations of the initial sections. Where, for instance, is the plan to integrate pre-clinical and clinical learning when there is a clear demarcation between pre-clinical and clinical stages in the programme? Or where are the ‘information literacy

skills' referenced in section 2.2.3 reflected in the assessment regime in the programme? The commitment to a holistic approach to learner wellbeing and personal development is also not evident in the proposed curriculum, particularly given the heavy assessment load proposed. **The faculty should review the programme description, design and modules to better reflect the innovative design and pedagogical concepts proposed in the introduction. The professional-related module learning outcomes should be reviewed and refocused around wellbeing and resilience.**

- **Consideration should be given to moving the 'Veterinary Business' module to a later stage in the programme, at least year 3, when learners have a better understanding of the business aspects of a veterinary practice post their 'Pre-clinical Extra Mural Studies' module placement.**
- Individual module learning outcomes are often assessed multiple times by different pieces of assessment. **The faculty team should review the proposed assessment in modules to avoid multiple assessment of an individual module learning outcome.**
- In discussion with the panel, the team outlined a more holistic and integrated approach to assessment across modules, but this is not captured in the document. **The faculty team should consider opportunities for integrated assessment across modules and articulate where same is proposed in the document.**
- Communication skills are a core requirement for a veterinary surgeon. **The faculty team should review the opportunities for developing the learner's communication skills in the curriculum and assessment in individual modules and articulate same in the document.**
- **The faculty team should consider the assessment criteria proposed in modules to ensure that the criteria articulated are appropriate to the corresponding grade band e.g. a grade of 59%, which is a 2.2 honour, could be achieved by a learner who demonstrates a 'limited understanding of the fundamentals of the learning outcomes'. Consideration should also be given to introducing tighter grade bands, including assessment bands in the 0-49 grade range, and to how standard setting might run in parallel to current assessment methods.**

- The entry requirements require applicants to provide evidence of completion of 60 hours of veterinary or animal husbandry work experience, divided equally between small and large animal enterprises. **The faculty should review the proposed work experience requirements and the specifications re settings for same to ensure that applicants from all geographical and socio-economic backgrounds will have equal access to the programme. The faculty could also consider accepting an element of customer service experience in the retail or hospitality sectors as interpersonal, communication and customer skills are essential for all veterinary practitioners.**
- The faculty team outlined their links with the animal charity and service animal sectors in discussion with the panel at the review meeting. **The links with the animal charity and service animal sectors should be articulated in the document to enhance the proposal, and underpinned with contracts if individual charity and service animal services are to form part of the curriculum delivery.**
- **The faculty should consider if the level of detail provided in the Indicative Content in some modules is necessary or if a more high-level, topic-based approach would make the modules more accessible and user-friendly for learners, applicants, employers and professional bodies.**
- The faculty proposed several professional accreditation bodies to which they intend to submit the programme for approval. **Given that professional bodies have different requirements, the faculty should identify the professional body or bodies most relevant geographically and concentrate initially on designing the programme to meet the requirements of same. Additional accreditation could be sought from the less geographically relevant bodies at a later stage when the programme is established, if the faculty still wish to pursue this option.**
- **The Aims and Objectives of the programme concentrate on developing veterinary surgeons, but greater emphasis should be included on the development of graduates as members of multidisciplinary veterinary teams.**
- In discussion with the panel, the faculty team indicated that the University has undertaken to support learners by paying travel and accommodation expenses while on

placement. **The support available to learners, including financial assistance, should be articulated in the programme proposal.**

- There are numerous CPD opportunities proposed in the document for staff within the University. **The faculty should propose a selection of CPD for particular staff cohorts, e.g. new lecturing staff, which would give a better indication of the nature of the professional CPD available and how it could be combined to meet the needs of particular staff cohorts.**
- **The staff resources should be kept under review as the programme is phased in to ensure that there are sufficient clinical faculty to teach the very broad curriculum proposed.**

Signed:

Majella O'Shea.

Majella O'Shea (Chair)

Date:

11 June 2025