

**The University of Leeds****EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT**

ACADEMIC YEAR: 2011– 2012

**Part A: General Information****Subject area and awards being examined**

<i>Faculty / School of:</i>	Biological Sciences / Centre for Sport and Exercise Science
<i>Subject(s):</i>	Sport and Exercise Sciences
<i>Programme(s) / Module(s):</i>	SPSC1031 Motor Control: Foundations of Learning SPSC1216 Intro to Psychology SPSC2031 Motor Control: Learning Environment SPSC2114 Applied & Social Psychology of Sport 1 SPSC2240 Human Motor Development SPSC2305 Drugs in Sport SPSC2308 Motor Control 2 SPSC2307 Motor Control SPSC3032 Motor Control: Research Issues SPSC3211 Land, Water & Air Based Activities SPSC3318 Exercise & Psychological Health SPSC3327 Contemporary Perspectives in Sport Psychology
<i>Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):</i>	BSc Sport & Exercise Science BSc Sports Science & Outdoor Activities BSc Sports Science in Relation to Medicine BSc Sports Science and Physiology

**Completed report**

The completed report should be attached to an e-mail and sent as soon as possible, and no later than six weeks after the relevant meeting of the Board of Examiners, to [exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:exexadmin@leeds.ac.uk).

Alternatively you can post your report to: **Head of Academic Quality and Standards**  
Academic Quality and Standards Team  
Room 12:81, EC Stoner Building  
The University of Leeds, Leeds LS2 9JT

**Part B: Comments for the Institution on the Examination Process and Standards****Matters for Urgent Attention**

*If there are any areas which you think require urgent attention before the programme is offered again please note them in this box*

None.

**Only applicable in first year of appointment**

*Were you provided with copies of previous relevant External Examiners' reports and the response of the School to these?*

**For Examiners completing their term of appointment**

*Please comment on your experience of the programme(s) over the period of your appointment, remarking in particular on changes from year to year and the progressive development and enhancement of the learning and teaching provision, on standards achieved, on marking and assessment and the procedures of the School*



**1. Please indicate the extent to which the programme Aims and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) were commensurate with the level of the award**

- *The appropriateness of the Intended Learning Outcomes for the programme(s)/modules and of the structure and content of the programme(s);*
- *The extent to which standards are appropriate for the award or award element under consideration.*

The Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) are appropriate for each level of the programme. There is clear progression from a focus on familiarity with concepts and demonstrating core competencies at Level 1 to demonstrating a broader range of conceptual understanding and range of competencies at Level 2 to deploying a range of critical analysis skills and conducting an extended project / dissertation at Level 3.

**2. Did the Aims and ILOs meet the expectations of the national subject benchmark (where relevant)?**

- *The comparability of the programme(s) with similar programme(s) at other institutions and against national benchmarks and the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications.*

The Aims and ILOs for each level remain appropriate for the subject and, so far as I am familiar, are consistent with other institutions running similar courses. As mentioned in my 2011 report, the programmes embrace more than two of the five study areas set out in the QAA benchmark statements for Sport Programmes.

**3. Please comment on the assessment methods and the appropriateness of these to the ILOs**

- *The design and structure of the assessment methods, and the arrangements for the marking of modules and the classification of awards;*
- *The quality of teaching, learning and assessment methods that may be indicated by student performance.*

A good variety of assessments are used at each level and these are appropriate for the specified ILOs of each module and increasing focus on critical appraisal from Level 1 to Level 3. Multiple Choice Questions (MCQ) and short answer assessments form the basis of exam assessments for most modules at Level 1, there is increasing use of essays at Level 2 (in conjunction with MCQs), and all exams at Level 3 use essay assessments. A good variety of coursework assessments are used across the three levels, including individual and group reports, group presentations, poster presentations and round table discussions. Collectively, these encourage the research-led 'feel' of the courses.

The assessments are well designed and yield an appropriate range and distribution of marks. Marking and procedures for moderation are rigorous and both the quality and amount of feedback are very good. Module leaders make good use of the marking proforma and proved a very good balance between critical comments and suggestions for how the student can improve in future submissions. It is very good to see that students are given the opportunity to benefit from feedback for exam assignments.

**4. Were students given adequate opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the Aims and ILOs?**

- *The academic standards demonstrated by the students and, where possible, their performance in relation to students on comparable courses;*
- *The strengths and weaknesses of the students as a cohort.*

The performance of students is comparable with other institutions with which I am familiar. There is some excellent work and there are some excellent grade profiles. At the top end, students display an excellent level of critical analysis and thrive on the opportunities they are given. This carries through to the dissertations where there is some excellent work being undertaken.

**5. For Examiners responsible for programmes that include clinical practice components, please comment on the learning and assessment of practice components of the curriculum**

NA

**6. Please comment on the nature and effectiveness of enhancements to the programme(s) and modules since the previous year**

*It would be particularly helpful if you could also identify areas of good practice which are worthy of wider dissemination.*

The team / University have appointed a full-time lecturer in Sport and Exercise Psychology, which has brought stability to teaching of the associated modules. A real strength of the course is the applied, 'real-world' research being conducted by many students for their dissertation. The group approach works very well, and many topics are closely aligned with ongoing staff research. I suspect this really helps students engage with the process and gives them every opportunity to produce a fine piece of work. Given the constraints of staff time and student numbers, I feel this is an excellent example of good practice.

**7. Please comment on the influence of research on the curriculum and learning and teaching**

*This may include examples of curriculum design informed by current research in the subject; practice informed by research; students undertaking research.*

The research-informed nature of the course(s) is apparent in the module content, assessments, and increasing focus on critical appraisal across the levels. It is also readily apparent in the choice of topics for students' final year dissertations, many (all?) of which are closely aligned to staff research interests.

**For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements**

**8. If you have acted as a mentor to a new External Examiner or have received mentor support please comment here on the arrangements**

**9. The University and its Schools provide guidance for External Examiners as to their roles, powers and responsibilities. Please indicate whether this material was sufficient for you to act effectively as an External Examiner.**

- *Whether External Examiners have sufficient access to the material needed to make the required judgements and whether they are encouraged to request additional information.*

Yes- it was sufficient.

**10. Did you receive appropriate documentation relating to the programmes and/or parts of programmes for which you have responsibility, e.g. programme specifications or module handbooks, marking criteria?**

- *The coherence of the policies and procedures relating to External Examiners and whether they match the explicit roles they are asked to perform.*

Yes

**11. Were you provided with all draft examination papers/assessments? Was the nature and level of the questions appropriate? If not, were suitable arrangements made to consider your comments?**

Yes

**12. Was sufficient assessed / examined work made available to enable you to have confidence in your evaluation of the standard of student work? Were the scripts clearly marked/annotated?**

Yes

**13. Was the choice of subjects for dissertations appropriate? Was the method and standard of assessment appropriate?**

Yes- all of these were as expected.

**14. Were the administrative arrangements satisfactory for the whole process, including the operation of the Board of Examiners? Were you able to attend the meeting? Were you satisfied with the recommendations of the Board?**

I attended the final exam board and the operation of the Board of Examiners was exemplary. I endorse the recommendations of the board. We discussed the University criteria for applying academic discretion when deciding degree classification in borderline cases.

**15. Were appropriate procedures in place to give due consideration to mitigating circumstances and medical evidence?**

Mitigating circumstances were considered separately, prior to the final exam board. In some instances, due to the way in which degree classifications are calculated, mitigating circumstances remained in effect from the previous academic year. This potentially places additional pressure on a student's final year performance and both external examiners recommend the course team consider deal with mitigating circumstances during the year in which they occur.

Where mitigating circumstances are upheld that would lead to the opportunity of a first attempt (uncapped), both external examiners recommend that students are given this opportunity as standard practice. The student can then be counselled as to whether or not a new grade is likely to affect their degree classification.

Other comments

**Please use this box if you wish to make any further comments not covered elsewhere on the form**

With respect to the Board recommendations, we had a lengthy discussion on interpreting the University criteria for applying academic discretion when deciding degree classification in borderline cases. We were concerned that the University instruction to take into account "any modules which have a low mean module mark" is subject to different interpretations. Further, the number of credits in the upper category at Level 3 (Criterion 1) and across Levels 2 and 3 (Criterion 2) are not specified.

Prior to discussion, both external examiners interpreted this as potentially working in the student's favour: a low grade might be considered anomalous. However, a low module mark was viewed as a negative in determining degree classification by the course team. I should add, this was done consistently and with well-reasoned justification.

We suggest the course team might:

- (a) seek clarification from the University regarding their regulations / code of practice, and
- (b) reflect on the information they receive in discussing their current procedures for judging borderline cases.

We feel this will help ensure there is a high degree of consistency in judging borderline cases across faculties within the University..



3 October 2012

Dear

**EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2011/12: BSc Sport and Exercise Sciences**

Firstly, many thanks for your efforts throughout the year and your comprehensive report on the programme. [redacted] has expressed [redacted] thanks for all your positive comments in [redacted] response to your report so I shall not reiterate them all here but just mention a few; I was very pleased regarding your positive comments about the quality and extent of feedback, the rigour associated with marking and moderation and the exemplary operation of the examination boards.

To address some of the issues you and other external examiners have raised, we are introducing several new initiatives for next session. As [redacted] states, we have modified our procedures to give first attempts as a default to students granted mitigating circumstances across all programmes in the Faculty which will help deal with the majority of student issues within year. In addition, we have introduced a mechanism for the scaling of module marks or module element marks where there is a strong academic case for review. This will allow marks to be either scaled up or down to better reflect student capability. The aim is to identify modules or module elements that score either very high or low marks and apply scaling to bring the marks closer to those of other similar assessments. An additional part of the process is for the module team to identify changes to affected assessments for subsequent years to address the problem. It is hoped that this will reduce the variability of mean module marks in future and tackle the issue associated with modules that have historically low module marks which can impact on student attainment.

Thanks once again for your input and I look forward to seeing you in April next year. If you have any queries, please let me know.

With best wishes,

Faculty Director of Undergraduate Student Education

Enc

---

*External Examiner:*

*Programme Area:* **BSc Sport and Exercise Sciences**

*Academic Year:* **2011/12**

*Date of Response:* **23 July 2012**

---

Dear

The Sports and Exercise Science team would like to thank you for your exceptionally positive comments regarding both the standards and the procedures used to ensure these within our degree programmes. We have worked exceptionally hard to ensure that a variety of assessments are used at each level and that the marking procedures are rigorous and standardised in line with our Faculty's Code of Practice of Assessment (COPA). We very much appreciate you highlighting the many ways in which our students benefit from the amount and quality feedback that is available to them especially in light of the sector wide concentration on this issue.

It was very satisfying to hear your comments regarding the 'research informed' nature of the course and how this has permeated module content, assessment, and our level three research projects. Our students are given the opportunity to undertake a research project that is closely aligned to staff research interests and we are extremely proud that you consider the dissertation process as an 'excellent example of good practice' given the constraints on our time and our high student numbers.

Following subsequent discussions the Sport and Exercise Science team have already acted upon your recommendation that mitigating circumstances are dealt with in the year that they occur. All students that have their mitigating circumstances upheld, if recommended by our Special Cases Committee, are now offered a first attempt (uncapped) in the August examination period and are given the opportunity to discuss this with a member of staff in light of their individual circumstances.

With respect to the bands of discretion, as outlined in our discussion in the classification board we do follow the Code of Practice for Assessment Section 3.13.2.1 (Academic Discretion). It was pleasing to see you highlight that the manner in which the board apply the criteria for academic discretion as consistent, but there is also consensus amongst the Sport and Exercise Science team that these criteria can be open to differing interpretations. Upon your recommendation as Examinations Officer for Sport and Exercise Sciences I intend to seek further clarity on how the University and Faculty recommend the criteria are interpreted in our next Faculty Examinations Officers meeting. I will be happy to discuss the outcome of these discussions at our next meeting.

Finally, I would like to thank you for all of your hard work and diligence throughout this year as external examiner. We very much appreciate the time and effort this involves.

Yours sincerely,

**Examinations Officer**