



Further Education Lecturer Research into Higher Education Choices Amongst Sports Students in Herefordshire and Worcestershire

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INTRODUCTION

This is the report of research conducted into sports student progression and HE choices in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The research was commissioned and conducted by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Lifelong Learning Network as a means of drawing on the experience of lecturers in Sports to identify the interests and needs of their students as well as to highlight issues of progression within the 2 counties.

SURVEY

Sports course leaders at all FE colleges that run level 3 programmes in Sport in Herefordshire and Worcestershire were surveyed both by electronic and paper based surveys. The survey was conducted in June 2008, and was conducted in parallel with a survey of students. The questionnaire was informally trialled with a Sports lecturer and adapted to take into account feedback received.

SAMPLE SIZE

All 8 colleges offering Sport at Level 3 across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

RESPONSE RATE

Responses from 6 course leaders from 5 further education colleges across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

RESULTS

Q1 & Q2 are a filter to ensure that respondents are lecturers on relevant sport courses in Herefordshire & Worcestershire.

They identified 5 colleges spanning Herefordshire and Worcestershire (two responses were received from one college), and providing a range of L3 qualifications:

College 1 – providing AS/A2 in Physical Education

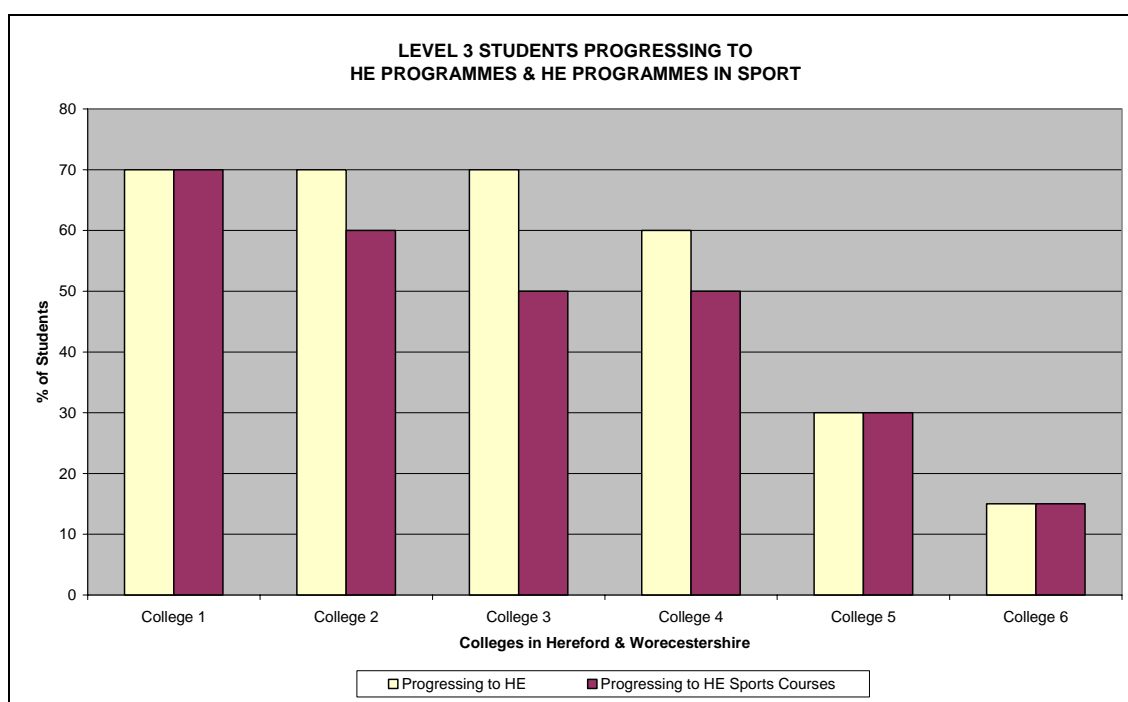
College 2/3 – providing AS/A2 in Physical Education, BTEC National Diploma/Certificate

College 4 – providing BTEC National Diploma

College 5 – providing BTEC National Diploma

College 6 – providing BTEC National Diploma

**Q3. Approximately what percentage of your students...
progress to HE courses?
progress to HE courses in Sport (or related subjects)?**



Q4. What sort of courses are most popular?

Undergraduate degrees	83.3%
HND	33.3%
Foundation degrees	16.7%
Other	0.0%

Q5. Are they mostly interested in studying ... Full-time, Part-time, Distance Learning?

Full-time:	100%
Part-time:	0%

Q6. If these courses were available what courses would your students be most interested in (Mark your top three options)

Lecturers selected from a list of: Sports Studies, Sports Coaching, Sport Tourism, Sports Development, Sports Journalism, Sports Business, Sports Psychology, Physical Education, Exercise Science, Health & Well Being, Sports Leadership and Management, Sports Sociology, Sports Law, Named Degree in a Specific Sport, Other

Only 3 out of the 6 respondents marked their top three options making the statistics a little more complicated. Thus the responses are tabulated in full to indicate preferences.

The responses were:

Subject Area	College 1	College 2	College 3	College 4	College 5	College 6
Sports Coaching	●		●	●	●	●
Sports Studies	●		●	●		●
Physical Education	●	●	●		●	
Exercise Science	●	●		●		
Named Degree					●	●
Sports Development			●			●
Sports Business						
Sports Law			●			
Sports L&M			●			
Other:						
i. Sports Therapy			●			
ii. Fitness instructing		●				
iii. Health			●			

Although the number of courses identified varies between respondents, the relative positions of the courses are largely unaffected if these responses are disregarded. The one exception is sports development, which would be negatively affected, thus the lecturer responses are listed by the percentage of responses i.e. 83% of the respondents indicated that their students would be interested in sports coaching courses at HE level.

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|-----|----------------------------------|-------|
| 1. | Sports Coaching | 83.3% |
| 2. | Sports Studies | 66.7% |
| 3. | Physical Education | 66.7% |
| 4. | Exercise Studies | 66.7% |
| 5. | Named degree in a specific sport | 50.0% |
| 6. | Sports Development | 33.3% |
| 7. | Sports Business | 16.7% |
| 8. | Sports Law | 16.7% |
| 9. | Sports Leadership & Management | 16.7% |
| 10. | Other (please state) | 33.4% |
| | i. Sports therapy | |
| | ii. Fitness instructing | |
| | iii. Health | |

Q7. Additional Comments:

College 1 "Students are looking for courses that offer them professional qualifications:
e.g. coaching qualifications, fitness instructor courses, swimming teachers,
lifeguard etc"

College 2 "Incorporating fitness elements and science"

ANALYSIS

Progression Rates

The survey reveals a high degree of variation in progression to sports-related HE courses from FE colleges in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, with colleges ranging from 70% to 15 % progression. The progression rates are reported figures based on course leaders' experiences and have not been audited against student records. Thus, the figures must be treated as estimations rather than statistically correct. It should also be cautioned that progression rates may reflect the progression of particular cohorts rather than an average over a number of years. Despite the imprecise nature of these figures several key points can be identified:

First, the progression rates appear to relate to the type of college with considerably higher progression from sixth form colleges. There are a number of possible reasons for this that were not explored within this research in particular students' entry grades and the specific balance between the academic and practical content within the courses.

Second, there appears to be a strong correlation between high rates of progression and whether a college provides its own HE courses in Sport. Whilst it is hard to disentangle this from the content of the course it is clear that the highest progression rates relate to institutions that provide both FE and HE programmes in the curriculum area.

Third, no evidence was provided on outcomes other than HE progression. Several courses have a particular interest in vocational development with strong links to sports employers, these courses are generally structured towards entry into sports related employment, and have correspondingly low rates of progression to HE.

Fourth, most students progress to HE within the same curriculum area, although the proportion varies considerably between colleges.

Thus the information on progression rates (see Question 3) provides an indication of the variety of courses and providers as well as a picture of student progression in Sports related courses across Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

Types of Courses

All lecturers responded that full-time courses were popular amongst students. 5 lecturers identified the most popular qualifications as Undergraduate degrees (BA, BSc), with 2 also identifying HNDs. 1 lecturer identified Foundation degrees as the most popular qualification for students to progress onto.

Courses

According to the research the most popular courses are *Sports Coaching*, *Sports Studies*, *Physical Education* and *Exercise Studies*. These courses can be considered as more traditional choices within Sports. The single most popular course was *Sports Coaching*, perhaps reflecting a perception of its vocational relevance, or that it fits well with the predominant L3 qualification: BTEC National Diploma in Sport. Also popular was the concept of a *Named Degree in a specific sport* (e.g. BSc Football coaching), where half the

respondents suggested that their students would be interested in this course. This was of specific interest to colleges with sports academies.

Thus the overall picture is the predominance of the well established courses, possibly this reflects the idea of the vocational relevance of these programmes. Alternatively it may be that the lecturers anticipate that students without clear ideas of which area to study will opt for more generalist courses in sports.

It seems probable that the design of the questionnaire, in particular the limitation to selecting three courses, had the unintentional effect of limiting respondents ability to identify the full spectrum of courses that would be appropriate to the varying needs of the students. Where respondents ignored the advice the data provides more detail on the relative attraction of the more specialist programmes.

Additional Comments

The feedback in this section identifies two themes that are relevant to student needs. First, the value that students place on additional qualifications within the main programme of study, and second, the need to include fitness elements and science into more general sports degrees. It seems probable that both comments reflect lecturers' perception that HE courses do not draw on the practical approaches that are developed through the L3 programmes, and tend towards academic rather than vocational approaches.

CONCLUSIONS

The survey provides an initial opportunity to consider the range of progression opportunities open to Sports Students, from the perspective of FE lecturers in the subject. It considers the type of courses that would appeal to students and the mode of study.

From this it is possible to draw two clear conclusions:

First, there is broad support for the current range of L4 programmes in the region, and some indication of areas for development – particularly for the development of *'Degree programmes in a Named Sport'* and *'Sports Development'*.

Second, there is a concern within the responses of lecturers (particularly from those institutions with lower progression rates) about the vocational relevance of some HE Sports provision. These comments suggest that there may be a demand for Higher Education programmes that incorporate vocational qualifications.

In addition to these conclusions, the research identifies a number of areas for further research. These might include research into the reasons for the wide spread of progression rates across the region, and whether the current curriculum offer at FE and HE is appropriate to all learners. Second further research might be necessary to identify niche courses and target specific groups of students to identify their interests.