

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2012– 2013

Part A: General Information

Subject area and awards being examined

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| <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.

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) remain 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 teaching and assessment methods are used at each level and these are appropriate for the specified ILOs of each module with an 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.

While there is some expected variability in the amount of feedback given, marking and moderation procedures remain rigorous and, in some cases, the level of feedback provided is exceptional. Module leaders make good use of the marking proforma and provide balanced feedback that students should find useful. In addition, students are able to benefit from feedback for exam assignments, which will be particularly helpful early in their course.

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 to other institutions with which I am familiar. Within each cohort, there is some excellent work and several graduates have outstanding grade profiles. There are also several examples of excellent dissertations that may well contribute to peer-reviewed publications in due course. This is an excellent reflection both on the opportunities presented to students, their engagement with the process, and the high level of supervision given.

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

N/A

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.

A real strength of the course continues to be the focus on providing students with dissertation topics that have the potential to be impactful and align closely with staff research interests. Many students clearly engage with the process and produce work of high quality. This ensures that a good proportion of dissertations have the potential to contribute to the research-led ethos of the Faculty and University.

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.

As per Point 6, there is a strong research culture in the Centre and this is reflected throughout the course. The teaching team are passionate about their research and this is reflected in the early focus on critical appraisal and especially in the choice of topics for students' final year dissertations.

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- comprehensive.

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- the teaching and administrative team do an excellent job in providing the relevant information in a timely manner. The nature and level of questions was appropriate and I was able to provide feedback to be considered by the team.

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 endorsed the recommendations of the board.

As last year, we discussed the vague University criteria for applying academic discretion when deciding degree classification in borderline cases. I am concerned that the vague criteria are open to being interpreted differently by different groups within the faculty and across other faculties. I feel strongly that this is an issue that should be addressed at University level in order to ensure consistency across all its courses. Specifically, the University should review and, where appropriate, revise the criteria to ensure there is clear, unambiguous guidance to course teams on this matter.

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. Following discussions last year, the course team changed the procedure for dealing with mitigating circumstances so that they were dealt with during the year in which they occurred. The feedback was that this was welcomed and had simplified the process.

Other comments

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

External Examiner:

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

Academic Year: **2012/13**

Date of Response: **12th August 2013**

Dear

On behalf of the Sports and Exercise Science team I would like to thank you for your exceptionally positive comments regarding our variety of teaching and assessment methods, adherence to published assessment criteria and the research ethos that permeates our Sport and Exercise Science programme. We were very pleased that you noted that collectively, these provide an excellent learning experience for our students.

Following a full programme review, we have worked exceptionally hard to ensure that a variety of learning opportunities and assessments are used at each level, providing our students with ample opportunity to develop the necessary scientific, discipline specific and generic skills, which as you note, prepare them well for employment or in particular postgraduate study at the end of their degree.

We very much appreciate you highlighting the many ways in which our students benefit from the amount and the quality of feedback that is available to them especially in light of the sector wide concentration on this issue. Currently we hold two exam feedback sessions, one early in semester 1, and one in the middle of semester 2. Due to recent changes that permit our level 3 students to resit exams in the August after their third year of study, starting next academic year we will also be holding another feedback session over the summer period to provide them with a further opportunity to clarify aspects of their performance and help guide their revision.

While you also noted that there was consistent and fair marking across our programme which are standardised in line with our Faculty's Code of Practice on Assessment (COPA), feedback concerning our research project marking highlight one area of inconsistency with respect to how the proforma is used and the depth of feedback provided to our students. Following subsequent discussions the Sport and Exercise Science team have agreed to amend the presentation of our proforma so staff have the opportunity to highlight specific excerpts to help provide clarification with respect to the final mark that is awarded. We also intend to use a separate assessment criteria for library based projects as of next academic year which will be approved at Faculty level and included in our COPA for the next academic session.

Once again we are exceptionally pleased by your overwhelming praise for the 'research informed/led' nature of the course and how this has permeated module content, assessment, and our level three research projects. As you note giving our students the opportunity to undertake a research project that is closely aligned to staff research interests is a real strength of our degree programme and we are extremely proud that you consider the dissertation process an 'excellent reflection both on the opportunities presented to the students and the high level of supervision given' particularly considering the constraints on our time and our high student numbers.

With respect to the bands of discretion, as outlined in our discussion in the classification board we do follow the Code of Practice on 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 we as a staff also agree with your assertion that these criteria can be open to differing interpretations by students and staff both within and across degree programmes. Based upon the recommendations of both our external examiners I raised this as an issue in our Faculty Examinations Officers meeting last academic year. The outcome of this meeting was that this academic year (12-13) all examinations officers were to attend other programme examination meetings to ensure that all meetings are dealing with similar cases in a common manner; we will report back on these meetings in due course. In this meeting it was also highlighted that the criteria outlined in our COPA to determine the class of degree when considering borderline cases, are intended only to inform the Exam Board of which factors may be taken into account in reaching a judgement on an individual case and not intended as a set of objective pre-conditions which must be satisfied to justify uplift to the higher degree class. It was also noted at this meeting that as a Faculty we had moved away from using too many objective conditions as it was thought to curtail academic discretion.

In light of your recent report and our open academic discussions at our Classification Board, the Sport and Exercise Science staff also support a thorough review of the criteria outlined in our Faculty COPA to be considered at borderline cases. I must clarify that the criteria set out in our COPA are developed at Faculty level. Whilst the University does make provision for examiners to use their discretion (based upon academic considerations) to determine the class of degree to be awarded in borderline cases it imposes no specific criteria to support this decision. Thus, it is again at Faculty level that an internal review of the criteria and the circumstances in which they are applied must be undertaken. I am pleased to inform you that prior to the new academic year the discretionary criteria will be thoroughly reviewed and refined, and I look forward to outlining the changes made at our next meeting.

Finally, I hope you accept our thanks for all your hard work and diligence throughout this year as external examiner. We very much appreciate the time and effort this involves, and look forward to working with you again next academic year.

Yours sincerely,

Examinations Officer