

# ULSTER UNIVERSITY

## REPORT OF A MEETING OF THE REVALIDATION PANEL: SUBJECT UNITS 28Gi SPORT (UG) AND 28Gii SPORT (PG)

7/8 December 2017

PANEL: Professor R Fee, Associate Dean (Education), Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Ulster University (Chair)  
Dr D Barr, Head of School of Education, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Ulster University  
Ms E Bonner, Sports President, Students' Union, Ulster University (Day 1)  
Mr O Kinsella, Academic and Student Affairs, Students' Union, Ulster University (Day 2)  
Dr K Dray, Senior Lecturer in Sport Coaching Science, Canterbury Christ Church University  
Ms C Haworth, Director of Academic Programmes, Cardiff School of Sport, Cardiff Metropolitan University  
Dr S Hayes, Reader in Sensorimotor Behaviour, Research Institute for Sport and Exercise Sciences, Liverpool John Moores University

### REVALIDATION UNIT

CO-ORDINATOR: Professor D Brennan, School of Sport, Ulster University

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B McArthur, Academic Office, Ulster University

## 1 INTRODUCTION

The Panel met to consider the following provision within Revalidation Units 28Gi Sport (UG) and 28Gii Sport (PG).

### Unit 28Gi Sport (UG)

1. AdvCert Performance Analysis and Coaching Practice (PT) (JN)
2. BSc Hons Football Coaching and Business Management (PT) (National Football Stadium Outcentre)
3. BSc Hons Sport and Exercise Sciences (FT) (JN) (with optional DIAS, DPP & DPP[I])
4. BSc Hons Sport, Physical Activity and Health (FT) (ME) (with optional DPP)
5. BSc Hons Sport Studies (FT) (JN) (with optional DIAS, DPP & DPP[I])
6. BSc Hons Sports Coaching and Performance (FT/PT) (JN)  
*(NB: Proposed title change from 'Sports Coaching' to 'Sports Coaching and Performance approved by APAG on 21/11/17 subject to approval by the revalidation*

*panel – min 17.144).*

All Honours programmes have CertHE and AB degree exit awards.

### Unit 28Gii Sport (PG)

- 1) PgDip/MSc Sport and Exercise Nutrition (with PgCert exit award) (FT/PT) (JN)  
*(Proposed change of delivery mode to fully online only)*
- 2) MSc Sport and Exercise Psychology (with PgDip exit award) (FT/PT) (JN)
- 3) MSc Sports Coaching and Performance (with PgCert and PgDip exit awards)  
(FT/PT) (JN)  
*(NB: Proposed title change from ‘Sports Coaching’ to ‘Sports Coaching and Performance approved by APAG on 21/11/17 subject to approval by the revalidation panel – min 17.144).*

NOTE: The Panel approved the proposed title change to the undergraduate and postgraduate Sports Coaching programmes – see 5.2 below.

Prior to the meeting on the 7 December, the Panel were taken on a tour of the facilities available to support delivery of the provision by the Head of the School of Sport, Dr Breslin, and the Revalidation Unit Coordinator, Professor Brennan. Following the tour, Dr Breslin gave a presentation covering the history of the provision, current staff, approach taken in preparing for revalidation and consultation undertaken with stakeholders including employers, students and the Further Education colleges where articulation arrangements are in place from the college’s sports programmes into the School’s undergraduate provision. Dr Breslin pointed out that preparation for revalidation had been informed by the University’s curriculum design principles and its widening access, internationalisation and employability policies.

The Panel met initially with the Faculty Senior Management Team comprising, the Associate Dean (Education), Professor A McKillop, the Head of the School of Sport, Dr G Breslin, and the Revalidation Unit Coordinator, Professor D Brennan. The Panel then met with a group of current undergraduate students and finally, with the subject team to discuss the provision in detail. On day 2, the panel met with a group of current postgraduate students and then with the postgraduate subject team.

## 2 DOCUMENTATION

The Panel received the following documentation:

- Agenda and programme of the meeting
- Guidelines for revalidation panels
- QAA subject benchmark statement for Events, Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism (2016).
- QAA Master's Degree Characteristics Statement (2015)
- External examiners’ reports for the last two years
- Preliminary comments from panel members
- Revalidation documentation

### 3 MEETING WITH SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAM

#### 3.1 Staff

The Panel asked about the challenges of increased growth in recruitment figures and the resultant pressure on staff resources. The Team stated that growth was particularly important to the School. They explained that MaSN capped undergraduate student numbers. The anticipated growth area therefore would principally be in non-MaSN postgraduate provision and particularly in international student numbers. The staff/student ratio was carefully managed through a 5-year plan ensuring there were no surprises. Any new proposal would go through a rigorous approval process and would require a clear resourcing plan. Each year, the Head of School would liaise with the Associate Dean (Education) regarding the following year's targets. The Team pointed out that within the last two years, due to careful resource management, the School had successfully introduced two new programmes, the BSc Hons Football Coaching and Business Management and the MSc Sports Coaching and Performance while meeting their growth targets. They stated that a long-term strategy beyond the next five years, based on market predication, would also be developed. In response to the Panel, the Team explained that the MaSN cap lay at Faculty level where decisions regarding distribution were made according to greatest need.

The Panel asked whether there was support at Faculty level to meet targets in non-MaSN provision. The Team replied that support was available through the recruitment group and new strategies emerging from the University's *Five and Fifty* plan through its *Global Vision*. The International Department had also been helpful, for example, in developing links with China, as had the Associate Dean (Globalisation).

The Team confirmed that support reached delivery level; that staff were recognised as the School's most valuable asset. They explained that a School budget provided for the equitable allocation of resources across the School. They acknowledged that resources were finite and pointed out that where possible, external funding was sought. For example, the BSc Hons Football Coaching and Business Management involved funding from their partner, the Irish Football Association. They stated that development of international links would help grow their international market and internship opportunities. A block teaching approach would free up time for this. This was something that the School were striving to develop further. Finding a way to distinguish their provision was an important part of their strategy with the Football Coaching programme a good example.

The Team went on to explain that in preparing for revalidation, they had spent three days reviewing structures and modules; looking what could and could not be done. They pointed out that there were a large number of modules across the provision so it was important to recognise the limits to what could be done bearing in mind that staff were also research active. The correct teaching/research balance had to be achieved.

### **UNDERGRADUATE PROVISION**

#### 3.2 Retention

In response to the Panel, the Team acknowledged that attrition figures were higher than the Faculty average. However, they had improved support mechanisms and staff currently spend a great deal of time in providing support which reduces their research time. The Team suggested that a collegial approach emphasising cohort identity helped retention but

recognised that this was more challenging where there were large student numbers. They also noted that practice oriented modules also helped foster a sense of belonging.

### 3.3 Content

The Panel quoted the last slide from the opening presentation, “By making these changes we will lead, inspire and shape the future of sport” and asked where the focus would lie; on ‘sports science’ or ‘sport’. The Team stated that they had long experience of delivering both. For example, within the BSc Hons Sport and Exercise Sciences, they were able to manage the two very well. They suggested that the sports industry was changing and there were now many employment opportunities within the ‘science’ field. Research into the psychological, physiological, and biomechanical aspects of sport delivered a strong skill set. The Team pointed out that in contrast, the Sports Studies programme was vocational in nature. It allowed students to choose from a range of applied modules while retaining a social scientific core. As the degree progresses, students realise that their learning leads to wider employment opportunities than simply PE teaching. The Team suggested that the key was in finding the balance between the ‘science’ and ‘sport’. They pointed out that the School had eleven programmes comprising a broad range of subjects that were reflective of the industry. They pointed out that Ulster had been first in the United Kingdom to introduce a BA (Hons) Sport & Leisure Studies degree, a 1-year sandwich placement (DPP) and a ‘Talented Athlete Entry Programme’ and one of the first to introduce a sports scholarship programme.

## 4 MEETING WITH STUDENTS

The Panel met with a small group of current undergraduate students. The following are summaries of their responses to issues raised by the Panel.

### Online assessment and feedback?

- User friendly - easy to use
- Submit via ‘Turnitin’
- Can submit work from home - helpful
- Feedback received within 3 weeks
- Feed-forward helps with future assessments

### Feedback before submission?

- Yes – very good; helpful
- Where there are large student numbers, more seminars would be helpful (Sport and Exercise Sciences)

### Peer support?

- Driven by yourself
- Down to the individual
- Buddy system encouraged (Sports Coaching and Performance)

### Support mechanisms for students not at the top end?

- Opportunities for individual support and feedback available through formal tutorials and extracurricular classes, e.g. academic writing
- Every support available from tutors both formally and informally
- Tutor invite by email for ‘one-to-one’ conversation
- Staff available on request – go to the tutor in the relevant subject area

- Some lecturers more accessible than others
- Small classes help– larger classes can lead to inattention from some students (Sport, Physical Activity and Health)
- Dyslexia student – the support was there from year 1, “ I was bombarded with support opportunities”
- Responsibility lies with the individual as to whether support opportunities taken
- “If you don’t get help it’s your own fault”
- Consensus – the support is there if students wish to avail of it

#### Study Advisors?

- Assigned in year 1 – 3 meetings per year – very helpful. If I have not contacted her for a while, she contacts me (Sports Studies)
- Really good Studies Advisor (Sports Coaching)
- Not seen him since year 2 – I have to initiate contact (Sport and Exercise Science)

#### Support available for advanced standing entry (Foundation degree)?

- Attended lecture on subject had not covered in foundation degree – difficult to catch up
- Only overview of the programme provided
- Bridging module in research methods available

Students agreed that a programme of pre-entry reading would be very useful

#### Assessments – bunching?

- Bunching – “I’ve four assignments to submit by next Friday” (Sport and Exercise Sciences)
- Assessments well spread – no bunching (Sports Studies)
- Part-time provision – assessments “well spread”

#### Laboratory access?

- Where limited software available, slots timetabled by tutor
- At level 6, opportunity to develop relevant laboratory-based skills
- Physiology -3 students engaged in practice, others inattentive (although agreed developed sufficient skills for project work)

#### Placement year

- Received one visit during year from academic tutor – contact by email if required – provided support for assignment (Sport and Exercise Science)
- Great support from tutors – opportunity for extracurricular qualifications welcomed
- Wide range of placements available, over 40 last year (Sports Studies)
- Where placement year option not taken up, other WBL opportunities available in other modules (e.g. Tutoring in Schools)
- Can identify your own placement opportunities

#### Input to programme development?

- Yes, views sought on a regular basis – believe views taken on board by staff
- Students provided online feedback on each module
- Received feedback on what had been changed from previous year based on student feedback
- Could see for ourselves where changes had been made

- Tutors explained the reason where suggestions could not lead to change

#### Programme choice?

- To Improve performance in my job and be able to teach others – course beneficial and enjoyable (Sports Coaching)
- Want to be a teacher – course and placement year provided a ‘massive’ opportunity – placement year particularly beneficial – ties everything together – optionality within course welcomed (Sport Studies)
- Currently on placement – physiology and strength conditioning – a strength of the programme (Physical Activity, Sport and Health)
- Course included everything I wanted to learn – identified different ways of doing things – “definitely the right course for me” (Physical Activity, Sport and Health)

## 5 MEETING WITH UNDERGRADUATE SUBJECT TEAM

### *5.1 Preparation for revalidation*

The Panel asked how the Team, in developing the provision for revalidation, had taken account of University policies in areas such as curriculum design, learning and teaching, assessment and feedback, graduate qualities and employability. The Team replied that they had discussed these issues during a series of away days, breakfast meetings and course committee meetings. They said that the subject team were experienced with skill sets covering the whole of the provision. Consequently, module pedagogy was continually being updated. They said that they had found the process challenging given the finite resources available but had regarded the process as an opportunity for change. Ideas for change in areas such as course structures and modules were discussed during “long and intensive days” with the overall aim of achieving a workable and appropriate balance between ‘sport’ and ‘sport science’. The new curriculum design principles had been taken into account and on one occasion, Professor Bartholomew, the PVC (Education), had attended a meeting and agreed that the Team were ‘on the right track’. The content of the University’s *Five and Fifty* plan in terms of the University’s strategy for globalisation and internationalisation, had also informed their thinking as had feedback from current and past students. Programmes and individual modules had been reviewed to ensure compliance with University policies in areas such as employability, widening access and work-based learning. While the process had been challenging, the Team had been determined to future proof the provision and ensure that each programme would meet student needs and provide a quality student experience.

The Team confirmed that they had also taken account of the move to the new Belfast campus. They stated that they had been assured that there would be nothing less than the facilities currently available at Jordanstown. The Team were unaware of precisely what facilities had been ‘signed off on’ but they remained positive while recognising that it was unlikely that they would have the same number of sports halls as currently available. In preparing for revalidation, they said that they had “done their best” based on the available information.

### *5.2 Programme title change – BSc Hons / MSc Sport Coaching*

In response to a Panel query, the Team explained that the change in title from ‘Sports Coaching’ to ‘Sports Coaching and Performance’ in both the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, more accurately reflected the science-based content of each programme and the increased focus within contemporary coaching on the development of

high-performing coaches across all levels. The Team emphasised however that the programme content was not entirely focussed on 'performance'. The Panel were content that the title change was appropriate.

### 5.3 Assessment and feedback

The Panel asked the Team to outline their assessment and feedback strategy. The Team stated that the School's strategy reflected that of the University. The curriculum design principles had also informed module assessment strategies. They said that module assessment and feedback strategies would be shared with students on their first day. This would include a commitment to provide individual as well as group feedback. Summative feedback would be provided within fifteen working days. Feed-forward would also be used to aid future performance. Feed-forward sessions relating to specific coursework would be available. The Team explained that to counter cases where students, being more focussed in their marks, missed out on the feedback, they had developed use of a feedback symbol to highlight for students when feedback was being provided. Moreover, to provide staff reassurance, assessment cover sheets had been revised inviting students to identify those elements of feedback taken account of in completing the current assessment task.

In response to a Panel query regarding formal examinations, the Sports Studies team stated that students had always been invited to contact staff post-examination for individual feedback. Unfortunately, too often students had failed to take up the offer. The Team explained that generally, examination preparation would take place during the first two years of a programme through class tests, dedicated classes and during tutorials. For failing students, staff would arrange classes and tutorials outside term time to provide feedback and feed-forward. Experience had shown that students had derived great benefit from these sessions. The Team pointed out that the number of formal examinations across the provision had been reduced.

The Sport and Exercise Sciences team stated that to ensure students received feedback, they provided them with a feedback sheet which did not include a grade thus forcing students to come to the tutor when, in addition to receiving their grade, they would receive feedback.

The Team added that in Health and Fitness modules with online class tests, the scripts were automatically marked with automatic feedback flagged in orange. In the level 5 module, Sociology of Sport, rather than a formal examination, one assessment component comprised a series of five online class tests. They suggested that this removed the pressure of a formal examination thus aiding performance. The Team stated that generally across the provision examination writing clinics would be available and, regarding class tests, students would always receive individual as well as group feedback.

The Panel informed the Team that concerning the provision of feedback, there had generally been a positive response from students. They had however made some suggestions; more seminars for the provision of feedback where there were large lecture classes, pre-entry reading material for FE students and the appointment of course and senior student representatives in *all* cases. The Team replied that they had begun to 'rethink' the student representative system since it was often difficult to get volunteers to act in the role and too often, representatives failed to attend Staff/Student Consultative Committee or Course Committee meetings. The Team stated that normally there would be two representatives per year group. Recently Dr Breslin and Professor Brennan had begun to meet with representatives informally outside of the formal process. This had proved

successful in that representatives had been more open in this forum and attendance had been much better. They said that they regarded the 'student voice' as crucial and there were many mechanisms in place to ensure it was heard. To this end, they recognised the importance of building relationships with the student body and acknowledged that there was more to do. As an example, they pointed to the introduction this year of a 'graduate transition programme' for final year students that was an extension of the induction programme. It was designed to aid graduates in preparing for postgraduate study and the workplace. They said that early engagement with and working alongside students was the key to building working relationships with students. From induction through to graduation, there would be a range of mechanisms to engage students. For example, an optional alumni mentor scheme had been introduced whereby students would meet with their mentor one or two times per semester. This would provide positive support from someone other than staff who had successfully completed the programme.

#### *5.4 Articulation*

The Panel noted the articulation arrangements from college foundation degrees into four of the honours degrees and that articulation into the BSc Hons Sports Coaching and Performance would be directly into the final level. The Team was asked whether mapping exercises had been carried out to ensure the appropriateness of the arrangements. The Team confirmed that mapping had been carried out for each programme to ensure that articulation arrangements were appropriate. They pointed out that successful completion of a Research Methods bridging module was a requirement for those students who had not previously completed an equivalent module at level 5. This module was taken in June and provided an opportunity for students to get to know one another. The Team stated that the FE colleges were more keen on the '2 + 1' articulation model because it aided recruitment. They pointed out however that the '2 + 2' model was more common because foundation degree students undertook 40 credits of work-based learning at level 5 thus missing out on areas of learning covered at level 5 in the honours degrees. The Team explained that they had consulted with the FE colleges on the changes made for revalidation. They explained that the college provision would undergo revalidation in the next academic year and would take account of these changes. In addition, during the academic year, University staff would attend the colleges and brief staff and students on the content of the honours degrees. In response to a Panel query regarding APEL, the Team explained the process and emphasised that it mirrored the University policy. They pointed out that on average, articulation students proved academically stronger than direct entry students.

The Panel asked if the sports programmes in the colleges were identical. The Team explained that there was a 'Sport, Exercise and Fitness' foundation degree at four of the local colleges and while each was quite broad-based, each had a different focus. For example, the NRC programme was more science-based while the SERC course contained both 'sports studies' and 'science'. They explained that at the last revalidation, the foundation degree modules had been mapped against the Ulster programmes and appropriate articulation pathways agreed. School staff collaborated closely with college colleagues and had an input into the foundation degree content. The Team stated that more foundation degree students were beginning to come into the University and use its facilities; that this was particularly prevalent at NWRC where its Strand Road campus was located close to Ulster's Magee campus.

## 5.5 Placement

The Panel asked how the international placement year was organised. The Team replied that students were made aware of its availability in semester 1 of year 1. At this time careers advice would begin which would include discussions around the international placement. A systematic approach to placement preparation was taken with preparation beginning in and carrying through from year 1. Preparation included exposure to industry professionals, networking with past students, assistance with CVs and application letters and mock interviews. The Team stated that the placement office assisted with travel visas and insurance and students on placement were well supported by academic staff and on-site mentors. They said that each year approximately half the student cohort opted to take the placement year and more students were now choosing an international placement.

The Panel queried why the BSc Hons Sport, Physical Activity and Health, while offering an optional Diploma in Professional Practice (DPP), did not offer an international placement. The Team replied that the programme had been established only four years and while the DPP's popularity had increased, on average, just under 50% of students opted to take it. The Team stated that they would however consider inclusion of the DPP(International) in the future.

In response to the Panel, the Team stated that only two students had undertaken an international placement in the last two years. Globalisation was addressed in the provision through the consideration of international research, policy and practice and this triggered interest in international placements. The Team stated that there was funding available through bursaries and various other sources.

The Panel noted that two of the honours degrees, Sports Coaching and Performance and Football Coaching and Business Management, did not offer placement opportunities and asked where students would obtain WBL experience. The Team stated that each of these programmes had work-based learning modules, three compulsory WBL-based modules in the Sports Coaching programme and in the Football Coaching programme, a 26-week internship as part of the level 5 compulsory *Reflective Practice* module.

Regarding the three honours programmes offering optional placement, the Team confirmed that alternative WBL opportunities would be available in each programme. From year 1, students would be afforded opportunities to gain coaching awards and other industry qualifications as the School of Sport was an Active IQ accredited assessment centre with the capacity to deliver an extensive range of fitness industry qualifications. In addition, participation in other extracurricular activities such as volunteering, Ulster Sports Outreach work and a range of CPD short courses provided by the School of Sport would be available. These courses would be embedded across the modules. Furthermore, guest speakers from industry would come in to talk to students about the industry and latest developments and current issues. Students would also be made aware of WBL opportunities available through the EDGE Award whereby credit can be gained for part-time work.

The Panel asked what processes were in place to quality assure placement and internship sites and ensure achievement of the module learning outcomes, particularly in relation to the Football Coaching programme. The Team replied that for each placement, a tripartite agreement would be signed between the student, academic tutor and placement provider. This would ensure that providers were aware of their responsibilities in delivering an appropriate student experience enabling achievement of the module learning outcomes. In

addition, staff had close links with and were knowledgeable about the local sports industry and therefore the suitability of placement sites.

Regarding the Football Coaching programme, the Team said that the Irish Football Association (IFA) had been keen for the development of an academic programme that would accredit their training. During programme development, three course team members had met with three members of the IFA which, inter alia, ensured that the work-based learning element of the programme and internships would take place on appropriate sites. They explained that in the final level Research Project module, students would be required to carry out a series of specific tasks that would acquaint them with current issues within the industry. An academic and IFA mentor would supervise their work.

#### *5.6 Learning and teaching strategy (fully online provision)*

The Panel asked about Team's strategy for fully online provision. The Team stated that they had been very proactive in organising staff training in this area and had worked closely with Access, Digital and Distributed Learning (ADDL). They explained that the Office for Digital Learning (ODL) had a long-standing relationship with the School having previously provided consultancy and support for a variety of aspects of digital and blended learning. The ODL also ensured that staff remained current in Ulster's digital learning environment and ensured that good practice was shared. They said that the training needs of the School were continually monitored and staff received training in areas such as Blackboard basics, Blackboard assessment and digital feedback tools with a focus on Turnitin, lecture capture and streaming video, and the online synchronous teaching tool Blackboard Collaborate. The Team stated that the School employs a variety of modes of course delivery and teaching methods including fully online delivery and that staff had embraced new pedagogies and technologies and used creative approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.

#### *5.7 Research Project*

The Panel asked about the process for identifying a project title in the research project modules. The Team stated that the research backgrounds of staff would be circulated to students. The Sports Studies team stated that the process was student-led but carried out in consultation with staff. The process would begin in the first two or three weeks of the semester when students would identify a research area. This would be refined through conversations with a member of staff. A supervisor with the appropriate background would then be appointed. The Sports Coaching team stated that in the part-time programme, the process would begin as early as year 3 when students would prepare a research proposal. The research project would then be completed over one semester in year 5. To assist in choosing an area for study, students would be linked to the 'science shop', a repository for suitable titles. The professional bodies would also provide suggested areas for study. Moreover, many of the students would already be working in the industry and would choose a topic aligned with their workplace. The Team stated that in the full-time programme, students would complete the research project over two semesters providing them with an opportunity to work with staff over almost a full academic year.

#### *5.8 BSc Hons Football Coaching and Business Management*

The Panel noted that at the evaluation of the BSc Hons Football Coaching and Business Management in December 2016, the Panel had imposed a condition that the Course Team must review the provision in relation to its 'Business Management' component with

colleagues from the Ulster University Business School' and that this condition be reviewed at revalidation. The Panel asked what steps had been taken to address the condition. The Team stated that following the evaluation event, Professor Farley, Associate Dean (Education) of the Business School, had carried out a review of the programme and had produced an analysis document regarding its business management content in which she made a number of recommendations for consideration by the course team. Following her review, the Head of School, Dr Gavin Breslin, and the Course Director, Mr Kyle Ferguson, had met with Professor Farley for discussions and had subsequently addressed her recommendations in the revalidated course document. The Team stated that Professor Farley had confirmed, "The approach taken [by the course team] would appear to be satisfy this condition".

## **POSTGRADUATE PROVISION**

### **6 MEETING WITH STUDENTS**

The Panel met with a small group of current postgraduate students. The following are summaries of their responses to issues raised by the Panel.

The Panel asked about the students' choice of programme and institution. A student on the Sports Coaching programme stated that she had gained an undergraduate degree in Animation at Ulster. However, she wanted to become PE teacher and hence her change of direction. She stated that she had found the MSc Sports Coaching and Performance to be an excellent course. A student on the same course stated that family members had previously attended Ulster and had spoken highly of their experience and of the 'fantastic' sports facilities. The Psychology student stated that Jordanstown was a convenient location for him and that he wanted to progress to PhD study for which he had now been accepted at Cardiff Metropolitan University.

The Panel asked the Animation student why she had made the career change. She stated that both parents were teachers. She was a track and field athlete, had been coaching since she was sixteen years old, and had gained her coaching badges. Coaching was an activity she enjoyed and wished to make it her career. Prior to entry, she had spoken to staff in the School who had recommended the course if she wished to become a PE teacher. She thought that she would ultimately be able to teach art and design and PE. The student confirmed that she had received tremendous support from the sports staff that had ensured a smooth transition. She said that she had found staff accessibility much better than in her undergraduate degree. In response to the Panel, she stated that she had not yet had an opportunity to engage in research, that that would come in the following semester.

The Panel asked the Nutrition student about his experience of online delivery. He replied that he had found fully online delivery "very good"; that he enjoyed using tools such as webchat. Technically, everything had worked fine without any problems. Regarding his research project, he had remained in telephone contact with his supervisor and had delivered his presentation via webcam. The Panel asked whether he missed coming onto campus. He replied that he "wasn't bothered" and that he would have more opportunity to come on campus during the next semester. Regarding his research project, while a list of titles had been provided, there was a lack of laboratory-based topics which would have been his preferred option.

The Panel noted that in order to practice, a student on the MSc Sport and Exercise Psychology would be required to have achieved a graduate basis for registration through a course accredited by the British Psychological Society (BPS) and asked whether the Psychology student had been made aware of this. The student replied that he had been made aware of this pre-entry when it had been explained to him that another route to accreditation was completion of a BPS accredited conversion course. He stated that while not a lot of detail had been provided, he had been made aware of the requirement at the outset. The Panel suggested that there did not appear to be much of an applied component to the programme. The student replied that the main applied component was contained in module, Professional Practice and Ethics in Applied Sports Psychology, where students were able to engage in a series of practical activities designed to develop their practitioner skills. Regarding staff support, the student stated that the course team had been very supportive throughout.

The Panel asked whether their choice of programme had proved relevant to their career choice. A Sports Coaching student stated that the programme was very relevant. Tutors would assess coaching sessions and provide advice. This was to be welcomed and was very helpful in skill development. She said that it made her think critically about her own performance and how to improve her skills. The other Sports Coaching student stated that there was a good balance between practice and theory. He said that working with coaches from different backgrounds was a positive aspect of the programme. Conversations in class were 'fantastic'. He said that paying for the course himself provided him with determination and motivation to succeed in the programme. Both students described themselves as enthusiastic about the programme and the course overall as "very interesting".

The Nutrition student stated that he worked in a leisure centre and found the course to be "very relevant". He said that he was looking forward to the practice modules that would be delivered on campus next semester. He described himself as self-motivated and the lecturers as "enthused".

The Sport and Exercise Psychology student agreed that the programme was very relevant to his career choice.

The Panel asked how the Sports Coaching students felt about the 2-day block teaching delivery model. One stated that she worked better with this approach. In her undergraduate programme, she had attended class three or four times a week right up until the end of the semester which had left little time "to wrap things up". With the 2-day block teaching approach, there was time to build on their learning following the two days on campus. The student confirmed that there was still contact with staff outside of the teaching blocks, particularly in the two weeks prior to the submission of an assignment. She also praised the speed of feedback provided by staff.

The Panel asked whether assessments were evenly spread across their programmes. The Psychology student stated that his were quite bunched with two or three assessments to be submitted within the next two or three weeks. The Nutrition student stated that his assessments were "reasonably spread", although in some modules more so than others. He opined that generally there were too many assessments.

Regarding feedback, all the students agreed that it was "very good".

## 7 MEETING WITH POSTGRADUATE SUBJECT TEAM

### 7.1 MSc Sports Coaching and Performance

#### *Entry requirements*

Regarding entry requirements, the Team confirmed that students could access the programme via the APEL route by providing evidence of relevant coaching experience and prior learning. The Team also confirmed that an applicant's undergraduate degree had to be in a relevant subject because the Master's degree was so practice oriented and students therefore required to have a solid foundation in a relevant subject.

#### *Support for students*

The Panel asked what support was available to students between the 2-day teaching blocks. The Team stated that students would have a great deal of work to do between teaching blocks. They would therefore attempt to instil in students an independent, professional mind-set to ensure that work was completed. Support would be available, for example, through the provision of all teaching materials online, one-to-one meetings with their academic mentor, if desired, and tutors would observe practice sessions and provide feedback. The Team pointed out that there were only four weeks between classes. They stated that student feedback had indicated that students wanted more feedback as a group, which the team had undertaken to provide.

The Panel asked how students requiring additional help were identified and supported. The Team replied that their approach was about establishing a 'community of practice' whereby everyone supported each other. One group had established a 'WhatsApp group' where group members shared papers and experiences and provided support to each other. This was an evolving and positive development. The Team stated that there were eighteen students in the cohort and they all supported one another. They confirmed that most students came from other institutions.

#### *Research project*

In response to the Panel, the Team stated that students would normally identify their research project topic from either their own area of interest or from their own coaching practice. On occasion, their topic might align with a member of staff's research area. The Panel noted that in full-time mode, the research project would be completed in one semester. The Team explained that while this was the case, discussions between students and staff would commence as early as semester 1. In semester 2 they would then complete a 15-credit point project preparation module (Research Project Preparation in Sports Coaching) thus ensuring that by the time they undertake the project in semester 3, all the preparatory work would have been completed. The Team confirmed that students would have access to all learning materials during semester 3, which would be released at the end of September. They also confirmed that the ethics approval process would be completed during the preparatory module in semester 2.

## 7.2 MSc Sport and Exercise Psychology

### *Accreditation for practice*

The Panel asked whether students were made aware of the requirement to have achieved a graduate basis for registration through a BPS accredited course in order to be an accredited practitioner. The Panel confirmed that students were made aware of this at the outset of the programme; that this was a BPS requirement. They pointed out that some students did not want to be professional practitioners, for example, those who wished to pursue a teaching career. The Team pointed out that students passing through the programme had different background profiles which was useful for student learning and enriched classroom discussions.

### *Module - Sport, Physical Activity and Mental Health*

The Panel welcomed the changes to module, Sport, Physical Activity and Mental Health, and its increase from a 15- to a 30-credit point module, and asked the Team to outline their rationale for the changes. The Team stated that the changes had been due in part to student feedback which suggested that the module was too theory heavy. Students had often struggled with the module. The Team had also looked at other similar programmes across the UK. The Team had therefore decided to make changes. They said that the area of athlete mental health support had grown as evidenced in the number of published articles, special issues in mental health promotion for athletes and increased contributions to this topic area at international conferences. Because of the growth in this area, staff had researched mental health and well-being leading to the development of a knowledge base from which students could learn. They pointed out that they had also changed the language used in the module to make it easier for students to understand. The change in title and increased size of the module reflected the growth in the area of sport psychology and the skill set of the course team.

### *Applied content*

The Panel suggested that there were limited opportunities for applied practice in the programme with only module, Professional Practice and Ethics in Applied Sport Psychology, offering such an opportunity. The Team stated that Stage 1 of the BPS accreditation process was more theory focused and that space had to be found to accommodate all the BPS requirements in order to secure accreditation. They suggested that the more practical aspects were to be found in Stage 2 of the process while Stage 1 centred on concepts and theory. They pointed out however, that certain practice elements had been retained. Notwithstanding, the Panel suggested that consideration be given to finding room within the programme for more practice opportunities.

## 7.3 PgD/MSc Sport and Exercise Nutrition

### *Sport and Exercise Nutrition Research Project*

The Panel noted that where students were unable to access an athlete population for data collection purposes, arrangements would be made to enable them to do so on either the Coleraine or Jordanstown campuses. The Panel asked how this would be managed should there be a significant growth in student numbers wishing to avail of this opportunity. The Team replied that while the programme would in future be offered fully online only, students would still be able to complete their research project in their own location which

would minimise the number of students wishing to avail of this opportunity regardless of any growth in numbers.

#### *Fully online delivery mode*

The Panel asked, given that the programme would be delivered in fully online mode only, whether the Team had a strategy to make students feel part of the School. The Team stated, while acknowledging that this would be challenging, that they were confident that a cohort identity would be engendered using online tools such as Facebook for social engagement and discussion boards for academic work. Students would also be encouraged to attend conferences where there may be opportunities to meet with staff and other students. The Team pointed out that local students would be able to attend any of the University campuses, use its facilities and meet with staff.

The Team confirmed that students would have access to all library materials online. Where a text was available only in hard copy, alternative arrangements would be made. In response to the Panel, the Team confirmed that they had already received a huge number of enquiries about the programme.

#### *Learning and teaching strategy*

Regarding the learning and teaching strategy, the Team stated that a variety of online tools would be employed. Learning materials would be released online on a weekly basis. Students would be encouraged to use chatrooms. Student engagement would be tracked and where students had not logged on for three days, they would be contacted.

#### *7.4 Student recruitment*

The Teams were asked whether cost had led to reduced student numbers. The Team pointed out that the Sports Coaching and Performance programme had just been introduced this year. Regarding the MSc Sport and Exercise Nutrition, recruitment had remained steady over recent years. The Sport and Exercise Psychology programme had recruited 18 students for 2017/18. The Team stated that the School were currently targeting an increase in international students, for example, in the USA, where the cost of similar programmes was much higher.

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

The Panel commended the Subject Teams on the following:

- good practice in the level of support provided to students in preparation for and during the Placement year and work-based learning components of the provision and, in particular, the development of the support website
- clear and reflective engagement with the student voice
- quality and quantity of feedback and feed-forward including the use of the innovative feedback symbol as an indicator for students
- clear evidence of the integration of theory in all practice elements of the provision
- the Sports Outreach programme and the ability of the subject team to engage students in the programme
- clear evidence of the establishment of a strong community of practice at Master's level

The Panel agreed to recommend to the Academic Standards and Quality Enhancement Committee that the provision within Subject Units 28Gi Sport (UG) and 28Gii Sport (PG).be approved for a period of five years (intakes 2018/19 – 2022/23 inclusive) subject to the condition and recommendations of the Panel being addressed and a satisfactory response and a revised submission being forwarded to the Academic Office by **7 March 2018** for approval by the Chair of the Panel.

#### Conditions

- 1) that all issues identified in the appendix to the panel report be addressed;

#### Strong recommendation

- 1) that the research project modules at both undergraduate and postgraduate level be reviewed to ensure consistency in assessment loads in terms of word counts (in line with the curriculum design principles) and in the management of the ethical review process and, in relation to module, SLS506 Research Project: Sport and Exercise Sciences, consider delivery over two semesters.

#### Recommendations – undergraduate provision

- 1) that consideration be given to including the Diploma in Professional Practice (International) in the BSc Hons Sport, Physical Activity and Health.

#### Recommendations – postgraduate provision

- 2) that opportunities to offer more applied experience during the taught elements of the MSc Sport and Exercise Psychology be kept under review;
- 3) that, in the event of a significant increase in student numbers, further consideration be given as to how those students without access to a data collection resource would be supported.

## 7 APPRECIATION

The Chair thanked the Panel members and in particular, the external members, for their valuable contribution to the revalidation process.

*Ref: BMcA/panelreport/19.12.17*