

TOUCH RUGBY SPORT REVIEW PROPOSAL

PREPARED BY JACK HARRIS (ETA) | 5 JULY 2021

CYCLE THREE



Executive Summary	3
Introduction	4
Our Vision for Touch in Universities	4
Touch Rugby: An Overview	5
The University National Touch Series (Uni NTS)	5
Operations and Funding	6
Athlete Data	6
The Uni NTS in Pictures	7
Purpose	9
Student Athlete Types	9
The Benefits	9
Strategic Alignment	10
Inter University Sport	10
Performance Sport	10
Social & Recreational Sport	10
Professional & Workforce Development	11
Equality, Diversity & Inclusion	11
University Admissions & Offer of Touch	12
Consultation & Support	13
Scale	13
Member Engagement	13
Future Growth	13
Working across the UK	13
Resource Implications	14
BUCS Resource Implications	14
Institute and Athlete Resource Implications	14
Wider Impact Assessment	15
Pathways & Competitions	15



“The Rugby Family”	15
BUCS Compliance & Governance	15
Match Officials	15
Sustainability & Funding	16
Diversity & Inclusion	16
Key Performance Indicators	17
First Year Targets	17
Medium Term (3 Year) Targets	17
Conclusion	17
Appendices	17
The England Touch Association	18
Federation of International Touch	19
Touch Club Data	20
Student Athlete Surveying	21



Executive Summary

Touch Rugby, known as “Touch”, is already extensively played in and between Universities across England, Scotland and Wales, with plans for growth in Northern Ireland. As the governing body for the sport in England, the England Touch Association (ETA) has identified universities as one of the core areas of growth in our 10 year vision. We believe that by adopting Touch into the BUCS student program, we can provide an inclusive sport for students of all backgrounds and abilities.

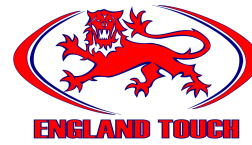
We have a vision for Touch being played in universities across all athlete types, from a throw around in the park, to an established intra-mural game and a competitive and successful BUCS sport. We also see Touch as a student performance sport, with the ETA offering a specific England Scholars squad as part of our High Performance Pathway.

The University National Touch Series (Uni NTS) is the ETA’s premier, inter-university Touch Rugby competition that we wish to see become part of the BUCS student sport program. In doing so, this will help further grow participation in Touch from the 1,000 athletes across 27 institutions that are expected to participate this coming year, to over 10,000 athletes having the opportunity to play in any university they attend by 2025.

The ETA have managed the Uni NTS successfully since its inception in 2014 and have supported many universities in setting up a Touch club. BUCS have an excellent opportunity to adopt a highly competitive sport into their program that is not only extremely inclusive but also caters for athletes from all type categories.

The Uni NTS is already closely aligned to BUCS programs with little to no extra resources required to adopt the sport officially. The experience that student athletes receive is likely to improve with little financial impact to them and member institutions who are already sending teams to Uni NTS events. Nearly all participating athletes want to see Touch become part of the BUCS offer knowing it will increase competition and enhance their student experience.

Following consultation and engagement within the BUCS Sport Review framework, the ETA have developed this Sport Review Proposal and our own 2021-22 University National Touch Series hoping that it can become part of the full BUCS sporting programme in 2022-23.



Introduction

The University National Touch Series (Uni NTS) is an energetic inter-university Touch Rugby competition program delivered by the England Touch Association (ETA), the governing body for Touch Rugby in England. The ETA has managed the Uni NTS since the series introduction in 2014 and has provided support services to universities, UK wide, who have founded and developed Touch Rugby clubs since. The Uni NTS has seen substantial growth recently, with the number of students and institutions participating doubling in 3 years. In 2019, nearly 800 athletes from 17 member institutions attended a Uni NTS event and a further 6 were due to take part in the 2020-21 season before the COVID-19 pandemic halted activities.

As a result of a successful and growing program, student participation in Touch has continued to flourish, with individual club training and local competition increasing. Several university clubs are also well connected within their local area, with many participating in local and regional competitions, outside of the university network.

Touch Rugby is one of the fastest growing sports in the United Kingdom because it is extremely social, non-contact based and easy to play. It is also one of the few team sports that is primarily played with mixed-gender teams which in turn creates a hugely beneficial, inclusive sporting environment. All Uni NTS events are single day event-based competitions open to mixed gender teams from BUCS member institutions.

The Uni NTS is immensely popular with student athletes and we pride ourselves on providing a series of outstanding events that cater for athletes within all student profile types. The series is sustainable at existing funding levels and has been developed to help offer the best experience for all students, with BUCS adoption in mind. Touch Rugby could be a huge asset to the BUCS student sport program with the opportunities and benefits it could provide to not only students but member institutions as well.

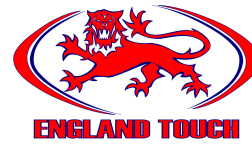
Our Vision for Touch in Universities

As the governing body for the sport in England, the ETA has identified universities as one of the core areas of growth in our 10 year vision. At the centre of our strategy is to make Touch a '*Sport for Life*', this will be achieved by focussing on sectors that reach across an athlete's playing career. We will:

- Introduce and embed into primary and secondary schools – from age 5 to 18
- Expand and increase participation in universities – from 18 to 25 (and beyond)
- Introduce as a workplace health and wellbeing activity – from 18 to 75
- Develop a structured social/park Touch model – from 5 to 75
- Engage and develop the club and league playing model – from 5 to 75

Touch is known as a sport for all; it is mixed gender and requires little specialist equipment and facilities making it accessible to athletes from all backgrounds. Touch is an excellent fit for university students due to its social and inclusive culture and continued growth in this sector is a crucial part of the ETA's plans.

Touch can provide the university sector with a mass participation game played by anyone, regardless of gender, age, ability, ethnicity, religion, race or other characteristics. From throwing a ball around with friends in the park, to representing the first team in the Uni NTS finals, we believe Touch can play a core part of the future for intra and inter university sport.



Touch Rugby: An Overview

Touch or Touch Rugby is an extremely fast, highly dynamic game that is played on a pitch 70m x 50m (roughly half of a standard Rugby Union pitch). The aim is for teams to score more tries than the opposition, however they have only six 'touches' to be able to advance and score. A touch is any contact on any part of the player made by an opposition player. Teams play with 6 players on the pitch but can have up to 8 substitutes in the interchange area. Interchanges are unlimited, can happen during active play and are common due to the fast-paced nature of the game. In the mixed gender form of the game, teams must have a minimum of 3 female and 1 male player on the pitch at any one time.

The University National Touch Series (Uni NTS)

Over the academic year, the Uni NTS currently comprises seven single day competitions. In the autumn semester, four regional qualifying events occur:

- Two for teams located in the Southern region
- Two for teams located in the Northern region

These competitions act as seeding events for the three national competitions that occur in the spring semester. Midland based venues are preferred to reduce the amount of travelling teams need to do.

Regional events currently have space for up to 16 teams, whilst national competitions host up to 32 teams. The national events separate teams into 4 divisions of 8 to improve competition levels as shown in Figure 1.

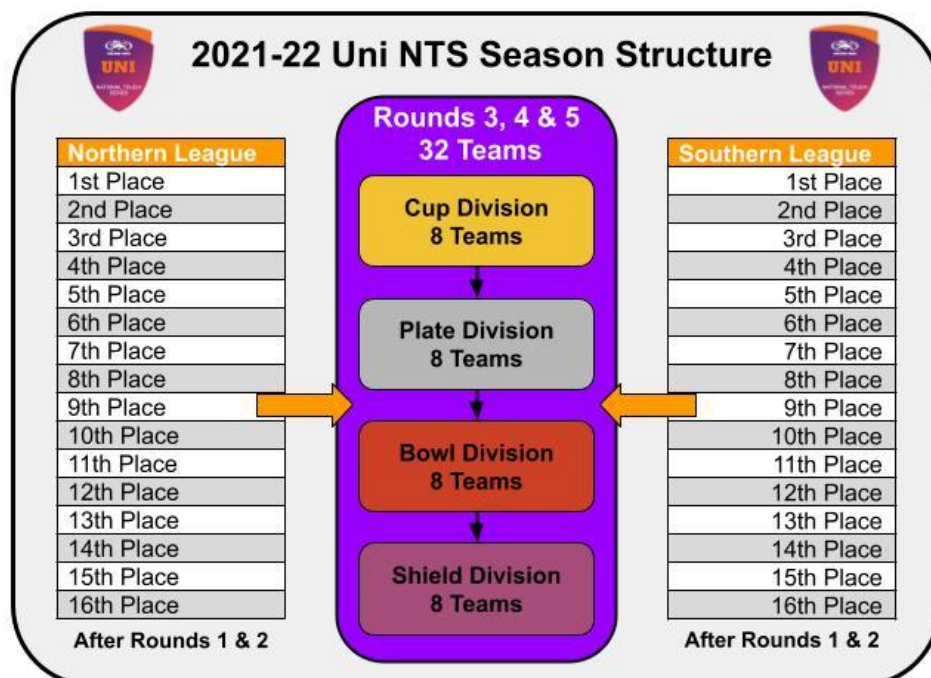
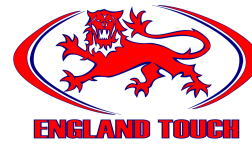


Figure 1 - The Uni NTS Series Structure:



Regional events commonly require two Rugby Union pitches worth of playing space including changing, warm up and welfare facilities. Preference will always be for artificial 3G and 4G surfaces to reduce surface condition issues related to weather in the November to February period. National events require at least four rugby union pitches worth of playing space.

Events follow a standard structure with pool games in the morning and knock-out games in the afternoon. Teams are ranked into pools of four teams before being seeded into knockout competitions based on their pool results. All teams will take part in 6 matches, equivalent to 120 minutes of game time.

NOTE: The ETA also hosts a social tournament for men's and women's teams at the beginning of the autumn semester which provides an opportunity for clubs to give new members a taste of what university-based Touch Rugby is all about. This currently sits outside of the proposed competition affiliation with BUCS.

Operations and Funding

The Uni NTS is self-sufficient at current funding levels. Events cost in the region of £2,500 to facilitate with the ETA managing these through its own workforce of largely voluntary staff. Club entry fees are typically £80 per team per event. Clubs must be affiliated to the ETA to participate with membership costing £80 per year. Individual players also require ETA membership at a cost of £5 per annum.

Very little equipment is required to run events, with the ETA owning or providing all equipment to help facilitate games. As part of the membership offer, the ETA provides insurance cover for all athletes and officials at events under our own policy which is monitored through our membership and event registration portal.

Athlete Data

The Uni NTS is a competition designed to cater for all athlete profile types. Of the athletes who took part in the 2019-20 Uni NTS season:

- One third fit Type 1
- One third fit Type 2
- One third fit Types 3, 4 & 5

Athletes in all categories have suggested they want to attend all events that they are able to throughout the season. Although playing at a more social level, it is obvious that even athletes fitting Type 1 enjoy competitions and start making them a priority outside of their studies.

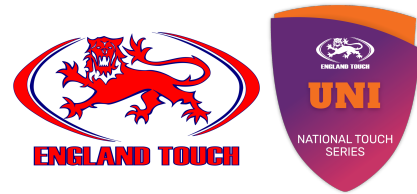
Other athlete data headlines:

- Nearly two thirds of our athletes had not played Touch Rugby before attending university
- Over 85% of students say they are likely or highly likely to continue to play Touch after graduating
- Over 50% say that without Touch it is unlikely that they would be playing sport at university
- Of all athletes in the 2018 England Open's Training Squads, 45% had played or were playing in the Uni NTS
- Nearly 95% want Touch Rugby to become a BUCS Sport

The Uni NTS in Pictures







Purpose

The ETA continues to receive requests from clubs and individual participants regarding the adoption of Touch Rugby within the BUCS sporting program. As shown in athlete feedback surveys in the Appendices, our athletes value the BUCS program massively and believe their student sport experience could be enhanced further with Touch Rugby's inclusion.

The ETA wants to continue to optimise the student athlete experience within Touch Rugby, across all athlete groups. Affiliating Touch Rugby into the BUCS program will create opportunities for development within new and existing clubs, in turn expanding the level of competition and quality of events. We also expect it to heighten the profile of university Touch, helping us to continue to focus on growth in participation across all educational sectors.

Student Athlete Types

Including the Uni NTS in the BUCS championship would provide an improved offer to nearly 1,000 athletes across all student athlete types as well as stimulating demand in existing and new establishments. Six newly formed clubs would have taken part in the Uni NTS in 2020-21 had it not been for the COVID-19 pandemic and a further four would have entered multiple teams for the first time.

The existing structure of the Uni NTS already caters for all athlete types, allowing teams and players to experience a mixture of opposition within regional qualifying tournaments whilst also then competing at an appropriate level of inter-university competition within the national competition tiers.

Students within Types 1 and 2 are willing to attend multiple competitions based on the ability the Uni NTS gives them to take part in an enjoyable, competitive environment without detracting from other commitments or study work. Students within Types 4 and 5 are further prioritising Uni NTS events knowing the level of competition provides a solid pathway to international and elite level programs.

The Benefits

Consultation with athletes and member institutions has indicated that the Uni NTS will be more highly valued and prioritised if it becomes part of the BUCS program. Institutions are more likely to offer state of the art facilities for use for Uni NTS events and further support the clubs with travel and logistics. We hope that adding Touch Rugby to the BUCS program will also increase student and staff awareness of our highly social, dynamic sport which could in turn increase levels of competition.

Member institutions will also gain heavily as a result of Touch Rugby's inherent nature. Touch Rugby would become one of very few mixed gender team sports within BUCS, presenting a more diverse sporting option for athletes who wish to play competitive sports. It can be expected that these factors would improve uptake and retention of athletes with data already suggesting that many athletes who play Touch would not be involved in university sport if it did not exist.

BUCS will benefit from adopting a self-sufficient program that introduces hundreds of athletes from nearly 30 institutions into the BUCS family. A continued administrative resource will be required to deliver the sport with the ETA as the franchised provider of an existing competition designed specifically with BUCS sport in mind.



Strategic Alignment

Inter University Sport

As part of the BUCS program, the Uni NTS would become a recognised, highly developed inter-university competition for athletes and clubs from across the UK. With 22 separate institutions having already taken part in a Uni NTS event since 2014, five of which now regularly enter multiple teams, athletes consider the Uni NTS as the premier competition to experience inter-university Touch Rugby. We already succeed in providing events which students enjoy and remember as a key part of their university experience.

Designed specifically to allow athletes from all type categories to excel in Touch, the Uni NTS strives to be an exemplary competition program that enables athletes to succeed. The tier structure ensures teams experience high levels of competition against opposition with similar priorities, whether that be competitively or socially.

Performance Sport

For performance athletes, the Uni NTS already provides a pathway into elite levels of the sport in the UK. This structured platform allows for the best players from the university circuit to develop and play together, increasing competition at the right level without significantly increasing costs for university players.

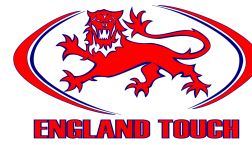
The pathway is based around an annual ETA organised tournament to compete with other international teams, following the end of the Uni NTS season. The England Scholars programme creates two single sex teams (a men's and women's squad; with the view to add additional mixed team(s) in future years). Talent identification takes place during the regional events for training squads to be selected ahead of Semester 2, with training sessions held on the Sunday following each of the national events. The programme is viewed as the steppingstone from Uni NTS into higher level Touch and the England High performance Touch Squads (HPTS), which are the teams that represent England in International competitions

The scholars programme and the Uni NTS are an established valuable pathway for the ETA with regard to high level players in type categories 1 and 2. This is shown by the representation of university players in the England Touch World Cup (TWC) squads. In 2018 there were 18 male athletes out of the initial 42 man squad that have played or are playing in the Uni NTS; 11 of whom played at the Touch World Cup. For the Women there were 19 players selected in the 38 women squad, 11 of whom played at the Touch World Cup. In the 2019 squads, 17 men were named in the 40 man squad, and 18 women in the 43 women squad. (These figures do not include additional players who previously played in the Uni NTS and have gained international caps for other nations international opens squads of which there are/have been several).

This higher-level competition also acts as a primary driving force to grow and develop the Uni NTS by allowing higher level coaching to distribute between all universities while maintaining an enjoyable but performance orientated environment. Forming part of the high-performance plan developing the pathway for new and existing players into the England high performance touch squads.

Social & Recreational Sport

Due to its nature, Touch can be played by almost anyone and picked up very quickly. In some parts of the world, friends playing Touch socially in a community space is as common as Football is which is testament to how accessible it is and does not come with the misconception that male and female athletes can't play together.



Our vision for Touch in universities is very much like that. For students to be able to get together with a few friends and exercise socially with a Touch ball in an open space. This is becoming more prevalent in the UK and will continue to grow as the profile and playing opportunities develop.

The next level of participation sees social teams and groups participate against one another in a local intra-university setting. This already exists in some universities where Touch is more established, and training takes on a more competitive setting, such as at Exeter, Bath and Loughborough. In 2018, Exeter University Touch club had around 300 registered members with social, intra-university games happening constantly.

We expect as the sport continues to grow that Touch becomes a core part of intra-mural programmes at those establishments that offer it, as well as continuing to offer a more social level of competition between universities in the Bowl and Shield tiers of the Uni NTS.

The Bowl and Shield tiers of national events provide suitable competitions for more social based teams. In 2019-20, a number of clubs took part in trials of these tiers. These clubs had initially formed to provide social Touch to athletes looking for a less-intensive sporting outlet and with the ability to play on an inter-university platform, the clubs saw an increase in participation with all of them expressing interest in attending again.

The ETA also works closely with O2 Touch, a franchise of the Rugby Football Union which was set up to encourage everyone to have a go at Touch. The franchise hosts many community leagues throughout England and a number of university clubs are O2 affiliated. In return, they receive funding to help get more students playing at a social level.

Professional & Workforce Development

Through the ETA, clubs have access to a multitude of resources that help develop leaders, coaches and officials. The ETA actively encourages clubs to send members on coaching and refereeing courses and as part of membership with us, receive discounted admission on to these.

With our guidance and support, club leaders are already actively trying to increase the awareness of Touch within their universities and recruit members. It's been amazing to see the number of athletes who had previously never played Touch succeed at the highest levels.

We are also starting to work with those institutions that offer teaching to introduce Touch into general primary PE and more specialist secondary PE training. Several teachers also play in local social leagues, particularly in London, Bristol, Thames Valley, Nottingham and Manchester.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

One of the ETA's values is that Touch is a sport for everyone, which is what we truly believe. Anyone can play Touch and we pride ourselves on creating environments where everyone feels comfortable to join in and isn't limited by social barriers.

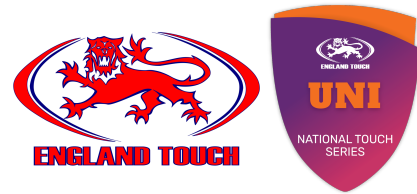
Being a mixed sport, it is evident that university Touch clubs already exhibit a level of inclusivity that few other sports achieve. A mixed gender environment creates a friendlier atmosphere and a number of institutions comment on the exemplary behaviour of their Touch clubs as a result.



What's more, in 2021 the ETA produced a comprehensive Transgender & Non-Binary Player Policy that clears the way for all persons to feel welcome in the Touch community. Persons of mixed or non-defined gender are welcome and able to play in all ETA competitions, including the Uni NTS, without need for definitions surrounding hormone levels or composition. This is something we are hugely proud of and believe would add massively to the BUCS program.

University Admissions & Offer of Touch

We are also receiving a number of enquiries from young athletes looking at higher education options. It is evident that there now exists a group of students who are likely to base their university choices on their offer of Touch Rugby. This is particularly prevalent for junior athletes who are representing their nations at international level.



Consultation & Support

Scale

Since 2014, 21 clubs from separate institutions have entered teams into the Uni NTS, with 5 of them entering multiple teams. In 2019-20 this amounted to over 800 athletes attending a Uni NTS event. As mentioned, there were a further six institutions looking to enter teams into the competition in 2020-21 before the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, this proposal currently affects 27 member institutions and approximately 1,000 athletes.

Member Engagement

Students have been directly consulted throughout the application process. Our athlete survey was completed by around 200 athletes with 95% wanting Touch Rugby to become a BUCS sport. When asking why this was, increasing levels of competition, access to better facilities and further support from institutions were common themes (as shown in the appendices).

The ETA have also consulted directly with member institutions regarding the affiliation of Touch Rugby; support has been very positive. Institutions have been extremely receptive to a sport that is not only extremely inclusive but also caters for all athlete type groups. There was significant support to keep events on Saturdays to reduce pressure on facilities on Wednesday afternoons but to also allow athletes who have interests in multiple sports to be able to play both if they wish to do so.

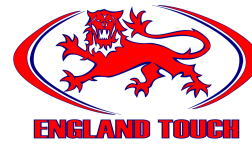
Future Growth

We currently retain the capacity to host up to 32 teams at a national competition. Growth can be achieved through creating further regional competitions and separating national events into 'elite' and 'development' tiers. Growing a single tournament above 32 teams is likely to be challenging due to the requirements of facilities and officials. However, the tiered system can continue to work with a hierarchy of regional qualifying and national tournament based competitions.

Working across the UK

Touch is an established sport in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland with the game governed by the Scottish Touch Association, Wales Touch Association and Ireland Touch Association respectively. Touch is widely played in Scottish and Welsh universities and a growing sport in Belfast. Cardiff, Cardiff Met and Edinburgh universities all take part in the Uni NTS.

The ETA works closely with our counterparts across the UK from both a high performance and participation perspective. Our work with the university sector already extends outside of England and we would expect this to continue into next year and beyond.



Resource Implications

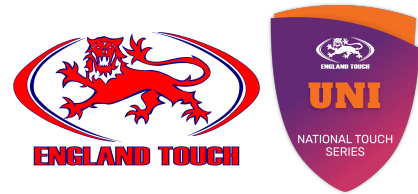
BUCS Resource Implications

Depending on what is agreed between BUCS and the ETA, resources required other than those for administration, entry management, handling enquiries and promotion, would be minimal. The ETA currently manages event entries and fees through its own membership portal. Finances can continue to be managed by the ETA as part of a franchised partnership with BUCS. Delivery of the Uni NTS has continued to be financially stable especially with the addition of more teams. Any profit made has always been re-invested to improve events further and this is something that we would want to continue doing in partnership with BUCS. No additional material or in kind resources would be needed from BUCS but support in accessing more suitable and superior facilities would potentially be sought.

Institute and Athlete Resource Implications

A significant majority of the clubs that enter teams into Uni NTS events are already part of their students/athletics unions so we foresee very little impact to resources as they are already receiving support. Any increase in admin support required is likely to be minimal and mainly constitute booking transport for events. Engagement with member institutions has shown that there is very little concern regarding the potential implications of Touch Rugby becoming BUCS affiliated due to the relative scale of clubs and events compared to that of other sports.

The financial impact to students is likely to remain neutral. It is our understanding that athletes at some institutions would have to pay more for BUCS club sport membership but this would then cover or subsidise costs that the athlete would've had to pay first hand anyway, such as for transport or accommodation. In fact, a number of athletes may end up paying less to attend events as costs may be covered further by institutions as a result of Touch Rugby becoming part of the BUCS program. Some institutions said that the likely cost impact to them would be minimal and something that they would be willing to support.



Wider Impact Assessment

Pathways & Competitions

Touch Rugby is traditionally a summer sport, with the main season for all national bodies occurring between April and August. As there is very little overlap of the Uni NTS with this time frame, we have not seen any overlapping impact, nor do we expect to see this in the future. In fact, a number of athletes go home for summer and join their local club to continue playing the summer season.

The high performance program provides one pathway into national and international training squads, but joining a local team and attending regional selection events also provides a separate pathway for athletes to play at more elite levels. Again due to very little overlap, athletes would be able to freely choose which pathway they take and does not limit their opportunities.

“The Rugby Family”

Touch Rugby is just one part of the “Rugby Family” of sports and the ETA works closely with other governing bodies including both the RFU and RFL to ensure we are providing a varied offer of sport that caters for all. Within universities, roughly one third of our current athletes are taking part in other BUCS sports, with roughly half of those students playing Rugby Union, Rugby League or Rugby Sevens. Our consultation has shown that many of these students enjoy the opportunities that all types of rugby provides. There are a lot of skills that each version can help develop for another. As a result, athletes have specifically requested that Touch remains a weekend event based competition so that fixtures do not clash with those on a Wednesday afternoon. This was echoed by institutions who want to give athletes opportunities to play a variety of sports without having to choose preferences because of training or fixture clashes.

Nationally we have seen huge growth in the number of people playing Touch. Many union and league clubs have actively adopted or created a Touch club to attract more members and players. In turn contributing to more sustainable models and increased use of their facilities. Having Tough Rugby as an option has allowed those who don't wish to continue to play contact sports to have a way of keeping active. We hope that this is a model that university clubs may begin to adopt to help complement their offer and retain more members.

BUCS Compliance & Governance

The ETA has developed the Uni NTS series with BUCS regulations in mind. In particular, Uni NTS eligibility is similar to, if not fully akin to BUCS Regulation 4. There may be an increase in enquiries on event entry and rules & regulations but this to be expected. The ETA will endeavour to work closely with BUCS to provide sufficient support to manage this.

Our wider governance is that of which you would expect of a national governing body. Whilst not yet recognised by Sport England, we have recently submitted our full application and given the uniqueness and inclusivity of Touch compared to other codes of rugby, we expect to be recognised later this year.

Match Officials

Up until this point, Uni NTS events have only been possible thanks to players offering to referee games when they are not playing. During the “off season”, getting hold of full time referees can be difficult but the ETA has recently introduced new initiatives to support clubs to develop match officials as we aim to have enough



officials available for events in the future. For national events, 50 officials are needed; we have only ever had a maximum of 30 full-time officials attend a Uni NTS event. New initiatives are helping to encourage university clubs to develop officials as well as players, with refereeing courses being offered more regularly and at a discounted rate.

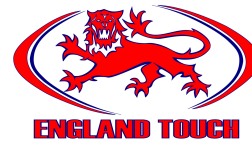
Sustainability & Funding

The Uni NTS has proven to be sustainable at existing funding levels for a number of years. The ETA is also well versed in providing top-quality events and has recently successfully helped to deliver elite level international tournaments such as the European Championships in 2019. Our track record of delivery could complement BUCS as this potential partnership grows. Over the coming years we are confident that growth from new participants will be sustainable through use of the national event tiering set-up.

Diversity & Inclusion

As previously mentioned, the ETA prides itself on how inclusive we are as a body and also how inclusive Touch is as a sport. The Uni NTS is specifically for mixed gender teams to improve the inclusivity of the competition. We believe this is something BUCS can adopt to complement their offer of mixed sport to student athletes. The series is open to transgender and non-binary athletes and caters for all type categories of athlete too. The wider impacts to BUCS regarding diversity and inclusion are only positive.

The ETA has both Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) and Transgender, Non-Binary and Gender Diverse Policies.



Key Performance Indicators

First Year Targets

Within the first season of being BUCS affiliated, we would like to succeed with the following targets:

1. Successful delivery of 4 regional events and 3 national events at suitable venues with appropriate facilities
2. To have a full competition of 32 teams at least one national event
3. Begin working with at least 5 new institutions looking to set up a Touch Rugby club and/or attend a Uni NTS event
4. Implement pathways and scouting opportunities that allow at least 20 players to be selected for regional or national training squads
5. Work with 5 established universities to help grow a social participation programme (such as Exeter, Loughborough, Durham or Bath.)

Medium Term (3 Year) Targets

Over a 3-year period, we hope to achieve the following:

1. Have all places at all competitions filled with teams.
2. Have created a number of venue partnerships with institutions who can provide high quality facilities for Uni NTS events
3. Have agreed a plan to expand the Uni NTS to allow more clubs and teams to take part as needed
4. Increase the number of participating athletes by 50%
5. Increase the number of member institutions with Touch Rugby clubs by 50%
6. See an increase in the number of institutions using Touch to get more students involved in sport
7. See an increase in athletes being selected for regional and national training squads

Conclusion

As part of our vision, the ETA strives “to facilitate and govern the expansion of Touch to every corner of the country” which includes that with higher education institutions. Affiliating Touch to the BUCS student program would give more students across the UK the opportunity to access and enjoy Touch Rugby.

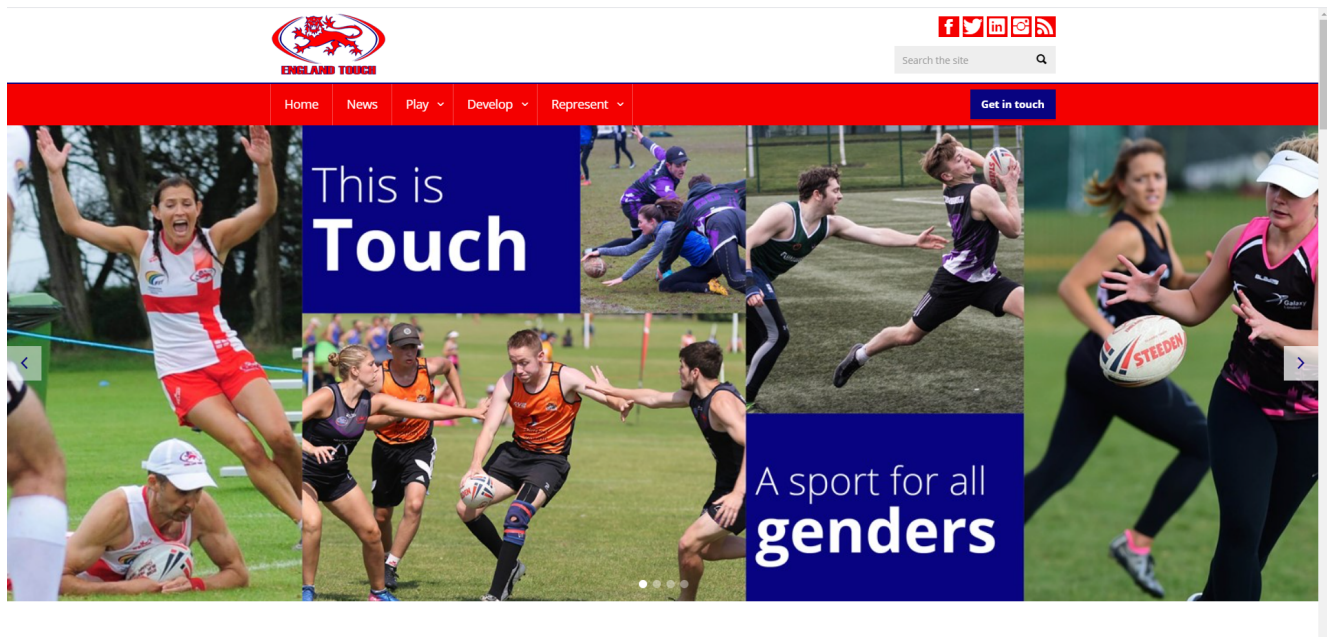
We have a clear track record of delivering high quality events that students enjoy and consider a large part of their university experience. Regardless of background, experience and type category, every athlete is catered for in the Uni NTS with clear pathways for elite players and friendly environments for social players.

BUCS has a fantastic opportunity to adopt a program that needs few resources and has minimal impact on member institutions, many of which already have teams competing in the series. Touch Rugby really is a sport for all and could be a significant string in the bow of the BUCS student sport program.

Appendices

The England Touch Association

“The England Touch Association (ETA) is the governing body of Touch in England. Our role as custodians of the game is to promote, encourage, foster, develop and grow the sport of Touch in England, under the Federation of International Touch (FIT) rules and guidelines. We are a non-profit organisation primarily funded by membership fees.”



Useful Documents

[Our Vision, Mission & Values](#)

[Code of Conduct](#)

[Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Policy](#)

[Transgender, Non-Binary & Gender Diverse Policy](#)

[Club Toolkit](#)

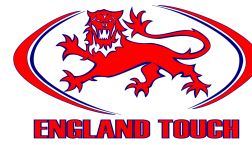
Useful Links

[Website](#)

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Youtube](#)



Federation of International Touch

“The Federation of International Touch is the governing body for the sport of Touch.

Touch started in Australia in the early 1960s as a social game and a training and warm-up technique for rugby league. The first official Touch Tournament was held in Sydney in 1968 and then spread to New Zealand.

From there the game has expanded rapidly, especially in the South Pacific and now all around the world and especially in Europe. Today, in 2011, the Federation of International Touch -F.I.T., founded in 1985, includes more than 50 members.

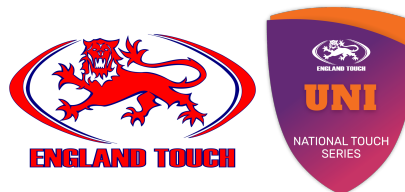
FIT is working closely with all members to ensure that our game achieves its immense potential around the globe.

The Federation has four objectives:

- 1. To develop standardized, administrative systems, policies and procedures*
- 2. To build formal partnerships with relevant Member Associations to facilitate effective global Touch development activities*
- 3. To facilitate quality and sustainable events for Members worldwide*
- 4. To facilitate effective and frequent communications to, from and between Member Associations and other stakeholders”*

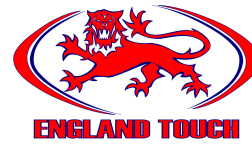


[Website](#)



Touch Club Data

Club	2019-20 Multiple Teams?	2019-20 Participant?	2019-21 Active Nos.	2020-21 Potential Participant	2020-21 Multiple Teams?	CAT5 Players	CAT4 Players	CAT3 Players	CAT2 Players	CAT1 Players	Played Before Uni Nos.	
Bath	Yes	Yes	70	Yes	Yes	10	10	10	25	15	20	
Birmingham	No	Yes	30	Yes	No	2	4	6	8	10	10	
Bolton	No	No	20	No	No	0	0	0	0	20	0	
Bristol	Yes	Yes	65	Yes	Yes	5	8	12	20	20	20	
Cambridge	No	Yes	15	Yes	Yes	1	2	4	4	4	10	
Cardiff	No	Yes	30	Yes	Yes	1	2	10	15	9	10	
Cardiff Met	No	No	20	No	No	0	0	0	10	10	5	
Durham	Yes	Yes	45	Yes	Yes	0	5	32	8	0	20	
East Anglia	No	Yes	25	Yes	No	0	0	9	11	5	0	
Edinburgh	No	Yes	20	Yes	Yes	2	2	5	7	8	15	
Exeter	Yes	Yes	120	Yes	Yes	5	25	25	30	35	20	
Keele	No	No	20	No	No	0	0	0	10	10	0	
Leeds	No	Yes	40	Yes	No	0	5	10	10	15	10	
Loughborough	Yes	Yes	55	Yes	Yes	4	10	18	15	8	20	
Manchester	No	No	15	Yes	No	0	0	3	5	7	5	
Manchester Met	No	No	30	Yes	No	0	0	5	15	10	10	
Newcastle	No	No	20	Yes	No	0	0	5	5	10	5	
Northumbria	No	No	20	Yes	No	0	0	5	5	10	5	
Nottingham Trent	No	Yes	30	Yes	No	5	5	5	10	5	10	
Oxford	No	Yes	30	Yes	Yes	1	2	10	10	7	10	
Oxford Brookes	No	No	20	No	No	0	0	0	10	10	0	
RVC	No	Yes	25	Yes	No	0	0	0	8	17	5	
Sheffield	No	Yes	20	Yes	No	0	0	0	10	10	0	
Sheffield Hallam	No	No	20	Yes	No	0	0	5	5	10	0	
Southampton	No	Yes	20	Yes	No	0	0	2	8	10	5	
Stirling	No	No	40	Yes	No	5	5	5	15	10	10	
Surrey	No	Yes	30	Yes	No	0	0	17	8	5	5	
		5	17	895	23	9	41	85	203	287	290	230
			815				5%	9%	23%	32%	32%	26%

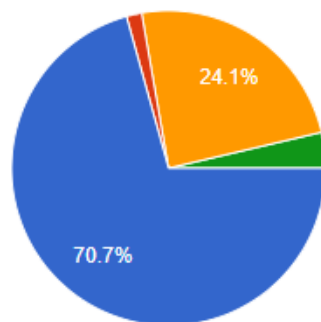


Student Athlete Surveying

(191 Responses)

Are you a current member of your University Touch Club?

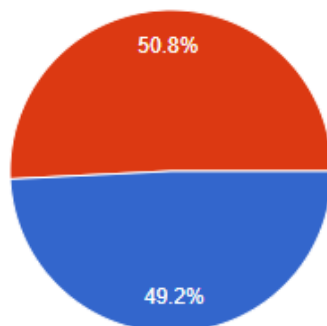
191 responses



- Yes
- No
- I am an Alumnus
- There is/was no active Touch Rugby club at my University

Had you played Touch Rugby before attending University?

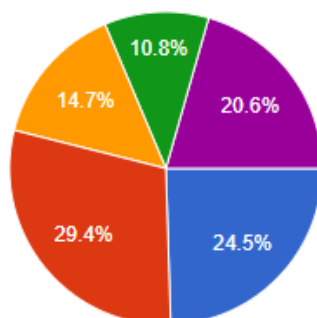
191 responses



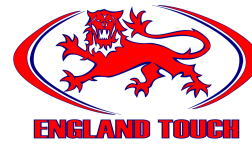
- Yes
- No

If so, what level had you played at?

102 responses

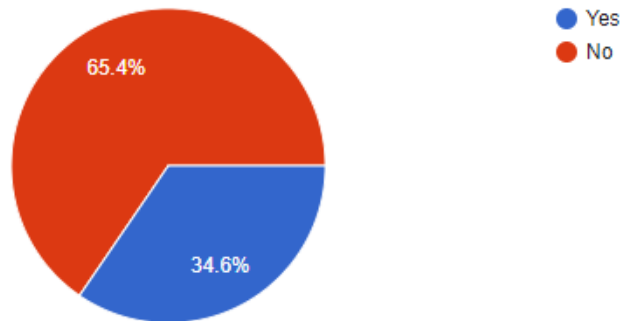


- Social (e.g. O2 Touch/Community Touch)
- Recreational (e.g. development or friendly events)
- Competitive (e.g. National series competition (NTS))
- High Performance (e.g. National level for a Regional Team)
- Elite (e.g. International Level)



Do you take part in any other BUCS Sports at University?

191 responses

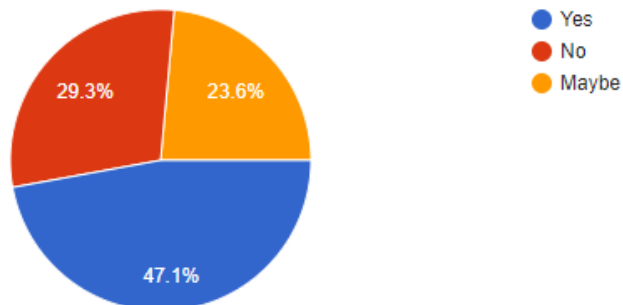


Of those playing other BUCS Sports:

- 32 Responses: Rugby (and variations thereof)
- 7 Netball
- 4 Football
- 23 Various Other Sports

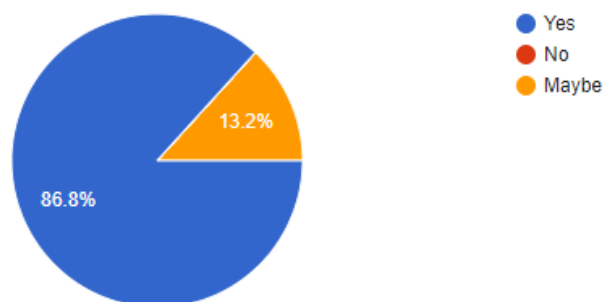
Without Touch Rugby, do you think you would still be taking part in sport at University?

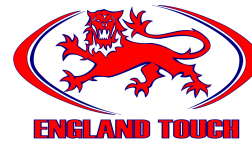
191 responses



Current students: Do you think you will continue to play Touch Rugby once you leave University?

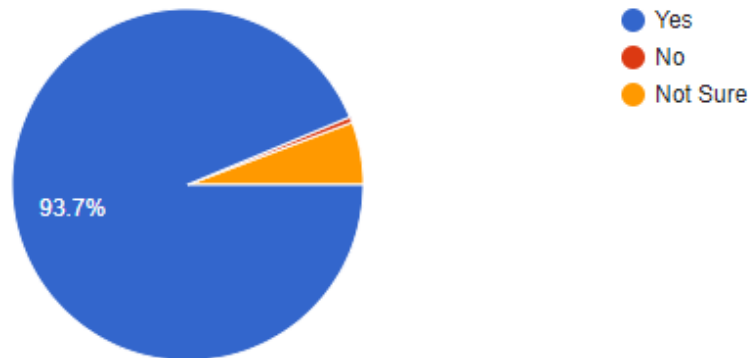
144 responses





Do you think the Touch Rugby University National Touch Series should be part of the BUCS student sport offer?

191 responses



Why do you play Touch Rugby?

“Being a mixed sport it’s one of the most social out there! No contact so anyone can play, really good for fitness and you can play socially, competitively at local club level, in the uni series and all the way up to international through the uni pathway. There’s something for everyone.”

“For the competition element. Outside of the social aspect, touch, for me, is very much about winning. I love the opportunity to play different teams (or universities when I was at uni).”

“For everything. It’s a perfect mix of both being social, but then also extremely competitive at a national level if you want to take that route. I certainly want to, and I know our teams do, and so becoming a BUCS sport would certainly help advance and recognise this competitive element, hopefully attracting new competitive members.”

“It’s one of the few sports that is mixed that allows both men and women to play equally and have equal roles. It’s so much fun and social and it is so cheap to run as you just need a field, a ball and some cones. It’s great for fitness as well and if you want to play at an elite level there are pathways and training sessions to help you reach your goals.”

What do you enjoy most about Touch Rugby as a Sport?

“It’s one of the few sports that is mixed and allows men and women to have equal roles, it can be very social and also very competitive which is great.”

“That it is very inclusive and enjoyable to play. You walk out of each training satisfied, learning something new or getting a good bit of exercise in.”

“I have been playing touch for 7 years but every session I still learn something new from different players. It is a sport where you will never be done improving, there is always another way to improve and other things to learn.”

“It is a fast skilful non contact form of rugby which allows me to make new friends and compete at the right level for any individual.”

“The balance between physical ability (speed, agility, rugby skills) and tactics make it a high paced challenging sport that you can play at many different levels depending on the group of players gathered, from social to elite, mixed to men’s and women’s”



How would you describe University National Touch Series Events?

“A competitive but very welcoming series which allows me to meet and compete against other uni teams and improve my game.”

“Definitely a key focus of the club calendar and what training sessions build towards. Touch generally takes a tournament format, so is very different to other university sports I have played e.g football where you play one game. Therefore each UNTS is a big event, with universities from across the country.”

“The biggest events of the year on the university touch calendar! The events are big enough that there is always good competition and plenty of teams to play, but small enough that you can make friends from other uni’s, and have multiple tournaments throughout the year with all teams attending. Fairly easy to organise since touch pitches are half rugby/football size so less space required, and all round good fun to be a part of.”

“UTS is the pinnacle of university touch. The tournament style is different to lots of other competitive sports I’ve played, and the overall fitness required to take part is greater than other sports.”

How can we improve the Uni NTS?

“If we can increase the amount of universities that take part then reducing the travel times would be great by having more local tournaments.”

“Need access to more facilities sometimes. More changing rooms and artificial pitches so weather doesn’t stop events.”

“Many of the improvements regarding the standard of play came in whilst I was at uni. It is important to have a tiered approach to ensure you are playing the highest standard where possible, but also to provide a space for those wanting to play at a more social level.”

“Make them less likely to be cancelled due to weather as there are so few in a year it was really disappointing if even one was cancelled.”

Why do you think Touch Rugby should be part of the BUCS offer?

“Greater exposure to generate more interest in the sport and create higher level playing opportunities for more students. Give clubs the funding they require to operate more effectively. Feed into a high performance pathway for England touch.”

“Would massively help with the way Touch is seen as a sport. It gets given that official uni sport competitive stamp immediately when you say it’s a BUCS sport. Supporting an up and coming sport doesn’t just help touch itself, but also shows how BUCS is inclusive in supporting non-traditional sports such as rugby, football, cricket, hockey etc.”

“Touch is a great alternative to contact rugby and offers better opportunities for playing time than most rugby clubs. However most touch teams must self fund and this turns people away from playing at higher levels. Better resources and funding would improve the quality of facilities available and allow more students access to compete at a higher level of sport.”

“Touch is a growing sport that is incredibly inclusive and accessible, whilst also being great for providing a social and community aspect to student life. Making touch a part of BUCS would likely improve the exposure and competitiveness of the sport, encouraging more people to join and compete at higher levels, befitting the sports current growth, whilst helping it to continue to grow and develop further. In other countries, such as Australia, touch is played at a highly competitive level, and there is no reason it should not be played at a similar level here. Making touch a BUCS sport at university would likely help touch in the UK move forward to not only become more widely played, but also to improve the standard at which it is played.”