

British University & Colleges Sports (BUCS) & The Football Association (FA) University Women's Leadership Programme

Overview and Partner Recruitment process – July 2025

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) is the national membership organisation for higher education (HE) sport in the UK with the strategic ambition 'To deliver exceptional student sporting experiences that **inspire, develop** and **unite**'. Our mission within this strategy is to embed sport and active wellbeing at the heart of student experience. More information on BUCS can be found by visiting www.bucs.org.uk.

With People Development as one of the four strategy themes, BUCS has a track record of providing CPD opportunities to staff members and students within higher education sport. This has been inclusive of a national conference, development events, workshops, seminars, networks and specifically related to this tender, delivery of a women's leadership programme with football at the heart.

BUCS has over 150 Higher Education Institution members and over 100,000 students compete in BUCS competitions and events annually. Each institution will have several students in leadership roles that both facilitate and enable the success of such sport and physical activity programmes across the sector.

BUCS and the FA have worked in partnership for several years with a collaborative aim of growing and servicing the game within the HE sector and its local communities. All projects and programmes align to the FA Grassroots Strategy "A Thriving Grassroots Game" 2024-2028 and The FA Women's & Girls Strategy "Reaching Higher" 2024-2028. This Women's Leadership Programme will contribute to the "developing a valued network of volunteers, coaches & referees" priority.

Following six successful cohorts of the programme, which earned a global FISU award for gender equality, we are now seeking a partner to work with us for the next 3 years to support in both the delivery, development and growth of the programme over the next three years. We are seeking a partner that understands the HE sector, values football and the role it can play and wants to implement change and growth for young female leaders. The partner will deliver the programme in its current guise for the upcoming season and will then work collaboratively to review, develop, change and grow for the following two years delivery.

PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

Based on FA commissioned research into the key behaviours that align to high performance in professional roles and/or increased chances of employability; the programme aims to support female students with aspirations to work within the game, to be competitive when they enter the job market. Seeking to bridge the gap between who the students are, and what they are capable of, through experiential and applied learning experiences: students will have the opportunity to develop their skills, behaviours, confidence and professional network, as well as be supported in defining their career goals and ambitions by exploring and understanding the diverse opportunities that exist in football.

The 25/26 cohort has 16-22 places available and is open to all students across England – we target a diverse representation to aid learning for all. The programme will have three multi-day and one single day touch points across a twelve-month period, including a minimum of two residential stays. The programme should feature both theoretical and applied learning experiences, with students being placed in 'real life' simulated tasks.

As we enter our 7th year, we have learnt a lot and have invested a great deal of time in capturing the impact we are seeking the programme to have (Our Why – Vision) and the culture we aim to create that makes the programme unique (Our How – Ethos). It is essential to us that everyone involved with the programme understands and supports the programme's Vision, and is as excited about this as we are, as well as wanting to be part of the programme's Ethos to make this even stronger than it is today.

To help you decide whether this is something you want to be part of we have shared the vision and ethos below.



**UNIVERSITY
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP
PROGRAMME**



BUCS
British Universities
and Colleges Sport

PROGRAMME VISION

Unlock the potential of diverse female students aspiring to work in the Women & Girls' Game, enabling them to be competitive in securing roles that support the Women's Game when they enter the job market.

PROGRAMME OUTCOMES

- Increased knowledge and understanding of the working landscape of football.
- Support the participants to define clear career goals/ambitions whether in the short, medium or long term.
- Develop self-confidence and belief in their ability to succeed.
- Build understanding and self-awareness of own strengths and potential areas for development.
- Expand the professional network of the participants.

THE PROGRAMME FRAMEWORK

The programme framework is built around developing the behaviours that make up the England Football Learning and Development Compass which is underpinned by the Grassroots Behaviours Model. The 8 behaviours are:

- Building Personal Capability
- Motivation to Achieve
- Powerful Communication
- Planning, Organising, and Delivering
- Resilience and Adaptability
- Creating Solutions
- Collaborative Teamwork
- Providing Leadership

The full Leadership framework, outlining the areas to be delivered along with key learning outcomes within each of these themes, can be found attached as Appendix 1.

BUCS is looking to work with a partner organisation that can design, develop and deliver content within these eight themes to selected student leaders from within HE sport.

BUCS are excited to work with a partner organisation to support the creation of a new format for the programme for the 2027 and 2028 season to ensure we continue to deliver an exceptional experience for those involved. The partner must commit to our ethos as outlined below.



PROGRAMME ETHOS

1. Role model – We bring to life the behaviours, values and professional standards expected of the participants.
2. Support – We understand the learning content and help the participants translate this to ensure it can be practically implemented.
3. Accelerate – We build trust and rapport to create a safe environment for participants, so they feel safe to fail, learn and grow.
4. Facilitate – We enable the participants' involvement and participation in discussions and tasks during the residential events.
5. Observe – We watch participants during the residential, capturing insights that are valuable to share with them as feedback.
6. Inform – We identify and share opportunities with the rest of the staff team to drive continuous improvement of residential/the programme/the delivery team.
7. Coach – We drive forward participant learning and commitment to take action through either 1-2-1 or group coaching conversations.
8. Collaborate – We connect and engage with all the delivery team to ensure a consistent and clear learning experience and environment.
9. Care – We recognise and acknowledge the physical and emotional needs of the delivery team as well as the participants and respond accordingly.
10. Agile – We complete other tasks and/or fulfil needs as required to ensure we deliver a high quality personal and professional development experience.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

2025/2026 season

+70 Overall Programme NPS Score

90% of participants agree that WLP positively contributes to their professional/personal development.

90% of participants agree that WLP improved their ability to connect with people.

90% of participants agree that WLP has increased their awareness of the leadership qualities needed to inspire people.

90% of participants agree that WLP improved my ability to develop effective collaborative relationships.

DELIVERY

The leadership programme would be delivered to students across multiple engagement points throughout the year. Any leadership partner would lead the delivery of these face-to-face events and be required to create, develop and manage resources that would track a student leaders progress and development throughout the programme. Dates for the 2025/2026 season are confirmed and can be found below.

Residential 1 (In-Person) – 15 – 19 October 2025

- Arrival and Preparation Day – 15 October 2025
- Staff Training Day – 16 October 2025
- Residential – 17 – 19 October 2025

Residential 2 (Virtual) – 19 – 21 February 2026

- Staff Training Day – 19 February 2026
- Residential – 20 – 21 February 2026



Residential 3 (In-Person) – 18 – 20 June 2026

- Arrival and Preparation Day – 17 June 2026
- Staff Training Day – 18 June 2026
- Residential – 19 – 20 June 2026

Employability Day – 3 July 2026

The partner would need to provide resources and/or mechanisms that would allow students to map, record and reflect on their learning throughout the course.

BUCS in conjunction with the leadership partner may invite additional speakers, key stakeholders and industry experts who are able to enhance the learning experience. Including externals to lead on specific tasks that are delivered at each residential.

Following a successful year of delivery the leadership partner will be asking to work collaboratively with both BUCS and The FA to develop and deliver the programme for the 2026/2027 and 2027/2028 season.

SUBMISSIONS

All submissions should include and cover the following information and refer to the criteria:

- Name of organisation and contact details
- Reference to the programme framework and 8 behaviours:
 - o What your chosen delivery method be for the 2026/2027 season?
 - o Which of the themes would you deliver together across the four delivery days?
 - o What your chosen delivery method be for the 2027/2028 season and beyond?
- Resources - what would you provide and how would these be embedded into the delivery
- How would you ensure a continual learning process in between the delivery day
- How would you align to both BUCS and The FA's aims?
- How would you align to the BUCS values?
- How would you evaluate your effectiveness in the delivery of the leadership programme as a whole
- Specific examples of previous experience of delivering leadership or similar programmes including evidence of best practice and impact
- Overall cost of delivering the programme, including budget detail.
- Why you want to deliver the BUCS & FA University Women's Leadership Programme?
- Referencing the 5-year Impact Report (appendix 2) how would you ensure that the programme continues to deliver the high outcomes.

Any interested partner should send their submission to deliver the BUCS & FA University Women's Leadership Programme to Dan Matthews, BUCS Senior Football Development Manager, dan.matthews@bucs.org.uk, by midday on Friday 8 August.

FAQ's

What is the timeline for tender applications?

- *Tender goes live: Monday 14 July 2025*
- *Tender deadline: Friday 8 August 2025*
- *Interviews: 11 – 22 August 2025 (Virtual)*
- *Tender outcome: Friday 29 August 2025*

How many students will be part of the programme in 2025/2026?

- *22 female student leaders from across the university football sector.*



Who will identify students on the leadership programme?

- Universities will nominate students to the BUCS team; we will form a panel who will score the nominations and ultimately decide who which students receive a place on the programme.

What frequency / number of hours of delivery are expected within the programme in 2025/2026?

- With 11 delivery days planned for 2025/2026, the expectation would be for a minimum of 5/6 hours leadership delivery across each day.
- There is an expectation that the leadership partner will plan and deliver 3 training days for our supporting staff team the day before each residential (included in the delivery section above).
- There would be an expectation to support the learner journey of student leaders as a follow up to these events
- There would be an expectation to liaise regularly with the BUCS Football Development Team throughout the season.

Will the delivery days be at one location or a variety?

- It is likely that the delivery venue will be the same for each event, we generally opt for a midlands venue as this is central to our members. BUCS will be responsible for the coordination of venues in conjunction with the needs of the leadership partner.

Who will deliver the programme content at each event?

- It is the responsibility of the leadership partner to devise and deliver the content at each event. BUCS may invite other experts and key stakeholders to support and enhance delivery, in agreement with the leadership partner.

Who will coordinate logistics for the programme?

- BUCS will retain ownership of the programme and coordinate logistics for the delivery of each event and communication with the students.

Is there an expectation that a student receives some form of resource?

- Yes – any leadership partner should develop resources that not only support the delivery of content but assist the students in their learner journey. This resource should guide them through delivery and enable them to showcase how they are implementing their learning in their own university environment.

Who owns the content of the leadership programme?

- BUCS will retain ownership, and all rights associated with the programme at all times. BUCS may work with commercial partners in association with delivery and input to the programme.

How long will the agreement be?

- It will be a maximum of 3 years with an annual review. This will include working with the successful partner to remodel the programme format going into the 2026/2027 season.

What is the delivery budget for the programme?

- For information on the delivery budget for the programme, please contact dan.matthews@bucs.org.uk.

Is there a set budget allocated for the learning partner?

- The budget for this tender is between £30,000 - £35,000 for more details on this, please contact dan.matthews@bucs.org.uk.

What is the submission process?

- Tender applications should be completed and sent with any supporting evidence to Dan Matthews (BUCS Senior Football Development Manager) – dan.matthews@bucs.org.uk by 12 noon on Friday 8 August 2025.

