UGRLS Project Proposal: An evaluation of the Mixed Ability Sports Development Programme (MASDP)

1. **Research Project Leader**: Dr. Jen Dyer

2. **Scholarship Project Supervisor**: Dr. Jen Dyer

3. **Working title of Scholarship Project**: In-depth participatory case study/ies of participant experiences of the Mixed Ability Sports Development Programme.

4. **Period of Scholarship Project Work**: Between June 1st and September 20th in both 2017 and 2018. Dates can be flexible depending on student availability.

5. **Summary of the research to which the Scholar will contribute**: 

   Sport and physical activity is increasingly being recognised as a vehicle for positive social impact through, for example, cultural cohesion, gender equity, education and social inclusion (e.g. Sherry et al., 2015). A new approach to this, the Mixed Ability Model, is being championed by the organisation International Mixed Ability Sports (IMAS). The Mixed Ability Model promotes understanding and empowerment amongst disabled and non-disabled players engaging together in a non-adapted and mainstream environment within their local community and sports clubs. While anecdotal evidence exists as to the benefits of the Mixed Ability Model in rugby, empirical research is currently lacking.

   Sport England funding has been secured by a team of researchers across Leeds (Jen Dyer (PI) and Angharad Beckett) and Loughborough (Rachel Sandford) Universities to evaluate the new IMAS initiative, the Mixed Ability Sports Development Project (MASDP) where the Model is being rolled out across 7 new disciplines (EDM (exercise, dance and movement), rowing, cricket, tennis, bowls, golf and boxing).

   The 2-year research project emphasises the use of innovative participatory methods to evaluate the 7 MASDP disciplines and obtain in-depth case studies of participant experiences. The project seeks to understand the impacts of the MASDP across all relevant stakeholder groups as well as the challenges and opportunities for sustainability.

6. **Summary of the work to be undertaken by the Scholar (200 words)**:

   International Mixed Ability Sports (IMAS) are a community interest company who are championing a new approach to social inclusion through sport known as the Mixed Ability Model. The Model promotes understanding and empowerment amongst disabled and non-disabled players engaging together in a non-adapted and mainstream environment within their local community and sports clubs. To date, IMAS have focused on Mixed Ability Rugby but have recently been awarded Sport England funding to pilot the Mixed Ability Model across 7 new disciplines (EDM (exercise, dance and movement), rowing, cricket, tennis, bowls, golf and boxing). This programme is called the Mixed Ability Sports Development Programme (MASDP).

   Part of the Sport England funding has been secured by a team of researchers across Leeds (Jen Dyer and Angharad Beckett) and Loughborough (Rachel Sandford) Universities to evaluate the MASDP. The 2-year research project emphasises the use of innovative participatory methods to evaluate the 7 MASDP disciplines and to get in-depth case studies of participant experiences.

   We would value an UGRL Scholar’s input to this research project in helping us develop and pilot innovative participatory methods to evaluate participant experiences in one of the MASDP disciplines, thereby creating rich, detailed case studies to supplement the broader research.

7. **Detail of the work to be undertaken by the Scholar**:

   The UGRL Scholar would be expected to carry out a mini research project from start to finish in Year 1 and then build on that in Year 2.

   In the first Year the Scholar would ideally:

   - Review key papers on participatory methods, social inclusion and project evaluation.
• Understand the background to the Mixed Ability Model and the MASDP programme (the Scholar would be supported and encouraged to speak to key stakeholders such as the IMAS Directors and to participate in a MASDP session).
• Develop and pilot (with MASDP participants) participatory research methods relevant for gaining in-depth data on participant experiences.
• Select a MASDP discipline and one/two case study participants as a research focus.
• Collect data using participatory research methods
• Analyse the data e.g. coding of qualitative data/interpretation of photographic diaries.
• Write up case-study/ies for inclusion as part of the Sport England funded evaluation.

In the Second year the Scholar would be encouraged to develop this research by applying their Year 1 experience to, for example, a different MASDP discipline, a different location, or by developing the methods used further with the same participants and discipline. There would also be scope for the Scholar to present their findings at the project mid-point workshop in October 2017 if they were willing and available.

8. Detail of the Leadership development to be undertaken as part of the project

Although the Scholar would be supported throughout the UGRL by the Project Supervisor, (see section 11), the project design, management and scope would be coordinated by the Scholar. The Scholar will gain experience in designing and carrying out data collection and analysis as well as project management, project evaluation and working as part of a research team. In addition, the Scholar will be responsible for presenting and disseminating the research.

9. Outputs expected of the Scholar including the final report

The Scholar will be expected to produce a report at the end of each Year’s research project. The 1st year report (~2000 words) will be a case study/ies of a MASDP participant(s) detailing their experiences of the Programme. The report should also contain a reflective section on the participatory methods used during the research. The 2nd year report format will depend on how the Scholar developed the research and may be more focused on method development or on further case study/ies. The 2nd Year report should also contain a comparative section reflecting on the development of the method and research from the previous year and/or comparing case studies and/or MASDP disciplines. Time will be factored into the UGRL Scholarship for writing up the reports. The Scholars are also welcome to produce a verbal presentation for the mid-point workshop in October 2017, and there is scope for them to contribute their case study research to academic journal outputs as the project progresses if they are interested.

10. Details of supervision arrangements

The Project Supervisor will be available for support throughout the project and as a point of contact either in person or over Skype. The Scholar will be encouraged to meet with the Project Supervisor at least once every two weeks during the project. Key areas of support from the Project Supervisor will be:
• Introducing key literature and the MASDP programme
• Making introductions to key stakeholders
• Supporting in the development of participatory research methods, selecting participants and refining methods
• Introducing data analysis techniques
• Assisting in developing format for case study write up