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Manchester Metropolitan University

Sports stars graduate from world's first Master of Sports Directorship degree



Kitted out in mortar boards and red and blue hooded academic gowns, a 23-strong squad that included some prominent sporting names lined up with 150 fellow students from Manchester Metropolitan University at a packed graduation ceremony at Manchester's Bridgewater Hall today [26 July].

The high profile students were each presented with a Masters of Sport Directorship degree certificate from vice chancellor Malcolm Press as new graduates of the university's Faculty of Business and Law.

Well known names including David Moss, Lee Darnbrough, Michael Appleton, Ashley Giles, Steve Round and veteran Liverpool midfielder Becky Easton have all spent the past two years as the first students to take the part-time post-graduate degree, which is the only qualification of its kind in the world.

The highly acclaimed course prepares sports people and other professionals for the key role of sporting director, which is increasingly being seen as a strategic necessity for sports organisations in the UK, as it has been by European clubs for several years.

The new MSD qualification has already struck a chord with UK clubs, several of which have been keen to recruit students from the course. Former Celtic head of scouting David Moss was snapped up by Premier

League newcomers Huddersfield Town in June for the new role of head of football operations, while Warwickshire County Cricket Club was quick to recruit former England spinner Ashley Giles as sport director in December and Steve Round became Aston Villa's technical director in September last year, where his root and branch overhaul has been credited with setting the Championship club on the road to recovery.

Lee Darnbrough has also left his job as Norwich City's head of scouting to take on a new role in June as head of strategic analysis and recruitment at Hull, and Michael Appleton has been recruited from Oxford by Leicester City to become the club's assistant manager.

Dr Sara Ward, programme director for the Manchester Metropolitan University MSD course, said: "It's fantastic to see our first group of MSD students graduate today and it's testament to their hard work and ambition that they have all succeeded on a course that is academically rigorous as well as being extremely practical.

"The sporting director role is becoming seen as essential in football clubs - as well as in a huge range of other sporting organisations - as the importance of sound governance and commercial leadership in sport continues to spark debate.

"It's great that so many of our very first graduates have already seen their careers transformed by becoming a master of sport directorship and, not surprisingly, we're seeing a big surge in interest from potential new MSD students keen to sign up for the course."

For more information on the Masters of Sport Directorship course at Manchester Metropolitan University go to www.mmu.ac.uk/master-of-sport-directorship/