



**BUCS**

**STRATEGY 2023-2027**



# WELCOME

The BUCS Board of Directors are pleased to introduce the new strategy that will guide and underpin the ambitions of BUCS, to deliver an exceptional student sporting experience.

Whilst the previous strategic plan should form a basis upon which to shape future priorities, significant changes have taken place in society and across the sector since the curation of the previous iteration. The aspiration of our 2023-2027 strategy takes account of these dynamics and assumes an agile approach to planning, implementation and delivery, in an ever-changing world.

The strategic themes reflect the feedback from across the BUCS network, where the provision and delivery of high-quality competitive opportunities is at the core of what we do. This focus is complemented by the promotion of wellbeing activities, the outturn of which will support institutions to engage a wider range of students, within a varied and inclusive programme of opportunities.

We must stay relevant. Our work will be informed by better use of data and our digital sophistication will continue to modernise and keep pace with how our student population communicates and engages.

We will represent at national and international levels to influence decision-makers and to optimise the scale of the contribution that is being made by university sport, to wider agendas and priorities.

This will include a better alignment of the vibrant, innovative and experienced student workforce who will be our future leaders, managers, politicians, coaches and influencers for the sporting industry.

The collective power, energy and commitment of our member institutions is the key ingredient that will unlock the impact of the plan. Higher education sport around the UK is in great shape, but there is more to come. Many medals will be won, more achievements will be accomplished, sporting dreams will be realised, however, the real success of the strategy will be the experiences and memories of students who have been involved in sport, during their time at university.

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# OVERVIEW

A soccer player in a red jersey with white stripes on the sleeves is running on a green field. The player is wearing a red jersey with a white Adidas logo on the sleeve and a red crest on the chest. The background is a large red curved shape that covers the top and right sides of the image. The word "OVERVIEW" is written in large white capital letters across the bottom of the image.

# OVERVIEW

AMBITION	To deliver exceptional student sporting experiences that inspire, develop, and unite.				
MISSION	To embed sport and active wellbeing at the heart of student experience.				
VALUES	Inclusive	Innovative	Respectful	Dynamic	
STRATEGIC THEMES	COMPETITION				
	Drive participation through high-quality, co-designed and inclusive competitions.				
	<p>PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT</p> <p>Increase the quality and diversity of people delivering higher education (HE) sport.</p> <p>Evidence and advocate the skills developed through sport on student experience.</p>	<p>DATA AND DIGITAL</p> <p>Place insight at the heart of all that we do.</p> <p>Develop a digital footprint to engage and influence.</p>		<p>WELLBEING</p> <p>Catalyse lifelong active wellbeing.</p> <p>Facilitate the delivery of integrated active campuses.</p>	
ENABLERS	Member engagement	Financial sustainability	Strategic partnerships	People	Environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG)

# AMBITION

TO DELIVER EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT  
SPORTING EXPERIENCES THAT  
INSPIRE, DEVELOP AND UNITE.



# MISSION

TO EMBED SPORT AND ACTIVE  
WELLBEING AT THE HEART OF  
STUDENT EXPERIENCE.

# VALUES



## INCLUSIVE

We value diversity and continually strive to create an inclusive and united culture.



## RESPECTFUL

We treat our environment and everyone in it with respect.



## INNOVATIVE

We are known for our ability to think outside the box and create opportunities that enable our development and progress.



## DYNAMIC

We deliver with energy, enthusiasm and unequivocal commitment to students and our work.

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# STRATEGIC THEMES

The background of the slide features a photograph of a hockey goalie in a green and yellow jersey. The jersey has a patch on the sleeve that reads "Brain Tumour Research Centre". The goalie is holding a net and is positioned in front of a blurred background of a hockey rink. The text "STRATEGIC THEMES" is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. A teal-colored geometric shape, consisting of several overlapping triangles, is positioned on the left side of the slide, partially behind the text.

# COMPETITIONS

## Drive participation through high-quality, co-designed and inclusive competitions.

### We will:

- ✔ Proactively evolve and co-design our portfolio of competitions to ensure it meets the demand and expectations of the student population, particularly outside of our traditional sport offering.
- ✔ Continually improve the quality and standards of our competitions, ensuring our portfolio can attract and support the best elite athletes as well as the more social participants.
- ✔ Facilitate sporting experiences to transform the lives of individuals for whom participation has been historically challenging.
- ✔ Ensure all our competitions, events and activities are underpinned by good governance.
- ✔ Work with members to co-create a positive culture across university sport that is based on our values.

The breadth and depth of our competitions have given us a world-leading reputation as an organisation delivering opportunities for participants to reach their potential and gain a sense of pride and achievement when competing.

With increasing numbers of Team GB athletes developed through our member institutions, access to international opportunities and stronger links to national governing body (NGB) pathways will be an important dimension of our work, as well as widening opportunities for all students.

However, we need to keep innovating our portfolio of competitions in light of changing student demands and expectations. We will ensure that it remains relevant and future-proofed whilst also ensuring diversification does not come at the expense of quality.

We can, and should, also facilitate the perception of sport as a transformative activity for those competing or participating at any level. An important part of this will be ensuring that those activities have a welcoming culture that champions fairness, respect and inclusivity in line with our equality, diversity, inclusion and accessibility (EDIA) values, as well as meeting the principles underpinning good sport governance.



# PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

## Increase the quality and diversity of people delivering higher education sport.

### We will:

- ✔ Work with relevant national governing bodies (NGBs) to create pathways to address gaps in key student sport roles.
- ✔ Work collectively with our members, NGBs and other partners to co-create improvements to the training and development of people working within the higher education sporting sector.
- ✔ Work collectively with our members to improve workforce diversity in higher education sport to ensure there is a wider range of ideas, perspectives and role models for our students.

Without roles such as coaches, officials and medical staff there is no sport. Our participants deserve access to high-quality deliverers across all roles involved in higher education sport from a wide range of backgrounds. We will work with the NGBs to address gaps where and when they emerge. Our commitment is to improve the diversity and quality of those undertaking these roles, and in particular our student volunteers, strengthening the sense of community within the BUCS family and creating inspirational role models for our students.



# PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

## Evidence and advocate for the impact of sport on student experience and success.

### We will:

- ✔ Co-create and evolve an evidence base on the contribution of sport volunteering to student success, the wider sporting landscape and local communities.
- ✔ Support our members to advocate for wider recognition of sport volunteering within formal university systems and processes as a key way of improving student development and employability.
- ✔ Work with relevant national bodies to support wider recognition amongst employers of the transferable skills students develop through sport volunteering.

Whilst we aspire to raising the quality and standard of all roles involved in higher education sport, we believe we have a particular responsibility to ensure the contributions of our student volunteers are recognised by them, their institutions and wider society.

Whether our students are club committee members, referees, coaches or involved in any other way, their contributions should be celebrated and form a valuable foundation for their future success.

This will require us to deepen our engagement with a range of national bodies, working collectively with our members to change perceptions and modernise perspectives.



# DATA AND DIGITAL

## Place insight at the heart of all that we do.

### We will:

- ✔ Increase our capacity and capability for generating high-quality insight and intelligence from our data.
- ✔ Improve our data capture processes, identifying and implementing new approaches where needed.
- ✔ Ensure that our approach to streamlining and innovating our activities is data-led.

People are the lifeblood of our organisation and in order to better understand, support and cater for them we need strong data and business intelligence so we can improve our efficiency and effectiveness as a membership organisation and deliver increasing value for money for institutions. One aspect of this will be continuing to invest in our insight-generating capacity and capability, but we also need to work with partners who hold useful data so we can embed it within our own decision-making processes.



# DATA AND DIGITAL

## Develop a digital footprint to engage and influence.

### We will:

- ✔ Optimise current and new technologies to provide innovative ways to increase and enhance participation and engagement.
- ✔ Create easily accessible digital assets that provide a platform for our advocacy and influencing work.
- ✔ Use our digital platforms to showcase exceptional sporting moments that inspire and help build stronger student communities.

We need to find new ways that students, members and partners can engage with us digitally. We have a significant opportunity to act as an interface between academic research and the sport industry, with a core part of this being the provision of a more effective evidence-based platform to influence national and international policy in higher education and sport.



# ACTIVE WELLBEING AND PARTICIPATION

## Stimulate lifelong active wellbeing.

### We will:

- ✔ Work with relevant bodies to develop and support the implementation of a comprehensive strategy for improving student wellbeing in UK universities.
- ✔ Use our reach and influence to help members deliver psychological and physiological benefits of physical activity in terms of building strong and inclusive communities, reduce isolation and support the development of long-term habits that lead to happier, healthier lives.
- ✔ Work with relevant partners to co-curate the evidence base for members and other partners to use to promote the positive links between physical activity and mental health.

We have a unique role to play in supporting improved student mental and physical health given our role as catalysts and advocates for active wellbeing initiatives within universities. By developing and enhancing the existing evidence base on the benefits, we will help improve student belonging, engagement and achievement and enable graduates to promote the benefits of active wellbeing in their communities after graduation.



# ACTIVE WELLBEING AND PARTICIPATION

## Facilitate the delivery of integrated active campuses.

### We will:

- ✔ Work with our members to provide a wide-ranging programme of sporting, recreational and health promoting activities that welcome participants of all abilities.
- ✔ Understand how we can become a key stakeholder in supporting the development of university curricula that have active wellbeing embedded through learning outcomes.
- ✔ Work with NGBs and relevant bodies to secure funding for innovative projects that seek to create more integrated approaches to active wellbeing within higher education.

The concept of an active campus is one that reflects the integration of active wellbeing within all aspects of university life. This not only includes the provision of suitable casual and formal opportunities for sport and physical activity, but also how the principles behind living a healthier and happier life are embedded within university curricula. As a result, students have a positive culture of active wellbeing and carry it through into their post-graduation lives.



# ENABLERS

# ENABLERS

Member engagement

Financial sustainability

Strategic partnerships

People

Environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG)

# Member engagement.

## We will:

- ♥ Ensure our corporate governance structure enables us to deliver our commitments to member institutions and our responsibilities to our wider stakeholder group.
- ♥ Deepen our relevance to national higher education and sport organisations, including embedding GB Students within NGB performance and talent pathways.
- ♥ Capitalise on the strength of our member network to both facilitate the sharing of best practice across members and speak externally with a single collective voice.

We are proud of the range of partners we have and rely unequivocally on the strength of our member network and the support it provides us.

A core part of our strategy depends on us ensuring the excellent relationships we have within sport and higher education are deepened further using new or existing brands like GB Students, where helpful.

We will also ensure that our decision-making processes incorporate a wide range of stakeholder views and we continue to facilitate member-to-member interactions to share good practice on a range of topics.



# Financial sustainability.

## We will:

- ♥ Significantly grow and diversify our income through increased sponsorship, funding from partners, marketing and broadcast revenues to a point that better reflects the quality and reach of our brands.
- ♥ Progressively reduce the financial cost to our members and students in real terms.
- ♥ Ensure we deliver value for money in all our activities.

The business model that has served us well must evolve to enable more diversification of our activity streams, particularly by growing commercial income.

We are acutely aware of the financial pressures faced by the higher education sector and students and will seek ways to progressively reduce the costs they have to pay to engage with student sporting competitions, events and activities without reducing quality or accessibility.

In addition, we will continue to actively pursue funding to help us invest in a range of value-adding initiatives for our members and wider success of BUCS.



# Strategic partnerships.

## We will:

- ♥ Develop a clear partnerships strategy that focuses on attracting, securing and maintaining true strategic partnerships based on mutual benefit and a clear value proposition.
- ♥ Leverage our partnerships to successfully advocate our members' positions on key issues in sport and influence the subsequent direction taken by NGBs and other organisations.
- ♥ Understand how our sub-brands like GB Students, LUSL and BUCS Play can be used with different audiences to secure the impact we desire.

We need to ensure we have a clear sense of which organisations we would be best partnered with to deliver this impact, as well as having a compelling view of how our brand and activities add value to our proposed partners' brands.

Better leveraging of the GB Students brand is critical to achieving this as well as delivering the impact that is expected from BUCS Play and future projects.

However, once we have established a strong partnership, we should not see it as an 'in perpetuity' relationship: all partnerships should have regular health checks to ensure they are working optimally for both partners.



# People.

## We will:

- ♥ Develop a culture based on mutual respect and understanding, as well as freedom of thought and expression in line with our core EDIA principles.
- ♥ Identify, nurture and retain talent within BUCS, using effective and fair performance management and reward processes as well as a best practice approach to staff development.
- ♥ Ensure that all staff have meaningful opportunities to inform and influence key strategic decisions in ways that makes them feel enthused, valued and motivated.

Our people are our greatest asset. Without the dedication, drive, talent and innovation of the sector we would not be able to confidently set out our ambitious strategy. We need to continue to build an environment that is value-led and enables unheard voices to come to the fore and feel appreciated for doing so.

Ensuring our staff are recognised and valued appropriately is critical, as well as fostering an inclusive approach to decision-making that promotes a shared sense of purpose, direction and achievement.

Ensuring that we actively provide high-quality and role-relevant staff development opportunities will help both retain the talent we have and also enable us to improve the services we offer.



# Environmental, social, and corporate governance (ESG).

## We will:

- ♥ Support our members' response to the challenge set by the United Nation's (UN) Sport for Climate Action framework and wider UN Sustainable Development Goals to take action to limit the impact created by higher education sport in the UK.
- ♥ Work collectively with our members to influence EDIA within global sport through international engagement, advocacy and sharing of best practice with sports organisations, federations and competitions.
- ♥ Develop and curate a library of good practice and research on improving environmental sustainability and social justice in sport for our members to apply in their own contexts.

The UN has set out its expectations in its Sport for Climate Action framework and Sustainable Development Goals, and our members, NGBs and partners have developed strategies to promote and support the delivery of those principles.

We should be a key partner in enabling our members to achieve these aspirations, as well as using our collective voice and active engagement with relevant committees of international bodies and competitions to influence global sport to be fairer, more inclusive and reduce inequalities.

To help achieve this aim, we need to be a hub of knowledge and good practice from across the globe to inform our members and drive action.





# THANK YOU

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