

**MSc Sport Coaching and Performance**

**Course Handbook: Performance Development & Expertise**

**Introduction**

Welcome to Performance Development & Expertise. This course is part of the MSc in Sport Coaching and Performance at the School of Education of the University of Edinburgh. It is also open to students on other programmes with an interest in this area.

For more information about the full MSc Programme you should contact the Programme Director, Dr Christine Nash (C.Nash@ed.ac.uk). This course guide will give you information on the course structure, the assessments, and other organisational details that you will need. For further details about this course in particular you should contact Dr Christine Nash, the Course Organiser ([C.Nash@ed.ac.uk](mailto:C.Nash@ed.ac.uk)).



**Prerequisites**

It is assumed that participants on this course will previously have participated in active delivery of sport coaching, or some other context agreed by Course Organiser.

**Aims and learning outcomes**

The formal aims and anticipated learning outcomes for Performance Development & Expertise are as follows:

Aims

The road to expertise in sport has been a recent development, aimed at assisting coaches and national governing bodies, by identifying talent within a particular sport and allowing the coaches to spend time developing those with promise, with a view to developing expertise. There is an ongoing debate as to whether this represents ethical good practice, whether it is a sound use of money and does in fact develop better performers, who are able to compete on the world stage. This course will examine this debate as well as models of talent identification and aspects of talent development. This is underpinned by the study of expertise, from a number of viewpoints: the performer; the coach and the concepts of expertise in different domains.

Learning outcomes

On completion of the course, participants will be able to:

* Critically appraise the development of expertise in both performers and coaches
* Evaluate the concepts and rationale for talent identification and development within sport
* Critically analyse the integration of talent identification, talent development and pathways within sporting contexts
* Appraise the role of higher order thinking, personality and creativity within performance development and expertise.

The whole notion of “learning outcomes” is troublesome, and will no doubt arise as a topic of conversation on this course. Suffice it to say here that while learning outcomes can be expressed in a general advisory way for a course as constructed, the most important learning outcomes will be those identified and owned by the learner.

**Delivery and Workload**

The course will run for 12 weeks from Monday 11th January 2016 until Sunday 3rd April 2016. This will be made up of 1 week of introduction and orientation, 6 weeks of reading on the topic, 3 weeks of assessed group seminars and a further two weeks for completion of the final assessed assignment. This course will be primarily based on guided personal reading, supported by ‘tutorial’ participation mediated through both synchronous and asynchronous online discussion. However, there is an expectation that theories and concepts will be applied in ongoing practice to provide an applied understanding of the information and knowledge.

All of the essential core readings will be provided online through the course Moodle site, with optional secondary references provided for consultation at the participants’ discretion, led by their interest. Participants will be encouraged to browse a small number of key journals (also available online through the University Library) to develop a feeling for the issues current in the field. There will be the opportunity for a formative assessment in the group seminar element.

Participation in the course online discussion (which will use the discussion forum tool within Moodle) will be expected of all course members. While participants are, of course, welcomed and encouraged to drive online discussion in those directions that seem relevant to them within the defined aims of the course, stimulus to discussion will be provided by:

* details of the course reading;
* specific questions for general discussion throughout thiscourse;
* fulfilment of assessment criteria

**Participation Etiquette**

This is NOT the introductory course on this programme however all participants on this course will be assumed NOT to have participated in online courses previously. As a participant on this course, you are expected to contribute regularly to the class discussions, and that when you do so the basic rules of ‘netiquette’ will apply. There are some ‘netiquette rules’ posted on the forum for your information. While robust debate is to be encouraged, please ensure that your contributions are polite and supportive. Someone who expresses an opinion with which you profoundly disagree is doing you a great service; he or she is helping you to articulate an understanding that you may previously not have had. As a recipient of robust criticism understand that the critic is doing a courtesy in engaging with your ideas, and is helping you to refine them. Some more detailed recommendations about the structuring of your online contributions are provided on the course Moodle site. In the meantime, general guidance can be summed up in the words ‘little and often’. Each post should primarily make one point, or relate to one topic. If you want to make more than one point, make separate posts. Such a discipline will make it much easier for a reply to be shaped, and will make it easier for the reader to follow what is going on. To quote from a course guide for another online course: Contributions to the discussion don’t have to be beautifully structured and written in formal, typo-free academic prose, but they should be reasonably clear and – very important – should function to drive the discussion along in a positive way. Try also to keep your discussion postings reasonably short and to the point – long, very intricate contributions tend not to be read, and can put others off contributing themselves. Reflect on your experiences developed through participating in coaching, think what may be useful and helpful to others and act accordingly.

Personally, I find the debate, discussion and exchange of ideas that is possible on the discussion board to be extremely useful. Many times, coaches have different experiences and perspectives that are extremely valuable in posing questions, offering differing points of view and reflecting on other contexts. This contributes to learning – my own view is that at this level of study there are few, if any, cases where the answer is black or white – shades of grey are the norm here.

**Social Networking**

Social networking is an important technologically mediated social phenomenon, and we feel that anyone interested in the potential of technologies in education should be aware of it, and develop a position on its relevance and significance. A recent survey suggested that something in the order of 97% of the undergraduate population of the University of Edinburgh report making regular use of some form of social networking site, such as Facebook. Further, 64% claim that they have used social networking activities for academically relevant purposes.

The course, like many other areas of the Programme, will also make use of Twitter to pass around comments and links to information discovered. We will colonise the hash-tag #PDE. Please add this tag to Tweets relevant to the course, and keep an eye on what others Tweet.

**Computer skills and equipment/software that you will need**

There is no assumption that participants on this Course, or the Programme, will be advanced computer users, although you will be expected to be a regular user of the computer for communication, information search and retrieval, and for writing. To participate you will need regular access to a computer capable of connecting to the Internet and to the course’s Moodle site. You should consult the Programme Handbook for further, more specific advice and guidance. You may wish to print copies of the recommended reading materials – unless you are comfortable reading from the screen – in which case access to a printer will be necessary. The basic software applications that you will require will be:

* a Web browser to access the Moodle resources and other recommended sites;
* Acrobat Reader to access course readings. You are also likely to want a word processing application for your writing. Some additional web-based tools and browser plugins will be suggested in relation to particular exercises from time to time. Participants are likely to have evolved their own patterns of working and “personal learning environment” (PLE).

**Course structure and format**

Performance Development and Expertise runs over 12 weeks from the start of the second semester of the 2015 / 16 academic session, from Monday 11th January 2016 until Sunday 3rd April 2016. The course Moodle site will be accessible for purposes of induction and orientation one week before the formal start of the course activities and the outline content of the course is set out below.

**Outline Content**

Week 1: Introduction and Pre-Course Information

This week provides the background information to this course. I hope that you will be able to access the pre-course information – readings, podcasts and introductory lectures – before this week.

There are some activities related to pre-course information but please ensure that you access all this information in the correct order. For example, the quiz in week 1 will make little sense unless you have listened to the background lecture.

### Week 2 - Nature Vs Nurture

"**Nature versus nurture**" is a psychological term related to whether heredity or the environment most impacts human psychological development (behaviour, habits, intelligence, personality, sexuality, aggressive tendencies, and so on).

Those that support the nature theory believe that heredity determines not only a child’s physical traits but everything else as well. Children are born with a set of traits that is predetermined and not influenced by the environment around them. Heredity alone determines the type of person that we become.

Those that support nurture feel that children are like a clean slate and the experiences they have in life and people who influence them determine what is written upon the slate. Genetics may play a role in deciding personality traits, but ultimately environmental factors determine who we become.

### Week 3: Deliberate Practice & Deliberate Play

Deliberate practice **is a highly structured activity engaged in with the specific goal of improving performance.**

Deliberate practice is different from work, play and simple repetition of a task. It requires effort, it has no monetary reward, and it is not inherently enjoyable. When you engage in deliberate practice, improving your performance over time is your goal and motivation. That’s not to say that deliberate practice can’t be designed to be fun, but it isn’t inherently enjoyable on its own. If you want to gain skills rapidly or approach expert-level status at something, you must understand the importance of deliberate practice and learn how to incorporate it into your daily life.

Deliberate play can be seen as **the opposite of deliberate practice as the focus here is of enjoyment and to try a range of sports which often tend to be “street sports”** such as football, basketball, and cricket among others. A key characteristic of deliberate play is that it is intrinsically motivated and designed to foster high levels of fun and natural skill development. The motive for engaging in this style of play is not for skill development or performance improvement (although this can be a bi-product), and there are no specific outcome goals in mind such as playing with a view to enter in to competition, or to become a national champion. Furthermore, deliberate play will tend to have rules which are more flexible, and rules that would be present in the sport at a formal or competitive level are absent, for example smaller teams, no specific positions, and no referees/ umpires.

### Week 4: Talent Development

Talent management is increasingly discussed in the literature and can be described as a set of practices that are implemented in organisations (CIPD, 2011; McDonnell et al., 2010), and refers to how organisations attract, select, develop and manage employees in an integrated and strategic way (Scullion and Collings, 2011). Talent development represents an important component of the overall talent management process (Novations, 2009, Cappelli, 2009). While it is possible for organisations to pursue a strategy that focuses on talent acquisition from the external sources, such a strategy is unlikely to be successful in the long term. It is well established that there are significant advantages to be gained from an internal development approach and that organisations need to acquire and develop specific knowledge and skills (Lepak and Snell, 1999) in order to be competitive.

Many youth sports coaches claim to be great talent identifiers, and point to the results of their under 11-year all-star team as proof. Yet they are not talent identifiers. They are talent selectors. The difference could not be more striking, or more damaging to our country’s future talent pool in many sports.

Talent selection is the culling of players with the current ability to participate and be successful in events taking place in the near future. Talent identification, on the other hand, is the prediction of future performance based upon an evaluation of current physical, technical, tactical and psychological qualities. Talent selection is pretty simple; talent identification is an art. One yields great results today; the other builds elite athletes and winning teams for the future.

Our current win at all costs youth sports culture promotes talent selection. When a coach is pressured to win by parents or a club, or when he or she feels the need to win to serve their own ego, that coach becomes a talent selector. When you are focused on talent selection, you are picking athletes to help you win now, and cutting ones that will not. You are looking at current athleticism, technical ability, and traits to help achieve short term success. You naturally select the biggest, strongest and fastest young athletes, and play them extensive minutes. You limit playing time for the kids who are not up to snuff, and tell them they need to work harder, get tougher, etc., if they want to play more. You yell at them because they cannot get to the ball quick enough, or cannot shoot well enough to score. You tell them that this type of pressure is what they will face when they are older, so they better get used to it now.

### Week 5: Development of Expertise

Almost every job requires that you continue learning and strengthening your skills. Doing so enables you to receive a promotion or empowers you to lead others in your organization. By learning how to develop professional expertise, you will discover ways to grow in your knowledge and skills. You could also become a recognized expert in your professional field.

There now appear to be a number of attributes that reliably and consistently differentiate the expert in motor skills from the non-expert. Studies reveal that experts have both superior declarative (factual) and procedural knowledge compared to that of non-experts; that the knowledge possessed by experts is organised in a different, more richly differentiated and structured manner than is the knowledge possessed by non-experts; sports experts are superior in the rapid encoding, retrieval, recall and recognition of patterns from their domain of expertise; and experts are superior in the advance prediction/anticipation of the actions of an opponent.

In all cases, the expert advantage is explicable in terms of the development of strategies, either implicitly or explicitly, that help to circumvent known information-processing constraints. For instance, the chunking of knowledge and patterns overcomes known memory capacity constraints; automaticity helps overcome conscious processing capacity constraints; and anticipation helps alleviate the well-known constraints imposed by reaction time delays.

A number of other attributes (for example, rapid detection, knowledge of subjective probabilities) have also been demonstrated, on occasions, to differentiate experts from non-experts, but the overall evidence on these attributes is less compelling both in quantity and consistency. It appears infinitely more sensible to devote practice time with less skilled performers to the enhancement of attributes, such as pattern recognition (‘reading the play’) and anticipation, which are clearly essential for expert performance than to the enhancement of basic visual attributes, such as acuity or depth perception, which do not need to be at supra-normal levels to support expert performance.

### Week 6: Psychological Characteristics of Developing Excellence (PCDE’s)

Whilst it is obvious that some physical and physiological attributes are important in some sports in comparison to others, one’s ability to overcome challenges and perform at the top level requires a whole host of other variables working in unison. Research suggests that those who use psychological skills (e.g., goal-setting, imagery, focus) as part of their development and training have been found to be more successful than those who do not incorporate such skills. Other research evidence also supports the notion that athletes are more successful when they use an array of psychological skills during competition but also when in training in comparison with athletes of a lower standard (Thomas & Thomas, 1999). It is clear that psychological skills play an important role at an elite level but can also be critical in helping athletes reach the top of their sporting disciplines. Recognising the importance of developing and using such psychological traits, Abbot and Collins (2004) investigated the usefulness and practicality of psychological characteristics of developing excellence (PCDEs). PCDEs can aid the learning of new skills (e.g., focus, distraction control) but also enable athletes to gain the most out of each training session (e.g., goal-setting, realistic performance evaluations). PCDEs also enable athletes to remain on their pathway to excellence by investing the necessary time for training in addition to staying committed to the learning process, particularly when their peers may be engaging in perceivably more joyful activities.

Promotion of PCDEs within a talent development environment (e.g., an academy) encourages aspiring athletes to behave like champions. However, it is important that developing athletes understand the behaviours expected of them, with coaches and teaches on-hand to monitor and reinforce these psychological traits. One PCDE which is hugely beneficial in an array of sporting disciplines is ‘focus’ and the ability to control distractions. It is imperative that developing athletes like elites are able to compete and train in environments with numerous distractions including noise, spectators and other competitors. If an athlete is to perform at their best, and to achieve their maximum potential, they need to be able to block out any distractions whilst focusing on the task at hand.

### Week 7: Innovation & Creativity

Discussions about innovation are often made difficult because people are unclear about the exact meanings of some key terms. In particular, there is confusion about the difference between creativity, innovation and invention. Let us start with some definitions:

Creativity is the capability or act of conceiving something original or unusual

Innovation is the implementation of something new.

Invention is the creation of something that has never been made before and is recognized as the product of some unique insight.

If you have a brainstorm meeting and dream up dozens of new ideas, then you have displayed creativity but there is no innovation until something is implemented. Somebody has to take a risk and deliver something for a creative idea to be turned into an innovation. An invention might be a product or device or method that has never existed before. So every invention is an innovation. But every innovation is not an invention.

It is this need for the combination of imagination and innovation (alongside coaching knowledge) that forms the foundation of good creative coaching practice. Robinson (2011) emphasises that any pace of change needs to be matched with an equally dynamic change in how coaches think. Creativity through thinking differently will allow participants (and the sport they are involved in) to “survive and flourish” (p.5). Coaches cannot expect the new generation to respond to methods from another era as they have been shaped by different cultural experiences and demand a more thought provoking experience (McCrindle, 2009). Lockwood & Perlman (2008) highlight that youth sport coaches often “coach the way they were coached” (p.30) which could perpetuate the authoritarian, highly prescriptive sessions which can disillusion those eager to learn and explore. The challenge for the sports coach today is to “create meaningful learning experiences that connect to young people” (Rossi & Tinning, 2011, p.282) and to be open-minded. As one coach commented “everyone and every situation is different, so I can’t have a one-size-fits-all approach” (Nash & Sproule, 2009). This challenge has to have imagination, creativity and innovation at the core. Are all coaches capable of this, or is it an attribute of the few? Can thinking be changed to enable more people to gain this skill, resulting in a more creative and dynamic coaching environment and a more engaged audience?

Week 8: Seminar Assessment Week 1

We will be concentrating on seminars during this week. Attendance is encouraged to support and report back to the presenting group/s. Please note that attendance & engagement is included within the overall assessment for this element.

Week 9: Seminar Assessment Week 2

We will be concentrating on seminars during this week. Attendance is encouraged to support and report back to the presenting group/s. Please note that attendance & engagement is included within the overall assessment for this element.

Week 10: Seminar Assessment Week 3

We will be concentrating on seminars during this week. Attendance is encouraged to support and report back to the presenting group/s. Please note that attendance & engagement is included within the overall assessment for this element.

Week 11 & 12:

Assignment Consultation on final assignment, and preparation for assignment submission.

**Assessment**

Assessment of the course will be based on two elements:

**Task 1: Online Group Seminar Presentation (50% of Final Grade)**

* A seminar presentation is an informal talk giving the results of your research into a topic on the course. You are sharing your ideas in a way that gives seminar participants an opportunity for discussion. In this particular instance you should prepare a 15-minute presentation of the topic and be prepared to lead a 30-minute discussion on issues arising.
* You will be working in small groups, hopefully with a maximum of three other people.
* A seminar presentation should not try to imitate an essay. It is better to offer a presentation that is very specific, addressing the key issues raised. The act of investigating sources, digesting information and summarising other people’s work will help to clarify these matters in your mind.
* Don’t write down the presentation verbatim. Make outline notes, then speak to these notes using set texts, any critical theory, relevant concepts and your own extended notes as backup material.
* Collaborate facilities will be available – if you wish to use another medium you must let me know at least 1 week prior to your presentation.
* A good presentation should lead to questions or further discussion raised by your subject. Including these issues as part of your conclusion should lead naturally into a discussion amongst the seminar participants. This also demonstrates the breadth and depth of your investigation into your subject area.

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| **Suggested Seminar Presentation Topics** | | |
| Topic No | Title | Comments |
| 1 | What constitutes expertise in sport? | You could choose 1 particular sport here. |
| 2 | What constitutes expertise in coaching? | You could choose 1 particular sport here. |
| 3 | Evaluate the current status of TDE in (Country) | The country or countries can be discussed, so that more than one seminar can held on this topic. |
| 4 | Evaluate the influence of nature on talent identification & development | This needs to add to the information already provided in the course structure. |
| 5 | Evaluate the influence of nurture on talent identification & development | This needs to add to the information already provided in the course structure. |
| 6 | Evaluate the following statement: “Practice makes perfect” |  |
| 7 | What makes a champion (sport) | The sport selected can be discussed, so that more than one seminar can held on this topic. |
| 8 | Evaluate the following statement: “As a coach, I would prefer to work with talented athletes” |  |
| 9 | Do coach education programmes produce expert coaches? | This is related to the formal coach education provision however general (non sport specific) provision or specialist (sport specific) provision could be evaluated. |
| 10 | How does performance development and expertise affect beginner participants? |  |

This seminar will be assessed using the following criteria:

### Seminar Presentation:

* + Student's understanding & critical analysis of the topic area.
  + Logical flow and organisation.
  + Ability to lead discussion and enable debate.

### Contribution to Discussions:

* + Engagement with discussion and debate, backed up by reasoned engagement with the issues
* Working within a Group:
  + Contribution to seminar preparation.
  + Please note - this aspect will be assessed by other members of your seminar group.

**Task 2: 2000 Word Case Study (50% of Final Grade)**

For this assessment, you will be expected to evaluate the development of a performer, team or coach within a sport or activity of your choice. The main aim is to highlight the development or performance pathway of this particular individual and to contrast this actual pathway with the prevalent theories of development.

Case studies typically examine the interplay of all variables in order to provide as complete an understanding of an event or situation as possible. This type of comprehensive understanding is arrived at through a process known as thick description, which involves an in-depth description of the entity being evaluated, the circumstances under which it is used, the characteristics of the people involved in it, and the nature of the community in which it is located. Thick description also involves interpreting the meaning of demographic and descriptive data such as cultural norms and mores, community values, ingrained attitudes, and motives.

Unlike quantitative methods of research, like the survey, which focus on the questions of who, what, where, how much, and how many, and archival analysis, which often situates the participant in some form of historical context, case studies are the preferred strategy when how or why questions are asked. Likewise, they are the preferred method when the researcher has little control over the events, and when there is a contemporary focus within a real life context. In addition, unlike more specifically directed experiments, case studies require a problem that seeks a holistic understanding of the event or situation in question using inductive logic--reasoning from specific to more general terms.

In scholarly circles, case studies are frequently discussed within the context of qualitative research and naturalistic inquiry. Case studies are often referred to interchangeably with ethnography, field study, and participant observation. The underlying philosophical assumptions in the case are similar to these types of qualitative research because each takes place in a natural setting (such as a classroom, neighbourhood, or private home), and strives for a more holistic interpretation of the event or situation under study.

In order to accomplish this, I would suggest that you follow the particular framework or methods suggested in these research articles:

Baker, Joseph, Cote, Jean, & Abernethy, Bruce. (2003). Learning from the experts: Practice activities of expert decision makers in sport. *Research Quarterly for Exercise and Sport,* *74*(3), 342.

Côté, J., Ericsson, K., & Law, M. (2005). Tracing the Development of Athletes Using Retrospective Interview Methods: A Proposed Interview and Validation Procedure for Reported Information. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology,* *17*(1), 1-19.

Nash , C & Sproule , J. (2009). Career development of expert coaches*. International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 4(1), 121-138 .

This case-study will be assessed using the following criteria:

### Content:

### Critical appraisal of the background of the performer/coach

* + Critical appraisal of the family environment of the performer/coach
  + Understanding of theory of talent development, subsequent development of expertise and ability to relate theory to individual case study
* Engagement with Appropriate Sources:
  + Engagement with appropriate research, as evidenced by relevant and contemporary reference list.
* Application and understanding of theoretical and ethical concepts.