

February 2026



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We hope the second half of the season is well underway and that 2026 is off to a positive start across your football and futsal programmes. Thank you again to all institutions who completed Reporting Window 1 in January. As we move into February, we're sharing a number of important updates across accreditation, staffing changes within the Football Development team, Emerging Club Leaders opportunities, BUCS Play expansion and key dates for Network Day and Awards. With Network Day & Awards approaching in May and nominations for the awards opening this month, this is an important period for planning, recognition and strengthening delivery across the network. We encourage you to review the updates below and share relevant opportunities within your teams and student communities.

#### **UPDATES:**

- 1. [BUCS Football Accreditation Reporting Window 1](#)**
  - 2. [BUCS Football Development Team Staff Changes](#)**
  - 3. [BUCS Emerging Club Leaders - 2026/27 Briefing Call](#)**
  - 4. [BUCS Play: Turn Up and Play Football and Futsal Sessions](#)**
  - 5. [BUCS Football Development Network Day 2026](#)**
  - 6. [BUCS Football & Futsal Awards 2025/26: Nominations Opening Next Week](#)**
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#### **[BUCS Football Accreditation Reporting Window 1](#)**

Thank you to all Universities who completed their reporting throughout January. We are in the process of resolving an issue on the portal, which means all accreditation ratings are currently displaying lower than universities would likely expect. This will be resolved in the coming days and we will inform you when to check the portal for your correct star rating.

The second reporting window will open late March and will finalise your star rating for the 2025/26 season. If you would like to book in a call to discuss how you can improve your star rating, please contact Sean Lofting on [sean.lofting@bucs.org.uk](mailto:sean.lofting@bucs.org.uk).

#### **[BUCS Football Development Team Staff Changes](#)**

From March, there will be some changes to the BUCS Football Development Team. Unfortunately, Dan Matthews (Senior Football Development Manager) will be leaving the team to move across to BUCS' Commercial Team. Dan has led the team through a period of exceptional growth, setting out BUCS' plans for delivery of The FA's 2024-2028 strategy within Higher Education and we wish him all the best in his new role. The team will now restructure, with Sean Lofting (Football Development Manager)

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overseeing the team that will include two Football Development Officers and a Football Development Assistant. These changes will come into effect from Friday 13<sup>th</sup> March.

We can announce that the first vacant Football Development Officer role has been recruited for. We will be welcoming **Beth Edwards**, currently at Wiltshire FA, to our team in March and will introduce her fully to the network in our next update once she has started. Beth will coordinate the Women's Leadership Programme, Club Committee Leaders events and support other areas of Football Development delivery.

There is currently another vacant Football Development Role which is live for applications until **Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026**. This role will focus on coordinating the Emerging Club Leaders Programme, Referee Development Hubs and BUCS Football Accreditation. Please see the job advert below for more information, and contact [Sean.Lofting@Bucs.org.uk](mailto:Sean.Lofting@Bucs.org.uk) if you have any questions regarding the role.

[BUCS Football Development Officer Job Advert](#)

### **[BUCS Emerging Club Leaders - 2026/27 Briefing Call](#)**

BUCS Emerging Club Leaders aims to make volunteering in Football a viable pathway for development for young people at university in off-pitch roles to drive the growth of community clubs.

This programme has 2 core elements:

- Placement at National League System (Step 2-6) or Women's National League (Tier 3-4) club in 1 of 6 roles
- Learning & Development Programme delivered by industry experts with both online and in-person CPD to support student's personal development

This programme is needed to provide a high standard of placement experience for students, universities and clubs. A key aspect of the programme is providing a consistent experience for all, no matter what club or part of the country the placement is taking place in. Delivery from trusted partners in The FA and BUCS plus the support, monitoring and evaluation ensure that all parties benefit from the programme.

BUCS will be hosting a briefing call on **Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> March** at **4pm** for universities and County FAs interested in being part of the programme for the 2026/27 season. Please share with relevant sports department staff, placement coordinators and course leads in academic departments for degrees such

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as Sport Media, Sport Development, Sport Management or non-sport degrees related to these themes.

### [BUCS Emerging Club Leaders Briefing Call Registration](#)

To find out more information about the programme, please visit the [BUCS Website](#) or contact Sean.Lofting@Bucs.org.uk.

### [New Accredited University - University of East London](#)

We are delighted to welcome a new Accredited University to our network, University of East London. They become our 93rd Accredited University and we look forward to supporting the team in growing their participation and workforce offer within Football and Futsal.

### [BUCS Play: Turn Up and Play Football and Futsal Sessions](#)

BUCS continues to expand its recreational football offer on BUCS Play, with Turn Up and Play football and futsal now available to universities across the network. This provides institutions with a simple, flexible way to offer low-commitment football opportunities for students who may not be part of traditional club or league structures, helping to grow participation, widen access and strengthen your overall football pathway.

The platform is **completely free for universities** to use, with BUCS covering the licence costs, making it an accessible option for institutions of all sizes. It is also **fully compatible with Intramural Sport (IMS)** delivery, meaning universities already running IMS through BUCS Play can easily add Turn Up and Play sessions alongside their existing programmes, creating a more connected and visible football offer on campus. BUCS will support you through every stage of setup, including configuring your system, providing training, and sharing best-practice guidance on how to promote and run sessions effectively.

Whether you have a large recreational programme or are just getting started, BUCS Play offers a simple way to capture data, manage registrations and demonstrate the impact of your football provision. If you would like to explore how Turn Up and Play football and futsal could work at your university, or if you would like support getting set up, please contact Alai Ayyakannu on [Alai.Ayyakannu@bucs.org.uk](mailto:Alai.Ayyakannu@bucs.org.uk) to arrange a conversation and next steps.

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### **[BUCS Football Development Network Day 2026](#)**

Football Accreditation Leads & Staff are invited to attend the 2026 BUCS Football Development Network Day, taking place on **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2026 at The Slate, University of Warwick.**

This annual event brings together universities from across the country to connect, collaborate and share best practice across the HE football and futsal landscape. The Network Day provides an important opportunity to reflect on progress across the sector, align on strategic priorities and strengthen collaboration between universities and partners and we look forward to welcoming you to Warwick in May.

**Event registrations will open on 16<sup>th</sup> March 2026.**

Please reach out to [Sean Lofting](#)/ [Alai Ayyakannu](#) if you have any questions.

### **[BUCS Football & Futsal Awards 2025/26: Nominations Opening Next Week](#)**

The BUCS Football & Futsal Awards will once again celebrate the incredible work delivered by Accredited Universities throughout the 2025/26 season. The awards recognise excellence across participation, workforce development, leadership, inclusion and innovation within university football and futsal.

**New for this year**, we are introducing a dedicated award category for **Football and Futsal Club Committees**, recognising the impact, creativity and leadership demonstrated by student committee teams across the network.

**Award nominations will open on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2026.**

We encourage institutions to begin identifying individuals, initiatives and committees who deserve national recognition and celebration at this year's ceremony.

Please reach out to [Sean Lofting](#)/ [Alai Ayyakannu](#) if you have any questions.

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