

<p>Institution: Newman University</p> <p>Unit of Assessment: 26 – Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism</p> <p>a. Overview</p> <p>Newman University College became Newman University in 2013. As when it was a University College, the research mission of the University is to continue to broaden the base of research active staff across all areas of academic activity, to support staff research and scholarly activities through the development of an inclusive culture and supportive environment. The benefits of the University's policies of supporting research remain evident, with financial support for members of staff in Units of Assessment, with scholarships for postgraduate research students, and protected staff time for research and scholarship. We can point to substantial improvements in the quality and quantity of our research publications and a rising research profile, which will see more Units of Assessment returned in the Research Excellence Framework than in previous Research Assessment Exercises.</p> <p>The UOA is part of the multi-disciplinary School of Human Sciences and comprises four full-time members of academic staff: two Senior Lecturers Myers and Woodfield, and two early career researchers Akubat and Holland. All the submitting members of staff are colleagues from one subject area department i.e., Physical Education and Sports Studies (PESS). The Unit's research interests include the areas of physical activity, health and well-being, and physiological and psychological aspects of sports performance more specifically: fitness training in intermittent sports, judging bias in Muay Thai, and the development of psychological skills in youth.</p> <p>The University's Research Committee promotes research development and monitors its progress. This includes overseeing the supervision arrangements for postgraduate students and developing a research strategy for academic staff. The budgetary system of the University gives financial responsibility to the Research Committee. A number of measures have been taken by the University to bring about a significant change in the profile of research in order to situate it as an integral feature of activity. These measures culminated in the appointment of a Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Scholarship in 2013 to take a leading role in promoting research across the institution for the future, following a substantial increase in the resources available to support staff scholarly activities, the development of a new institutional research strategy to encourage and facilitate research, and a programme of training and staff development to support and refine research practices. As previously, funding towards the cost of further academic study is offered through an annual bidding process managed by the Research Committee, and monies secured in the last Research Assessment Exercise have been used to expand the University's areas of research excellence recognized in 2008.</p> <p>b. Research strategy</p> <p>As set out in its Research Strategy for 2012-2015, Newman University aspires to be recognised regionally, nationally and internationally for the quality of its research and scholarship. Our vision for research is underpinned by the University's core values as outlined in its Strategic Plan and its mission to make a positive difference to individuals and communities through the contribution of its staff, students and graduates. Building upon the positive outcome of the RAE in 2008, the Research Strategy has particularly focused investment funds on Units submitting to the Research Excellence Framework, whilst enabling early-career researchers to develop their capacity. Against a background of tighter fiscal constraints we are also making links with other aspects of third stream activity. Knowledge transfer, consultancy and related forms of employer engagement are creating opportunities and funding for research and income generation, as well as broadening the student experience and providing staff development.</p> <p>The University's Research Committee takes as its remit a strategic role in all aspects of developing and sustaining a successful research culture and research performance. The Committee's major function is to ensure that the University's areas of research strength and comparative advantage</p>

are protected and enhanced, that research potential is recognised and nurtured and that resources are strategically targeted to build an externally-recognised research presence. A detailed action plan for the implementation of these objectives is provided and reviewed annually. Since the last RAE, we have strengthened our academic leadership through the internal promotion of four further staff to the position of Reader and through the external appointment of several new professors, who have extensive successful PhD supervision experience; two new professors have been appointed as Deans of School and other professors have been appointed as senior academic leads, such that the University now has a Professoriate which meets periodically throughout the academic year to advise the Vice-Chancellor on matters of research.

The unit takes its own strategic approach to research from this institutional context. The broad areas of study set out in the 2008 RAE remain at the core of the ongoing work within the unit. The PESS subject area's research mission still includes trying to uncover issues influencing young people's physical activity, health and well-being with Woodfield's research into cross-sectional physical activity and body mass index and physical activity intervention studies. Furthermore, Al-Nakeeb, the former leader of the Unit who retired in November 2012 and is now an Emeritus Professor, two other previous employees in PESS, and three postgraduate researchers (PGRs) have also researched and published in the area since the last RAE.

Since 2008, the unit has expanded its research interests due to changes in staffing. In particular, there has been growth in the areas of physiological and psychological aspects of sports performance. Although Myers was not entered into RAE 2008 he has since published various research associated with his PhD thesis exploring officiating in the sport of Muay Thai. Furthermore, the appointment of Akubat in 2010 and Holland in 2013, with their research into fitness training in intermittent sports and the development of psychological skills in youth respectively, has broadened and enhanced the scope of research undertaken within the Unit.

A number of steps have been taken since the RAE to increase and sustain the research volume and quality in publishing peer reviewed journal articles. Firstly, to meet research needs and to support the diversification of research activity, there has been ongoing and significant investment by the University to expand and enhance the sports science laboratories and resources. Furthermore, the subject area founded a Sport, Exercise and Health research centre in 2010 which is developing an increasingly strategic approach to research activity across a range of areas. The research centre has a variety of purposes with its first being engagement in high-quality research alongside scholarly activities, knowledge transfer, training and consultancy. This can be illustrated through the variety of work that has been undertaken by members of the research centre, as outlined below.

Myers has led workshops and been invited to present his research to National and International Muay Thai organisations. Akubat and Holland, along with non-submitting current and previous members of PESS, Dinsdale, Smith and Tanton, have all undertaken a variety of consultancy work in applied settings which has been facilitated by the research centre. This has included work with a range of organisations including British Canoeing and English Premier League football clubs.

In addition, the research centre aims to support the University's mission to make a positive difference to individuals and communities. This can be demonstrated by the work of Woodfield, Al-Nakeeb, and PGRs whose research participants have been drawn from schools in the Birmingham and West Midlands area. This has required engagement with parents and members of school staff with whom research findings have been shared, with a view to informing practice to improve the health and well-being of young people.

To further promote collaborative research activity, in 2012 the research centre was restructured into research groups comprising members of staff and postgraduate researchers with shared research interests. The groups include: 'Physiological, biomechanical and psychological aspects of sports performance', 'Physical activity, health and wellbeing', 'Physical Education Pedagogy' and 'Sports Policy, Management and Social Policy'. In collaboration with the Employer engagement officer at Newman University, the unit are currently exploring links with other local organisations,

including Birmingham City Council and West Bromwich Albion Foundation. The intention is to provide opportunities for research for publication, as well as training and consultancy work.

c. People, including:

i. Staffing strategy and staff development

The University's Research Committee operates a Small Grants scheme. Sums of up to a maximum of £600 are made available to subject areas, research groups or individuals. A significant number of awards are allocated every year to encourage members of staff to pursue small-scale research projects individually or as a group. This allocation is based on a highly competitive bidding process. PESS staff and postgraduate student research groups have received in excess of £3,000 of small research grants to help support various research projects. This work has been published or presented at conferences such as the European College of Sport Science. In addition, the Research Committee invites research groups to bid for a maximum of £3,000 as a contribution towards more substantial research projects.

The University has also operated when possible a scheme of negotiated sabbatical support for staff, who must identify clear and measurable targets to be achieved at the end of the sabbatical period. Three members of current and previous members of the Unit have taken sabbaticals during the period. Two members took their sabbaticals during the writing-up phase of their PhDs, which they both successfully completed. Financial support up to £2,000 is provided for staging conferences at the University and funding is also given for conference presentation to a maximum of £400 per conference; support may be given to multiple presentations in any one year.

The Unit has benefitted with several staff and research students receiving financial support to present at conferences, including international overseas conferences in the United States, Czech Republic, Spain and Turkey. More general support covers both advice to the research community and information to the Research Committee and is provided by the Research Office Administrator as part of the range of support offered by the Graduate School. This involves organising regular research seminars, research training workshops and inaugural-professorial lectures, as well as enabling suitably qualified academic staff to engage in postgraduate research supervision.

Staff development on research-related issues is organised by the Head of the Academic Practice Unit, while all matters of staff and student research ethics are overseen by the Research Ethics Committee, which scrutinizes several hundred research proposals each year. Regular staff research seminars are held throughout the year, some organized centrally and some within the School. Contributors to these seminars are University staff, research students and invited speakers from other institutions. The University has now long maintained a Visiting Professor scheme for distinguished scholars. As well as delivering research seminars and workshops, the Visiting Professors play a pivotal role in developing the research and scholarship potential of staff through appropriate forms of advice, training and support.

The sports studies research team comprises both early career and experienced members of staff; who act as academic mentors in providing support and advice on research matters. Furthermore, much of the research undertaken is collaborative in nature with PESS Staff working with colleagues from other HEIs (i.e., Coventry University, University College London, University College Plymouth St. Mark & St. John, and the Universities of Bedfordshire, Birmingham, Chester, Hull, Staffordshire and Wolverhampton) including those who were part of Newman's RAE 2008 submission and who now work at other HEIs. For example, Woodfield has published research with M. Duncan at Coventry University, and A. Nevill at the University of Wolverhampton, both of who have international reputations in their respective research areas. These collaborations have resulted in the publication of several co-authored peer-reviewed articles.

The subject area aims to ensure continuity and development by nurturing new researchers. New members of staff are encouraged to research collaboratively with more experienced researchers, either within the subject area or alongside colleagues from other institutions. Staff and PGRs have also contributed seminars to Newman University's Research Seminar programme. For example,

during 2012, Myers presented his published PhD work to a non-specialist audience. In addition, Morris, a PGR, and Woodfield, her PhD supervisor, jointly presented pilot work on children’s physical activity and social interactions as part of the inaugural conference for the Research Centre for Children, Young People and Families in September 2012. Recently appointed staff in PESS have either completed their PhD or are currently in the later stages of their work. These newly appointed members of staff have included early career researchers with outstanding potential, Akubat and Holland, and others who are currently studying for their PhDs, Lovett and Dinsdale. Currently, all members of staff who do not already have a doctoral qualification are studying or in the process of registering for a doctoral programme. Staff are encouraged and supported to do so by both subject area and Research Committee. All staff have an entitlement to research and scholarly activity time and the subject area endeavours to protect one day per week for staff research.

Two members of the submission are registered as second supervisors with the University of Leicester. Akubat is also registered as an external supervisor with two other HEIs, University of Bedfordshire and Edge Hill University, and is supervising two postgraduate researchers. Until November 2012, the UOA was led by Al-Nakeeb, who has since retired and is now an Emeritus Professor. Al-Nakeeb has been first supervisor on various successfully completed PhDs, including those of current staff submitting outputs to the REF. Al-Nakeeb has mentored staff within the Unit and across the institution, in the co-supervision of PhD students.

The Unit has established a Sport, Exercise and Health research centre which is developing an increasingly strategic approach to research activity across a range of areas. The centre was recently restructured into research groups, comprising members of staff and postgraduate researchers with shared research interests, with a view to developing collaborative research. The laboratories are staffed by a full-time graduate assistant with an MSc in Sport and Exercise science who is also working towards a PhD.

ii. Research students

Development and support for research students is thus provided by the Graduate School, while pastoral support and mentoring is provided by the Postgraduate Research Co-ordinator. While attracting self-funding students, the University has operated an intermittent policy of offering research studentships through a competitive bidding process. The University offers training to PGR students preparing for a career in teaching in Higher Education and opportunity is sometimes available for students to gain in-class teaching experience.

Below are the FTE of postgraduate research students enrolled on doctoral programmes, broken down into the academic years of the assessment period (Table 1).

Table 1. FTE of postgraduate students enrolled on doctoral programmes

Year	PGR FTE
2008-09	1.00
2009-10	1.50
2010-11	2.58
2011-12	2.00
2012-13	2.00

During the assessment period, three PhDs have been awarded within the Unit in partnership with the University of Coventry (the institution that formerly awarded research degrees studied through Newman University). All completed their PhDs through part-time study as they were contracted members of staff at Newman University. There are presently three PGRs registered with the University of Leicester, the institution that currently awards Newman University’s research degrees.

Environment template (REF5)

One PGR was funded on a three year full-time studentship from Newman University's Research Committee (2010-2013) and who is currently writing up, one is a full-time fee-paying international student, and another is a lecturer within the School of Education at Newman University who is registered as a part-time PGR.

All PGRs are expected to undertake a postgraduate research methods module. This has involved students attending the course at another local HEI with A. Nevill, who is Visiting Professor at Newman University, and an external supervisor of the PGRs. Woodfield is a supervisor for two of the PGRs. PGRs meet regularly with the supervisory team to review progress made, and to set targets.

PGRs have the technical support of the Graduate Assistant in PESS, as well as being encouraged to seek the expertise of other members of the PESS department.

d. Income, infrastructure and facilities

Since 2008, the sports science laboratories have been enhanced twice. 2012 brought the major investment of £1.2 million by the University to expand and enhance the laboratories and supplementary facilities to meet the research needs of PESS, and to support the diversification of research activity. Facilities now include: human performance laboratory; sports psychology and motor learning laboratories; sports studies laboratory with interview room; blood laboratory; strength and conditioning gym. The subject area has on site most major technologies and facilities and is well equipped for its size. The laboratories are staffed by a full-time Graduate Assistant with an MSc in the Sports and Exercises science.

With a view to improving the performance of athletes or officials, Akubat and Myers have, through the Research Centre, undertaken regular applied consultancy work with professional football clubs and national governing bodies for Muay Thai respectively. Furthermore, previous members of staff have undertaken similar work (e.g., Smith worked with British Canoeing). In addition, work within the Sport, Exercise and Health research Centre has included evaluation work undertaken with local authorities led by Ryan. Such work has brought in income of £40,000 to the research centre which has been used to support the development of staff in the subject area. Income generated from the consultancy, training and evaluation activities of its staff has been used to support future research activity and projects. Income may also be used to cover the publication costs in open-access journals, therefore potentially increasing the diversity of the audience, as well providing staff with access to fees for conference attendances, costs incurred for research (e.g., staff travel), or dissemination of research to non-academic audiences.

e. Collaboration and contribution to the discipline or research base

Members of the UOA have worked in close collaboration with other researchers locally, nationally and internationally. Woodfield has undertaken several collaborative research projects with M. Duncan, and more recently with S. Birch (both Coventry University). This research network has given rise to further collaborative arrangements and opportunities in the areas of young people's physical activity and health. Enabling researchers to build capacity in their field of research is an aim of the research centre which in smaller Units and departments, such as PESS, can only be achieved through collaboration with external colleagues.

For example, some of the published work between Newman University and Coventry University has been undertaken in collaboration with Coventry City Council Education Department who have identified schools for targeted interventions (e.g., on the basis of demographic information on health and well-being). M. Duncan has provided advice to students and provided our PGRs with opportunities to attend and present their work at Research Group Seminars at Coventry University. The collaboration is reciprocated with Woodfield acting as external examiner for two Coventry University MRes theses. Woodfield has collaborative research published with Al-Nakeeb (now Qatar University), who himself has published with international colleagues in Saudi Arabia and the Republic of Ireland.

Environment template (REF5)

Both Woodfield and Myers have had several articles published with A. Nevill (University of Wolverhampton) as co-author. Myers has published with N. Balmer (University College London). Myers work has been supported by the Muay Thai community both in Thailand and Europe. The publication of this work resulted in *Frontiers in Psychology* inviting Myers to edit a special edition focusing on influences on sports officials' judgement decisions.

Akubat's published work has been in collaboration with G .Abt, University of Hull, and Holland has published with a research team including co-researchers at the University of Birmingham (J. Duda, C. Woodcock [now Staffordshire University] and J. Cumming), L. Sharp (University College Plymouth St. Mark & St. John).