



Promoting higher quality

**The Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education**

Subject review report

October 2001 Q435/2001

Kingston University

Hospitality, Leisure, Recreation, Sport and Tourism
(Sports Science)

Reviewing the Quality of Education

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was established in 1997. It has responsibility for assessing the quality of higher education (HE) in England and Northern Ireland from 1 October 1997 under the terms of a contract with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

The purposes of subject review are: to ensure that the public funding provided is supporting education of an acceptable quality, to provide public information on that education through the publication of reports such as this one, and to provide information and insights to encourage improvements in education.

The main features of the subject review method are:

Review against Aims and Objectives

The HE sector in England and Northern Ireland is diverse. The HEFCE funds education in over 140 institutions of HE and 75 further education (FE) colleges. These institutions vary greatly in size, subject provision, history and statement of purpose. Each has autonomy to determine its institutional mission, and its specific aims and objectives at subject level.

Subject review is carried out in relation to the subject aims and objectives set by each provider. It measures the extent to which each subject provider is successful in achieving its aims and objectives.

Readers should be cautious in making comparisons of subject providers solely on the basis of subject review outcomes. Comparisons between providers with substantively different aims and objectives would have little validity.

Review of the Student Learning Experience and Student Achievement

Subject review examines the wide range of influences that shape the learning experiences and achievements of students. It covers the full breadth of teaching and learning activities, including: direct observation of classroom/seminar/workshop/ laboratory situations, the methods of reviewing students' work, students' work and achievements, the curriculum, staff and staff development, the application of resources (library, information technology, equipment), and student support and guidance. This range of activities is captured within a core set of six aspects of provision, each of which is graded on a four-point scale (1 to 4), in ascending order of merit.

The aspects of provision are:

- Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation
- Teaching, Learning and Assessment
- Student Progression and Achievement
- Student Support and Guidance
- Learning Resources
- Quality Management and Enhancement.

Peer Review

Reviewers are academic and professional peers in the subject. Most are members of the academic staff of UK HE institutions. Others are drawn from industry, commerce, private practice and the professions.

Combination of Internal and External Processes

The review method has two main processes:

- Preparation by the subject provider of a self-assessment in the subject, based on the provider's own aims and objectives, and set out in the structure provided by the core set of aspects of provision.
- A three-day review visit carried out by a team of reviewers. The review team grades each of the aspects of provision to make a graded profile of the provision, and derives from that profile an overall judgement. Provided that each aspect is graded 2 or better, the quality of the education is approved.

Published Reports

In addition to individual review reports, the QAA will publish subject overview reports at the conclusion of reviews in a subject. The subject overview reports are distributed widely to schools and FE colleges, public libraries and careers services. Both the review reports and the subject overview reports are available in hard copy and are also on the world-wide web (see back cover for details).

Introduction

1. This Report presents the findings of a review in October 2001 of the quality of education in hospitality, leisure, recreation, sport and tourism, comprising in this instance sports science, provided by Kingston University.
2. The University was formed from Kingston Polytechnic in 1992. It has its origins in Kingston Technical College, founded in 1899, and the Schools of Art and Technology. In the 1930s, the School of Art became a separate college in its own right. By the 1960s, the Technical College had grown again and was split into the College of Technology and the College of Further Education (now Kingston College). In 1970, Kingston Polytechnic was created by the merger of the College of Technology and the College of Art and, in 1975, the Polytechnic was joined by Gipsy Hill College of Education. The University's six faculties are located on four sites in the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. Each faculty is subdivided into schools. A total of 12,217 full-time and 3,824 part-time students (14,129 full-time equivalents (FTEs)) are enrolled at the University. Sports Science is located in the School of Life Sciences, which is in the Faculty of Science. The Faculty is accommodated in the Penrhyn Road site of the University.
3. The BSc (Hons) Sports Science was launched in 1995 and is delivered with staff from Kingston College. There are 136 full-time and four part-time students, a total of 138 FTEs. There are nine academic staff contributing to Sports Science, with the support of five administrative and two technical staff.
4. The following provision forms the basis of the review:
 - BSc (Hons) Sports Science.
5. The statistical data in this Introduction are provided by the institution itself. The aims and objectives are presented overleaf. These also are provided by the institution.

The Aims and Objectives for Hospitality, Leisure, Recreation, Sport and Tourism

Aims

In offering the Sports Science degree the School aims:

- A1. to produce sports scientists with a sound understanding of the various aspects of their subject and an in-depth knowledge of selected specialist areas;
- A2. to promote independent learning by students and to encourage them to acquire problem-solving skills;
- A3. to equip sports science graduates with key skills and subject-specific practical skills including knowledge of safe working practices;
- A4. to provide a high quality physical, teaching and learning experience supported by appropriate resources;
- A5. to maintain links with the sport and leisure related authorities and industries to inform the curriculum and its development and delivery;
- A6. to regularly monitor the quality of provision and to enhance it in response to self-evaluation and feedback from students, staff and appropriate external agencies;
- A7. to be supportive of students with respect to their academic, pastoral, welfare and recreational needs;
- A8. to enable its graduates to gain employment in a variety of areas, particularly those concerned with sport, exercise and related activities and to be prepared for postgraduate study.

1.3 Objectives

On completion of this course students will have or be able to demonstrate:

01. an appropriate knowledge and understanding of life science disciplines relevant to sport and exercise - anatomy, physiology, nutrition, psychology and aspects of biomechanics;
02. an appreciation of socioeconomic and cultural issues in sport and of management science appropriate to sport and leisure activities;
03. specialist knowledge and understanding of selected sporting activities;
04. specialist knowledge of either exercise prescription and fitness assessment or management of sport and leisure depending on the pathway chosen in the final year;

05. competence in a range of practical and research skills relevant to sports science and their application to problem-solving;
06. an ability to learn independently;
07. competence in a range of key skills that should enhance their career prospects and an ability to work effectively both independently and in collaboration with others;
08. knowledge of safe working practices in the sports sciences;
09. a familiarity with the range of graduate career opportunities available to them, as well as those specifically in sports and leisure.

Summary of the Review

6. The graded profile in paragraph 7 indicates the extent to which the student learning experience and achievement demonstrate that the aims and objectives set by the subject provider are being met. The tests and the criteria applied by the reviewers are these:

Aspects of provision

1. Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation
2. Teaching, Learning and Assessment
3. Student Progression and Achievement
4. Student Support and Guidance
5. Learning Resources
6. Quality Management and Enhancement.

Tests to be applied

To what extent do the student learning experience and student achievement, within this aspect of provision, contribute to meeting the objectives set by the subject provider?

Do the objectives set, and the level of attainment of those objectives, allow the aims set by the subject provider to be met?

Scale points

1

The aims and/or objectives set by the subject provider are not met; there are major shortcomings that must be rectified.

2

This aspect makes an acceptable contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives, but significant improvement could be made.

The aims set by the subject provider are broadly met.

3

This aspect makes a substantial contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives; however, there is scope for improvement.

The aims set by the subject provider are substantially met.

4

This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives.

The aims set by the subject provider are met.

7. The grades awarded as a result of the review are:

Aspects of provision	Grade
Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation	3
Teaching, Learning and Assessment	3
Student Progression and Achievement	4
Student Support and Guidance	4
Learning Resources	4
Quality Management and Enhancement	4

8. The quality of education in hospitality, leisure, recreation, sport and tourism at Kingston University is **approved**.

The Quality of Education

Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation

9. The BSc (Hons) Sports Science is a modular full-time course. Students take eight 15-credit modules each year, four in each semester. It is primarily an academic course, with vocationally oriented aspects, and covers mainly sports science and business. The curriculum design is ambitious, with modules drawn from several faculties, including life sciences, business and human sciences, and from Kingston College, which provides the practical sport modules. Several disciplines are involved including life sciences, psychology, business and management studies, sociology and history. Students have the opportunity to participate in the University's exchange scheme in the USA. Students also have the opportunity to qualify for coaching awards from sports' national governing bodies. The curriculum is underpinned by staff research, membership of professional bodies and consultancy work. The School's Industrial Liaison Committee seeks to reinforce links with the sport and leisure industry.

10. The course is designed to offer breadth and to provide in-depth knowledge of selected areas. In the first two levels, all modules are compulsory. In Level 1, the course provides students with a basic understanding of anatomy and physiology, sports psychology and core business concepts. There are also sports practical modules and first aid training. In Level 2, students extend their knowledge of the physiology of the human body and the nutritional and training needs of athletes. They also develop subject knowledge of sports psychology and generic business and management knowledge. The sports practical modules are linked to the scientific aspects of the curriculum. In the final level, there are modules designed to help students acquire interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches to sports related injuries. A module in sport, politics and society provides students with a wider context for their studies. Some specialisation is available through two modules in either exercise prescription and fitness assessment, or in strategic management and operations management of sport and leisure.

11. Transferable skills, such as communication, laboratory, computer, mathematical and team work are embedded in the curriculum content. The recent introduction of a research methods module at Level 2 develops research skills required to undertake the final-level dissertation.

12. Since 1995, the curriculum has been modified and staff are sensitive to the need to maintain currency. In particular, efforts have been made to respond to students' requests to ensure that the business and management modules are less generic and more relevant to sport and leisure. While some curriculum revisions, namely in Level 3, and the recent appointment of a subject specialist, have gone some way to addressing this issue, more needs to be done to ensure that the business modules are contextualised with reference to sport and leisure. In addition, the course team could meet with members of the Industrial Liaison Committee which, with more frequent meetings, could provide the curriculum with the industrial knowledge to ensure that the business modules become more relevant.

13. This aspect makes a substantial contribution to the achievement of the stated objectives; however, there is scope for improvement. The aims set by the subject provider are substantially met.

Curriculum Design, Content and Organisation: Grade 3.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment

14. There is a clear strategy at university, faculty and school levels for teaching, learning and assessment. There are clearly defined faculty-level descriptors to guide the setting of assignments at each level. Students benefit from an appropriate range of teaching and learning methods, as well as a varied set of assessment tasks, some of which are formative.

15. Teaching is delivered by staff from different parts of the University and the College. The teaching of practical sports modules is augmented by part-time members of staff who are actively involved in sports coaching. The reviewers found evidence of many features of good practice from key subject-specialist tutors, and current and former students spoke very positively about the quality of the teaching and learning.

16. The reviewers observed eight teaching sessions, covering all levels and including lectures, large group discussions, practical sports teaching/coaching sessions and a laboratory practical session. Overall, the observations indicate variable quality of teaching with the best teaching being excellent and the less accomplished being at least adequate. The Sports Psychology and Exercise Physiology sessions were outstanding. All sessions were effectively prepared, well paced and, in the main, sessions met their intended learning objectives in full or in large part. In most instances students were actively engaged in their learning, and in the sports sciences and practical sports modules they were eager and enthusiastic participants in a climate of purpose and good humour.

17. Throughout the levels of the programme, student learning is characterised by a shift of emphasis towards independence. Greater emphasis is placed on key transferable skills and group work in Levels 2 and 3. The learning experience for students is facilitated by the effective use of peer-assisted learning and the Blackboard learning management system. These are recognised by students as being valuable additions to their overall learning experience. The mix of coursework and examination assessment tasks requires students to demonstrate subject knowledge and understanding, as well as transferable skills.

18. Documentation for students is generally detailed and the reviewers agree with the external examiner's comment that the assessment tasks for each module are made clear. Yet, there is also evidence of ambiguity in the way that students' learning is developed and assessed. Progression of assessment tasks between levels is not consistently transparent and, in many instances, the tasks do not resonate with the School's articulation of level descriptors. In particular, the characteristic competencies of Level 3 work as indicated in the level descriptors are not always assessed directly and overtly.

19. The reviewers scrutinised a range of student work from all levels. There was compliance with the University's stated policy on marking and second-marking. Marking demonstrated consistency and fairness. The Faculty has a form for student feedback, and although there is variability in the extent to which staff use this feedback is supplemented by annotations of work and by oral and email comments. Students indicated general satisfaction with feedback on their work. Furthermore, the University's quality assurance systems (through the School's modular scheme boards of study) are able to detect and respond appropriately when students register dissatisfaction about the adequacy of feedback that they receive.

20. This aspect makes a substantial contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives; however there is scope for improvement. The aims set by the subject provider are substantially met.

Teaching, Learning and Assessment: Grade 3.

Student Progression and Achievement

21. From 1995, the course has consistently met its intake targets by attracting applicants with an average GCE A-Level points score of 14.4; 66 per cent have GCE A-Levels, 10 per cent GNVQ/BTEC qualifications and 24 per cent enter with other qualifications. Numbers entering the course have risen from 32 to 53, although the ratio of applicants to places has fallen from 11:1 to

4.8:1, in line with the national trend. Recruitment remains buoyant, however, in an increasingly competitive market. Staff are pro-active in ensuring recruitment remains healthy. There is a gender balance of two males to every female, with the majority of students in the 18 to 21 age category. Ethnic minorities make up 13 per cent of the intake. The course also recruits approximately 10 local students every year from the foundation course at Kingston College.

22. Completion rates and progression rates between levels are good. Over the last three years, 89 per cent of entrants completed the course. When students do withdraw, the reasons are mainly financial or personal and not because of dissatisfaction with the course. On average, 57 per cent of the students graduate with First class or Upper Second class honours degree awards. Students from the foundation course perform as well as other students and there are instances of First class awards.

23. The reviewers scrutinised student work from all levels, which included a range of types of assessment such as: exams; essays; projects; laboratory reports and dissertations. There was also evidence of subject-specific and transferable skills being assessed, such as coaching and presentation skills. Generally, student work showed that they were achieving the learning outcomes set in the assignments, and were demonstrating a sound understanding of the subject and in-depth knowledge of specialist areas, as defined in the aims in the self-assessment. In particular, the reviewers agree with external examiner comments concerning the good quality of some of the final-level dissertations and projects.

24. Some 68 per cent of graduates secure employment in the sport, exercise and leisure industries and 19 per cent go on to further study. Former students reported that the course prepared them well in terms of subject-specific orientation for employment in sport and exercise science, and more generally in terms of the leisure management sector. Employers told the reviewers that graduates had not only the necessary specialist skills and knowledge, but also general skills, including good interpersonal relations.

25. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Student Progression and Achievement: Grade 4.

Student Support and Guidance

26. The School aims to be supportive of students with respect to their academic, pastoral, welfare and recreational needs. This is successfully achieved.

Support is provided in the School by the Course Director and Deputy, year tutors, module leaders, technical and administrative staff. Additionally, the University offers accommodation, careers, ecumenical counselling, health, sport and recreation, funding and nursery services. Students may self-refer to these services or be advised to contact them by tutors. Liaison between tutors and the University's services is largely informal, although it is facilitated by the excellent 'Signpost' document, providing comprehensive information on central services to teaching staff. The University careers service offers verbal and written advice on careers and organises career fairs. Students spoke favourably of the sports science careers talk that had been offered to them in their final year.

27. As part of the admissions procedure, students are encouraged to attend open days. A welcome pack is sent out in advance of the student's arrival at Kingston. A notable feature of the provision is the induction programme, which was changed recently in the light of student feedback and is now extended over the first eight weeks. It includes a one-week, non-assessed field course, which facilitates team building and teaches specialist skills associated with outdoor sport and leisure activities. Students also receive Preparing for Science, a pre-course guide to study techniques. The Sports Science Course Handbook is a model of how to provide students with the correct amount of information.

28. There is an effective year tutor system, whereby a staff member acts as personal tutor to all students in the year cohort throughout their degree studies. This ensures continuity of support and guidance and students spoke highly of the effectiveness of this system. Specialist support is provided for talented athletes including the opportunity for a flexible programme of study. There is also a support system in place for students transferring from the foundation course at Kingston College to the Sports Science degree at the University, and for those students who go on the USA exchange. There is a peer-assisted learning programme, which uses senior students to support first-year students. While uptake appears to be variable, the students felt this was a useful support mechanism.

29. Effective means of communication operate between students and subject staff. These include clearly advertised office hours, notice-boards, email and a recently developed intranet-based Blackboard learning management system. Because of the effective support system and the need for staff and students to work closely together, for example, in practical sports and laboratories, there is a strong rapport with the students. Current and former students indicated that staff were accessible and highly supportive.

30. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Student Support and Guidance: Grade 4.

Learning Resources

31. Learning resources are provided through a partnership between the University and Kingston College. The University, Faculty and School are committed to a strategic approach to providing appropriate resources that is informed by a library and media services 'vision paper' and an information and communications technology (ICT) technical strategy. The School matches resources to the needs of the student learning experiences, and there has been a major capital investment in Sports Science since 1995. There will be new specialist accommodation for September 2002.

32. Specialist facilities and general teaching rooms are based at the Penrhyn Road Campus, with practical sport modules delivered at Kingston College, at the University's high quality provision at the Tolworth Campus and hired external venues. Laboratories are appropriately designed for teaching and research. Attention is given to health and safety matters, and laboratory procedures adhere to the recommendations of the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences. A notable feature of the provision is the environmental chamber and the extensive facilities for independent student work in the biomedical laboratories. Teaching rooms, which include audiovisual and computer links, are appropriate for the teaching and learning methods used and are well maintained.

33. Library resources have increased significantly since 1995, and the collection of books, journals, videos and electronically accessed materials meets students' needs. The library at Kingston College complements this provision and students can access management resources at the Kingston Hill site. Students also benefit from the M25 Consortium, which provides access rights to syndicated institutions in the London area. Subject librarians and teaching staff liaise frequently to ensure resources are updated. At the time of the review, the Penrhyn Road library was open for 67.5 hours each week during term time and 48 hours a week during undergraduate vacation time, although this is to be extended significantly in November 2001. The libraries have sufficient individual and group study areas.

34. Sports Science students enjoy a learning environment that is rich in ICT provision. There are 95 dedicated open-access PCs in the Penrhyn Road Learning

Resources Centre, including adjustable workstations for disabled users, and 115 PCs in pooled rooms that are also used for teaching purposes. Faculty PCs enhance the provision of equipment. The ratio of students to PCs is 8:1. An ICT help-desk provides important support for students and the course is well supported by administrative and technical staff.

35. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Learning Resources:

Grade 4.

Quality Management and Enhancement

36. The University has a well-established central quality assurance policy for course validation and review. The key quality assurance mechanism at school level is the course log, a well-structured university annual review and action planning process for all courses run within any one school. Course logs are considered by the relevant school boards of studies. Heads of school chair the boards, which are responsible for ensuring that agreed actions for the maintenance and the enhancement of quality are carried out. The Faculty Quality Assurance Committee monitors course logs and minutes of boards of studies. This approach to quality management through the course log is determined by the field structure associated with the University's undergraduate modular scheme (a field being the approved set of modules from which students can choose to gain a named award). Because the BSc (Hons) Sport Science includes modules from several providers within the University, there is more than one course log involved in the quality assurance process for the course. The reviewers are satisfied that the University's field-based quality assurance procedures are being properly followed.

37. The format for the consideration of external examiner reports is carefully structured through a set university form and are appropriately scrutinised through the School course logs. The reviewers agree with the external examiner's confidence in both tiers of the Assessment Board process. The Course Director has access to appropriate information regarding the performance of Sports Science students in units run by providers outside the School of Life Sciences.

38. The Sports Science course is conceived as a coherent whole that includes inputs from a number of different internal providers and Kingston College. As such, it is quality-assured through a multiple rather than a single mechanism. The course team comprises teaching staff from several faculties and the College. While the course team does not meet formally, the

Course Director liaises individually with module leaders. The School may wish to formalise these meetings to oversee the delivery of the whole course.

39. Student opinion is sought through an end-of-semester module evaluation questionnaire that has both quantitative and qualitative elements. The quantitative elements are formally processed and the results made available to the module teaching teams, in addition to the raw qualitative comments. The annual course review process requires module leaders to collate information arising from their modules' delivery, assessment data and student evaluation data into formal module reports. These inform the course log as appropriate. Student opinion is also sought through semester meetings of the course staff-student consultative committee, chaired by the Course Director. Current and former students endorsed the effectiveness of the staff-student consultative committee. For example, it has influenced a decision to modify the Level 3 curriculum and resulted in changes in the teaching of generic business modules.

40. There is evidence of quality enhancement of the provision through staff induction, mentoring, peer review of teaching, appraisal and staff development processes within the School of Life Sciences. These processes take account of the School's objective of ensuring sport science staff engage in research activity, which informs the development and delivery of these specialist aspects of the curriculum.

41. While the reviewers found the self-assessment document to be descriptive, rather than evaluative, it was a helpful guide to the provision.

42. This aspect makes a full contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives. The aims set by the subject provider are met.

Quality Management and Enhancement:

Grade 4.

Conclusions

43. The quality of provision in hospitality, leisure, recreation, sport and tourism, comprising in this instance sports science, at Kingston University is approved. All aspects make at least a substantial contribution to the attainment of the stated objectives and the aims are at least substantially met. The reviewers come to this conclusion, based upon the review visit together with an analysis of the self-assessment and the additional data provided.

44. The positive features of the education in sports science in relation to the aspects of provision include the following:

- a. Curricula that provide theoretical and practical knowledge with subject and transferable skills embedded in the content (paragraphs 10; 11).

- b. Generally well prepared and well-organised learning and teaching sessions, with some cases of outstanding learning experiences for students (paragraph 16).
 - c. Effective use of peer-assisted learning and a learning management system (paragraph 17).
 - d. Good recruitment rates from well-qualified applicants and from the foundation course (paragraph 21).
 - e. Good progression, completion and employment rates, with students entering subject-related industries (paragraphs 22; 24).
 - f. An effective student support and guidance system at both university and school levels (paragraphs 26; 28).
 - g. An induction programme, including the one-week residential experience (paragraph 27).
 - h. Clear strategic planning for learning resources and well-equipped specialist laboratories and facilities (paragraph 31).
 - i. The high-quality provision of general and specialist information and communication technology facilities (paragraph 34).
 - j. The effectiveness of the course log to review external examiners' reports and ensure action points are completed (paragraphs 36; 37).
 - k. The effectiveness of the methods for gathering and acting upon students' views of the course (paragraph 39).
45. The quality of the provision in sports science could be improved by addressing the following issues:
- a. The course team should continue its efforts to make the business modules more relevant to sports science and meet with the Industrial Liaison Committee (paragraph 12).
 - b. Assessments, especially at Level 3, should articulate more clearly with the School's own level descriptors to ensure there is clearer progression in student assessments (paragraph 18).