

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2013-2014

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

Faculty / School of:

Biological Sciences / Centre for Sport and Exercise Science

Subject(s):

Sport and Exercise Sciences

Programme(s) / Module(s):

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

Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):

BSc Sport & Exercise Science
 BSc Sports Science & Outdoor Activities
 BSc Sports Science in Relation to Medicine
 BSc Sports Science and Physiology

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**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 Quality Assurance
 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

Over the period of my appointment the programme team have faced challenges relating to staff shortages (particularly in sport and exercise psychology), relocation of research labs / offices, and one very large cohort of students (graduates of 2014) progressing through the levels. The manner in which the programme team have faced up to these challenges has been exemplary and has helped ensure there have been few, if any, negative repercussions for student experience. This reflects extremely well on the leadership displayed by the programme leader(s), the administrative support team, and each individual member of staff.

A real strength of the course is its research-led nature, reflecting the teaching team's strong reputation in this area and generating excellent opportunities for students to do high-level research in their final-year project.

On a procedural level, the administrative support has been exemplary, with all relevant information provided in a timely and clear manner.

Last, the criteria for applying academic discretion to borderline profiles are now clearer and less open to different interpretations. This is a welcome and important development.

Standards

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, progressing from a focus on concepts, factual knowledge, and core competencies at Level 1, to demonstrating a broader range of conceptual understanding and range of competencies at Level 2, to a focus on critical analysis skills and project design, execution and analysis 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 are appropriate for the subject and are consistent with other institutions running similar courses. 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 variety of teaching and assessment methods are used at each level 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 short answers / essays at Level 2 (in some cases 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.

Following discussions with students and the programme team, the Programme Leader generated a document summarising the assessments across the three levels for review by the programme team. In our meeting with students mid-way through the academic year, they expressed a concern about a perceived jump from (short-answer) Level 2 to (essay) Level 3 assessments. As a consequence, the programme team are being proactive in considering how students might be better prepared for the essay assessments at Level 3.

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.*

Overall, student performance is as expected in terms of degree outcomes, with examples of outstanding work in many modules. A good number of Year 3 projects / dissertations are excellent and reflect extremely well on the research-led nature of the course and student supervision.

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

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.

New, clearer criteria have been introduced for applying academic discretion when deciding degree classification in borderline cases and I understand these are now applied consistently across the Faculty. The criteria are now less open to interpretation and this is a welcome and important development. The extent to which the same criteria are applied across the institution remains unclear and is something that should be addressed at the institutional level.

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.

A real strength of the course is its research-led nature, reflecting the teaching team's strong reputation in this area and generating excellent opportunities for students to do high-level research in their final-year project. All modules have a strong research focus and students are encouraged to engage in critical analysis from an early stage.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

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

The Examination/Assessment Process

10. 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.

11. 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

12. 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

13. 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

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

Yes and yes.

15. 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 arrangements and process was entirely satisfactory.

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

Yes

Other comments

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

Faculty of Biological Sciences
Student Education Service

Student Education Office
Irene Manton Building
University of Leeds
Leeds
LS2 9JT, UK



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

30 September 2014

Dear

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2013/14
BSc Sport and Exercise Sciences
BSc Sport and Exercise Sciences (Industrial)
BSc Sport and Exercise Sciences (International)
MBiol, BSc Sport and Exercise Sciences (Integrated Masters)

The Sports and Exercise Science team would like to thank you for your exceptionally positive comments regarding the excellent learning experience we offer our undergraduates. The staff in Sport and Exercise Sciences have again worked exceptionally hard over this past academic year, with a large cohort, to produce a research-led degree that we believe has excellent standards. Thus, it is very satisfying to receive your comments that once again acknowledge our well-designed modules, innovative teaching, and the variety of assessments used across our programme. In line with other comparable institutions our curriculum is designed not only to meet professional benchmarks but also to be research-led and informed. Your report outlined the ways in which not only are our modules designed to deliver a research-led content, but that our dissertation topics are aligned to staff research interests and that this serves to deliver an exceptional learning experience for our students, where they are exposed to cutting-edge research.

As outlined in your report, our assessment strategies are varied and linked to the Intended Learning Outcomes of each module enabling our students to develop a wide range of academic and communication skills. Over the years 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 on Assessment (COPA). I am glad you found the assessment mapping document of use, this document will serve as the starting point for a full programme analyses of assessment strategies and how these are linked to our learning outcomes. Furthermore, we are currently assessing the transition in assessment type from year 1 to 2, and 2 to 3, and as you have alluded to, are currently reviewing modules to ensure that students are well prepared for essay assessments at level 3. Concurrently, we will also be reviewing timing of assessments to ensure a reasonable spread of assessment deadlines throughout the academic year as far as is practically possible.

With your guidance and input we have recently reconsidered the criteria for applying academic discretion when deciding degree classifications in borderline cases. Not only are the new criteria applied across the Faculty, ensuring parity across programmes within the Faculty of Biological Sciences, they are less subjective without curtailing academic discretion. 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, although we have completed our internal review of the criteria at a Faculty level, we agree that the University should now review their advice and position with respect to this matter, and I have raised this at our recent Exams Officers meeting with our Director of Student Education and Pro-Dean for Student Education.

Finally, I would like to thank you for all of your hard work and diligence throughout your time as External Examiner. We very much appreciate the time and effort this involves and would like to thank you for your support and guidance in maintaining the high standard of our degree programme and student experience.

Yours sincerely,

Examinations Officer

The University of Leeds
EXTERNAL EXAMINER'S REPORT
ACADEMIC YEAR: 2013– 2014

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

Faculty / School of:	Biological Sciences, Sport and Exercise Science
Subject(s):	<i>Sport and Exercise Sciences, Physiology, Biomechanics</i>
Programme(s) / Module(s):	A range of modules across BSc Sport and Exercise Sciences, with physiology and intercalated medical students
Awards (e.g. BA/BSc/MSc etc):	BSc

Name and home Institution / affiliation of Examiner**Completed report**

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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?

NOT APPLICABLE

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

NOT APPLICABLE

Standards

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 overall programme aims and intended learning outcomes were entirely appropriate for the type of award / level. The learning outcomes were matched to the structure and content of the programmes and the standards of the students across all 3 years were appropriate to the overall award.

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 programme aims and intended learning outcomes continue to match the level of those observed at other universities' in the UK and are appropriate for subject benchmarking and professional body recognition (BUES).

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.*

The design and structure of the assessment portfolio is generally appropriate, diverse and well considered. It generally allows appropriate marking and discrimination of student performance. It is very good to see that staff have decided to develop an overview MAP of the assessment opportunities across all levels of the degree programmes (after external examiner comment previously). This will help develop plans to look at roadblocks of multiple assessments in short time spans in semester one and two as well as to look at the spread and development of assignment styles across the years of the degree programme. Staff have already noted that some adjustment to the number and progression of essay writing is required to support level 3 (final year) performance. This insight and development is to be applauded .

Student performance is generally good and some excel. In speaking sot students at a meeting earlier in the year it is clear that they value their staff, their teaching methods and their expertise which no doubt supports good levels of attainment in many of them.

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 academic standards demonstrated by students were appropriate, commensurate with their level and well matched to other institutions across the UK.

Most assignments were well designed and allowed students to show their knowledge/abilities and clearly differentiated between the good and poorer students. I think the only further constructive comment I could give here is that have had a look in detail at exam performance (mainly in the final year) there is substantial variability in student choice of, performance in and differentiating capacity of different exam questions. The staff should use these data to critically reflect on exam question, content, style and how this reflects on and related to module content

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

Not applicable

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.

We made a few observations about module content, feedback and assessment formats in relation to specific modules last year (notably the use and progression of MCQ within level 2 biomechanics). Staff seem to have responded positively to these constructive challenges.

To my mind there does not appear to be any major limitation, problem or shortcoming in relation to programme or module content other than the perceived issues of "second class status" of sport an exercise science students in (normally) level 1 modules where mixed teaching with other students and programmes within the faculty is conducted (again largely with non sport and exercise science staff. A tricky issue of internal discussion and preparation of students.

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.

It is clear to me that staff research interests and more general scholarship pervade module content, especially as the programme progresses through the years. The students have the chance to listen and learn from all research active staff in various modules before enjoying a more focussed, research-led experience in their final year dissertation.

The dissertations I viewed this year clearly demonstrated a range of performance levels from the students but with almost consistent levels of engagement and enthusiasm that was backed up by student discussion at an early meeting. Staff were using their own programmes of research and expertise to develop students' knowledge base and a range of technical skills (some unique to Leeds University). Overall, I would note 2 points. Firstly in a year with a substantial increase in cohort size (10-16 projects students for each member staff) the staff managed this exceptionally well with some group type projects but development of assessment and process criteria in group may need some thought if it is to progress at this level. Secondly, I would encourage more differentiated marking of the good work – there seems to be a ceiling at about 72% for this work.

8. Where the programme forms part of an Integrated PhD, please comment on the appropriateness of the programme as training for a PhD

Not applicable

For Examiners involved in mentoring arrangements

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

Not applicable

The Examination/Assessment Process

10. 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.

<> and <> have been exceptional throughout the year and in the build-up to both visits including the recent award board. Given some new (borderline regulations) the award board and associated discussions were well informed, highly professional and importantly consistent and fair.

Examiners were well prepared and engaged in the process.

11. 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, all material delivered in a timely fashion.

12. 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 and feedback was taken on board.

Exams structure is developing well and if student performance is analysed (question by question etc) I am sure can be optimised and harmonised with teaching.

13. 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

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

Yes, as noted above I think the ability to extend the mark range for high performing students should be part of an ever vigilant staff assessment process.

15. 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?

Yes. I attended a very positive, professional and well run (fair, consistent) meeting where I was satisfied with the recommendations.

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

Yes.

Other comments

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

Both examiners provided a number of points (minor) for consideration in our verbal reported at the end of the Award Board. Briefly, here I highlight my statements.

Overall highly positive in terms of structure, content, LO, "levelness".

Good feedback from students in terms of degree content, assessment, staff support and overall experience

Positive reflections on, and continuing developments of the overall assessment structure through the MAPPING exercise.

Some issues to reflect upon for staff –

- a) Think about matching marks with written feedback – exceptional = 70% There is is more scope here – especially linked to higher range marking
- b) Continue to work on level of consistency in feedback (especially on projects). Some staff comment on documents, some don't, some comment on marks sheets, some don't, some comment on process sheets, some don't. No one gets no feedback but there is some noticeable variance in adopted practice.
- c) Overall students cannot seem to write abstracts (even in good overall projects) ... a skill to develop?
- d) When doing exam marking please try and provide sub question breakdown to marks in questions where this is the chosen way to split up question content for the students – practice on this was variable in the exams I saw.

Faculty of Biological Sciences
Student Education Service

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LS2 9JT, UK



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

30 September 2014

Dear

RESPONSE TO EXTERNAL EXAMINER REPORT 2013/14
BSc Sports Science and Physiology
BSc Sports Science and Physiology (Industrial)
BSc Sports Science and Physiology (International)
BSc Sports Science in Relation to Medicine
MBiol, BSc Sports Science and Physiology (Integrated Masters)

On behalf of the Sports and Exercise Science team I would like to thank you for your 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. Furthermore, we are very pleased that you consider our programme aims and intended learning outcomes to continue to match the level of those observed at other universities in the UK and are appropriate for professional body recognition, particularly since within the next academic year we are intending to seek external professional accreditation for our programmes from BASES.

Following your recommendation last year, over the past few months we have developed an assessment map for all three levels of our degree programme. Not only will this support the full programme analyses which will be undertaken by our Programme Leaders over the next few months it has, as you have also indicated, allowed us to already identify areas in which further development is needed (e.g. essay writing skills) to support the progression of our students performance to level 3 and beyond. This document and our programme analyses will also help us ensure that our assessment deadlines are spread as so far as is practically possible throughout the academic year, and streamline our assessment portfolio. Furthermore, as indicated both last, and this academic year, this will also drive forward a review of our biomechanics assessment strategies and progression, and I look forward to outlining the changes we will have made to our programme where necessary, after this comprehensive review.

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, as is the ability for some students to develop technical skills which are unique to our degree programme. We are particularly proud that you comment on the quality of some of our projects and consider that the staff have managed our large cohort number, where they have supervised between 10 and 16 students at once, exceptionally well. This year has been particularly challenging, considering the constraints on our time and our high student

numbers, and to have our External Examiner reflect positively on this is very welcome. All staff would like to express their thanks for your acknowledgement of this.

With respect to the assessment of level 3 projects we agree that an internal review of the marking criteria is due. There is currently consultation being made about the qualitative descriptors that are used for assessment, with new assessment criteria being developed and included in our COPA for next academic year. As a programme team we have already highlighted that we welcome a review of the wording used across all criteria but particularly at the top end to encourage/support staff to give students the recognition for the high quality work they complete. With respect to the feedback our project students receive - whilst your comments suggest that all students receive feedback, it also points to the fact that there is variable feedback and a lack of consistency with respect to how the process documents, qualitative criteria etc are used to provide feedback. Over the next few months, working groups from within Sport and Exercise Sciences will be reviewing the delivery of our research and professional skills modules and our dissertation project module. I will be feeding your comments about feedback on projects and the need to refine our students' ability to write abstracts to those working groups, and hopefully next academic year you will be able to see progress with respect to both these issues.

With respect to our exam questions, where possible we do try to split up questions and ensure transparency with respect to how marks are attributed, but again we acknowledge that there is some variable practice. Whilst I would not wish to 'prescribe' how module questions/answers are written to all module managers, I will ensure that they give your feedback due consideration when the exam papers are produced at their module team meeting. Furthermore, before the exam papers are written for our January 2015 exams I shall review exam performance across the modules - but particularly at level 3, to see if certain topics/styles of questions are either unanswered or answered poorly and request that module managers and question setters reflect on exam question content and style appropriately in response to this and how this relates to module content.

The feedback you received from your mid semester discussions with our student representatives, indicates our students appreciate our high degree of input, expertise and continued support, which is pleasing. It is disappointing however that our students still perceive they are regarded as 'second class' by some non-sport and exercise science teaching staff. Whilst we acknowledge there has been some isolated incidents where students have expressed concern regarding this attitude to us, we did not realise it was as pervasive as it seems to be at level 1. As you recommend this comment warrants internal discussion and preparation of the expectations of our students, as well as additional consultation and briefing of all staff involved in teaching our students which will be led by our Director of Student Education for Sport Sciences and our Programme Leaders.

Once again we very much appreciate how positive your report was about the provision and delivery of our degree programme/s, and fully believe that with your continued support and guidance we can maintain the very high standards we set for ourselves and our students as we prepare them for employment or further study. Thank you for all your hard work and due diligence over the last year, we look forward to working with you again next academic session.

Best wishes,

Examinations Officer