

# Master of Science in Sport Psychology

**Institution name:** East Central University

**Official Degree Designation and Program Title:** Master of Science in Sport Psychology

**Location(s) where program will be offered:** Ada, OK Campus of ECU

**Method of Delivery:** Both Traditional and Online

## Contact Information

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**Are you the Chief Academic Officer?**

## JUSTIFICATION OR PROGRAM

### Description of Proposed Program

The proposed Master of Science in Sport Psychology will be a 45-hour blended format program (traditional and online) that will serve a diverse range of students who have an interest in an advanced psychology degree that prepares them to provide mental performance consultation. Students from this program will receive the educational components that will allow them to apply to be a Certified Mental Performance Consultant (CMPC) through the American Association of Sport Psychology (AASP) and provide consultation in the area of athletics, performing arts, and other performance-based disciplines (e.g., business, military, etc.). This program will focus on developing skills in motivation, performance enhancement, and the ability to maximize human potential. By providing a curriculum that integrates sport psychology and an awareness of basic counseling techniques, this degree will prepare students for careers in various performance-based areas. The MSSP will be a 45-hour program split into 21 hours in Psychological Foundations, 18 Hours in the Sport Psychology Specialization, and 6 hours of Field Experience.

Objectives of the program include: 1) Preparing students to conduct psychological assessments to evaluate mental strengths and areas for improvement; 2) Preparing students to develop customized mental conditioning programs to enhance performance; 3) Develop skills for collaborating with coaches, trainers, and other professionals to create a comprehensive support system for athletes and performers; 4) Create an understanding and ability to complete research that explores the psychological factors that impact performance and mental well-being; 5) Prepare students to work with individual and team athletes and performers on mental skills training, goal setting, and motivation using various evidence-based techniques; 6) Create an awareness of the psychology and counseling aspects of sport psychology.

### Employment Demand for Proposed Program

In general, a master's degree of this type in psychology is in demand by two types of students. First, would be students who are specifically interested in obtaining a master's degree in sport psychology

because they are previous athletes or performers and have inherent desire to continue to work in the area. Secondly, are students who are interested in obtaining a consultation based degree to go along with the desire to provide individualized consultation to clients.

In terms of specific employment opportunities, it is projected overall that the employment of psychologists outside the area of counseling will grow approximately by 7 percent from 2023 to 2033, an average that is faster than the average for all occupations. On average, about 13,000 openings for psychologists are projected each year over the next decade. In regards to employment opportunities, sport psychologists work in many areas including professional and collegiate sports teams, health clinics and private practices, academic institutions, and Government agencies and military organizations. Career options for sports psychologists include private practice, academic positions, athlete development roles, and consulting within corporate programs. Obtaining advanced doctoral level degrees following a master's degree can lead to even higher-paying roles such as clinical sports psychologists and sports psychology professors. Sports psychologists can work in various environments, including schools, universities, sports organizations, hospitals, and private practice. They may also find roles in human resources, leveraging their understanding of psychology to improve workplace. Typically, jobs for Sport Psychology will typically earn between \$60,000 and \$80,000 depending on locale and can vary considerably when it occurs during private practice as a consultant. In general, the demand for Sport Psychologists is increasing as more athletes and teams recognize the importance of mental health and guidance in performance – and the field is expected to grow by 6% over the next decade (Research.Com & Bureau of Labor Statistics). Individuals with a CMPC – the proposed endpoint of our degree – has demonstrated a median income of \$85,000, and the median compensation by work setting varies from \$50,000 (working in schools) to \$115,000 (working with Olympic Committees). Other key job opportunities are University Athletics & Military (\$80,000), and Private Practice (\$62,500).

Sport Psychologists also have employment opportunities outside the specific area of consultation. Alternative career paths include roles in human resources, where knowledge of psychology can improve employee well-being and productivity, as well as positions in coaching, athletic training, and sports management. For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics states that human resource management (which can include Sport Psychologists) – is projected to grow 7% from 2021 to 2031, with a projected annual income of \$126, 230.

### **Unmet Need for Proposed Program**

Currently, we are offering a program of Sport Psychology as an option to our Master of Science in - Psychological Services (a 60-hour program). By transitioning to our new proposed Master of Science in Sport Psychology (a 45-hour program), this degree will adopt industry standards regarding the courses that are required to obtain a CMPC (Certified Mental Performance Consultant). As such, we currently have approximately 5 to 7 students in our program at any given time. Based on communications with these students, the desire is for a program that more accurately captures the curriculum requirements of the CMPC, thereby reducing the number of hours needed from 60 to 45. Currently, there is no other Master's Level program in the state that offers training in Sport Psychology, demonstrating that there is a continued need for such a program. Similarly, advisors in the program have found that inquires by potential students about the program typically stop short when students learn of the extended hours of our current program in relation to the needs of obtaining a CMPC (a certification that can be obtained

with a 45-hour degree). Exit survey data completed on graduating students suggests that between 5 to 10% of our undergraduate students would be interested in a Sport Psychology based program that is 45-hours in length. Lastly, by transitioning to a stand-alone program, opportunities for students to return to obtain our LPC-based degree and qualifications would result – a factor that is supported by communication with students currently in the program, of which approximately 75% have a desire to obtain both the Sport Psychology Degree and an LPC-based degree.