

# Supporting Elite Athletes' Academic Study Policy

## 1. Introduction and Principles

- 1.1 The Supporting Elite Athletes' Academic Study Policy ('the policy') offers guidance for students and staff regarding options available to students who wish, whilst studying for a University of Worcester award, to maintain active participation as an elite athlete in a particular sporting activity.
- 1.2 The University recognises that a wide range of benefits result from participation in sporting and recreational activities for individuals, teams and their communities, and that such benefits may be gained from many different levels of participation in sport (ranging from leisure activities to elite levels of performance). Many students actively balance participation in sport alongside academic studies, and do not experience interference with completion of modules and programmes of study.
- 1.3 The University appreciates the particular demands experienced by specific students who attempt to balance academic study with participation in sport as elite athletes. These demands may in exceptional situations have the potential to severely interfere with academic study; for example where the student is studying a module and fully expects to complete the required assessment by the appropriate due dates but an unforeseen event beyond **their** control (e.g. international team selection) prevents the student from taking the assessment alongside the cohort.
- 1.4 Central to this policy are two fundamental expectations:
  - 1.4.1 That each student will have a named academic staff member who, in undertaking the role of 'Personal Academic Tutor' for the student, will provide a central point of contact for discussion of any potential areas of concern that may relate to aspects of this policy, and offer appropriate guidance throughout the programme of study. In addition, each student will have a named Athlete Advisor to support them. In discussion with the student, the Personal Academic Tutor and the Athlete Advisor will help identify, in advance, the likely impact of training and competition schedules alongside participating in academic study and assessment, and will support the student in liaising with other colleagues where necessary. Ideally, a pre-academic year meeting will be convened to agree a suitable progression plan for the student together with follow up meetings to monitor progress and circumstances that may impact upon progression.
  - 1.4.2 That each student takes a mature and responsible attitude towards combining their study and sporting commitments, accepting it is their responsibility to inform their Personal Academic Tutor and the Athlete Advisor of any potential calendar tensions, as soon as they are aware that it might even be a possibility.
- 1.5 The policy will use the Procedures for Dealing with Claims of Exceptional Mitigating Circumstances to manage the application and decision-making process. The process described in section 6 below provides a summary of how this policy will work with these procedures.

## 2. Definitions

- Sport** Refers only those participating in sports recognised by Sport England (<http://www.sportengland.org>), or the English Institute of Sport ([www.eis2win.uk](http://www.eis2win.uk)), or, where there may be some discrepancy, by UW's Chair of the Sport Board will be eligible for application under this policy.
- Major Competition** A competition at either a national or international level. The UW's Chair of the Sport Board will be the final abitur if there is uncertainty regarding the level of the individual competition.
- Student** For the purposes of this policy, this refers only to those students who engage in sport at an elite level by:  
a) representing **their** country at a major international competition or  
b) being involved in preparation immediately preceding a major international competition  
or  
c) participating in a major national championship.
- Attendance** Attendance at lectures, seminars, workshops or other specified forms of learning is required according to the demands of the appropriate module or course. Some teaching sessions may be designated as compulsory.
- Assessment** Refers to academic work undertaken as part of a named module for which a grade (and academic credit) is awarded for coursework assignments e.g. essays, portfolios, presentations and examinations.

## 3. Registration

### 3.1 Reduced study load, temporary withdrawal

The Taught Courses Regulatory Framework (TCRF) provides flexibility which the student may take advantage of, including reduced study loads and the ability to withdraw for short temporarily (up to two weeks) or extended (e.g. a semester) periods. If sporting or training commitments make it necessary for the student to withdraw from some or all modules during a semester, the student should notify the University of the withdrawal as soon as possible and will be subject to the usual academic or financial implications of such a decision.

### 3.2 Maximum period of Registration

The maximum time period in which a student must satisfy the requirements to complete the program and to be eligible to graduate (TCRF section 3) may be extended for the student by the Academic Registrar **(or nominee)**.

## 4. Attendance

- 4.1 Where training or sporting commitments prevent the student from attending classes, the student should approach their Athlete Advisor and the Course Leader to negotiate appropriate alternative arrangements. Where alternative arrangements cannot be made,

the student should temporarily withdraw from the course.

## 5. Assessment Flexibility

5.1 Favourable consideration will be given to applications from a full-time student where the student is studying for a module and fully expects to complete the required assessment by the assessment due date, but an event **beyond their** control (e.g. international team selection) will prevent **the student** from taking the assessment alongside the main student body and may miss occasional lectures. The student may apply for Assessment Flexibility **through the mitigating circumstances procedures**.

### 5.2 Student Responsibility

5.2.1 Since the timescale for notification of selection lies beyond a student's control, the student must **liaise with their Personal Academic Tutor and Athlete Advisor to discuss the process of making a claim for mitigating circumstance as soon as they are aware that missing a module assessment might be a possibility i.e. as soon as they are aware that selection may take place.**

5.2.2 If the student wishes to be absent from an assessment owing to preparation for an international training event, the student must **liaise with the relevant module leaders and inform their Athlete Advisor. The Athlete Advisor will advise on the process of making a claim for mitigating circumstances.**

### 5.3 Duration of Absence

5.3.1 If **mitigating circumstances are approved**, it will be for the duration of the preparation and competition only. A student will be expected to return to the University immediately once the competition is over. Extended absences for non-competitive reasons will not be granted.

### 5.4 Assessment **adjustments**

#### 5.4.1 Coursework:

Ideally, students will prepare for coursework and submit it prior to leaving for the period of training/competition. In exceptional circumstances, absence for preparation or a competition will interfere with coursework preparation/submission and students may request an extended submission to correspond with the missed period. A maximum of two weeks extension can be granted **following a successful mitigating circumstances claim**. Consideration must be given to ensure that the student has no advantage over other students when submitting in this way.

#### 5.4.2 Examinations, Presentations and Practical assessments etc.:

In some cases, it may be possible to hold a presentation or practical earlier than the planned due date. If it is not, or the assessment is an examination then the assessment will move from the original assessment period to the next routinely scheduled period, which will usually be the scheduled reassessment period, without incrementing the attempt number. No opportunity for a second attempt (resit) will be available until the next formal assessment period, i.e. individual resit opportunities will not be created for one student. This is the same for any student who secures a further attempt at an examination due to their exceptional mitigating circumstances.

This may have implications for progression to the next academic year and for subsequent module selection.

## 6. Process

- 6.1 At the earliest opportunity the student should discuss the possibility of missed examinations or coursework with **their** Personal Academic Tutor and Athlete Advisor, preferably prior to selection for the team or squad. Ideally, the student will prepare for coursework and submit it prior to leaving for the period of training/competition.
- 6.2 The student should submit formal notification requesting Assessment Flexibility by submitting a claim for exceptional mitigating circumstances, identifying the appropriate modules and assessments **within seven days of the assessment due date(s)**.
- 6.3 The student should submit evidence to support the claim by obtaining a supporting statement from their National Governing Body as to the nature of the competition/ increased training load when preparing for a major tournament, and the date the student was informed of their selection/possible selection.
- 6.3 The Complaints & Appeals Officer will share details of the claim with the student's Athlete Advisor and in some cases the Chair of the Sports Board, who will discuss the request for Assessment Flexibility, considering: the nature of the request; the accompanying evidence; whether the student has acted in a timely and responsible manner in terms of their organisation and communication of selection/possible selection.
- 6.4 The student will be informed of the outcome by the Mitigating Circumstances Officer.
- 6.5 If declined, the student may discuss the reasons with their Athlete Advisor. A student may appeal against the decision only if **they** believe the procedures have not been properly followed. Neither the Student Academic Appeals Procedures nor the Student Complaints Procedures can be used to challenge the outcome of a decision made under this policy.

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### Revision History

Committee	Date	Change
Academic Board v1.1	6 July 2022	Minor amendments [AB-71]
Academic Board v1.0	27 April 2016	New Procedure Approved WEF: 1 Sept 2016 (AB15-37)