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## **JSS Editorial: Sport and Exercise Psychology**

I took over from Professor Andy Lane as Executive Editor of the *Social and Behavioural Sciences* section of the *Journal of Sports Sciences* at the start of 2019, so you'd be forgiven for thinking this editorial is a little overdue. However, I recall a conversation with the late Professor Craig Sharp in which he reflected on the increasing pressure to publish, particularly for doctoral students. He recounted how, as a PhD student, he had asked his supervisor when they would submit their exciting results to a journal. In a dead-pan manner, his supervisor responded: "When we have something to say, Craig". In that spirit, I am acutely aware that much has already been said in many articulate editorials in this journal. The qualities that the editorial team look for in a submission are largely unchanged. Andy Lane's excellent editorial on "getting published" in what was then the Psychology section of the *Journal of Sports Sciences* highlighted the perennial importance of impact, originality, and quality of methods (Lane, 2012). More recently, Professor Colin Boreham and his associate editors set out several tips for authors that hold true for submissions to all the sections covered in the *Journal of Sports Sciences* (Boreham et al., 2021). Rather than repeat these, Associate Editors Dr. Paul Appleton (Manchester Metropolitan University), Dr. David Fletcher (Loughborough University), Dr. Jamie North (St Mary's University) and I would like to announce a change to the section name, then provide some context for researchers to consider the value, opportunities and challenges associated with submitting their work for publication in the *Journal of Sports Sciences*.

In this newly labelled section, we welcome submissions from sport and exercise psychology, motor control and learning, and the psychology of sport expertise. The 'Social and Behavioural Sciences' section name was chosen when the 'Psychology' and 'Motor Behaviour and Expert Performance' sections were merged in 2018. The scope of the social sciences and behavioural sciences is much broader than psychology, while skill learning, motor behaviour, and expertise have a rich history of research as areas of psychology. Furthermore, our discussions with colleagues together with the increasing number of submissions that are redirected to other sections suggest authors are sometimes unsure whether to submit their manuscript to this section or the *Sport Performance* section. After discussion with the Editorial Board, we decided to rename the section '*Sport and Exercise Psychology*' to address these issues. As you will see on the journal website, the focus of the section remains the same, encompassing all sub-disciplines of psychology including related areas such as motor control and learning, motor behaviour, and expert performance. We are confident this will provide greater clarity for researchers when they submit their work to the *Journal of Sports Sciences*.

The growth and reach of the *Journal of Sports Sciences* is impressive and continues to accelerate. It is now almost 39 years since the *Journal of Sports Sciences* was established and the remarkable growth in research in the sport and exercise sciences has been reflected in the journal's metrics. The journal is ranked 13<sup>th</sup> out of 85 journals under Sports Science based on the total number of citations and our submission rate has doubled since 2017. Article downloads have increased by more than 50% over the past two years and, in 2020, they surpassed one *million* for the first time. Alongside downloads through traditional

databases, Twitter downloads almost doubled to 18,500 in 2020 and @JSportsSci now has over 45,000 followers. Of direct relevance to this section, the appetite for postgraduate study and practitioner training continues to rise. In the UK, the British Psychological Society (BPS) now has 23 accredited courses in Sport and Exercise Psychology, while the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) has developed a new Sport and Exercise Psychology Accreditation Route (SEPAR).

This sharp increase in the journal's overall submission metrics highlights the excellent opportunity for researchers to publish their work in a high-quality international journal with excellent visibility and citation metrics. On the other hand, the large number of submissions means the bar remains high when it comes to accepting manuscripts for publication. Altogether, more than half of the submissions to this section are 'desk rejected', and consequently, not sent out for external review. Many of the papers that do not go out for external review have significant shortcomings; however, some papers that are solid on the science and the research is well executed will not enter the review process because the work is judged to be limited in its originality and potential significance for the field. As well as being well-designed, and offering a conceptual contribution, we are looking for papers that have significant impact with findings that have implications across sports and broader domains. When considering the practical implications of such work, it is important we are not blinkered by the boundaries of sport. For instance, advances in understanding of how individuals best learn motor skills in sport has the potential to transfer to rehabilitation and occupational therapy settings. Similarly, advances in understanding of how psychological factors impact decision making and skill execution has potential implications for other high-performance environments. And better understanding of the social and psychological determinants of behaviour change has numerous applications outside of the sport and exercise domain.

In closing, we would like to remind you about several recent developments at the *Journal of Sports Sciences*. First, the Advisory Board for each section has been refreshed. We have added strength in depth to the *Sport and Exercise Psychology* board and are delighted to welcome 11 new colleagues onto our Advisory Board. These individuals take the place of six colleagues who made a valuable contribution to the review process over many years, for which we are very grateful. Second, we have introduced the option of Registered Reports. We strongly encourage authors to consider this submission option, which is designed to promote research transparency and help combat issues of publication bias, along with questionable practices such as p-hacking. For a full consideration of the issues and how registered reports attempts to address them, we encourage you to read the recent *Journal of Sports Sciences* editorial (Abt, Boreham, Davison, Jackson, Wallace, & Williams, 2021). Third, the *Journal of Sports Sciences* has appointed a separate Advisory Board in the area of research design and statistics to help Executive Editors and Associate Editors address any questions or concerns in this area. This reflects an increase in the number of submissions with complex research designs and statistical procedures, such as those involved in the analysis of 'big data'.

In summary, this is an exciting time for the journal and for researchers in our area. If you wish to publish excellent work in a highly visible journal with a strong international profile and reputation, we urge you to submit it to the *Journal of Sports Sciences*.

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Dr David Fletcher  
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Dr Jamie North  
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