

SWEDISH NATIONAL GUIDELINES for elite athletes' dual careers

Recommended actions for the combination of high-performance sports and university education at the Swedish National Sports Universities (RIUs) and Elite Sports-Friendly Universities (EVLs)



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Riksidrottsförbundet
Swedish Sports Confederation

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Swedish Sports Confederation

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1. Introduction

It can be challenging to be a student–athlete¹, combining high-performance sport with a university education. Success in an international competitive athletic career requires long-term, dedicated training and competition both nationally and internationally, which can be difficult to balance with the requirements of a university education.

The combination of high-performance sport (or elite sport) and higher education is addressed in the *EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes*, which provides stakeholders in EU member states (including politicians, schools, sports clubs, and employers) with the minimum standards and guidelines for the management of athletes' dual career (DC).[1]² Each member state is encouraged to develop its own guidelines that reflect local conditions and are based on national research.

'**Dual careers** in sport encapsulates the requirement for athletes to successfully initiate, develop and finalise an elite sporting career as part of a lifelong career, in combination with the pursuit of education and/or work as well as other domains which are of importance at different stages of life, such as taking up a role in society, ensuring a satisfactory income, developing an identity and a partner relationship.'[1] Having a dual career means an individual has a career with two major focuses (for example, sport and study or sport and work) and involves different phases and transitions in the individual's development.

1.1 The current situation in Sweden

The European guidelines confirm that success in student–athletes' dual careers is often dependent on the willingness of key people in various organisations to help, but that they rarely take a systematic approach based on financial and legal agreements.

In international terms, Sweden is a model of organised support for dual career athletes at the gymnasium level (upper secondary school) using financial and legal contracts. Since 1965, the Swedish Sports Confederation (RF) has led the way with its national system for the promotion of high-performance sport and gymnasium-level study in the shape of National Elite Sports Gymnasiums (RIG) and Nationally Approved Sports Programmes (NIU). The system reflects the official sports policy for the twenty-first century, where 'the key idea behind the Swedish model is that elite athletes should be able to proceed with a normal life once their sporting careers are over.'[2]

1 In these guidelines, 'student–athlete' refers to an elite athlete who has received a RIU/EVL certificate based on the definition of a RIU/EVL student, as described in Section 2.

2 The notes in these guidelines refer to the Further Reading at the end of this document.

The ethos of ‘winning in the short and the long run’, developed in step with the Swedish system for elite athletes’ dual careers, refers to their long-term prospects following athletic career termination as ‘winners’ well prepared for their future lives. The point of this philosophy is to make it easier for elite athletes to pursue dual careers in sport and beyond in a socially responsible manner, helping student–athletes realise their full potential both as athletes and as individuals. Student–athletes are short-term winners when they balance their lives sufficiently well to cope with the demands at different levels of development (see Figure 2), thus continuing to develop on several levels at once (see Section 6).

When it comes to dual careers at the university level, however, Sweden’s approach has not been as methodical as it has been at the gymnasium level. As it stands, some universities have many years of experience of facilitating elite athletes’ dual careers (on a broadly contractual basis), while others have only recently begun to work systematically to help students combine high-performance sport and university studies. Given the ever-growing demands made by elite sport and society, the need for a national system for dual careers at sports universities has become pressing. Beginning in 2011, RF has been in dialogue with the sports movement and education system, leading to the launch in 2015 of the Swedish National Sports Universities (Riksidrottsuniversitetet or RIUs) and Elite Sports-Friendly Universities (Elitidrottsvänliga lärosäten or EVLs).

Today, dual careers in Sweden can be illustrated by a simultaneous progression in elite athletes’ studies, sport, and employment throughout their athletic careers (see Figure 1). [3, 4] The model gives an overview of possible paths in a dual career with related career transitions (indicated by the upwards arrows in the diagram), confirming that one career transition is part of a wider whole *and* the individual’s long-term development (see Section 7). The timing and length of each level and transition will depend on the individual and the sport. As the model with its various career transitions shows, there is a need for transition-specific guidelines and support services in order to facilitate student–athletes’ dual careers. These guidelines thus focus on career development and career transitions at the two top levels of the model—the RIUs and EVLs and beyond.

25+	Post-athletic career education	Discontinuation	Vocational post-athletic career
19–24	RIU, EVL, or other university	Mastery 2	Sport as work Sport + work
16–18	RIG, NIU, or other gymnasium	Mastery 1	
13–15	Senior level of compulsory school	Specialisation	
10–12	Intermediate level of compulsory school	Development	
6–9	Junior level of compulsory school	Initiation	
Age	Education	Sport	Work

Figure 1. The Swedish dual career model showing the dual career pathways and transitions in a Swedish context. [3,4]

1.2 The purpose of guidelines for dual careers

Sweden's national guidelines for elite athletes' dual careers are based on the *EU Guidelines on Dual Careers of Athletes* and on Swedish and international research, and their point is to promote the continued development of the RIUs and EVLs in facilitating the combination of high-performance sport and university education in Sweden by means of greater transparency and equality on a surer legal basis. The guidelines are aimed primarily at decision makers and dual career coordinators at Swedish universities and at other collaborative partners such as sports federations (SFs).

The guidelines aim to contribute to

- a greater awareness of student–athletes' dual careers;
- a closer collaboration between academia and sports;
- strategies to enable student–athletes to pursue successful dual careers at universities in Sweden;
- a greater understanding of the Swedish model for the organisation of RIUs, EVLs, and dual careers;
- the dissemination of research findings and best practice in the field; and
- further development of the national guidelines for dual careers, extending them to the gymnasium level (RIG/NIU).

1.3 Athletes' careers, dual careers

Since the 1960s and the early days of research on athletic careers, there have been several changes in the way researchers think about athletes' careers.[5] One of the most significant shifts has been in the way the individual is viewed: no longer simply a high-performing athlete concerned solely with sport, the more holistic approach sees the athlete as a 'whole' person who may have other interests in life outside sport. This changing view has been matched by a lifespan or holistic developmental perspective,[6] which takes into account athletes' development in athletic and non-athletic areas alike, including their psychological, psychosocial, academic, and financial. The change has also led to a broader definition of an athletic career. An athletic career is a developmental process, containing various stages and transitions, and a part of and a resource for an athlete's life career. These changes encourage coaches and counsellors to understand athletes' achievements in their wider career context—in relation to athletes' identity and personal development as well as their lifestyle and wellbeing.

In the holistic athletic career model (Figure 2), it is recognised that athletes undergo simultaneous changes at different levels of their athletic, psychological, psychosocial, academic, and financial development throughout their athletic careers.[7, 8] There is strong support in the research for how such developments, and especially the transitions from one level to the next, coincide at different developmental levels. One example is the dual career, in which athletes' athletic progress overlaps with their academic development, and indeed their psychological, psychosocial, and financial development. For example, student–athletes may need help coping with their development from junior to senior sport, while simultaneously studying at university, becoming an adult, finding a partner, and earning a living.

The holistic athletic career model offers a general understanding of normative athletic careers, but the exact timing and length of the various phases and transitions will depend on the individual and the sport (for example, the optimisation phase comes earlier in sports with early specialisation). In addition to the normative transitions that athletes can expect to face, there are also non-normative transitions that they cannot foresee, such as injury, which can have a major impact on their progress (for career transitions, see Section 7).

With the holistic athletic career model, student–athletes’ dual careers at university level can be described in terms of what they may have to contend with in order to continue to develop successfully. At each level, developmental demands can be expected to take the form of:

- athletic development (for example, more frequent and intense training sessions, the transition from junior to senior competition, and injury and other performance setbacks);
- psychological development (for example, developing a personal identity, maintaining motivation, taking responsibility, and self-care);
- psychosocial development (for example, changing coach, leaving home with corresponding changes in family support, joining new social networks, managing relationships, and communicating personal needs);
- academic development (for example, increased study requirements, greater independence); and
- financial development (for example, paying for equipment and competition fees, finding sponsors or student jobs, and applying for scholarships).

These requirements illustrate the dynamic situations that student–athletes find themselves in, and why they have to balance the time and energy they invest in their daily activities in order to develop as athletes, students, and individuals.

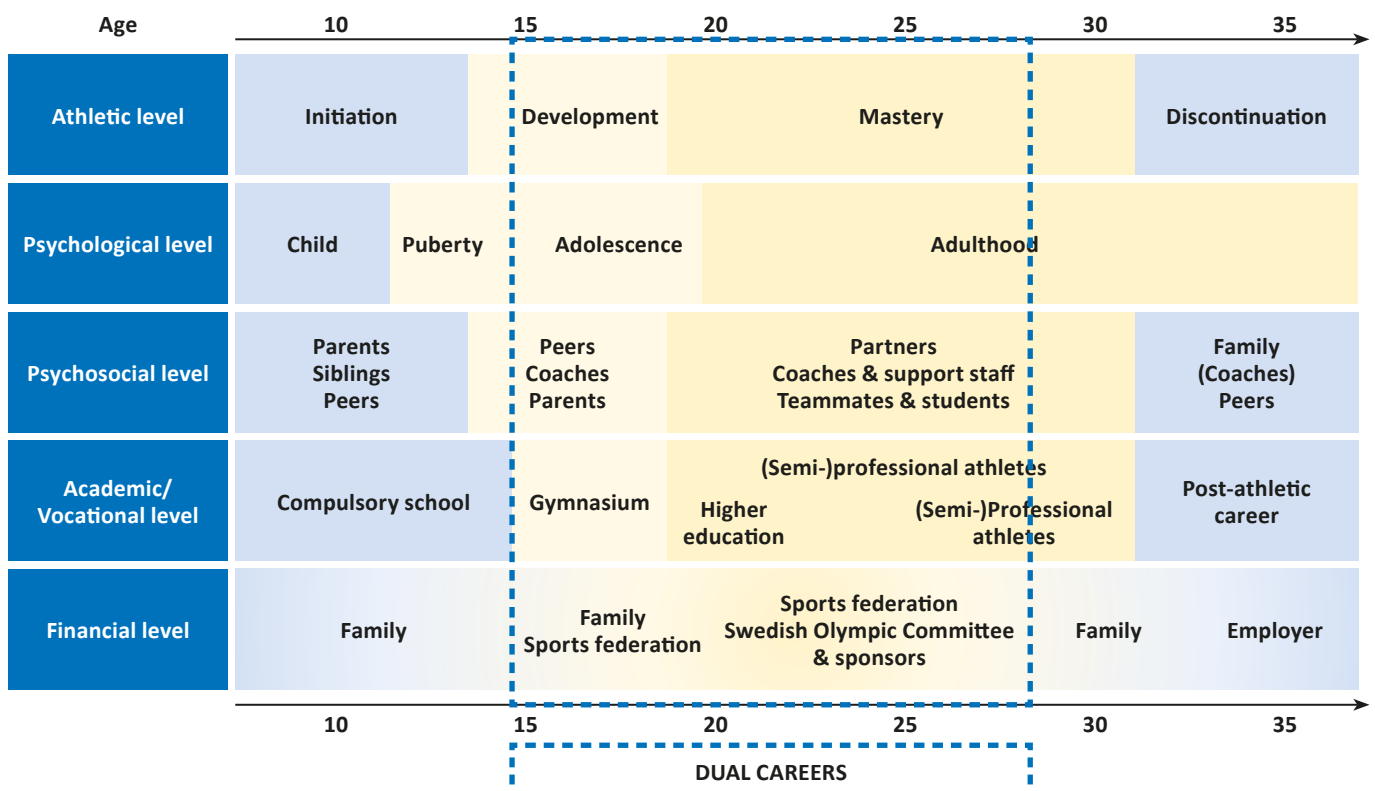


Figure 2. The holistic athletic career model.[7, 8]

1.4 Advantages and disadvantages of dual careers

Swedish and international research[1] has identified several advantages athletes with dual careers have over athletes who do not, or whose athletic and educational careers are not properly coordinated. The benefits are increased well-being (for example, life balance and reduced stress), better health, and a greater opportunity for personal development (for example, personal identity, independence, responsibility, and transferable skills), and clear social benefits in the shape of larger social networks, greater social support, and strong, supportive friendships.

The combination of high-performance sport and university has benefits for student-athletes:[9]

- The need to focus on more than one aspect of life lessens the pressure to achieve and helps put things in perspective.
- It underlines that skills learnt in sports are transferable to university in a mutually advantageous way.
- The mix of physical and intellectual stimulation helps maintain their interest and commitment in the long term.
- It can defuse the frustration of having dedicated their time exclusively to elite sport, but with minimal improvement in sporting performance.
- The recognition that there is more to life than sport can bring a sense of balance.
- It provides a greater self-assurance because they feel their future is secure, whatever their performance, which in turn leads to even greater athletic achievements.

Several long-term advantages of a dual career have also been identified.[1, 10] They include a better adaptation to life after their athletic careers end (for example, with better career planning, shorter adjustment periods, and prevention of identity foreclosure) and financial benefits (for example, greater job opportunities and better access to the labour market).

The disadvantages of a dual career are often seen in student-athletes' dynamic life situations and the daily challenges they face in their pursuit of success on several fronts (see Section 1.3). The demands put on student-athletes to progress simultaneously in their sports, studies, and private lives leave them struggling to make the most efficient use of their time and energy—a way of life best compared to senior management.[9] The main fears in the research literature are that student-athletes might fail to strike a balance, or that demands in one area of life (sport, for example) might overshadow development in others. The effect of a failure to cope with a dual career can result in identity foreclosure and other negative consequences, including a greater risk of injury, overtraining, and mental ill-health (for example, anxiety, depression, burnout), which in turn can lead to student-athletes dropping out of university or competitive sport, or both.[11]

The question of whether the advantages will outweigh the disadvantages comes down to the student-athletes' ability to manage the demands of their immediate situation, the support they are provided with, and the environment they operate in. Examples of the known factors include the individual's dual career competences (for example, an ability to plan and prioritise, discussed in Section 6.1), the individual's financial situation, the coach's attitude to combining sport and education, the quality of the support given by the coach, and the surrounding organisation and culture.

2. The system of Swedish National Sports Universities (RIUs) and Elite Sports-Friendly Universities (EVLs)

At the meeting of the Swedish Sports Confederation Board (RS) in December 2014, the first tentative steps were taken to combine elite sports and university education in Sweden. Commissioned by the Swedish Sports Confederation General Assembly (RIM) in 2011 and 2013, RS had decided to kick-start the process of developing the Swedish National Sports Universities (RIUs) and the Elite Sports-Friendly Universities (EVLs). For the 2015–2018 contract period, the RS appointed three RIUs and eleven EVLs:

- **The RIUs** were Umeå University (Umeå); the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences and KTH Royal Institute of Technology (Stockholm); and University of Gothenburg and Chalmers University of Technology (Gothenburg).
- **The EVLs** were the universities of Dalarna, Jönköping, Halmstad, Karlstad, Linköping, Linnaeus, Malmö, Mid Sweden, Örebro, Stockholm, and Uppsala.

The meeting of the RS in November 2017 invited applications to become RIUs or EVLs for the period 2018–2022 from the following institutions:

- **As RIUs**, the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences and KTH Royal Institute of Technology; and University of Gothenburg and Chalmers University of Technology; Halmstad University and Malmö University; Mid Sweden University; and Umeå University.
- **As EVLs**, Blekinge Institute of Technology, the universities of Dalarna, Jönköping, Kristianstad, Karlstad, Linköping, Linnaeus, Mälardalen, Örebro, and University West.

Between the RIM of 2011 and the RIM of 2013, a working group of representatives from various universities, RF, SISU Sports Education, a number of national sports federations, and one regional sports federation (DF) developed the first national organisational model for the RIUs and EVLs. National and international studies clearly demonstrated the importance of investing in sports coaching degree programmes and in applied high-performance sports research in order to strengthen Sweden's international competitiveness, so it was decided that Sweden's first national model should cover all these areas. It was considered equally important, though, to ensure the possibility of combining high-performance sport and university education was included.

RF has the national responsibility for supporting high-performance sports, in line with the targets set by the RIM in 2015: 'Swedish sport is to achieve greater sporting success internationally'. An important part of RF's work is to ensure collaborations between academia and sports on combining high-performance sports with university education, applied sports research, and specific education initiatives selected to meet the national sports federations' needs.

Challenges to be met in strengthening Swedish sport's international competitiveness: In order to support Swedish high-performance sport, the collaborations between research, education, and practice must be strengthened and harmonised.[12]

Applied high-performance sports research concentrates on the methods and techniques that generate knowledge that can be put into practice by coaches and athletes. In Sweden, research on high-performance sport is a relatively small field, but shows great potential.

Among the ideas that need to be implemented are:

- National sports federation-initiated, practice-based research projects relevant to excellence in performance in the sport in question.
- Reviews of the literature and state of the art for each sport. What is being done internationally and where is Sweden in international terms?
- Academic research findings should be made more accessible to national sports federations and athletes.
- The sports movement needs to work on its coaching, competition, and leadership culture, basing it on systematic analyses and scientifically proven methods.
- National sports federations should generate research questions about their particular sports and collaborate with universities and individual researchers to create research opportunities that will boost Swedish sport.
- Closer collaborations between academia and sport are necessary for coach training programmes of an international standard.
- Research and education must go hand in hand to boost elite coaches' expertise.
- Elite and national team coaches' skills need strengthening across the board, to reflect an absolute standard of expertise required of elite and national team coaches.

The central elements that must be recognised as essential to success as an elite coach are education and practical experience. The essence of practical experience is the ability to apply knowledge and skills in best-practice instruction, didactics, and methods.

- How are different training methods validated by research and best practice experience?
- In what ways can elite and national team coaches benchmark their work, learning by comparison with the best in the world?
- The training process should be characterised by a constructively critical approach, where the ability to analyse, reflect, develop, and adapt is a prerequisite for excellence in training and competition.

Project groups and working groups for the period 2015–2018: RF had two project groups (RIU project management and EVL project management) and three working groups (sports coaching degree programmes, dual careers, applied high-performance sports research). The project leaders' task at their universities was to promote collaboration and good relations between RF, the RIUs, and the EVLs. The working groups also had more specific work to do, such as developing each part of the national model for the RIUs and EVLs. All five groups had a hand in revising the current national model ready for the 2018–2022 period (see below).

2.1 The Swedish organisational model for RIUs, EVLs, and dual careers

The Swedish national model for the organisation of the RIUs, EVLs, and dual careers (see Figure 3) is made up of four areas for the 2018–2022 contract period:

- Education—the possibility of flexible studies for elite athletes.
- Elite sports—development environments for elite sports in collaboration with national sports federations.
- Education initiatives—strategic education initiatives in collaboration with RF.
- Research and development—collaboration between the universities and sports movement on applied research and development.

Higher education and elite sports: The core mission is to facilitate dual careers by ensuring that universities permit flexible studies and collaborate with national sports federations in providing an elite sports environment. Universities, sports federations, and the sports movement work together to integrate their efforts and promotes collaboration and exchange across the various levels of education, student–athletes, and sports in a shared environment for dual careers. Each is summarised below and described in greater detail later (see Sections 3–7).

Education

- Flexible studies, with individual rates of study, lectures, and exams.

Elite sports

- A development environment for elite sports in collaboration with national sports federations
- Collaboration between academia and sport.
- Support from networks of experts in, for example, physiology, medicine, psychology, and nutrition, as well as opportunities for testing.

Balancing sport, study, and private life

- Integrated dual career support from both sports and university staff.
- A holistic approach to student–athletes’ development.
- Develop student–athletes’ dual career competences.
- A network for student–athletes to give a greater sense of community.

Career transitions into and out of RIUs or EVLs, between universities (for example, from an EVL to an RIU), and athletic career termination.

- A proactive, supportive perspective to facilitate student–athletes’ career transitions.

Education initiatives: To undertake an education initiative of this kind is, in collaboration with RF, to lead and develop strategic education initiatives to meet the educational needs of Swedish sport as defined by the RF. Examples of educational initiatives include sports coaching degrees, DC coordinator training, elite coach training (ETU), child and youth coach training (BTU), and sports psychologist training with a focus on cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).

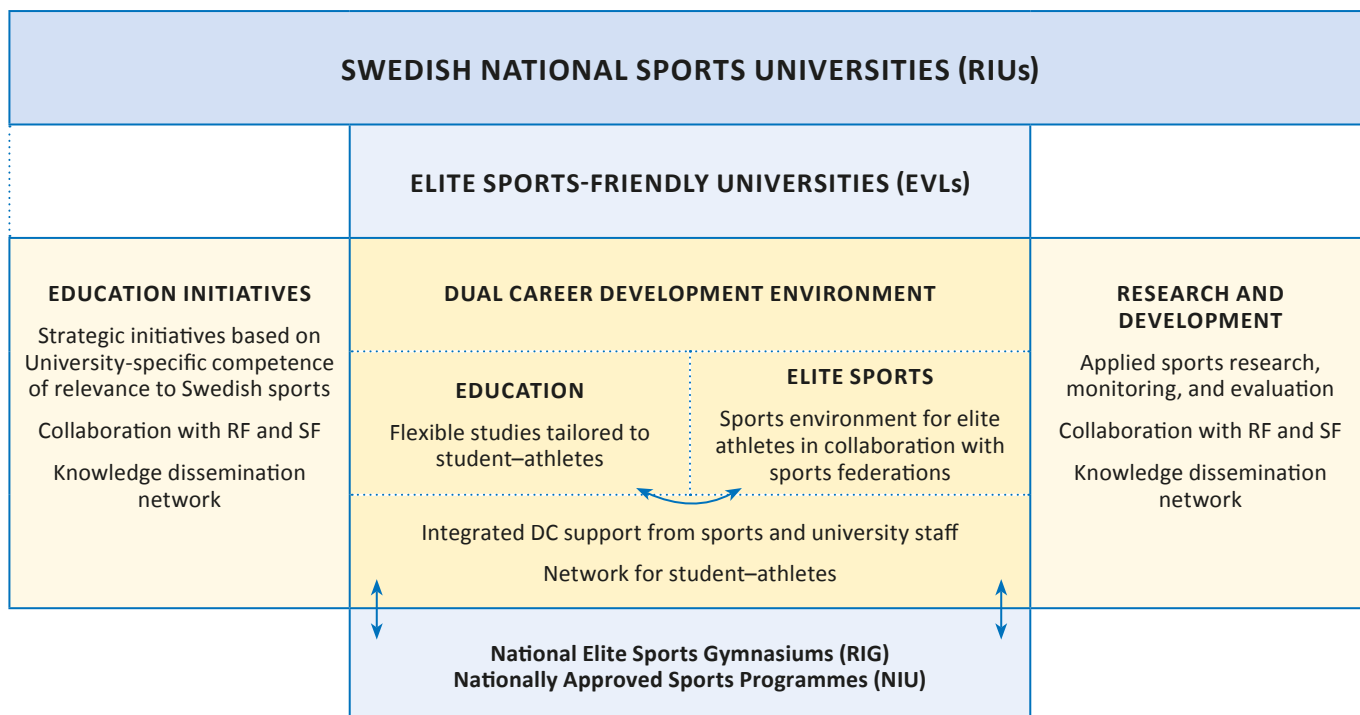


Figure 3. The Swedish model for the organisation of RIUs, EVLs, and dual careers (DC).

Research and development: The Swedish Research Council for Sport Science’s definition of research into high-performance sport ‘refers to projects focusing on sporting excellence, which promote individuals and teams participating in top-class sport. The aim of the research should be to promote the international competitiveness of Swedish sport at senior level. In this context, an elite sports programme is demanding, specialised and highly organised, with clear performance and results targets.’[13] Given this definition, the research and development aspect of the Swedish model means that

- universities, in collaboration with RF and sports federations, should conduct applied research into high-performance sport in order to develop new knowledge and skills for elite and national teams; and
- universities can provide support for the follow-up and evaluation of the sports federations’ elite and national team programmes.

2.2 Defining RIUs and EVLs

The RIUs and EVLs will give athletes, defined by sports federations as potential or current members of a national team, the opportunity to combine high-performance sport with studies at a specific university. To this end, RF has agreed the following definitions:

An **EVL** is a university that offers student-athletes an environment where they can pursue dual careers. This means that

- an EVL should support student-athletes in balancing studies, sport, and private life and in managing their career transitions;
- an EVL offers flexible studies to student-athletes, and a development environment for elite sports for student-athletes in collaboration with the relevant sports federation/clubs; and

- an EVL has a dual career coordinator to lead and develop DC activities and ensure their quality, in the light of the national guidelines for elite athletes' dual careers.

EVLs can conduct research and/or offer an education in collaboration with RF and/or sports federations in areas of relevance to Swedish high-performance sport. EVLs are appointed and contracted by RF for a number of years, with support from RF in according on the scope of their operations, and possible support from the district and region and the relevant sports federations.

An **RIU** is made up of one or more universities that offer the full range of activities in the model for the organisation of RIUs and EVLs and dual careers (see Figure 3). This means that the RIUs

- should cover all the same points as the EVLs;
- as part of their official mission must conduct sports science research and offer an education of immediate relevance to Swedish elite sports; and
- are tasked by RF with collaborating on any of the strategic education initiatives that RF chooses to implement.

RIUs are contracted by RF on a multi-year basis, with RF's support according to the scope of the RIUs' activities and any education initiatives, and with the possible support of the district and region and the relevant sports federations. Each university is entitled to use the specially designed RIU logo.

2.3 Defining RIU and EVL students

An RIU or EVL student is a potential or current member of a national team who is engaged in high-performance sport at a level where flexible studies are necessary.

A 'potential' member of a national team is a student-athlete engaged in

- an individual sport (a) who is identified by or has been selected for the national team's development activities, and (b) is expected to be in the national team or to compete at the top international level within the next 2–5 years;
- a team ball sport (a) who has been selected for the national team's development activities, and (b) is playing in the highest series or division of the sport.

A 'current' member of the national team means that a student-athlete

- is continuously selected for the national team with the aim of competing in international championships (European and world championships and the Olympics and Paralympics);
- under the aegis of the national sports federation, trains and competes according to a regimen designed for excellence at the international level.

2.4 Strategic development, follow-up, and evaluation of the RIUs and EVLs

On the recommendation of the Elite Sports Council, which advises the RS, the RS decided that the RIUs and EVL system should be strategically developed, according to the requirements, funding, and maturity of the system. The ambition is that the entire system of the RIUs and EVLs will evolve to keep pace with sports' needs.

RF follows up and evaluates the RIUs and EVLs once a year by collating information from all the universities involved, describing their work with dual careers, including combining elite sports and university. The universities are required to submit the accreditation certificates for all RIU and EVL students (name, sport, level, and course) to RF. The RIUs also specifies its work on strategic education initiatives and the applied research on high-performance sport. During each contract period, RF makes a site visit to the RIUs, when students are interviewed and the university leadership presents its internal organisation and current activities. Under the contract, RF must provide constructive feedback on the outcomes.

Every year, RF and the universities issue a student questionnaire to get feedback on the evaluations from a student perspective, and for the picture it gives of the venture's strengths and areas for improvement. The results of the student questionnaire is the basis for further developments at the respective universities, and are part of the quality assurance for the RIU and EVL national model.

Applications and contracts of collaboration: RF invites applications from all universities one year before the new contract period starts. An RF internal assessment panel is appointed to consider all the applications. RF's Steering Group for Elite Sports and Education draws up recommendations for the Secretary General of RF and SISU Sports Education, which are then ultimately decided by RS.

Following RS's decision, a contract of collaboration is signed between RF and the universities in question.³ Each contract is for four years—currently 2018–2022.

2.5 Funding RIUs, EVLs, and student-athletes

RF works actively to secure basic funding for the RIUs and EVLs. For RIUs it is a matter of funding the entire venture: strategic education initiatives, dual careers, and applied research. For EVLs it is a matter of funding flexible studies and additional exams for the national team athletes in question. An EVL can also be contracted to undertake strategic education initiatives or applied high-performance sports research projects.

RF and Svenska Spel's Elite Sports Scholarship: In order to support student-athletes financially, RF and Svenska Spel together award scholarships to facilitate the combination of high-performance sport and university education. RF ensures that recipients are primarily students at the RIUs and EVLs, where the scholarships boost individual opportunities for a dual career. The universities are committed to advertising the scholarships' existence to students who are recognised by their sports federations as current or potential members of a national team.

The scholarships enable athletes to combine elite sports and a university education. Announced at the Swedish Sports Awards every year, 75 student-athletes receive scholarships, worth SEK 50,000 each and paid termly (SEK 25,000 a term). Recipients can also attend a training camp at the RF sport development centre in Bosön near Stockholm. The Elite Sports Scholarships are part of RF's support for the sports federations, and thus all applicants are ranked by their respective sports federations. RF and Svenska Spel's Elite Sports Scholarships began in 1980 and have supported many successful athletes.

³ RF's national guidelines for RIUs and EVLs as published in Swedish, and not the English translation of the same, inform all such contracts.

RF and Folksam's Elite Sport Insurance: An elite athlete can take out RF and Folksam's Elite Sport Insurance, either individually or through the RIUs or an EVL. The insurance covers medical costs in the event of accident or illness (investigations, healthcare, hospital care, treatment, and prescriptions) prescribed by a qualified doctor, up to one year after the injury or illness (the period of liability). Compensation is paid regardless of the medical care (public or private) and without an excess. Two levels of insurance are available: Base and Base+Extra.

Guidelines for RIUs and EVLs

1. Work to raise awareness and understanding among staff and other stakeholders and collaborative partners of the Swedish organisational model for RIUs, EVLs, and dual careers.
2. Work to establish a positive attitude among the university leadership towards elite athletes combining high-performance sport with a university education.
3. Work with RF to improve student-athletes' financial situation.

3. Facilitating an environment for dual careers

Section 3 introduces the dual career development environment model as adapted to the Swedish university context (Figure 4).[14] It is intended to facilitate a holistic approach to student–athletes’ development, charting the various stakeholders and relationships involved in facilitating an environment for dual careers.

The dual career development environment model is a framework for describing the environment’s key roles, functions, and components and their interrelations, set in a broader sociocultural context. It is a heuristic working model that reflects the specificities of Swedish sport, education, and society, designed to guide assessments of the organisation and functioning of different dual career development environments.

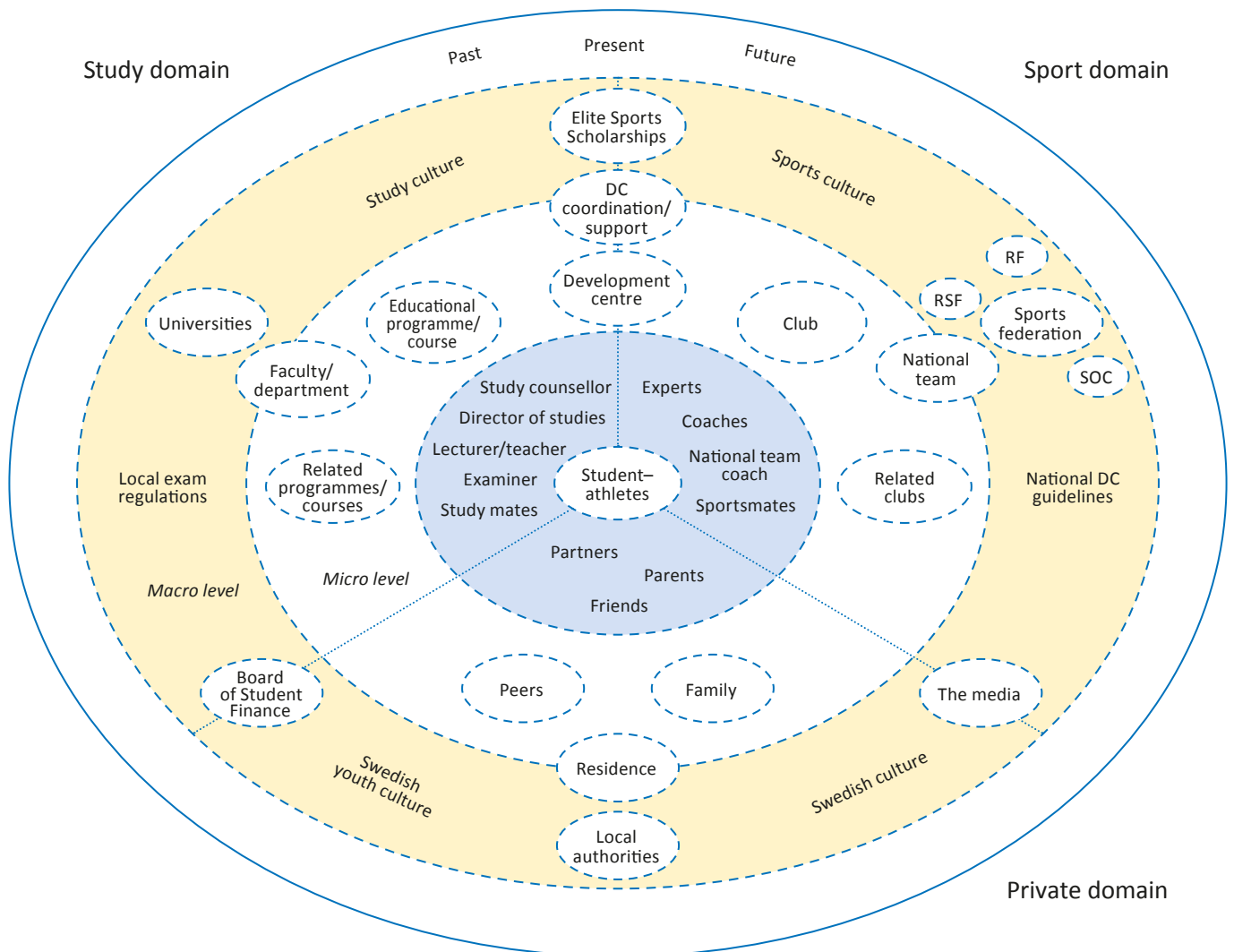


Figure 4. The dual career development environment model as adapted to the Swedish university context.[14]

RF = Swedish Sports Confederation
 RSF = Regional Sports Federation
 SOC = Swedish Olympic Committee

The dual career development environment model takes a holistic approach to dual careers on two levels (the micro and the macro) and in three domains (study, sport, and private life). The micro level describes their everyday environment and the key figures whom student-athletes communicate with directly—coaches, parents, lecturers, and the like—all of them drawn from one or more micro-level contexts, such as a sports club, family, or a university department. The micro level thus consists of the student-athletes' immediate surroundings, where their dual career development (study, sport, and personal development) takes place. The micro level is embedded in the macro level, the sociocultural context that indirectly impacts on student-athletes, but does not involve them as active participants (for example, in decision-making), and is represented by three main stakeholders: universities, sports federations, and local authorities.

The micro and macro levels are linked mainly through the position of the programme of study at the university faculty or department, the student-athletes' involvement in the national team, and their place of residence in relation to family and friends or their proximity to their sport or university (affecting their commuting time, for example). The macro level also reflects the values and traditions of the culture to which student-athletes belong, their financial situation (for example, Board of Student Finance loans and RF and Svenska Spel's Elite Sports Scholarships), and the various sporting and university regulations that affect their situation (for example, local exam regulations). The outer layer of the model—the past, present, and future—is a reminder that the environment is dynamic, and that student-athletes and their contexts influence one another in a reciprocal manner with their traditions, history, and future.

Several case studies in Nordic contexts relevant to Swedish dual careers have identified the characteristics of a successful athletic talent development environment. [15, 16] These common features vary in the way in which they are implemented, each environment having a unique way of functioning.

The characteristic features of a successful athletic talent development environment are as follows:

- Integration of effort, meaning coordination and communication between sports, universities, family and friends, and other stakeholders, so that the student-athletes' experience is of a coherent synergy in the environment as a whole.
- A coherent organisational culture, with clear values that are acted upon, and which lend stability to the group and the learning environment.
- Supportive schools, families, friends, and others who acknowledge and accept the athletes' dedication to sport.
- Athletes who develop transferable skills that are valuable beyond their immediate application in sport (for example, responsibility, teamwork, communication skills).
- Athletes who are treated as 'whole' people and not just as athletes.
- A focus on long-term development rather than early success, with the duration and nature of the training appropriate to athletes' ages and maturity.
- An inclusive and communicative training community that offers athletes supportive relationships and friendships regardless of their level of performance.
- Coaching situations with role models who are willing to share their knowledge.
- A full range of basic sporting skills in addition to sport-specific training, with versatile forms of training (for example, by trying other sports or training with other athletes).

A pilot study^[14] has identified the following characteristics of a dual career development environment at a Swedish university: (1) sports and university staff coordinate and integrate their efforts to facilitate the students' dual careers; (2) flexible studies are built into the educational programme; (3) student–athletes form a cohesive group; (4) there is access to high-quality coaching, expert support, and facilities as part of a development environment for elite sports, within a community supporting the sport; (5) support providers (sport and study) share a basic philosophy (for example, a holistic approach, a focus on long-term development, an emphasis on transferable skills between sports and university/working life, and the cross-fertilisation of sport and education); (6) the clear and explicit responsibility of each member of the support staff for their individual areas, but shared responsibility for the whole; and (7) knowledge transfer, with opportunities for elite student athletes to learn from one another (for example, group training with athletes from other sports, student mentorships, and direct access to role models).

The Erasmus+ Project 'Ecology of Dual Career—Exploring Dual Career Development Environments across Europe', aim to study dual career development environments across Europe in 2018–2019 in order to provide recommendations for their optimisation, which will be very useful for the continued development of this in Sweden.

Guidelines for RIUs and EVLs (continued)

4. Work to raise awareness among student–athletes, support staff, and other stakeholders of the dual career development environment for student–athletes and the role they have in it.
5. Work to appoint DC coordinators to coordinate efforts across the dual career development environment as a whole.⁴
6. Work to participate in a network of DC support staff (for example, DC coordinators and DC support providers) to promote the exchange of knowledge, experience, and best practices.

⁴ DC coordinators organise, coordinate, and develop the dual career development environment as a whole, as opposed to DC support providers (DCSPs) (see Section 6), who work closely with student–athletes to help them with their individual dual career pathways. Depending on the university, both roles can be held by one person or they can be split between several different people, requiring careful coordination.

4. Facilitating academic development

In accordance with RF's contracts with the RIUs and EVLs, the universities must promote the academic development of student-athletes by enabling them to combine high-performance sport and a university education. The contracts state that each university should provide those athletes defined by sports federations as current or potential national team athletes with the opportunity for flexible studies tailored to student-athletes, including individual rates of study, lectures, and exams. This means in practice that it is the university departments and institutions that have immediate responsibility. Exam requirements for student-athletes are to be the same as for all other students, but an RIU/EVL certificate issued by a sports federation makes individually tailored study possible. The RIU/EVL certificates are issued to elite athletes who are engaged in high-performance sport to such a degree that flexible studies are a necessity if they are to combine sport with a university education.

Regardless of the university subject and the sport, student-athletes should have the opportunity to receive a university education tailored to their requirements as elite athletes. The choice of subject (whether complete or freestanding courses) should not limit student-athletes; rather, they should be able to take the subjects and programmes best suited to their own interests and academic qualifications.

Student-athletes do not have priority in admissions to university courses and programmes, and must go through the same admissions process as everyone else. Study location can affect the student-athletes' ability to pursue their sport and limit their choice of education. If a student-athlete, due to a change in athletic career, needs to relocate to another university, it would be preferable if 'late admissions' were possible in order to facilitate the continued combination of sport and study.

Flexible studies come with the proviso that (i) the student-athletes themselves want it; (ii) it does not break the university's rules and regulations; (iii) it is necessary in order for student-athletes to pursue dual careers in a responsible manner; and (iv) it does not prevent personal development (by indulging or overparenting students).

Facilitating student-athletes' academic development is a question of flexible studies—lectures, study rates, and exams—which in turn requires increased knowledge and understanding about dual careers on the part of lecturers, examiners, study counsellors, study coordinators, admissions officers, study counsellors, careers advisors, DC coordinators, and the like.⁵ The following sections enlarge on this.

⁵ Please note that while the term 'study counsellor' is used throughout this section, their actual title and role can vary according to the university organisation.

4.1 Student–athlete expectations

The design of dual career programmes should meet athletes' individual needs taking into account their age, sport specialisation, career level, and financial status, with the athletes themselves taking increasing responsibility as they progress through their career.[1]

It is essential that student–athletes know what is expected of them and what they can expect from their university when they begin their studies. Student–athletes have a major responsibility for their success in combining high-performance sport and a university education. In order for it to work, a good interaction between the students, their sport, and their studies is crucial.

The students need to know their rights, but also their obligations, and must meet the ethical norms of the Swedish sport and education systems. Universities must make student–athletes aware of the challenges they can face in combining elite sport and a university education, while at the same time providing them with the information they need about the support they can expect to receive. There are some considerations for student–athletes to bear in mind:

- **Open communication and clarity:** Student–athletes need to be clear in communicating their ambitions in their sport and studies to their university. They will also need to be clear with their university about their personal and social needs and wishes in order to access the best possible support.
- **Forward planning:** Student–athletes must plan well in advance if they will require flexible studies. As soon as their term or course schedule and training and competition schedules are known, they should discuss it with their study counsellors. An open dialogue and planning will permit far greater flexibility in their university studies, especially when student–athletes are only told at short notice that they are to participate in training camps or competitions. It is important for sport and study planning to be integrated, and good planning will include both how their studies can be adapted to their sport *and* how their sport can be adapted to their studies.
- **Networking with other students:** Networking with other students is important, as it can help student–athletes with their studies in various ways, for example, by helping with lecture notes, studying together, and more.
- **Daring to ask for help:** Many student–athletes might feel awkward asking for help as they are used to success coming from their own efforts. They might view lowering their pace of study as a failure. Here the university will be central in showing them that it is not a sign of weakness to ask for help in arranging a suitable programme of study.

4.2 Individual programmes of study on special grounds

Many student–athletes will need an individual programme of study: for those who intend to study at a different pace to the syllabus, they will need one that specifies when they are to take the various course components. In practical terms, an individual programme of study makes it possible for student–athletes to take even the programmes and courses that do not normally offer the opportunity to study at a slower pace. Students may need to study intensively at certain points of the year and less so at others in order for their combination of high-performance sport and university education to work.

An individual programme of study is a mutual agreement between the student–athlete and the university, and should be signed by both the student and the study counsellor (or equivalent). It is important that the parties are agreed on the conditions that apply in an individual programme of study.

Note that this does not mean that each student has an individually tailored course syllabus; it is only the programme of study that is individualised, which clearly sets out which courses the student is taking, when, and the course requirements which determine whether the student is qualified to take the course. Any individual programme of study must also clearly state whether there are any special prerequisites that must be met in order for the student to proceed to the next course, and when any outstanding assignments are to be done.

When starting university, it is best for students to contact their study counsellors (or equivalent) to discuss the broad outlines of an individual programme of study. A more detailed or revised programme can then be agreed before the start of each term. Thereafter, student–athletes will need to communicate in advance with all parties (lecturers, examiners) about the possibilities for adjustments during ongoing courses.

Study elsewhere and approved leave: If there are periods when their sport requires that student–athletes will not be near their normal university, their ability to continue their studies will be affected. One alternative, if there is a university in their temporary location, is to take courses there that can be credited to their existing degree programme. If there is no suitable university or course available in their temporary location, it would be better to take approved leave from their studies (with a place guarantee), making it part of their individual programme of study.

Practical example

At the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, the Vice-Chancellor has ordered that elite athletes fall under the ‘special reasons’ quota for work placement training and approved leave.

Study abroad: Student–athletes may find it necessary to spend part of their university careers abroad (for example, because of training or competitions). This should be included in their individual programmes of study.

Practical example

A student–athlete studying medicine at Umeå University did part of his clinical placement in Colombia, where the climate and training opportunities for his sport were excellent. A student–athlete studying Civil Engineering did an MA dissertation in Prague when she spent a season competing there, but she was supervised from Umeå.

Work placement training and other placements: It is desirable that student–athletes if possible be given precedence when choosing where to do their work placement training in order to combine it with their training and competitions. This should be stated in their individual programme of study.

Practical example

Umeå University has amended its rules for placements and study elsewhere so that where there is competition for placements, student–athletes are included in one of the priority groups.

4.3 Distance and distributed learning

Student–athletes can be helped to develop academically with flexible forms of education delivery. Flexible arrangements enable student–athletes to follow their courses, despite many days of travel, prolonged absences, and more. Distance learning with on-campus meetings or entirely online are two possible solutions when combining university education with high-performance sport, whether for an entire degree or for a limited period. It is in the nature of many university courses that they cannot be offered as distance courses in their entirety; however, they can be adapted in such a way as to allow some if not all distance learning using a digital learning platform.

Practical example

As part of Halmstad University’s Professional Career in Sport and Working Life programme, all course components are filmed and made accessible to student–athletes on a digital learning platform. The filmed components have not brought a fall in on-campus attendance.

4.4 Adapting the times and formats of exams

Student-athletes may need to be absent from their studies for sporting reasons, including competitions, training, training camps, and travel. In order that they can complete their chosen programmes and courses, it may be necessary to adapt the timing and form of exams. This applies primarily, but not exclusively, to compulsory written exams. It is a stipulation that any such adaptation does not alter the exam requirements, and that it should be allowed under the exam regulations of the university in question.

The point of adapting an exam is to identify the best solution, with student-athletes expected to play an active part by communicating their needs to the examiners and others. In that each university has a member of staff responsible for coordinating student-athletes (for example, a DC coordinator) they can, on a needs basis, assist in the dialogue with the relevant university departments, and support both the student-athletes and university staff in the process. Various examples of adapting exams are as follows.

Retakes: If student-athletes are unable to attend an exam at the appointed time, the first alternative is to postpone until the retakes, which all courses at Swedish universities offer.

Written exams at other times: If student-athletes are unable to attend ordinary exams or retakes, and this will have a long-term impact on their academic progress (for example, it is a course requirement for subsequent studies, or it will affect their eligibility for student funding), the university should consider whether students can be examined with another course group as soon as possible, or whether a further exam can be offered within their own course.

Written exams elsewhere: If due to their sport student-athletes are elsewhere at the time of an exam (whether in Sweden or abroad), they and their home university can look into the possibility of sitting the exam in their temporary location (for example, at a nearby university). It would be useful if universities were to regard student-athletes as 'students on special grounds', who thus have the right to be examined elsewhere.

Illustrative example

Charlie is an athlete and is studying Civil Engineering. He has the chance to attend a training camp in southern Spain, but it coincides with one of his written exams. Charlie himself checks to see if there is a university where the training camp is being held, which there is, and he tells his study counsellor a month in advance. The study counsellor contacts the Spanish university and arranges the practical details such as the length of the exam and invigilation, and sends them the exam. Charlie sits the exam in Spain, on the same day and at the same time as his coursemates in Sweden.

Weekend exams: If exams are always held at weekends, consideration ought to be given to student–athletes, who often have competitions, matches, training camps, or training at the weekends.

Early start or delayed start exams: If student–athletes are competing, for example, and thus need to start a written exam either earlier or later on the day of the exam, it should be possible as long as they comply with the university regulations on examinees arriving late in the exam hall and leaving early (for example, that they may not leave the exam hall until the ordinary exam has started).

Other compulsory exams: If student–athletes, due to their sport, cannot attend compulsory exams, whatever the form (for example, a seminar or a practical), the university ought to consider alternative forms of examination (for example, through submitted work equivalent to the original exam). However, any alternative must not deviate from the requirements of the syllabus. One simple solution, when appropriate, is to permit student–athletes to participate online using video conferencing software.

Practical example

Halmstad University’s Professional Career in Sport and Working Life programme uses a flexible ‘digital presence’ for compulsory seminars, whereby off-campus students arrange with their on-campus coursemates to attend via their tablets or similar, having communicated this to the lecturer beforehand.

Independent degree projects: Occasionally, student–athletes may need to complete their independent degree projects individually, because they are unable to coordinate the writing of the dissertation with their coursemates, or for other sports-related reasons. It is desirable that the university takes this into account when appointing supervisors.

Practical example

Umeå University has complemented its existing exam regulations with a policy for the combination of high-performance sport and university education. The policy describes what examiners and lecturers can do to adapt exams to meet student–athletes’ needs.

Guidelines for RIUs and EVLs (continued)

7. Work to adopt a university policy for the combination of high-performance sport and a university education, including how exams can be adapted for student–athletes under university exam regulations.
8. Work to establish an agreement or contract between university and student–athlete that sets out both parties’ rights and obligations, and states what is expected of both in order for the combination of high-performance sport and a university education to succeed.
9. Work to increase staff awareness (for example, lecturers, examiners, study counsellors) of various measures to adapt university studies to the needs of student–athletes.
10. Work to facilitate student–athletes’ responsibility by presenting them with learning opportunities in, for example, planning, advance preparation, and communication.
11. Work to put student–athletes on a par with other students who have an adapted university education on special grounds (for example, work placement training).
12. Work to establish, on a needs basis, an individual programme of study for those student-athletes who cannot keep pace with a university programme or course.
13. Work to increase the opportunities for flexible studies by
 - a. making all course information and teaching materials available online, for example on a learning platform;
 - b. encouraging lecturers to record and broadcast their lectures (including on-campus courses); and
 - c. allowing student–athletes to participate in seminars using video conferencing when they cannot attend in person because of their sport;.
14. Work to develop distance or online courses in areas relevant to high-performance sport or student–athletes.
15. Work to establish a network of contacts at the RIUs and EVLs to enable students to sit exams away from their home university.
16. Work to established exchange programmes with universities abroad where high-performance sport can be combined with a university education.

5. Facilitating athletic development

This section focuses on how the RIUs or EVLs can help facilitate student–athletes’ pursuit of athletic excellence by collaborating with the sports movement to create development environments for elite sport. The ambition should be to give student–athletes every opportunity to train and develop individually using scientifically proven methods. The sports movement has the prime responsibility for facilitating athletic excellence, and with the support of the universities can increase resources and competences.

5.1 Organizing a development environment for elite sports

In order to pursue their sport, student–athletes need access to a strong development environment for elite sports. It is important to have a shared understanding of how such a development environment can be created, and how universities and the sports movement can play to their strengths to do so (combining, for example, academia’s scientific method and sport’s practical applications). The main responsibility for the development environment lies with the sports movement, but what form it takes will depend on the closeness of the relationships and collaborations between the sports movement and individual universities. As such partnerships evolve, they can become increasingly integrated, adding to their value for the student–athletes’ development. An analysis of the situation countrywide shows that collaborations between universities and the sports movement take many forms, some more integrated than others.

- Athletes train at a sports club, without collaboration with a university. The student–athletes have sole responsibility for their dual careers.
- Athletes train at a sports club, with a formal cooperation agreement with a university. There is a named contact at the sports club and both parties undertake to promote dual careers.
- Athletes train at sports clubs, and student-athletes from various sports clubs are brought together in a network managed in collaboration by, for example, the university, a regional sports federation, a regional sports association, or other body (such as a charity or foundation).
- Athletes train mostly or entirely at a development/high performance centre (often with national team activities), managed in collaboration, for example, by a university, sports federation, sports club, and local authority.
- Athletes train in a local or regional development environment for dual careers (for example, from age 16 and up). Involving several levels of education and several sports, the development environment is a collaboration between, for example, universities, gymnasiums (RIG/NIU), sports federations, sports clubs, regional sports federations, and local authorities or county councils. Several development/high-performance centres can be included in such an environment.

Several stakeholders (see Section 3) are needed to set up a development environment for elite sport, primarily determined by local conditions and the sport in question. For some sports, athletic development can benefit from being largely or completely within a sports club with a high-performance environment. This is especially true of team ball sports. For other sports, and especially individual sports, a formal collaboration between the university and the various sports federations is essential in order to establish a development environment for elite sport. The regional sports federations and local authorities will also be important partners, as will the sports gymnasiums (RIG/NIU). The Swedish University Sports Federation (SAIF) is another key partner, because it helps prepare, stage, and evaluate the Universiade.

Across Sweden there are examples of development environments for elite sport, for example (from north to south) the development and competence centres at Umeå School of Sports Science, the Swedish Winter Sports Research Centre in Östersund, Dala Sports Academy in Falun, Sports Campus Sweden in Stockholm, LiU Elite Sport in Linköping, the RIUs Gothenburg in collaboration with the Västra Götaland Sports Federation, the Athletic Development Centre in Växjö, the Elite Sports and Academy in Halmstad with the Swedish Golf Federation's Development Centre for Golf Excellence in Halmstad, and Malmö Sports Academy in Malmö.

5.2 The key aspects of a successful development environment for elite sports

Nordic research with relevance to athletes' dual careers has identified the key factors that characterise a successful athletic talent development environment (see Section 3).[15] Successful athletic talent development environments have been studied in the Swedish context,[17] and show in line with the Nordic research a number of key factors: the importance of a culture characterised by a clear structure, qualified expert coaches, ready access to good training facilities and equipment, a holistic approach to the individual taken, for example, by the expert support of various kinds, and a supportive training group with good relationships and role models (see Section 3). All student-athletes, whether they compete in team sports or individual sports, will benefit from qualified expert coaches, good facilities, testing, and expert support in a variety of areas.

Qualified expert coaches: Student-athletes need access to competent coaches if they are to excel in their athletic careers. Coaches need a basic knowledge of sports physiology, sports psychology, sports medicine, sports nutrition, anatomy and kinetics, leadership and didactics, as well as expert knowledge of training and competition in practice, as well as sport-specific techniques and tactics. The appropriate formal qualifications to work with student-athletes are a sports coaching degree and/or sports teacher education plus the highest coach certification from the relevant sports federations. The ambition should be to give student-athletes every chance to pursue their chosen sports, coached using scientifically proven methods and best practice.

Sports facilities: In order to compete internationally at the highest level, student-athletes need access to full sports facilities to support their training, competition, and development. Universities, working with the local authorities, sports federations, regional federations, sports clubs, and others, can secure access to improved

sports facilities as part of the organisation of their development environment for elite sports.

Expert support: For sporting achievements at the highest level, student–athletes need to develop not only technically, tactically, physically, and mentally, but also personally and socially. It is important that each student–athlete is treated with respect as a ‘whole’ person by support staff (see Section 6.2) in order to support their personal development. Support staff must have a good working knowledge of the challenges encountered by student–athletes during and after a dual career.

All support should be based on scientific grounds and/or backed by scientific expertise. It is important that support staff respect the student–athletes’ integrity and rights, and act in accordance with their professional standards and codes of conduct. They should also stay up to date with recent developments in their profession. It is essential that support staff do not offer support or advice that lies outside their own competence, knowledge, or expertise, and where necessary refer student–athletes on to the appropriate staff or experts. A formal network of various types of expert support is therefore of great importance, and such a support network will include experts who can support student–athletes in such areas as:

- sports physiology and biomechanics;
- sports psychology;
- sports medicine and physiotherapy;
- sports nutrition;
- performance analysis;
- anti-doping; and
- finance (for example, starting a business), law (contracts), media (media training, social media presence), and marketing (personal branding).

A network of experts can be developed based on the competence and expertise at a university, or as a collaboration between the sport and the university. What matters is that student–athletes have access to the expert support on offer. Access to support can mean, for example, lectures and seminars on personal development in relevant areas and skills for elite athletes, preventive counselling, or access to ongoing or one-off expert support when needed.

Testing: Student–athletes can benefit from developing their ability to evaluate and follow up their own training and development using scientifically based methods, in order to create their own development plan with a long and healthy athletic career in mind. For that reason, it is desirable that all universities involved give student–athletes the opportunity to undergo various tests, and to be trained in test analysis and evaluation, as part of their individual development. Testing is in this sense a tool for monitoring and evaluating individual progress, and part of a performance analysis to identify the key factors in an individual’s development of sports performance, health, and well-being.

Guidelines for RIUs and EVLs (continued)

- 17.** Work to have formal contracts between RIUs and EVLs and various stakeholders to organise a development environment for elite sports appropriate to local conditions, including sports federations, local authorities and county councils, regional sports federations, sports clubs, sports gymnasiums (RIG/NIU), and the Swedish Olympic Committee and the Swedish Paralympic Committee.
- 18.** Work to have a local or regional development environment for dual careers (for example, for age 16 and up), to involve several levels of education and several sports, in a collaboration between a university, gymnasiums (RIG/NIU), sports federations, sports clubs, regional sports federations, and local authorities or county councils.
- 19.** Work to promote the establishment of good development environments for elite sports
 - a. with student–athletes’ coaches who have both a sports coaching degree and the highest coach certification from the relevant sports federation;
 - b. with access to full sports facilities for elite athletes in conjunction with other stakeholders (for example, local authorities, sports federations, sports clubs);
 - c. by establishing and coordinating a network of experts in relevant areas and enabling student–athletes to access that support; and
 - d. by enabling student–athletes to complete various tests and offering training in test analysis and evaluation as part of their individual development plans.
- 20.** Work under the aegis of the Swedish Sports Confederation to establish national standards for expert support staff to ensure they have the necessary education and competence to work with student–athletes at the RIUs and EVLs, and to establish a national network of expert support staff to promote the exchange of knowledge, experiences, and best practice.

6. Facilitating a balance between sport, study, and private life

A weekday everyone can handle, but can you handle all your weekdays?

(Helena Jansson, former medical student and World Champion in orienteering)

Student–athletes often acknowledge it is a challenge to stay on top of life as both a student and an athlete. In an attempt to cope, many of them neglect their private and social lives in order to have more time for sport or study. The challenge for student–athletes lies in balancing their lives so that they can handle the demands of various levels of development (see Section 1.3), and so continue to develop on several levels at once. Balance in this sense should not be thought an equal distribution of time and energy across the board. It is natural for the balance to vary, with one activity requiring more time or energy than another, and then later changing; however, in an individual’s development over time, the individual should feel that life is in balance.

Optimal dual career balance is defined as a combination of sport and studies that helps student–athletes achieve their educational and athletic goals, live satisfying private lives, and maintain their health and well-being.[4]

Achieving a balance in a dual career is both individual and dynamic. Examples of ways to achieve balance include:

- learning to shift priorities between sport, study, and private life, where the prioritised role and associated tasks are given more time and effort, and the other role and associated tasks are maintained to the point where a quick comeback can be made when necessary;
- planning the sports season and the academic year in an integrated way;
- developing a support network (friends, family, coaches, directors of studies, study counsellors); and
- developing dual career competences.

6.1 Competences for a successful dual career

The Erasmus+ project, ‘Gold in Education and Elite Sport’ (www.gees.eu)[18] has led Swedish and European research to focus on how student–athletes succeed in becoming winners in the short run by examining how they manage the challenging scenarios they encounter in their dual careers, and what competences they need to successfully manage their dual careers.

Challenging scenarios in a dual career are characterized by demands on several levels of development at once, including: (i) planning an academic year, only to find that exams conflict with a crucial competitive phase; (ii) choosing subjects and courses that make it possible to manage the integration of both sport and study in future; (iii) catching up on study and group assignments during or after a competition or training camp; (iv) leaving home and adapting to a new social environment, and managing it with less family support than before; (v) recovering from injury at the same time as studying; (vi) finding time for a social life outside sport; and (vii) generating an income to finance both study and sport. Swedish student–athletes generally managed the challenging scenarios well. Leaving home and adapting to a new social setting was the scenario they coped best with; they found recovering from injury, finding time for a social life, and generating an income the most difficult. The results also showed that student–athletes had a limited awareness of the dual career competences that might be useful in managing various scenarios.

The GEES project findings also indicate that Swedish student–athletes felt a strong need to develop their dual career competences.[19] The ten competences that Swedish student–athletes felt the strongest need to develop were:

1. the ability to cope with stress;
2. understanding the importance of rest and recuperation;
3. the ability to use setbacks as a positive stimulus;
4. the ability to focus on the here and now, without being distracted;
5. the ability to prioritise what needs to be done;
6. the ability to ask for advice from the right person at the right time;
7. being patient about the progression of their dual careers;
8. belief in their ability to overcome the challenges of a dual career;
9. the ability to critically evaluate and modify their goals when necessary; and
10. the ability to use their time efficiently.

The findings show that Swedish student–athletes felt a strong need to develop seven of the ten competences they also thought were the most important for successfully managing a dual career (including handling stress, understanding the importance of rest and recuperation, prioritising, believing they can overcome career obstacles, making the best use of their time, self-discipline, and making responsible choices), which indicates that they believed they lacked core competences for a dual career.

In the research literature,[20] the common competences identified as needed for a successful dual career are the ability to plan and prioritise, along with being organised and using one’s time well (including recovery planning). Also listed are career- and self-awareness, self-discipline, the ability to communicate one’s needs, making responsible choices, taking responsibility for one’s actions, dedication to developing in both sport and studies, and perseverance to overcome obstacles.

6.2 Integrated dual career support from sports staff and university staff

For successful dual careers, student–athletes will need support from coaches and sports staff as well as lecturers, examiners and other university staff, and help integrating their studies, sport, and private life into a sustainable lifestyle.

Integrated dual career support means for example that sports staff and university staff:

- work together so that student–athletes experience the combination of high-performance sport and university education as a unified whole, as part of the same development environment;
- communicate and coordinate their activities to eliminate rather than to create barriers to student–athletes’ development;
- communicate in a consistent way with student–athletes;
- to treat student–athletes as both athletes and students, but above all as individuals, each with their own needs and interests;
- to acknowledge and respect student–athletes’ identities and roles (for example, that sports and studies are central to their identity), rather than neglect them;
- understand and respect student–athletes’ priorities;
- understand and respect that education is no less important than sports; and
- help student–athletes combine sport, study, and private life in a sustainable lifestyle.

Dual career support from university staff: A supportive attitude from university staff is central if student–athletes are to succeed with the combination of high-performance sport and university education. It is particularly important that university staff understand and respect sport’s significance for student–athletes. This does not mean that university education is unimportant, however. Regardless of the legal framework, study choices, or sport, it is important that all parties remain constructive and solution-driven in dealing with any problems that arise with the common goal of student-athletes succeeding in both their studies and their sports.

At university, student–athletes will encounter staff with a variety of roles—university coordinators, study coordinators, study counsellors, careers advisors, lecturers, examiners—and that variety (for example in different courses) means that student–athletes should shoulder their responsibility and form good relationships with university staff, while at the same time the university must foster positive attitudes so that student–athletes can combine high-performance sport with a university education. According to some student–athletes, their requests for flexible arrangements are sometimes taken as an attempt to get off lightly, where in reality they are trying to take responsibility and pursue their ambition to excel in both sport and studies. Although flexible arrangements are sometimes needed (a reduced pace of study, for example, or the postponement of an exam), it is essential that university staff understand that the exam requirements for student–athletes are the same as for all other students.

Illustrative examples

In consultation with her lecturer, a student–athlete chooses a study group to join on the basis of the course timetable and her training and competition schedule. This flexibility removes the difficulties the student had in taking that particular course.

An student–athlete is unable to attend a number of lectures because of his training schedule. The course coordinator tells him to ask a coursemate for the lecture notes, and to ask the lecturers if it would be possible for a coursemate to record the lectures for him. The lecturers agree, on condition that the student only has them for his personal use, and does not share them in any form.

An student–athlete has been competing at an international championship and arrives home late on the Sunday night. She has an exam first thing on Monday morning. Sunday's flight home was a long one, so she will only have a few hours of sleep. It would have been better to ask at the planning stage whether she could sit the exam on another occasion in order to have time to recover and do her best in the exam.

Dual career support from sports staff: The relationship between coach and athlete is central, not least because the coach in many cases is the stable point in the athlete's career, especially as they often work together for years. Student–athletes sometimes report that when they say they are going to university it is often assumed they are giving up on their sporting ambitions, and that it can be difficult to ask sporting staff or coaches for flexible arrangements, because of the risk of being punished for their absence (for example, by being dropped from the team). The expectation is that it is up to the university to be flexible and to accommodate the student–athletes' level of training and competition. It is equally important that sport takes a similarly flexible approach, adjusting as far as possible to suit the students' academic situation (lectures, seminars, and exams). It is crucial that coaches and sporting staff understand and respect that university is important to student–athletes, and that the goal is to be able to combine the two. Training times may need to be adjusted to suit student–athletes' studies, creating conditions under which they can both thrive and perform well in their sport.

Coaches, with their central role in athletes' development, have a key part to play as role models for student–athletes and sports staff, and their positive attitude towards dual careers and the combination of high-performance sport and university education can be decisive. Coaches need to show their active support and understanding of the realities of the students' sporting and academic situation. They can use their leadership to create an ethos of achievement in which it is perfectly normal to go to university and to be an elite athlete at the same time. Coaches can also encourage an open dialogue about flexible arrangements—not that they always can be met, but that sport and staff should be seen to be open to the possibility of being flexible.

Illustrative examples

A basketball coach starts to encourage players to study, and on the way to and from matches several of the players choose to study on the team bus rather than watch the film. The team ethos shifts to welcome study alongside its athletic ambitions, which leads several players to consider going to university.

A couple of football players prioritise a university exam over football training. The coach punishes the players by benching them for the next match, even though in performance terms they should play.

6.3 Dual career support providers

A dual career support provider has been defined as a professional consultant, associated with or certified by an educational institution or an elite sports organization, who supports elite athletes by optimizing their dual careers in elite sport and education.[18]

For a successful dual career, student–athletes require support not only with their sport, studies, and private life, but also with combining different levels of development in a sustainable lifestyle (for example, by working on their dual career competences). Swedish research findings from the GEES project show that study counselors and careers advisors often play a key role here, but that many of them are not trained in handling dual career issues.

Dual career support providers (DCSPs) can help student–athletes with their physical, social, and mental health (for example, together with student health services), discussing how to manage recovery and stress, helping them to avoid identity foreclosure and to develop their social networks. DCSPs can help student–athletes combine various levels of development in a sustainable lifestyle, for example by developing their dual career competences and clarifying or developing their networks and support. DCSPs can also promote student–athletes’ dual careers with various forms of career advice, spanning university (for example, what courses to take or putting together individual programmes of study), work (such as vocational careers advice), and sport (for example, career transitions) (see Figure 2 for the holistic careers model, and Sections 1.3 and 7 for career transitions).

The GEES project[18] found that across Europe the ten most important DCSP competences were as follows:

1. The ability to treat each student–athlete in an individualised manner.
2. The ability to maintain trust-based relationships with the student–athlete.
3. The ability to be an active and supportive listener.
4. The ability to refer the student–athlete to another professional if necessary.
5. The ability to be flexible in response to unexpected events in the student–athlete’s life (for example, injury).
6. A knowledge of the education system or systems.
7. The ability to encourage autonomy in the student–athlete.

8. Being alert to student–athlete’s mental health status.
9. The ability to enhance the student–athlete’s ability to organise and plan life.
10. The ability to adapt the support offered in response to feedback from others.

It was also found that DCSPs across Europe felt the need to improve their ability: (i) to prepare student–athletes for the challenges of specific transitions; (ii) to encourage autonomy among student–athletes; (iii) to understand how the key transition phases contribute to student–athletes’ long-term development; (iv) to be alert to student–athletes’ mental health status; (v) to equip student–athletes with the necessary competences to plan their lives and be more organised; (vi) to make student–athletes aware of their dual career competences; and (vii) to take a holistic approach to student–athletes’ lives (their sports and studies in parallel with their financial, psychological, and psychosocial development).

Practical example

Umeå University offers training for study counsellors and other university staff in collaboration with its Centre for Educational Development. The course is designed to increase their understanding of flexible studies and what dual careers can entail.

6.4 Student–athlete networks

Student–athletes at any given university are often scattered across different programmes and courses. In order to instil a sense of community in student–athletes, it is useful to create a forum where they can meet and share experiences. A network can give student–athletes the chance to help one another, form closer relationships, swap experiences about combining elite sports and university education, and learn from one another’s sports. If it offers mentoring it can improve the knowledge transfer about dual careers at that particular university from one cohort to the next, and even if not it can help student–athletes understand how dual careers function in comparison to what they were used to before, and thus add to the local dual career culture. A student–athlete network can also be a conduit for their views to the university, identifying and discussing the local problems and challenges with combining high-performance sport and university education.

Practical example

All student–athletes at Halmstad University are members of a network and an online community on a social media platform. The student–athlete network is a forum for the exchange of views and news, and arranges talks on relevant sports issues and dual careers.

6.5 Student–athletes who need special support

Permanent disability: Special support and flexible arrangements are available at all Swedish institutions of higher education for students who are prevented otherwise from studying because of a permanent disability. The Discrimination Act stipulates that all universities must work specifically to promote equal rights and opportunities for students, irrespective of sex, ethnicity, religion, disability, or sexual orientation. The law protects students from harassment and discrimination. The Higher Education Ordinance has a number of provisions that regulate student rights.

Student–athletes with permanent disabilities who are, for example, physically disabled, visually impaired, or deaf can compete as parathletes, including at the Paralympics. They may require more complicated arrangements from the university in order to accommodate both their disability and their elite sporting ambitions. The university’s educational support coordinator is likely to be closely involved.

Other situations that call for special arrangements: Student–athletes may require special support and flexible arrangements at university as a result of a sports injury or other health issues (whether physical or psychological). For some, a period of injury can mean an opportunity to increase the pace of study, while others may need to cut back in order to concentrate on rehabilitation training.

Other situations that can impact on student–athletes’ dual careers (see Section 7.1) and may call for special support or flexible arrangements include pregnancy, parental leave, sudden sporting successes or setbacks that affect their training and competition schedule, being selected for the national team at short notice, and time abroad (for example, in the run-up to a major international competition). Special support and flexible arrangements may also be needed before or during international exchanges or study abroad, while visiting students may also need special support in adapting to Swedish culture.

In all of these situations, special support and the opportunity for flexible arrangements can be necessary in pursuing a dual career. It is important to bring home to universities and their staff that student–athletes are in a very unusual and often vulnerable position when pursuing a dual career. If they suffer a sports injury or some other interruption to their athletic career, it can have devastating and far-reaching consequences. To create the best possible conditions for a successful dual career, it is not enough for universities to know this; they must also be open to providing flexible arrangements and special support. In some cases, it will be necessary to work with a university’s student health services.

In terms of mental health clinical care, RF has special partnerships with Stockholm County Council (<http://riddargatan1.se/elitidrott>) and Malmö’s outpatient dependency unit (<http://vard.skane.se/psykiatri-skane/mottagningar-och-avdelningar/vuxenpsykiatrimottagning-beroende-triangeln-malmo/>).

Guidelines for RIUs and EVLs (continued)

- 21.** Work to facilitate student–athletes’ dual career balance by
 - a. raising awareness of student–athletes’ dual career competences, and of the challenges facing them in their dual careers;
 - b. helping student–athletes to develop their dual career competences (for example, stress management, planning and prioritisation, forming trust-based relationships, and working with sports and university staff);
 - c. promoting an understanding that dual careers can have a positive effect on student–athletes’ study and sports performance alike.
- 22.** Work with sports federations and sports clubs to increase lecturers’ and coaches’ understanding of student–athletes’ dual careers and the long-term benefits of dual careers, in order to promote an integrated approach and consistent communication between sports and university staff.
- 23.** Work with the RF to establish and develop
 - a. the role of Dual career support providers (DCSP) at all RIUs and EVLs; and
 - b. DCSP training for DC coordinators, study counsellors, and others at the RIUs and EVLs.
- 24.** Work to establish student–athlete networks to instil a sense of community that enables mentoring, knowledge transfer, and the exchange of experiences between student–athletes pursuing different university programmes, courses, and sports.
- 25.** Work to identify the particular needs of student–athletes who require special support and flexible arrangements. For student–parathletes, as for any students with a permanent disability, work to plan and agree individual, long-term support that reflects the nature of the disability and the student–parathlete’s individual needs.

7. Facilitating student–athletes’ career transitions

Section 7 looks at how to facilitate student–athletes’ career transitions using a proactive, supportive perspective. The career transitions are, for example, starting at an RIU or EVL, graduating, leaving one university for another (for example, moving from an EVL to an RIU), and athletic career termination.

A career transition[21] is a turning phase or shift in the student–athletes’ development associated with specific demands that they have to cope with in order to continue to develop successfully. Student-athletes’ ability to cope is determined by a dynamic balance between their resources and barriers. Their resources consist of their individual strengths and competences (internal resources), and their social support and help from others (external resources). Depending on the individual and the situation, the same thing (motivation, a lecturer’s understanding, a coach’s support, the quality of the sporting equipment, personal finances) can be a useful resource or a barrier to development.

The athletic career transition model (Figure 5) describes three different career transition pathways. The most advantageous pathway is a result of effective coping, which means that student–athletes can mobilise their resources, compensate for any barriers, and so cope with the demands of the transition. Preventive interventions before or at the beginning of a transition can ensure that more student–athletes will cope effectively and have successful transitions. A longer transition is a result of ineffective coping, when inadequate resources and/or the number of barriers make it difficult for student–athletes to cope with the transition demands, and thus needing help and support in order to move on. If that intervention—for example, the development of resources or the elimination of barriers by counselling or education—has a positive impact on student–athletes, they will have successful, if delayed, transitions. An unsuccessful transition is when student–athletes cannot cope with transition demands, and either do not receive help, or the intervention fails to have a positive effect. Failure to cope with transition demands can result in a developmental crisis that comes at a price, with negative consequences such as overtraining, mental illness (for example, anxiety, depression, fatigue syndrome, or anorexia), or with student–athletes dropping out of university or competitive sport, or both.

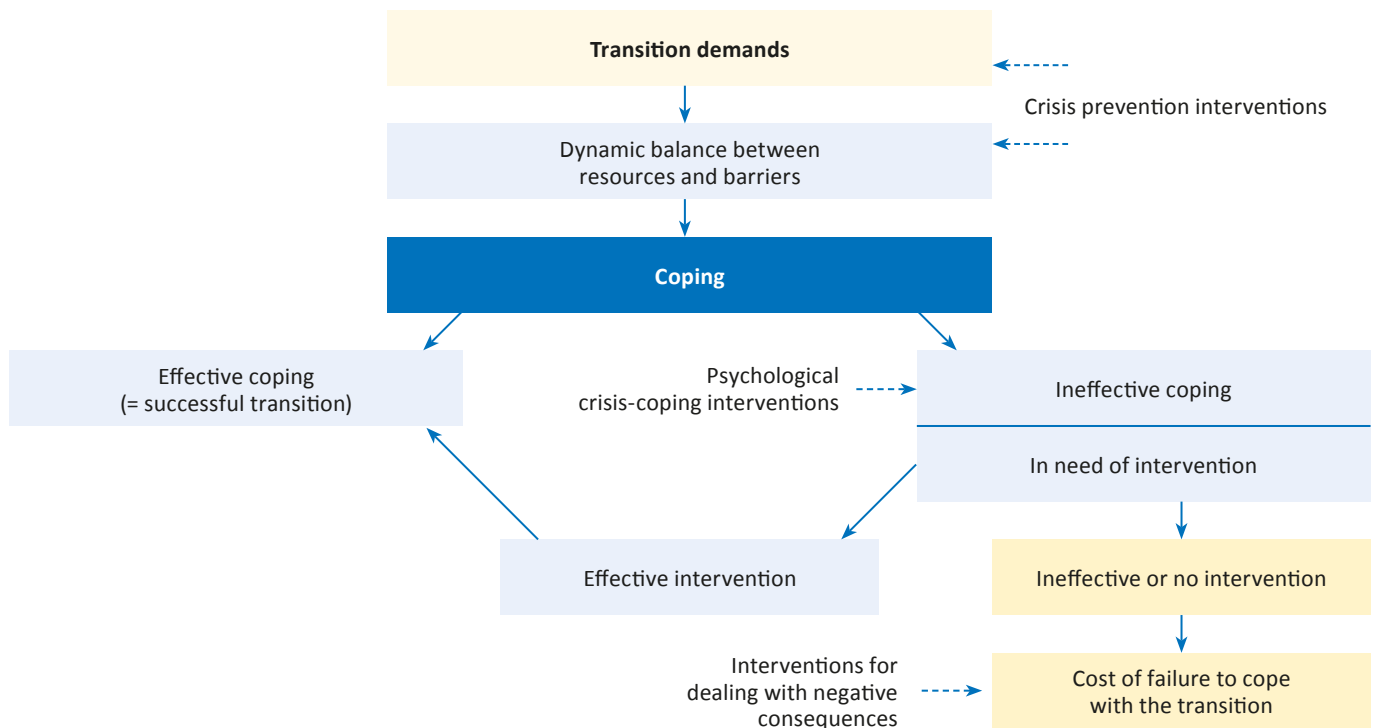


Figure 5. The athletic career transition model.[21]

7.1 Different types of career transitions and career support

There are different types of career transitions, whether within sport and outside sport (for example, psychological, psychosocial, academic, and financial), and whether normative, non-normative, or quasi-normative.[22] Normative transitions are broadly expected, which means they can be predicted and planned for (for example, the transition from junior to senior, athletic career termination, individuation as a young adult, or the transition from gymnasium to university). Non-normative transitions (see Section 6.5) cannot be predicted and planned for in the same way, as they are generally unexpected (for example, injury, a change of coach, team selection, illness, or parental leave). The less predictable a non-normative transition, the greater the likelihood the individual will need help managing it. Quasi-normative transitions are those that can be anticipated for particular groups of individuals, but not exactly when they will occur. Dual career transitions are of particular relevance to student-athletes, as they imply parallel transitions in both their academic and sporting lives. One example is the transition from gymnasium to university, which in several sports coincides with the transition from junior to senior competition.

Using the athletic career transition model (Figure 5), it is possible to identify three different types of support in a transition: (i) crisis prevention interventions prior to a transition (for example, raising awareness of current and future transition demands, or developing resources to meet those demands); (ii) crisis-coping interventions during the transition (for example, understanding the situation and developing strategies to cope); and (iii) interventions for dealing with the negative consequences of failing to meet transition demands (for example, analysing the crisis and identifying the best possible ways to manage it).

7.2 Transition to university

The transition from studying at a gymnasium (for example, RIG/NIU) to university can be a sharp one, and is characterised by changes on several developmental levels at the same time (see Section 1.3).[23] Students find themselves with greater freedom, but also with greater responsibility for planning their studies and their sport. Greater academic demands, a new social setting, a change of club or training environment, and a new financial situation are all examples of demands that add to the complexity of the transition. To prevent athletes having to choose between an athletic career and education, and to encourage more athletes to continue with a dual career at university, support is needed for the transition from gymnasium to university education. For that reason both gymnasiums (RIG/NIU) and universities (RIUs/EVLs) must have strategies and partnerships to facilitate the transition from both ends. It would be wise to include the sports federations in this in order to encourage their athletes not to end their athletic career prematurely because of concerns about their later careers outside sport.

In order to facilitate successful transitions, gymnasiums can help athletes think ahead and anticipate the transition to university (for example, what to expect, and what the individual will need to develop to stay on track). Universities can facilitate the transition through information exchanges and networks of various sorts (for example, brochures, social media networks, open days, and meetings with alumni). The universities can also help student–athletes improve their dual career competences (see Section 6), and can coordinate and optimise the institutional setting for dual careers (see Sections 3–5). Gymnasiums and universities can collaborate on open days or outreach, sending student–athletes to gymnasiums to talk about the transition to university and how the combination of elite sport and university education works in practice.

Practical example

The School of Sports Science (IH) at Umeå University collaborates with local gymnasiums (for example, by having representatives on school boards) and invites gymnasium students for visits and open days, where students receive information on sports education, university, dual careers, and the contract in place between each student–athlete and IH on admission. Prospective students also visit the sports environment at IKSU Sport and the university sports lab, and attend a special lecture given by a member of the IH support team. Similar visits are also arranged for sports clubs, open to pupils, parents, and coaches. Each term there are lectures for student–athletes on subjects such as dual career balance, or how to set goals and evaluate their own training. One of the main reasons is to provide a forum where student–athletes can meet and discuss their particular situation, combining sport and a university education.

7.3 Transition upon graduation

On graduating, there are several different pathways open to student–athletes. They can continue in sport as a profession, they can combine work with sport, or they can end their athletic careers and take full-time jobs. The latter has proved common. In order to promote a successful transition, it is useful to know in advance which path the student–athlete is considering, in order to prepare and develop the various competences that will be needed. The establishment of alumni networks to share experiences and advice, and to work towards graduates being able to continue with elite sport at the same location, can all help the transition. The Erasmus+ research project ‘Be a winner in elite sport and employment before and after athletic retirement’ (B-Wiser, www.bwiser.eu), which focuses on optimizing the employability and employment of active and former elite athletes, will make an important contribution to the support offered student–athletes through this transition.

Practical examples

At the universities of Gothenburg and Chalmers, alumni are invited to breakfast meetings that are open to all. RIUs alumni students give talks for student–athletes about their own experiences, about combining university and sport, and the importance of having career alternatives for when their athletic career ends. The university media also report on RIU alumni.

The Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences holds careers fairs where student–athletes can connect with potential employers from among the business community.

7.4 Athletic career termination

All athletic careers end.[10] It is inevitable for all athletes, who have to accept it, adapt to their new status as a former athlete, re-evaluate their personal roles and identity, and find new, meaningful employment and a new lifestyle and social network. In deciding when to end an athletic career, athletes weigh up the various factors (for example, stagnation, a lack of motivation, being benched, injury, or the feeling of satisfaction) and their prospects (for example, job offers, or wanting to start a family). International research shows that 15–20 per cent of all athletes go through a developmental crisis at the time of their athletic career termination. Although the majority cope well with the transition, measures should be taken to facilitate successful athletic career terminations in order to avoid personal crises or losses to the labour market because of delayed transitions.

Factors that help the transition to a post-athletic career include athletes planning their athletic career termination in advance, while they are still active in their sport; having acquired an education; a range of personal interests and identities, rather than one narrow identity as an athlete; effective social support and networking within the sport and beyond; and a sense that they control their own lives. Thanks to their dual careers, graduate student–athletes are better equipped to take the next step, having not only a university degree but also their sporting experiences and knowledge. In many cases, student–athletes have a great deal of experience gar-

nered from their sport (time management, leadership, determination, communication skills, teamwork, languages), but even so they can need help with identifying, understanding, and presenting their strengths in their new working lives and other relevant contexts.

Practical examples

Umeå University offers its student–athletes individual consultations to discuss their post-athletic career plans and to identify the individual’s strengths. There are also lectures on the importance of being aware that their athletic careers might soon end, and how this transition might affect them emotionally.

At the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, when student–athletes choose to change career their study counsellors and careers advisors focus on the reasons they chose sport in the first place and what kept them motivated, so that the focus shifts to identifying where students might find fresh impetus when they end their athletic careers. At the Swedish School of Sport and Health Sciences, such transitions frequently benefit from the fact that courses at the university are a way to stay in sport once they have ended their sports careers.

7.5 A national online support service for dual careers

Given the Swedish dual career model (see Figure 1) and the various career transitions, there is a clear need for transition-specific support services to facilitate student–athletes’ career development. The GEES project results show that DCSPs find it difficult to fully prepare student–athletes for the challenges of specific transitions, because they do not fully understand where the transition phases fit in relation to the student–athletes’ long-term development.[18] Individualised support that responds to the differing needs of student–athletes before, during, or after various career transitions is necessarily extensive. It needs to be cost-effective in order to be sustainable in the long run, and it should be open and accessible to all. One possible solution is thus to coordinate a service, which would be beyond what any one institution alone could provide: a national online support service for dual careers, which student–athletes, sports staff, and university staff (such as DC coordinators and DCSPs) could use as a platform for sharing information and developing competences.

A national online support service for dual careers could be the Swedish transition hub, bringing together universities and the sports movement; a site where potential and current student–athletes (and support staff) can find information on career transitions (for example, on athletic career termination or when injured), expert networks (for example, sport psychologists or physiotherapist), and develop the basic knowledge and competences needed to manage a career transition of this kind. With such a hub, universities could give users access to existing resources online, share teaching material, run joint online training courses, and share examples of best practice, in order to encourage equivalence in the support given to student–athletes across Sweden.

Guidelines for RIUs and EVLs (continued)

- 26.** Work to raise awareness of current and future career transitions—as when beginning at an RIU or EVL, graduating, transferring from one university to another (for example, from an EVL to an RIU), or on athletic career termination—and how student–athletes can prepare, for example by career planning and competence development.
- 27.** Work to facilitate student–athletes’ coping with the transition to an RIU or EVL by increasing their awareness, competence, and motivation by
 - a. collaborating with gymnasiums on open days, information meetings, and mentoring; and
 - b. inviting student–athletes to relevant training on dual careers (see also Guidelines 11 & 21).
- 28.** Work to facilitate student–athletes’ career transitions at graduation by
 - a. promoting proactive, strategic thinking among student–athletes who are about to graduate, looking at what they need in order to prepare for working life or continuing in high-performance sport;
 - b. establishing alumni networks for student–athletes; and
 - c. facilitating graduates continuing with elite sport at their university location..
- 29.** Work to facilitate student–athletes’ coping with athletic career termination, for example by
 - a. setting up routines to draw attention to student–athletes who are approaching athletic career termination, and enabling access to help and support if necessary; and
 - b. increasing awareness among student–athletes about their transferable skills which are applicable in other contexts
- 30.** Work to provide support, on a needs basis, for student–athletes who prove unable to manage a transition successfully, for example by providing support staff at the university who have the relevant skills, or by referring them to other professionals as and when needed (for example, psychologists or psychotherapist).
- 31.** Work to establish a national online support service for dual careers, which student–athletes, sports staff, and university staff (for example, DC coordinators and DCSPs) can use as a platform for sharing information and developing competences.

8. Dissemination and further research

The final section highlights the importance of a public awareness of dual careers, the role of media and a variety of networks, and the importance of evaluating the impact of the introduction of national guidelines. Possible lines of further research are suggested.

8.1 Public awareness of dual careers

If dual careers are to become an established career pathway for Swedish elite athletes and a successful part of the Swedish model, a public awareness of the concept of dual careers and their importance for individual development will be central. All athletes (including those with a disability) who are considering going to university should hear that it is possible to combine high-performance sport with a university education, and that it will be a valuable part of their development. If we are to increase the number of elite athletes who choose to study in parallel with their sport, it matters that existing student–athletes, universities, and other stakeholders share their positive experiences so that potential student–athletes, and those around them (parents or guardians, lecturers, coaches, sports federations, sports clubs, local authorities) can grasp the importance and benefits of dual careers.

The media: The media plays a key role here by communicating the benefits of dual careers and promoting a positive image of dual careers, student–athletes, and the system of RIUs and EVLs as part of the Swedish society. The media can also provide constructive criticism, which will help the Swedish system develop. It is therefore desirable for the universities involved to have a close dialogue with the media. Student–athletes also need to understand that they themselves market the ‘combination of elite sport and study’. For example, universities and the local media can collaborate to highlight student–athletes attending major national and international sporting events. However, it is important that student–athletes feature in the media not only for their sporting successes, but also for having dual careers.

8.2 Networks for dual careers

The need for different types of national networks for dual careers has been emphasised throughout these guidelines. They can play a key role in spreading the ethos of dual careers, contributing with good examples and recent research, and helping develop new ideas for how challenges can be solved and how best to achieve equivalence between the Swedish universities where high-performances sports and university studies are combined. All this calls for continued networking on the subject of dual careers in Sweden.

In addition to the Swedish national networks, it is relevant to collate other experience and learning internationally. One example of an international network designed to promote dual careers is the 'European Athlete as Student (EAS) Network'. Since 2004, EAS has brought together educational institutions with an interest in high-performance sports (universities, gymnasiums) with sports clubs and federations that want to help their athletes with their studies. The EAS holds an annual conference on the subject of dual careers.

8.3 Further action on dual careers

By referring to the existing research, the need for further research can be identified in the further development of national guidelines and dual careers in Sweden. Some of the promising lines of research include:

- Criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the RIUs and EVLs.
- A database to track student–athletes' development at the RIUs and EVLs.
- Exploring successful dual career development environments at the RIUs and EVLs, and providing recommendations for how they can be optimised.
- Investigations of the student–athletes' transferable skills that can increase their chances of finding work after graduation and/or in their post-athletic career.
- Exploring the current support provided for dual careers at the RIUs and EVLs, enlarging on the DCSPs' job description.
- Developing national training for DCSPs, with new content tested in a number of workshops.
- Studying the media coverage of dual careers in Sweden, and recommending how the RIUs and EVLs and the media might collaborate.
- Developing content for a national online support service for student–athletes' dual careers, and establishing a platform where that support can be implemented.

8.4 Evaluating the guidelines for elite athletes' dual careers at RIUs and EVLs

The impact of introducing national guidelines for the facilitating of elite athletes' dual careers at RIUs and EVLs should be evaluated in order to update both the guidelines and the national model for RIUs and EVLs. It would be best if the universities drew up the criteria for this evaluation, under the aegis of RF, and that the evaluation and update of systems and guidelines took place during the coming contract period.

Guidelines for RIUs and EVLs (continued)

- 32.** Work to collaborate with the media and others (for example, sports federations, sports clubs, the Swedish Sports Confederation, and local authorities) to increase public awareness of dual careers.
- 33.** Work to facilitate the dissemination of best practices and learning, for example by means of a joint RIU–EVL conference under the leadership of RF.
- 34.** Work to increase networking between RIUs and EVLs under RF’s leadership.
- 35.** RIUs and EVLs, with RF and the Swedish Research Council for Sports Science, work to support continued research of relevance to dual careers in Sweden.
- 36.** Work to evaluate the impact of the introduction of national guidelines for elite athletes’ dual careers at the RIUs and EVLs.

Further reading

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