

# AN EVALUATION OF THE SHEFFIELD HALLAM UNIVERSITY PHYSICAL EDUCATION, SPORT DEVELOPMENT & COACHING STUDENT CONFERENCE 2007

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## INTRODUCTION

During 2005-6, three prominent national UK organisations began work with the UK University sector with regard to the development of new industry standards and skill requirements within the Sport & Physical Education industry:

- **SkillsActive**, the UK's Government Sector Skills Council for the area of sport and leisure
- **Sports Coach UK (SCUK)** - the national organisation charged by Government to develop professional standards within coaching as a profession
- **Institute of Sport, Play & Leisure Management (ISPAL)** - the National body representing the Sport Development Profession

In addition to this, the **UK Government's National PE, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) Strategy (2004)** has placed further emphasis upon the educational and training requirements that the new breed of Physical Education teachers and strategic sport staff within School Sport Partnerships need to enable them to operate more effectively in the future. As such, **employability** has become a key feature nationally and Universities delivering sports-related courses need to ensure that the academic student experience reflects the demands that Government, strategic organisations and employers are now expecting.

In 2005 the UK Government named Sheffield Hallam University a national Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) in Embedding, Enhancing and Integrating Employability. The CETL was established in 2005 and works to improve the employability of Sheffield Hallam University students. In response to the highly competitive environment of Higher Education within the UK and abroad, Sheffield Hallam University, with support from its CETL, developed the concept of running a truly professional annual conference in sport & physical education for its Undergraduate & Postgraduate students.

## PROJECTED CONFERENCE OUTCOMES:

To expose the students to a professional conference environment

To further develop the concept of learner autonomy through involving students within the planning, running and evaluation of the conference

To further enhance employability of the students through national industry specialists delivering workshops and keynotes plus workshops specifically focussing upon personal skill & career development

To further strengthen the university's relationship with the sports industry via an annual event.

## PROJECT

### Conference Overview:

In total 440 undergraduate and postgraduate students from Sheffield Hallam University attended the 2 day conference. Over 50 practical and classroom-based workshops and update sessions were delivered by professionals from the sport development & physical education industries. Keynotes included:

Rt Hon Richard Caborn - Minister for Sport

Sue Campbell - Chair of UK Sport

Martin Havenhand - Chair of Yorkshire Committee for the 2012 Olympic Games

Professor Richard Bailey - Leading Expert on Talent Identification in Physical Education

**Industry Involvement:**

The use of practicing sport industry specialists allowed contemporary knowledge and views to be delivered to both staff and students. It enabled the sports industry to contribute in a valuable manner to the development of its future workforce.

**RESULTS**

The evaluation of the event in terms of student satisfaction was conducted by the Sport Industry Research Centre at Sheffield Hallam University. A self-completion questionnaire survey was used to monitor the effectiveness of the Conference on participants. Specific reference was given to relevance to degree studies, innovation, and overall impact of the conference. In total 440 student delegates were surveyed and of these 329 (75%) evaluations were returned in a useable state. 40 industry specialists were also surveyed in relation to their participation in conference workshop delivery and any future involvement. More informal feedback was also sought across the University in terms of how the conference had raised the profile of the academic sport programme and its students.

**EVALUATED AREAS - GENERAL**

**% of responses good - excellent**

1. Overall impression of the conference

**96%**

2. Rating of conference as a teaching/learning method

**92%**

3. Opportunity to gain new/innovative ideas

**85%**

4. Usefulness in terms of preparation for employment

**63%**

5. Usefulness in terms of degree studies

**72%**

**EXAMPLES OF WRITTEN COMMENTS IN TERMS OF THE VALUE OF THE CONFERENCE:**

“The conference was presented in a good way, to encourage learning and knowledge a different way to learn, very interactive”

“It motivated me more, and inspired me!”

“Gives a great insight towards life after university in terms of professionalism “

“I found the workshop very helpful towards my degree.”

“All of the sessions were extremely useful in terms of career development from my degree route.”

“Everything that was said could be linked to course or future employment in the area.”

## **DISCUSSION**

The key findings from the overall survey were extremely positive. Exceptionally high levels of satisfaction were reported by the student delegates across all areas. In addition to this, there was a 100% positive response rate from the industry specialists in terms of the value they placed on the experience and their impression of the students.

In response to the overwhelming success of the Sheffield Hallam conference, there are a number of UK organisations who are now seeking to hold a similar event but on a national scale. The Youth Sport Trust, the Institute for Sport, Play and Leisure believes that a National Student Sport Conference is needed within the UK and would also wish to investigate the potential to expand it to include students from other European Universities.

Universities UK (2002) stated that Higher Education and the labour market are changing rapidly. The economy is becoming increasingly knowledge-based and competitive, and the nature of graduates' work is being transformed. As such Universities teaching sport-based programmes need to develop innovative learning environments for their students. The ability to provide an opportunity where the industry can interact in a professional manner with students is one which should be continued on an annual basis.

## **REFERENCES**

PE, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) Strategy (2004) Department for Education & Skills.

SkillsActive (2006) National Occupational Standards for Sport.

Universities UK (2002) Enhancing employability, recognising diversity. Making links between higher education and the world of work.