The challenges and motivations of dual-careers: Exploring the experiences of being an elite athlete and a higher education student

2018

Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Cardiff Metropolitan University for the degree of Bachelor of Science
Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own independent investigation under the supervision of my tutor. The various sources to which I am indebted are clearly indicated. This dissertation has not been accepted in substance for any other degree, and is not being submitted concurrently for any other degree.

Candidate

Signed:
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I would like to thank my parents for their support and encouragement throughout my degree. I honestly would not have been able to do it without them. Thank you for being the most supportive people in my life.

I would also like to express my appreciation to my dissertation supervisor for all the help and guidance throughout the journey of my dissertation. I would also like to thank her for going out of her way to help me during times that I needed it.

Lastly, I would like to thank the participants who took the time to take part in my study. I am so grateful for being so open with me. Without you, this project would not have been possible.
ABSTRACT

With an increase in elite athletes attending further education (British Universities and College Sport, 2012), the body of literature on dual-careers is growing. Previous research exploring the experiences of elite student-athletes has been heavily researched in the United States of America. However, few UK studies have examined the first-hand experience of elite student-athletes. The present study’s aim was to build on the limited amount of literature exploring the experiences of elite student-athletes in the UK, and to explore the challenges and motivations of such a unique group of dual-career students, using a qualitative research approach basis. A total of four participants took part in the study, who were all undergraduate students, aged between 19 and 23. A semi-structured interview and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) were used to uncover the three super-ordinate themes; expectant self, transitional self and aspiring self. The current study highlighted the challenges and motivations of pursuing a dual-career and the coping mechanisms needed to deal with it. Further research should explore the experiences of elite student-athletes in other universities and different sports and aim to clarify whether the results of this study are unique to one sport or all sports.
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1.0 INTRODUCTION:

1.1 Definition of terms:

This study explores the challenges and motivations of being an “elite student-athlete”, defined as a person who competes at the highest level in their chosen sport, whilst simultaneously partaking in higher education studies; the so-called “dual-career” (Puskas Lentene, 2015; Cosh and Tully, 2014; Swann, Moran and Piggott, 2015).

A dual-career is characterised as having two major foci (Geraniosova and Ronkainen, 2015), for example, a Professional Cricketer aspiring to qualify as a Sports Psychologist in the future.

This research paper expands on the dual-career theme and the lack of UK specific studies, by exploring the experiences of several elite student-athletes who are following their chosen professional sporting pathway, whilst studying full-time at University in the UK.

1.2 Historical research:

Prior to this study, a significant body of research has been accumulated which examined career transitions, development and especially athletic retirement (Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler & Côté, 2009). Current research highlights the need for a ‘whole career’ or ‘whole person’ approach, due to athletes going through many career transitions (Wylleman and Lavallee, 2004). Dual-career research is an answer to this call for a holistic perspective, making this a developing area of research (Dunstan-Lewis & McKenna, 2004; McGillivray,
2006; Sørensen and Christensen, 2009; Aquilina and Henry, 2010; Burnett, 2010; Haley and Saghafi, 2012).

As a result of dual-careers becoming more popular, many sports institutes and authors have become increasingly interested in exploring the multiple identities, life skills and academic achievement of elite student-athletes (European Commision, 2012; Park 2012: Fleuriel and Vincent, 2009; Aquilina and Henry 2010; Mahoney, 2011).

Of particular interest is the significant increase in elite athletes attending higher education and the increased awareness of the challenges and motivations faced by these athletes (British Universities and Colleges Sport, 2012; Stambulova, Alfermann, Statler & Côté, 2009). Universities are becoming ‘hubs’ for elite athletes, providing top class facilities and support for students to excel both in their athletic and academic careers (Aquilina, 2013). In fact, between the 1992 Barcelona and 2012 London Olympics, 65% of British Gold medalists had been to University to further their education (British Universities and Colleges Sport, 2012).

Furthermore, increased interest in the dual-career topic has been motivated by “The EU Guidelines on Dual-Careers of Athletes” (2012), in which national stakeholders are expected to provide support for elite student-athletes and are encouraged to further develop the research on dual-careers. Additionally, the European Parliament have established the “Education and Training in Sport” programme for elite student-athletes and because of growing interest in dual careers in the last decade, the study by Guidotti et al., (2013) explored the combination of education and elite sport commitments of European student-
athletes and attempted to provide a systematic review of scientific contributions on dual-careers in Europe.

Additionally, Wylleman and Lavellee (2004) proposed the developmental model of transitions faced by athletes. This encompassed a more holistic lifespan perspective, encouraging further research to study sport and studies of athletes from the “dual career/whole person” angle and to consider challenges faced overall (Aquilina and Henry, 2010; Dunstan-Lewis and McKenna, 2004; Platts and Smith, 2009; Burnett, 2010).

There is increasingly an expectation that athletes embark on further education and university degrees in preparation for life after sport (Hickey and Kelly, 2005), with recognition of this opportunity leading to an increase in the number of elite athletes attending further and higher education (Haley and Saghafi, 2012; British Universities & Colleges Sport, 2012). However, participation in both sport and education is extremely arduous and stressful (Burden, Tremayne and March 2004), although the attributes needed to perform at the top level athletically can be utilised to help elite athletes’ academic performance (MacNamara, Button, and Collins, 2010). These factors incorporate setting long-term and short-term goals, imagery, focus, resilience and motivation (Orlick and Partington, 1998).

1.3 Challenges of the Dual-Career:

Elite student-athletes can frequently dedicate up to 30 hours each week to sport practice and competition which, when combined with full-time study, can make the dual-career
extremely challenging (Scott et al., 2008; Miller and Kerr, 2002; Petitpas et al., 1997).

When considering these challenges, Miller and Kerr, (2002) found that there was constant tension between the academic, athletic and social aspects an elite student-athlete faces. The authors comment that academic and athletic commitments often took priority over social loyalties, even though social relationships were frequently formed within the athletic environment, rather than in the academic setting. In addition, the athletes were sometimes found to have stronger commitment to their sporting, rather than academic, progression.

Further research suggests that juggling both athletic and academic roles creates added pressures for student-athletes (Knowles and Lorimer, 2014; Miller and Kerr, 2002; Petitpas, Brewer and Van Raalte, 2009). However, these pressures can be overcome effectively by, for example, developing self-awareness, and implementing a range of coping strategies, explained in the following section.

1.4 Coping strategies

Stambulova (2003) produced the Athletic Career Transitions Model (Stambulova, 2003). It identified transitions experienced by elite athletes, in this instance, furthering their academic career to a higher level, whilst also competing at an elite level in their chosen sport. It determined a set of demands, together with coping strategies to overcome them and suggests that in order for the elite student-athlete to cope well with the dual-career,
they will need to be reliant on accessing both *internal* and *external* resources to help them overcome the stressors that will inevitably arise.

*Internal resources* included personality traits such as conscientiousness; effective time-management skills; self-motivation and self-efficacy levels (Van-Yperen and Renkema, 2008). Such characteristics have also been investigated as a link to career success (Judge et al., 2006) and it was found that if an individual was conscientious the chance of career success was more likely.

Furthermore, Davids (2015) found that the characteristics of self-belief resulted in more challenging goals being set, which resulted in greater commitment and success.

External resources reported included emotional or physical support from friends, family and coaches or help financially to cope with the demands of the dual-career (Stambulova, 2003).

However, if the athlete was not able to deal with stressors related to the dual-career, they could experience crisis. To deal with this crisis, athletes would need to undertake an intervention such as those demonstrated below (Pearson and Petitpas, 1990; Taylor and Lavallee, 2010; Murphy, 1995).
When examining the effects of stress on elite student-athletes, Sallen, Hemming and Richartz (2017) found alarmingly higher indicators of stress when compared to the general population, in particular other higher education students (Richartz and Sallen, 2017). This lead to the development of the Stress-Resistance Training (SRT) intervention to assist, including topics such as a range of coping strategies, identifying the source of stress and achieving a work/life balance.

Most participants who engaged with this intervention saw an improvement in resistance to stress and a better reaction to stressful incidences. In fact, 92% of participants rated the programme as highly recommendable and this intervention was shown to decrease the chance of stress-related impairments on athletic and academic performance, and improve overall wellbeing.

1.5 Wellbeing

Wellbeing is a function of the individual’s psychological, social and physical resources to overcome psychological, social and physical challenges (Kloep, Hendry, and Saunders, 2009). As stated earlier, elite student-athletes are often subject to substantial amounts of pressure due to the amount of time they need to allocate to both careers in order to succeed. Because of this pressure, it was found that 10 to 15 percent of elite student-athletes have experienced a psychological issue requiring counselling, as a direct result of their dual-career (Parham, 1993; Murray, 1997; Hinkle, 1994; Watson and Kissingner, 2007). It was also discovered that elite student-athletes are less likely to seek professional help for their
psychological problems due to the fear of looking weak in front of peers or losing valuable training or academic time (Brooks and Bull, 1999; Moulton, Molstad, and Turner, 1997).

One factor that plays a significant role in the well-being of the elite student-athlete is social support (DeFreese and Smith, 2014). This relates to the social resources, such as tutors, parents and friends, that can help improve the quality of life of the elite student-athlete (Jeon, Lee, and Kwon, 2016). Research shows that elite student-athletes who perceive themselves to have a high level of social support are more likely to overcome psychological stress related problems, by developing coping strategies to overcome difficulties, whilst increasing self-esteem through motivational support (DeFreese and Smith, 2013; Baruch-Feldman et al., 2002).

Self-confidence is another factor shown to have considerable influence on overall wellbeing in elite student-athletes (Sa and Isiklar, 2012; Bačanac et al., 2014; Tamminen et al., 2013). It is interesting to note that dealing effectively with challenges such as short-term underperformance in sporting or academic careers can cause self-confidence to grow, as the elite student-athlete can gain an understanding of their capabilities to deal with such stressors. Thus, they can become more self-confident in their ability to deal with these challenges, whilst providing an opportunity for personal growth (Theberge, 2008; Tamminen et al., 2013).

A negative aspect affecting wellbeing can be poor academic or sporting performance which can also lead to feelings of isolation, resulting from decreased feelings of self-worth and motivation (Smith et al., 2015). These performance-related pressures can sometimes lead to
burnout, usually impacting one career or the other (Schinke et al., 2016). If this occurs some elite student-athletes experience a “trade-off” with one career being sacrificed at the expense of the other (Burden, Tremayne, and Marsh, 2004; Stronach and Adair, 2010).

Furthermore, studies have shown that some athletes pick less demanding academic subjects aimed at reducing their workload, thereby allowing greater focus on their sporting commitments (Burden et al., 2004). In fact, a study proposed by Cheng et al., (2005), found that six out of ten elite figure skaters included in the study had stopped attending higher education altogether, to concentrate on their sporting commitments. Additionally, some athletes are less motivated than non-athletes to perform well academically (Lucas and Lovaglia, 2002) as a result of being highly focused on their sporting commitments and future sport employment options. Some student-athletes described themselves as aiming only to pass, thereby restricting future opportunities that may have arisen had they achieved a better grade at university (Cosh and Tully, 2014).

1.6 Motivations of the Dual-Career:

Numerous studies in the last decade have investigated the motivation behind choosing to pursue a dual career (Ryba et al., 2015; Wylleman, Reints and De Knopp, 2013; Stambulova, 2010; Aquilina, 2013; Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavellee, 2004).

Primary motivations include: a sense of balance; a need for a secondary employment option and the chance to improve athletic performance in a sport-friendly academic environment (Aquilina, 2013; Ryba et al., 2015; Wylleman, Alfermann and Lavellee, 2004).
In addition to the above, McGillivray (2006) suggests that financial factors can also motivate elite student-athletes. In this study, Scottish football players were analysed and were found to be more motivated to gain an educational qualification when their livelihood from football was perceived to be less secure. Insecurity was influenced by competition from younger peers, particularly when their place in the team was under possible threat.

Furthermore, elite athletes’ careers tend to be relatively short compared to most occupations due to a number of factors. These include the player’s requirement to stay fit and healthy, their strenuous fitness and wellbeing expectations and the mental, as well as physical challenges of performing consistently at the highest level. The constant risk of earlier than expected release and/or of being replaced by a better or younger athlete can make a dual-career even more critical in the search for post-graduate opportunities (McGillivray, 2006; Lally and Kerr, 2005).

Combining elite sport and further education has proven to be a beneficial factor in creating a balanced lifestyle (Aquilina, 2009). The educational side thereby provides life experiences away from the athlete’s chosen sporting environment and the advantages of mixing in different social groups (Knowles and Lorimer, 2014). Other positive factors include increased intellectual stimulation, helping the athlete achieve breaks from strenuous physical and mental training or match play. This allows the athlete to focus on something outside of their sport, achieving a better work/life/sport balance, reduced stress and ultimately increased wellbeing (Aquilina, 2013; Elbe and Beckmann, 2006; Emrich et al., 2009; Gaston-Gayles, 2004; Jonker, Elferink-Gemser, and Visscher, 2009; Wylleman, and Reints, 2010; Gustafsson, et al., 2007; Uebel, 2006).
1.7 Rationale and Aim:

To date, the majority of dual-career related research has been carried out in the USA (Harrison and Lawrence, 2004; Sudano, 2011; Albert, 2017; Johnson et al., 2008; Sorenson et al., 2015; Haslerig and Navarro, 2016). However, most of this literature relates to track athletes (Harrison and Lawrence, 2004; Brown et al., 2015) and elite student-athletes. These USA roles are more akin to professional sportspeople than university students in the United Kingdom (UK), as academic success in the US is not necessarily essential. A common stereotype used in the USA is the term ‘dumb jocks’ (Wininger and White, 2015). Whereas, in the UK, student athletes are generally expected to display excellence in both their academic and athletic abilities (Cross, 2004).

The limited available UK research focuses upon elite student-athlete guidance and support techniques (McKenna and Dunstan-Lewis, 2004), the transitional experiences and coping with these transitions (Brown et al., 2015; Cross, 2004). For example, the study proposed by Brown et al., (2015), observes the transitions student-athletes experience, with the main aim of identifying the coping mechanisms used to overcome the demands of a dual-career. The study by McKenna and Dunstan-Lewis (2004) likewise addresses the daily life support needed for elite student-athletes. However, few UK studies have examined the first-hand experience of elite student-athletes and the challenges and motivations they face from their dual-career choices.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to build on the limited amount of literature exploring the experiences of elite student-athletes in the UK, and to explore the challenges and
motivations of such a unique group of individuals, using a qualitative research approach basis.

2.0 METHOD:

2.1 Design:

A qualitative design was used to allow the researcher to fully immerse themselves in the participants’ experiences, with the purpose of fully understanding their experiences as elite student-athletes.

2.2 Participants:

Four current elite student-athletes were used as participants for the study. The age of the participants ranged from 19-23 years old. The inclusion criteria for the participants included: having to be of a first-class level in cricket and to currently be enrolled in UK higher education. Purposive sampling was used so the researcher could rely on his own judgement as to whom should be included within the in-depth study, saving time and selecting the right participants with the precise characteristics required for this study’s area of interest (Chein, 1981; Patton, 2015). Within purposive sampling, snowball sampling (Goodman, 1961; Morgan, 2008) was used. This sampling technique is a non-profitable sampling method that does not have the probability of other sampling techniques such as random sampling, where the odds of a participant being used are the same. This sampling method
was used as the researcher belongs to an elite athletic team and contacted individuals via social media and/or email ensuring that they fulfilled the inclusion criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>University Year</th>
<th>Sporting Division</th>
<th>University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>Second Division</td>
<td>A South Wales University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
<td>Second Division</td>
<td>A South Wales University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freddie</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>Second Division</td>
<td>A South Wales University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
<td>First Division</td>
<td>An English University</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.3 Materials:

The materials consisted of a semi-structured interview (SSI) schedule, participant information sheet and consent form. Two devices were used for recording, a mobile phone and password-protected laptop. The transcripts and annotations were completed on a word document on the password-protected laptop. All transcripts, recordings and annotations were kept on a memory stick and locked in a cabinet to ensure all confidential information was protected.
2.4 Data collection:

Prior to data collection, full ethical approval was permitted and awarded in December 2017 by the Cardiff Metropolitan Ethics Committee (Reference number: 9780).

Face-to-face interviews were carried out in a convenient and quiet location suitable for the participant and interviewer, ensuring participant comfort and no fear of interruption (Langdridge, 2007). All interviews lasted no longer than thirty minutes.

Informed consent was obtained prior to the interview: participants were given an information sheet, a consent form to sign and were also informed of their right to withdraw from the interview and the study altogether. Such right were permissible up to three weeks after the interview. Participants also received the opportunity to view their transcripts and redact any statements or the whole transcript up to two weeks afterwards. Participants were told that they would remain anonymous, all information would remain confidential and untraceable, with all recorded information only shared between researcher and supervisor.

The SSI schedule was utilised in the face-to-face interviews to allow flexibility so that areas could be explored that may not have been possible with a rigid structured schedule (Smith and Osborn, 2008). The schedule was designed for the participant to convey as much information as possible (Langdridge, 2007). This method acts as a flexible guide, allowing participants to articulate their elite student-athlete experiences. The questions were configured into the most coherent order, allowing the interview to flow smoothly, starting with open-ended questions such as “What are you studying?” and gradually asking more
emotive questions such as “Can you describe the biggest challenges and motivations of being an elite student-athlete?” (Langdridge, 2007).

The design of each interview also allowed a relationship to be built between the participant and the researcher encouraging the participant to be more open with their personal response, offering a considerable advantage to both.

2.5 Method of analysis:

The study used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the qualitative method of analysis (Smith and Osborn, 2008). This study used a small sample size, so that a more in-depth analysis could be undertaken, and to allow a greater focus on the richness of each individual’s experiences (Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014). Five stages of analysis were used:

Stage one:

The initial stage of the analysis started with the researcher immersing themselves into the data by listening to the interview recordings many times until he had gained a comprehensive understanding. Thereafter, the data was transcribed into text, read and re-read line by line to obtain an even greater in-depth familiarity of the transcripts. This stage was a vital part of the analysis as it allowed the researcher to unveil any new themes that emerged through reading the transcripts on numerous times.
**Stage two:**

Secondly, the left-hand margin was used to annotate any initial notes and consideration of anything seen to be significant about the participant’s remarks and explanations. Once again, this stage was of great importance for the researcher to immerse himself in the data.

**Stage three:**

The third stage looked at converting the initial notes in the left-hand margin into emergent themes by using the right-hand margin to construct more concise phrases. Once again, this stage was replicated on all transcripts, forming new emergent themes. For this study, the researcher revisited the transcript many times, engaging completely with the content, feelings and emotions of the participants and constantly questioning what they were portraying, observing what they were communicating, how they conveyed their messages and why.

**Stage four:**

This stage started with listing all emergent themes from each transcript in the order that they arose, in a Word document. The emergent themes were then clustered by identifying connections and similarities between them, by writing a corresponding number next to the themes that matched. Even though some themes had similarities, others needed greater thought to identify the associations between them. Henceforth, the clusters themselves
were given titles, resulting in superordinate themes being developed, and identifying significant supporting quotations from the transcripts.

**Stage five:**

In the final stage, a table was created to present the superordinate themes, emergent themes and indicative quotes. Then an interpretative commentary was used to provide a narrative account of the experiences of the participants, whilst using quotations to provide evidence (Smith and Osborn, 2008).
3.0 Results

Three superordinate themes were identified when examining and evaluating the experiences, observations and perceptions of four undergraduate elite student-athletes.

The table below shows these superordinate themes, the associated emergent themes and specific, relevant participants’ indicative quotations.

Table 2: Superordinate themes with connected emergent themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Superordinate Themes</th>
<th>Emergent Themes</th>
<th>Indicative Quote</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectant self</td>
<td>Challenges</td>
<td>James “...again 9am lectures, training in between, and then you may have another assessment in the next day” 62-64,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Ben “…it’s more just the mental and physical fatigue you get from training, whereby it’s quite hard to motivate yourself” 59-61,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aspirations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Obligations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Responsibilities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualities and characteristics</td>
<td>Freddie “I’ve got to work hard then trying to balance time with training and trying, trying to get enough training done and being able to study” 40-43,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional self</td>
<td>Balancing commitments</td>
<td>Freddie “…being able to kind of commit to both things fully is hard, but I think that’s what you kind of learn as you go along.” 39-42,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Time management &amp; organisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Motivations</td>
<td>John “Give me another focus, so yeah, I think I was ready for the challenges and I think obviously after the first years pretty easy going,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interactions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mental &amp; physical strength &amp; challenges</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Performance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Peer pressure &amp; sacrifices</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenges &amp; obstacles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support &amp; coping mechanisms</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excelling</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
um not that much work load but especially over the past two years the challenges have a lot more real and I think I've found ways to deal with it so far” 26-32,1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspiring self</th>
<th>Multi-focused</th>
<th>Future plans</th>
<th>Positive outlook</th>
<th>Health &amp; wellbeing</th>
<th>Personality traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

James “…my biggest motivators are again being, being the best cricketer, I can be” 87-88,2

James “maybe get a first-class honours degree in order to again plan like life outside of cricket.” 85-86,2

### 3.1 Super-ordinate theme: EXPECTANT SELF

This superordinate theme identifies the emergent themes, characteristics and challenges recognised during the expectant phase. The superordinate theme refers to the participants’ expectations of their dual careers, identifying suitable qualities such as proactivity, engagement, strength, versatility and aspiring personality traits such as those who can cope well and who have the desire to succeed. Albeit, it is acknowledged that there are positive and negative influences within the individual’s life and work experiences.

**Sub-ordinate theme: Aspirations and expectations**

John and James sum up their expectant views of what a successful dual-career feels and looks like. They reiterate how success is achievable by being organised and maintaining motivation and balance, in order to achieve goals in both aspects:
“...having the challenge, especially cricket wise of still keeping the motivation of wanting to play and succeed at the highest level” 67-70,2 John

“I think that a successful student is one that can sort of manage their time and be organised whilst doing a Uni degree and undertaking an elite cricket programme.”
29-32,1 James (Speaking from viewpoint of a successful student who has not achieved it yet)

The expectations of the three participants associated with the MCC University, are very similar and their initial expectations were clearly met:

“It probably has met my expectations...” 19,1 James

“Yeah I think it’s kind of what I expected really......” 10,1 Freddie

However, the non-MCC university participant, Ben, did not have a clear anticipated outlook and details of what to expect were not evidently explained to him:

“... I’d say it definitely has been quite hard to know what to expect going into it...” Ben (16,4)

This shows that the non-specialist University pathway could provide more issues and challenges when trying to pursue this dual-career.
Sub-ordinate theme: Obligations, responsibilities and balance

Participants described self-determination and the natural processes of self-motivation being important to successfully meet obligations whilst maintaining well-being. Commitment was also identified as an important aspect influencing the work and social balance. Freddie’s reflection and observations highlight these expectant obligations and responsibilities and it is observed that he is constantly trying to achieve these. Note how often he says “trying” in the quotations reproduced below:

“I’ve got to work hard then trying to balance time with training and trying, trying to get enough training done and being able to study” 39-42,1 Freddie

“So, it’s probably trying to find a way to kind of get that balance again of having a social life and being that, having that part of university, but also knowing that you’re going to have to put something on hold if you, if work is backing up or if you have a training session the next day” 95-100,3 Freddie

Sub-ordinate theme: Motivations and challenges

The participant’s comments demonstrate the links between the motivations and challenges of balancing dual-careers and the perceived learning acquired. Management of motivation, work, time and recreation plays a general theme as portrayed via Ben’s and James’ comments below:

“...it’s more just the mental and physical fatigue you get from training, whereby it’s quite hard to motivate yourself” 59-61,2 Ben
“...quite hard sometimes to motivate yourself to go to uni or if you’ve got training and a lecture that clash to have the strength of mind to say I’m going to go to the lecture and catch up on the, the gym work or training that you’ve missed” 29-33,1 Ben

“...but just having to manage yourself, manage your entire career, know how you work best, in terms of, do you like, or can you work in the library, can you work in your room on your own with distractions in halls, when your mates are all around. So, I think that’s probably been my biggest challenge, learning enough about myself to enable me to keep on top of both.” 36-42,1 Ben

“...one of the big factors that motivates me is having a successful future maybe outside of cricket, erm and that’s pretty much why I try and work really really hard in university and meet my deadlines and get all the work done before so I can enjoy sort of, maybe meet the social side after.” 78-83, 2 James

Sub-ordinate theme: Commitment

Dual-careers have been described by the participants as character building, with commitments of early morning and late evening training curbing social activities and free time compared to their university peer group.

“...it can be tough knowing that you might miss a social experience because you’ve gotta get to bed at ten when you’ve got training at half seven, when they’re all going
out, but that’s just, I supposed that’s just part of it and it’s something you expect.”

116-121,3 Ben

“I didn’t expect to come to uni and be able to live like a student and be able to do the
sports side of it as well.” 121-122,3 Ben

“…again 9am lectures, training in between, and then you may have another
assessment in the next day” 62-64,2 James

3.2 Super-ordinate theme: TRANSITIONAL SELF

This superordinate theme captures the main challenges of the participants various
perceived perspectives. The observations of their transition and current experiences of
combining university and elite sports activities, are thought-provoking. In addition, they
highlight numerous factors that impact their behaviour and outlook in relation to their
academic achievement, sports performance and social experiences. It is accepted that there
are positive and negative influences and this theme emphasises their perceptions on various
experiences at university so far, including sacrifices and motivations.

Sub-ordinate theme: Time management challenges

A common concern of all participants was time management, in respect of academic
deadlines and sporting commitments. Each participant’s reflections show how challenging
time management can be during this phase and how testing it is to find a balance between
academic, sports obligations and any social activities. Ben expresses his concerns in this regard and how he must constantly work at this element and continuously spend time planning.

“I keep going back to time management. You’ve essentially got two full time jobs when you do them both. So, you’ve got to be bang on with your time. You’ve got to wake up on time, know what you’re gonna do, know what you’re gonna do when you get back and have a real plan in place, which is what I’ve got better at this year.” 96-101,3 Ben

James also verbalises that time management is one of his most challenging aspects of his chosen dual-career path and that it is key for him to achieve a balance. Moreover, he explains how important time management is to succeed when choosing this dual-career and that it would be wise to examine this aspect during the expectant self-phase.

“Time management through university is one of the biggest things that I can stress when people come to university and that it must take importance.” 58-61,2 James

“So yeah, the things I’d take from that would be time management, organisation erm staying on top of your work erm and then that allows you to enjoy sort of the social side and training at the same time.” 131-136,3 James
Sub-ordinate theme: Balancing commitments

Freddie communicated that his academic focus correspondingly improved his performance and success in his other chosen career.

“I was always pretty motivated by academics. I really enjoy that and I really enjoy that aspect of my life and I think, by having another, another thing to concentrate on, like it helps my cricket as well” 48-52,2 Freddie

John similarly articulates how balancing commitments and keeping motivated builds a routine and clear expectations.

“...that balance of, I think it’s keeping motivated to the point where you know what’s expected now, so more of a routine now for me...” 98-100,3 John

Sub-ordinate theme: Sacrifices

Participants portrayed many obstacles during this academic period. This theme demonstrates the numerous factors experienced which caused disruption in their performance, lifestyle and the sacrifices endured.

“...they want different things from life than you do and obviously being an elite sportsman leads to sacrifices you have to make all the way through.” 198-201,5 John

“So, I think it’s just trying, trying to make them realise that you, you are a normal uni student in one sense but then when it comes to it you have to kind of pick and choose between the times you can socialise and have down time and you have to really push on with work” 78-83, 2 Freddie
**Sub-ordinate theme: Interactions**

Participants explained how interactions, physically and socially, with their sport colleagues are intensive and time consuming. However, Freddie described that these interactions can also be supportive, providing a familiar and comfortable empathy, because these peers are experiencing similar encounters.

“I’ve kind of going with guys that are in the same boat as me, so boys that are in the same elite group that have training a lot, a lot of the times of the week, doing, doing degrees, I feel like, that as a social group is kind of, we’re all in the same boat type of thing, so we have, we go out on the same night, we have the same kind, type of interests. I feel that I’ve gravitated towards that kind of social set up” 109-117,3

Freddie

John voiced how multiple colleague interactions provided him with a social network which he felt was important to help deal with the demands of his dual-careers.

“...you’ve got the three different types of social kind of groups, so you have your cricket side, whereas again you can socialise on and off the pitch, and then you have your actually uni people and course friends and then obviously, your housemates.”

161-166,4 John

**Sub-ordinate theme: Mental strength and challenges**

To cope and be successful following the dual-career path can take a certain type of individual. Ben voiced how difficult it can be if you are too much of a people pleaser and
how sport can be a lonely environment sometimes. In this regard, he says that it is important to express your feelings to those who care about you:

“...if you’re the type of person that likes to the like the biggest voice in the room and be mates with everyone, I think you’d struggle a bit more, trying to please too many people, tick too many boxes.” 133-136,3 Ben

“I find it important to go home as much as I can because, it is a lonely place, sport at times. It things aren’t going well and it’s hard to talk to people in the sport environment about how you’re feeling inside. So when you can, when you have the chance to go home and be with people that you care about, it’s important to do that I think, because it makes you feel better about yourself, which will hopefully make you perform better about yourself...” 141-148,4 Ben

**Sub-Ordinate theme: To excel in both careers**
It was recognised that those participants within the South Wales Cricketing Organisation (John, James and Freddie) were far more focused on excelling in all areas of university life and that achievement was necessary in both education and sport and not just one area at the expense of the other. These universities are part of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC) which has funded six university cricket academies in England and Wales and they offer some of the best coaching, support and facilities available anywhere in the country. The aim of the MCC is to give talented young cricketers the chance to receive top-level coaching and playing opportunities whilst furthering their education.

“I think it maybe sort of promotes the development of a student, because often students erm, again naturally focus on the assessments and working hard to gain a
high degree but you know, if you can enjoy university whilst working hard and getting really good marks in your assessments, then I think that’s a perfect balance and playing sport that you love and playing games of sport that you want most success out of on top of erm social opportunities and working hard is err a perfect balance.” 169-179, 4 James

However, it is interesting to analyse Ben’s interview in this regard. As mentioned previously, Ben attends a non-MCC university and his elite sports focus is outside of the university within the county cricket set up and this means that he is mixing and training with employed professionals who are much older individuals and non-students. Ben expresses how this can be challenging as his peers are generally of a different level in age and experience and this has an influence over is required level of maturity, change and growth.

“... being in a professional sporting environment you have to, you have to grow up quick because you’re playing with, or you’re constantly in an environment with grown men who have families and kids, so, you have to learn to know yourself, get to know yourself and not be the, the buy, you’ve got to turn into a man as such...” 47-52, 2 Ben

Furthermore, this has impacted on Ben’s core ambition focus and he states that he is very focused on his ultimate principal motivation of the professional sports career. His university achievements are less of a motivation albeit he does not want to fail in this regard from a self-esteem point of view.
“... because it’s my passion, I want to be as good as I can be. I want to reach my **potential**, whatever that may be, whether it be, playing professional cricket at a good level, or playing for England. **Whatever my ceiling is as such, I want to get to it** and that’s what kind of motivates me to work hard every day and try to improve every day. Err, with the uni side of it, I think the motivation comes from knowing you don’t want to let yourself down as such. I don’t want to be at uni and **fail** as such. Like, I want to do well but it’s more my motivation is anyway, **more fear of failure**.”

70-80,2 Ben

**Sub-Ordinate theme: Motivations**

Participants explained how motivated and focused they are to excel, achieve success and reach their potential. This appears to be a significant personality trait for elite student-athletes.

“I want to **reach my potential**...”71, 2 Ben

“...I’m looking at University at the moment to maybe get a first-class **honours degree** in order to again plan like life outside of cricket. Erm, in terms of cricket, my biggest motivators are again being, being the **best cricketer I can be**. Putting in the hours at training and really sort of, again it’s one thing to be an elite cricketer, but it’s one thing to be a successful elite cricketer and do everything in your power in order to do that” 84-92,2 James

“this year I’m trying a lot more **to push myself** and change my **motivation** into wanting to do well, rather than not wanting to do badly as such.” 107-109, 3 Ben
Sub-ordinate theme: Support

All participants relied on some form of support from a wide-ranging variety of sources. They expressed how the diverse sources of assistance provided have aided them through challenging times. It shows that the support structure surrounding the individuals plays a meaningful role in their nurturing success. John’s reflection supports this claim, demonstrating how important he has viewed the support from his academic and sports coaches. This is a significant additional mechanism to reduce stress and improve well-being.

“...the head coach John is, he’s always there in the mornings or, or he’s just a phone call away if you ever need anything. Obviously being a lecturer in uni, he’s quite a good person to know if you’ve got any, any issues with regards to time or submission dates” 220-225,5 John

Freddie portrayed how the coaches can keep them grounded, keeping a necessary balance between enjoyment and hard work enabling him to excel:

“I think they help a lot in trying to keep you always grounded and kind of say that you are allowed to enjoy yourself as well as working hard...” 130-133,3

Freddie

It is interesting to note that, yet again Ben’s experience differs from the other participants. He does not feel that he gets much support in his dual-career. Whilst this may be making him more self-sufficient, when things may not be going so well, this could be a real challenge making it difficult to bounce back from.
“...I’ve got a close family. Not too, not too big, but just mum and dad, sister and no one else really. So, it’s quite nice to get home once in a while...” 139-140,3 Ben

(When discussing support) “I haven’t got that much, but I’ve learnt a lot about myself, because I’ve had to do it myself. I’ve had to be my own coach at times and work things out for myself...” 154,157,4 Ben

3.3 Super-ordinate theme: ASPIRING SELF

The Aspiring Self Superordinate theme identified how the participants feel about and imagine their future careers. They expressed extremely positive outlooks, being enthusiastic about their future and showing determination to excel.

Sub-ordinate theme: Future plans

Participants highlighted a positive aspect of this, dual-careers being the multi-focused areas of potential excellence. Freddie expressed that in the event of experiencing one career challenge he can fall back on the other. Having this balanced focus could help overall achievement in both careers, even though some participants are perceived to have greater aspirations in one area more than the other. Dual-careers do provide an alternate future and a positive plan as revealed by Freddie, John and James.

“I think it helps me having something else that I know that if I’m going through a rough patch, it’s not the be all and end all.” 54-56,2 Freddie
“...and obviously getting a good, good grade in university, trying to graduate with a first, I think that is probably my aim” 88-91, 2 John

“...one of the big factors that motivates me is having a successful future maybe outside of cricket, erm and that’s pretty much why I try and work really really hard in university and meet my deadlines and get all the work done before so I can enjoy sort of, maybe meet the social side after.” 78-83,2 James

“...my biggest motivators are again being, being the best cricketer, I can be.” 87-88,2 James

**Sub-ordinate theme: Personality traits**

The elite student-athletes revealed fundamental characteristics including determination, enthusiasm, diligence, discipline, conscientiousness, drive and commitment.

“Whatever my ceiling is as such, I want to get to it and that’s what kind of motivates me to work hard every day and try and improve every day.” 74-76,2 Ben

“...my biggest motivators are again being, being the best cricketer I can be. Putting in the hours at training and really sort of, again it’s one thing to be an elite cricketer, but it’s one thing to be a successful elite cricketer and do everything in your power in order to do that...” 87-92,2 James
Sub-ordinate theme: Positive outlook

The participants communicated very positive outlooks and demonstrated enthusiasm and determination. They voiced how their dual-career produced balance in their lives, revealing an overall commitment to achieve whilst maintaining health and wellbeing.

“... the long-term goal is probably become a teacher...” 86-87,2 John

“I want to reach my potential, whatever that may be, whether that will be playing professional cricket at a good level, or playing for England.” 71-74,2 Ben

“... one of the big factors that motivates me is having a successful future maybe outside of cricket, erm that’s pretty much why I try and work really really hard in university and meet my deadlines and get all work done...” 78-82,2 James

Finally, James expressed exceptionally well his perception of the three overall keys to dual-career success being: time management, organisation and some relaxation or social time:

“...to anyone now coming to university, three things I’d probably flag; time management, organisation and then just enjoying your time off.” 179-182,4 James
3.4 Summary of Results

Generally, the findings show that transition is a course of many components. The predominant theme expressed by all participants within the transitional self-phase was the importance of balancing commitments. In addition, discipline, motivation, commitment and organisation are important qualities when undertaking dual-careers and there was a strong feeling that academic and sporting commitments must take priority over everything else.

Nonetheless, the other themes were no less significant as they showed meaningful benefits to the participants, for example, the support and coping mechanisms, which considerably help overcome the pressure and stress experienced and enable them to deal with challenging times and maintain wellbeing.

As the research sample varied across two different universities, it was fascinating to discover the different mindsets regarding the level of importance placed on academic and sporting accomplishments. The MCC university students are definitely expected to excel at the highest possible level in both areas and this should be identified and communicated to new potential candidates within the expectant self-phase. For some new students, this could put an enormous level of pressure and stress on them, thus affecting student wellbeing.
4.0 Discussion

The aim of this research study was to investigate the challenges and motivations of dual-careers by exploring the experiences of elite student-athletes in the UK using a qualitative approach.

This analysis was influenced by a growing interest in attending university whilst following elite athlete opportunities. It aimed to also discovering current student experiences and the challenges faced during this journey and their coping skills through their dual-career time.

Due to the limited UK research, this study delivers extended understanding to assist those individuals choosing the dual-career path, in particular those combining elite sports and further education. In addition, this research can assist UK universities in understanding the issues faced by dual career students and the support mechanisms that can assist individual success, wellbeing and overall life experience. Three core themes were recognised within the four interviews:

1. Expectant self
2. Transitional self
3. Aspiring self

Adopting a qualitative approach enabled each individual’s meaningful experiences and emotions to be captured and to uncover individual study, sport and social challenges and unique coping methods.
4.1 Findings in Relation to Existing Research

4.2 Expectant self
The first theme explored the student’s ‘expectant self’ phase. Notably, the results identified the expectations of elite student-athletes engaging in dual-careers and the qualities needed to succeed.

Participants exhibited a strong desire to deploy the internal resources required to succeed when transitioning into a dual-career. The internal resources identified included self-motivation and commitment. These results replicate the work of the Athletic Career Transitions Model (Stambulova, 2003), highlighting the need to overcome the challenges of dual-career transition by using internal resources.

The current study highlighted the essential requirements of managing time effectively. Previous research reflects these results (Dahie, Mohamed and Osman, 2016), revealing that time management is highly related to performance in the given dual-career and that being organised decreases stress levels of the elite student-athlete, resulting in more efficient time distribution between their academic and athletic career.

Identification of goals and aspirations were acknowledged within the reflections. Zimmerman et al. (1992) concluded that goal-setting and students’ self-efficacy serve as a good prediction of success of students’ final course grades in social studies.
The participants generally expressed positive viewpoints on the dual-career transitions. Albeit they voiced various challenges encountered particularly in the transitional self-phase, for example time management.

Judge et al. (2006) investigated the relationship of personality traits with career success and conscientiousness positively predicted intrinsic and extrinsic career success. In addition, Salgado (1997), showed three related aspects needed for success - achievement orientation (hardworking and persistent), dependability (responsible and careful), and orderliness (organised). These characteristics feature in the elite student-athlete declaration hence providing evidence of skills and traits required for these challenging careers.

4.3 Transitional self

In line with previous research (Miller and Kerr, 2002), many participants found that there was a tension between academic, athletic and social careers, understanding the need for prioritisation and necessary sacrifices.

Another finding from the results is the need for external resources, such as support to aid the participants through challenging times. Previous research (Jeon, Lee and Kwon, 2016) suggests that social support, in the form of tutors, coaches or parents can help the elite student-athletes overcome most challenges faced.

Furthermore, participants in this transitional self-phase characterised further personality indicators of elite student-athletes including being driven, disciplined, committed, strong, diligent and hardworking. This supports previous research of Van-Yperen and Renkema
(2008), who stated that success stems from hard work and having the discipline to achieve set goals.

Nonetheless, the results demonstrated that even though participants had the drive to excel in their sporting career, not all of them had the same ambitions with their academic careers. These results back up previous studies (Burden, Tremayne and Marsh, 2004; Sorensen and Christensen, 2009; McKenna and Dunstan-Lewis, 2004) which state that when two careers come into conflict, elite student-athletes could prioritise one career over the other.

Additionally, this study has identified that certain universities have a big influence on the level of effort and determination put into both careers. Participants who attend MCC universities were expected to excel in both their academic studies and athletic career. However, the non-MCC university student had a completely different mindset, with his sports career being his priority and academia being less of a priority. This is reflected in Lucas and Lovaglia (2002) study which found that some elite student-athletes can be more focused on their sporting commitments than their academic commitments.

Overall this theme showed that dual-career transitions can be a positive experience even though it can be demanding and stressful. Time and stress management are expressed as coping mechanisms during this challenging phase. Although there is a general acceptance that student-athletes perform better during particularly busy sport competition periods, it is believed that this is because the structured nature during the playing season leads to more structure in student-athletes’ academic life and better academic performance (Scott et al.,
2008), with results in revealing stability in performance, and a positive impact on personal factors such as mood and wellbeing.

4.4 Aspiring self

The final ‘Aspiring self’ theme identifies how the participants imagine and expect their future careers to be and discovers important attributes possessed by most elite student-athletes, such as conscientiousness.

The results provided an insight into the motivations for choosing a dual-career. The main intention being the opportunities post-graduation, giving the individual a backup plan and future security should their athletic career end earlier than expected, consistent with research by McGillivray (2006) and Aquilina (2013). However, further research (Cosh and Tully, 2014) has stated that elite student-athletes sometimes are more focused on their sporting future employment, rather than their alternative careers. The fact is supported by one participant, who showed indifference concerning his academic future employment opportunities and purely focusing on his elite sport future.

Moreover, the results also provided an understanding of the participants’ personality traits, using words such as ‘motivated’ and ‘organised’. All participants showed a level of conscientiousness needed to succeed in their dual-career. This links with the work of Judge et al. (2006) who found that individuals who were conscientious were more likely to achieve career success, through a higher degree of need for achievement and persistence.
4.5 Consideration for Future Research

This study has shown to have its strengths and weaknesses. A great strength of this study was the opportunity it gave the participants to speak about their experiences at length as an elite student-athlete, allowing them to delve deeper into their challenges and motivations.

However, there are certain limitations of this study that need to be acknowledged. The first being that there is not a great diversity of elite student-athletes from different Universities, with three participants being from one university and the remaining student from a different University. Although it is clear that the two Universities have created different experiences for the elite student-athletes, these experiences cannot be generalised to characterise every elite student-athlete undertaking this dual-career.

Although the study elicited rich data regarding the lived experiences of the elite student-athletes, further research will provide an even greater depth of understanding of this population. For example, this study used all male participants, whereas future research could focus on the female population where there is a paucity of literature (Saxe, 2015) and help decipher if these experiences are unique to men or, as may be far more likely, unique to elite athletes in general.
4.6 Reflexive Analysis

Reflectivity is a critical part of any qualitative study (Hartas, 2010; Smith, Flowers, and Larking, 2009). This is because it is possible for the researcher to have an impact upon the data produced. Qualitative researchers need to acknowledge that their own role can influence the participants’ responses, the data collection and analysis of the study, ultimately affecting the outcomes. Thus, through reflexivity, the researcher can identify how their own subjectivity can affect their research (Finlay, 2005).

It is important to inform the reader of the reason behind researching this topic and my position within this area being studied (Langdridge, 2007). The reason for pursuing this area of research is because I am an elite sportsman and a higher education student myself, so I am experiencing similar challenges and motivations. I wanted to explore other’s experiences and see if they differed from my own, whilst simultaneously gathering any tips or techniques that I could use myself to cope with the challenges I face on a daily basis.

I recognise that my experiences overlap those of the participants, however I feel that my own experience and knowledge would arguably benefit the study too, as I was able to address certain topics that arose in the interviews that would be unfamiliar for someone not in the same position as myself (Bonner and Tolhurst, 2002).

Although familiarity of this research area improves the depth of understanding, there is the concern of the researcher being too similar to those being included in the study (Kanuha, 2000). This would also relate to my relationship with the participants as we all know each
other well due to the amount of time we spend together. Nonetheless, I felt that the participants gave a true account of their experiences.

When reflecting on my own experience of conducting the interviews, I feel that my last interview was the most successful one, as my ability and skills had improved during the previous three interviews. Moreover, the questions I was asking were more familiar and the subsequent questions to attain deeper knowledge flowed well. On further deliberation, if I was to make any change to the study, I would conduct a pilot study (Kim, 2011) before starting the interview process. The would enhance my interview skills further enabling me to become even more familiar with the interview schedule, thus improving professionalism, delivery and content received.

4.7 Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this research study was to examine the challenges and motivations of dual-careers by exploring the experiences of elite student-athletes. Previous research in this area corresponded with the current study’s finding in relation to the positive and negative experiences of elite student athletes, including what effect it has on life experience and wellbeing.

As such, the study contributes to the limited UK research in the area of dual-careers. This study can also contribute to the knowledge, skills and support from coaches, tutors and parents, minimising challenging experiences and assisting current and future elite student-athletes by identifying and implementing the coping strategies recognised in this study.
Thus, using this knowledge to improve learning capabilities plus opportunities for growth and success in this dual-career, creating a more pleasurable and rewarding experience.

Future research into a broader range of experiences, including those of females and a variety of universities should be explored. In addition, consideration of the encounters during the transition period post university is recommended as this would give a completely holistic vision of dual career success and the challenges confronted. Finally, it is also important to use this knowledge to reassure and encourage students about what has been demonstrated to be a stressful and demanding, yet rewarding career option.
5.0 References


Cosh, S., & Tully, P. J. (2014). “All I have to do is pass”: A discursive analysis of student athletes’ talk about prioritising sport to the detriment of education to overcome stressors encountered in combining elite sport and tertiary education. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise, 15*, 180-189.


Defreese, J. D., & Smith, A. L. (2014). Athlete social support, negative social interactions and psychological health across a competitive sport season. *Journal of sport and exercise*
psychology, 36(6), 619-630.


6.0 Appendices

6.1 Appendix A (Interview Schedule)

1) What are you studying and which year are you in?

2) Think about your experience so far of being a student athlete – has it met your expectations?
   
   Prompt: explain that when referring to the term student athlete you are talking about dual career

3) Can you describe the biggest challenges and motivations of being an elite athlete and higher education student?
   
   Prompts – let’s begin with the challenges?
   
   Can you describe the factors that motivate you within these roles

4) Can you explain to me how you deal/cope with being elite athlete and student on a day to day basis?

5) Can you explain whether you feel that being an athlete and a student has impacted upon the social experiences in either of these roles?

6) Where do your greatest sources of support come from?

Thank you for participating – before we close is there anything else you would like to add that I may have missed.
6.2 Appendix B (Information Sheet)

Reference number: 9780

Title of Project: The challenges and motivations of dual-careers: Exploring the experiences of being an elite athlete and a higher education student

Participant information sheet

The study

This study is an attempt to understand the challenges and motivations of being an elite student-athlete during higher education.

What would happen if you agree to participate?

You will have a face-to-face interview carried out in a convenient quiet location for you. It is anticipated that interviews will last no longer than half an hour. The interview will engage with you to share experiences based on a pre-determined structure of themes/prompts such as social life, stress related issues and motivations.

Exclusion criteria

The exclusion criteria will include; having to be of an elite standard in sport, to currently be enrolled in UK higher education.

Potential Risk

There are no obvious risks of partaking in this study but you have the right to withdraw at any time during the interview or indeed after the interview has taken place. If you feel unwell or for any reasons do not want to participate in this study please do not hesitate before or during the interview to say.

Potential benefits

In taking part, you will be able to reflect on your situation as a student-athlete, which could provide a useful understanding of how you feel at this time and how you could improve your experience at university.
Withdrawal, anonymity and confidentiality

You have the right to withdraw from the interview and the study as a whole. Right to withdraw from the study as a whole can take place up to three weeks after the interview. You will also be given the opportunity to view your transcripts and redact any statements or the whole transcript up to two weeks after.

Your name and any names used in the interview will be changed in order to obtain anonymity. The researcher and the dissertation supervisor are the only individuals who will have access to the data. Confidentiality will be established by storing all data in a password protected device and transcripts will be contained in a locked cupboard.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact:
6.3 Appendix C (Consent form)

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Reference Number: 9780
Participant name or Study ID Number:
Title of Project: The challenges and motivations of dual-careers: Exploring the experiences of being an elite athlete and a higher education student
Name of Researcher:

Participant to complete this section: Please initial each box.

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time before leaving the experiment, without giving any reason. ☐

3. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

_______________________________________    _____________________
Signature of Participant                                Date

_______________________________________    _____________________
Name of person taking consent                          Date

_______________________________________
Signature of person taking consent
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