

2025-26 BUCS NATIONAL COMPETITIONS GROUP - MEETING 3 - MINUTES

Date Tuesday 3rd March 2026
Time 10:00-15:00
Location Microsoft Teams

ATTENDEES

Anna Russell (AR)
Victoria Carnall (VC)
Sam Johnson (SJ)
Ffion Hewlett(FH)
Ed Baker(EB)
Scott Dale (SDa)
Chris Purdie (CP)
Harriet Broadway (HB)
Laure Hockaday (LH)
Marcus Henson (MH)
Sophie Dunning(SDu)
Daisy Gillie (DG)
Alison Davidson (AD)
Josh Darley (JD)
Neal Kington (NK)
Alice Wilkie (AW)
Nick Burley (NB)
Hannah Underhill (HU)
Max Bergin (MB)
Christopher Lamb (CL)
Helen Weeks (HW)
Joseph Gallimore (JG)
Freddie Fairbairn (FF)

APOLOGIES

ORGANISATION

Chair
South West
London
Wales
North West
South East
SSS / Scotland
Yorkshire
North East
East Midlands
West Midlands
North East
Senior Managers Network
Student Rep
BUCS
Volleyball SAG

ORGANISATION

Item	Action								
1. Apologies / Welcome	AR								
2. Minutes and Matters Arising (Meeting '2' 2025-26) a) Attaching forms to match cards – No update b) Dates for Last NCG meeting moved									
3. Proposal for Change 1 – Competition Format – Volleyball– National League Introduction HU Introducing a paper proposing introduction of a National League to Volleyball Men's and Women's. Feedback from Form sent out to Premier and Tier 1 Women's and Men's teams: <table border="1" data-bbox="413 741 1031 920"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="413 741 632 808">Vote</th> <th data-bbox="632 741 1031 808">Count of Volleyball Premier and Tier 1 Teams</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="413 808 632 846">Rejects</td> <td data-bbox="632 808 1031 846">5 (16% of votes)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="413 846 632 884">Supports</td> <td data-bbox="632 846 1031 884">27 (84% of votes)</td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="413 884 632 920">Not responded</td> <td data-bbox="632 884 1031 920">16</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> CP: Scottish region in favour. SDu: East Midlands generally in support, some worries around travel and concerns that the turnaround for 26/27 is too soon as some student recruitment was based on competing in the top league, and that may now not be the case. Questions on the rationale behind choosing a playoff at bottom of (National) rather than an automatic relegation. FF: The rationale is that for the integrity and sustainability of the league a playoff is a better fit, especially as it is looking at the performance end of athletes. VC: Question on why 6 teams have been chosen for the Premier (National) and not 8? FF: Rationale for 6 was that there were only 7 teams with external partnerships with top level clubs, so again it came to the sustainability of the league. Moving forward hope would be that between SAG and LMC that sizes of league/ relegation would change as fits best. SJ: Some institutions are worried about the extent of travel that would be introduced with a 6 team Premier (National), as opposed to an 8 team league. And where the teams aware of who would likely be being brought up. FF: 7 Fixtures in an 8 team league felt like too few fixtures for the integrity of a performance league, ideally in time the league would move to a 9 team league. There was a selection criteria in the paper so the teams should be aware of who was likely to be brought up. A lot of those teams also compete in the Super/National League already and so are making those travel commitments already, so could then find ways to combine those fixtures. HU/LH: Concerns about whether players were consulted fully, as some of the players were concerned about playing the National and potentially now also the BUCS Premier (National) league. FF: Performance players are already used to playing multiple times a week, often back to back (e.g. Friday to Saturday). Creating a new level will also support with player development as it will allow for players to play at a more appropriate level to	Vote	Count of Volleyball Premier and Tier 1 Teams	Rejects	5 (16% of votes)	Supports	27 (84% of votes)	Not responded	16	HU/FF
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<p>support their development.</p> <p>AR: The paper mentions wanting to expand the league after implementation. FF: Hope is that an LMC would help guide the league from a 6 team league to a larger league as the competitive structure develops, presuming there are teams capable of making that jump.</p> <p>AR: Now that the league season is over will the teams be informed or will it be left to them to calculate.</p> <p>NK: AS NB has mentioned the teams will be informed, once the knockout is concluded to allow us to fully calculate. During this implementation stage the teams have the choice to opt-in (or opt-out) and so teams will be informed in making the decision to play in the (National) league. If not enough teams opt-in then the implementation will not go ahead for the 26/27 season and the structure will remain as it currently is.</p> <p>AR: Whilst Volleyball England are engaged, can work be done with the NGB to improve the officiating body as there isn't a surplus pool of officials in every region.</p> <p>FF: Volleyball England's intentions are to attempt to use the BUCS pathway to promote officiating opportunities among both pre-existing officials, but also in engaging further with the student officiating body.</p> <p>NCG recommends Implementation</p>	
<p>4. Notice of Change 1 – Rounders – Competition Format – Regional Qualifier Numbers</p> <p>CL Introducing a notice of change to increase to the number of teams qualifying through to the National Championship Final, from three teams to four.</p> <p>No further comments from NCG.</p> <p>AR: Tracker had no rejections, 21 in support.</p>	<p>CL</p>
<p>5. Notice of Change 2 – Basketball – Competition Format – New Discipline - 3x3 Basketball Championship</p> <p>NK introducing a paper proposing the introduction of a 3x3 Basketball Championships into the BUCS Competition offering.</p> <p>NK: Tender process alongside the paper which has moved quickly and is now reviewing tenders. So, the hope is to announce a host for Year 1 as soon as possible.</p> <p>AR: Is there likely dates for the hosting:</p> <p>NK: We gave a hosting window, but with some flexibility for the hosts. We'd expect the host to Mid-April to End of June.</p> <p>AR: Has the tender hosting been positive?</p> <p>NK: It has, especially as a lot of tenders have come from institutions/members, which should mean 3x3 is an entirely member-led/supported competition, which should be a bonus overall.</p>	<p>NK</p>

<p>MH: With the tenders are these for the year, or are they longer-term (e.g. 3 years) tenders?</p> <p>NK: As 3x3 (and padel) are being brought in they are still in probation. With 3x3 we've gone with 1 year tenders, as we're confident it will grow once introduced – hopefully to the regional model – and with lots of members applying to tender being able to spread that around is seen as more beneficial. Whereas PADEL has more of a facility lag so locking in a secure venue for multiple years was seen as a better option to help support the sustainability of that competition.</p>	
<p>6. Notice of Change 3 - Rowing: Regatta – Competition Format – Introduction of Para Categories</p> <p>AW introducing a paper introducing para categories at the Rowing Regatta Championships.</p> <p>NB: For some clarity, when these are brought in during the season with immediate effect they won't have BUCS points. There is an ongoing review of the BUCS points for these categories, and hopefully the season after they are introduced, we can provide an update on how BUCS points will be awarded.</p> <p>Support on the tracker was significant with no rejections.</p>	<p>JL</p>
<p>7. Swimming Team Championships – Appendix 1 – Follow up Question Answers</p> <p>JG introducing answers to follow-up questions from the initial feedback as part of the NCG recommendation for implementation of the Swimming Team Championships paper.</p> <p>No further comments from NCG.</p>	<p>JG</p>
<p>8. BREAK</p>	
<p>9. Discussion Point 1 – Late Entries Policy & Process</p> <p>HU introducing a discussion point paper providing an overview of the current BUCS late team entry process, which was updated for the 2024 season but remains unclear to members who have been directly involved in the process. Recent feedback shows frustration from institutions—especially when late entries cannot be accepted. We want to understand whether increased transparency would help and whether the acceptance/rejection process itself needs adjusting.</p> <p>Called for feedback on late entry policy and process</p> <p>Feedback from tracker:</p> <p>Timelines? - Strong majority said yes timelines are reasonable. Most institutions agreed timelines were acceptable, few suggested clearer specificity e.g. 10 working days instead of 1-2 weeks. A few concerns around late entries in September causing fixture disruption.</p> <p>Threshold for acceptance/rejection? – 80% rule = 46%, Simple majority = 31%, 50% = 15%. Only 1 institution wanted 100% acceptance Option D – 80% rule is clear favourite chose by nearly half of institutions who voted.</p> <p>Non-responses treatment? – acceptance = 57%, abstention = 21%, only count expressed votes = 14%. Strong majority want non-responses to automatically count as acceptance, as long as follow up made.</p>	<p>HU/MB</p>

AR: Interesting to see that the responses

EB: Issue with leagues going from 6 to 7 sizes as this is where you are almost halving the number of fixtures for the teams. Perhaps in this situation should there be a higher threshold than in other late entries.

SDa: Asking if concerns around budget constraints are shared as it was raised in the South East?

EB: Not had the conversation specifically on Late Entries, but conversations usually indicated that budgeting has been done based on your entries, with the assumption of 10 fixtures (+ knockout).

SD: Is there much impact on IAs with fixture rearrangement, especially later towards the season?

HU: The conversation here isn't really around the acceptance of late entries, as this was formalised in 2024. This discussion point would be more aimed at the process.

SDa: There's not usually a huge number of late entries, so the impact hasn't been too noticeable in the past. With unknown influx of students it can be really hard for them to predict team numbers, so its good to continue to support their participation.

LH: Share the sentiment shared in the room that late entries aren't too burdensome on IAs and that they like late entries as a mechanism to support clubs with participating in sport.

HB: Seems like often the issue relates to the CRM.

AR: The idea to include multiple people in the consultation emails to ensure that its reaching staff members should help with emails being missed/non-responsive. But also an are for BUCS to work on as, whilst it's the institution responsibility, there's not much emphasis pushed on ensuring the CRM is updated fully.

CP: One issue potentially being noticed where more resource is coming into sports (e.g. a director of Hockey) where they may sit above the IA and don't look to prioritise the inter-member relationships, and instead only prioritise their own sport, meanwhile those other sports that don't get the extra resource get squeezed more.

SDa: Aware of the issues raised by CP, perhaps something to be raised at the Senior Manager network as, speaking anecdotally, internal support from senior managers has helped with pushing and making decisions in line the IA perspective.

AD: Happy to pick that up with senior managers but likely comes to the internal organisation at each institution.

HU: Looking forward towards a paper we would look to explore moving to an 80% threshold with potential to tighten threshold for 6 to 7 team leagues and on the acceptance of non-responses with the caveat of a follow-up to the institution if they are non-responsive.

Action: BUCS – Bring a proposal paper with the voted process.

10. Discussion Point 2 – Team Championships (Events) BUCS Points – Follow-up

NB introducing a discussion point paper

NB

<p>30 institutions responded, 20 chose option 1 as first choice, 13 as a second choice. 8 chose option 2 as a first choice, 7 as a second choice.</p> <p>Markedly more people happier with option 1 than option 2.</p> <p>NB tracker did not include feedback on word changing to REG 6.1.2.2.</p> <p>SD: Will the new model potentially reduce entries in the lower competitions?</p> <p>NB: It is something we considered. Looking at our current model, it is already something that already has potential to happen – for example lots of swimmers compete without any chance of earning BUCS points. It is up to institutions whether they want to prioritise BUCS points when making decisions on entries, but we already exist in world where teams compete way beyond the opportunity to earn BUCS points, so a change to the BUCS points hopefully would not change that.</p> <p>AR: Based on tracker and feedback I the room, building on option 1 are we happy moving forward with that?</p> <p>NB: Yep, thank you for the feedback, it is now up to BUCS to look at how to implement that.</p> <p>Can we get feedback on the regulation change as well over the next couple of weeks following the minutes.</p> <p>Action: REPS – Go back out to region on the regulation change feedback</p> <p>Please ask them to feedback on column K and L of the Meeting 3 tab on the Competitions Group Feedback Tracker</p>	
<p>11. BUCS Sport Specific Regulation Changes for 2025-26 – Set 3 (Cricket)</p> <p>NB on the whole the tracker supported all the changes but happy to open to the floor if there is any feedback from regions.</p> <p>One query on increasing squad sizes. Whether you choose to take that extra player is on the institution to decide, the regulation just gives that flexibility to choose but just bear in mind that names on a team sheet count towards normality. Travel cost increases based on this are optional, it is your choice, and a single extra player should not be a huge increase.</p>	NB
<p>12. Standing Item #1 – Events Update</p> <p>Canoe Slalom has been rearranged for 2-3 May</p> <p>Highlight Para Badminton 29 April, Entries close 14 April</p> <p>Regional Golf in South East – entries close 2nd April</p> <p>Nationals summary</p> <p>BUCS Nationals saw strong engagement from the membership, with 84% of members participating in the six sports, across four venues. Th event was supported by student volunteers from Sheffield Hallam University, the University of Sheffield and also the Sheffield Academy of Young Leaders. Additionally, four staff from Member institutions</p>	AW

joined the BUCS Staff Team for the duration of the event after an open application process at the end of 2025.

BUCS Big Wednesday
 BBW updates

- Changes to registration process
- We will be holding a captains briefing on Thursday 19 March 17:00 – also open to IAs as well

Date: 24 March (american football) & 25 March 2026.

Location: Loughborough University

Fixture Times: A confirmed schedule can be downloaded from the website [here](#).

Fixture times and venues will be put onto BUCS Play in due course.

Staff Tickets: Institutions are entitled to up to 10 all access passes per institution for staff. Names need to be submitted on [this form](#) by 11:00pm on 22 March 2026.

Media Accreditation: This will be available via the link [here](#). Sign up by Sunday 22 March

AR: Was there an impact on entry levels for cross-country with the difficulties faced with logistics.

AW: Nope, we had over the maximum number.

13. Standing Item #2 - BUCS Competitions Update

Team Entries: 5042 (2024/25: 5022 (up by 20), Institutions: 145 (2024/25: 145).
 Fixtures (Sep – Feb 23rd): 21,102 BUCS Fixtures (~96% Completion).

As most of our league's finish over the next month, the majority of our knockout competitions are now underway, with play offs fast approaching. All information regarding these can be found on Appendix 14 and BUCS play, and updates will be provided on BUCS play in line with league completion.

A reminder that any team competing in post-league season central venue competitions (i.e. baseball, outdoor ultimate (not including the Men's National Shield), softball, Gaelic football, and dodgeball) may still opt-out of participating in the knockout competition up to their respective league deadline without penalty.

Positive trend since changes made by group to knockout opt out:

Knockout Opt Out - Yearly Tracking		
Season	# Institutions	# Teams
2021-22	10	25
2022-23	36	133
2023-24	38	184
2024-25	51	269
2025-26	57	386

Conference finals are taking place across the regions on the 11th of March and BBW is on the 25th of March.

Team entries for next season will open on the 30th of March, with more information to follow in due course.

HU

Annual rules and regulations review is currently underway, and Nick will be bringing potential changes for discussion amongst the group for the next 2 meetings.

Padel, 3 x 3 Basketball, Flag Football and Women's RFL 9'S are all being introduced for the first time towards the end of this season with announcements to be made over the next month regarding dates and venues.

14. A.O.B.

1. National Trophy Review – HU

- Question asked in last meeting what - Is the National Trophy still an important competition to determine the 'best' Tier 1 team nationally? Or should the teams be competing within their conferences only at this level?
- Consensus was that it was valued and issues with travel had decreased due to early regionalisation. Equally we have also received some feedback from a few universities since the current structure of National Trophy just seems like a repeat of their league, and the early regionalisation can mean the best teams are pitted against each other in the first rounds. Feedback in summary was that cost has a broader impact for more institutions, and the regionalised offer for the national trophy may make for a better offer outside the select top teams.
- Call to see if we still want a review group, as only Ed Baker came forward following last meeting.

2. Digital Plaques Feedback – HU

- Last year we started the transition to digital league plaques for league winners, and this year we will only offer digital league plaques.
- Digital team would like feedback on: if what universities received last year was what they wanted in regard to design and formatting?
- Any feedback send directly to Hannah Underhill – Hannah.underhill@bucs.org.uk

AR: Is there scope to add a staged process as there are a lot of institutions/teams that would value something physical even if it is at their own cost.

SJ: Echoes that there are institutions/teams that would engage with that.

NK: It was removed as part of the sport review recommendation as part of the reward and recognition piece. As such it is no longer a part of our budget, but we can look at alternatives that might allow teams to purchase their own through an official, however it may not be possible – and may not be possible in time with the digital plaques.

MH: Would templates be able to be shared, so institutions may have the option to produce those rewards themselves?

NK: The way the digital assets are designed is they tell you all the information that would usually exist on the physical plaques (i.e. team, competition, etc...). But we have made the decision to move

away from it, so cannot complain if institutions choose to go down an inhouse approach.

HU: Digital plaques will be sent out following the final league (April 11th), so we are hoping to have those sent before the end of April.

3. BUCS Forms/Appendices Updates – Best Communication Channel – HU

- Currently we have a number of key Appendices that we expect IA's to refer to, to assist with season planning etc.
- If significant changes are made, we notify institution via email, newsletters etc.
- Is this appropriate comms channel or would you prefer a different channel?

Summary of comments: BUCS essentials relied on heavily by IAs to help with planning across the season. BUCS Play notifications not relied on as they are often unreliable. Would like updates via emails.

EB: raised the point of Appendices being saved on SharePoint rather than website, so IA's could access live doc, rather than have to download each time.

HU and team to look at including league and knockout updates into BUCS essentials or own comms, but consider timing i.e. A Monday would be better than a Tuesday for IA's workload and capacity.

4. Blocked Play-off teams – NK

Programmes in which promotion to Premier Tier is blocked by ineligible teams finishing 1st and 2nd.

EB: Think a review would be welcome as we are moving closer to some leagues being permanently blocked by very strong 2nd teams. However, if it does go lower down than 2nd the league then potentially it should see the bottom of the premier tier also compete.

AR: Sounds like there is potential for a review needed.

NB: Knowing which SAG this discussion came from, it will come through as a general regulation change, but this is a good temperature check that there is wider appetite for review and change here.

Action: BUCS – Follow up with a review of the blocked leagues and bring any proposed changes forward.

5. Rugby Union Expansion - EB

Part of the expansion criteria is based on how the season concludes (points difference between fixtures – blowouts etc.). So, playoffs etc are being planned as they may be necessary. First Playoff is a necessity between the Premier (North/South), the follow up playoff may not be necessary and will be communicated, as necessary.

Signs so far are the scores are likely to hit the threshold for us to continue with the expansion paper.

6. Scope to add first aid risk assessment on BUCS Play – VC

NB: In terms of ability to upload something to BUCS Play, there currently is not any capability, but it could be included as part of the pre-existing discussions to attach to fixtures onto BUCS Play.

AD: Due to REG 9.3.1 a lot of teams presume that they do not need a first aider as it will be provided by the home institution.

NB: There is a difficulty in applying one level of first aid across sports as they all set different standards of what is required and then there is the difference between requirements and guidance. Something that we need to pick up separately away from NCG initially.

Action: AD/NB/HW – To pick up and discuss further the issue.

7. Is there an update on Taekwondo? -VC

NB: We are now in conversations with British Taekwondo (the NGB) about moving forward with a competition next season. Should expect to see a paper on the delivery of the taekwondo event next year coming as a paper – or may be engaged earlier if feedback is needed on direction of how to take the event forward.

8. Senior manager engagement – AD

AD: Senior Managers network was prompted in terms of tracker feedback. Requested any feedback on the tracker from an institution level but have not heard much back.

AR: We have seen an increase through the seen and noted addition, but something I will review over the summer is feedback completion.

9. How NCG papers are shared – HU

HU: Currently papers are attached to the email that is sent out. Moving forward it might be better to move towards attaching a link to a SharePoint which is also linked in the tracker, to keep everything in one accessible resource. Hoping for some feedback on the best route forward to support making it easier to access and read all the papers.

CP: Most IAs will get the email from myself and then, generally, forward it on to the relevant club, or on to all clubs. If a SharePoint can help alleviate issues with distributing papers its worth a go.

FH: Adding a link to the SharePoint at the top of the papers would be helpful.

HU: For next meeting we will include them as attached hard copies but will also explore using the SharePoint as a work in progress.

10. Location for Meeting 4 – AR

Action: REPS - Deadline to submit rules and regulations is coming up so REPS please push that.

Action: REPS - Tuesday 2nd June in Person meeting is there anyone able to host the NCG Please Email AR and HU.

Dates and times of remaining meetings for 2025-26 season.

Meeting 4 – Tuesday 02 June (In Person location TBC) – 10:00 – 15:00

Meeting 5 – Tuesday 14 July – 10:00 – 15:00

Competitions Group Feedback Tracker