



Qualification and Training Routes to Becoming a Practising Sport and Exercise Psychologist in the UK



The British Psychological Society

Following discussions between BASES and the British Psychological Society (BPS) on qualification and training routes to become a practising sport and exercise psychologist, the BPS-BASES Joint Committee tasked Dr Ailsa Niven and Amanda Owens to answer commonly asked questions

The application of psychology to sport and exercise settings is a relatively new field, which is rapidly developing and expanding. This branch of psychology is concerned with understanding the behaviour, mental processes, and well-being of people who are involved in sport and exercise. Practitioners typically specialise in either the sport or exercise branches, though some work equally in both fields. The purpose of this article is to describe current qualification routes to becoming a practising sport and exercise psychologist, address some common questions regarding these routes, and provide information on recent developments in the field.

Currently there are two types of recognised sport and exercise psychologists. Through BASES, individuals can become Accredited as Sport and Exercise Psychologists and work within the guidelines of BASES. Through Full Membership of the

Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology (DSEP) of the BPS, individuals can become Chartered Sport and Exercise Psychologists and follow the professional guidelines and code of conduct of the BPS. Figure 1 outlines typical routes to each qualification.

Q What is the difference between the two types of sport and exercise psychologists?

It is possible that a psychologist may be both Accredited and Chartered, and there are individuals who have achieved both from different starting points. One of the main differences between the two types of psychologists centres on the knowledge gained at undergraduate level and how this has subsequently been applied. A BPS Chartered Psychologist will have focused his or her undergraduate study mainly in psychology and therefore, may have a greater understanding of how the breadth of psychology pertains

to sport and exercise situations. In contrast, a BASES accredited practitioner with a sport and exercise science undergraduate degree will have studied a wider range of disciplines that typically will have included physiology and biomechanics as well as psychology, and may have focused specifically on sport and exercise psychology.

Q Will both BASES and BPS Psychologists be able to use the term 'psychologist'?

Through the Foster Review, the Department of Health has called for the statutory regulation of psychologists. Through statutory regulation members of the public will know that those claiming to be psychologists are properly trained and qualified, and answerable to a registration authority. Consequently, the term 'psychologist' or adjective terms such as 'sport and exercise psychologist' are likely to become protected. Further, it is likely

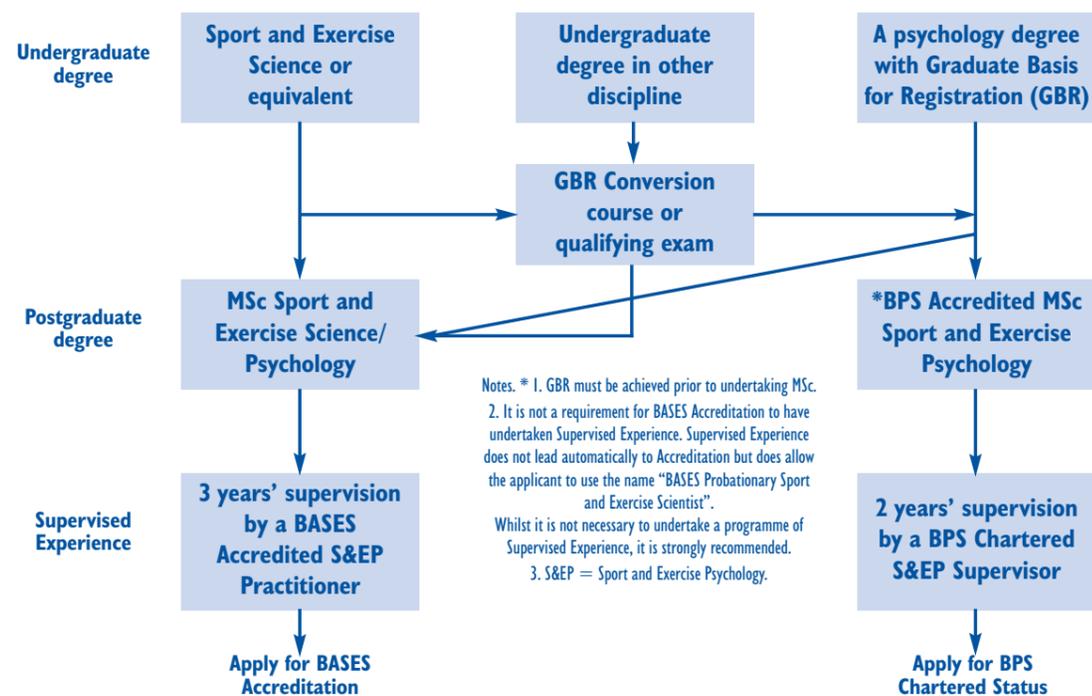


Figure 1: Typical routes to becoming a BASES Scientific Support Accredited or BPS Chartered Sport and Exercise Psychologist



that an independent regulator of psychologists will be established and individuals will need to demonstrate an appropriate standard to be able to legally use the term psychologist. It is not yet known what this standard will be. It may be that those with chartered status or BASES accreditation will be eligible, however this issue is still at consultation level and no final decisions have yet been made.

Q How can I find a BASES Accredited/BPS Chartered sport & exercise psychology supervisor for Supervised Experience?

Individuals who wish to pursue the path of becoming a BASES Accredited Sport and Exercise Psychologist can search on the BASES website www.bases.org.uk and look on the BASES Consultant Finder www.bases.org.uk/newsite/conssearich.asp for a supervisor. Individuals wishing to pursue the BPS path to become a Chartered Sport and Exercise Psychologist can search the BPS website and look for BPS Chartered Sport and Exercise Psychologists at www.bps.org.uk/e-services/find-a-psychologist/register.cfm

Q Can I become Chartered if I have already completed an MSc that wasn't BPS Accredited?

Candidates with the Graduate Basis for Registration who successfully complete a postgraduate qualification in sport and exercise psychology between 1 September 2004 and the 30 September 2008 may apply on an individual basis to have this training course approved by the BPS Admissions Committee. Where the Admissions Committee agrees to approve this course, and the candidate has also undertaken a period of supervised experience in sport and exercise psychology developing the key competencies expected of a Full Member of the DSEP to an appropriate level, the candidate will be eligible for Full membership of the DSEP and for Registration as a Chartered Psychologist.

The total period of training for the qualification and experience shall be a

minimum of three years. Candidates who complete their postgraduate training course after 30 September 2008 will not be able to take advantage of this arrangement. See www.bps.org.uk/spex/join/join_home.cfm for further details.

Q If I am BASES Accredited, then can I also become BPS Chartered?

There is no reciprocal arrangement between the BPS and BASES. All individuals applying to become a Full Member of the DSEP and therefore Chartered must establish that they have GBR. Most candidates meet this by successfully completing a BPS accredited undergraduate degree in psychology, a conversion qualification or by passing the BPS' Qualifying Exam.

To become a practising psychologist, BASES stipulates that candidates should normally hold a higher degree so a PhD may substitute for an MSc qualification.

In certain special circumstances, academic psychologists with a PhD in psychology who can demonstrate a broad range of psychological knowledge equivalent to an undergraduate psychology degree (including research and statistics expertise) may be eligible for Graduate Basis for Registration. Please contact the BPS' Admissions Team for further information (applications@bps.org.uk). Once GBR has been demonstrated, individuals who have not completed a Society accredited training course, or a qualification approved by the Society on an individual basis, may still be considered for Full membership of the Division and Chartered Status through the 'grandparenting' scheme, but will have to demonstrate training and experience in the required key

competencies at an appropriate level over a period of at least five years. This route is for experienced academics and practitioners and is only considered in special cases. For further details, see www.bps.org.uk/spex/join/join_home.cfm

Q If I am BPS Chartered, then can I also become BASES Accredited?

There is no reciprocal arrangement between the BPS and BASES. Nevertheless it is likely that BPS Chartered Sport and Exercise Psychologists would be in a good position to successfully apply for BASES Accreditation by documenting their knowledge in the required areas, including the other sport and exercise disciplines.

Q What is the situation if I am doing a PhD in sport and exercise psychology?

To become a practising psychologist, BASES stipulates that candidates should normally hold a higher degree so a PhD may substitute for an MSc qualification. Nevertheless a candidate is advised to still undertake the required period of supervised experience, and subsequently apply for the qualification. For the BPS route, a PhD cannot substitute for the stated training route to becoming a practising sport and exercise psychologist unless it is through the 'grandparenting' scheme (see above). ■

Useful weblinks:

- BASES Supervised Experience - www.bases.org.uk/newsite/supervisedexp.asp
- BASES Accreditation - www.bases.org.uk/newsite/accresind.asp
- Membership of the BPS Division of Sport and Exercise Psychology (DSEP) - www.bps.org.uk/spex/join/join_home.cfm

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