

# High Performance Athlete Academic Flexibility Policy



**Policy Owner:** UCD Ad Astra Academy  
and UCD Sports

**Approval date  
and body**

Approved by AC on  
22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021

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## 1. Purpose

UCD, as part of its mission (Core Objective #4 – UCD Strategy 2020-2024) is committed to recruiting, supporting and developing high performance athletes.

High performance athletes include but are not limited to members of the: (i) UCD Ad Astra Academy Elite Sports Programme; (ii) UCD Sports Scholarship Programme; and (iii) UCD Graduate Sports Scholarship Programme. They normally represent UCD and may be selected to represent inter-provincial, national, or international teams/squads, with the opportunity to attend associated training camps and/or compete at important international events such as, the Six Nations Rugby Championship, European Championships, World Championships, the Paralympic Games, and the Olympics Games.

Due to commitments associated with high performance sport, UCD high performance athletes at times, may require academic flexibility and in exceptional circumstances may need to avail of a leave of absence or extend their degree programme.

To ensure consistency and equity for all UCD high performance athletes, a university policy is required.

## 2. Content

This policy: (i) outlines who is considered to be a UCD High Performance Athlete, (ii) defines academic flexibility and (iii) outlines the principles of its implementation.

## 3. Definitions – who is considered to be a UCD High Performance Athlete?

UCD High Performance Athletes include:

- Members of UCD Sports Scholarship Programmes (Ad Astra Academy Elite Sports Scholars, UCD Sports Scholars and Graduate Sports Scholars).
- Members of a UCD Club selected to represent UCD at national or international-level competitions.
- Members of a UCD Club selected to represent their country at important international sporting events such as, the Six Nations Rugby Championships, European Championships, World Championships, the Paralympic Games, and the Olympics Games.

- Members of a UCD Club selected to attend a training camp prior to an important international sporting event such as, the Six Nations Rugby Championships, European Championships, World Championships, the Paralympic Games, and the Olympics Games.
- In exceptional circumstances, UCD students who are not in receipt of a UCD Sports Scholarship or who are not a member of a UCD Club, but who have been selected to represent their country at an important international sporting event, may avail of academic flexibility (as defined by the scope of this policy). Examples of such circumstances may include (i) the university not including a club for that particular sport or (ii) the university club not competing at an elite level<sup>1</sup>.
- Participation in intervarsity competition is not normally considered high performance.

#### 4. Scope – defining academic flexibility

UCD recognises the important contribution that High Performance Athletes make to the reputation of the University through their participation in national and/or international-level competitions.

Due to their participation in training and competition, High Performance Athletes may require authorised absence from lectures, tutorials, and laboratories. In addition, they may require academic flexibility related to the timing of assessments, participation in group-based work, and commitments to work placements/internships. Specific examples of academic flexibility are listed below:

- Authorised absences from lectures, laboratories, workshops, seminars, tutorials, study visits, clinical fieldwork, work experience, internships etc. Such authorisations should be considered where students are engaged and progressing in their programmes.
- Flexible deadlines for the submission of coursework. Such authorisations should be considered where students are engaged and progressing in their programmes.
- Flexible arrangements for work placements and internships, where possible.
- The opportunity to sit examinations at alternative agreed times and locations, invigilated by designated, responsible individuals (e.g., UCD Club Coach, UCD Staff Member, National Governing Body Personnel) as approved by the UCD Director of Assessment. This requires advanced planning by the High Performance Athlete and module coordinator and should be authorised by the UCD Director of Assessment.
- Encouragement to consider whether an alternative individual work piece rather than group work, is appropriate subject to meeting the learning outcomes of the module.

Requests for academic flexibility require advance notification and detailed planning. However, due to the nature of high performance sports, it may not always be possible to seek planned support in advance (for example late call ups to squads). In such cases, it is the responsibility of the High Performance Athlete to make contact with the module coordinator as soon as possible to discuss the possibility of flexible academic arrangements.

High Performance Athletes in exceptional circumstances may request the following in consultation with their Academic Mentor (where appointed), Governing Board and Scholarships Programme:

- The opportunity/possibility to avail of a leave of absence when required due to sporting commitments.
- The opportunity/possibility to extend their degree programme to a maximum of one additional academic year due to sporting commitments.

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• <sup>1</sup>Under exceptional circumstances a committee (see Appendix 1) will be established to review an athlete's status to determine if they should be classified as a High Performance Athlete.

In such cases the Governing Board will determine when such academic flexibility is appropriate or feasible in terms of each student's academic performance and/or when a move to an extended duration of their degree programme or a leave of absence may be advisable.

## 5. Principles

UCD as part of its mission is committed to recruiting, supporting and developing high performance athletes.

The University, where possible, will support requests from high performance athletes' to have academic flexibility due to their sporting commitments.

The policy will be transparent and outline clear guidelines for the High Performance Athletes and relevant staff in their academic programmes.

Requests should be made before the commencement of training/competition and where possible, at the start of the trimester. In *ad hoc* cases, the application should be dealt with as quickly and as locally as possible, for example by the module coordinator and/or Head of School. Retrospective applications may be considered only in exceptional cases, whereby there are valid reasons for non-submission within the usual timeframe. Such applications will be managed at the appropriate level, for example, by the module coordinator, Head of School, and/or Governing Board as appropriate.

The University reserves the right to investigate the validity of applications. Where necessary, cases will be referred to the UCD Student Code of Conduct.

## 6. Process

High Performing Athletes are required to complete a formal schedule at the start of each academic year outlining their sporting commitments, which must be reviewed/approved by their Scholarships Programme/UCD Sports. This will be provided to the athlete's Programme at the start of each year and updated each trimester, if required.

This schedule will include their full competitive and training commitments, as well as any other opportunities they identify where they may be asked to represent their sport. The onus is on the athlete to outline any potential conflicts between their academic and sporting commitments.

Where clashes between the High Performance Athletes academic and sporting commitments are identified and academic flexibility is required, the athlete will need to complete and submit the UCD's High Performance Athlete Academic Flexibility Application Form to their module coordinator/Programme Office for approval. Requests should be made before the commencement of the training/competition and where possible, at the start of trimester.

In cases where requests are being made for leave of absence or extending their programme, this must also be approved by the athletes Governing Board.

In exceptional circumstances, retrospective applications may be considered where there are valid reasons for non-submission within the usual timeframe.

For circumstances unrelated to sports the [UCD Extenuating Circumstances](#) policy should be used.

Academic flexibility requested by a High Performance Athlete is never guaranteed. The final decision on such applications rests with the athlete's Governing Board. If a Governing Board refuses a request, the decision will be communicated to the athlete and their Scholarships Programme/UCD Sports.

The High Performance Athlete is required to complete all aspects of their academic programme. Athletes will not be exempt from submitting mandatory pieces of assessed work and will be expected to meet the learning outcomes of the programme by an agreed date.

Where a High Performance Athlete has been approved to extend their programme, the Governing Board will notify UCD Fees of the decision.

## **7. Roles and responsibilities**

- High Performance Athlete
- Module Coordinator
- UCD Academic Mentor where appointed
- UCD Scholarships Programme
- UCD Sports Development Officer
- Governing Board (to approve leave of absence and/or extended year)
- A Review Committee (to approve students in exceptional circumstances who are not on/part of a University Club)
- UCD Student Adviser (source of support)

All faculty and staff responsible for High Performance Athletes should be aware of the UCD's High Performance Athlete Academic Flexibility Policy, Procedures and Application Forms. This includes module coordinators, governing boards and scholarships programmes.

The High Performance Athlete must ensure that they are familiar with the content of any relevant University Regulations, Policy, Procedures and Code of Practice on the assessment of their work.

Where the High Performance Athlete requires flexibility for their academic commitments, they must complete the UCD's High Performance Athlete Academic Flexibility Application Form. They must discuss their request with the (i) Scholarships Programme/UCD Sport and/or (ii) module coordinator and/or Chair of the Governing Board, before submitting their completed application.

The High Performance Athlete should take all necessary actions to ensure they progress in their academic studies whilst pursuing their sporting commitments and to ensure that they meet all academic requirements of their programmes. This includes contacting the relevant staff where clashes between sporting and academic commitments may occur to resolve any potential conflicts in advance of them taking place.

If the High Performance Athletes application for academic flexibility is rejected by a module coordinator, it is recommended that the athlete meets with the Head of School/Chair of the Governing Board to discuss possible alternate solutions to meet their learning outcomes whilst also meeting their sporting commitments.

## **8. Related documents**

UCD Leave of Absence Policy

UCD Extenuating Circumstances Policy

UCD's High Performance Athlete Academic Flexibility Procedures

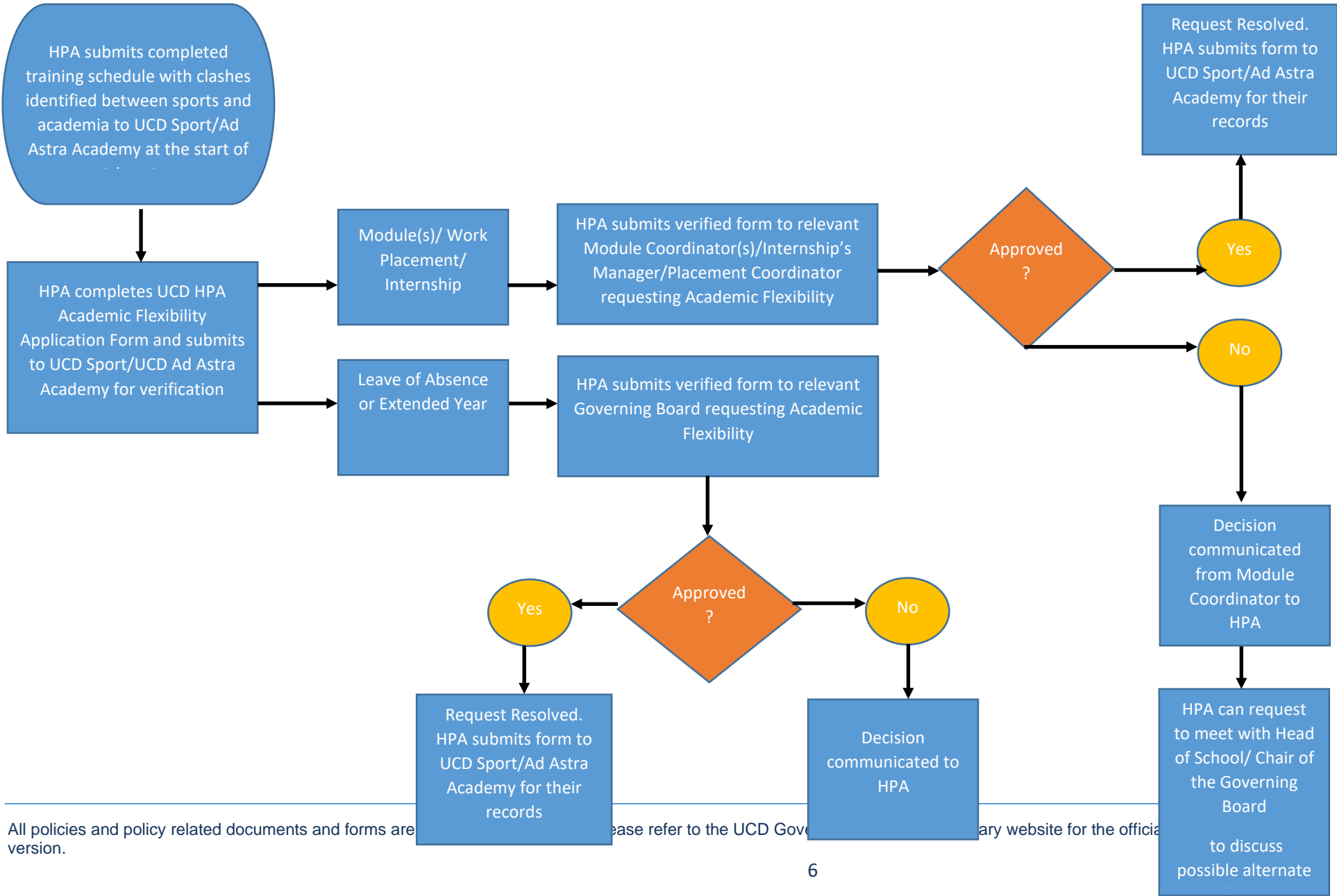
## **9. Appendix One: Committee to Review an Athletes Status in Exceptional Circumstances**

The composition of such a committee will include the Registrar's Nominee, two members of staff from UCD Student Services with at least one staff member to be from UCD Sport. Terms of Reference for such a committee will be established once it is set up and may include co-opted members as required

## **10. Version history**

Version 1.1.

# UCD's High Performance Athlete (HPA) Academic Flexibility Procedures



All policies and policy related documents and forms are available on the UCD website. Please refer to the UCD Governing Board website for the official version.