Dr Leighton Wells

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Profile

Exercise and sport science teaching at Deakin and Victoria University draws on my doctoral research, coaching athletes in Australia and internationally, and more than twenty years in industry. Since 2022, that teaching has included eight Deakin units and unit-chair responsibilities across two VU units. Research into training load, coaching practice and communication continues alongside applied work and research assistant roles.

Education

PhD, Sport Science, Deakin University

Completed December 2025 · Graduated February 2026

Thesis: Triathlon Coaching Practices: Optimising Training Load Processes and Communication.

Submitted in just over three years, with three peer-reviewed papers published during candidature.

"I conclude that this thesis is an original scientific contribution that meets or exceeds international standards for the Doctor of Philosophy in sport science. I recommend its approval without reservation."

Professor Stephen Seiler, University of Agder, independent doctoral examiner

Master of Applied Sport Science, Deakin University	2022
Graduate Certificate of International Business, Deakin University	2000
Graduate Certificate of Computing, Deakin University	1999
Bachelor of Science (Biology), Deakin University	1998

Applied practice

Owner and Head Coach, Summit Triathlon Coaching

Jan 2022–present

Provides professional coaching to athletes in Australia and internationally through remote technology, across triathlon distances up to Ironman; AusTriathlon Development Coach and TrainingPeaks Level 2 Coach; about twenty years coaching, more than thirty years in triathlon and seven Ironman finishes.

Qualifications, checks and affiliations

Exercise & Sports Science Australia: eligible for Accredited Sport Scientist Level 1; application currently on hold; willing to complete the process for this role.

Current driver's licence and full Australian work rights.

Current Working with Children Check.

AusTriathlon Development Coach; TrainingPeaks Level 2 Coach.

Academic and teaching experience

Teaching Fellow, Deakin University

Full-time contract in T2 2025
Teaching at Deakin since 2022

Practical classes, seminars and marking across all three trimesters.

Teaching delivered, eight units

Unit	Title
HSE103	Exercise Prescription and Delivery
HSE104	Research Methods and Data Analysis in Exercise and Sport
HSE105	Principles of Sport Coaching
HBS109	Introduction to Anatomy and Physiology
HSE204	Motor Learning and Skill Acquisition
HSE208	Integrated Human Physiology
HSE302	Exercise Programming
HSE304	Physiology of Sport Performance

Additional marking: HSE102 Functional Human Anatomy · HSE110 Muscle Biology for Exercise Science · HSE727 Time and Motion Analysis of Sport Performance

Student feedback. My teaching consistently records 100% student satisfaction in HSE103, HSE105, HBS109, HSE208, HSE302 and HSE304. HSE208 received 100% positive teaching feedback in T2 2026, following the same result in T3 2025.

Additional responsibility. Provided cover in HSE304 and HSE103; was allocated all Waurn Ponds HSE304 marking (AT1–4) in T2 2024.

Sessional Academic, Victoria University
2025 and 2026 · Intensive block model

Responsibilities. Full unit-chair duties for SSC2000 (2025) and AHE3114 (2026): unit news, student support, all marking, self-moderation and grade release; covering Alice Sweeting's leave for AHE3114.

Unit content. Contributed to its development in both units. For SSC2000 Sport Coaching Systems and Technology, proposed and delivered an endurance sport technology session from my research, including a practical TrainingPeaks training-week exercise.

Student feedback. SSC2000, 2025: Student Evaluation of Teaching responses were 100% "strongly agree" across all items.

2026 delivery. Teaching both deliveries of AHE3114 Sport Physiology in Block 3, 2026 (28 September to 21 October), with workshop delivery, marking and latitude to edit teaching content.

Research Assistant, Deakin University
2025–present

Resistance-training and altitude study: lifting-technique instruction and supervision; 3RM strength testing; participant recruitment; laboratory protocols; honours-student mentoring; and writing the literature and scoping review as an invited co-author.

Research Assistant, Deakin University
2023

GPS sport-watch energy-expenditure accuracy; sub-maximal VO_2 testing of recreational runners using MetaLyzer and a clinical-grade treadmill.

Supervision and mentoring

Co-supervisor, Master of Applied Sport Science candidate, 2025: menstrual-cycle symptoms and perceived performance in female triathletes. Manuscript in preparation.

Current honours-student mentoring within the resistance-training and altitude study.

Mentors early-career coaches in applied practice.

University engagement

Open Day, Waurn Ponds, 2023–2025: supplied and demonstrated a race bike, smart trainer, screen, Apple TV and Zwift, linking practical learning with technology used in practice.

Peer review

Regularly invited to review manuscripts for the International Sport Coaching Journal, the International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, Frontiers in Sports and Active Living and Frontiers in Physiology.

New and emerging technology

Sport technology and wearables: athlete-monitoring research; 34,731-session training-load dataset; GPS sport-watch accuracy study; TrainingPeaks education and applied coaching.

Responsible AI and research-method innovation: developing a governed workflow with source tracking, privacy controls, audit trails and mandatory human review; a three-paper international series examines verification and rigour, and the current test dataset contains approximately 42,000 Ironman World Championship performances.

Teaching materials: built a system to process existing PowerPoint decks into a consistent, editable, on- brand format while preserving content and presenter notes.

Research program

Research interests: training-load quantification and periodisation · athlete monitoring and wearable technology · exercise physiology · coaching practice and behaviour change · evidence translation · responsible AI-assisted research methods in sport science

Peer-reviewed publications

1. Wells, L. A., et al. (2026). Training load and intensity in triathlon: objective differences between sex, age, race distance preference and training phase across a cohort of 95 age-group triathletes over six months. Frontiers in Sports and Active Living, 8. https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2026.1798702

2. Wells, L. A., et al. (2026). An interpretive exploration of Australian triathlon coaching practices: working toward optimal training load practice within real-world contexts. International Sport Coaching Journal, 13(1), 58-69. https://doi.org/10.1123/iscj.2024-0093

3. Wells, L. A., et al. (2025). Differences between Australian triathlon coaching practices and evidence-based training load management recommendations. International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 20(1), 92-101. https://doi.org/10.1177/17479541241305677

4. Wells, L., Konoval, T., & Bruce, L. (2023). An examination of how and why triathlon coaches use a suite of technologies in their practice. International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching, 18(3), 687-694. https://doi.org/10.1177/17479541221144129

Under review, second-round revisions: Wells, L. A., et al. Optimising training load and communication practices in triathlon coaching: a pilot evidence-based education intervention. International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching.

In preparation: three papers on AI-assisted research methodology in sport science with Professor Stephen Seiler, Professor Marco Cardinale and Palo Galko.

Translation and presentations

TrainingPeaks Coach Blog: commissioned and edited practitioner article, Age-Group Triathlon Training Load: What 34,731 Training Sessions Reveal, based on the 2026 Frontiers paper. Standing editorial invitation for the intervention paper when published.

European College of Sport Science: doctoral research presented at the 30th Anniversary Congress, Rimini, 4 July 2025.

AusTriathlon and TrainingPeaks: invited presentations at the Queensland Academy of Sport, 6-7 December 2024, for high-performance, performance and development coaches, including Olympic-level coaches. Only guest presenter.

AusTriathlon: national webinar, 19 February 2025, on training load and communication.

Leadership, industry, partnerships and funded delivery

Founder and CEO, Pivot Summit
2015–2019

Led a regional technology and innovation event; secured more than $1 million in sponsorship; brought Apple co-founder Steve Wozniak to regional Australia for the first time; negotiated Deakin University's major sponsorship with Vice-Chancellor Professor Jane den Hollander AO.

Co-founder, COO and Director, Runway
2016–2017

Startup incubator and accelerator that raised $1.25 million through the Victorian Government's LaunchVic program.

Founder and Managing Director, Digitalsmith
2012–2015

Led digital strategy, later website work and due diligence connected with a major acquisition. My marketing consultancy Crux created Catapult's original OptimEye and ClearSky identities.

Co-founder, Regional Rising
2019–2021

Contributed to STEM and digital-literacy education programs delivered with regional partners, including STEM4Sunraysia.

Earlier leadership
1998–2017

Marketing Director at Dexion, part of GUD Holdings (ASX: GUD); Technology Geelong director; senior roles across ASX, NASDAQ, NYSE and private-company settings, including Varian (now part of Agilent, NYSE: A), OfficeMax (formerly NYSE: OMX) and MYOB (formerly ASX: MYO). At ADP Employer Services (NASDAQ: ADP), I was Product Manager for Payline, which had a $23 million annual sales target.

Partnership development: made a senior-level introduction between AusTriathlon and Deakin in 2025 to explore coach-education opportunities, then handed the discussion over with context on both sides.

Funding: secured and acquitted local, state and federal grants for education and innovation.

Referees

Professor Lyndell Bruce

Deakin University · PhD supervisor and co-author

Dr Samantha Hoffmann

Deakin University · PhD supervisor and co-author

Dr Alice Sweeting

Victoria University · SSC2000 and AHE3114 teaching, unit content and unit responsibilities