



Academic Flexibility Policy for Taught (Dual Career Athletes)

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Academic Flexibility Policy for Taught Students (Dual Career Athletes)

1. Scope of the Policy

The University of Essex Academic Flexibility Policy for Dual-Career Athletes is an acknowledgement to the fact that the window of opportunity for attaining excellence in sport coincides with the years during which an athlete may be attending university. The policy offers support to elite Dual-Career Athletes, whose commitments to rigorous training and competition programmes may have a negative effect on their academic performance.

This policy 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 [Guidelines on Extenuating Circumstances](#) and [Late Submission of Coursework](#).

International students must read the information provided in point 9, regarding additional compliance obligations relating to their visa and additional funding they may be in receipt of, such as (but not limited to) US Loans.

2. Background to the Policy

Preservation of the integrity of a University of Essex degree is paramount¹. However, the University recognises the additional responsibilities placed upon Dual-Career Athletes and the need for provision to be put in place to help them meet these responsibilities; both sporting and academic. It is also essential to maintain equitable treatment of all students including Dual-Career Athletes².

¹ Academic Flexibility will be made where the learning outcomes of a course and/or the requirements set by a Professional or Regulatory Body (PSRB) are not compromised.

² Students requesting support or special dispensation for circumstances not involving sporting commitments should consult the University's [Extenuating Circumstances Procedures](#).

Under no circumstances will a student be excused the requirement to submit a piece of work, attend an examination or reduce their assessed practice placement hours.

3. Eligibility

This policy is to be applied for supported Dual-Career Athletes who require academic flexibility in relation to national training camps, international competition, representation of University of Essex Rebels teams in professional and British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) competitions.

A Dual-Career Athlete is defined as any student who is in receipt of a University of Essex Sports Scholarship or receiving benefits in kind; or any TASS (Sport England funded) student athletes studying on University of Essex courses.

The University recognises that many students participate in a wide range of sporting and recreational activities, but eligibility for receiving support in line with this policy will be based on whether a student meets the definition of a dual-career athlete outlined above. Students must be in receipt of a University of Essex athlete contract or be a TASS-funded athlete.

Applications for academic flexibility require the Dual-Career Athletes to be training or competing in their chosen sport at either regional or national level. Applications **must** be supported by evidence that confirms a Dual-Career Athlete's participation in such an activity.

4. Student responsibility

The University acknowledges that the timescale for notification of selection is often completely outside the student's control and may be on a relatively short timescale; however, this policy will only be available to students who proactively manage their affairs and submit their requests for academic flexibility ahead of the period in which they feel their academic study will be affected. Usually this will be no later than 6 weeks from the start of the first term of their academic year. This policy will not be used retrospectively, so dual-career athletes should contact staff in the Sport's Performance Team as soon as they are aware that selection may be a possibility. Students should discuss their Dual-Career Athlete status in the first instance with their personal tutors/academic advisors at the start of the academic year and throughout their period of study.

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 [Student Engagement Policy](#). 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 Essex who hold a Student visa have an additional responsibility to ensure they regulate their own attendance and progress in line with the requirements set out by the Home Office. Please see 'International Students' section below at point 9 for further information.

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

If a Dual-Career athlete's situation changes and they wish for their academic flexibility arrangements to be reversed or changed, they must ensure they inform their academic department, in writing, at the earliest opportunity. Confirmation that the arrangements have been reversed or changed will be formally communicated to the dual-career athlete by the academic department or school. Additional evidence may be required for instances of substantial change.

5. Assessment flexibility

Although this policy will allow flexibility in assisting students to meet their responsibilities as both elite-athletes and students, they will still be required to undertake all the assessments pertaining to their degree course. This policy will not waive the academic responsibilities of students, but it will permit reasonable adjustments to be made where learning outcomes are not compromised.

Where a student in receipt of a University of Essex Sports Scholarship is made aware of selection, or possible selection, for an International or BUCS competition or training camp which clashes with an examination or coursework deadline, they can submit a request for assessment flexibility. A completed Application for Academic Flexibility Form should be submitted to the University's Sports Performance Team in the first instance, usually within the first six weeks of the Academic Year. If approved by University of Essex Sports Performance Team, the Sports Performance Team will forward the request to the relevant academic department(s).

5.1 Examinations

Dual-career athletes unable to attend an examination, or a number of examinations as a result of selection for an international or BUCS competition or training camp, should submit a completed Application for Academic Flexibility Form, where possible, no later than six weeks after the start of the academic year. Requests for examination deferral made after this deadline will be considered on an individual basis up until the start of the examination period.

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

5.1.1 Successful Examination Deferral requests

Successful deferral request will allow for dual-career athletes to take the affected examination(s) in the next available opportunity, for uncapped marks (no re-sit fee charged)⁴.

5.1.2 Unsuccessful Examination Deferral requests

Where a Dual-Career has not provided clear evidence to suggest 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 policy; preparation for assessments should be a continuous process throughout the whole year/term and as such other commitments immediately prior to an exam will not be seen as grounds to request flexibility.

5.2 Coursework

Requests for academic flexibility relating to coursework can be made with regards to both formative and summative work. Academic Flexibility may cover a range of approaches including but not limited to altered deadlines, use of the seven-day window for Late Submissions, re-arranged test/practical exam dates.

5.2.1 Coursework with ‘on-the-day’ assessment

Where a dual-career athlete is due to be absent on the day of a coursework test (in-class test) or other performance-assessed coursework such as practical exam, presentation or similar, the department is required to consider offering the student flexibility. Students should be aware that the department 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 left to the Head of Department or their nominee, in relation to the best academic interests of the dual-career athlete. A completed Application for Academic Flexibility Form should be submitted to the University’s Sports Performance Team in the first instance.

⁴ **Note:** Absence from deferred examinations will be treated in accordance with the standard examination procedures and the University’s Rules of Assessment.

Note: Failure in deferred examinations will be treated in accordance with the [University’s Rules of Assessment](#).

Note: Where a student is permitted to undertake an examination overseas, they will still be required to pay the [overseas examination fee](#).

5.2.2 Coursework flexibility

The majority of coursework assignments are provided to the students early in each term. The dual-career athlete is 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.

Requests for flexibility relating to the period immediately prior to a coursework assignment hand in date will not normally be supported by this policy; completion of coursework should be a continuous process throughout the whole term 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 resources or information have been provided, a completed Application for Academic Flexibility Form should be submitted to the University's Sports Performance Team in the first instance.

6. Placements

Some dual-career athletes may be on programmes where Assessed Practice Placements are integral to the programme. Students should be aware that the department may not be able to offer flexibility in relation to some placements, especially where late-notice (typically within six-weeks of the placement start) is given. In such cases, it is the dual-career athlete's responsibility to proactively manage their dual commitments, ensuring that flexibility requests are discussed with their department at the earliest opportunity so requests can be considered in a timely manner.

6.1 Placement location

Where students are required to be close to Colchester Campus for the purposes of attending regular training, students should make their departments aware via the Department's placement preferences information process and via a completed Application for Academic Flexibility Form submitted to the University's Sports Performance Team in the first instance. The final decision on the placement location is left to departmental discretion in relation to the best academic interests of the dual-career athlete and placement availability.

6.2 Placement flexibility where a substantial part of the placement will be missed

In cases where a substantial part of the placement will be missed it is anticipated that the placement will need to be rescheduled to take place at the next available opportunity, usually over the Summer period or via amendment of the placement timeline. The final decision on the level of flexibility is left to the Head of Department or their nominee to the best academic interests of the dual-career athlete and the working relationship with the external Placement Provider and Placement availability. A completed Application for Academic Flexibility Form should be submitted to the University's Sports Performance Team in the first instance.

6.3 Placement flexibility where only one to two days of the placement will be missed

The final decision on the level of flexibility is left to departmental discretion in relation to the best academic interests of the dual-career athlete and the working relationship with the external Placement Provider. In such cases discussion between the student, the university and the placement provider will establish whether flexibility in the form of authorised absence will be granted. Students should expect to be flexible in order to make up lost hours where required. A completed Application for Academic Flexibility Form should be submitted to the University's Sports Performance Team in the first instance.

6.4 Successful Placement amendment applications

Successful deferral applications will allow for dual-career athletes to take the affected placement at the next available opportunity or via changed placement timelines as appropriate, for uncapped marks.

6.5 Unsuccessful Placement amendment applications

Where a dual career-athlete is in receipt of a University of Essex Sports Scholarship, but has not provided clear evidence to suggest why they are unable to attend assessed practice placement on a particular date or set of dates, an application will be rejected on the basis of lacking evidence.

7. Degree-pacing

Where a student in receipt of a University of Essex 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 course for an extended period of time, they can submit a request to pace their degree over a pre-agreed time period. A completed Application for Academic Flexibility Form should be submitted to the University's Sports Performance Team in the first instance.

In keeping with the expectation that dual-career athletes proactively manage their academic affairs, the deadline for submitting a request for degree-pacing is 1st September, before the start of the academic year in question. Requests submitted beyond this date will not be considered unless for exceptional circumstances such as late selection or call-up.

7.1 Course and module criteria

One year of a full-time undergraduate degree programme will not normally be extended over more than two years.

Postgraduate Taught courses may be extended in line with the [dissertation formal extension policy](#) and in the case of Student visa holders, where permissible under the Home Office regulations pertaining to their visa at that time. A year of study extended over two years will normally be weighted 50:50, which

for most undergraduate degree schemes constitutes 60 academic credits per academic year. [Principal Regulations for Taught Masters programmes \(.pdf\)](#) apply for Postgraduate Taught Students.

Degree-pacing will only be permitted where the learning outcomes of a course and/or the requirements set by a PSRB are not compromised⁵.

7.2 Successful Degree-pacing application

Dual-career athletes in receipt of a University of Essex Sports Scholarship will need to submit a request for degree-pacing to the University's Sports Performance Team in the first instance.

7.3 Unsuccessful Degree-pacing applications

Where a dual-career athlete is in receipt of a University of Essex Sports Scholarship, but has not provided clear evidence to suggest why they are applying to pace their degree, an application will be rejected on the basis of lacking evidence.

Students studying at the University of Essex on an International Study visa cannot be offered the option of part-time study as a result of Home Office regulations.

8. Assessment Boards and progression

Dual-career athletes will undertake all the assessments pertaining to the modules they take in each year of study. Academic progression can only be permitted in line with the University's Rules of Assessment.

Re-assessment will be offered in line with the University's Principles of the Rules of Assessment Framework and course specific variations to the Rules of Assessment.

9. Further information

9.1 Intermission

Where it has not been possible to approve a request for academic flexibility, students should be directed to the University's guidance on intermission, where students can be granted the option of taking a break from their studies at either the start, or part way through an academic year. Where other

⁵ 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 degree-pacing.

adjustments have not been possible, this may be the most suitable option to allow both academic and sporting attainment.

9.2 International students

Whilst the University will look to support academic flexibility where possible, there may be occasions where Home Office rules and compliance obligations in place (both on the part of the student and the University) must be followed instead.

9.21 Non-sponsored visa holders

Students with a non-sponsored visa, such as a Dependents visa, are unlikely to have any visa conditions which preclude them from any elements of this policy. However, Immigration Rules do change from time to time, so students in this category are advised to ensure that they comply with the conditions relating to their visa at the time.

9.22 Sponsored visa holders (Student visas)

Student visa holders have a number of additional compliance obligations in connection to their visa:

Students who hold a Student visa are precluded from participating in a professional level sporting activity, or undertaking work as a sports coach. Additionally, the professional sportsperson restrictions apply to activity undertaken on placement

There are restrictions relating to Student visa holders ability to undertake professional sporting activity overseas. You must contact international@essex.ac.uk before planning this type of activity. Individuals who have played sport at national/elite level or that intend to do so in future could be precluded from having a Student visa.

Student visa holders must adhere to the attendance requirements of their visa at all times. This includes any requirements regarding in-person attendance. If you have any queries regarding this, you must contact international@essex.ac.uk before requesting any flexibility in your studies. If you do not adhere to these requirements, your continued sponsorship may be at risk.

Student visa holders **are** permitted to participate in BUCS matches.

9.23 International students (any visa type) in receipt of external funding

In addition to fulfilling any visa-related compliance requirements, international students who receive external funding must also adhere to any conditions set by their funding provider. These obligations may vary depending on the source of funding.

For example, students receiving Title IV Federal Student Aid from the United States are not permitted to undertake their studies remotely or leave the UK for extended periods. Failure to comply with these conditions may result in the termination of your funding and your place on the course.

If you have any questions regarding your funding obligations, please contact: askthehub@essex.ac.uk.

9.3 Contact

Should you think you are eligible for a University of Essex Sports Scholarship, please contact:

Performance Sport Team

T: 01206 873016

E: performancesport@essex.ac.uk

If you have questions regarding what is permitted under your visa conditions, please contact:

International Services Team

E: international@essex.ac.uk

If you have questions relating to external funding conditions, please contact:

Funding Team

E: askthehub@essex.ac.uk

Appendix 1- Academic flexibility process summary

Step 1

The dual-career athlete is made aware of selection or possible selection for national training camps, international competition or representation of University of Essex Rebels teams in professional or British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) competitions that they feel will interfere with their academic study. They complete Section A of an Application for Academic Flexibility Form and submit this, with supporting evidence, to the University's Sports Performance Team no later than six weeks after the start of the academic year.



Step 2

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 dual-career athlete is currently in receipt of a University of Essex Sport's Scholarship or a TASS-funded athlete. **If the dual-career athlete is an international student, the Sports Performance Team will check with International Service team that visa compliance can be maintained if the request is approved.** If the Sports Performance Team support the application, proceed to Step 3. If the application is not supported at this stage, the Sports Performance Team will communicate this to the applicant and the process becomes closed.



Step 3

Academic Department: The application form will be sent to the dual-career athlete's academic department, where the Head of Department, or their 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 dual-career athlete's degree scheme. Consideration will be given to whether the student will be able to sufficiently demonstrate that they meet the learning outcomes with what is proposed and whether they meet any requirements set by a PSRB. A review of the dual-career athlete's attendance and progress (to date) will also be carried out at this stage. **Any advice with regard to Study visa compliance will also be considered in determining the level of flexibility that can be approved.**



Step 4

Academic Department: The application form will then be sent by the academic department for the attention of the Faculty Dean (Education) of the relevant faculty, where the final outcome will be decided and recorded in Section D of the application form and then **returned** to the Academic Department. The outcome of the application will be communicated by the academic department to the dual-career 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.

Note: until a student has received formal notification from their department that their request for academic flexibility has been approved, they should not assume their request has been approved.



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

Document Control Panel

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