

SPORT REVIEW

MAKING CHANGES TO BUCS COMPETITIONS

FRAMEWORK

V3.0 (JUNE 2026)



MAKING CHANGES TO BUCS COMPETITIONS - FRAMEWORK

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To enable BUCS and its members to meet the ever-changing demands and interests of the current and the next generation of students, we have initiated this piece of work. This should collectively enable us all to respectively initiate positive and impactful change in different ways as we aspire to deliver our strategic aims of delivering exceptional student experiences through to 2030 and beyond.

Before the 2025-26 season BUCS relied solely on the full New Sport Proposal Framework (Route 1) to add new sports to the programme through a five-phase process. There was no mechanism to trial competitions, disciplines or event structures within the delivery programme, and the approach required long lead-in times, often two seasons or more. Student voice was not as central as it is now, and BUCS risked missing time sensitive opportunities or failing to deliver experiences to students while they were in higher education. The new multi-route framework was therefore designed to remove those barriers, introduce nimble, evidence-led trial routes and preserve robust probation and review safeguards.

BUCS now operates a multi-tiered approach to making changes to its competitions:

1. **Route 1 – Full New Sport Proposal Framework:** SRIG's rigorous five-phase pathway including member and NGB consultation, competitions group ratification, implementation and a 12-month probation to ensure strategic fit and sustainability.
2. **Route 2 – Structural tweaks:** adjust league tiers, team numbers or event structures through Proposal or Notice of Change papers, with stakeholder consultation where required.
3. **Route 3A and 3B– Trial Events / Categories:** embed trial categories within existing events (eg mixed relays, new weight classes), or trial events within existing Disciplines of Sports, under Executive mandate with normal entries and a concise post-event review.
4. **Route 4 – New disciplines:** add distinct disciplines of existing sports (e.g. 3×3 basketball, padel) via a Notice of Change with standard promotion, entry, probation period and a data-led review for possible adoption.
5. **Route 5 –BUCS executive-led initiatives:** streamlined proposals to pilot new sports via a one-season trial (no BUCS points), an eight-week notification to competitions group and a data-led review for possible adoption.

Across all routes BUCS balances responsiveness with transparent stakeholder engagement and robust review mechanisms. A decision tree is provided in [Appendix B](#).

Version History

Version	Date	Author	Summary of Changes
V1.0	Sep 2025	Neal Kington	Initial Release
V2.0	Oct 2025	Neal Kington	Route 5 tweaked following member dialogue and is now live and fully implemented.
V3.0	Jun 2026	Neal Kington	Tweak to route 3B to allow BUCS to edit Event Categories based on NGB Gender Eligibility changes.

CURRENT FORMATS OF BUCS DELIVERY

Events

Our events programme provides a wide variety of opportunities for students to compete, from one-off events, to regional event series, to qualifiers that lead into national finals. Events are delivered both directly by BUCS and in partnership with external event delivery partners to ensure breadth and quality.

The calendar includes two flagship events each year – BUCS Nationals, welcoming over 4,000 athletes, and BUCS Big Wednesday, which sees around 1,900 athletes compete in championship finals. Alongside these, over 130 domestic events are staged annually across more than 50 sports, amounting to more than 200 days of competition.

The programme is designed to be inclusive of all levels, with athletes competing who are part of Olympic or professional pathways through to those trying out a new sport for the first time. This variety ensures that events provide both a platform for excellence and accessible entry points for participation.

While these are the current formats of delivery, we recognise the importance of evolving to meet the needs of the next generation of students. This means being dynamic in exploring alternative models such as festival-based formats or weekend tournaments, offering different types of student experience alongside our established programme.

The event calendar for the current season can be access [here](#).

All current BUCS Sports, and their format of delivery can be found in [Appendix C](#).

League and Knockouts

Our leagues and knockout programme runs across term time with regular, scheduled fixtures so students can play consistently alongside their studies. Leagues are organised at regional and national levels to suit different travel and competition needs, with divisions for all standards from more local play to national tiered competition.

Team types exist in a variety of formats (men's, women's, mixed and open) to keep the programme inclusive. Knockout competitions run alongside leagues and feed into annual finals events, including a BUCS Big Wednesday or Regional Conference Finals. Overall, the structure is designed to offer regular competition, clear progression and choice for every level of player.

The Dates and Deadlines, as well as the structure of our Leagues for the current season can be found in our General Regulation Appendices [here](#).

All current BUCS Sports, and their format of delivery can be found in [Appendix C](#).

ROUTE 1: NEW SPORTS – NEW SPORT PROPOSAL FRAMEWORK (EVENTS, LEAGUES AND KNOCKOUTS)

Context

The New Proposal Framework is BUCS' formal mechanism for the introduction of brand-new sports – including events, leagues, and knockouts, into the BUCS programme. This process is designed to ensure new sports are introduced based on strong strategic rationale, sector demand, and long-term sustainability.

This process applies exclusively to sports that:

- Are not currently delivered through any other BUCS route.
- Do not qualify under existing processes for trial events / categories, new disciplines, or BUCS executive Led Initiatives.
- Intend to operate as a BUCS executive led event, third-party event, or league and knockout programme.

Governance

New Sport proposals are typically authored by the relevant National Governing Body(ies) (NGB), with support from BUCS staff throughout the development process. Proposals are assessed through a multi-stage governance model that includes:

- Consultation with members, NGBs, and sport stakeholder groups is undertaken.
- Review by the BUCS executive, who support authors in preparing the submission.
- Formal feedback windows.
- Final ratification by the National competitions group, following the agreed consultation thresholds as set out in the Sport Review Decision Making Matrix.

All proposals must demonstrate alignment with BUCS strategic objectives, member support, and the ability to deliver a safe, inclusive, and sustainable offer.

Process

The process follows a defined sequence with five key phases:

Phase 1: Submission to SRIG (0 Months)

- Authors work with BUCS staff to prepare the proposal.
- Member consultation is conducted.
- Proof of concept is expected (minimum 2 years of activity).

Phase 2: Publication to Membership (0-2 Months)

- Submission is graded by SRIG.
- Successful proposals are shared with membership.
- 2-month feedback window for member consultation.

Phase 3: Assessment (2-4 Months)

- Review of feedback received.
- Submissions with additional questions are answered.

- All submissions are either Supported (move to decision making framework) or rejected at end of assessment phase.

Phase 4: Decision Making (4-6 Months)

- Using the review matrix, one of the following outcomes is possible:
 - Automatic Adoption.
 - Adoption (via competitions group Recommendation).
 - Rejection (via competitions group Recommendation).
 - Proposal is Rejected.

Phase 5: Implementation (6+ Months)

- Proposals that are adopted via Automatic Adoption or competitions group Recommendations move through implementation.
- Implementation documentation is created and shared.
- If agreement cannot be reached within the implementation meeting surrounding how the new proposal will be adopted, the application will be redirected to the BUCS executive for a final decision.

Phase 6: Probation

- Proposal operates in a minimum 12-month probation.
- Review undertaken to assess success.
- SRIG can recommend entries do not open for second season if review is unsatisfactory.

Example

Examples of sports who have been through previous Sport Review Cycles include:

[Wheelchair Basketball](#), [Taekwondo](#), and [Dodgeball](#).

The New Sport Proposal Framework is a new addition to the Sport Review process, beginning in Cycle 6 (2024-25). So far, no sports have progressed through the full New Sport Proposal Framework, but examples will be updated as/when.

Links

Full process timelines, criteria, and submission guidance are detailed in the [New Sport Proposal Framework Document](#).

ROUTE 2: CURRENT SPORTS – COMPETITION STRUCTURE CHANGES (LEAGUES AND KNOCKOUTS, EVENTS)

League and Knockouts

Context

This process supports the ongoing refinement and optimisation of existing BUCS league structures across all sports currently delivered within the programme. This process ensures that the league offer remains responsive, balanced, and inclusive, without creating entirely new formats or tiers.

The process allows for the following types of adjustments:

- The **addition or removal of teams** within existing league tiers.
- The **creation or removal of leagues** within an existing tier (e.g. a North / South 2 League added under a Premier 1 League).

All proposals must be in line with BUCS' strategic objectives and competition principles.

New formats or tiers that do not currently exist across any BUCS sport (e.g. National 2 League) must follow the full [New Sport Proposal Framework](#).

Changes may be proposed reactively, in response to feedback, student insight, NGB consultation, or member requests, or proactively, based on BUCS' strategic planning and data analysis.

Governance

This process is led by the BUCS executive in consultation with competitions group. Proposals are informed by engagement with:

- Relevant SAGs, League Management Committees (LMCs) and NGBs.
- Directly affected institutions, who must be consulted prior to implementation.

Proposals are classified based on support and impact:

- **Notice of Change** – if sufficient support (as defined within the process) is secured through early consultation.
- **Proposal for Change** – if further consultation or formal approval is required.

Final implementation requires visible commitment from involved institutions and is subject to confirmation timelines tied to the BUCS annual calendar.

Process

The process consists of two formal stages, supported by a series of structured documents and consultations.

1. Initial Paper Stage

- The author(s) submits a Proposal for Change Paper to the BUCS executive for review (not applicable if the BUCS executive are a paper author(s)).
- Stakeholder consultation follows, including with competitions group chair, SAGs, NGBs, and directly affected institutions.
- Based on consultation, the proposal is categorised as a **Notice of Change** or **Proposal for Change**. The paper is then shared with competitions group for dissemination.

2. Implementation Stage

- An Implementation Paper is prepared to outline the new structure and gain institutional opt-ins.

- BUCS facilitates an Implementation Meeting with all affected institutions invited to attend, to confirm understanding and address queries.
- Institutions then confirm their opt in / opt out preference for the new structure, and final adjustments are made as required.

Key Timelines:

- All proposals must align with the BUCS annual planning cycle and be submitted in advance of competitions group meeting 1, 2 or 3.
- Early engagement with the BUCS executive is strongly encouraged to ensure feasibility.

All proposals must present a **single recommended option** and be designed to enhance the **quality, inclusivity, and sustainability** of competition.

Example

In the 2023-24 season, the BUCS Rugby League Coordinator implemented a National League to sit within the Premier Tier of Rugby League utilising this process. A summary of the paper is below, but the entire paper can be viewed in the Links section below.

Background & Rationale:

Over the past decade, BUCS Rugby League has suffered a 26% decline in team entries, most acutely in Midlands, Western and South Eastern regions, resulting in uncompetitive leagues, low fixture completion and frequent walkovers. Member feedback (average rating 5–6/10) highlighted poor lower-league depth, limited southern participation and excessive withdrawals. Data from 2019–20 through 2022–23 revealed fixture completion rates as low as 33% in the Western Tier 1 and a sharp rise in score blowouts, underscoring the need for structural reform.

Proposed Changes & Implementation:

- **Premier Tier:** Creation of a National League
- **Tier 1:** Consolidate into two regional leagues (Northern; Southern),
- **Tier 2:** Realign Midlands/Western and Northern conferences to minimize travel burdens.

This Notice of Change, ratified for immediate effect, secured over 80% stakeholder support (BUCS executive, RFL, majority of participating institutions). Fixtures have been crafted to balance home/away splits and travel distances. A comprehensive review in December 2023 will assess outcomes and inform future expansions.

Links

[APPENDIX A - COMPETITION STRUCTURE CHANGES – OVERVIEW](#)

[APPENDIX B - COMPETITION STRUCTURE CHANGES - INITIAL PAPER GUIDANCE](#)

[APPENDIX C - COMPETITION STRUCTURE CHANGES - IMPLEMENTATION STAGE](#)

[COMPETITION STRUCTURES - NOTICE OF CHANGE - MEN'S RUGBY LEAGUE \(EXAMPLE\)](#)

Events

Context

This process supports the ongoing alteration and improvement of existing BUCS events structures across all events currently delivered within the programme. It ensures our event offer remains relevant, balanced and inclusive, without creating entirely new event structures.

The process allows for the following types of adjustments:

- **Amending** the Competition Structure.
- **Amending or Removing** existing categories.
- Amending the number of **Event Days**.
- Amending the allocation of **BUCS Points**.

All proposals must be in line with BUCS' strategic objectives and competition principles.

Changes may be proposed reactively, in response to feedback, student insight, NGB consultation, or member requests, or proactively, based on BUCS' strategic planning and data analysis.

Governance

This process is led by the BUCS executive in consultation with the competitions group. Proposals are informed by engagement with:

- Relevant EMGs, NGBs, SAGs and Tournament Directors (TDs) (where applicable).
- Student and IA perception received via Event Feedback process.

Proposals are classified based on support and impact:

- **Proposal for Change** – A change which requires consultation from the membership; or,
- **Notice of Change** – A change is required, either due to changing NGB regulations, or to continue delivery of said event(s).

Papers are shared with competitions group for dissemination a **minimum of 6 weeks prior to event(s) delivery**.

Competitions group gives the BUCS executive one of the following recommendations:

- Recommend Implementation.
- Recommend Rejection.

The BUCS executive reserves the right to accept or reject recommendations on a case-by-case basis.

Process

Once competitions group has given a recommendation to the BUCS executive, it will progress via one of the following:

Recommended for Implementation / BUCS decision to implement / Notice of Change:

1. The amended event(s) will be added to the BUCS calendar and promoted through standard BUCS channels.
2. Entries will be taken via BUCS Play, and all information will be included on the BUCS website.
3. Event(s) run with the amendments in place.

Recommended for Rejection / BUCS decision to reject:

1. Changes are not implemented initially for the event.
 - a) If time permits prior to the event, a revised paper can be submitted to a later competitions group meetings, if this meeting is a **minimum of 6 weeks prior to event(s) delivery.**

Example

In the 2024-25 season BUCS proposed revised bout cut-offs for the BUCS Boxing Championships to reduce novice oversubscription and increase entries in intermediate and experienced categories. A summary of the paper is below, but the entire paper can be viewed in the Links section below.

Background & Rationale:

The current bout brackets are skewing entries heavily to novice divisions, producing long reserve lists and very small experienced fields (some weight classes with a single entry). 2022-23 and 2023-24 entry profiles show this imbalance: men's novice 159–161 entries (71%), intermediate 35–38 (16–17%), experienced 26–29 (12–13%); women's novice 23–25 entries (77–78%), intermediate 3–4 (9–13%), experienced 3–4 (10–13%). A review with England Boxing sought to rebalance participation while maintaining safety.

Proposed Changes & Implementation:

- Men: change brackets to 0–5 (Novice), 6–13 (Intermediate), 14+ (Experienced).
- Women: change brackets to 0–4 (Novice), 5–9 (Intermediate), 10+ (Experienced).
- Apply changes for the 2024-25 BUCS Boxing Championships.

Institutions are asked to submit feedback via the competitions group feedback tracker for review at the October 2024 competitions group meeting.

Links

[COMPETITION FORMAT - PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE - BOXING CHAMPIONSHIPS 2024-25](#)

ROUTE 3: CURRENT SPORTS – TRIAL EVENTS (EVENTS ONLY)

3A - Trial Events

Context

Trial Events (defined within the [FAQ section](#)) provide BUCS with the ability to explore new standalone events within a discipline of a sport we already deliver, in a (minimum) one season probation period with no BUCS points awarded. The introduction of these events is typically in response to:

- Student feedback and insight from previous events.
- Emerging regions / nations with gaining popularity within a sport.
- Opportunities to introduce more inclusive and accessible Event's in line with BUCS' EEDI commitment.

Trial events are introduced for a minimum of one season, with a formal review taking place to assess the long-term implementation of the event as part of the wider programme.

Governance

The BUCS executive holds the mandate to introduce Trial Event within current Disciplines of Sports we already deliver. All trial events will be:

- Notice of Change papers authored by the BUCS executive, with consultation from the relevant NGB and, where applicable, SAGs and EMGs.
- Notice of Change shared with competitions group for information and dissemination, a **minimum of 6 weeks prior to event(s) delivery**. These papers are shared for transparency and sector awareness of the trial event(s).
- Delivered either by BUCS or in partnership with a third-party delivery body, depending on the nature of the discipline.

New Events can be identified and initiated by BUCS (e.g. through trend analysis) or proposed by NGBs, SAGs, or other formal BUCS groups. Consultation may take place where the relevant stakeholder group(s) exist.

N.B: The BUCS executive reserves the right to refine, delay, or withdraw papers at any stage prior to this communication, ensuring they remain aligned with organisational priorities and capacity.

Process

Once the membership has been informed of the Trial Event via competitions group:

1. The standalone event(s) will be added to the BUCS calendar and promoted through standard BUCS channels.
2. Entries will be taken via BUCS Play, and all information will be included on the BUCS website.
3. The event(s) will be delivered over a **minimum one-season probation period**, with **no BUCS Points** awarded during this phase
4. Following the season's conclusion, a [formal review process](#) will be undertaken, including feedback from participants, stakeholders, competitions group and delivery partners (if applicable). Based on the review, one of the following actions will be taken and communicated to competitions group:
 - The event(s) is **adopted into the full BUCS programme**, with BUCS Points awarded (if applicable).

- The event(s) **remains in probation**, and delivery is repeated with adjustments for a further season.
- The event(s) **is withdrawn** if performance expectations or sector needs are not met.

This process ensures that BUCS remains responsive to student interest and innovation within recognised sports, while preserving governance and operational standards.

Example

Golf – Northern Ireland Event (illustrative only)

- **Rationale:** The BUCS executive are made aware of growing demand for a BUCS Golf Tour Event in Northern Ireland by the Sports Advisory Group, while it is clear there is some interest, it is unknown at this stage the potential levels of engagement this event could have.
- **Exploration and Consultation:** BUCS executive liaises with the SAG, and other relevant NGBs and Stakeholder group gauge member institution interest and operational requirements.
- **Notice of Change:** A formal paper is authored by the BUCS executive detailing the proposed event format, proposed dates within the 2025-26 calendar, entry criteria, and alignment with BUCS values.
- **Notification:** The Notice of Change is circulated to the competitions group at least six weeks prior to Event Delivery, ensuring transparency and sector awareness.
- **Delivery Model:** The Event is delivered by a third-party specialist organiser under BUCS oversight, utilising their facilities and event-management expertise while integrating BUCS branding and entry processes.
- **Pilot Delivery:** The Northern Ireland Event runs over a (minimum) one-season probation, entries managed via BUCS Play, standard promotion through BUCS channels, and no BUCS Points awarded, monitored against agreed KPIs (entry numbers, participant feedback, operational delivery).
- **Review & Decision:** Following the season's conclusion, the BUCS executive conducts the Year One Review process. The competition is then either adopted into the full BUCS programme with BUCS Points from Year 2 (if applicable), extended for a further probationary season with refinements, or withdrawn if it fails to meet agreed success thresholds.

Links

While no Sport has been through this process yet, the paper would follow the same format as this paper:

[COMPETITION FORMAT - PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE - CANOE SLALOM \(INITIAL PAPER\)](#)

[BUCS Changes to Competitions - Year One Review.](#)

3B - Trial Event Categories

Context

Trial Event Categories (defined within the [FAQ section](#)) provide BUCS with a mechanism to explore new opportunities within existing BUCS Events, without requiring full structural change or the awarding of BUCS Points. These categories are typically introduced in response to:

- Student feedback and insight from previous events.
- Emerging categories gaining popularity within a sport.
- Opportunities to introduce more inclusive and accessible competition categories in line with BUCS' EEDI commitment.

Trial categories are always added to an existing BUCS event (e.g. an additional category at a current championship) and are not standalone events. These are introduced on a **trial basis for a minimum of one season**, with the intention of assessing performance and participant feedback before making any long-term changes.

***N.B** where BUCS is required to add a new Event Category to an existing event because a change in NGB or international federation gender eligibility policies/position now prevents a group of participants, who were previously eligible, from competing in an existing category, the new category may be enacted immediately without formal paperwork. The new category will be added on BUCS Play and to the Event Entry Information ASAP prior to an event. This is treated as a trial category for governance purposes, reviewed post-event in the same way as other trial categories, and, where the review is successful, progressed to BUCS Points the following season.*

Governance

The BUCS executive holds the mandate to introduce Trial Event Categories within current BUCS Events. These categories are not subject to formal approval by competitions group, but the group will be **notified of the trial category introduction prior to event entries opening**.

All trial categories will be informed by:

- Feedback and insight from students and participating institutions within the existing BUCS event.
- Input from Event Management Groups (EMGs) and National Governing Body(ies) (NGB) where applicable.
- Operational feasibility, including safety, cost, and alignment with existing delivery models.

Process

Once a Trial Event Category has been confirmed for introduction:

1. The category will be added to the event entry information and published alongside other categories on the BUCS website.
2. Entries will be taken via BUCS Play and promoted through standard BUCS channels.
3. The category will be delivered as part of the existing event, with **no BUCS Points** attached.
4. Following the event, the BUCS executive will review the Trial Category, including feedback from participants, stakeholders and delivery partners.

Please note, this will be a small internal review, rather than full year one review as per other routes.

Following the review, one of the following decisions will be communicated to competitions group:

- The category is **adopted** into the full event programme, with BUCS Points awarded (if appropriate).
- The category remains in a **probation phase**, with refinements made and delivery repeated in a second season (still non-BUCS Points scoring).
- The category is **withdrawn** if it does not meet performance expectations or sector demand.

Trial Event Categories provide a low risk, insight led opportunity to test innovation and inclusivity in event delivery while maintaining flexibility and responsiveness within the BUCS programme.

Example

Kayak Cross was taken through this process during the 2024-25 season. The initial paper, and the follow up review, can be found below.

Links

[COMPETITION FORMAT - PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE - CANOE SLALOM \(INITIAL PAPER\)](#)

[COMPETITION FORMAT - NOTICE OF CHANGE - CANOE SLALOM \(REVIEW / UPDATE PAPER\)](#)

ROUTE 4: NEW DISCIPLINES (EVENT ONLY)

Context

This process enables BUCS to introduce a new standalone event(s) or event series that represents a recognised discipline of a sport already delivered within the BUCS programme, governed by the same National Governing Body(ies) (NGB). It provides BUCS with greater confidence and robustness to respond to developments in the student sport landscape with increased agility, while maintaining strong alignment with NGB structures and existing BUCS governance.

This route is distinct from [Route 5](#) which applies only to entirely new sports not currently delivered by BUCS in any format.

New Disciplines must:

- Be governed by the same NGB as an existing BUCS sport.
- Be considered a distinct and recognised discipline of that sport by the NGB.
- Fall within a sport that BUCS currently delivers.

*Examples could include the introduction of **Padel** (governed by the LTA) or **3x3 Basketball** (governed by Basketball England/Scotland/Wales), where **Tennis** and **Basketball** are already part of the BUCS offer.*

Governance

All New Disciplines (Events Only) will be:

- Notice of Change papers authored by the BUCS executive, with consultation from the relevant NGB and, where applicable, SAGs and EMGs.
- Notice of Change shared with competitions group for information and dissemination, a **minimum of 6 weeks prior to event(s) delivery**. These papers are shared for transparency and sector awareness of the new event(s).
- Delivered either by BUCS or in partnership with a third-party delivery body, depending on the nature of the discipline.

New disciplines can be identified and initiated by BUCS (e.g. through trend analysis) or proposed by NGBs, SAGs, or other formal BUCS groups. Consultation may take place where the relevant stakeholder group(s) exist.

N.B: The BUCS executive reserves the right to refine, delay, or withdraw papers at any stage prior to this communication, ensuring they remain aligned with organisational priorities and capacity.

Process

Once the membership has been informed of the new discipline via competitions group:

1. The standalone event(s) or series will be added to the BUCS calendar and promoted through standard BUCS channels.
2. Entries will be taken via BUCS Play, and all information will be included on the BUCS website.
3. The event(s) will be delivered over a **minimum one-season probation period**, with **no BUCS Points** awarded during this phase
4. Following the season's conclusion, a [formal review process](#) will be undertaken, including feedback from participants, stakeholders, competitions group and delivery partners (if applicable). Based on the review, one of the following actions will be taken and communicated to competitions group:

- The event(s) or series is **adopted into the full BUCS programme**, with BUCS Points awarded (if applicable).
- The event(s) or series **remains in probation**, and delivery is repeated with adjustments for a further season.
- The **event(s) or series is withdrawn** if performance expectations or sector needs are not met.

This process ensures that BUCS remains responsive to student interest and innovation within recognised sports, while preserving governance and operational standards.

Example

This process could support the future introduction of **Padel** (governed by the LTA) or **3x3 Basketball** (governed by Basketball England / Scotland / Wales) within the BUCS programme, where **Tennis** and **Basketball** are already delivered.

Padel (illustrative only)

- **Rationale:** LTA approaches BUCS to introduce Padel, a recognised discipline under a sport we already deliver, attributed to clear student interest in emerging racket sports. Our Data & Insight team corroborates strong year-on-year growth in student Padel club memberships and participation at regional tournaments.
- **Exploration and Consultation:** BUCS executive liaises with the LTA to confirm governance and competition standards and engages the relevant Sport Advisory Group (SAG) to gauge member institution interest and operational requirements.
- **Notice of Change:** A formal paper is authored by the BUCS executive detailing the proposed event format (e.g. regional qualifiers rounds leading to a national finals), proposed dates within the 2025-26 calendar, entry criteria, and alignment with BUCS values.
- **Notification:** The Notice of Change is circulated to the competitions group at least six weeks prior to event delivery, ensuring transparency and sector awareness.
- **Delivery Model:** The pilot is delivered by a third-party specialist organiser under BUCS oversight, utilising their facilities and event-management expertise while integrating BUCS branding and entry processes.
- **Pilot Delivery:** Padel runs over a one-season probation, entries managed via BUCS Play, standard promotion through BUCS channels, and no BUCS Points awarded, monitored against agreed KPIs (entry numbers, participant feedback, operational delivery).
- **Review & Decision:** Following the season's conclusion, the BUCS executive conducts the Year One Review process. The competition is then either adopted into the full BUCS programme with BUCS Points from Year 2 (if applicable), extended for a further probationary season with refinements, or withdrawn if it fails to meet agreed success thresholds.

Links

While no Discipline has been through this process yet, the paper would follow the same format as this paper:

[COMPETITION FORMAT - PROPOSAL FOR CHANGE - CANOE SLALOM \(INITIAL PAPER\)](#)

[BUCS Changes to Competitions - Year One Review.](#)

ROUTE 5: NEW SPORTS – BUCS EXECUTIVE LED INITIATIVES (EVENTS ONLY)

Context

This route allows BUCS executive to lead on the expedited development and delivery of new sports within the BUCS Events programme, where there is a clear strategic, insight-driven or commercial rationale to do so. These initiatives enable the BUCS executive to respond more dynamically to emerging trends, strong student demand, or opportunities within the wider sporting landscape. For a sport to be considered in this process, it must be a **new sport to the BUCS programme** and not currently delivered through any other sport route.

BUCS executive led initiatives are intended to pilot new sport event offers under a streamlined version of the current [New Sport Proposal Framework](#). These events will operate in minimum **one season probation period** and, if successful, may transition into the full BUCS programme, including the potential to award BUCS Points from Year 2 onwards.

Typical justifications for a BUCS executive led initiative may include:

- Insight and trend data indicating strong and growing student demand.
- A time-sensitive commercial partnership opportunity.
- A strategic delivery model that requires testing before full adoption.
- A gap in provision aligned to BUCS values, strategic ambitions or EEDI objectives.
- The opportunity to capitalise on increased interest following major sporting events on the world stage (e.g. Olympic or World Cup success).

Governance

BUCS executive led initiatives are managed and overseen by the BUCS executive, who act as the lead authors and decision makers for initiating pilot proposals. While led internally, initiatives are informed by sector insight and stakeholder consultation.

All initiatives will follow this sequence:

- Initial exploration and consultation with relevant internal BUCS teams (SLT, data and insight, events etc.) and discussion with the chair of competitions group (or other member of competitions group if Chair unavailable) if applicable. If appropriate, this may also include conversations with NGBs, and Sports Advisory Groups (SAGs)/Event Management Groups (EMGs) to understand further any technical or sport specific knowledge that would support the proposal.
- BUCS executive Led Initiatives Framework authored by the BUCS executive, based on a condensed version of the New Sport Proposal Framework.
- BUCS executive Led Initiatives Framework shared with competitions group for information and dissemination, a **minimum of 8 weeks prior to event(s) delivery**.
- The BUCS executive, supported by the competitions group (where required), undertake a review at the end of the one season probation period. Full details of the review are [here](#).

N.B: The BUCS executive reserves the right to refine, delay, or withdraw initiatives at any stage prior to this communication, ensuring they remain aligned with organisational priorities and capacity.

This governance model enables BUCS to act responsively and strategically, while maintaining transparency and sector input throughout the process.

Process

Once a BUCS executive Led Initiatives Framework has been explored and notified for delivery, it will follow a consistent implementation model:

1. Pilot delivery will take place over a minimum of **one season probation period**, during which the initiative will be delivered by BUCS or a Third Party and monitored by the BUCS executive (no BUCS Points awarded).
2. The BUCS executive will support delivery and administration in line with the proposed format, timelines, and entry requirements.
3. Following the season's conclusion, a [formal review process](#) will be undertaken, including feedback from participants, stakeholders, competitions group (if required) and delivery partners (if applicable). Based on the review, one of the following actions will be taken and communicated to competitions group:
 - The event is **adopted into the full BUCS programme**, with BUCS Points awarded (if applicable).
 - The initiative **remains in probation**, and delivery is repeated with adjustments for a further season.
 - The **initiative is withdrawn** if performance expectations or sector needs are not met.

Clear measures of success will be assessed through the formal review process, ensuring decisions are evidence based and aligned with BUCS' ambition to deliver exceptional student sporting experiences.

Example

This process could support the future introduction of sports such as Hyrox, Cheer or Kabaddi.

HYROX (illustrative only)

- **Rationale:** HYROX organisers approach BUCS with a time-sensitive commercial partnership proposal. Concurrently, our Data & Insight team reports a 40% year-on-year increase in student participation in functional fitness and endurance events.
- **Exploration and Consultation:** BUCS executive convenes relevant BUCS teams and liaises with the relevant NGB/Delivery organisation to validate demand, commercial terms, and delivery feasibility.
- **Framework Development:** A condensed New Sport Proposal is authored by the BUCS executive, outlining event format, entry criteria, timelines, and commercial arrangements.
- **Notification:** The proposal is shared with the competitions group at least eight weeks prior to the inaugural HYROX pilot event for information and dissemination.
- **Pilot Delivery:** HYROX runs as a one-season probation (no BUCS Points awarded), delivered by the event organiser in a third-party capacity, monitored against agreed KPIs (entries, engagement, commercial performance).
- **Review & Decision:** At season's end, the BUCS executive conducts a formal review, incorporating participant feedback, stakeholder input and insight metrics, with either:
 - **Adopt** HYROX into the full BUCS programme with BUCS Points from Year 2;
 - **Extend** probation for a further season with refinements; or
 - **Withdraw** the initiative if strategic or performance benchmarks are unmet.

Links

[BUCS Executive Led Initiatives Framework.](#)

[BUCS Changes to Competitions - Year One Review.](#)

APPENDIX A: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between a 'new sport' and a 'new discipline'?

A new sport is one that is not currently delivered by BUCS in any form. A new discipline is a distinct variation of an existing BUCS sport, governed by the same NGB (e.g. Padel under LTA).

2. Who can propose changes to competitions?

Changes can be proposed by BUCS staff, NGBs, SAGs EMGs, member reference groups (such as the Race and Equality working group or Para Sport working group) or member institutions, depending on the route. The BUCS executive may also initiate changes directly. It is recommended any potential Author engages with the BUCS executive first prior to exploring their potential routes.

3. What is a 'Trial Event'?

It's a (minimum) one season, non-BUCS Points scoring addition to the BUCS event programme, designed to test new standalone events within a sport and discipline we already deliver, for example an additional BUCS Golf Tour event within Northern Ireland.

4. What is a 'Trial Event Category'?

It's a (minimum) one-season, non-BUCS Points scoring addition to an existing BUCS Event, designed to test new competition formats or inclusive categories (e.g. mixed relay, new weight class). Where a category is added reactively to maintain participation following a change in gender eligibility regulations, it is still treated as a trial category for review purposes. Outcomes are reviewed post-event to determine future inclusion.

5. What does 'probation period' mean?

This is the initial delivery phase (usually one season) during which a new sport, discipline, or category is tested and reviewed before full adoption into the BUCS programme, with no BUCS Points awarded. Points may be introduced from Year 2, pending a successful review and formal adoption.

6. What is the difference between a 'Notice of Change' and a 'Proposal for Change'?

A Notice of Change is used when we are sharing and disseminating information about a change that will occur. A Proposal for Change is used when we are seeking feedback and recommendations from the membership, which the BUCS executive will take into account when making final decisions.

7. How long does it take for a new sport to be fully implemented?

For Route 1, full implementation can take 6–12+ months, depending on consultation timelines, assessment, and probation. Other routes (like 3, 4, or 5) are more agile and can be implemented within a single season cycle.

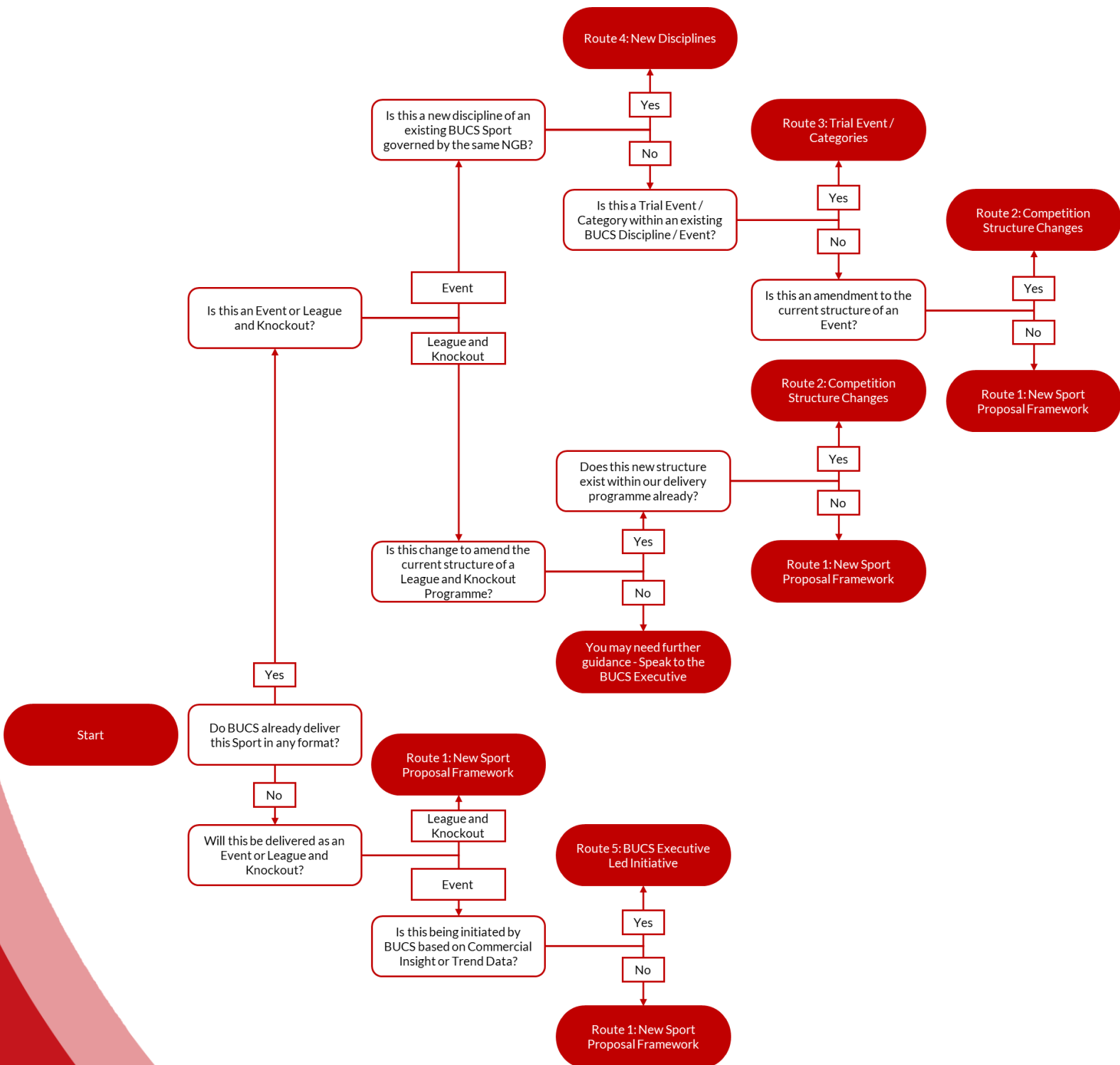
8. Frequently Used Acronyms

BUCS	British Universities and Colleges Sport	NGB	National Governing Body(ies)
EMG	Event Management Groups	RFL	Rugby Football League
LMC	League Management Committees	SAG	Sports Advisory Groups

LTA	Lawn Tennis Association	SRIG	Sport Review Implementation Group
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APPENDIX B: PROCESS FLOWCHART

This will have guides / flows to aid people in understanding which route for their sports.



APPENDIX C: CURRENT BUCS SPORTS

#	Sport	Event	League and Knockout
1	American Football	X* (*LUSL Event Only)	X
2	Archery	X	
3	Athletics	X	
4	Badminton	X	X
5	Baseball & Softball		X
6	Basketball		X
7	Boxing	X	
8	Canoeing	X	
9	Clay Pigeon Shooting	X	
10	Climbing	X	
11	Cricket	X	X
12	Cycling	X	
13	Dodgeball		X
14	Equestrian	X	
15	Fencing	X	X
16	Football		X
17	Futsal		X
18	Gaelic Football		X
19	Golf	X	X
20	Gymnastics	X	
21	Handball	X	
22	Hockey		X
23	Jiu Jitsu	X	
24	Judo	X	
25	Karate	X	
26	Korfball	X	
27	Lacrosse		X
28	Modern Biathlon & Pentathlon	X	
29	Netball		X
30	Orienteering	X	
31	Pool & Snooker	X	
32	Powerlifting	X	
33	Rifle	X	
34	Rounders	X	
35	Rowing	X	
36	Rugby League		X
37	Rugby Union		X
38	Sailing	X	
39	Snowsports	X	
40	Squash	X	X
41	Surfing	X	
42	Swimming	X	
43	Table Tennis	X	X
44	Taekwondo	X	
45	Tennis	X	X
46	Touch Rugby	X	
47	Trampoline	X	
48	Triathlon	X	
49	Ultimate	X	X
50	Volleyball	X	X
51	Water Polo		X
52	Weightlifting	X	
53	Wheelchair Basketball		X
54	Windsurfing	X	