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### **Published version**

ANDERSON, Harvey (2018). S&C coach education: Where's the coaching? In: 11th International Conference on Strength Training 2018, Perth, Western Australia, 30 Nov 2018 - 3 Dec 2018. (Unpublished)

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# "S&C Coach Education: *Where's the coaching?*"

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## Introduction

The demand for strength and conditioning coaches and with it S&C Coach courses are on the increase in the UK and worldwide (Dawson et al., 2013). It is recognised that S&C Coaches develop through a number of mechanisms, in a complex and non-linear fashion (De Lyon & Cushion, 2013); namely through formal, non-formal and informal mechanisms (Kuklick & Gearity, 2015; Gant & Dorgo, 2014)

It has been suggested that S&C coaches need to have sport specific knowledge and coaching pedagogical knowledge (Jeffreys, 2014), other authors argue that reflection skills are also critical (Hanratty & O'Connor, 2012), alongside relationship building (Tod, Bond & Lavallee, 2012). Radcliffe, Comfort & Spence (2017) point to the need for high quality mentorship to allow novice S&C coaches to develop, and Anderson (2016) suggested that in addition to these, coaches also need inter-personal and inter-professional communication skills.

Finally Gearity (2009) concludes that S&C coaches need to know about: pedagogy, physiology, biomechanics, injury prevention & care, nutrition, speed, resistance training, sport psychology, sociology and management (p.77).

With such a large remit of potential topic areas to cover, the focus of this paper was on the formal learning programmes in the UK at Postgraduate level to see what is actually being delivered.

## Method

An internet search for "Strength & Conditioning" Postgraduate Courses at UK Universities was carried out and a content analysis was conducted, looking at program outlines and module descriptors of each of the 21 Postgraduate Degrees found on their respective websites.

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was conducted by initially using module titles that were listed on the respective courses and where module descriptors were available, these were analysed and used to assist the categorisation of each theme.

## Results

<b>Practical Techniques</b>	<b>86%</b>
<b>Research Methods</b>	<b>80%</b>
<b>Sport Science (Phys)</b>	<b>80%</b>
<b>Project/Dissertation</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>Biomechanics</b>	<b>52%</b>
<b>Programme Design</b>	<b>38%</b>
<b>Needs Analysis</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>Work Placement</b>	<b>29%</b>
<b>Contemporary Issues</b>	<b>24%</b>
<b>Injury Prevention</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Personal Development</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Pedagogy</b>	<b>19%</b>
<b>Performance Analysis</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Skill Acquisition</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>34%</b>

The results demonstrated that there was a common structure for these programmes, with courses primarily being structured around research methods, 'practical techniques' modules, sport science, and finally a dissertation.

However, work placements were only available on less than 30% of the courses, and pedagogical/coaching modules only accounted for less than 20% of all content. Skill acquisition modules accounted for only 10%.

## Discussion

The results demonstrate that there is a genuine lack of opportunities for student S&C coaches to gain theoretical knowledge of the key areas in relation to coaching, namely pedagogy, skill acquisition, and some form of practical coaching experience. In addition, there appears to be very little organised opportunity for student S&C coaches to develop inter-personal and inter-professional skills, deemed essential for coaches to be successful in this vocational field (Anderson 2016). The critical dangers of this issue were further illustrated, when we consider that only two courses (>10% of the 70%) that didn't have a work placement, had a pedagogy module.

This begs the question, "*Where can UK S&C coaching students get opportunities to gain theoretical and practical experiences and frameworks to coach Strength & Conditioning?*"

## Conclusion

Postgraduate S&C students are missing out on critical learning opportunities to engage with the *coaching* aspect of S&C