

Title: A British University Case Study of the Transitional Experiences of Student-Athletes

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Sport(s): track and field, rugby union, triathlon, badminton, field hockey, swimming

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Main Theme: Transitions

Secondary Theme(s): Social Support

Aims: The aim of the study was to examine the transitional experiences of student-athletes at a singular British university that houses a national High-Performance Centre offering elite support services. More specifically, the aim was to look at all elements of the athlete's life and how they coped with transition into university.

Method: Participants were current and past student-athletes (range of ages and sports), members of athlete support staff (e.g., physiotherapist and strength and conditioning coach), and administration staff (e.g., sport scholarship manager). Data were collected through focus groups, interviews, and timelines.

Results and Practical Implications: Results found that student-athletes experienced a number of transitions at the same time as they moved into university. These transitions were within the athletes' sport (e.g., change of training of environment) and academic development (e.g., adapting to a new learning environment). There were also changes within the student-athlete's psychological development (e.g., increases in responsibility) and changes within psychological and social support (e.g., athletes had to form a relationship with a new coach). These results suggest that athletes would benefit arriving at university with knowledge of the requirements about to be placed on them. It is suggested

that greater communication between athletes and coaches prior to transition would be beneficial. Student-athletes expressed how personal resources (e.g., having dedication and a strong work ethic) and other resources within their environment (e.g., flexibility within their education and having elite athlete role models within their university) were useful to them overcoming any difficulties within the transition to university. Student-athletes had coping strategies which helped them to overcome difficulties in the transition, including communicating with all members of staff about issues and setting goals within their sport and education. Student-athletes also discussed some barriers which negatively affected their transition, including parents being overprotective. Coaching staff discussed how a balance should be established between support and independence, and that student-athletes benefit from making mistakes and learning from them following their transition into university.

TASS have produced this lay summary. The full article is available (permissions may apply): [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276132687 A British university case study of the transitional experiences of student-athletes](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/276132687_A_British_university_case_study_of_the_transitional_experiences_of_student-athletes)