

# At the interface between psychology and sports - the international "M.Sc. Psychology in Sport and Exercise"

Why is it that some athletes cannot call up their performance potential when it really matters? Can simply imagining a movement improve its execution? And how can the cohesion in teams be improved?

If you are interested in combining psychology and sports, scientific thinking and working in an international context as well as the practical application of research, this is the right place for you.

As one of only two Master's programs in sports psychology at public universities in Germany, the "M.Sc. Psychology in Sport and Exercise" at the German Sport University Cologne has been bringing together experts in sports science and psychology as well as students from all over the world since 2016.

The field of sports psychology, which is still quite young in Germany, has only been enjoying increased attention and recognition for a few years. Since the commitment of sports psychologist Hans-Dieter Hermann to the German national football team in 2004 and the resulting visibility of sports psychology to the general public, the demand for sports psychology support from clubs and associations has grown enormously in recent years. This is also due to the fact that almost all physiological limits have been reached in competitive sports and that mental strength is now increasingly decisive for victory and defeat at the highest level. The lack of high-quality training in sports psychology has prompted the Cologne University of Sport to introduce a consecutive Master's program and have it accredited.

The program has a standard period of study of four semesters, in which a total of 120 credit points is to be earned.

In terms of content, the focus is on research. Students will be enabled by leading scientists to recognize research deficits and to carry out sport psychological diagnostics professionally using various test procedures. They learn to collect data and to evaluate them adequately with the help of statistical methods and to analyse them with regard to the underlying research question. For this purpose, the Institute of Psychology is equipped with all common measuring instruments, which are also available to students for their own research.

In order to make the training as holistic as possible and to provide insights into all areas, some courses also deal with the practical application of sports psychology. This includes, for example, that the students design and conduct their own sports psychological coaching. The teaching in these areas is especially characterized by the

fact that many lecturers are themselves active in practice at the same time and share their personal experiences with the students during the courses.

The international orientation of the program makes it possible to accept well-trained students from other countries, thus promoting heterogeneity in research and teaching. In addition, a degree in English facilitates the professional establishment also beyond national borders, both in the research and application context. Since 2019 there is also a European certification of sport psychologists.

The course of studies stands out particularly by its interdisciplinarity. This is supported by the fact that it is specifically aimed at Bachelor graduates in both psychology and sports science. In order to ensure an equal basic knowledge, the first module of the program starts with compensatory lectures, which convey the basics of both areas, upon which the further study program is built.

The following modules focus on general research, diagnostic and intervention skills (PSE 2, PSE 3) as well as theoretical and applied basics of various topics such as cognition, emotion, psychophysiology and group dynamics (PSE 4 - 9). The last two modules (PSE 10, PSE 11) contain individual research projects on current topics, which also include the final Master's thesis.

The circle of thirty students who are admitted each year for the winter semester should be as diverse as possible. This applies both to their professional background - about half of the acceptance is given to students with a degree in sports science, the other half to those with a degree in psychology - and to their origin.

The size of the program and the family atmosphere within the institute allow for close cooperation with the lecturers, who are always available to answer questions.

In the context of engagements as a research assistant or other work on research projects at the Institute, the first "real" research experience can thus be gained alongside the studies.

A great advantage for the students is the proximity to scientific associations and federations: Many lecturers are members of the boards of directors of sports psychology organizations, such as the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Sportpsychologie (asp)*; Prof. Dr. Dr. Markus Raab, head of the program, is also president of the *European Community for Sports Psychology (FEPSAC)*.

After completing their studies, many graduates\* decide to pursue a doctorate at universities; others work as sports psychologists\* on a self-employed basis or in clubs and associations. An engagement in various independent organizations such as the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA) is also conceivable.

Admission requirements for the "M.Sc. Psychology in Sport and Exercise" are, in addition to the completion of basic studies with above-average grades, proof of personal and professional aptitude as well as an English language certificate, provided that the basic studies were not completed abroad. Passing the sports aptitude test is not an admission requirement.

The extraordinary mentality for which the city of Cologne is known is also reflected without exception at the Sports University. There is an above-average degree of openness, tolerance and togetherness among the students, which makes the time spent at the "SpoHo" unforgettable.

Further information about the course of studies can be found here:

[www.dshs-koeln.de/master-pse](http://www.dshs-koeln.de/master-pse)

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