

# Balancing Sport and Education

A Guide for  
Students

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# The importance of finding a balance

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A 'Dual Career' allows for student athletes to reach their sporting and educational potential whilst also preparing for future employment prospects. This is important as only a small percentage of athletes find full-time employment within their sports, meaning qualifications and skills are needed to find careers alongside sport or after athletes sporting careers.

For many athletes, balancing education along with their sport can be a challenge. Finding this balance is crucial for young athletes to have the best opportunity to progress in education alongside their sport, maintain other interests and experience a more balanced way of living.





# The Challenges

A dual career can be challenging for many young athletes. These challenges can include, but are not limited to:

- Time management
- Mental and social strain
- Career goals

These challenges may seem disconcerting but with the knowledge and support, they can be managed.

So how do you tackle these challenges?





# Planning and Time management

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Agreement and planning is important for getting the best out of your sporting, educational and social experience. Information from schools, colleges and universities is available for athletes attempting to balance sport and education. It is important to be collaborative in discussions with your teachers, lecturers and parents/guardians regarding plans for your dual career.

Time management can be a challenge for many student athletes which can compromise either athletic performance or academic performance. Creating a personal plan can assist in balancing these. For example, a plan could include sport practice/training times, games/competitions, school timetables and self study time. A plan like this created with a teacher, lecturer, parent or guardian can assist the student athlete not just manage their time but can help with stress levels and avoid burnout.

# Wellbeing, Mental and Social Health

**Due to the complexity of a 'Dual Career', it is common for students athletes to face challenges regarding their wellbeing, mental health and social life.**

## **Mental Health and wellbeing**

**While all students face challenges with mental health and wellbeing, student athletes are no exception and it is possible that student athletes are more susceptible to mental health issues than previously believed. Sports injuries, pressure to succeed, lack of sleep, stress from school, and overtraining can all have an impact on depression and anxiety rates. Schools, Colleges and Universities should all provide support specifically for student athletes in order tackle these potential issues. Having an open dialogue with coaches, lecturers and your inner support group (family and friends) is beneficial when you are feeling down, stressed or anxious - they can help to point you in the direction to get support.**

## **Social Life**

**Balancing a dual career can have a big impact on a student's social life. Studying full time alongside playing a sport can take up a lot of time and can feel lonely, it is important for students to still have 'downtime' and spend time with family and friends. Spending time taking part in different hobbies and sports can help develop personal growth and pleasure.**

# Career Prospects

As previously discussed, it is rare for student athletes to find full-time employment in their sports. Therefore gaining official qualifications in school/further education (college/university). Having these qualifications and educational experience can help in:

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- Finding employment alongside their sporting career
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- Finding a career once their their sporting career has come to an end, either within the sporting field or something completely different



# Take-away Messages

**Make time for your own wellbeing**

**Time Management is Key**

**Education/qualifications are crucial for life after sport**

**Support is always available through educational institutions**

**Balancing sport and education is complex but manageable**