

FACTORS AFFECTING PERFORMANCE

Guidelines for the Completion of Assignments

The information below offers further explanation of the criteria for component 6725/01, Factors Affecting Performance (FAP), in conjunction with the information about the FAP in the 'Coursework Guide - Second Edition (Issue 3)'. It is intended help centres with interpretation of the criteria and provide guidance about what is expected of candidates in order for them to produce their best possible piece of work.

A glossary of terms and an FAQ section is included.

The context

Unit 5 'Refining Performance' is designed to enable candidates to fully integrate the theoretical knowledge and understanding needed to improve a practical performance, by undertaking an exercise programme and completion of a FAP. Those candidates who choose to undertake an Investigative Study rather than a practical performance will be required to produce primary research.

All components carry an equal weighting of 5% of the A2 award and centre staff are advised to devote a suitable period of time to the teaching and completion of the applied coursework and the assessment of each component.

The principle

The fundamental principle of the FAP is to engage candidates in an applied coursework component. Candidates are asked to identify a 'factor' that negatively affects their own, or another's (if they are acting as a sports psychologist working with other performer(s)), practical performance, and then research the academic context of the factor and employ methods to overcome the effects of the 'factor' on the performance in order to help refine their own, or another's, performance. The refinement of this performance must be objectively evaluated and concluded appropriately.

Once a factor has been established, candidates must undertake fieldwork over a suitable period of time (eg, a set number of sport matches), and employ acceptable 'sporting methodology' as identified in their written section 'Application to Performance'.

Assignment Guidelines

Introduction: 100-150 words (approximately)

- This must include a clear indication of the role selected by the candidate, ie that of a performer, coach or sports psychologist. 'Performer' refers to a

sports player, ie a hockey player who is seeking to refine their own performance.

- The candidate must also detail why this factor has affected them (or the selected sports performer), what the perceived effects on the performance are, and how this has been identified.
- The introduction must also contain a synopsis of their research methods and how the candidate will apply their knowledge and understanding gained from the research and literature review to their own, or another's, performance. This may involve a 'time plan' of their applied work, eg over 3 months or 6 matches.

Research findings and Literature Review: 600-650 words (approximately)

- Candidates are required to use a mixture of established A Level texts as well as other textual sources such as the Internet, magazine/newspaper/journal articles and information covered in classroom lessons in order to express their academic understanding of the 'factor'.
- This should include details of their own, or another's, sports performance through explanation using brief examples, but it may also include a cross reference to other sports examples, thereby demonstrating a wider understanding of the context of the 'factor', ie candidates may use linking introductions such as '...but in a sports context...' '...on the other hand...' '...not applicable to...' '...has universal application except...' etc.

Application to Performance: 450-500 words (approximately)

- Candidates are required to undertake primary research or testing, where applicable, to show that the knowledge and understanding written in the Research and Literature Review section about the methodology required to overcome the 'factor' has been applied in an appropriate way. This means the author is doing some form of actual 'field work' on their own, or another's, practical performance.
- However, there may be cases where secondary research can supplement or provide support for the candidate's own findings, ie established data.
- Some field work may be of a simplistic nature, ie the testing needed to highlight a recovery from injury.
- The applied work has to be conducted over an appropriate period, ie not one match or performance but suitable enough from which to draw reference, eg 3-6 matches or over a number of weeks.
- Cross references are acceptable where applicable to current trends and the wider developments related to the 'factor' in the candidate's chosen sport.

Conclusions and Evaluations: 350-400 words (approximately)

- Without practical application it is difficult for the candidate to draw and evaluate conclusions. The candidate is aiming to, as a result of the knowledge and understanding gained from the Research and Literature

Review and their applied work, conclude if there has been a positive change in their own, or another's, sports performance.

- For instance, if the performer suffers from stress has the candidate researched:
 - What the signs of stress on my practical, or another's, performance are?
 - What the academic explanations for the causes of stress are?
 - How stress is measured and gauged?
 - What the expected effects of stress on their own, or another's, sports performance are?
 - Whether there are strategies and methods that will help to overcome the stress limiting their own, or another's, performance?

Following on from this, as a result of their applied field work, is the candidate able to demonstrate that they have influenced or refined a sports performance?

- Candidates that use secondary research, such as support data and/or defined strategies and methods etc, must evaluate their methods in trying to overcome the effects of stress.
- Finally, did it work?
 - Was there a refinement of performance?
 - If so, how was it measured and then quantified
 - Were these methods suitable for testing the 'factor' in question?
- The assignment may include graphs, tables and appendices.
- Candidates may be critical of their research and findings, ie judging and evidencing what was and wasn't successful in their applied work.
- Suggestions and recommendations for undertaking a similar assignment are valid inclusions.
- Candidates should use the Harvard System when compiling their bibliographies.

Other points worthy of reiteration

- The FAP is **not** an Investigative Study, which has a higher word count (2000-2500 words).
- The FAP is **not** a Research Project, which has no direct application to the refinement of a practical performance. The Research Project simply develops a wider knowledge and understanding of a sports issue or topic.
- Candidates **must** stay within 1500 word count.
- Plan the word allocations - divide the 1500 words allocated in relation to the marks available.
- Use appendices and footnotes to include additional information and research, points of explanation etc.

Glossary of Terms

Applied: The candidate undertakes fieldwork about their performance in their prescribed, or chosen, role.

Current Findings: Contemporary thinking, methods and factual information.

Refinement: To further improve a performance.

Objective: An opinion based on quantified or qualified data/research from established academic sources and/or from their own findings.

Subjective: A candidate's personal opinion based on emotional feelings or personal bias.

FAQs

Q: What if I am unable to perform practically due to injury?

A: The candidate must assume the role of, for example, a trainer, coach or sports psychologist and then work alongside one or more other sports performers involved in practical performance. Alternatively, candidates may use the injury as the 'factor' and undertake a rehabilitation programme.

Q: Will this require applied coursework?

A: Yes - the candidate must still research a topic, carry out applied field work and evidence whether they have been able to further refine a practical performance.

Q: How much field work is required?

A: Sufficient to enable the refinement of the performance and for objective conclusions to be drawn.

Q: What if I cannot keep to the 1500 word limit?

A: Candidates are advised to use foot notes and appendices. Numeric tables, graphs, diagrams and the bibliography will not form part of the word count. For those writing beyond the 1500 word limit for the purposes of moderation any text contained after this point will not be included in the moderation process.

Q: Are all candidates in a centre allowed to undertake the same FAP?

A: No - the fundamental principle is that the 'factor' identified by a candidate should be unique to the candidate. However, it is envisaged that in larger centres some candidates may share the same 'factor', eg suffer from the effects of stress.

Q: What areas of study are open to candidates other than psychological ones?

A: Centres are reminded that the FAP can cover any physiological, psychological or biomechanical factor and therefore could include:

- Technical developments - improving a weak technique such as a poor back hand
- Recovery from an injury - a rehabilitation programme
- A weight reduction programme
- A lack of tactical understanding of their sports performance playing position

Q: What if, despite the applied field work and use of methodology appropriate to refining my performance, I cannot overcome the 'factor'?

A: If the candidate is using appropriate methodology it is envisaged that some refinement will take place. However, there may be logical reasons for the 'factor' not being overcome and adjustments should be made during the candidates' fieldwork to try and correct this. On completion of the FAP if no refinement in the practical performance has taken place then this should be reflected in the content of the conclusions and evaluation.

Q: Why can the FAP not just be a 'desk top study'?

A: Opportunities exist for candidates to undertake a research project in Unit 2 of the AS course. The fundamental ethos of Unit 5 is to engage candidates in applied work in all component areas. The FAP is not a revision essay, an extension of the Skill Acquisition assignment or an abstract application of sports examples.