

<p><b>Institution: University of Cumbria</b></p> <p><b>Unit of Assessment: 26 Sport &amp; Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism</b></p> <p><b>a. Context</b></p> <p>The research of the unit is focused on sport and exercise sciences. Whilst the University was only formed in 2007, the unit has a long track record of research in the history and culture of sport, and in sport coaching and practice, through its legacy institution, St Martin's College. The Sport department moved from the Faculty of Business, Social Science and Sport into the Faculty of Health &amp; Wellbeing during a restructure in September 2010. The rationale for this move was the clear linkages between physical activity and wellbeing, and reflected the refocusing of the group's activity onto exercise sciences; including biomechanics, physiology, coaching, and physical activity. This reorganisation has enabled the unit to expand the research into NHS trusts, including action research interventions and evaluations, allowing immediate adoption of research into practice, and more generally has enabled further interdisciplinary and health related work to be undertaken.</p> <p>The main beneficiaries from the unit's research are sporting individuals (including members of the general public, athletes and practitioners, including sports coaches and sports physiotherapists); associations and professional bodies (including coaching bodies, sports clubs and sports associations); local government and policy makers (including City and County Councils), and the public, in terms of stimulating forms of engagement.</p> <p>Specifically, the research has benefits which include influence on the training and practice of coaches and athletes, particularly in the planning, delivery and analysis of training; development of resources (such as through influencing professional bodies in defining best practice guidelines and protocols); wider influence on professional practice, particularly of coaches, by stimulating debate and challenging received wisdom; and influence on local government policy and practice in physical activity service provision. The work of the emerging Active Ageing Research Group (AARG) also has specific implications for the management of physical activity in old age, and is likely to provide specific benefits in terms of health and wellbeing for individuals and shape governmental policy and practice in this area.</p> <p><b>b. Approach to impact</b></p> <p>The practice based nature of the unit means that engagement with the non-academic beneficiaries of the research has always been an intrinsic part of the activity undertaken. This is particularly true in relation to the new strategic direction for the unit that has emerged during the assessment period, which has altered the orientation of the work from the historical and cultural perspective of sport and towards practitioner and applied research. The clear engagement focus of the academic activity and the applied nature of the research projects, findings and the significant quantity of practitioner-orientated outputs produced create a direct route to impact for the unit's research.</p> <p>The main approach to impact within the assessment period, which supports the applied focus of the research itself, has been through identifying and developing relationships with the key beneficiaries of the research. The unit concentrates on developing strategic and synergistic partnerships with key stakeholders in order to help to shape the research agenda, such as local and regional Sports clubs, national teams and community groups and coaching staff. Examples of such relationships include Active Cumbria (CRONIN, BAMPOURAS), Sport England (ELLIOTT), UK athletics, Football Association England, GB Diving Squad and the Scottish national water polo women's team (BAMPOURAS).</p> <p>Specific examples of the types of engagement include the work with Active Cumbria, a local County Sports Partnership dedicated to developing sport and physical activity in Cumbria. Our partnership with Active Cumbria includes delivering evidence based workshops for practitioners on coaching and human performance, which includes feedback on the implementation of research</p>
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**Impact template (REF3a)**

recommendations shared. These workshops form part of the Coaching Plus Development Programme which has been developed with an aim of creating a Community of Practice (CoP) for coaches. Coaching plus involves a bespoke development programme for regional coaches (primarily at UKCC Level 2 and above) at locations across the region, with topics across a full range of elements of coaching. Each workshop and facilitated discussion between coaches is led by relevant experts, the majority of whom are Cumbria academics directly sharing research insights with the practitioners.

A further example is the applied research with the Great Britain diving team. This involved provision of biomechanical analysis to the top ten 10m platform divers in Britain on two of the most difficult dives (four and a half somersaults for males; inward three and a half somersaults for females). One member of staff also received accreditation for the World FINA Diving Series, providing an opportunity to collect data on the top Olympic divers in the world. The research was used to aid GB diving biomechanics support work and inform coaches of important mechanical variables for competitors.

The unit has specifically supported staff to enable impact to be achieved from their research by providing internal research monies to pump prime stakeholder engagement events, the running of activity clubs, and pilot research work as a foundation to larger studies. It has made use of institutional support, expertise, and resources to provide support to its staff, such as support in grant applications for knowledge exchange activity.

The group have run a number of evidence-based trainings days with direct links to community and sport partners, on-going engagement with stakeholders, and developing research in partnership. A number of steering groups have developed that include representatives from key local and national sport and physical activity groups, which helps to gain feedback and evaluation from stakeholder events. The newly established Active Ageing Research Group is also developing stakeholder engagement, for example through discussion with the Lancaster University C4AR Older Learners continuing learner group and the Lancaster and Morecambe University of the Third Age.

The unit also engages with end users of the research through a variety of means, including through publishing findings in practitioner journals. An example of this are two recent review articles on training practice which were published in Professional Strength and Conditioning, the UK Strength and Conditioning Association journal, which is received by all UK strength and Conditioning coaches accredited by UKSCA. The publication containing the second part of the review was also provided in the delegate pack of a recent UKSCA accreditation meeting.

**c. Strategy and plans**

The Faculty implemented an impact policy in 2013, which has been adopted by the unit, to raise the issue of building capacity for impact in the planning and implementation of research projects. However, the unit will also be supported through the establishment of a Faculty strategy for creating and measuring impact. This is a key issue in the development and training opportunities provided to staff within the unit, a large number of whom are Early Career Researchers who are developing research profiles following professional careers (e.g. as coaches).

The impact strategy for the unit aims to align extremely closely with the still emerging research strategy, which has been developing within the assessment period, as the group refocuses its research following restructure and the departure of a number of (sports humanities orientated) research active staff. New research priorities such as determining best practice in muscle function and assessment and the content and delivery of coaching practice, are specifically designed to have a direct impact on practitioners and services. The influence of such research will be enabled through on-going engagement activity with local stakeholders, professional associations and the production of non-academic outputs to support take-up of the research also published in traditional academic formats. The latter is already exemplified in the activities of the group through engagement in professional conferences (such as paper and poster presentations) and through targeting to publications such as the practitioner focused *Journal of Strength and Conditioning*

## Impact template (REF3a)

### *Research.*

The unit will support the impact of quality research in the following ways:

- Establish an explicit impact strategy for the unit, to support the policy for considering this element as part of research planning. The strategy will include specific elements addressing how to enable impact from research and on how to measure and evaluate impact generated.
- To maintain and extend engagement with a range of stakeholders, including the co-development of methods to evaluate impact. This will also extend the current policy to engage stakeholders in research design.
- To put into place processes for collecting evaluation data from research-based training and evaluation events (such as Active Cumbria events), and user feedback and testimony (such as through social media, media, blog, practitioner networks).
- To ensure that impact remains a strategic element in developing research themes, for example through practitioner engagement, especially in sport performance and approaches to coaching.
- To maximise the impact through the work of AARG, ensuring that the results of this interdisciplinary work are taken up through practitioners and policymakers, and enable positive impacts on health and welfare related to active ageing, including reduced morbidity and health costs through appropriate interventions based on sports and exercise research.
- Possible comment on how impact could specifically be enabled by creation of a research centre. Anything we can say about current or planned involvement with relevant subject associations, professional bodies and similar, and how this will enable impact.

### **d. Relationship to case studies**

#### **Case study 1: Interdisciplinary Psychosocial Impacts on Coaching and Coach Education**

The case study exemplifies the effects of applying innovative psycho-social approaches to professional practice and services in coaching and coach education, with benefits for practicing coaches, coach educators and performers.

#### **Case study 2: Improving training through testing context appropriate muscle function assessment techniques to support effective coaching practice and athletic performance**

The case study exemplifies the benefits for practitioners in competitive sports (coaches and performers) from the application of muscle function assessment to practical and realistic training scenarios. This has direct benefits in terms of changes to training practice, with secondary effects being realised in training outcomes.