

MODULE: BMSS5007
Developing your Professional Profile



REFLECTION OF PLACEMENT

2520188

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1. INTRODUCTION

Reflection is an important factor for professional development in sport science, helping improve the transition from theoretical understanding to applied practice and understand how to build and replicate success (Huntley *et al.*, 2014; Kuklick, Gearity and Thompson, 2015). It is also a requirement within professional endorsements such as the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES) (BASES, 2019).

This essay reflects on my placement experiences shadowing an SENr-registered sports nutritionist and PhD student, focussing on the delivery of nutrition interventions and education and physiological assessments. While my background as a national-level swimmer provided me with strong baseline experience in sport-science related areas, this placement challenged me to adopt the role and viewpoint of the practitioner.

My focus statement from pre-placement (Appendix 1) highlighted development needs, including increasing confidence in practitioner-led delivery, gaining hands-on experience with athletes and improving my ability to translate theoretical knowledge into applied practice. My SWOT analysis (Appendix 2) identified strong academic knowledge and elite athlete experience as strengths, but highlighted weaknesses in communication, confidence and lack of exposure in working directly with athletes in performance environments. My training needs analysis (Appendix 3) also emphasised a need to develop professional conduct and understanding within multi-disciplinary environments. This aim of this placement was to directly target these areas and work on my SMART goals (Appendix 4) in a real applied sport-science environment. A placement review from my placement supervisor is included and was helpful in choosing further development areas (Appendix 5).

Overall, this reflection evaluates how engaging with nutrition workshops and interventions, ISAK assessments and PhD research protocols has enhanced my readiness and practical skills for postgraduate study and future career paths. To ensure critical analysis of my experiences, this reflection is framed using Gibbs (1988) reflective cycle to examine specific events, alongside Kolb (1984) experimental learning cycle to evaluate the transition from my athletic background into the practitioner role.

2. CONTEXT AND INTENTION

This placement took place across approximately 30-hours and was involved within a variety of sports clubs both locally and distantly. Due to my own interests and aspirations, it was dual-focused, involving the delivery of sports nutrition under the supervision of an SENr-registered practitioner alongside some time spent observing and learning about the work behind field-based research trials. The main demographic involved was club level athletes, with many being elite swimmers and water polo players. This helped me start to apply my skills, as from my own background I could understand the demands and needs of their sport.

In my professional portfolio my focus statement aimed to develop confidence, knowledge and hands-on experience within high-performance athletes. My SWOT analysis identified that my current knowledge (acquired from university studies and elite swimming) was a strength, but my explicit knowledge, the ability to translate known theory into practitioner led intervention, was a significant area for improvement (Pasipamire, 2025). This placement aligned with Anderson's cognitive model ACT-R, where deliberate supervised practice is required to transition from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge (Anderson, J. and Fincham, 1994).

By choosing this area to focus on, my intention was to specifically address skills such as anthropometric measurements and analysis and communication of nutritional data. Pre-placement I felt a sense of apprehension and 'imposter syndrome' when considering being involved with the practitioner's role, as I did not feel I had the skills to deliver knowledge to athletes effectively (Anderson, 2024). Therefore, this placement was chosen to provide opportunities to increase confidence and directly target my identified weaknesses.

3. CRITICAL REFLECTIONS / KEY SCENARIOS

The scenarios I encountered during placement reflected the areas of development I outlined in my SWOT analysis. My weaknesses, particularly lack of confidence and apprehension around hands-on assessments, were a large focal point of my learning. Conversely, my strengths, such as my strong theoretical knowledge and personal experience as an elite athlete, were useful in supporting my progression through placement. Each scenario provided me with the opportunity to work on and evaluate any improvements in my identified training needs (Inceoglu *et al.*, 2019).

3.1 PRACTICAL ASSESSMENT SKILLS

One key scenario was the transition from observation to actively assisting in ISAK-standard anthropometric measurements on athletes. Initially, there were the feelings of apprehension mentioned previously, as while I understood the theory and landmarks behind skinfold protocols, the actual measurements can be difficult to achieve successfully when trying to be as non-invasive as possible. This related with the 'evaluation' phase of Gibb's cycle as I recognised that this learning curve was necessary for improving the skill (Gibbs, 1988). Research suggests the accuracy of skinfold measurements are practitioner-dependent, which increased pressure as I wanted my collected data to be reliable for the nutritionist's report (Kasper *et al.*, 2021). However, frequent verbal feedback and supervision from the practitioner helped ensure reliability and increase my confidence.

On reflection, my background as an athlete provided me with an increased understanding of how athletes feel, yet this became a complex barrier during the 'analysis' phase of my reflection based on Gibb's reflective model (Gibbs, 1988). While this helped me empathise with a potentially sensitive situation involving body measurements, it made me significantly more hesitant in my approach (Merino *et al.*, 2024). This hesitation came from a fear of overstepping professional boundaries, having previously been the subject of these tests, I was extremely aware of the vulnerability involved and feared making the athlete uncomfortable (Biedroń *et al.*, 2025). I realised that maintaining a respectful but confident boundary is essential to ensure the athlete feels they are in a professional, safe environment, and learned this through observing the nutritionist's body language and communication (Mathisen *et al.*, 2023). This experience is where I would identify a strong development in my subject-specific skills, as after completing more measurements I found using the callipers and interacting with the athletes easier and more natural.

This addressed one of my core weaknesses from my previous SWOT analysis. Being given the opportunity to complete practical skills under supervision allowed me to progress towards my goal of increased confidence and experience in working hands-on with athletes. This was a turning point as I felt my confidence stemmed from inexperience rather than inability.

This development is vital for my future postgraduate study and career aims, as an ISAK accreditation and ability to acquire physical data from athletes is common in high-performance sport and research (Brown, 2025). Alongside this, learning the importance of the data collected and how it interconnects with an athlete's specific nutrition plan was important to observe alongside physical skills.

3.2 COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT

Another key scenario was moving from creating educational resources (such as presentations and handout sheets) to helping the nutritionist deliver presentations to athletes (Appendix 6). In my pre-placement SWOT analysis, I identified a weakness with presentation of information and applying this to athletes. While creating infographics and presentation slides felt safe, presenting this material took me outside of my comfort zone. More specifically, I found it difficult due to my background in elite sport where my position was usually from the athlete point of view of taking in information. Research suggests this is a common occurrence in early-career sport-scientists who transition from elite sport backgrounds, known as 'identity tension' (Tod *et al.*, 2020; Wendling and Sagas, 2021).

On reflection, this scenario allowed development of my personal skills. The main improvement I found was learning ways to modify language to make the nutrition and physiology information easier to understand for athletes with no background knowledge. Modifying my language represented the 'active experimentation' phase of Kolb's model (Kolb, 1984). I observed the nutritionist using sport-specific analogies to explain complex information such as biochemistry and tested this strategy myself. For example, rather than focusing on the full scientific breakdown of glycogen resynthesis, I simplified it and compared the athlete's carbohydrate stores to a 'fuel tank' or 'battery' that needed refilling at the correct times. This aligns with Bolling *et al.*, (2025) who suggested that effective practitioners must adapt their communication style to suit the specific needs of the athletes receiving the information. This trial-and-error process taught me that successful communication is not just about simplifying information, but about finding ways to make it relatable and interesting for athletes (Curry, 2025). Nearing the end of the placement, my anxiousness around public speaking in front of

athletic groups had decreased, especially after receiving positive and constructive feedback from the supervising nutritionist, however, this is still an area that requires more practice for full competence. This has directly supported my confidence and given me skills to build rapport and appropriately deliver key information to athletes.

3.3 UNDERSTANDING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS

Another aspect of this placement involved assisting with the practical set up of a research trial and observing the long process of defending a study protocol at PhD level. Initially, from observation and learning how the process works, the meticulous attention to detail was overwhelming and seemed like a level of work that I would never be able to reach. As the placement progressed, I started to evaluate the opportunity to observe this process as valuable, as it had improved my knowledge on the rigorous foundation behind evidence-based practice (Waller, 2020). This observation allowed for 'conceptualisation', where this specific event allowed me to form an understanding of professional principles (Kolb, 1984).

In the future, my aim is to become a practitioner and aim for professional accreditation (BASES/SENr), therefore, I must ensure any intervention I provide is underpinned by robust and ethical research to enhance athletes wellbeing and performance (SENr, 2021). Observing the defence and improvement of the protocol over multiple weeks highlighted the professional responsibility and integrity required within sport science and research. This consideration shifted my view from seeing the creation of a research study as tedious and frustrating to an important requirement for athlete safeguarding and high-quality investigation (Schneider *et al.*, 2025). This experience has solidified my ambition for postgraduate study. I feel I have a better understanding that to be a competent practitioner, I need to be confident with hands-on skills alongside having the knowledge of scientific principles and defence required to justify interventions.

My focus statement emphasised the long-term goal of progressing into postgraduate study and eventually achieving professional accreditation (such as BASES/SENr). This placement experience exposed me to the scientific rigour, ethical considerations and evidence-based justifications required in professional practice and research.

4. EVALUATION OF DEVELOPMENT AS A WHOLE

Evaluating my overall progress, I feel I have successfully addressed the parts of my training needs analysis that relate to this placement. My initial focus statement prioritised transitioning from a passive learner to an active practitioner. In general, I would identify my greatest area of strength was my ability to integrate my athletic knowledge into professional skills. For example, I felt my background allowed me to better understand and anticipate athlete's needs, which facilitated a quickly-developed rapport that I was not expecting. My personal history in sport was a major driver to success for learning to support high-performance athletes in this placement.

Another supporting factor was the high-quality mentorship provided by the SENr nutritionist. The opportunity to observe and work within a multi-disciplinary team, including coaches and personal trainers, provided a professional and immersive environment that is vital to understand for my future career goals (Casassas *et al.*, 2018). This 'community of practice' allowed me to see practitioner-athlete interactions and best practice firsthand (Culver and Trudel, 2008). However, the relatively short duration of 30-hours was a limitation I identified from this placement experience. While this was enough time to start improving my competence, it was not enough time to for the skills I worked on to become fluent or automatic. This realisation is an important output from my placement experience as my focus has shifted from simply learning these skills to understanding how much practice is needed for retaining and mastering them (Clapper, 2022).

Something valuable I took away from this placement experience was having better understanding of the complex research that provides an evidence base for applied sport science. At first, the long process of research trials felt unapproachable, but by assisting in set-ups and having the process explained thoroughly, I believe it has increased my confidence that I can work at this level in future. This has helped refine future career options, for example, moving onto postgraduate study is now a non-negotiable goal. Also, the nutrition and physiology focus of the placement has changed my interest from my original portfolio, where sport science was identified as an area of focus. This placement provided me with a clear niche I wish to follow and a view of the competence I need to gain to take the next steps into postgraduate study.

When evaluating my development against my original pre-placement SWOT analysis, I can identify clear progress in my targeted areas. My confidence in practitioner led delivery and

presentation of information improved through exposure to watching and assisting in athlete workshops, while my hands-on experience and competence was increased through athlete assessments. These improvements suggest this placement successfully addressed the weaknesses and training needs identified in my professional portfolio. Alongside this, my identified strengths were valuable in aiding rapport building and understanding from the athletes point of view, confirming that these were correctly identified as strengths.

5. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE AMBITIONS

5.1 PLACEMENT CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this placement has been an important experience in my transition into a sport-science related practitioner. By using reflective models, such as Gibbs and Kolb's, to review my experiences, I feel I have successfully navigated the feelings of apprehension and imposter syndrome noted at the beginning of my placement (Gibbs, 1988; Kolb, 1984). I started to move from simply knowing the theory, to actively contributing with assessments and athlete education (Anderson, 1994). I reached some major turning points where my perceptions positively shifted, with one major example being my viewpoint of academic research and how important it is for the profession. While I remain committed to my original goal of supporting high-performance support, my placement has clarified that my specific career path will involve becoming an SENr-accredited practitioner.

Reflecting on my original focus statement, this placement confirmed that the areas I chose to work on were accurately identified and that the environment was an appropriate opportunity to address them. This experience has strengthened my confidence that I can progress into postgraduate study and helped highlight areas that still require continued development.

5.2 FUTURE ACTION PLAN

The SMART goals developed in my professional portfolio were relevant and important in giving a focus to my placement, but my experience has allowed me to refine my future goals and plans (Bahrami, Heidari and Cranney, 2022). Research suggests an important part of goal setting is reassessment of goals to keep them relevant as circumstances change (Bjerke and Renger, 2017). The following action plan incorporates my original goals alongside insights from my placement.

For my future career pathway, I would need to achieve the following competencies and accreditations to succeed:

SMART action plan table:

GOAL	SPECIFIC ACTION	MEASUREABLE OUTCOME	ACHIEVEABLE	RELEVANT	TIME-BOUND
Accreditation	Complete ISAK Level 1 anthropometry course	Successful completion of the course and certificate of accreditation	Achievable as courses are available for sport science graduates	Essential for completing body composition monitoring in athletes	Complete post-graduation, potentially alongside an MSc
Academic Progression	Apply for an SENr-accredited MSc in Sport and Exercise Nutrition	Receiving a formal offer and enrolling on the programme	Achievable if continuing to achieve first-class grades throughout Level 6	Required for graduate registration	Apply near the end of Level 6
Experience	Secure a further placement in applied sport nutrition and physiology	A signed off logbook or feedback document from a registered mentor	Achievable if professional networking is completed to find appropriate contacts	Necessary to further bridge the gap between theory and practice	To complete as part of Level 6 study or MSc study
Communication Mastery	Independently create and lead 3 nutritional workshops under supervision	Mentor performance review and athlete feedback forms	Achievable due to contacts within swimming clubs who welcome sport-science related education	Addresses public speaking anxiety and impostor syndrome highlighted as weaknesses	Completion by the end of Level 6

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Appendix:

1) Focus Statement

Focus Statement:

My long-term career ambition is to work as a sports scientist within a high-performance environment, supporting elite athletes in achieving optimal performance. I am particularly passionate about working with female athletes as there is still a significant gap in research, understanding and tailored support within women's sport (Emmonds, et al., 2019). This aspiration stems from my experience as a national-level swimmer, where I developed an appreciation for the role of scientific principles in enhancing performance. Through my degree in sports science, I have begun to build the theoretical foundation and practical skills for this career and aim to further develop my competence through professional placement and continuous professional development.

From my SWOT analysis, I identified several strengths that support my progress toward this career goal. My studies have provided strong knowledge in exercise physiology, sports nutrition, biomechanics and research, all of which are central to the work of a sports scientist (British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences, 2020). My background in competitive sport has strengthened my teamwork, discipline and resilience, qualities that are all highly transferable to professional practice. In addition, my prior experience in healthcare has enhanced my communication and problem-solving abilities, as well as my capacity to remain calm under pressure. However, my SWOT also identified some weaknesses, such as my limited hands-on experience in performance environments and developing confidence with sport technologies. Recognising these areas to improve has guided my focus for professional growth.

The outcomes of my training needs analysis reinforced these priorities. I rated skills such as data analysis, athlete monitoring and communication as highly important to this future role. While I currently rate my theoretical understanding as high, I identified the need to develop practical competence in data visualization tools (e.g. excel) and in the application of monitoring systems. Additionally, I identified the importance of opportunities to get involved with female athlete's performance to better understand specific physiological and nutritional considerations that differ from male athletes (Hallam and Amorim, 2022). To progress towards professional practice, I will seek learning opportunities through workshops, online training and hands-on experience. I also aim to align my development with the standards of the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES), whose accreditation represents an essential benchmark for ethical and professional practice (BASES, 2020).

Consequently, I created several SMART targets within my personal development plan. SMART goals allow goals to be focused and provide a clear roadmap on how to reach them (Poe et al., 2021). Within the short term, I aim to develop competence in athlete monitoring and data reporting by accessing and utilising university equipment and software and by completing online courses to further support this. My medium-term goal is to complete a placement within a women's sports team or performance centre, applying my skills. My long term goal is to achieve a BASES accreditation and secure a position as a sports scientist working with elite athletes. From completing a needs assessment and structured goal setting, I will be able to track my development and ensure that each stage of my academic and practical experience contributes to my professional readiness (Segarra and Gentry, 2021).

Overall, my focus for placement and future development is to bridge the gap between academic theory and applied practice, gaining the experience and professional confidence required for a successful career in sports science. Goal setting, continued learning and commitment to evidence-based practice will help me progress towards this role and allow me to contribute to high performance sport.

2) SWOT Analysis

Strengths (Internal)	Weaknesses (Internal)
- Strong academic knowledge in physiology, nutrition, performance analysis, anatomy - National-level swimmer with excellent discipline, resilience and teamwork skills - Effective communication and professionalism from healthcare experience - Calm under pressure and adaptable to different team environments	- Limited hands on experience in professional sports environment - Lacking complete confidence using performance monitoring technologies (e.g. Catapult, ForceDecks) - Need to enhance data analysis and visualisation skills (Power BI, Tableau) - Limited experience working with team-sport athletes
Opportunities (External)	Threats (External)
- Placement and volunteer opportunities as part of university course within sports environments - Accessing CPD workshops and resources (e.g. BASES resources) - Networking with professionals	- High competition for sport science placements and graduate roles - Balancing academic workload with gaining experience - Quickly evolving technology requires continuous upskilling

3) Training Needs Analysis

Training Need Analysis – Self Evaluation

Goal: Develop Sports Scientist Skills

Timescale: within 18-24 months

Main Skills/Requirements of Job	Relative importance (0-10)	Self- Rating (0-10)	Training Needs
Competence with GPS, ForceDecks and other athlete monitoring technology	10	5	Shadow professionals on placement, gain more hands-on experience through university practicals. Complete online catapult or performance analysis training where possible
Data Visualisation and reporting (Power BI, Excel)	10	4	Improve on ability to process and interpret performance data- through shadowing or using excel for performance data during university practicals. Attend an excel course, or complete Power BI training
Understanding exercise physiology and performance testing	10	8	Continue to apply theoretical knowledge in practical testing, keep up to date with upcoming research around physiology
Working with female athletes and understanding specific performance factors	9	8	Gain experience supporting female athletes on placement opportunities, explore current literature on female physiology
Research, report writing and presentation of findings	8	5	Develop confidence in presentation skills through academic assessments. Attend conferences where possible to observe professionals present
Adhering to BASES standards for professional conduct	8	4	Review BASES code of conduct to ensure ethical practice while on placement
Time management and organisation	8	7	Continue balancing academic deadlines with practical experience and other aspects. Refine and research time prioritising strategies to utilise when busier.

4) Pre-Placement Goals

Personal Development Plan: Setting Goals

Using your SWOT form think about what goals you need to give yourself to succeed in your chosen profession. Note what & how you are going to achieve the goal / goals.

What skill do I want to learn / develop for the post / career?	I have to ...	What support / resources will I need?	I measure success by ...	Target date for review
Develop competence using athlete monitoring technologies	Make the most of university practicals where these technologies are used. Assist with practical data collection during placement where possible	Access to university sports labs, equipment and software. Alongside, guidance from lecturers, sports lab technicians or placement supervisors	How confidently I am able to use monitoring equipment and interpret the data. Success with this skill involves being able to do this with minimal to no assistance	End of Year 2
Improve data analysis and visualisation skills	Complete online excel course or workshop. Apply these skills on placement and in university practicals where the data needs to be reported and visualised	Access to training materials or online courses. Being able to access example data sets or observe lecturers or placement staff completing this data reporting	Being able to produce at least one clear, professional data visualisation for university practicals or placement	End of Year 2
Strengthen professional communication and teamwork in applied settings	Collaborate with multi-disciplinary teams during placement, request feedback and on communication and how to improve it	Guidance and advice from supervisors	Improvements noted in placement feedback or evaluation	End of Year 3
Develop Readiness for BASES accreditation	Engage in CPD and shadow accredited sports scientists, maintain a practice/placement log of skills completed	BASES student membership, access to further CPD opportunities	Evidencing professional growth through competencies, reflection and completing relevant CPD	Within 3-5 years

Personal Objectives

Short Term Goals (next 6 months)
- Build practical skills in athlete monitoring and data collection - Look into/begin data visualisation courses to enhance skills - Volunteer in more sports research studies to observe professional practice
Mid Term Goals (next 12 – 2yrs)
- Complete placement within an applied sports science environment to gain experience - Strengthen confidence and professionalism working with athletes and working within a multi-disciplinary team - Apply for BASES student membership and start building evidence towards future accreditation

5) Placement Supervisor Post Placement Feedback



APPENDIX PL1g

PL1g POST-PLACEMENT REVIEW AND FEEDBACK

Name of student:	Millie Checkley		
What were the positive aspects?			
Millie was very good at building rapport with the athletes and I was very pleased with how her confidence improved when engaging with the athletes as the placement went on. Millie was fully engaged and passionate to help with any task at hand which was reflected in the work produced.			
Were there any problems?			
Millie needs to trust her own knowledge and decisions as many times she was correct but was often apprehensive and second guessing herself.			
Do you have any recommendations for enhancement for the future?			
Continue to grow her confidence and keep working on applying her subject knowledge into real-life scenarios.			
Signed:	<i>Lily Jewell</i>		
Name:	LILY JEWELL		
Position: (please tick one)	☒ Placement Provider/Workplace Supervisor	Date:	01.05.26

6) Examples of Presentation/Workshop/Handout Material

BENEFITS OF A BALANCED DIET

Improved Health

Supports normal hormonal health function, bone health, immunity and overall wellbeing.

Improved Performance

Improves energy levels, strength gains and cognitive function.

Improved Recovery

Supports glycogen restoration, muscle repair and inflammation repair.

Under-fuelling or inadequate energy intake can lead to LEA and RED-S, negatively affecting a swimmers health, physical development, sporting and academic performance and personal wellbeing.

CARBOHYDRATES

Complex / Low Glycaemic

These carbs release energy over a longer period of time



Simple / High Glycaemic

These carbs release energy over a shorter period of time



NUTRITION TIME-LINE

3-4HRS BEFORE EXERCISE
carbohydrate rich, well-balanced meal

60-30MINS BEFORE EXERCISE
30-60 grams

DURING EXERCISE
30-60 grams per 1hr

POST EXERCISE
protein + carbs



TIPS FOR MAINTAINING HYDRATION



1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

1

Carry a bottle around with you- frequent small sips.

2

During training/competition, consume electrolytes.

3

Post-training- REHYDRATE!

4

Check hydration status through urine colour.

4

Body Mass (lb) / 2 = daily minimum fluid consumption (oz)
+ 0.5-0.7 Litres per 1hr of exercise



HIGH PROTEIN SNACKS

Whey & Greek Yogurt



1/4 Pot of Greek yogurt (~125g)
1/2 scoop Whey Protein Powder
**Mix and consume*

Greek Yogurt & Fruit



1/2 Pot of Greek yogurt (~250g)
Berries - 100g (1 cup)

Cottage Cheese on Oatcakes



Oatcakes - 4
Cottage Cheese - 100g (1/3 pot)

Houmous & Chicken/Veg



Houmous- 50g (1/4 pot)
Chicken slices - 75g (5 average slices)
Carrot - 1 whole
Celery - 1 x stalk

Meat Roll-Ups



Ham slices - 4
Soft cheese - 40g (~2 tbsp)
Asparagus - 40g (~5 spears)

Beef Jerky/Biltong



1 pack (30g)

Boiled Eggs



2-3 eggs

Oat & Whey Bar



1 bar

