

## Research focus

We are proud that every member of our academic staff is actively involved in research in some capacity. This research informs our teaching and helps to ensure that we remain at the cutting edge of sports and exercise science, with a number of students volunteering as participants for this work. Read about one of our recent research highlights below.

### The Spirit of Scott: Psychology in the Antarctic 100 years on

Recent research, conducted by Dr Chris Wagstaff and Dr Neil Weston and currently 'in press' in the journal *Sport, Exercise and Performance*, examined how a group of military personnel managed their emotions during a two-month expedition to the Antarctic, exactly 100 years since Captain Scott's fateful journey.

In some ways, the demands faced by the explorers, such as living in close proximity to others and frequently encountering life-threatening situations, mirrored Scott's expedition and, perhaps more importantly, the modern theatre of war. However, just like Scott's expedition, for the participants in this study, the nearest medical support and rescue team was thousands of miles away.

Daily checklists indicated that participants in the study heavily suppressed the emotions they experienced, particularly negative emotions. However, by suppressing their emotions for such an extended period of time a debilitating effect occurred, with participants reporting significantly elevated mental fatigue on days when they suppressed their emotions, regardless of their physical efforts that day. Moreover, the use of these unhelpful suppression strategies were related to reduced levels of cohesion among the group and poorer ratings of team and individual performance.

Dr Wagstaff said: 'Those operating in high performance teams in extreme environments regularly feel the need to suppress their feelings, often because of social expectations and group norms, so suppression can be useful as a short term strategy. For example, the participants in this study felt that they needed to suppress their feelings to maintain morale and avoid conflict. However, when used chronically, these strategies inadvertently had the opposite effect! Their acts of biting their tongues and masking their feelings exhausted them mentally and led to poorer relationships and performance. Future expeditions and military expeditions should promote social support and educate personnel about the consequences of chronic suppression strategies.'



[www.port.ac.uk/sportscience](http://www.port.ac.uk/sportscience)

## Staff profile

**Name:** Dr Matt Dicks  
**Title:** Lecturer in skill acquisition

**What's your background?** I studied both a BSc and an MSc degree at the University of Portsmouth before working as a research assistant in sport psychology at the University of Chichester. I then moved to New Zealand to study a PhD at the University of Otago in 2006 and spent a total of three and a half years living there, and a further six months as a visiting researcher at Queensland University of Technology, Australia. I returned to Europe in 2010, working as a skill acquisition/coach education lecturer in football at the German Sports University Cologne. In 2011, I was awarded a research fellowship by the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research, and subsequently joined the MOVE Research Institute Amsterdam at the VU University Amsterdam. I returned to DSES in February 2013.

**What are your teaching duties?** I teach on Psychology of Coaching and Learning, and Professional Practice in Coaching and Learning. I also contribute towards other coaching and sport psychology units on BSc and MSc degree pathways. I will be coordinating the MRes Science Project in 2014–15 and I supervise numerous undergraduate and postgraduate projects in various skill acquisition topics.

**What are your research interests?** My research interests are focused on perceptual expertise and the visual control of movement. I have particular experience in the use of eye movement technology. Some projects I am currently undertaking include investigation of anticipation, deception, and the visual control of walking interactions. This research is conducted across a number of different experimental paradigms including sport situations (penalty kicks), walking interactions (pedestrian crossings) and instances of deceptive expertise (magic tricks).

**What advice would you give students to help prepare for a career in skill acquisition?** Find a subject that you are passionate about and read... a lot. If you are going to progress in the academic field you will need to do some form of postgraduate study. Contact leading academics in a research area that really interests you and try to gain funding that will give you the opportunity to work with them. Ask questions, be critical, learn as much as you can, and develop your own (novel) research ideas to help you become an expert. Gain experience with sport teams and industry to learn how to put theory and research into practice.

**What's the best thing about DSES?** The people. Staff across the Department work hard to create a really good environment for teaching and research. DSES keeps going from strength to strength and it is great to work with, and learn from, the staff who contribute to that success.

## Contact us

To send in your news:  
E: [jo.corbett@port.ac.uk](mailto:jo.corbett@port.ac.uk)

For more information about DSES:  
T: 023 9284 5163  
E: [sports.science@port.ac.uk](mailto:sports.science@port.ac.uk)  
W: [www.port.ac.uk/sportscience](http://www.port.ac.uk/sportscience)

MD9296 0914

# Pulse



University of  
**Portsmouth**

Issue

2

## Welcome

Welcome to the second issue of *Pulse*, the newsletter of the University of Portsmouth's Department of Sport and Exercise Science (DSES). Whether you are a current, future or former student, or you are simply interested in DSES, we extend a very warm welcome to you.

We hope that *Pulse* will help you to keep up-to-date with the many exciting and interesting projects in which our staff and students are involved. Our first issue was well received and we had lots of positive feedback. However, remember that this is your newsletter too, so if you have any projects or successes to share, please email [jo.corbett@port.ac.uk](mailto:jo.corbett@port.ac.uk). And don't forget, there is more to watch and read online at [www.port.ac.uk/sportscience](http://www.port.ac.uk/sportscience).

Number one in the UK for Overall Student Satisfaction in Sports Science (National Student Survey 2013–2014).

For our additional rankings success, visit [www.port.ac.uk/sportscience/highlights](http://www.port.ac.uk/sportscience/highlights).

## High quality courses recognised

The Department of Sport and Exercise Science has, once again, fared extremely well in the various league tables for 2014–2015. Sports Science was ranked as one of the highest departments for student satisfaction in the UK according to the National Student Survey. *The Guardian* university league tables have ranked the Department of Sport and Exercise Science at the University of Portsmouth among the ten best sport and exercise science departments in the United Kingdom and as the best sport and exercise science department in the south east of England. This outstanding performance follows the department being ranked ninth in the United Kingdom in the recent *Good University Guide*, and confirms the University of Portsmouth as one of the premier institutions for sports science in the United Kingdom and the top destination in the south east of England.

The league tables take into account a variety of factors including student satisfaction, graduate career prospects and a value-added score, which compares the student's final degree results with the entry qualifications. Head of Department Dr Richard Thelwell commented: 'we are very proud of these excellent results, which reflect the high quality vocational courses that we deliver, the excellent work of our staff, and the fantastic achievements of our students.'

## Successful BASES Student Conference

On 8 and 9 April the University of Portsmouth hosted the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) Annual Student Conference 2014. Over 300 delegates attended from universities across the United Kingdom, where they listened to keynote presentations from speakers including Olympic champion rower Katherine Grainger, National Director of the English Institute of Sport Nigel Walker, and Chris Neville, the England Football Team Strength and Conditioning Coach. The delegates also had the chance to present their own work, take part in workshops in the first-class sport and exercise facilities and network through the comprehensive social programme. The conference organiser, Professor Joanna Scurr, commented: 'the feedback from the delegates was excellent and the conference was a real success. The student presentations were of a really high standard and the delegates will have gained lots of valuable experience and had the opportunity to experience the first-class facilities at the University of Portsmouth.'



[www.port.ac.uk/sportscience](http://www.port.ac.uk/sportscience)

## Student success

### DSES award winners

At the end of each academic year DSES makes a number of awards to students who have excelled in a variety of areas. This year's award winners were: Rebecca Hings (outstanding undergraduate academic achievement (sponsored by Nova)), Andrew Powell (outstanding postgraduate academic achievement (sponsored by John Wiley)), Peeraphat Sirireung (most improved student (sponsored by Human Kinetics)), Amber Johnson (contribution to community sport (sponsored by the Department of Sport and Recreation)), Phillip Turrell (best Sport and Exercise Science BSc project (sponsored by Cranleigh)), Lauren Hunnisett (best Sports Development BSc project (sponsored by Portsmouth City Council)), Jade Kirke (best MSc project (sponsored by Jenny Golden)), Jessica Bradley (outstanding contribution to the Department (sponsored by the DSES)).

### England Netball recruits DSES graduates

Amy Hewick, Sally Tibbits, Emily Loftus and Hannah Brooks are all recent graduates from the BSc (Hons) Sports Development course and have all been recruited by England Netball. Course leader Kieren McEwan commented: 'the fact that four students from the same course have been recruited by a national governing body that was voted National Governing Body 2014 at the BT Sports Industry Awards shows that we are providing our students with the skills that employers want and that we are preparing our students to succeed in the best jobs in a competitive jobs market.'

In her appointment as the Regional Coordinator for London and the South East, it was noted that Amy 'has good communication skills due to presentations given as part of the degree programme'. Amy commented: 'the project management experience whilst volunteering at the Great South Run was important. It is recognising the practical elements of the course that improve your employability status, and the group work teaches you the skills that are reflective of the work place.'

Sally, who is the County Development Officer for Kent, thought that the course at Portsmouth gave her 'an in-depth knowledge of the sport development world, as well as giving practical experience to enable me to execute England Netball programmes on the ground'. Emily, who has been with England Netball as Hampshire and IOW Development Officer longest out of the group, suggested that 'throughout my time at England Netball, I've found the key attributes needed are excellent communication skills, being a good organiser, being able to work well as a part of a team as well as an individual, and being hardworking and conscientious. These are all transferable skills I gained whilst completing my degree and developed during my working career'.

## Alumni update

The Department of Sport and Exercise Science at the University of Portsmouth has a strong employment record and we are proud of the successes of our ex students. In this regular feature we catch up with one of our alumnus to find out what they have done since leaving the University.

**Name:** Alex Ouzounoglou

**Courses studied:** BSc (Hons) Sport and Exercise Science (2005 to 2008), MSc Sports Performance (2008 to 2009)

**Current job:** Head of Academy Sports Science, Burnley Football Club

**Typical day:** I provide sports science and strength and conditioning support to our U21 Development Squad and U18 Youth Team players. Depending on the day, this ranges from on-field conditioning to strength and power development and injury prevention to recovery sessions. I also ensure hydration, wellbeing, recovery and training intensity is assessed daily through various monitoring techniques.

**Best thing about your job:** The best thing about my job is being in an active environment and involved in sport every day. Being able to work in a football environment and alongside professional athletes is a dream come true.

**Worst thing about your job:** The most difficult thing about working in football is the yearly retain and release process. It is always disappointing to see players leave the club whom you have been educating, coaching and developing for a number of years. That and the weather up north!

**Advice you would give to DSES students wanting to pursue a similar career:** Gain as much experience as you can and set yourself apart from the rest. The knowledge and education from the degree is fantastic, however there is also a lot you can learn in an applied environment. Offer your services to local sports teams and build your coaching philosophies from there.

**Best memory of your time at Portsmouth:** My best memory of my time at Portsmouth was playing with the University Football Club. Going to university is primarily about coming away with further education and a good degree. However, it is also a major life event and a chance to meet new people and share new experiences. It is important to find a healthy balance between the two. Studying in Portsmouth, you are guaranteed to experience both.

### Student profile

**Name:** Jamie Prout

**Hometown:** Marlborough

**Course:** BSc (Hons) Sport and Exercise Science



**Why did you choose to study at Portsmouth?** Once I had met the enthusiastic lecturers and saw the excellent science equipment at the Open Day I had to come back for more.

**What's your favourite thing about being a student at Portsmouth?** Meeting passionate people. The staff on my course are engaging and there are plenty of great clubs/societies to participate in for almost any hobby or skill.

**What do you hope to do when you finish your studies?** I hope to publish my research in a peer-reviewed journal and use what I have learnt in my studies to improve the performance of workers or athletes in extreme environmental conditions.

## New staff join DSES



The new academic year sees the introduction of two new staff to the Department of Sport and Exercise Science: Zoe Saynor, who will be working in the area of Physical Activity, Exercise and Health, and Dr Joseph O' Halloran, who will be working in the area of Human Movement Sciences. Zoe joins us from the University of Exeter, where

she has been working in the Children's Health and Exercise Research Centre and Royal Devon and Exeter NHS Foundation, conducting research looking at exercise in individuals with cystic fibrosis. Zoe is also an England Rugby International. Joseph joins us from the University of Limerick where his work has focused on the use of dynamical systems theory methods in the evaluation of human movement. Both members of staff have significant teaching and research experience and they will be well placed to make a valuable contribution to our teaching and research profile.

### DSES academic speaks at English Institute of Sport



Dr Jo Corbett was recently invited to present at the English Institute of Sport (EIS) on an ongoing programme of research co-funded by the EIS and the University of Portsmouth and being conducted by PhD student Rebecca

Neal. The research is examining the use of environmental stressors, alone and in combination, as a tool for enhancing human performance. Jo Corbett said: 'It was an honour to be asked to present at the EIS, and it is really exciting seeing the impact of the research that we are conducting at the University of Portsmouth and the way that it is being used to inform the preparation of athletes that are going to go and compete for medals at Rio 2016.'

### Expert workshops



DSES have recently hosted two workshops showcasing the expertise and first-class facilities on offer within the Department. The Research Group in Breast Health held a workshop on 'The Science of

Breasts and Bras'. The workshop was attended by industry experts, independent retailers and physiotherapists, with presentations and practical demonstrations by members of the research group highlighting the research that this group has undertaken. On 20 April, 45 delegates attended a Swimming Research Workshop where members of the Extreme Environments Research Group presented some of the research undertaken by this group and led practical workshops in the swimming flume.

Please keep checking the DSES website for forthcoming workshops.

## High-quality teaching

### Research excellence recognised

In recognition of her outstanding research achievements as leader of the internationally recognised Research Group in Breast Health, Joanna Scurr has recently been awarded the title of Professor of Biomechanics. Professor Scurr's research group consists of ten researchers and academics who conduct research across a variety of themes including breast pain, understanding appropriate breast support, and breast biomechanics in sport. Professor Scurr's work regularly appears in the national and international media, and the group have developed close collaborations with a number of industry groups and have secured a substantial amount of research funding for their work.

