<table>
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<th>Title</th>
<th>The effect of action outcome expectations on attentional processes and sports performance</th>
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| Supervisory Team | Dr Robin Jackson  
Dr Thom Wilcockson  
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| Summary of proposed project | Sports teams invest significant resources in performance analysis to determine likely tactics and action preferences of opponents. It is assumed that this knowledge enhances performance, yet this assumption has recently been challenged. First, advantages in terms of response time and response accuracy are broadly balanced – the advantages associated with congruent action outcomes are offset by disadvantages for incongruent action outcomes. Second, using signal detection analysis, we have recently shown that prior expectations increase susceptibility to deception. This results in stronger response bias toward higher-probability outcomes when viewing a deceptive action than when viewing a genuine action. Some researchers have argued that prior expectations create an (explicit) cognitive bias (reflected in a change in the criterion for responding) and do not affect attentional processes (reflected in the same ability to discriminate between genuine and deceptive actions). However, we have recently shown that both discriminability and response bias are affected by outcome expectations.  

The purpose of these studies will be to unpick the attentional processes underlying these effects. Specifically, we will design studies to assess the effect of performer expectations on attentional bias, attention switching, and inhibitory control, alongside signal detection analysis of response accuracy data. Second, we will test predictions from attentional control theory (ACT) regarding the moderating effect of situational pressure (heightened anxiety) on attentional processes and performance. |
| Skills/ experience/ education required | **Education:**  
A good (2:1/1st) undergraduate degree in Psychology (essential).  
A relevant MSc, or equivalent relevant work experience (desirable).  
**Skills:**  
Quantitative research methods.  
Familiarity with (essential) and experience of (preferable) using remote and wearable eye-tracking equipment and associated software. |
| Link to School research theme | Sport performance |