



# MSc Physical Activity, Exercise and Health

## *Programme Specification*

### **Primary Purpose**

Course management and quality assurance.

### **Secondary Purpose**

Detailed information for students, staff and employers. Current students should refer to the related Course Handbook for further detail.

### **Disclaimer**

The University of Portsmouth has checked the information given in this Programme Specification. We will endeavour to deliver the course in keeping with this Programme Specification; however, changes may sometimes be required arising from annual monitoring, student feedback, review and update of units and courses. Where this activity leads to significant changes to units and courses, there will be prior consultation of students and others, wherever possible, and the University will take all reasonable steps to minimize disruption to students. It is also possible that the University may not be able to offer a unit or course for reasons outside of its control, for example; the absence of a member of staff or low student registration numbers. Where this is the case, the University will endeavour to inform applicants and students as soon as possible. Where appropriate, the University will facilitate the transfer of affected students to another suitable course.

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## Course Details

### **1. Named Awards**

MSc in Physical Activity, Exercise and Health

### **2. Course Code (and UCAS Code if applicable)**

C2677F/P

### **3. Awarding Body**

University of Portsmouth

### **4. Teaching Institution**

University of Portsmouth

### **5. Accrediting Body**

None

### **6. QAA Benchmark Groups**

BioSciences (2015)

Clinical Sciences (2004)

Physiotherapy (2001)

### **7. Document Control Information**

September 2017

### **8. Effective Session**

2017-2018

### **9. Author**

Dr Andrew Scott

### **10. Faculty**

Faculty of Science

### **11. Department**

Department of Sport and Exercise Science

## Curriculum

### **12. Educational Aims**

The General aims of the Programme:

- To provide an interdisciplinary applied approach to enhancing health-related fitness
- To provide a challenging and stimulating study environment
- To provide a framework allowing students to follow a coherent programme of study

- To develop technical and vocational skills underpinned by academic learning
- To provide students with the skills and knowledge required to maximise career opportunities within the field of clinical exercise

The aims of the MSc Degree:

- To promote an understanding of the inter-disciplinary nature of applied clinical exercise science
- To provide advanced knowledge and understanding of scientific principles underpinning health-related fitness enhancement
- To enable students to evaluate and apply a range of research techniques and methodologies.
- To evaluate and integrate application of theory to practice with current needs, priorities and ethical frameworks within clinical exercise
- To use problem-based learning approaches to enable students to experience a variety of challenges in clinical exercise
- To give the student relevant experience and support to carry out a research project of their own design and to interpret and discuss these results within the context of clinical exercise

### 13. Reference Points

This MSc recognises an interdisciplinary approach, providing a holistic understanding for applied clinical exercise of which professionals working in the field must be aware. The structure of this MSc recognises this as imperative and encourages students to appreciate the inter-disciplinary frameworks and solutions. This requires a clear understanding of the inter-play and complex interactions in the clinical exercise setting. This MSc programme matches the specialisms offered by the Course team, further enhances the Department's research profile in the direction of health-related exercise and meets the needs of the employment market. Additionally, the MSc programme encompasses many of the departmental aims and objectives, specifically by 'producing postgraduate students able to work within applied health-related exercise settings' and by 'developing effective working relationships with relevant local agencies in the physical activity and health sectors and reflecting this within relevant units'.

The programme's learning outcomes have been developed in alignment with the following reference documents:

- The QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, 2008 (FHEQ)
- Quality Assurance Agency's Benchmark statement for Physiotherapy, 2001 (CS)
- Quality Assurance Agency's Benchmark statement for Clinical Science, 2004 (CS)
- Quality Assurance Agency's Benchmark statement for BioSciences 2015 (BS)
- The University of Portsmouth's Curricular Framework (CF)
- Policy for Placement Learning, University of Portsmouth (PPL)
- Assessment Code of Practice, University of Portsmouth (ACP)

### 14. General Learning Outcomes

#### Level 7

Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship
- originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline

- conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
  - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
- continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level

And holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
  - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
  - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations
- the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development

## 15. Learning Outcomes

### A. Knowledge and Understanding of:

- A.1 Physical activity and health from an applied and interdisciplinary perspective.
- A.2 Applied theoretical research-based knowledge across health-related fitness sub-disciplines.
- A.3 Ethical implications within health-related fitness research and support.
- A.4 Problem solving approaches to formulate solutions to variety of problems in the health-related fitness context.
- A.5 Comprehensive techniques/ methodologies applicable to individual projects that are theory or research based

### B. Cognitive (Intellectual or Thinking) Skills, able to:

- B.1 Recognise and critically analyse existing methodologies used within physical activity and health.
- B.2 Formulate appropriate research questions within the realm of clinical exercise science.
- B.3 Select and apply scientific principles to the implementation of health-related fitness enhancing and evaluation strategies.
- B.4 Use principles and supporting theory to solve “real” health-related fitness issues and challenges.
- B.5 Select research protocols to collect data that can subsequently be interpreted, evaluated, integrated and disseminated into relevant formats.
- B.6 Synthesise and contribute to the creation of new knowledge within the research project

### C. Practical (Professional or Subject) Skills, able to:

- C.1 Proficiently use equipment in a safe, confident and reliable manner
- C.2 Produce critical scientific reports, programmes and case studies in an appropriate format for application within a health-related fitness environment
- C.3 Confidently use a variety of valid and reliable tests in the assessment of health-related fitness status.

#### **D. Transferable (Graduate and Employability) Skills, able to:**

- D.1 Communicate effectively and confidently, using a range of media
- D.2 Apply both quantitative and qualitative skills used within clinical research
- D.3 Illustrate competence in the use of IT and specialist software
- D.4 Be an independent learner and demonstrate collaborative skills
- D.5 Solve problems and demonstrate sound judgement in decision making
- D.6 Identify and use the appropriate resources to enable the successful completion of a task
- D.7 Meet deadlines and manage time effectively
- D.8 Develop a self-reflective element to learning and evaluation

#### **16. Learning and Teaching Strategies and Methods**

A variety of teaching and learning strategies will be used based on successful methods currently used within the Department of Sport and Exercise Science.

- The VLE will enhance traditional teaching and learning strategies for content delivery and student support (facilitating A1 -A5).
- The emphasis on good practice throughout the programme encourages students to utilise and appraise a variety of information sources including traditional book and journal-based literature as well as using information technology resources such as the VLE, internet based journals, CD-ROMs and human resources from the sporting profession (facilitating A1, A2, A3).
- Group/practical work will also aid students' ability to work proactively with others (facilitating A4 & A5).
- Intellectual skills are developed through lectures as well as practical laboratory sessions, workshops and seminars, which encourage knowledge transfer across sub-disciplines.
- The "Applied Research Methods" unit will allow students to apply theory to practical research, thus providing an avenue for independent and autonomous research. These skills will also be evident in the MSc Research Project (facilitating B1, B2, B3 & B4)
- Cognitive elements are integral components of each of the units within the programme and these each require specific methodological research and analysis strategies unique to the discipline involved, e.g. disease diagnosis, pre-exercise screening, health behaviour change and nutrition. At the same time, they also encourage students to synthesise the methods into an interdisciplinary approach toward supporting health-related fitness change, this is particularly evident in the Exercise Rehabilitation and Research Project units (facilitating B3, B4, B5 & B6)

The emphasis of this MSc is on the practical application of skills with acknowledgment of underpinning theory.

- Practical workshops are included within each of the taught units.
- The format of the programme will enable students to obtain a range and depth of laboratory-based skills, field skills and techniques as well as the ability to communicate with clients/patients, adopting a professional and approachable style (facilitating C1 & C2).
- Attention to ethical considerations and health and safety issues is also promoted within units and within the production of reports (facilitating C1 & C3).

Students develop the ability to work with key stakeholders involved in health-related fitness for diseased populations. Students will mostly enter this programme following undergraduate study and professional experience in a related area and therefore many scientific and professional skills may already be evident. Further development of these skills and other transferable skills are a critical feature of this MSc.

## 17. Assessment Strategy

Assignments consist of both formative and summative elements (supporting A1-A5). This programme is designed to provide practical, hands-on expertise in clinical exercise techniques; therefore the majority of the assessment requires a problem based learning approach. One example of a unit that utilises this approach is the integration of theory and applied practice in the 30 credit Exercise Rehabilitation unit. Units such as this require the students to apply fundamental theories, already learned within each sub-discipline, to understand real life scenarios within a health-related exercise setting (supporting A2, A4 & A5). Such assessment methods and other more traditional methods, such as examinations, individual and group presentations, meet all the learning outcomes for knowledge and understanding.

Assignments consist of both formative and summative elements, with a primary focus on problem-based learning and practical work through projects, presentations, case studies and examinations. Each unit develops the students' ability to recognise and critically analyse existing methodologies and techniques and apply them to research or support in clinical exercise science, supporting learning outcomes B1, B3 and B4. Additionally, the MSc Research Project allows the students to demonstrate their ability to hypothesise and generate research questions, supporting learning outcomes B2, B3, B5 and B6.

This work will be formally assessed via role play, projects and laboratory reports, for example the unit "Exercise Rehabilitation" requires students to follow a professional protocol with regard to preparation, customer care, implementation and follow-up of a health-related fitness assessment (supporting C1 & C3). Students are expected to work within time constraints and pressures associated with the health-related fitness professions (supporting C1 & C2). Likewise the Psychology of Exercise and Physical Activity unit requires the students to simulate a professional scenario between clinical exercise scientist and client with regard to adopting a healthier lifestyle.

Skills are further developed via a range of assessment mechanisms including case studies, presentations and reports. For example the case studies in the Clinical Physiology and Psychology of Exercise and Physical Activity unit require students to utilise their problem-solving abilities by drawing from various interconnected theories and mechanisms learned from their experiences within the taught units.

## 18. Course Structure, Progression and Award Requirements

See [Unit Web Search](#)<sup>1</sup> for full details on the course structure and units

The programme is offered in two formats:

- As a full-time course (12 month) and as a part-time course (24 month). The delivery of the course in each of these formats is modular.
- The course consists of 30 credit point units, where 30 credits represent 300 hours of study time and usually includes approximately up to 48 hours of time-tabled activities.
- The course offers a total of 180 credits for the MSc award and ends with a 60-credit research project.
- There are two intermediary exit awards:
  - Postgraduate Certificate requiring 60 credits
  - Postgraduate Diploma requiring 120 credits.

## 19. Employability Statement

It is expected that when students graduate from this course they will be well placed to find employment in the field of clinical exercise and other human and applied science disciplines. The Department has developed a forum (Placements and Employability Group) for evaluating the programme in terms of meeting the requirements of the specified field of employment. The PEG meets quarterly and reviews curriculum issues and links between the department and potential

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<sup>1</sup> [www.port.ac.uk/unitwebsearch](http://www.port.ac.uk/unitwebsearch)

employers. Information specifically assisting students with their future career options is covered in the tutorial programme, and a strength of the course is that the applied nature of units enables students to develop their competencies and skills to enhance their employability within the field of science.

## **Course Management**

### **20. Support for Student Learning**

- The Course is managed by a Course Leader.
- Extensive induction programme introduces the student to the University and their course.
- Each student has a personal tutor, responsible for pastoral support and guidance.
- University support services include careers, financial advice, housing, counselling etc.
- The Academic Skills Unit (ASK).
- The Additional Support and Disability Advice Centre (ASDAC).
- Excellent library facilities.
- The University of Portsmouth has consistently been awarded an excellent rating for student support and guidance in a number of Quality Assurance Agency inspections.
- Student course and unit handbooks provide information about the course structure and University regulations etc.
- Feedback is provided for all assessments.
- Personal Development Planning (PDP) for all awards.

### **21. Admissions Criteria**

#### **A. Academic Admissions Criteria**

- This course should be of interest to health professionals (e.g. exercise physiologists, doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, health visitors, dieticians, health promoters, etc) and those with related undergraduate degrees (e.g. exercise, nutrition, health, biomedicine, psychology, physiology, anatomy, biochemistry).
- Students will be expected to hold at least an upper second class honours degree in an appropriate subject awarded by a UK university or internationally recognised higher education institution.
- Alternatively, students may have a relevant professional qualification with appropriate professional experience, deemed equivalent to the above by the University of Portsmouth.
- Applicants are required to have a standard of proficiency in the English language at a minimum of IELTS band 7.0 with no component score below 6.5.

#### **B. Disability**

The University makes no distinction in its admissions policy with regard to disability and will endeavour to make all reasonable adjustments in order to make it possible for students to study at Portsmouth on a course of their choice.

### **22. Evaluation and Enhancement of Standards and Quality in Learning and Teaching**

#### **A. Mechanisms for Review and Evaluation**

- Course Leader's Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review.
- Head of Department's Annual Standards and Quality Evaluative Review.
- Unit and Course Level student feedback considered at Board of Studies.
- Unit Assessment Board consideration of student performance for each programme.



- Annual Standards and Quality Reports to Board of Studies, including consideration of Subject and Award External Examiner Reports.
- Periodic Programme Review.
- Student Representatives and Student/Staff Consultative Committees.
- National Student Survey.
- Staff Performance and Development Review.
- Peer Review and Development Framework.
- Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee.

#### **B. Responsibilities for Monitoring and Evaluation**

- Unit Co-ordinators for unit content and delivery.
- Course Leader for day-to-day running of course.
- Board of Studies with overall responsibilities for operation and content of course.
- Head of Department.
- Associate Dean (Academic).
- Associate Dean (Students).
- Quality Assurance Committee.
- Unit, Award and Progression Board of Examiners.

#### **C. Mechanisms for Gaining Student Feedback**

- Student Representation on Board of Studies.
- Student Staff Consultative Committees.
- Unit and Course level student feedback questionnaires.
- University participates in external student surveys, eg National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and International Student Barometer (ISB).

#### **D. Staff Development Priorities**

- Academic staff undertake activities related to research, scholarship, teaching and learning and student support and guidance.
- Annual staff performance and development reviews match development to needs.
- Managers undertake a variety of management development programmes.
- New academic staff are required to work towards Higher Education Academy Fellowship status.
- All academic staff encouraged to seek Higher Education Academy membership.
- Academic staff new to teaching required to undertake Initial Professional Development Programme (iPROF).
- Support Staff are encouraged to attend short courses in areas such as minute taking, and specific IT packages.

### **23. Assessment Regulations**

The current University of Portsmouth academic regulations will apply to this programme (see [Assessment and Regulations<sup>2</sup>](#)).

### **24. Role of Externals**

Subject External Examiners who will:

- Oversee unit assessment and usually attend Unit Assessment Boards

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<sup>2</sup> [www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/assessmentandregulations/](http://www.port.ac.uk/departments/services/academicregistry/qualitymanagementdivision/assessmentandregulations/)

- Review unit assessment strategy
- Sample assessment artefacts
- Present report to Unit Assessment Boards

Award External Examiners (usually also a Subject External Examiner) who will:

- Oversee and attend Award/Progression Boards
- Scrutinise and endorse the outcomes of assessment
- Ensure that the standard of the award is maintained at a level comparable with that of similar awards elsewhere in the United Kingdom

## 25. Indicators of Standards and Quality

### A. Professional Accreditation/Recognition

None

### B. Periodic Programme Review (or equivalent)

The Department of Sport and Exercise Science's programmes underwent Periodic Review in 2014. Outcomes were confirmation of fitness of purpose of the curriculum and confirmation of the effectiveness of annual monitoring and review processes.

### C. Quality Assurance Agency

QAA Higher Education Review, March 2015, judgements about standards and quality meet UK expectations (*for full report see [Higher Education Review of the University of Portsmouth, March 2015](#)*<sup>3</sup>).

### D. Others

None.

## 26. Further Information

Further information may be found in:

- Student Handbook
- University of Portsmouth Curriculum Framework Document
- University of Portsmouth Prospectus
- [University of Portsmouth](#)<sup>4</sup> and [School/Department](#)<sup>5</sup> websites

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<sup>3</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/University%20of%20Portsmouth/University-of-Portsmouth-HER-15.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/University%20of%20Portsmouth/University-of-Portsmouth-HER-15.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> [www.port.ac.uk/](http://www.port.ac.uk/)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.port.ac.uk/department-of-sport-and-exercise-science/>