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METHODOLOGY OF IMPLEMENTATION THE SPORTS TUTOR MODEL

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Methodology of Implementation the Sports Tutor Model

In this section, we are going to uncover the experiences of implementing the Sports Tutor in the universities involved within the ESTPORT project. The nature of each university will be described before providing a description of the methodology used and developed for the implementation of the project. The major barriers and obstacles that had to be overcome will follow, along with the lessons learned during the process that help inform the recommendations. Finally, this Chapter will discuss how to make such a project, like ESTPORT, sustainable.

1. University of Thessaly (UTH)

University of Thessaly (UTH) was founded in 1984 and elected the first Rectorate Board in 1998. While its administrative and academic center is situated in the city of Volos, it has also been expanded in more new campuses in the cities of Larissa, Trikala and Karditsa as far as the regions of Thessaly concerns and in Lamia. UTH is an institution which its present academic structure consists of eighteen (18) Departments and six (6) Faculties, with prominent position in the Greek educational system. The main mission of the University of Thessaly is the promotion of scientific knowledge through research and the contribution to the cultural and economic development of the local community and to society in general. UTH is steadily attracting both high profile professors and personnel either from Greece or abroad and continuously upgrading its services to industry, central government, local authorities and society.

The Department of Physical Education and Sport Sciences was founded in 1993. Its facilities are situated in an area of 150.000 m² in Karyes, Trikala. The Department currently employs 23 faculty members,

9 members of teaching and laboratory staff, and 12 members of technical and administrative staff, not considering the yearly contract or secondment staff. The Department was among the first 10 Greek higher education departments that participated in the formal internal and external evaluation procedures set by the Greek Ministry of Education.

As it is imposed by the Institutional Law the Bodies of the Department that form the institutional framework of operation are the General Assembly, the General Assembly of Special Composition, the Administrative Board and the Head. Beyond its great performance within the present context in the Department there is not any other fundamental institutional approach concerning the students/athletes and their integrated framework in order to support them.

UTH gives also special emphasis on the bond between the University of Thessaly and the labour market. This bond is further supported by the operation of the Career Services Office which is mainly associated with connecting graduates with the business sector, and it encourages a great deal of social activities and public lectures on various issues held by qualified academic staff.

1.1. Methodology

a) Steps and explanation of the main features of each step

Operating in a quite conventional and traditional institutional framework, the concept of the Dual Career imposed by the ESTPORT project had to be introduced in a very attentive and concrete way. Such an approach was considered really necessary in order to ensure that the introduced model could provoke the interest of the students-athletes and the staff but at the same time without causing radical changes in the traditional way of the Department's overall operation.

Therefore, a careful and a well-designed strategy was developed assuring the effectiveness of the model of dual career sports – athletes in the Greek framework. The proposed strategy was based on the following integrated and well defined steps.

b) Dissemination & Raising of Awareness

The basic priority and main aspiration of the working team was to highlight the importance of supporting athletes-students on an institutional basis while at the same time to reveal the regulatory operating framework of this institutional model which is one of encouragement the dual career aspect. Subsequently, the design and the development of a comprehensive strategy towards disclosing the importance of the dual career model became the first working priority.

The working team in the project had to adopt a relatively careful strategy in order to “stress” the innovative concept of the “Sports Tutorship Model” under the framework of a very conventional and traditional operation of the Greek Higher Educational Institutions (HEI).

Therefore, an “outward” official launch of the project and raising of awareness of the Sports Tutorship Model attempted to focus on the problem of the dual career of sport athletes and its negative effects not only in short term period but also in long term. With the presence of policy officers, stakeholders, trainers, students and faculty members the first workshop was implemented in the premises of the Local Municipality (symbolically) in order that the aspect of the dual career could be highlighted beyond the conventional limits of the University. The basic goal of the workshop was to address the issues and the framework of having a dual career for the student-athlete in Greece.

The feedback received and the results provided were the basis for the smooth introduction of the concept of the Sports Tutorship Model in the Greek framework. Beyond the many significant results and key assumptions that were extracted by this 1st workshop, one of the most critical points that actually represented the basic inflow in UTH’s contribution was the adoption of a very aggressive awareness strategy.

It was decided that this strategy that will be implemented throughout the life time of this project, will concern the different target groups in order to ensure that the concept of the dual career of students-athletes in general and in particular the Sports Tutorship Model would be incorporated into the consciousness of all the related stakeholders (faculty, staff, students, trainers, athletes, etc.).

The aggressive dissemination strategy that was adopted by the UTH team in order to ensure the awareness of the Sports Tutorship Model, was considered to be successful. It has been confirmed by the number of students/athletes that replied to the questionnaires of the related survey but also by the number of students/athletes that participated in the next workshop. This 2nd workshop raised the interest of a really big number of participants that actually provided the feedback for the design of this Sports Tutorship Model.

With the implementation of the two workshops the first main objective of familiarizing the concept of “Sports Tutorship Model” had been accomplished. All the relevant stakeholders revealed the importance and the significance of supporting the students-athletes through an integrated model which was the first priority in our Greek Institutional framework.

1.2. Barriers and difficulties

Beyond extensively raising awareness of the project, the introduction of the innovative, new and radical concept of the sports tutorship could not be introduced automatically into a conventional and bureaucratic public institution without constraints and delays.

A number of barriers and limitations appeared that made the smooth introduction of the Sports Tutorship Model in a Greek Higher Educational Institution a very big challenge:

a) The Institutional approval: Despite the presence of a relatively big number of faculty members in the workshops and their positive attitude towards the importance and existence of the Sports Tutor and the Sports Tutorship Model in the Department there was still a need of institutional acceptance/approval in the general assembly of the Department. However, the bureaucratic “monster” that rules the Greek public sector (including the Greek HEI) requires an additional institutional acceptance in order to become an official regulation through the Division of Students and Administrative Affairs.

b) Profile and availability of Tutors: Two basic issues, concerning the tutors and their contribution to the model, negatively affected its smooth

introduction. Firstly, the availability of the faculty for undertaking the “critical” role is one of the biggest obstacles since the present status of the professors in Greek HEI is considered extremely busy. Therefore, it is highly important to expand the base of the available staff in order to undertake the important role of a tutor. However, in that case another problem is automatically assigned. Who might be a potential tutor beyond the professor? Who obtains the necessary skills and competence to undertake this role?

c) “Elite” student-athletes: Since the Greek professional sports have been affected by the recent economic crisis inevitably that affected also the number of students/athletes that actively participated in a championship level being considered as an “elite” student-athletes. Therefore, another big problem that has emerged is related to the profile of the students-athletes that were to be considered as “elite” and therefore, that could take advantage of the sports tutorship model.

d) Content of the Model: One of the most critical issues that was raised through the workshops referred to the real content of the proposed Tutorship Model. Due to the diverged target group it was a real difficult task to determine the content and the support services of the proposed Tutorship Model. Different demands and needs could not be applied or modified in one simple unique framework.

e) Status of the model: A big debate emerged concerning the “status” of the model. The very “busy” schedule of many students/athletes with a lot of training sessions and courses, created the need for online tools to support the students. It then became a critical question about whether the sports tutor would be represented by his/ her physical presence (through scheduled visits) or if the role could work through a dynamic platform.

1.3. Recommendations and lessons learned

The present institutional framework together with the different limitations represented the need for the design and the development of an integrated methodological approach that would contribute to the

successful introduction and the smooth adoption of the Sports Tutorship Model in the national context. In order to overcome the difficulties and the limitations, the proposed model consists of a staged approach of four different phases:

I. The initial Phase: Contains the raising of awareness of the concept of the Sports Tutor in order that all the involved stakeholders could become familiar with this new challenge and gradually then for it to become an integral part of the daily life of both the faculty members and the their relevant student-athletes.

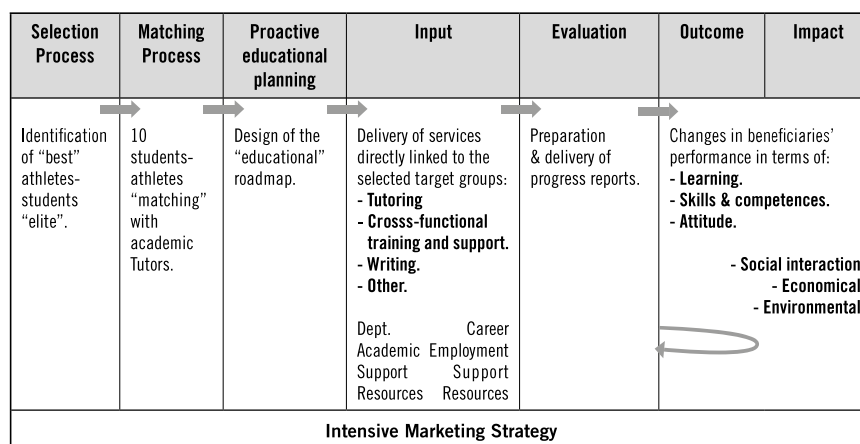


Image 1. The Sports Tutorship Model in the Greek context.

II. The Introduction Phase: Contains the two first stages of the model a) selection process and b) matching process. At this stage the criteria of selecting the "elite" group of students-athletes are carefully determined in order to achieve the best "matching" of the tutor-athlete relationship. An open invitation was launched with a clear description of the necessities and the profile of the proposed "elite" students that would be able to participate in the Sports Tutorship Model. This carefully designed stage of the model facilitated the whole process of identifying the correct "target" group and thus to avoid any misunderstandings between the student-athlete and the faculty members of the Department.

III. Implementation Phase: This stage of the model was considered quite necessary firstly in order to identify the right portfolio of support services provided to the participants and secondly to achieve a high quality of services to be delivered to the student-athlete. In order to do so a careful determination of the particular needs of each participant is required, formulating, along with the Tutor, the “roadmap” for each student-athlete.

Additionally, the qualitative provision of support services has been ensured by being categorized in two different thematic fields: a) educational and b) career & occupational. Similarly and in order to be able to meet the needs of the student-athlete, an online tutorship approach was introduced (merely by skype) to accommodate the busy schedule and outdoor training of students who could not meet the Tutor in person.

What was obviously identified as basic outcome during the workshops and the sessions with the tutors, was that the student-athlete needs a career oriented “toolkit”.

Due to their daily dedication to their sport they are missing important information concerning their future both in terms of postgraduate studies and career options available for their future. Therefore, along with the labour market experts of the career office a necessary career “toolkit” was prepared containing:

- A list of selected Sport master courses across Europe and particularly in the UK,
- A Career Guide with detailed description and guidelines of how to prepare a Curriculum Vitae and a Covering Letter,
- Templates of CVs both in Greek and English language (including Europass format).

IV. Evaluation Phase: Selected members of the “elite” team were asked to prepare and present their CVs to the Tutors in order to monitor both their involvement and their progress. Additionally through scheduled meetings “virtual” interviews were organized in order that the Tutors (acting as potential employers) could identify skills, abilities but also weaknesses and negative aspects of the student-athlete.

This role-play exercise facilitated the whole introduction of the elite students to the model and their familiarization with the concept of tutorship. Their performance was also monitored during the exam period in order to not only facilitate the student-athlete but also to ensure that the model performed properly and successfully met the initial objectives.

As illustrated from image 1, the successful implementation of all the phases of the Sports Tutorship Model (for the first time in the Greek Higher Educational Institution) was reinforced from a parallel dissemination strategy that occurred as an on-going basis.

1.4. Sustainability

The first Sports Tutorship Model of dual career of student-athletes was successfully introduced and implemented in the national Greek context. This first initiative was considered really successful with several critical aspects to be inspected for the future sustainability of the Tutorship Model. Some of these issues are considered necessary pre-requisites not only for the existence of the model but also for its future sustainability.

a) *Become institutional unit.* As it has been clearly illustrated by this first implementation of the Sports Tutorship Model in the Greek Higher Educational Institution a broader aspect of dual career of the students-athletes should be addressed institutionally and not occasionally according to the “good willingness” of the Sport faculty. It is highly important that this model is seen as an institutional model and therefore, becomes a permanent service provided to all student-athletes that “fit” under the proposed criteria available not only to the students of the Sport Departments but also to the students of the other departments as well.

b) *Constant raising of awareness.* The dissemination and the raising of awareness for the Sports Tutorship Model should be an ongoing activity to promote the positive effects of its implementation. An aggressive marketing strategy should be aligned to the sustainability of the model revealing all the advantages and the multiple effects not only for the student-athlete but also for the Institutions and the relative stakeholders. Particularly UTH invested in this ongoing promotion of the Sports Tutorship Model. Having

that in mind the UTH invested in this ongoing promotion of the Sports Tutorship Model. Having that in mind the UTH working team prepared and promoted a promotional video revealing not only the importance of the model but also the benefits for the student-athletes, by using as main characters of this video the same student-athletes that participated in the model.

c) *Adjustment to the changing economic environment.* A sustainable framework for the Sports Tutorship Model dictates that its concept will be always subject to consideration and continuous adjustment to the changing conditions of both the economic and the social environment. Student-athletes should be aware of the continuous changing and the demanding economic environment that might affect their transition (after their sport performance) to the labor market.

A static and solid Model unable to be adjusted to the changing conditions and the different demands of the student-athletes cannot ensure the prospective benefits and the added value of a successful Sports Tutorship Model. In order to ensure this continuous improvement a multi-disciplinary committee should be introduced in order to assess the validation of the model and its functional adjustment to the conditions proposed by the new environment.

The introduction of a supportive system for student-athletes is very important for the continuation of their career. This system may include, financial support for elite student-athletes (e.g. scholarship), medical support with regular medical check-ups in order to prevent any health problems and psychological assistance by helping them to overcome oncoming problems (e.g., transition period in their career).

2. Leeds Trinity University (LTU)

Leeds Trinity University was founded in 1966 as a teacher training college, and whilst the institution continues to be renowned for the high standard of teacher training provision, the number and range of courses has expanded and diversified considerably. For example, Leeds Trinity

University was one of the first places in the United Kingdom to offer degrees in Forensic Psychology and Sports Journalism. Now with more than 3,000 students, a tenfold increase compared to when the institution first opened, the university focuses on undergraduate provision; recruiting over 1,000 new undergraduate students in 2016. Additionally, recruitment is expanding with regards to postgraduate, part-time, continuing professional development and international learners. With 433 postgraduates recruited in 2016, Leeds Trinity University continues to demonstrate a sustained upward trajectory in Higher Education provision.

The University has an ever developing sport structure. The Sports Development team work to promote sport and physical activity participation at the University in all levels of sport. This now includes the recruitment and retention of student-athletes. Prior to the implementation of the Sports Tutor model, Leeds Trinity University had three identified student-athletes, this has increased to sixteen throughout the implementation period. A partnership developed internally with Trinity Performance has contributed greatly to the supporting of student-athletes, Trinity Performance are an external facing specialist team that work with a range of athletes, coaches and students to offer support and development opportunities within sport performance, health and exercise by offering services such as, performance consultancy, fitness assessment and coach education workshops.

Prior to the implementation of the Sports Tutorship model in academic year 2014/2015, there was no formal support structure in place for student-athletes enrolled at Leeds Trinity University. Although praised by previous cohorts, the support that student-athletes previously received was on an ad-hoc basis and was reliant on the “good will” of individual staff members. Obviously, this approach demonstrated inconsistency and lacked formalisation as well as workload allocation; often leading to confusion and a blurring of roles for both students and staff. Leeds Trinity University was therefore unable to recruit student-athletes on the basis of this ad hoc support and the absence of a formal support system for student-athletes. The opportunity to introduce the Sports Tutorship model has allowed Leeds Trinity University to support current student-athletes and become a realistic option for those who may consider to combine

the demands of competitive sports participation and a programme of study at the University in the future. The model fundamentally aims to assist student-athletes in the learning of key transferable skills that can be utilised in ensuring the demands of both academia and their sporting career can be met and utilised post sporting career (Cosh and Tully, 2014; Aquilina, 2013). Leeds Trinity University prides itself on providing a special community feel therefore the Sports Tutorship model aims to utilise this through fostering support and development of student-athletes.

2.1. Methodology

Prior to the implementation of the Sports Tutorship model, the surrounding literature was reviewed. An emergent theme was, the transition into University life combined with a high level of sporting competition places a potentially intolerable level of demand on the student-athletes. As the implementation process developed, new publications continued to express the difficulties in the transition into University life, particularly for student-athletes (Cosh and Tully, 2014; Brown *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, the Sports Tutorship model aimed to educate and support student-athletes through their journey of Higher Education and sporting career by ensuring that the demand placed upon them could be managed, controlled and coped with. Figure 1 provides an overview of the methodology that will be discussed.

a) Introduction of project assistant

The initial step for implementation of the Sports Tutorship model was employing a Sports Tutorship project assistant. As there was no formalised method of student-athletes support, no staff within the sport services were contracted to work with student-athletes. As ambiguity of the role and responsibilities was highlighted previously at an institutional level, a key priority was for a staff member to take ownership of the project. Accordingly, additional hours were added to an existing Sport Development team members contract to account for the administration and supervision of the project under the guidance of the project leader. The day-to-day

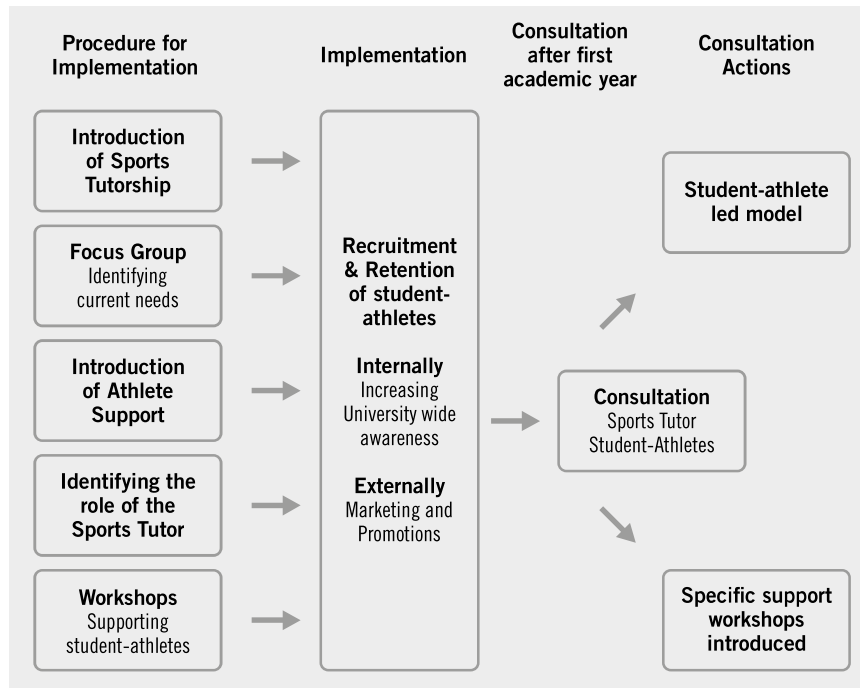


Figure 1: Leeds Trinity University Sports Tutorship implementation model.

running of the project; included, but was not limited to: identification of, retaining and managing student-athletes, along with allocation of a designated Sports Tutor based on the demands of their sport. Having the project assistant as the named point of contact allowed for the promotion of the project internally to create awareness of the model.

b) Focus group

Once a project assistant was employed, a needs analysis was performed such that the requirements of current student-athletes were sought to be identified. To achieve this aim, a focus group with three student-athletes allowed exploration of the perceptions concerning the level of current support, whether adequacy was achieved and how support systems could be improved via the introduction of the Sports Tutorship model. Several

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|--------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Identified staff member | Student-athletes identified that a designated staff member to seek support from would be useful. They felt it would expel the previous ad-hoc support that was reliant on the “good will” of individual staff members and provide clarity for student-athletes. The Sports Tutorship model would address this by providing a designated member of staff to seek support from. |
| One-to-one support | Very similar to identified staff member, student-athletes felt one-to-one meetings with a designated staff member to discuss progress and any potential issues. A tailored approach was identified as required. They also stated that specific subject knowledge and previous experience supporting elite athletes was vital within the one-to-one support. |
| Priority facility access | Student-athletes identified that access to sporting facilities for training purposes would contribute to reduce the demands placed upon them. Access to the gym and strength and conditioning facilities would allow student-athletes training to be shaped around academic timetabling. |
| Clearer academic support procedures | Once again, the support in relation to academic procedures was very ad-hoc. Therefore extensions and support may not be guaranteed and were granted in varying circumstances. Student-athletes acknowledged that a better understanding of the circumstances that would allow for an extension or re-submission and the designated steps to follow if required. |

Figure 2: Focus Group Emergent Themes.

key deterrents were highlighted to explain a student-athletes ability to successfully manage the demands of being both an athlete and being engaged in full or part-time academic study (Figure 2). To facilitate this process, it emerged that specialist workshops would be of benefit to provide further bespoke guidance on pertinent topics. Additional issues identified included: an increased provision of one-on-one support from staff, priority facility access to manage training schedules and clearer academic support procedures around pinch-points in the competition calendar. The focus group allowed the opportunity to introduce the new Sports Tutorship model to the student-athletes. At this early stage, they were confident that this would address their issues identified as it designated a single member of staff as their point of contact.

c) The Sports Tutor role and identification

The next step was to identify suitable academic staff members to take the role of the Sports Tutor. Key characteristics required of the Sports Tutor then were elected (Figure 3). These characteristics were identified

| Experience | Personality Characteristics | Knowledge |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Supporting Students · Supporting Elite Athletes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Approachable · Disciplined · Efficient · Enthusiastic · Flexible · Passionate · Reliable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Physiology · Psychology · Nutrition |
| Identified Via | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Student-athletes ideals · Focus Group · Literature (Aquilina, 2013) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Student-athletes ideals · Focus group · Literature (Aquilina, 2013; Cosh and Tully, 2014) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Student-athletes ideals · Focus group · Literature (Cosh and Tully, 2014) |

Figure 3: Characteristics of Sports Tutor.

through surrounding literature and information provided in the focus group. The Sports Tutors had to be approachable and flexible, these had to be pre-disposed by the individual and been developed further through previous work experience in an elite environment and working to support students. Therefore they were required to hold a strong level of knowledge in relation to the demands of both academia and competition. It emerged that two members of academic sport staff who had previously worked in an elite environment, one in relation to physiology and the other, psychology met the designated criteria.

The core of the Sports Tutor's role is was aimed to reduce the demands placed on student-athletes (Figure 4). The focus group highlighted that supporting staff must have previous experience in working with and understanding the demands of an elite sporting environment (Johnson, *et al.* 2013). A second reason that strengthened their suitability to the role of Sports Tutors was that, both physiological and psychological assistance emerged from the focus group as two areas of support student-athletes wanted improved access to. With this demand, the identification of Sports Tutors became about not just supporting the student-athletes academically but in a performance related well-being role too. Another aspect of the Sports Tutor role that would strengthen the model was their ability to assist in the development of key transferable skills or 'critical tools' that

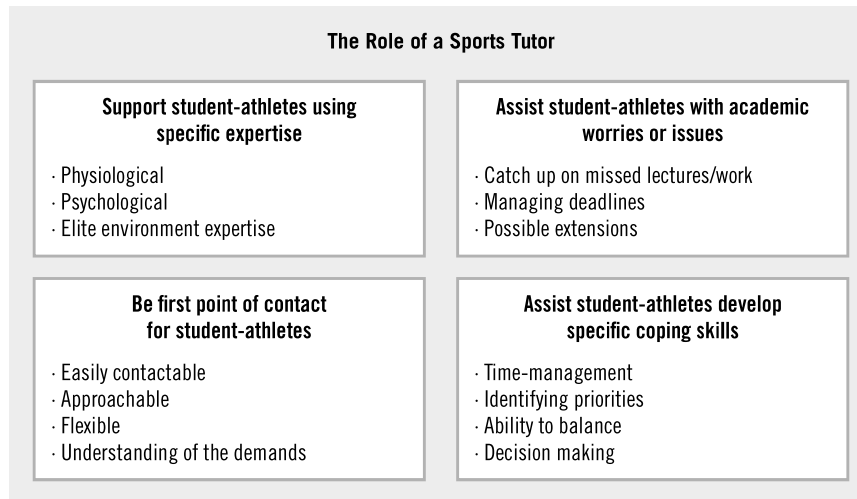


Figure 4: The role of a Sports Tutor.

would have life-long value for student-athletes (Aquilina, 2013). This included supporting the student-athletes in improving skills such as coping strategies, problem solving and addressing priorities. This element of the Sports Tutor aims to encourage student-athletes to take responsibility for their current positioning and use the key skills to maintain or adjust the direction in which they are heading. Whilst also knowing how to access further support if required. This allowed the Sports Tutorship model to be strengthened, as it ensures an additional dimension on the role of the Sports Tutor and the importance of their contributions to the successful implementation of the model.

d) Development and introduction of an athlete support package

The third step after identifying student-athletes needs and suitable Sports Tutors, was the development of the Athlete Support Package (ASP) that could be administered in conjunction with the Sports Tutor model to provide students with a holistic, formalised and sustainable support package (Appendix 1). As there was no offer in place prior to the introduction of the Sports Tutorship model, it was acknowledged that alongside providing

a Sports Tutor, the further development of a unique support offer was required. The responsibility for the researching and designing the ASP was assigned to a sole member of staff placed on the Sport Development Committee. They conducted a review of competitor Universities offers, leading to the formulation of the ASP. It was found that English Universities offer specialist access to facilities and tailored sports science programmes. The ASP was signed off by the Sport Development Committee as they felt the level of support it offered was unique and beneficial to student-athletes. It was then introduced, the Sports Tutor model was placed within the offer and aimed to meet the demands identified in the initial focus group at the beginning of the process.

Two key aspects of the ASP are the offering of tailored support via Trinity Performance team and access to sport facilities to manage training schedules. It was seen that Trinity Performance held a level of expertise that, combined with the Sports Tutors could benefit student-athletes. Alongside Trinity Performance, improved sport facility access allowed student-athletes to fit training in during busy periods if required. The aim was to provide a base for training to occur as a coping strategy if external training sessions could not be attended due to various demands.

The role of the Sport Development Committee at Leeds Trinity University was to inform and discuss the sporting landscape. The committee aimed to develop all levels of the sporting pathway and strategy. It was a strong communication channel that allowed an internal partner approach to sport and physical activity, allowing shared objectives and a platform to voice opinions. Another aim was to assess how sport can contribute to internal partner's requirements and strategies. Figure 5 identifies the breakdown of the Sport Development Committee group members. The committee was constructed to include a wide range of internal partners to develop the sporting landscape.

e) Internal recruitment of student-athletes

Once this support offer was in place, it allowed for the internal recruitment of student-athletes. As previously discussed, prior to the Sports Tutorship model being introduced there were three identified student-

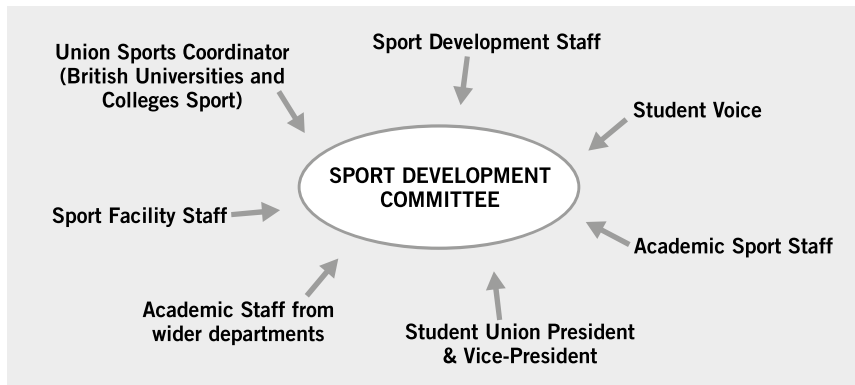


Figure 5: Sport Development Committee Breakdown

athletes at the University therefore identifying student-athletes currently studying at the University was deemed a priority. Internal communication channels were utilised. Three methods were primarily used, the Sport Development Committee, the project assistant attending lectures in various departments, allowing engagement with staff and student groups and internal intranet communication that would be viewed by staff and students. These methods identified a further ten student-athletes. One-to-one meetings were held with each student-athletes, this allowed an understanding to be gained of their sport, the demand surrounding it and how they feel this support could assist them.

As the student-athletes competed in varying sports, it became clear that varying levels of support would be required. Each student-athletes identified they would find an increase in academic based support, including assistance with time-management and scheduling useful. This identification of student-athletes further recognised that the process of implementation was a continuous learning progression and several developments would be made during its course.

After recruiting internally for student-athletes, the attention then focussed on external recruitment. The use of the University's marketing channels including website, blogs and articles, Trinity Sport promotional information, prospectus and open days were all vital in sharing the new

model with external partners and prospective students. The possibility of promoting via National Governing Bodies (NGB) also arose. Several NGB's provide information packages that are distributed to academies and performance teams consisting of the support available at various Universities. This was an excellent platform to utilise as recognition from NGB's surrounding the Leeds Trinity University package was a positive step in the progression and promotion of the University's support offer.

f) Workshops

As discussed previously, the Sports Tutor was responsible for guiding student-athletes in their development of key skills that held life-long value (Aquilina, 2013; Brown *et al.*, 2015). These key skills were advanced through one-to-one meetings with Sports Tutors but also four developmental workshops, the workshop topics emergent from the focus initial focus group. Four workshops were run over a two year period (Figure 6), each workshop targeted a specific area of development for the student-athletes. All four workshops provoked discussion between student-athletes to allow them to compare their experiences with other student-athletes. It also allowed them to understand the varying levels of support required and how the development of specific knowledge and skills could reduce the demands placed on them on their dual career journey. The workshops were key in the implementation of the Sports Tutorship model as they provided feedback, increased awareness of the model both internally and externally and assisted meeting the requirements of the student-athletes.

g) Consultation Process

During the implementation process, the Sports Tutorship project assistant, distributed a consultation form to student-athletes. The aim of this consultation was to allow student-athletes to confidentially share their experiences with the project assistant regarding their initial interactions with the Sports Tutorship model. This provided a vast array of thoughts on the model, some utilised it in a positive manner that allowed them to continue their dual-career option. Others acknowledged the support system but noted they had managed sufficiently therefore had not needed

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| Workshop 1 | Focus Group |
| Identified the needs and issues faced by student-athletes. The focus group found student-athletes current methods for dealing with the demands and how the Sports Tutorship model can assist. The focus group provoked discussions between student-athletes and offered an opportunity to share experiences. | |
| Workshop 2 | Introduction to Sports Tutorship (Appendix 2) |
| The workshop was introducing the new Level 4 Dual Career Athletes to the Sports Tutorship project and also to the Level 5 and 6 student-athletes. The project strives for all our student-athletes to interact, share their individual knowledge and experiences. The workshop was delivered by Sports Tutors and they focussed on how their support can develop key skills required for coping with demands of the dual-career option. | |
| Workshop 3 | Mental Toughness (Appendix 3) |
| The workshop increased student-athletes and invited coaches' knowledge of mental toughness in the field of sport and how this influences performance. It discussed and identified practical methods to control and develop mental toughness and assisted student-athletes in developing coping strategies for dealing with situations which may be considered as stressful. | |
| Workshop 4 | Nutrition (Appendix 4) |
| The workshop provided an overview of key nutritional considerations for student-athletes. It involved discussions regarding the student-athletes current nutritional practice and recommended nutritional intakes. | |

Figure 6: Workshop Content.

to utilise it. These returns were positive as it demonstrated that there was a high level of awareness surrounding the Sports Tutorship model.

After consideration and reflection on this consultation regarding varying engagement with the support, it was decided that engagement with Sports Tutors would be student-athletes led. Due to the varying levels of support, Sports Tutors were advised to maintain regular contact with student-athletes to ensure they were managing sufficiently. This approach ensured the model was not over-bearing resulting in extra demand being placed on student-athletes. Instead the student-athletes led approach promoted a responsibility for the student-athletes and their Sports Tutor was a supportive figure who could be utilised if required.

The steps identified highlight Leeds Trinity University's methodology in introducing the Sports Tutorship model. As there was no previous support offer for student-athletes it was a challenging process however on reflection the University now offer a strong individualised support system. The barriers and difficulties faced in the implementation process is to be discussed below.

2.2. Barriers and difficulties

As mentioned, there were several barriers and difficulties faced during the implementation process of the Sports Tutorship model at Leeds Trinity University. Throughout the two and a half year process four major barriers were identified (Figure 7), these barriers were dealt with appropriately and have contributed to the learning and development of the Sports Tutorship model.

a) **Lack of identified staff member for delivery**

One of the initial barriers was the lack of an identified staff member to implement the Sports Tutorship model. This barrier emerged through the University having no support structure in place for student-athletes. Meaning that no staff within the sport services were contracted to work with student-athletes. The implementation of the Sports Tutor model began with no designated staff member therefore the causing delays in the implementation process. A suitable staff member was selected from the Sport Development team and additional hours were added to their contract. Their main role would be to administer the project under the supervision of the Project Lead. In Universities where a support structure is already in place, this barrier would not have occurred however for Leeds Trinity University, this introduction was entirely new. Therefore no previous staffing resources were directed towards support student-athletes. This created an awareness within the University regarding the importance of supporting student-athletes.

b) **Structure of higher education performance sport**

Leeds Trinity University's status amongst competitor Universities in relation to performance sport and the performance sport structure in England can be considered to be a barrier to the implementation process. Across the country there is a strong structure for the development of student-athletes in Higher Education. The Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS) is funded by Sport England, who are a non-departmental public body under the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. TASS

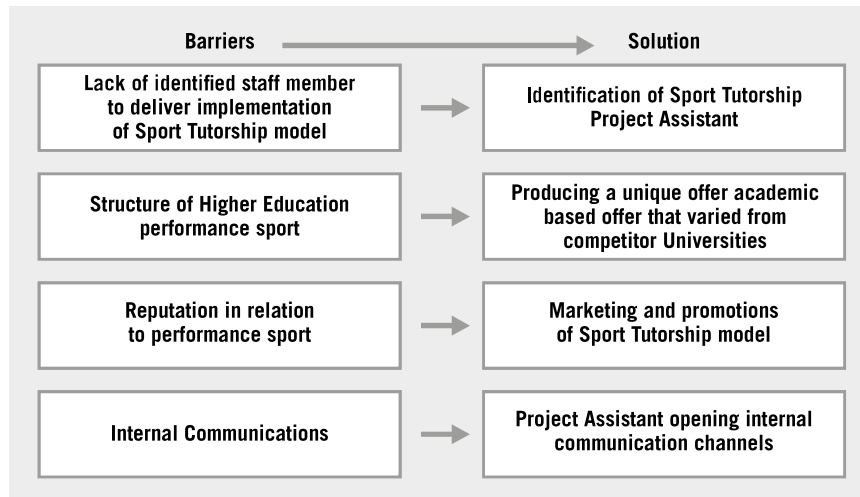


Figure 7: A breakdown of barriers and solutions.

creates partnerships between talented athletes, educational institutions and national governing bodies of sport (TASS, ND; Aquilina, 2013). There are 27 TASS accredited sites across England. Leeds Trinity University is not one of those however the two other higher educational institutes in the city of Leeds are accredited sites. The University of Leeds and Leeds Beckett University are two very well established institutions in relation to sport. Both these Institutions have received a significant investment into the development of performance sport. As each TASS accredited site is allocated academic support, national training centres and professional set-ups to provide student-athletes with a tailored approach to their academic and sporting progressions (Aquilina, 2013). Therefore competing against this image has proved difficult as Leeds Trinity University had no investment in supporting student-athletes. Student-athletes often do not consider Leeds Trinity University, particularly as previously there was no support offer at the institution. The introduction of a unique model for support, through Sports Tutorship has allowed Leeds Trinity University to become recognised for being capable of supporting student-athletes.

c) Internal communication channels

Another barrier that the introduction of the Sports Tutorship model had to overcome was educating students and colleagues internally. It was widely known that with no support structure in place prior to the Sports Tutorship model being introduced, student-athletes could not be fully catered for. Support was provided on an ad-hoc basis upon the individual staff member's choice or willingness. This also created issues as a consistent approach was not being offered. The Sports Tutorship project assistant had to ensure that the introduction of this model was communicated across the University to all staff members, acting as a referral service for current student-athletes and those considering studying at Leeds Trinity University in the future. Educating the institution on the change in supporting student-athletes was challenging however student-athletes are now emerging from departments wider than those studying sport. This indicates progress however this work continued throughout the entirety of the Sports Tutorship project. Ensuring communication channels remain open and fluid are vital in achieving institutional awareness.

2.3. Recommendations and lessons learned

Throughout the two year implementation several contributing factors allowed the Sports Tutorship model to be successfully implemented at Leeds Trinity University (Figure 8). These factors form four recommendations that should be considered by institutions who are considering to implement the Sports Tutorship model, particularly those of a similar size and sporting landscape.

a) Unique model

The creation of a unique model tailored to the size and resources available at the institution was key for Leeds Trinity University. As discussed previously, our neighbouring Universities have a strong sport performance infrastructure therefore Leeds Trinity had to adapt to attract and retain student-athletes. The formulation of the student-athlete centred Sport Tutorship model has assisted in this process and provided Leeds Trinity

| RECOMMENDATIONS |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Offer a unique model Create an offer unique to your institution</p> |
| <p>Ensure a student-athlete led approach Creation of a supportive environment Creation of awareness of support access routes</p> |
| <p>Assign a designated staff member to implement Sports Tutor model To recruit and retain student-athletes</p> |
| <p>A combined approach The use of Sport Development staff knowledge and expertise alongside academic.</p> |

Figure 8: Recommendations to institutes considering the Sports Tutorship model.

University with the opportunity to engage in a varying approach. It has created a unique offer that student-athletes choose due to the personalised nature of the model.

After the experience of implementing the Sports Tutorship model in a small higher education institution, it is recommended that institutions of this scale do not attempt to compete with those that are well-established but instead offer a unique contribution to the supporting of student-athletes. The introduction of the Sports Tutorship model does exactly this, it does not aim to copy or replicate but instead produces an innovative method of supporting student-athletes and ensuring that potential student-athletes can choose to study at any higher education establishment and be successful.

b) Student-led approach

After consultation with student-athletes, it became evident that an over-estimation had occurred in relation to the amount of contact time student-athletes would require with their Sports Tutors. As discussed in the methodology, a consultation process led to finding that student-athletes utilised the support in different manners. With this in mind, it is recommended that the support is very much student-athletes led. However the Sports Tutors were still advised to keep in contact to monitor whether the student-athletes were coping sufficiently however the model

was careful to avoid an over-bearing approach. It was reported in the consultation that the Sports Tutor contact instilled a sense of backing from staff and the University behind the athlete. It was noted that the model led to student-athletes feeling that the University held a sense of pride in relation to their achievements. This positivity and backing from both the University and student-athletes is recommended as it allowed for the successful development of the model.

The student-athletes led approach is recommended, therefore a key element of this being successful was the creation of awareness of the support available and the relevant access routes. If a student-athletes is not coping sufficiently, they know the route to support. Therefore placing responsibility on the student-athletes to be accountable for themselves and their progress. If required, they would seek support via making an appointment with their Sports Tutor who can systematically work through their issues to find a common solution.

This recommendation of a student-athletes led approach, with the correct guidance and support has been beneficial to the student-athletes at Leeds Trinity University.

c) Assign a designated staff member for implementation & combined approach

It is recommended that a designated member of staff leads on the project in relation to the recruitment and retention of student-athletes. Particularly for smaller institutions, these responsibilities were worked into a current employee's contract within the Sport Development team. This allowed the project to include a sport development perspective too, rather than just the academic. Leeds Trinity University recommend this dual input and perspective, considering the English sport performance climate where many elite athlete programmes are placed within Sport Development departments. The addition of academic perspectives within this Sports Tutorship model ensured it is unique and considers their academic career unlike the majority of models that support student-athletes. This dual approach ensures that student-athletes have a strong support model with the correct expertise and knowledge base.

2.4. Sustainability

The Sports Tutorship model implemented has develop throughout the two year period to become sustainable. The main element of ensuring the models sustainability is to have structures in place to allow the continuation of the Sports Tutor role. This tutor time must be managed and worked into the Sports Tutors workload planners. The two year implementation process has allowed the model to be introduced and developed, with the overcoming of barriers and difficulties to ensure the model's sustainability. The support internally from the University has contributed greatly as many are happy to support student-athletes and value the support and expertise of this unique Sports Tutorship model.

The Sports Tutorship model has University-wide backing ensuring it will continue to support student-athletes after the implementation period. A large element of the model's sustainability is ensuring we can continue to support student-athletes in a manner that is beneficial to them. The implementation process has been a two year learning and development process that has led to the formulation of a sustainable and unique student-athlete support offer. This model will continue to operate in the coming years and it has become a staple part of Leeds Trinity University's sporting provision.

3. University of Malta (UM)

The University of Malta (UM) is a publicly funded University which was founded in 1769. Over 12,000 Maltese students and 1000 international students attend courses up to EQF level 8 in line with the Bologna Process. The University has 14 faculties and a number of interdisciplinary Institutes and centres providing expertise related to the needs of the country.

The Institute for Physical Education and Sport (IPES) was set up in 2002 to provide courses in Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport and to carry out research in various fields related to these areas. IPES also services the Faculty of Education in the preparation of Physical

Education teachers since its establishment in 1978. The Institute provides a continuous professional development programme and cooperates with various local associations in the training of their sports personnel. It also collaborates with many European Universities and contributes actively in International sport related associations.

3.1. Methodology

a) Establishing the target group for a pilot study. Before establishing a Sports Tutorship model and piloting it out with a group of student-athletes, the need was felt to identify the target population. UM wanted the first tutorship model to target the group that needed it most, that is, student-athletes who compete at National and International level, and who dedicate many hours of training a week. Since no database of student-athletes was available at UM, a google form was sent to all the University students, inviting student-athletes to send us their details, the sport practiced and the number of hours of weekly training. Eighteen student-athletes from eight faculties replied and we invited them to an introductory workshop. Concurrently, Sports Tutors were identified who were interested to support student-athletes, and we invited them to join the pilot project.

b) Institution and national bodies' awareness. Raising awareness about the need of a Sports Tutorship model to support student-athletes at University was the next important step. A workshop targeting all stakeholders with a direct interest in such a project was held. Representatives from SportMalta (Malta Sports Council), the Maltese Olympic Committee (MOC), the Malta University Sports Club (MUSC), and the University Registrar's office attended the workshop, together with student-athletes and lecturers. During this workshop, the EU guidelines on the Dual Career of athletes (2008) were presented and discussed, with a particular reference to examples of good practice in other Universities which could be emulated locally. A representative from Registrar's office explained the UM regulations that are particularly relevant for student-athletes, and the support available, together with the procedures to be followed. Present

and past student-athletes also presented their challenges and experiences and an open discussion followed.

c) Studying perceptions of student-athletes. In order to understand further the needs of student-athletes and to cater for them in this project, a study on their perceptions was carried out through a questionnaire. The results were presented in a workshop for student-athletes and lecturers, which also dealt with new technologies available for teaching and learning at University.

d) A pilot project. An open invitation to join a pilot Sports Tutorship project was launched. Nine students from two faculties accepted our invitation and were assigned two Sport-tutors who had accepted our original invitation. A meeting was held to discuss the procedures student-athletes had to follow when they required any kind of support from their Sports Tutors and the project started.

e) Evaluation of the pilot project. Four months later, an evaluation of the pilot study was carried out, in preparation to extend this project to all the faculties. The same questionnaire distributed at the beginning of the project was sent to the nine students participating in the pilot project, aiming to study any changes in perceptions and to evaluate the support given.

f) Creating a database of student-athletes. Since a good database of student-athletes was still not available, all local Sports Associations were contacted, asking them to send us a list of athletes who attended University. However, the response was poor and some associations sent a whole list of athletes without specifying the names of the students.

g) Extending the programme to all faculties. In order to extend this project to other faculties, a new call was issued inviting new student-athletes and Sports Tutors, who are either academics or non-academics. An administrator from registrar's office offered to support us in this project and we started discussing the best way to identify student-athletes. Two seminars were held, one for Sports Tutors and another one for the Sports Tutors and student-athletes. During the first seminar we explained the role of Sports-Tutors and also discussed the contribution of faculties, while during the second one we discussed any challenges of student-athletes and possible solutions.

h) Inviting Deans to nominate a sport-tutor. Since our target for UM was to have a Sports Tutor from every faculty, Deans were contacted where there were student-athletes interested in this project. Whilst with some difficulty, UM finally managed to organise a Sports-Tutor in every faculty where there were student-athletes, with a total of 10 faculties catering for 20 student-athletes.

i) Individual meetings with student-athletes and Sport-Tutors. Meetings with every Sports-Tutor and student-athletes were held and the procedures were discussed.

j) Meeting Rectorate and Parliamentary Secretary for Sport. A meeting was held with Rector, explaining the aims of this project, and the importance of including such a project in the UM Sports Strategy. The aims of the project were also explained to the Parliamentary Secretary for Sport and suggested its inclusion in the National Sports Policy.

3.2. Barriers and difficulties

a) The first challenge faced was to identify the student-athletes attending University. Sending a google form to all the students and inviting student-athletes to send their details was a good start. However, if a list of all the student-athletes is required, the best way that UM found to go about this was to include a question on the University entry form.

b) Another challenge was to attract Sports Tutors to support students. The best way UM found was to contact tutors personally, with those who have an interest in sport. However, if this project is to be extended across University, such a role has to be acknowledged by HR management and an official role should be assigned in every faculty and institute. All respective Deans and Directors would then appoint a Sports Tutor at the beginning of every academic year.

3.3. Recommendations and lessons learned

1. Although all student-athletes acknowledge that it's challenging to balance their academic work and sporting demands and to cope successfully

with both, some student-athletes chose not to seek support and not to come forward to join such a programme. Therefore, this should not be seen as a weakness of the project. However, using all possible ways to promote such a project is important, such as to use traditional promotional methods, including posting printed materials in every faculty's notice-board.

2. Although the support given by sports tutors is very important, particularly if it is related to University demands, this might not be sufficient. Such a project needs to involve clubs and associations from its start, as in some cases they are putting too much pressure on their athletes and do not always understand the demands of academic studies.

3.4. Sustainability

The following steps will ensure that the dual career programme will be sustainable, and offered in all faculties, institutes and centres at UM:

1) Set a meeting with the Rector, Human Resources Management, and Registrar to discuss the recommendations put forward by student-athletes and the setting up of a UM dual-career programme committee described below. It is being proposed that every faculty and Institute will nominate a Sports Tutor at the beginning of every academic year and that this person will be allocated at least an hour a week in his/her workload to dedicate to student-athletes.

2) Set up a UM Dual-Career Support Programme committee (DCSP). This committee will run and monitor this programme and liaise with the Registrar's office re any requests for changes in dates of exams to attend International competitions. The committee members will be as follows:

- A dual-career co-ordinator from the Institute for PE and Sport to chair the UM DCP committee and to co-ordinate this programme. This role will be taken by the Director of IPES, the Sports Manager or their designate.
- A dual-career officer at Registrar's/ Admissions office to collect data on new entrants and current student-athletes at all levels (not only elite) and to communicate with Sport-Tutors. A space will be added

in the UM application form where details on involvement in sport, level and number of hours of training will be included.

- A dual-career counsellor at the Counselling Services Unit. The counsellor's duty will be to guide student-athletes applying for a UM Course and to introduce the dual-career support programme.
- A student-athlete representative will represent student-athletes on the UM DCSP committee.

3) The committee will organise an initial meeting every October for all Sport-Tutors, student-athletes, Deans, Directors and Faculty Officers, sport associations and the Olympic Committee.

4) An evaluation meeting will be held at the end of every semester, while regular feedback will be sought through an online forum and individual meetings when requested.

4. University of Rome Foro Italico (URFI)

The University of Rome Foro Italico is the fourth public university in Rome and is the heir of the Italian Academy for Physical Education founded in 1928. Its urban campus is located in the northern part of Rome, in the historical area of Foro Italico, a 10.000 square meters venue that host the Olympic Stadium and prestigious annual tournaments and competitions.

The University is the only Italian teaching and research institution entirely devoted to the study of sport and physical activity. It is provided with new sport and training facilities along with modern laboratories which support the development of research applied to the interdisciplinary scholarly field of Sport Sciences.

The University is a community of 2.300 students and about 60 scholars who share the ethical and social values of sport. The University includes one Department of Motor, Human and Health Sciences and one Doctoral School which offer courses within the three levels of Bologna Process. These courses are: Sport and Motor Sciences (first level); Sport Management, Adapted Physical Activity (two courses, one in Italian and one in English),

Sport Science and Technique (second level); a Ph.D. Program in Sciences of Human Movement and Sport (third level).

The University is very active in the field of international relations, cooperation and projects development with more than 160 agreements with the most important European and worldwide academic and research centers focused on the study of sport and physical activity. Recently, the University has signed an explicit agreement with Italian Olympic Committee (CONI) aimed to foster active and retired athletes from its federations to follow a bachelor's degree course in Management and Sport Sciences.

4.1 Methodology

Foro Italico's research and implementation unit of the project has carried out its actions utilizing a method aimed at coupling theory and practice. After a deep analysis of scholarly literature retrieved from psychology and sport sciences scientific databases, a reflection on experiences and good practices of tutorship concerning the dual career of student-athletes attending Italian and foreign universities was developed. Through workshops and so-called "world café" events stimulated by public lectures and discussions, the main legal and pedagogical issues concerning the dual career were identified along with new learning models for tutoring student-athletes. Moreover, the characteristics relating to the psychological and educational features of the good tutor were identified as well as a more efficient online/distance tutoring and teaching system.

The Italian research and implementation unit has found a way to combine Grounded Theory and Action Research seen as hermeneutical approaches capable of better implementing the ESTPORT project. The philosophy of ESTPORT research methodology was a work-in-progress project with the main aim to explore, interpret and understand the issues and topics relating to the tutorship and the dual-career of student-athletes as pedagogical issues. The questionnaire built by the international units of ESTPORT was administered and used to collect, understand and interpret data and results from the research and promotional activities of the Italian group.

The results were disseminated through publications, public conferences and by trying to structure experimental models of implementation of active tutorship in other educational contexts as a future “spin-off ” work of ESTPORT.

In this regard, the University of Rome Foro Italico has structured and put into practice a particular model for tutoring the student-athletes.

The model was called DU.C.A.S.T.UN (Dual Career Academic Support and Tutoring Unit). The model was based on a systemic epistemological approach which tends to see the dual-career of the student-athletes as something which is more (and greater) than the sum of its parts. We could say that tutoring is a part of the system and forms a subsystem in itself.

Foro Italico have focused their research and implementation on new e-tools based on Web 2.0 seen as a means of better tutoring student-athletes and interpreted the issues concerning the dual-career of student-athletes. In light of critical pedagogical models (Donald Schön model of the Reflective Practitioner and the Community of Learning). The university has gradually taken awareness and emphasized, not only the fact of how many victories students have won in sport, but how many of the athletes, with the help of sport, have learned to become winners in their further lives.

The Italian Research unit has also taken cognisance of the importance of coupling quantitative and qualitative research methods to deeply grasp the issues dealing with the dual career of student-athletes. Also, qualitative methodology can be effective to collect data, life stories and narratives, providing first-person accounts of experiences as the first source of data. The research steps to collect data should focus on: significant events in the personal education/professional career of the student-athletes; critical moments in her/his sporting career; personal, professional growth; future intentions in personal and vocational career or life after her/his career.

Moreover, the methodology we have used focused on the ethical issues in tutoring the student-athlete. In this regard, through the word café methodology, we have tried to answer the moral and philosophical question whether student-athletes deserve to be mentored, supported

and assisted during and after their professional career or not. In addition, we have identified the characteristics of the best tutor as a person and learning assistant in light of student-athletes needs and expectations and tried to look at the dual career of the student-athletes, as that under the lens of lifelong learning education. In this regard, the advantages and disadvantages of utilizing e-tutorship for dual career students-athletes were compared. From this it was concluded that Web 2.0-based tools (mainly social networks) were efficient and safe lifelong tutoring environments for use by student-athletes. These tools can also be used to build learning environments in other contexts such as secondary of high schools attended by student-athletes.

The implementation of the tutoring system at URFI (University of Rome Foro Italico) involved a defined, structured, specific pedagogical model, as mentioned earlier (model DU.C.A.S.T.UN). The model was fully experimented with and use with a group of 27 student-athletes attending an intensive bachelor's degree course in sport sciences (in Italian, "laurea di I livello") offered by URFI in cooperation with the Italian Olympic Committee.

For the implementation of the Sports Tutorship Model and as a research environment and scenario, a feedback and evaluation group was created. Du.C.A.S.T.Un is a flexible, systemic, dynamic and smart model which acted as an environment to help develop and implement both for the tutorship and the dual-career of student-athletes. In this research at IRFI, Du.C.A.S.T.Un was shown to work and be run efficiently with a group of student-athletes, ranging in age from 12 to 15. The key features of the model consist of being made of components which act as interactive parts of the same system. The effectiveness of the system is guaranteed by continuous feedbacks and communication among the parts. The model is based on the utilization of Web 2.0-based communication tools, the critical thinking and the mutual help through learning and tutoring active communities. The scope of the model is to highly motivate the student-athletes and to involve her/ him in the learning process through tasks based on emotional involvement. Principal components/actors of Du.C.A.S.T.Un were:

1) Instructors. These were three teachers: Teacher 1, background in Psychopedagogy; Teacher 2, background in Sports Sciences; Teacher 3, background in foreign languages and e-learning. The three instructors acted as mentors and learning facilitators for the student-athletes.

2) Tutors. They were selected on a voluntary basis from the administration staff/Ph.D. students of the University. They have a background in sport sciences (one of them is a sports manager and was a high-level athlete). The primary function of the tutor in the DUCASTUN consisted of:

- Acting as facilitators for the interactions between instructors and student-athletes;
- Assisting the student-athlete about examination dates, legal issues, and regulations concerning the attendance of the course;
- Supporting the Didactic Manager in her/his functions;
- Maintaining communication with URFI's tutoring and job placement office and keeping the student-athletes informed continuously about any changes that can occur in the course.

3) Didactic manager. They had a background in sport and management sciences. Their function was to guarantee the quality of the course in front of the Italian Olympic Committee and the URFI through a continuous feedback from student-athletes and monitoring of the tutoring process.

The goal of DUCASTUN was to create an effective and comfortable tutoring and learning environment for the student-athlete and to help her/him link academic life and professional development. The environment was based on lifelong learning models in which knowledge was not merely theoretical acquiring but something that was a result of practical experiences, both critically understood and interpreted.

The implementation of the URFI's Sports Tutorship model was carried out through a hermeneutical approach, methodologically focused on the following main steps:

- Description and interpretation of the existing situation related to tutorship and the dual career of student-athletes;
- Understanding the reasons that brought the current situation to the current form (analysis of interests and ideologies);

- Sketch of a possible agenda for improving a more active and efficient tutorship system;
- Evaluation of how to put this system into practice.

In this regard, the complicated nature of the student-athlete profile was discussed. The student-athlete can be thought to be like a Centaur, the student-athlete being neither an athlete nor a student if seen as a person who is devoted entirely to all activities that both sport and education demand.

One of the main challenges relating to the dual career of student-athletes consists of identifying effective learning and tutorship models based on virtual and distance communication. The main philosophies which inspired this model and its implementation were those of Personalism, Idealism, and Pragmatism. Within these philosophies, student-athletes' mentors and tutors act as role models which have to be emulated and have to offer students/trainees opportunities to improve their life skills. The actions of the project show that the aim was to develop a valid tutorship system to help the student-athlete to develop as an autonomous and independent person, according to Howard's Gardner's theory of multiple intelligence and that knowledge and learning have to be oriented by values and virtues, implying a practical application.

4.2. Barriers and difficulties

The main barriers encountered by URFIs' research group for the implementation of the tutorship model were those concerning the lack of awareness about the issues and problems faced by student-athletes in this university. The case of URFI – a sport university – can be seen as symptomatic of difficulties and problems which tend to occur in all the European University system. From a legal perspective, in Italian universities, these difficulties are increased and amplified by legal constraints and administrative rules which tend not to favor the process of putting of the student-athlete in the system of traditional university courses. Student-athletes often therefore, face several problems in following these courses.

They are forced to combine sport activities and competitions with their duties as university students without any help from the same university they attend which, usually, tend to focus on a traditional and non-flexible teaching and learning system without any support from distance and Web 2.0-based education.

Other difficulties concern the didactical methodologies used for delivering the content of subject matters to student-athletes and the selection and recruitment of tutors and mentors due to the competencies and skills they need to competently be learning facilitators, counselors, and expert in administrative support.

4.3. Recommendations and lessons learned

It is necessary not only to select, recruit and train excellent tutors for supporting the tutorship for the dual-career of student-athletes at URFI, but also to identify instructors from its department who are highly motivated more sensitive towards the problems faced by such students. These instructors need to have an open and flexible attitude and be capable of managing new distance and Web 2.0-based learning tools. In addition, they need to take responsibility for the students and to face the challenge of social networks as learning environments. They have to be aware that not all instructors from a university department can adequately cover the function and role required to competently facilitate student-athletes' learning in the complex and fragmented scenarios of modern education. However, the capacity of an instructor and tutor to adapt is a key requirement as well as efforts to enhance the quality of instruction for student-athletes.

However, this can only happen if the legal constraints and barriers which oppose the enhancement of this quality are not rethought by this and all European universities in light of a more democratic, dialogic and inclusive practice. It is suggested here that there will not be any future for the student-athletes' dual career until these constraints and barriers are completely removed and overcome (or rethought in light of a more systemic philosophical approach).

4.4. Sustainability

Feedbacks from student-athletes collected from surveys, interviews, and questionnaires have shown that the DUCASTUN model is effective and highly motivating for student-athletes at Foro Italico. This model is feasible, and its application can be extended to all of the URFI student-athletes. Due to the ETSPORT project, URFI has become aware that it had a tutoring model for its student-athletes which needed to be better identified, improved, developed and implemented. Moreover, the university now understands the importance of training new tutors for putting the DUCASTUN model into practice and transforming it into an efficient and permanent tutoring environment. In a nutshell, it is crucial to make all URFI instructors aware of the importance of tutoring their student-athletes in the best possible way, to teach them to utilize new e-communication and teaching tools and select those who have, or are more interested in developing, specific competencies to tutoring their student-athletes. URFI have identified particular styles of tutoring, and in the future, it will be necessary to find a way to put them into practice. They are convinced that these styles have to be shown by every tutor of student-athletes.

In conclusion, motivation, knowledge, and comprehension of the subject matter the student-athlete is studying, as well as of the process of acquiring them, have to be the pillars of an effective system to tutor and mentor student-athletes. This system has to help them develop problem-solving skills and to discover how to better understand things. Therefore, in the future, the aim will be to implement the tutorship system by teaching tutors to be, and act, as better tutors, becoming learning facilitators and human beings capable of using the emotional capital to motivate their tutees.