Pearson

Higher Nationals in Sport and Exercise Science: Qualification Guide

A contemporary Sport and Exercise qualification with clearly defined specialist pathways, industry-relevant content and a strong emphasis on practical, technical and transferable skills that support progression into higher education and careers across the sport and physical activity sector.

FIRST TEACHING FROM SEPTEMBER 2027



What are HNs?

Higher Nationals are practical Level 4 **(Higher National Certificate/ HNC)** and Level 5 **(Higher National Diploma/HND)** qualifications regulated by Ofqual, designed to develop the skills employers need, and allow learners to go straight into work or further study.

Why have we redeveloped them?

The sport and exercise science sector is evolving rapidly, driven by advances in technology, performance analytics, data science, health interventions and evidence-based practice.

The redeveloped qualifications have been designed to reflect these changes. The new qualification structure provides clearer occupational pathways, stronger links to professional standards and a greater focus on the practical application of sport and exercise science principles. This ensures learners develop the specialist skills needed for employment while also supporting progression to university degree programmes.

The redeveloped Higher Nationals in Sport and Exercise Science have been developed in collaboration with employers, universities, colleges, professional bodies and industry experts to ensure they reflect the latest developments in sport, health, performance and exercise science.

Key contributors include:

- CIMSPA
- CASES
- UK Coaching
- UK Anti-Doping
- SportsAid
- The Football Association (FA)
- The Premier League
- Plus Loughborough University and several leading higher education institutions

The specialist pathways have also been developed in partnership with CIMSPA and align to recognised professional standards. This provides learners with clear progression opportunities and helps ensure that the curriculum reflects current industry expectations across coaching, performance analysis, strength and conditioning, exercise prescription and athlete development.

What's new?

Three specialist pathways

The new suite introduces specialist pathways designed to reflect emerging roles and workforce demand within sport and exercise science:

- Coaching and Talent Identification & Performance Analysis
- Strength and Conditioning with Advanced Exercise Prescription
- General Sport and Exercise Science pathway

Contemporary scientific content

The qualifications include innovative new content that reflects the future direction of the sector, including:

- Talent Identification and Athlete Pathway Development
- Performance Analytics and Tactical Evaluation
- Applied Biomechanics to Optimise Performance
- Applied Strength and Conditioning for High Performance Athletes
- Artificial Intelligence in Sport and Exercise Science
- Holistic Athlete Support: Media, Mindset and Wellbeing

Greater integration of theory and practice

A major feature of the redeveloped suite is the stronger integration of scientific theory with real-world practice. Learners have opportunities to develop skills in performance testing, athlete monitoring, biomechanics, rehabilitation, coaching, performance analysis and exercise prescription through applied learning and assessment.

The qualification has been designed to develop graduates who can confidently translate complex scientific concepts into practical solutions within sport and exercise settings.

First teaching



The HN in Sport and Exercise Sciences is available for **first teaching from September 2027**.

What’s new?

Stronger progression opportunities

The new pathways also strengthen progression opportunities into high-demand areas including performance analysis, strength and conditioning, exercise physiology, sport and exercise science, rehabilitation and health-related professions, while supporting progression to degrees such as Sport and Exercise Science, Strength and Conditioning, Clinical Exercise Physiology and Sports Therapy.



Professional Body Recognition

A learner that completes one of our industry aligned pathways in Sport will achieve The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (CIMSPA)* professional status of:

HN Sport – Pathway	Coaching and Telent ID/ Performance Analysis	Strength and Conditioning with Advanced Exercise Prescription
CIMSPA Professional Status'	• Sports Coach • Coaching in High Performance Sport • Safeguarding and Protecting Children	• Strength and Conditioning Trainer • Working with people with long term conditions (LTC) • Safeguarding and Protecting Children

CIMSPA Education Partner

CIMSPA professional status demonstrates industry-recognised competence, supports CIMSPA membership, and gives employers confidence in their skills and readiness for work.



*subject to approval.

HN in Sport and Exercise Science
Qualification structure

Scan or select the QR code to visit the qualification page.

KEY

Cell colour identifies the type of each unit in the pathway.

Core Mandatory | Specialist Mandatory | Optional

Level 4 - Core/Mandatory

Credits	Unit #	L4 General Pathway
15	401	Fundamentals of Nutrition for Sport, Health and Performance
15	402	Fundamentals of Sport and Exercise Psychology
15	403	Applied Anatomy and Physiology for Sport and Physical Activity
15	404	Applied Research Skills in Sport and Physical Activity (Pearson Set)
15	406	Application of Fitness Testing and Training
15		Optional unit
15		Optional unit
15		Optional unit

Credits	Unit #	L4 Coaching and Talent Identification
15	401	Fundamentals of Nutrition for Sport, Health and Performance
15	402	Fundamentals of Sport and Exercise Psychology
15	403	Applied Anatomy and Physiology for Sport and Physical Activity
15	404	Applied Research Skills in Sport and Physical Activity (Pearson Set)
15	405	Coaching Practice and Skill Development
15	410	Talent Identification and Athlete Pathway Development
15		Optional unit
15		Optional unit

Credits	Unit #	L4 Strength and Conditioning with Advanced Exercise Prescription
15	401	Fundamentals of Nutrition for Sport, Health and Performance
15	402	Fundamentals of Sport and Exercise Psychology
15	403	Applied Anatomy and Physiology for Sport and Physical Activity
15	404	Applied Research Skills in Sport and Physical Activity (Pearson Set)
15	406	Application of Fitness Testing and Training
15	419	High Performance Training Programme Design
15		Optional unit
15		Optional unit

Level 4 Optional units

Credits	Unit #	L4 General Pathway
15	411	Digital Innovation in Health and Human Performance
15	413	Work Experience
15	405	Coaching Practice and Skill Development
15	414	Exercise Interventions for Inactive and Sedentary Populations
15	415	Applied Massage Techniques for Recovery and Rehabilitation
15	416	Fundamentals of Biomechanics
15	417	Industry Insights and Professional Pathways in Sport
15	419	High Performance Training Programme Design

Credits	Unit #	L4 Coaching and Talent Identification
15	419	High Performance Training Programme Design
15	406	Application of Fitness Testing and Training
15	411	Digital Innovation in Health and Human Performance
15	413	Work Experience
15	415	Applied Massage Techniques for Recovery and Rehabilitation
15	416	Fundamentals of Biomechanics
15	417	Industry Insights and Professional Pathways in Sport

Credits	Unit #	L4 Strength and Conditioning with Advanced Exercise Prescription
15	410	Talent Identification and Athlete Pathway Development
15	411	Digital Innovation in Health and Human Performance
15	413	Work Experience
15	415	Applied Massage Techniques for Recovery and Rehabilitation
15	416	Fundamentals of Biomechanics
15	417	Industry Insights and Professional Pathways in Sport
15	414	Exercise Interventions for Inactive and Sedentary Populations

Level 5

Credits	Unit #	L5 General Pathway
30	501	Evidence Based Practice and Sport Research Methods – Research Project (Pearson -Set)
15	504	Applied Biomechanics to Optimise Performance
15	511	Performance Psychology for Sporting Success
15		Optional unit
15		Optional unit
15		Optional unit
15		Optional unit

Credits	Unit #	L5 Coaching and Performance Analysis
30	501	Evidence Based Practice and Sport Research Methods – Research Project (Pearson -Set)
15	502	Performance Analytics and Tactical Evaluation
15	504	Applied Biomechanics to Optimise Performance
15	506	Advanced Coaching Pedagogy and Skill Acquisition
15	511	Performance Psychology for Sporting Success
15		Optional unit
15		Optional unit

Credits	Unit #	L5 Strength and Conditioning with Advanced Exercise Prescription
30	501	Evidence Based Practice and Sport Research Methods – Research Project (Pearson -Set)
15	503	Exercise for the Management of Long Term Conditions
15	507	Injury Management and Rehabilitation Strategies
15	505	Nutrition to optimise Health and Performance
15	509	Applied Strength and Conditioning for High Performance Athletes
15		Optional unit
15		Optional unit

Level 5 Optional units

Credits	Unit #	L5 General Pathway
15	502	Performance Analytics and Tactical Evaluation
15	503	Exercise for the Management of Long Term Conditions
15	505	Nutrition to optimise Health and Performance
15	506	Advanced Coaching Pedagogy and Skill Acquisition
15	507	Injury Management and Rehabilitation Strategies
15	508	Holistic Athlete Support: Media, Mindset and Wellbeing
15	509	Applied Strength and Conditioning for High Performance Athletes
15	510	Exercise Therapy and Specific Populations
15	512	Inclusive Coaching and Accessible Sport Delivery
15	513	Applied Sport, Exercise and Environmental Physiology
15	514	Leadership and Management within Multidisciplinary Teams
15	515	Data Informed Health and Performance Monitoring
15	518	Artificial Intelligence in Sport and Exercise Science

Credits	Unit #	L5 Coaching and Performance Analysis
15	505	Nutrition to optimise Health and Performance
15	507	Injury Management and Rehabilitation Strategies
15	508	Holistic Athlete Support: Media, Mindset and Wellbeing
15	509	Applied Strength and Conditioning for High Performance Athletes
15	512	Inclusive Coaching and Accessible Sport Delivery
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Credits	Unit #	L5 Strength and Conditioning with Advanced Exercise Prescription
15	502	Performance Analytics and Tactical Evaluation
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15	515	Data Informed Health and Performance Monitoring
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