



Academic Policies

Elite Athlete Academic Flexibility Policy

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1. Introduction and Context

The University has an enviable and proud record of accomplishment of success in Elite Sport and recognises that combining high level sport and higher education can be difficult for elite athletes. Elite athletes are those students who receive support under the Athlete Support Programme (ASP) at TU Dublin.

Elite athletes have unique demands in comparison to the non-student athlete population (e.g., increased time and energy demands, increased accountability to various support providers, international travel and competition requirements), and require flexible and supportive structures to successfully attain a dual career. Combining education or full-time work with a sporting career is known as a “dual career”.

TU Dublin have been successful in achieving the required standards in dual career support structures and programmes for student athletes and have been awarded the Sport Ireland Institute Accreditation for Student Athlete Support (ASAS), which recognises good practice in dual career support for student athletes.

The University is fully supportive of elite athletes who manage themselves well and are proactive in organising their sport and their studies. Through the Academic Mentoring Programme, the University creates a supportive environment, whereby elite athletes can combine their sporting career with their education in a way that allows them to achieve their potential in the pursuit of both sporting and academic excellence.

2. Purpose

This document is designed to support elite athletes when representing TU Dublin and/or higher-level representation ¹. Academic flexibility will be made to

¹ For the purposes of this policy document ‘higher level representation’ is defined as National, International and in the case of GAA activities representation at Inter-County level.

accommodate this participation. All Faculties will be provided with a list of TU Dublin ASP Elite Athletes studying within their respective Schools at the beginning of each Academic Year.

3. Scope

This policy applies to student athletes who have been awarded Elite Athlete status by TU Dublin Sport. Academic accommodations have been developed with TU Dublin academic colleagues, based on student experiences, to enable specific appointed academic mentors to negotiate academic flexibility within their respective Schools. The University will endeavour to accommodate requests for academic flexibility, however the timescales involved may limit what can reasonably be accommodated.

4. Policy Details

Sections 4.1 and 4.2 set out the guiding principles that will apply when negotiating academic flexibility for elite athletes.

4.1 Guiding Principles for Elite Athletes on Taught Programmes

Assessment Deadlines

Elite athletes will be able to request extensions to assessment deadlines, with the support of their appointed academic mentor, appropriate to their training or competitive requirements. The appointed academic mentors will support elite athletes to negotiate academic flexibility where sporting commitments may prevent the student-athlete from submitting assessment or course work in the required timeframe.

Authorised Leave of Absence

Elite athletes will be able to request a leave of absence if they compete at national or international sporting events. The appointed academic mentors will support elite athletes to negotiate academic flexibility to meet academic requirements where sporting commitments may prevent the student-athlete from attending classes/tutorials/practicals/laboratories. It should be noted that this will not be possible for some programmes which have mandatory attendance requirements e.g., several professionally-accredited or statutorily-regulated programmes.

Work Placement

Accommodation should be made, where possible, when planning work placement arrangements to facilitate their training and competitive schedules. Mandatory clinical placements are not considered work placements for the purpose of this policy. Work placement is increasingly becoming a key feature of student learning in the University. For elite athletes to benefit from a well-structured and managed placement, accommodations should be made when planning work placement arrangements.

Examinations

Elite athletes will be able to request examination flexibility under special examination regulations if competing at national or international sporting events. In such cases, a Deferral of Assessment/Exam/Project Form should be submitted in advance to the School Office as soon as the circumstances are known (normally at least 1 month in advance of the exam, assessment, or project due date, but may be accepted somewhat later than that):

- [Application to Defer Assessment / Exam / Project Form](#) (City Campus)
- [Application to Defer Assessment / Exam / Project Form](#) (Blanchardstown Campus)
- [Application to Defer Assessment / Exam / Project Form](#) (Tallaght Campus)
- For unforeseen extenuating circumstances, an Extenuating Circumstances (EC) Form must be completed and submitted to ecforms@tudublin.ie not later than 3 working days following the coursework submission or sitting date. EC Forms (for *unforeseen* extenuating circumstances) are available here:

<https://www.tudublin.ie/explore/about-the-university/academic-affairs/assessment-regulations/extenuating-circumstances/>
- Both forms must be accompanied with the relevant supporting evidence - verified by TU Dublin Sport - where academic flexibility is required to complete assessment/exam requirements. ***Elite athletes who are unable to attend seasonal examinations due to training and competitive sporting commitments should be allowed to take the supplemental examinations as a first sitting.***

Longer Period of Study

Where appropriate, and on a case-by-case basis, in agreement with, or approval from the Head of School and/or Head of Discipline, it may be possible for elite athletes to 'stretch their studies' over a longer period to accommodate training needs and major competitions. However, it may not be possible to accommodate a longer period of study given clinical competencies acquired during placement. It may not be feasible to stretch studies involving requirements for mandatory clinical placement.

If agreed, students must notify both the Registration and the Exams Offices of the modules that are being undertaken in each of the respective academic years. In each qualifying year, the 100% Student Contribution Charge is waived, and the 100% Tuition Fee is claimed from the Higher Education Authority (HEA). In the second

academic year, the Registrations Office will set up a 'dummy' record for the same programme year and apply a no-fees charge.

Protocol

- I. TU Dublin Sport will identify those students who will be supported as an Elite Athlete and will inform the appropriate appointed Academic Mentor, Programme Coordinator, Head of Discipline and Head of School. Elite athletes are required to provide a detailed training and competitive schedule to their appointed academic mentor at the commencement of each academic semester to identify the potential 'pinch points' where academic requirements may clash with sporting commitments.
- II. Any request for academic flexibility must be made in advance of the stated School deadlines by the student, and be accompanied by supporting evidence verified by TU Dublin Sport. The appointed academic mentor will then advise the student on the most appropriate course of action to negotiate academic flexibility on their behalf. In cases where requests for academic flexibility require actions beyond assessment deadline extensions or exam deferral, agreement of the Head of School/Head of Discipline will be required.
- III. The onus lies with the student to ensure that their academic/assessment requirements are met by the agreed date(s), whilst they continue competing at the highest level in sport.
- IV. Students will be made aware that flexibility cannot be guaranteed in all cases and will ultimately be dependent on the requirements of their academic programme. Students who have been granted academic flexibility will be expected to complete all elements of their programme and will not be exempt from completing compulsory pieces of assessed work. All students will be expected to meet their academic requirements by an agreed date that is appropriate within their respective School.

- V. The students are responsible for submitting work to an appropriate standard by the agreed date to meet assessment requirements.

4.2 Guiding Principles for Elite Athletes on Research Programmes

For Research Students the Academic Supervisor(s) act as academic mentors.

Professional Development Training Deadlines

Elite athletes can negotiate academic flexibility where sporting commitments may prevent the student-athlete from participating in the annual Professional Development Training week. Elite athletes can request to take the training week modules online.

Annual Evaluation Deadlines

The Faculty Head of Research co-ordinates the annual evaluation event in each School. If an Elite athlete experiences any difficulty in attending the annual evaluation event, they must immediately inform the relevant Head of Research and an evaluation will be arranged at the earliest possible date to facilitate the process.

Authorised Leave of Absence

Elite athletes will be able to request a leave of absence if competing at national or international sporting events. Following discussion with their supervisors(s), students should complete form PGR 5B and should attach any supporting documentation. Following approval of any leave of absence, the programme end date for that student will be changed, thereby longer periods of study are accommodated.

Work Placement

Accommodations should be made, where possible, when planning work placement arrangements to facilitate their training and competitive schedules. Work placement is increasingly becoming a key feature of student learning in the University. For elite athletes to benefit from a well-structured and managed placement, accommodations should be made when planning work placement arrangements.

Examinations

Elite athletes will be able to request examination flexibility if competing at national or international sporting events. At least six weeks prior to the proposed date of the final examination, the student should submit an electronic copy of their thesis and the completed PGR 4B [Confirmation of Suitability of Thesis] form, to the Graduate Research School Office. When completing form PGR 4B possible dates for the viva voce examination, taking account of any national or international sporting events, should be suggested.

Similarly, for transfer and confirmation examinations, at least six weeks prior to the proposed date, the student should submit an electronic copy of their report, to the Faculty Head of Research, indicating possible dates for the viva voce examination, taking account of any national or international sporting events.

Protocol

- I. TU Dublin Sport will identify those students who will be supported as an Elite Athlete and inform the Graduate Research School Office. Elite athletes are required to provide a detailed training and competitive schedule to their appointed academic supervisor when developing their annual research plan. Elite athletes in receipt of research funding must also inform their funder of all requests for

extensions of deadlines, leaves of absence, and examination and academic flexibility.

- II. Any request for academic flexibility must be made in advance of the stated deadlines by the student and accompanied by supporting evidence verified by TU Dublin Sport. The appointed academic supervisor will then advise the student on the most appropriate course of action to negotiate academic flexibility on their behalf. The Faculty Head of Research and the Head of the Graduate Research School can provide advice as required.
- III. The onus lies with the student to ensure that their academic/assessment requirements are met by the agreed date(s) whilst they continue competing at the highest level in sport.
- IV. Students will be made aware that flexibility cannot be guaranteed in all cases and will ultimately be dependent on the requirements of their academic programme. Students who have been granted academic flexibility will be expected to complete all elements of their programme and will not be exempt from completing compulsory elements. All students will be expected to meet their academic requirements by an agreed date.
- V. The students are responsible for submitting work to an appropriate standard, by the agreed date to meet assessment requirements.