

Dual Career Policy

Academic Flexibility Guidance Notes (Sport)

1. Scope of the Guidance Notes

This document will outline the following:

- Background (Section 2)
- Student Eligibility (Section 3)
- Assessment Flexibility (Section 4)
- Study Flexibility (Section 5)

These guidance notes are written in recognition of the University's strategic aims to ensure a positive experience and successful academic outcome for all students.

The University of Manchester Academic Flexibility Guidance Notes (Sport) is an acknowledgement to the fact that the window of opportunity for attaining, and developing towards, excellence in sport coincides with the years during which an athlete may be attending university. The notes offer support to elite student-athletes, whose rigorous training and competition programmes may have an impact on their academic performance.

This document does **not** cover circumstances of a non-sporting nature. Students wanting to alert University staff of circumstances relating to personal or health difficulties should consult the University's [Policy on Mitigating Circumstances](#). [Schools should also refer to the Policy on Alternative Assessments, alongside this document.](#)

2. Background

This document forms part of the University of Manchester's regulatory requirement to continue to be a Talented Athlete Sport Scholarship (TASS) delivery hub site. The University of Manchester has been a TASS delivery site since the programme's inception in 2004, and has supported hundreds of elite student-athletes from the University of Manchester and from the North West region. Please note this document is relevant only to University of Manchester Sports Scholarship students.

Preservation of the integrity of a University of Manchester degree is paramount¹. However, the University recognises the dual responsibilities placed upon student-athletes and the need for provision to be put in place to help them meet and excel across their dual academic and sporting responsibilities. It is also essential to maintain equitable treatment of all students including student-athletes².

The term academic flexibility refers to a range of arrangements that can be made to support an individual thereby allowing a talented student-athlete to balance their studies with a hectic sporting schedule. There is no exhaustive list of the types of flexible arrangements Schools may wish to give to students. This document outlines common academic flexibility types for assessment and study however each request must be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3. Eligibility

The University recognises that many students participate in a wide range of sporting and recreational activities. Eligibility for receiving support in line with this guidance note will be based on whether a student is in receipt of a [University of Manchester Sports Scholarship](#). Students must have applied and been successful in their application to the University's Sports Scholarship Scheme before requesting the support outlined in this document.

The University's Performance Sport Panel assess Sport Scholarship applications against a strict set of criteria that require student-athletes to be competing in their chosen sport at a minimum of junior national level. Applications **must** be supported by evidence that confirms a student-athlete's selection. The panel

¹ Reasonable adjustments will be made where the learning outcomes of a programme and/or the requirements set by an external professional body are not compromised.

² Students requesting support or special dispensation for circumstances not involving sporting commitments should consult the University's Policy on Mitigating Circumstances.

is made up of representatives from the UoM Sport department, an academic staff member from within the institution, a former UoM Sport scholar, an external representative from a sport National Governing Body (NGB) and chaired by an independent appointed person with a knowledge of the performance sport landscape across Higher Education and the wider sport sector.

3.1 Student Responsibility

In making **any** requests for academic flexibility, students will be required to provide evidence of their requirement to attend a particular competition or event³.

The University acknowledges that the timescale for notification of sporting selection is completely outside the student's control and may be on a relatively short timescale; however, the arrangements under these guidance notes will only be available to students who proactively manage their workload and submit their requests for academic flexibility ahead of the period in which they feel their academic study will be affected. This process will not be applied retrospectively, so student-athletes should contact staff in the Sport's Performance Team as soon as they are aware that selection for a sporting event may be a **possibility**.

In considering whether a student is eligible for academic flexibility in light of their sporting commitments, their academic engagement will be monitored and assessed in line with the University's Attendance and Monitoring Procedures⁴. If it is deemed that a student's engagement and academic progress has been unsatisfactory, for reasons unrelated to their sporting commitments, this will affect the decision as to whether reasonable adjustments can be made to support their studies.

Students studying at the University of Manchester on a Tier 4 visa have a responsibility to ensure they regulate their own attendance and progress in line with the requirements set out by the Home Office. The University will not permit instances of academic flexibility if the terms of a student's Tier 4 visa are invalidated.

If a student-athlete's situation changes and they wish for their academic flexibility arrangements to be reversed or changed, they must ensure they inform their School/Faculty, in writing, at the earliest opportunity. Confirmation that the arrangements have been reversed or changed will be formally communicated to the student-athlete via the appropriate School/Faculty⁵. Additional evidence will be required for instances of substantial change.

4. Assessment Flexibility

Although this guidance procedure will allow flexibility in assisting students to meet their dual responsibilities as both elite-athletes and students, they will still be required to undertake all the assessments pertaining to their degree programme, in order to ensure that they meet the required Intended Learning Outcomes of the programme. The process outlined below, and as part of the Application for Academic Flexibility Form, will not waive the academic responsibilities of students but it will permit reasonable adjustments to be made where practicable and where learning outcomes are not compromised⁶.

Where a student in receipt of a University of Manchester Sports Scholarship is made aware of selection, or possible selection, for an international competition or training camp which clashes with an examination or coursework deadline, they can submit a request for assessment flexibility. It is advised that the student speak to their academic School/Faculty in advance and then send an initial draft Application for Academic Flexibility Form through to the University's Performance Sport Team to review, agree and sign to say that that this meets eligibility from a Sport perspective. The completed Application Form should then be submitted by the student to the appropriate School/Faculty.

4.1 Examinations

³ Evidence should include a supporting statement from the National Governing Body as to the nature of the competition/training camp, including when the student-athlete was informed of their selection/possible selection.

⁴ University Attendance & Monitoring Policies are defined by the [General Regulation XX – Monitoring Attendance & Wellbeing of Students](#) and the [Policy on Recording & Monitoring Attendance](#).

⁵ Students should be aware that depending on when a request for reversal or change is made, there may not be sufficient time for the alterations to be put in place.

⁶ Under no circumstances will a student be excused the requirement to submit a piece of assessed work or attend/sit an examination.

Student-athletes unable to attend an examination, or a number of examinations as a result of selection, or possible selection for an international competition or training camp, should submit a completed Application for Academic Flexibility Form, where possible, five weeks before the start of the relevant examination period. Requests for examination deferral made after this deadline will still need to follow this process but will be considered on an individual basis up until the end of the examination period by the appropriate School/Faculty.

4.1.1 Successful Deferral Applications

Successful deferral applications will allow for student-athletes to take the affected examination(s) as a 'first sit' in the August reassessment period⁷, or at the next available opportunity, for uncapped marks (no re-sit fee charged)⁸.

4.1.2 Unsuccessful Deferral Applications

Where a student-athlete is in receipt of a University of Manchester Sports Scholarship, but has not provided clear evidence to support why they are unable to attend examinations on a particular date or set of dates, an application will be rejected on the basis of lacking evidence.

Requests for flexibility relating to the period immediately prior to an exam will not normally be supported by this procedure; preparation for assessments should be a continuous process throughout the whole year/semester and, as such, other commitments immediately prior to an exam will not be seen as grounds to request flexibility.

4.2 Coursework and Learning

Requests for academic flexibility relating to coursework and learning activities can be made with regards to both formative and summative work.

4.2.1 Learning access

Training and competing commitment patterns for dual career student-athletes will vary throughout the academic year, so access to online notes and recorded lectures/seminars should be available and provided where absence is unavoidable. This arrangement should be made on a localised level between the student and the School/Faculty.

4.2.2 Coursework Test Flexibility

Where a student-athlete is due to be absent on the day of a coursework test, the student should submit a completed Application for Academic Flexibility Form as described at the start of section 4, in advance of the test date. The School/Faculty is required to consider offering the student flexibility. Students should be aware, however, that the School may not be able to offer flexibility in relation to some tests, including certain practical and laboratory-based coursework tests. The final decision on the level of flexibility is at the discretion of the School/Faculty in relation to the best academic interests of the student-athlete.

4.2.3 Coursework Flexibility

The majority of coursework assignments and deadlines are provided to the students early in each semester. Student-athletes are expected to proactively manage their time effectively to allow them to engage in the work necessary to complete the coursework assignment prior to any absence from University related to sporting activities.

Requests for flexibility relating to a coursework assignment hand in date will not normally be supported by this procedure; completion of coursework should be a continuous process throughout the whole semester and, as such, other commitments immediately prior to a coursework deadline will not normally be seen as grounds to request flexibility.

In cases where coursework assignments are provided to the student with a very short deadline (e.g. submission one week later) or where coursework cannot be completed before certain

⁷ Students should understand that if they fail the examination(s) in the August reassessment period, there would be no opportunity to retake the examinations before the next academic year. This will have implications relating to continuation on to the next stage of their course.

⁸ **Note:** if the exam was a second or third attempt at the assessment for the unit, the marks would remain capped.

Note: Absence from deferred examinations will be treated in accordance with the standard examination procedures and the University's [Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree Regulations](#).

Note: Failure in deferred examinations will be treated in accordance with the University's Undergraduate or Postgraduate Degree Regulations.

resources or information have been provided, a completed Application for Academic Flexibility Form should be submitted as described at the start of section 4.

5. Study Flexibility/Change of mode of attendance

Where a student in receipt of a University of Manchester Sports Scholarship is made aware of selection, or possible selection, for an international competition or training camp that is likely to affect their ability to be in full-time attendance on their degree programme for an extended period of time, they can submit a request to change their degree from full-time to part-time over a pre-agreed time period; however, it should be noted that it may not always be practical for all degree programmes to be changed from full-time to part-time attendance. It is also important for the student to understand the potential financial impact of doing this, which should be discussed with the School/Faculty and/or the Fees Team in Student Services before completing the Application for Academic Flexibility Form and the process described at the start of section 4.

In keeping with the expectation that student-athletes proactively manage their academic affairs, **the deadline for submitting a request for Study Flexibility is 1st September, before the start of the academic year in question.** Requests submitted beyond this date will not be considered.

5.1 Programme and Course Unit Criteria

A request for Study Flexibility/change of mode of study will not be considered for the first academic year of a degree programme, or for the year in which the request is made⁹.

One year of a full-time undergraduate degree programme will not normally be extended over more than two years. Postgraduate Taught courses can be extended in line with the University's PGT Degree Regulations and Guide to the Taught Degree Regulations.

A full-time year of study extended over two years on a part-time basis will be weighted in line with the appropriate School and University regulations.

Study Flexibility/change of mode of study will only be permitted where the learning outcomes of a course and/or the requirements set by any external professional body are not compromised¹⁰.

5.2 Assessment

Student athletes will undertake all the assessments pertaining to the course units they take in each year of study. Academic progression will not be permitted unless the course units in any given year are successfully passed in line with the University's Degree Regulations.

[Summer reassessment, where available, will be offered in line with the University's Degree Regulations.](#)

5.3 Successful Study Flexibility Applications

Student-athletes in receipt of a University of Manchester Sports Scholarship will need to submit a request for Study Flexibility by completing the Application for Academic Flexibility Form and process outlined at the start of section 4. This request will need to be substantiated with evidence that the student-athlete is required to attend a specific competition or training camp¹¹.

5.4 Unsuccessful Study Flexibility Applications

Where a student-athlete is in receipt of a University of Manchester Sports Scholarship, but has not provided clear evidence to suggest why they are applying to study flexibly, an application will be rejected on the basis of lacking evidence.

Students studying at the University of Manchester on a Tier 4 visa cannot be offered the option of part-time study as a result of Home Office regulations.

⁹ Students will be expected to have discussed the possibility of part-time study or academic flexibility ahead of their registration for the academic year in question. Due to the variety in course unit types, it is not possible for arrangements to be made if the academic year has already started.

¹⁰ Students on courses relating to healthcare or language studies will need to discuss the specific requirements of their degree schemes with their academic department to find out if they are eligible for Study Flexibility or a change of mode of study

¹¹ Evidence should include a supporting statement from the National Governing Body as to the nature of the competition/training camp, including when the student-athlete was informed of their selection/possible selection.

6. Further Information

6.1 Interruption

Where it has not been possible to approve a request for academic flexibility or study flexibility/change to mode of study, students should be directed to the University's [Policy on Interruptions and Guidance for Students on Interruptions to Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Programmes of Study](#), where students can request to take a break from their studies at either the start, or part way through an academic year. Where other adjustments have not been possible, this may be the most suitable option to allow both academic and sporting attainment (although final decisions on whether to accept an application for interruption are made by the student's School; they are not automatic). As each case is unique, the recommended procedure is for the School and sport department to explore and discuss where alternative options and/or methods of assessment may be possible.

6.2 Contact

Any queries please contact:

Jonathan Kantor
Performance Sport Officer
T: 07795 815 017
E: jonathan.kantor@manchester.ac.uk

Academic Flexibility Procedure

The student-athlete is made aware of selection **or possible** selection for an international competition or training camp that they feel will interfere with their academic studies. Following a discussion with the relevant School, they should complete **Section A** of an Application for Academic Flexibility Form and submit this, with supporting evidence, to the University's Sports Performance Team.

Sports Performance Team: The Head of the Sports Performance Team will make a decision whether to support the application or not by completing **Section B** of the application form. This part of the process will involve Sports Performance Staff verifying the supporting evidence and confirming that the student-athlete is currently in receipt of a University of Manchester Sports Scholarship. Where a student-athlete is not in receipt of a University Sports Scholarship, but the Sports Performance Team feel the student-athlete should be considered for academic flexibility, details will be provided.

YES

NO

School: The application form will be sent to the student-athlete's School where the Head of School, or his / her nominee, will complete **Section C** of the form. This part of the process will involve consideration as to whether the request for flexibility can be accommodated within the student-athlete's degree programme. Consideration will be given to whether the student will be able to sufficiently demonstrate that they meet the programme's learning outcomes with the flexibility that is proposed and whether such flexibility arrangements meet any requirements set by an external professional body.

Faculty: The application form will then be sent to the Head of the relevant Faculty, where the final outcome will be decided and recorded in **Section D** of the application form. A review of the student-athlete's attendance and progress (to date) will be carried out at this stage. The outcome of the application will be communicated to the student-athlete via e-mail and will include details of exactly what has / has not been approved. Where an application for academic flexibility has been rejected, the student will be given an explanation as to why their request for academic flexibility could not be facilitated / approved.

NB. Until a student has received formal notification from the Faculty that their request for academic flexibility has been approved, they should **not** assume

This process will only be available to students who proactively manage their workload and submit their requests for academic flexibility within the timeframes outlined in the process above.