



Research into Higher Education Course Choices for Students Studying Level 3 Sports Courses in Herefordshire and Worcestershire

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INTRODUCTION

This is a survey of Level 3 students, currently studying sports in Herefordshire and Worcestershire about their intentions about progressing to Higher Education.

SURVEY

Course leaders at all 8 Further Education colleges running level 3 programmes in Sport in Herefordshire and Worcestershire were asked to survey current students (either first or second year) by electronic and paper based surveys. The survey was conducted in June 2008. The responses were collated in Survey Monkey, and run alongside a survey of FE Lecturers in Sport.

The survey was informally trialled with course leaders and with Gareth Jones from University of Worcester.

SAMPLE SIZE

The survey aimed to make full use of the HWLLN network and thus the survey was sent to all 8 colleges offering Level 3 in sports related courses.

RESPONSE RATE

Students: 28 students responded from 2 colleges.

RESULTS

Q1 & Q2 were filters to ensure that all respondents were students on Sports related courses at colleges in Herefordshire and Worcestershire

This identified that:

28.6% of respondents were studying A Levels

71.4% were studying a Level 3 Vocational Qualification (BTEC National Certificate/Diploma)

Q3. Are you considering progressing to Higher Education?

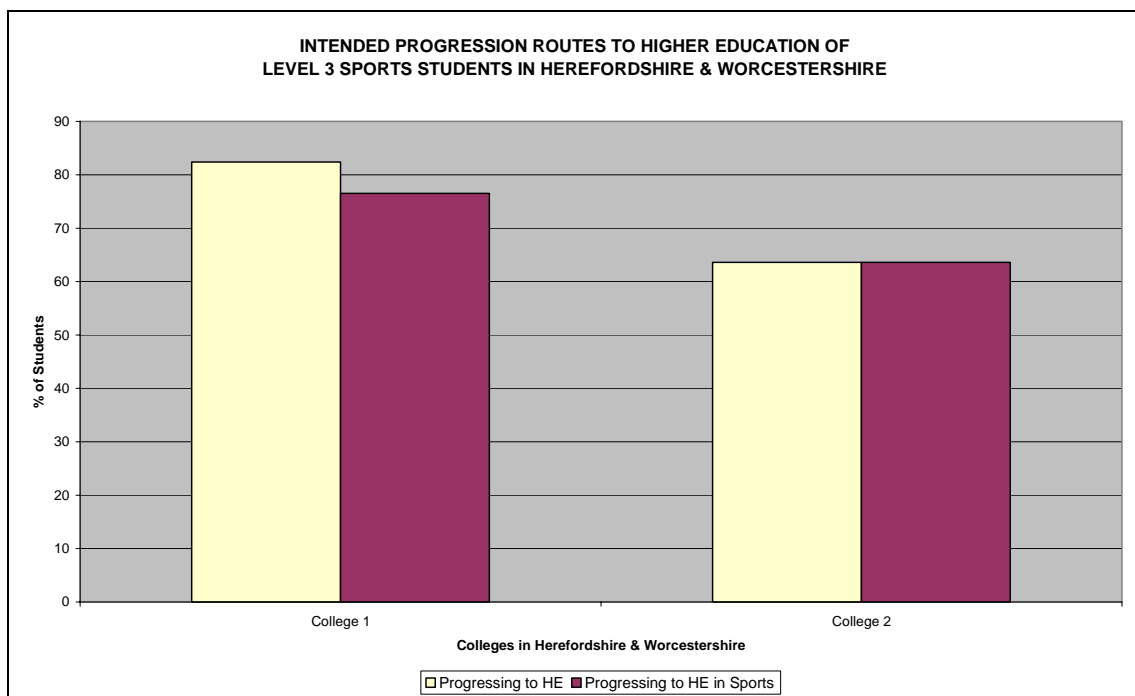
Yes	75%
No	25%

The responses provide intended general progression rates:

College 1 – providing A Levels & BTEC National Certificate/Diploma	82.4%
College 2 – providing BTEC National Certificate/Diploma	63.6%

With intended progression rates in Sports is:

College 1 – providing A Levels & BTEC National Certificate/Diploma	76.5%
College 2 – providing BTEC National Certificate/Diploma	63.6%



Q4a. What sort of course are you considering? (21 respondents who answered Yes to Q3)

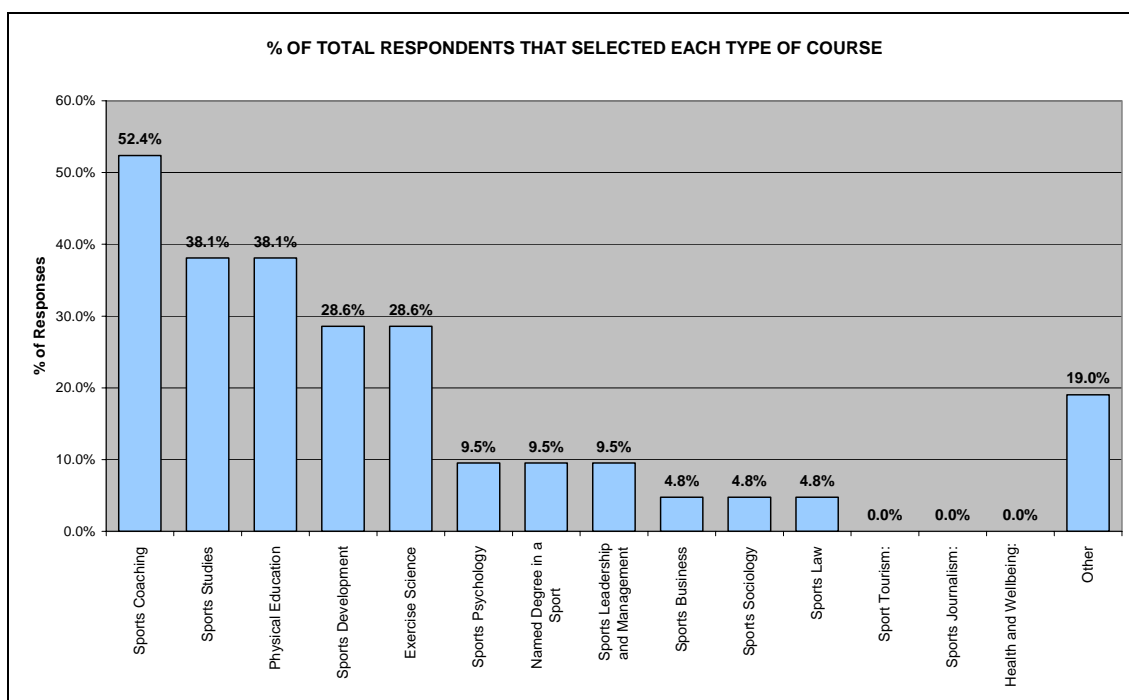
Foundation degree	38.0%
Undergraduate degree	33.3%
HND	14.3%
Undecided	23.8%

Q4b. Are you interested in studying ... (21 respondents who answered Yes to Q3)

Full time	95.2%
Part-time	4.8%

**Q4c. What sort of course are you interested in? (SELECT YOUR TOP 3 OPTIONS)
(21 respondents who answered Yes to Q3)**

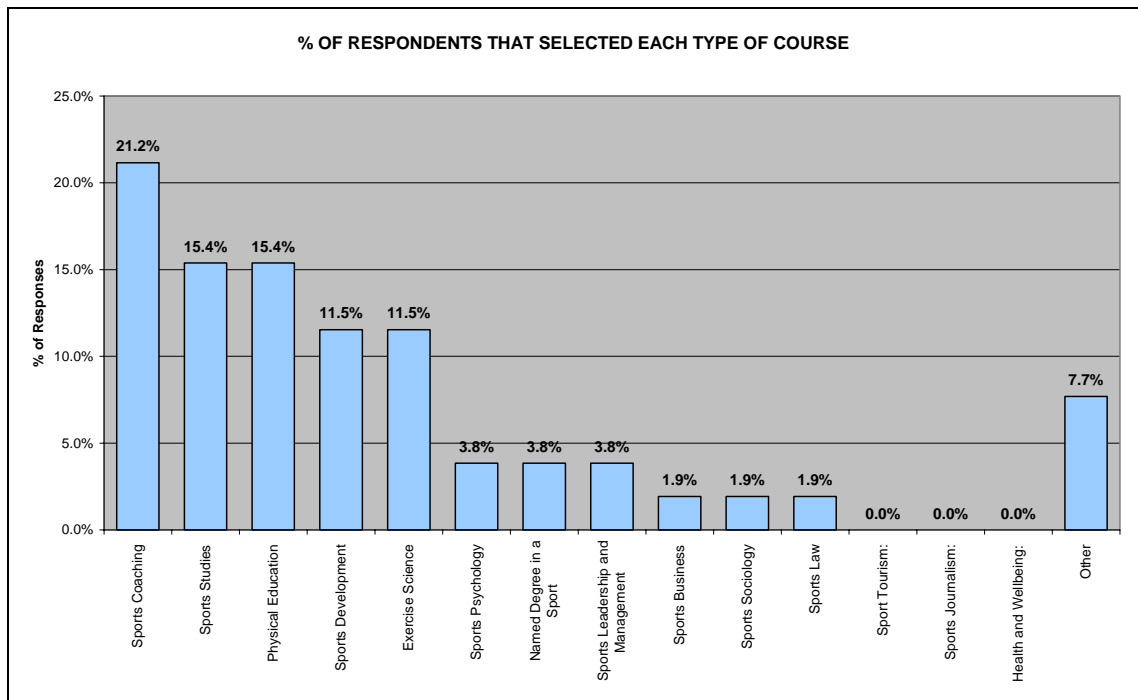
Percentages show the proportion of respondents who indicated a preference for each course:



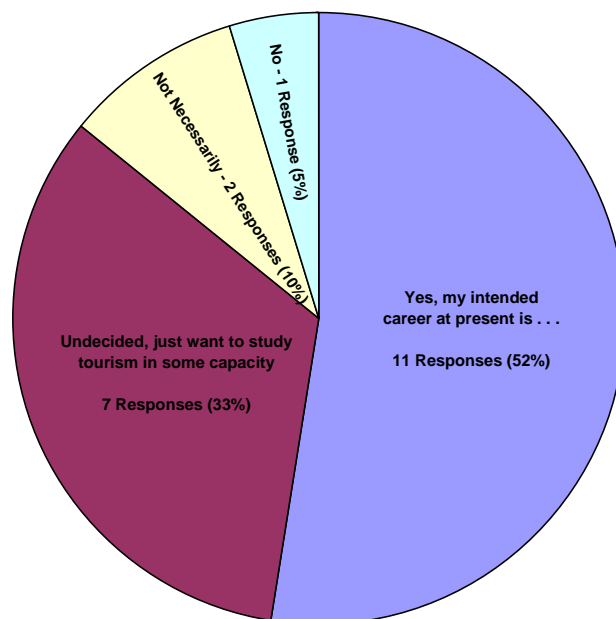
The courses in the 'Other' category included:

- Sports Science & Materials Technology
- Arts
- Outdoor Leadership
- Sports Education

As respondents selected multiple options a clearer picture is provided by considering the percentage of responses for each course.



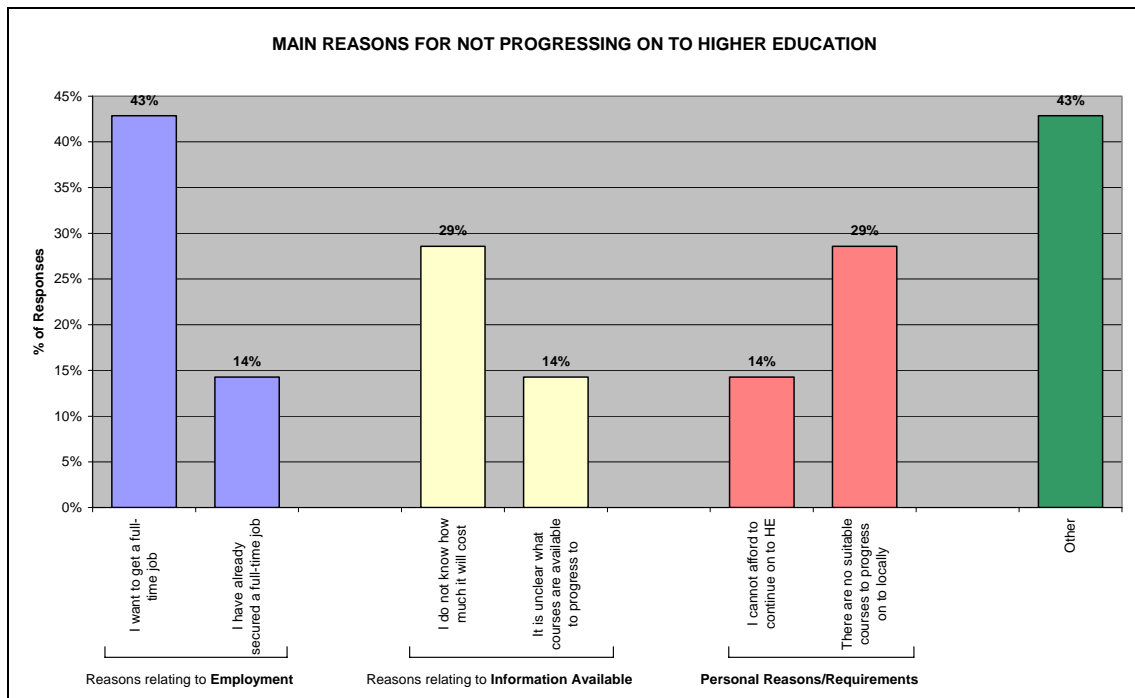
Q4d. Is it your intention that your choice of career will lead to a career in Sport or a Sport related industry? (21 respondents who answered Yes to Q3)



Those students that said 'Yes' provided information regarding their intended career at present, which included:

- PE Teacher (x7)
- Coaching
- Sports Centre Staff
- Coach/Player
- Not Known (x2)

Q5. What are your reasons for not progressing on to HE? (Select as many boxes as apply) (7 respondents who answered No to Q3)



The reasons given in the 'Other' category include:

- Scaffolding for one year, then Camp America, then apply for police
- Armed Forces
- Might be moving abroad

ANALYSIS

The survey was conducted in June 2008 when most second year students had already made their progression choices. Thus most of the respondents were first year students, considering their choices for 2009. All students were studying level 3 awards from BTEC or OCR at Colleges in Herefordshire and Worcestershire

Overall the responses reveal a high degree of intention to proceed to Higher Education, with 75% planning to continue their studies. Of these students there was no single type of course preferred, although within the survey data it was clear that students at larger institutions tended towards BSc / BA courses, whilst students at smaller institutions tended towards Foundation and HND. This may reflect a number of structural factors: size of institution, whether the college has its own HE provision, links to particular courses and location. Alternatively it may reflect the student intake profile and student expectations, or the institutional / programme emphasis on the relative merits of vocational employment and higher education. Further research would need to be undertaken to investigate this further.

Almost all the respondents anticipated studying full-time with only a few considering studying whilst working. However, it is also noticeable that of those respondents who did not anticipate progressing to HE a significant grouping cited reasons that related to the cost of full-time study.

As anticipated, respondents selected a wide variety of courses. However several key features can be identified:

First, *Sports Coaching* was the most popular with over half of the respondents selecting this course. This is also reflected in the respondents' career choices with many seeking careers in teaching and coaching. Further research might find that there may be a relationship between the coaching modules of the BTEC National Diplomas in Sport, and OCR National Diploma in Sport and course selection.

Second, student choices generally reflected the more traditional courses with well-established reputations – specifically *Sports Coaching*, *Sports Studies*, *Physical Education* and *Exercise Studies*. In addition to these courses, 28% of respondents showed an interest in *Sports Development* courses – possibly this reflects a perception of increased career opportunities in this area as well as the subject area. Overall this suggests that employability is a concern to students when selecting study areas.

Third, there is broad interest in more specialist courses in Sport, possibly as specialist pathways within broader degrees or as combined studies.

The survey showed 85% of L3 sports students intend to pursue careers in the broad area of sport, but that most have no exact career ambitions. Only a very small proportion were clear that they did not wish to study a sports subject, with the remainder uncertain. The high degree of intention to pursue a career in sports suggests that sports students are very vocationally oriented, with implications for HE course design and recruitment.

Students who stated that they were not intending to progress to higher education, provided a range of reasons for not progressing. The major reason was that respondents either already had a full-time post, or intended to get one. Beyond this main reason, a number of students identified the cost of higher education as a reason for not progressing to HE, and a small number identified a lack of suitable courses locally.

Overall, issues of money emerge as an underlying reason for students not progressing to higher education in sport.

CONCLUSION

The survey identifies that L3 sports students in Herefordshire and Worcestershire are very committed to their subject area and that a large proportion would like to progress to higher education. It found that the subject choices of most students were fairly conservative, and largely supports the current range of provision of Higher Education programmes. However it also identifies interest in a wide range of specialist courses and particularly in the development of new programmes in Sports Development.

In studying the reasons not to progress to higher education, the research found that the major reasons for not progressing were the perceived costs and opportunity costs of studying. This finding has major implications for the widening participation agenda, and could be investigated in further study.