

BUCS BIG WEDNESDAY

2028-31

HOSTING MANUAL



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1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction

British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS) is pleased to invite collaborative proposals from member institutions to host BUCS Big Wednesday for the period 2028 – 2031.

BUCS Big Wednesday is the culmination of the BUCS league and knockout programme and one of the pinnacle events in the annual BUCS calendar. The league programme consists of over 25,000 fixtures played across approximately 825 leagues in 24 sports between October and March, with around 80,000 unique participants – making it the biggest student sporting programme in Europe.

The successful bidder will be appointed the designated host venue for the event, with BUCS retaining overall administrative and operational responsibility through its executive team.

This document, along with the accompanying attachments, outlines the minimum bid specifications and provides essential background information to support the development of an innovative, dynamic, and inclusive bid proposal.

About BUCS

British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS) is the leading national organisation for higher education sport in the United Kingdom. BUCS supports over 150 member institutions across Great Britain and Northern Ireland, facilitating a wide-ranging programme of competitions and events.

Our mission is to embed sport and active wellbeing at the heart of the student experience. This is underpinned by our organisational values of being inclusive, innovative, respectful and dynamic. In line with our ambition to deliver exceptional student sporting experiences that inspire, develop and unite, BUCS Big Wednesday plays an essential role in achieving this, providing a platform to strive towards our goal of supporting over 1 million students to be active each year by 2030.

A link to the 2023-2030 BUCS Strategy document can be found [here](#).

BUCS Big Wednesday: Overview

BUCS is now seeking to appoint a host partner for BUCS Big Wednesday 2028–2031. This presents a unique opportunity for institutions to showcase their commitment to student sport, community engagement, and major event delivery.

The objective of the event is to ensure that those students competing at the pinnacle of the BUCS Wednesday afternoon programme are rewarded with an experience that reflects the outstanding achievement of competing at this level.

The host of BUCS Big Wednesday has the opportunity to showcase their facilities to the best student sports teams from across the country, with the chance to promote their institution both nationally and internationally to prospective students and host staff from key sporting universities. There were over 120,000 views across 30 live stream broadcasts in 2026, the event hit over 3.5 million social media impressions during the event.

The event aims to accommodate 12-16 team sports at National Championship, Trophy and Vase level. The 2026 event saw 60 fixtures take place in total across 16 sports. The final number of sports that will make up any BUCS Big Wednesday event will vary and is dependent on the facilities of the host and the quality of bid put forward. The sporting programme will be reviewed annually by BUCS, where BUCS reserves the right to amend the programme and add or remove sports as required.

The preference is for all fixtures to take place on the Wednesday, however innovative ways in which to extend the finals across Tuesday as well will be considered. For example, the host must be able to hold National Championship, Trophy and Vase competition and we will work with the host to best fit the timetable to their facilities whilst ensuring the sports are showcased as much as possible.

In addition to elevating the profile of your institution within the sector, hosting BUCS Big Wednesday provides the chance to showcase the breadth of your facilities, increase the visibility of your university amongst our commercial partners and offer invaluable work experience for local students and staff at one of the largest multi-sport events in the university calendar.

Hosting can also bring a performance advantage through home support and local facilities, while simultaneously showcasing programmes and infrastructure to future student athletes. Taken together, these contribute to generating economic value across the wider geographical area for both the university and its partners.

The selected host will enter a partnership with BUCS, taking on the role of designated host venue for the event period. While the event's administration and oversight will remain under the authority of the BUCS executive, the host will play a critical role in the planning, resourcing, and delivery of the event experience.

The upcoming dates of the event for this tender period are:

22 March 2028

21 March 2029

27 March 2030

26 March 2031

Please note, the venue is required for the full event period, including build phase and de rig and must not host any conflicting events during this time (anticipated to be a phased build from Sunday prior to the event, and derig complete on Thursday post event). In addition, all competition pitches and playing surfaces must be free from fixtures and appropriately rested for an agreed period prior to the event to ensure they can be prepared and presented to the required standard for competition.

2. SPORT INFORMATION AND EVENT FORMAT/STRUCTURE

The event should be hosted across as few venues as possible, ideally within close proximity, to create a unified event atmosphere and enable spectators to easily access multiple sports.

Once a host has been confirmed, BUCS will review the available facilities and develop a fixture schedule that makes the best use of the venues.

The table below details all sports and fixtures that were part of the event in 2026. BUCS recognises that it may not be feasible for a single venue or venue cluster to accommodate every final. Bidding institutions should therefore specify which sports they are able to host.

Sport	Gender	Level	Warm up	Fixture Start
American Football*	Open	Trophy	09:00	10:30
American Football*	Open	Vase	12:30	14:00
American Football*	Open	Champ	17:30	19:00
Badminton	Open	Trophy	08:30	09:30
Badminton	Female	Champ	08:30	09:30
Badminton	Open	Champ	14:00	15:00
Badminton	Female	Trophy	14:00	15:00
Basketball	Women	Trophy	09:00	09:30
Basketball	Men	Trophy	11:30	12:00
Basketball	Women	Champ	16:30	17:00
Basketball	Men	Champ	19:00	19:30
Fencing	Mixed	Trophy	10:30	11:00
Fencing	Female	Trophy	10:30	11:00
Fencing	Mixed	Champ	14:00	14:30
Fencing	Female	Champ	14:00	14:30
Football	Men	Trophy	09:00	10:00
Football	Women	Trophy	12:30	13:30
Football	Men	Champ	15:30	16:30
Football	Women	Champ	18:45	19:45
Hockey	Female	Vase	09:30	10:00
Hockey	Open	Vase	11:45	12:15
Hockey	Open	Trophy	13:00	13:30
Hockey	Female	Champ	14:00	14:30
Hockey	Open	Champ	17:00	17:30
Hockey	Female	Trophy	10:00	10:30
Lacrosse	Women	Trophy	09:30	10:00
Lacrosse	Men	Trophy	12:00	12:30
Lacrosse	Women	Champ	16:00	16:30
Lacrosse	Men	Champ	18:45	19:15
Netball	Female	Trophy	13:30	14:00
Netball	Female	Champ	16:00	16:30
Rugby League	Men	Trophy	14:30	15:00
Rugby League	Men	Champ	17:00	17:45
Rugby Union	Women	Trophy	10:00	11:00
Rugby Union	Women	Vase	10:00	11:00

Rugby Union	Men	Trophy	13:30	14:30
Rugby Union	Men	Vase	13:30	14:30
Squash	Male	Trophy	10:30	11:00
Squash	Female	Trophy	10:30	11:00
Squash	Male	Champ	12:30	13:00
Squash	Female	Champ	15:00	15:30
Table Tennis	Men	Trophy	08:00	09:00
Table Tennis	Women	Trophy	11:00	12:00
Table Tennis	Women	Champ	11:00	12:00
Table Tennis	Men	Champ	13:00	14:00
Tennis	Women	Trophy	08:00	08:30
Tennis	Men	Vase	08:00	08:30
Tennis	Men	Trophy	10:00	10:30
Tennis	Women	Champ	12:30	13:30
Tennis	Men	Champ	12:30	15:30
Tennis	Women	Vase	14:30	15:30
Volleyball	Male	Trophy	09:00	09:30
Volleyball	Female	Trophy	11:30	12:00
Volleyball	Male	Champ	17:00	17:30
Volleyball	Female	Champ	19:30	20:00
Water Polo	Open	Trophy	11:15	11:45
Water Polo	Female	Trophy	12:45	13:15
Water Polo	Open	Champ	14:45	15:15
Water Polo	Female	Champ	16:15	16:45
Wheelchair Basketball	Open	Champ	14:00	14:30

**Denotes the fixture took place on the Tuesday*

Sport Specifications

The sport specifications provided within this tender are intended to act as a **guide to the requirements for each sport** and should be used by bidders to inform their assessment of the facilities, operational requirements and proposed event delivery model.

Detailed sport-by-sport specifications are provided in Appendix 1. These outline the anticipated requirements for each sport, including relevant facility, equipment, capacity and operational considerations.

Bidders should review the specifications in full and demonstrate how their proposed facilities and event delivery approach can accommodate the requirements outlined. BUCS recognises that some requirements may need to be adapted to reflect the specific facilities and opportunities available at the Host Institution, and these can be discussed and agreed with BUCS as part of the planning process.

3. ESSENTIAL ANCILLARY REQUIREMENTS

In addition to the sporting technical requirements, the below ancillary requirements must be met. Appendix 2 should be completed to detail provision in these areas.

Requirement	Details
Ground Floor Storage	- Large ground floor storage space within or in close proximity to one of the main venues - Accessible for drop-off with vehicle access. - To be made available from Sunday prior to event, through to the completion of de-rig - Approximately 10m x 10m space
Team Changing Rooms	- Sufficient changing provision to allocate each team a specific changing room with access from 2 hours before and around 1 hour after match time - As a guide 40 changing rooms were provided for 120 teams in 2026
Officials Changing Rooms	- Separate changing areas for officials in close proximity to the competition areas. - As a guide nine changing rooms were provided for officials in 2026
Team Registration Area	- Each venue should have provide a suitable location for a registration desk - The designated area should be capable of accommodating participant and spectator queuing in a safe and efficient manner - Indoor spaces are preferred where available, however temporary outdoor structures will also be considered
Media Room	- Centrally located in and amongst key venues, ideally near or overlooking the field of play. - May require multiple rooms across sites. - Needs tables, chairs, power, and high-bandwidth internet. - Capacity requirements: Approx. 20 (boardroom)
Catering & Water	- Competitor food (sit-down & takeaway, athlete-appropriate, dietary options) - Hot food catering for ~220 BUCS staff/volunteers daily (coordinated with BUCS) - Spectator catering close to sports area (healthy food, hot/cold drinks, managed alcohol) - Water fountains throughout venue(s)
WiFi/Internet	- High-speed WiFi is expected. - Hard-wired connections preferred. - A private network for BUCS staff is ideal.
Live Streaming	Facilities and infrastructure should support live streaming (details to be determined).
Sustainability	Venue should show environmental initiatives which support those that are detailed in Sport England's Every Move Strategy.
VIP Hosting	Provision should be made for potential VIP hosting facilities, with detailed requirements and specification to be confirmed at a later stage. Examples include stakeholder networking and hospitality, hosting of Directors of Sport, sponsor and partner engagement and a reception for invited guests.
Spectator Facilities	- Provision for up to 5,000 ticket sales across the event - Catering & refreshments - Toilet provision – male, female, gender neutral, accessible - Live results/screens - Parking, public transport, and spectator routes - In-venue screens/multimedia platforms for event messaging
Sponsor Activation	- BUCS will be able to exploit the venues for its own commercial gain - BUCS would reserve the right to brand the athlete area (field of play) at venues and agreed areas outside the venues and public domain areas with a mix of BUCS and BUCS partner branding.
Accommodation	- Up to 200 low-cost hotel rooms for staff/officials near venue(s) - Any preferred hotel rates should be shared - Competitor accommodation not required, but venue can suggest options for BUCS to publicise
Parking	Sufficient parking must be available for spectators, competitors and workforce

	• Free parking should be provided for competitors • A dedicated coach drop-off and pick-up is essential • Onsite or nearby coach parking is desirable • Accessible parking must be available, with an appropriate number of designated disabled bays located as close as possible to key event venues
Security	• Appropriate security measures to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all participants, officials, workforce, volunteers, spectators throughout the event • A security and crowd management plan must be developed and agreed with BUCS in advance of the event • Staffing levels, deployment locations, operating hours and areas requiring dedicated security coverage will be determined jointly by BUCS and the venue based on the event format, capacities and risk assessment.
Inclusivity	• Gender-neutral changing facilities • Multi-faith and quiet space • Full accessibility at all venues is essential
Risk Management	All of the above should be underpinned with appropriate risk management processes, including: • compliance with national and local health and safety regulations • compliance with relevant legislation, including the requirements of the Terrorism Act 2025 (Martyn's Law), where applicable • medical provision • emergency evacuation procedures • safeguarding policies and processes • contingency planning • traffic management plans • inclement weather plans • security plans • insurance coverage The above plans should be incorporated into the bidding document.

4. VOLUNTEERING PROVISION

BUCS' vision for this event is to deliver the pinnacle of student sport within outstanding university sporting facilities, supported by a high-quality, engaged and well coordinated student workforce. A strong partnership between BUCS and the host institution will be integral to achieving this ambition.

The Host Institution will be expected to work collaboratively with BUCS to establish and deliver the volunteer workforce required to support the event. This may involve developing a new volunteer workforce or integrating BUCS Big Wednesday into an existing institutional volunteering programme.

A minimum of 100 volunteers per event day will be required to ensure the event is delivered to the required standard. The volunteer workforce will support a range of sport specific, operational and spectator facing roles across the event, including sport specific volunteers, event assistants for field of play areas, and operational support across sporting venues. These roles will be critical in delivering a safe, efficient and high-quality experience for athletes, spectators and event stakeholders.

Host Institution Responsibilities

The Host Institution will be responsible for:

- Appointing a dedicated member of staff to lead the volunteer programme, acting as the key point of contact between the Host Institution and BUCS.
- Leading the recruitment, onboarding, training and deployment of a minimum of 100 student volunteers per event day, in collaboration with BUCS.
- Ensuring the designated volunteer lead is available to attend the BUCS volunteer training day and is present throughout the event to oversee volunteer coordination.
- Providing appropriate staff support at each sport hub to coordinate and support volunteers during the event.
- Working with BUCS to develop appropriate volunteer roles, structures, training and deployment plans.
- Ensuring volunteers receive appropriate information, training and briefing to enable them to fulfil their roles effectively.
- Establishing clear communication channels with volunteers before and during the event.
- Supporting volunteer engagement, recognition and feedback following the event.

Institutional Collaboration

The successful delivery of the volunteer workforce will require engagement across the Host Institution. Bidders should demonstrate how they will engage relevant internal departments, teams and student groups to maximise recruitment opportunities and provide a high-quality volunteer experience.

Previous successful partnerships have involved collaboration with:

- University Sport / Sport and Physical Activity Department
- Students' Union
- Student sports clubs, particularly those representing sports included within BUCS Big Wednesday
- University volunteering programme leads
- Student media and communications teams
- Employability / Careers teams
- Academic staff and course leaders from relevant degree programmes, including Event Management, Sport Management, Media and other sport-related disciplines

Bidders should outline their proposed approach to establishing these partnerships, including how they will utilise existing student networks, volunteering programmes and academic opportunities to recruit and engage the required workforce.

BUCS will work closely with the successful Host Institution throughout the planning and delivery process, providing guidance, role requirements and event-specific information to support the development of an effective volunteer programme.

5. COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND BUCS RIGHTS

Marketing

It is required that the host would work in conjunction with the BUCS Marketing and Commercial team to help facilitate communications in advance and during the event and ensure the delivery of any sponsorship activation programmes.

This could include, but is not limited to:

- Local marketing to generate spectator interest
- Media engagement
- A joint launch plan in local and national press
- Ticket sales (if appropriate)
- Access to key alumni/relevant sporting personalities of local universities
- Student media support

Bids should demonstrate support from the most relevant department/staff member within the host partnership group to work with the BUCS Marketing and Commercial team.

Live Streaming

BUCS is the owner of all rights to the broadcast and/or live streaming of BUCS Big Wednesday but welcomes the support of the host to deliver the production. BUCS will manage all production requirements including management of third-party production provider.

Branding

BUCS would reserve the right to brand the athlete area (field of play) at venues and agreed areas outside the venues and public domain areas with a mix of BUCS and BUCS partner branding.

For host venue branding (that does not contain branding of commercial partners) BUCS would agree with the host appropriate levels of branding and is keen to recognise through a suitable branding plan the partnership between the host and BUCS. BUCS would reserve the right to have any conflicting venue partner branding pitch/court side removed.

Ticketing

Ticketing for the event will be managed and controlled by BUCS, with 100% of ticketing revenue retained by BUCS.

BUCS will work collaboratively with the Host Institution to develop an appropriate ticketing plan for the event. This will include assessing the suitability and capacity of individual venues and determining which sports should be ticketed, taking into consideration venue capacity, spectator demand, operational requirements and the overall event experience.

The Host Institution will be expected to provide BUCS with relevant venue and facility information to support the development of the ticketing strategy, including:

- Venue and spectator capacities
- Seating and standing arrangements
- Venue access and egress arrangements
- Spectator flow and segregation requirements
- Any venue-specific ticketing restrictions or operational considerations
- Available facilities and infrastructure to support ticketed spectators

The final ticketing strategy, including ticket prices, ticket allocations and which sports or sessions are ticketed, will be agreed and managed by BUCS in consultation with the Host Institution.

Commercial Rights

BUCS owns the rights to commercially exploit BUCS Big Wednesday. This includes sponsorship, branding, merchandise sales, photography, advertising and value in kind promotions and product. BUCS will work to secure additional funding to cover costs and enhance the student experience at the event through leveraging these rights and delivering event-based activity.

BUCS will provide a list of its commercial partners and their activations prior to the start of the event.

As this is a BUCS event the hosts, venues and university may not enter into any commercial agreement surrounding this event without the prior written consent of BUCS. For the avoidance of doubt this includes any merchandise, third party retailers, data capture, marketing activity and advertising or event/social activity.

If you have any questions regarding the commercial rights or partners that have attended the event previously please let us know.

BUCS Rights

BUCS reserve the full rights to the BUCS Big Wednesday event and will act in the best interest of the event and our member institutions at all times.

All potential partners will accept that, during the final season of the agreement (2030-2031 season), BUCS will publicly re-tender the event at a time set by BUCS.

6. INFORMATION ON BIDDING

BUCS invites collaborative bids led by universities but is open to collaborative bids between universities and external partners / stakeholders. Hosts must demonstrate:

- 1) Experience of managing and hosting sporting events across multi-site venues
- 2) Ability to source a volunteer workforce
- 3) Financial support for the event, Eg. reduced or free venue hire, staff resource and other VIK suggestions
- 4) Experience of working collaboratively with stakeholders to host and deliver large sports events

The bid should include and make detailed reference to all the following:

Event Delivery and Facilities

- How the facilities meet and/or exceed the requirements
- Facility location map
- Previous event hosting experience
- Designated staff leads and contacts for venue management and delivery
- Details of catering provision across all venues, including capacity, cost, operating hours, and options available for participants, officials, volunteers and spectators
- Details of venue and event security arrangements, including staffing and compliance with relevant safety and security legislation
- Details of parking provision along with any traffic management measures in place

Finance and Business

- Detailed financial overview including costs associated with venue hire, catering, accommodation staffing, and all other relevant costs attributed to delivery.
- Detail of any reduced costs, VIK given.
- Any current commercial partners the host works with that are relevant to the bid
- Details of any proposed VIP hosting, to add value to the BUCS membership

Volunteer and Staff Management

- Access to volunteers and a collaborative approach to recruit between 100-150 volunteers for sport and event management based roles
- Details of additional support e.g. volunteering, media, marketing, live streaming etc.

Working with BUCS

- Why the host wishes to host this event and work with BUCS
- Any additional support the host wishes to provide
- Details of any existing partnerships with National Governing Bodies (NGBs) and how these could support the delivery and enhancement of the Big Wednesday event experience

Phase 1

An optional meeting slot will be held for potential hosts on Thursday 8 October to ask queries before submitting final proposals.

Phase 2

Bid Submissions compiled by hosts and sent to BUCS Executive Sunday 29 November 2026. Bids should be submitted in a format and template of the bidder's choosing. Submissions must clearly demonstrate how the proposed venue meets the general specifications and the sport specific specifications, providing sufficient detail and supporting evidence where appropriate. Bids need to be submitted to Alice Wilkie – BUCS Head of Event Operations (alice.wilkie@bucs.org.uk) by the deadline detailed below.

Phase 3

Shortlisting will happen amongst the BUCS Executive, with all bidders contacted by the end of this window to inform of the intent to progress to the next phase, or to inform that the application will not be progressed any further.

Phase 4

A site visit window is planned in January 2027

Phase 5

After the conclusion of the site visits, a decision is expected by the end of March 2027.

7. TIMELINES FOR BIDDING

Friday 28 August 2026	Bid Questionnaire available to complete
Thursday 8 October 2026	Bookable slots to meet BUCS Executive
Sunday 29 November 2026	Deadline for submission of Bid Questionnaire
Monday 30 November – Wednesday 23 December 2026	Shortlisting window – all bidders contacted by Wednesday 23 December 2026
January 2027	Site Visit window
March 2027	Host venue announced