

Creating a sporting habit for life



# Higher Education Insight Pack

January 2014



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This pack contains insights into student participation in sport which you can use to shape delivery.

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- Understanding the audience: who attends your university
- Customer understanding: who plays sport, who wants to play more, how, where and what do they want to play and what are the motivations for and barriers against taking part

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The information in this pack is primarily drawn from the Higher Education (HE) Sport Participation and Satisfaction Survey, HE Audit 2012 and reports from Active University

# Purpose of the insight pack

- This pack is a resource to support the application process for the University Sport Activation Fund.
- It outlines relevant insights around areas you should consider to shape your application and highlights lessons learned from across the sector.
- The pack aims to help you to ensure your sporting offer and delivery is tailored to the needs of your target audiences with students' needs considered throughout your application.
- However, the pack has been written to support all higher education institutions (HEIs) who might apply to the fund. As an applicant you will need to consider how the information applies to your university and where you might be different.
- This pack is **not** a guide on what to write in your application, it should be used to stimulate thinking and ensure all areas of your application have been considered in the light of available evidence.



# Identifying need: Understanding the market

A number of trends impact on HE students and their perceptions of sport, for example:



## University fees

- The cost of university impacts on students' expectations of their experience.
- A university's sporting offer can play a role in improving value for money perceptions.
- Students are increasingly focused upon getting the best degree possible and considering how sport fits with this for different students is important.
- The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) has information on the number of students who also work – if this is increasing at your university, students are likely to be facing increased time pressure. In our [research](#), 75% of students not participating in sport said this was due to lack of time through work and study commitments.

## A competitive market

- [Research commissioned by British Universities and Colleges Sport \(BUCS\)](#) highlighted the importance of graduate employability to HEIs who are operating in an increasingly competitive environment.
- There is greater appetite amongst students for volunteering and leading sporting activities to enhance employability skills. In our Round 1 Active University projects, student workforce featured heavily with nearly 2,500 student coaches and a similar number of volunteers.

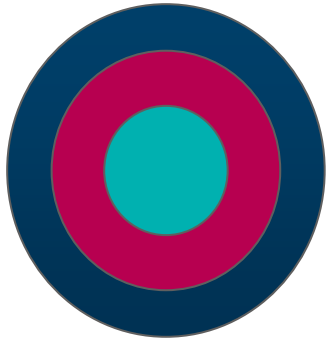


# Identifying need: Understanding the market (2)

A number of trends impact on HE students and their perceptions of sport, for example:

## Flexibility

- On-demand availability is becoming the norm and in sport we've seen students increasingly take part 'on the go' rather than planning participation.
- Decisions are made at short notice to take part in whatever activity is convenient, available and suiting to the situation and needs of that moment.



## Hyperlocal

- Technology is increasingly supporting the ability to provide individuals with information tailored to them and the place they are in at a given time.
- There is an increasing expectation to be able to find out about the opportunities to take part in sport linked to the day / time of day / place they are currently in.

## Online word of mouth

- Word of mouth has greater resonance and credibility, with social media creating expanded spheres of influence through Facebook 'likes', twitter comments and online reviews.

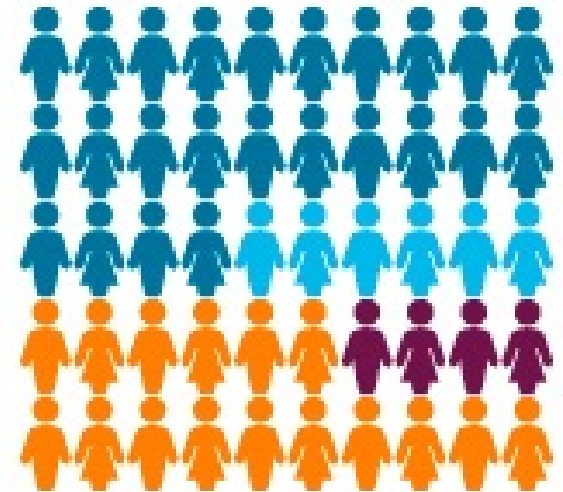


# Identifying need: Understanding the audience

## Who attends your university?

- Understanding who attends your university is necessary to identify the **potential audience for your sporting offer**.
- [HESA data](#) gives you the demographic profile of your students.
- Do you know who will be joining your university? For example:
  - Does past experience or UCAS data indicate you are likely to have a large intake from local further education colleges? Do they have data they will share with you? Our [FE research](#) could also be of interest.
  - If you tend to have a larger number of local students, census data for your local authority could give you relevant socio and demographic information.
  - Do you have a large component of international students? How might their needs be different?
- Your application needs to demonstrate understanding of your student body. Please remember we don't know your university as well as you do and need this information when assessing your application to understand if your proposed project is relevant to the needs of your students.

Over 2m HE students in England



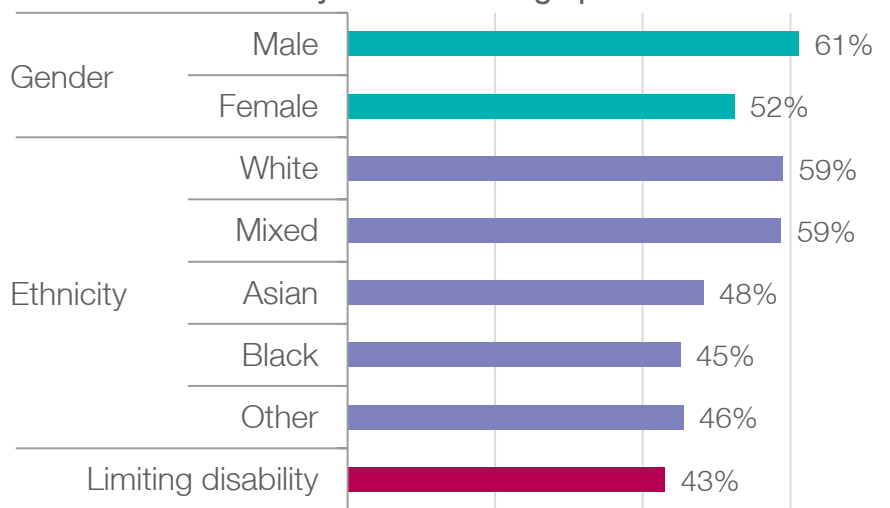
# Identifying need: Who plays sport

The proportion of people playing sport varies

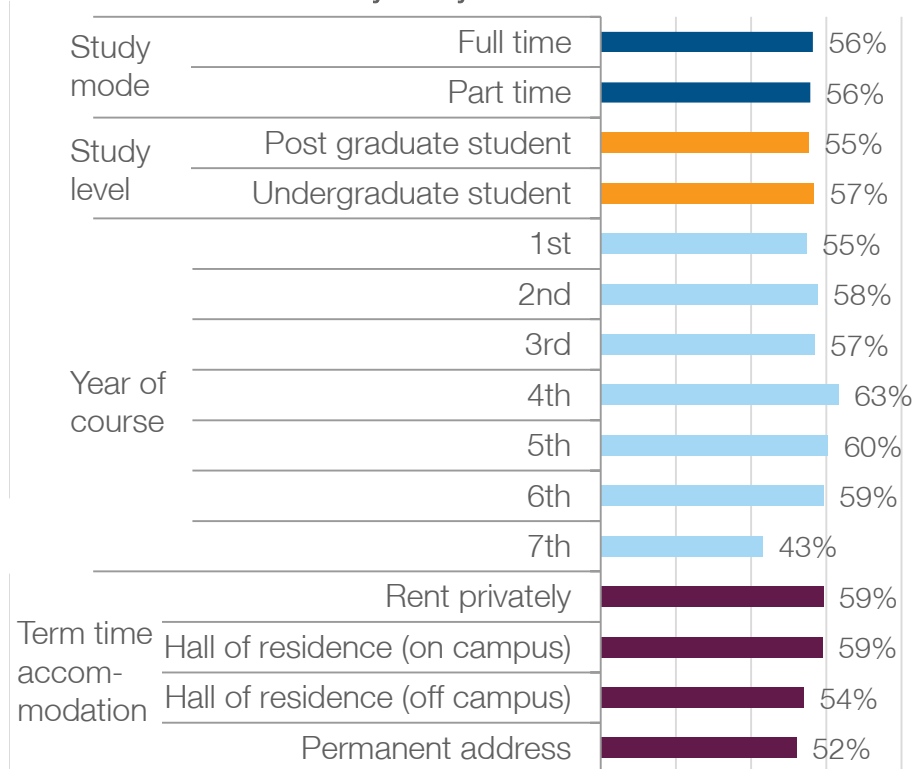
- Our [HE survey](#) monitors the numbers of students taking part in sport; on average 56% play sport at least once a week. However, a number of factors impact on likely levels of participation.
- If you know your university and student base, these trends can provide an indicative picture of participation.

## Variations in once a week sports participation

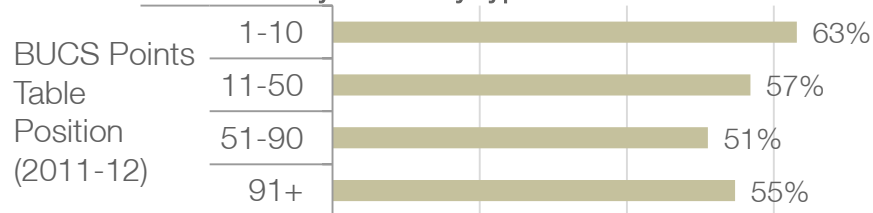
By student demographics



By study behaviour



By university type

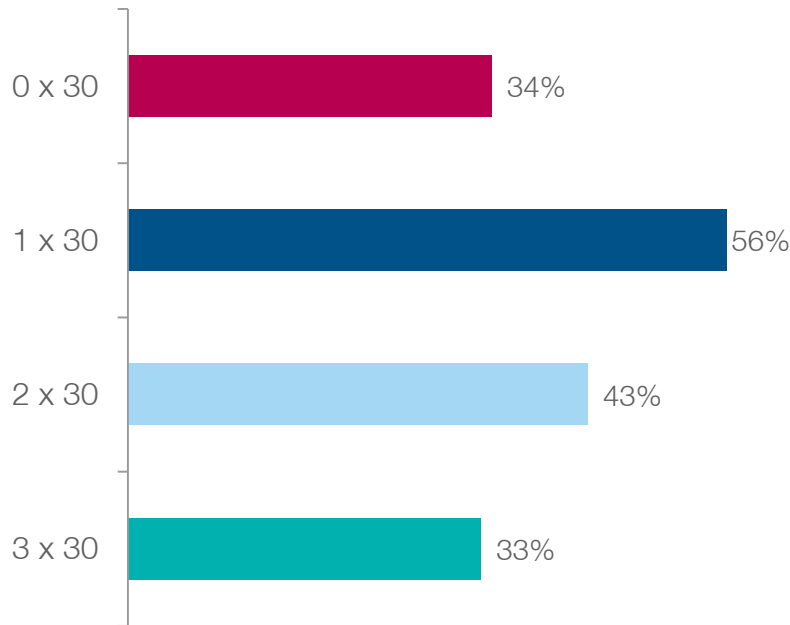


Source: Higher Education Sport Participation and Satisfaction Survey year 1 and 2 data. Base: All students (68,651)

# Identifying need: How is sport played

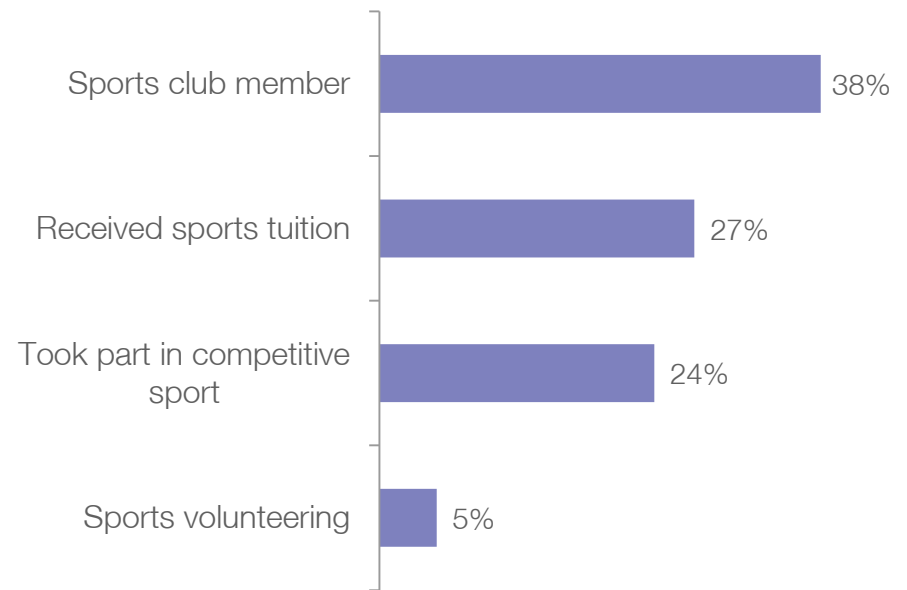
## Frequency of participation

- A third of students are not doing 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport on a weekly basis.
- Over half take part at least once a week.
- A committed third play sport at least three times a week.



## Organised sport

- 38% of students had taken part in sport as a member of a club, society or organisation in the previous month.
- This is higher than the proportion who receive coaching or play competitively.
- Only a small proportion have volunteered in sport – is this due to limited interest or lack of opportunities?



Source: Higher Education Sport Participation and Satisfaction Survey year 1 and 2 data. Base: All students (68,651)



# Identifying need: Demand for sport

## Students want to take part in more sport

- 84% of students would like to do more sport over the next 12 months than they currently do. There is some variation, with those groups who are less likely to already be taking part regularly (females, non-white ethnic groups, disabled people) slightly more likely to want to do more sport than they currently do.
- This demand needs to be activated, with the right offer and tailored messages supporting the conversion of expressed interest into action.

## Differences in the proportion wanting to do more sport and physical activity

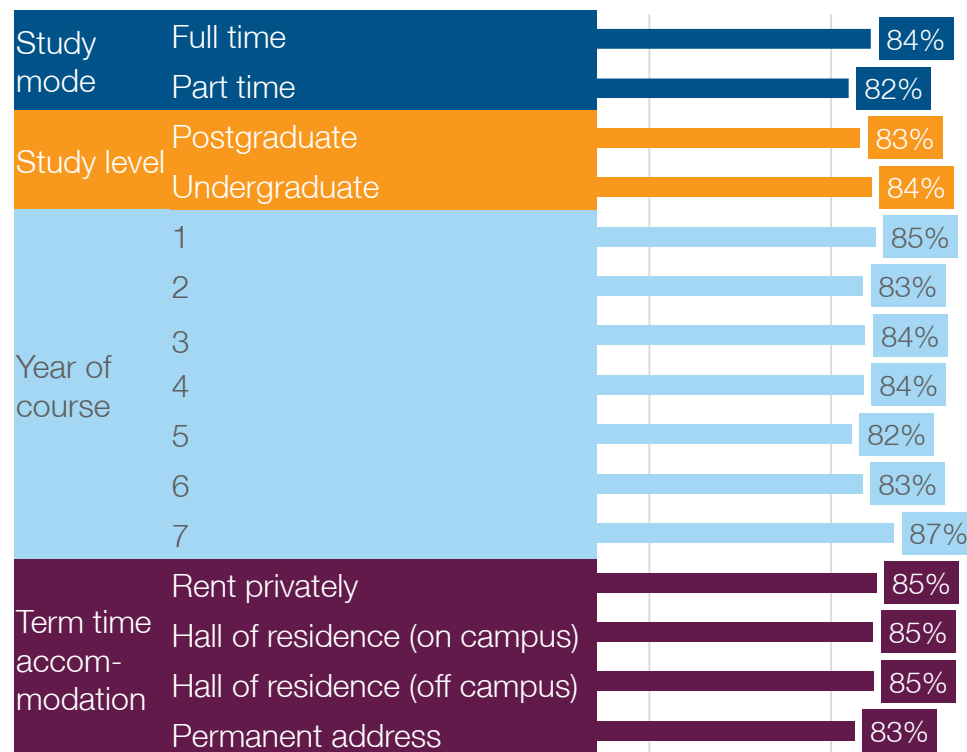
### By student demographics



### By university type



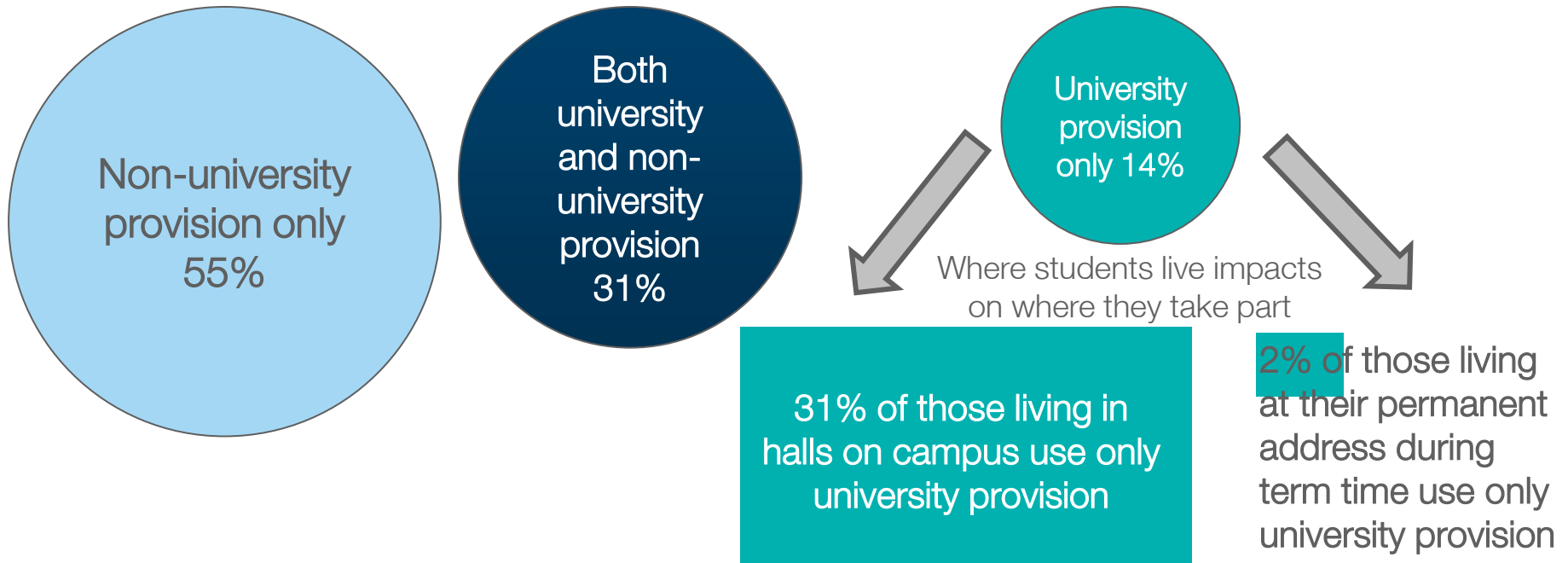
### By study behaviour



Source: Higher Education Sport Participation and Satisfaction Survey year 1 and 2 data. Base: All students (68,651)

# Identifying need: Where is sport played

Where are the students who are taking part in sport doing their activity



## HE provision is only part of the picture

- More sport is being done outside of university provision than is being done within it.
- The success of your potential project can be impacted but other provision in your area.
- When you are looking to improve your sporting offer, consider whether gaps you've identified in existing provision are gaps in the university provision or all local provision.

Source: Higher Education Sport Participation and Satisfaction Survey year 1 and 2 data. Bases: Students taking part in sport (49,804); students taking part in sport who live in halls on campus (8,618); students taking part in sport who live at their permanent address (11,924)

# Identifying need:

## What types of sports are played – HE Pathway

The types of participation can be considered via this pathway model

- A large proportion of activity is gym and fitness related.
- We are more focused on developing social sport, intramural and flexible participation programmes.

**Gym/Fitness**  
Total = 670k (32%)

87% achieve 1x30 (580k)

[NB does not include those in  
Formal or Social]

Out of Uni  
and non Gym  
Total = 390k  
(19%)

Just 58%  
achieve 1x30  
(225k)

74k (24%)  
also do Gym

**Social Sport**  
Total = 300k (14%)

70% achieve 1x30 (210k)

[NB does not include those  
in formal sport]

85k (50%)  
also do Gym

37k  
(20%) also  
do social

**Formal Sport**  
Total = 170k (8%)

87% achieve  
1x30 (150k)

An additional 360k  
do not achieve 1x30

No Sport = 550k (26%)

# Identifying need: Which sports appeal

## How sports are presented has an impact

- A number of universities have noted that sports delivered in formats which focus more on the **fun and social** aspect (as opposed to sport for sports sake) have resonated.
- Offering opportunities at appropriate **skill** levels is important.
- **Innovative** delivery formats appeal, for example Glow in the Dark racquet sports and themed runs (zombie run for Halloween and Santa fun runs for Christmas).
- Linking sporting activities to **other interests** such as music and cinema can attract alternative audiences; for example 'Cycle Cinema' involves watching a film whilst undertaking a spinning class.
- **Variety** and a mix of activities can hold appeal – an increasing proportion of those taking part in sport regularly are doing a mixture of activities rather than simply focusing on one sport.



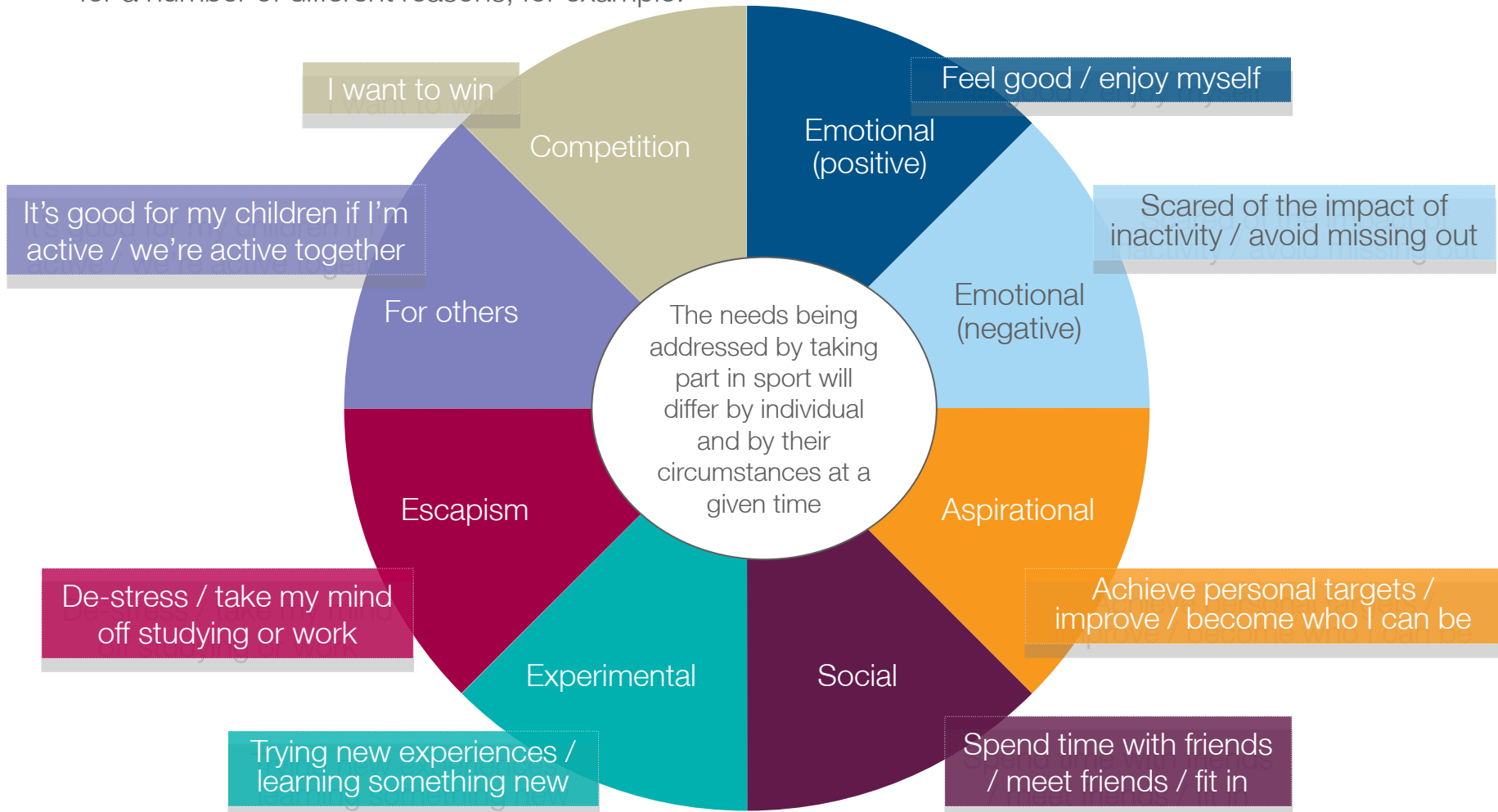
## Appealing to specific audiences

- A number of projects have targeted groups with lower levels of participation, for example women and disabled people. Women are more likely to take part in dance and fitness classes, although women-only team sports have proved successful for some. Disability sport sessions and inclusive opportunities were offered at a number of universities targeting this audience.
- The importance of having the right messages and communication which taps into underlying needs is more evident for these audiences who are less likely to respond to a specific sport offer.

# Identifying need: Why do students take part

Motivations for taking part in sport are wide ranging

- Sport can meet a number of different needs and individuals can be motivated to start, or keep, taking part for a number of different reasons, for example:



# Identifying need:

## What barriers stop students taking part

The main reasons students who don't take part in any sport give for not doing so

Family commitments

Expensive

Prefer to spend time doing other activities

Lack of time due to work/  
study commitments

Not enough opportunities for me locally

Size of text is indicative of the proportion of students giving this reason

**Weather:** Active University projects have reported weather conditions impacting on participation and the importance of contingency planning

In addition, students not using university provision highlighted:

- **Location** – other local facilities are more convenient (53%)
- **Cost** – university provision is more expensive (19%)
- **Programming** – does not offer me the appropriate activities or opportunities (18%)

It is necessary to consider how university provision can build on existing provision in the marketplace. Be aware of the alternatives which might already be successfully catering to your students.

Source: Sport England Higher Education Sport Participation and Satisfaction Survey.

Base: All students who did not participate in any sport (17,406) / All students who used non-university provision (24,970)

# Identifying need: Addressing barriers example

Identifying components underlying a stated barrier to find elements of potential solutions

## Lack of time

Having to commit to sessions is a turn off

Travel time plays a part

Sport is less of a priority during exam time



### Flexibility

Informal participation and responsive programming can hold more appeal.

### Location

Students prefer activities on site. Convenience is key

### Communication

Messages about de-stressing and highlighting the benefits on concentration of taking proper breaks can resonate more at this time

### Duration

Length of session can impact on the appeal

# Identifying need: **Next steps**

- Consider how this information fits with what you know about your university and your students.
- By understanding your customers and their motivations and needs as well as the marketplace and the sporting opportunities on offer, you can begin to identify gaps.
- These may be gaps in who is being reached, the need or motivation being addressed, the type of activity on offer (e.g. single or multi-sport, what sports, format, formal or informal), the location or delivery channel and so on.
- It is important to continue to develop your understanding and consulting with your students and partners is a key element of that.
  - There is some guidance on consultation and feedback in Appendix 1.

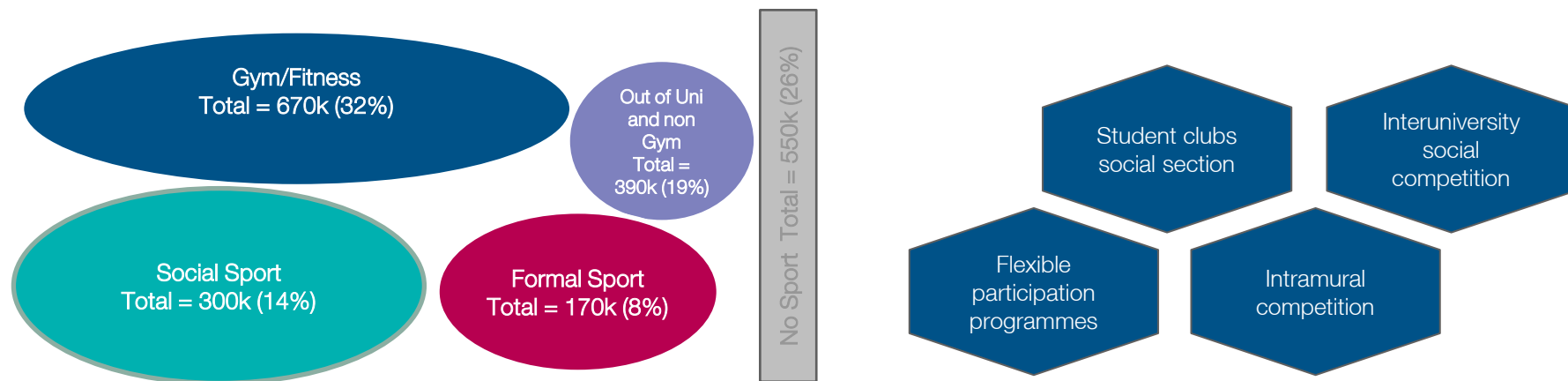


# Delivery and impact:

## Understanding your existing offer

It is important to understand the sporting opportunities your university already offers students

- We need to build and develop on existing provision to grow the number of students taking part in sport regularly.
- The [2012 HE audit](#) highlights the type of information it would be useful for you to be aware of and allows you to compare your provision with other HEIs:
  - Facilities: type (e.g. grass pitches, swimming pools), usage priorities, external facility access.
  - Partnerships: facilities, volunteering and coaching, community sport, club development, national governing bodies of sport (NGBs).
  - Workforce: volunteers, coaches, NGB activators.
  - Student experience: clubs, number of sports offered.
- Consider your existing offer in relation to our pathway model to identify relevant gaps which align with our funding priorities.
- Appendix 2 includes some examples of the ways universities have examined their offer



# Delivery and impact:

## Understanding other provision in your area

Students do not only access university provision and there is value in being aware of other provision in the local area

- Running activities in direct competition with other providers can limit the numbers of students who will want to take part in your activities. We want to **avoid duplication**.
- Consider what you are best placed to deliver compared to other providers and where you can work in partnership.
- A number of round 1 Active University projects highlighted the opportunities to **access facilities and coaches** as an important benefit of partnership working with community clubs.
- Working in partnership with other parts of the university and local providers can provide **potential exit routes** to help sustain participation.

### What other provision exists?

- County Sport Partnerships are a useful source of local knowledge.
- A number of NGBs are continuing to develop the work they are doing with the HE sector.
- [Active Places Power](#) holds information on the types of sporting facilities and clubs in an area.

Non-university provision only 55%

Both university and non-university provision 31%

### Active Places

All sites summary map



Contains Ordnance Survey data. © Crown ...

# Delivery and impact: Improving your offer

There are six main areas to consider in creating a new and improved sporting offer:

Who you are targeting

What you will deliver

Where you will deliver

How you will deliver

How you will promote your offer

How you will retain participants

Considerations for who you are targeting include information covered earlier in this pack:

- University demographics
- Participation rates
- Needs and motivations of that audience

Considerations for what to deliver:

- What activities are offered, in what format, at what skill level, formal/informal
- Range and variety on offer
- Ability to innovate and respond flexibly
- Seasonal changes
- Frequency of sessions and duration
- Sign up process and length of commitment. (ease and flexibility is preferred)
- Price and payment options
- Timetabling and responding to limited availability or limited time slots available

# Delivery and impact: Improving your offer (2)

Considerations for where and how you will deliver

## Where you will deliver

- What environment are you creating?
- Ambience, mood, music, acoustics
- Signage, displays, lighting
- Indoor / outdoor
- Sporting / non sporting venue
- Accessibility
- Changing facilities
- Consider the audience and where they feel comfortable
- Proximity and convenience of locations is important
- Consider less formal / unconventional spaces
- Potential availability concerns if facilities are at capacity or prioritising the performance offer.
- Some universities have responded for example by creating a facility steering group to ensure student needs are the focus, there is one common agenda across both the recreational and performance offers and allowing for on-going communications across the sports pathway.

## How you will deliver

- The workforce
- What model best suits your delivery plan?
  - Coaches, volunteers, activators, interns, coordinators
  - Peer to peer engagement
- How many and what skills, knowledge and expertise is required?
- Identify training needs
- How will you develop/ retain the workforce?
- How will you measure its success?
- Goal setting of workforce
- Student experience and employability
- Our HE Audit suggests volunteering and coaching are important offers within each institution
  - Range of placements, opportunities and training
  - Links with external partners
- How will the interaction with students take place – is it personalised? Who else is there?
- Engagement between sessions
- Equipment and technology
- How will you gather feedback and incorporate back into the delivery programme?

# Delivery and impact: Improving your offer (3)

## Considerations for promotion and retention

### How you will promote your offer

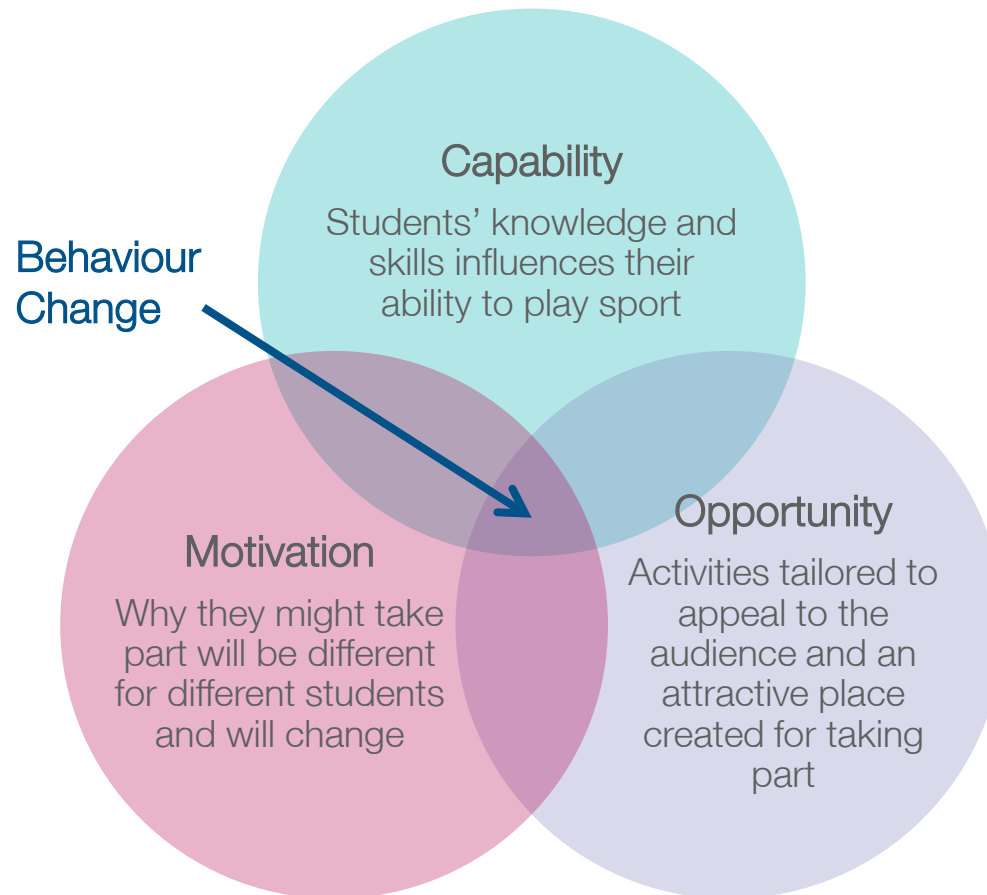
- How will you reach your target audience
- How does the audience like to be communicated with
  - Mixed success using social media, with some universities finding Facebook only reached those already interested in and doing sport rather than their target audience.
  - Peer to peer communication has been most effective, for example using marketing ambassadors who encourage face to face marketing
- What will you say and how will you say it (tone of the message)
  - Competition and formal can put students off the offer
  - Using targeted campaigns such as de-stressing around exams
- Fresher's fairs, taster sessions
- How often the message is communicated
- How will you measure the effectiveness of the communication?

### How you will retain participants

- Sustainability of participation
- On-going development
- Responsive to student feedback
- Support and add-ons
  - For example one Active University project noted lack of knowledge for repairs and confidence out on the road were limiting continued participation in cycling. It offered bike maintenance courses and discounts to students who ran on campus workshops providing general guidance and maintenance advice to other student cyclists.
- Loyalty cards
- Exit routes
- Tracking on-going participation
  - One university used qualitative interviews to monitor the 'journey' of their participants and identified how students were continuing to participate in sport in different forms

# Delivery and impact: **Changing behaviour**

There are a number of elements which play a part in creating behaviour change, all need to be leveraged to increase the numbers of students taking part.



# Delivery and impact:

## Participants and attendances

In your application you need to estimate the numbers of participants and attendances that you expect to achieve within your project.

- Successful projects will report progress against these measures every six months for the duration of the funding period.
- **'Participants'** is a count of the number of individual people that take part in the project. Only count **each person** once however many times they take part.
- The best way to collect participants data is a registration process that enables you to record some basic information about each new person that takes part. Some projects found an online registration system made it easier for students to engage with the programme.
- **'Attendances'** is a count of the **number of times** individuals take part in sport in the project e.g. If four people each take part five times, there would be four participants and twenty attendances.
- Attendance information can be collected by recording how many people attend each session of activity e.g. using headcounts, session registers, or monitoring 'clicks' through a turnstile. Some projects have used bar coding to collect data, reducing admin resource and human error / ineligible data.



# Delivery and impact: Understanding change

## Benchmarks from Active Universities

- Each project and university is different so there is no expected number of participants or attendances.
- Projects tend to be better at predicting participant numbers but can over-estimate attendance numbers
- Remember that in practice set-up delays, staff illness, facility availability, weather, exam pressures and so on may mean not all planned sessions of activity will be delivered and they may not all be at full capacity
- In their first year, Active University projects on average achieved:

**1,233** participants

**11,383** attendances

Average of **9** attendances per participant

## Higher Education Sports Participation and Satisfaction Survey

- All successful projects will be able to use this survey as a way of measuring their progress.
- It will show how much students in each institution are participating, what sports they are doing, where they are doing sport and how these things change over time.



# Partnerships: Working with others

Building partnerships and processes is required to support effective delivery

- A number of universities have highlighted the value in working closely across the university
  - Establishing partnerships with and support from other internal departments and senior management at the start can limit any problems or competing priorities which may lead to conflicts in delivery. Early involvement is key.
  - Active University projects noted benefits from developing partnerships with internal departments such as information technology and marketing.
  - Working with the students union also proved valuable, for example creating an internship position in the students union focussed on community strategy and halls ambassadors representing students' view.
- Leveraging evidence of the value of sport to strengthen internal relationships
  - Improving student experience and a greater focus on performance regarding graduate employability are priorities in the 2011 White Paper which places 'Students at the heart of the system.' There is both an opportunity and strategic need for sport in higher education to demonstrate its role and value.
  - Our [value of sport monitor](#) summarises evidence around the physical, psychological and social value of sport, while [research commissioned by British Universities and Colleges Sport](#) (BUCS) highlights the role of sport in relation to graduate employability.
  - Universities are operating in an increasingly competitive environment and an excellent sport offer can increase a university's appeal.
- You should also consider developing partnerships with other organisations working in sport, e.g. county sport partnerships, national governing bodies of sport, your local authority and commercial providers
  - One university created an official partnership with a community centre run by the local trust. They developed joint branding and the university supported improvements to the centre in return for reduced membership rates, exclusive use of the hall on Wednesday afternoons and first refusal on any free space – which was increasingly filled by intra-mural and non competitive student clubs making the centre increasingly a place students feel is for them.
- If there are other HEIs in close proximity, you could consider developing a joint application.

# Sustainability: Two key elements

## Sustainability of participation

- Retention is important both within your project and in sports participation generally
- 66% of students are doing more or less sport than they were 12 months before
- Participation is fluid with people dropping in and out of regular participation
- Exit routes
- Supporting wider provision (e.g. self-organised) beyond the project

## Sustainability of the project

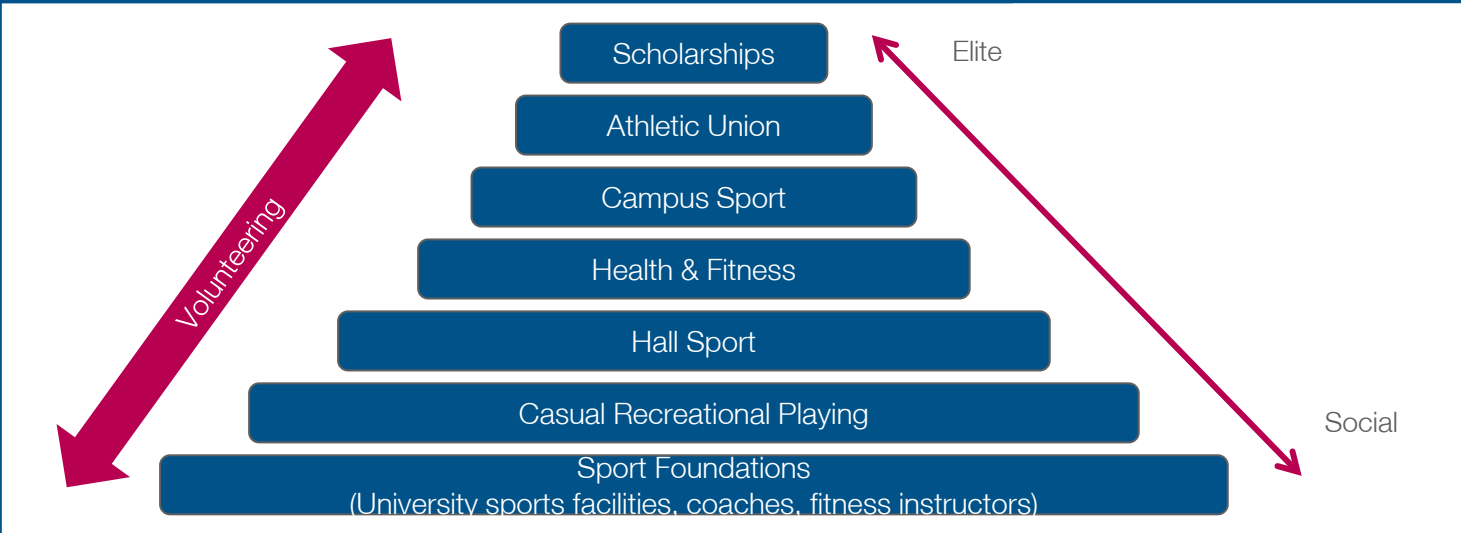
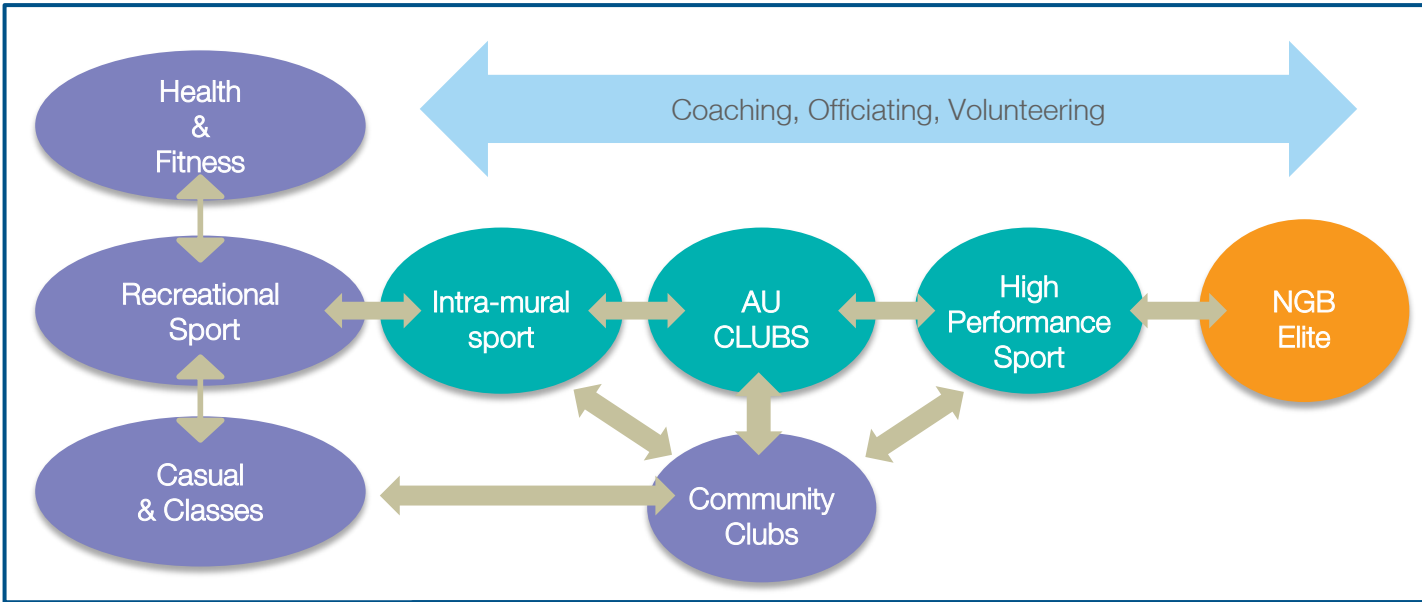
- As we will not fund repeat projects or give on-going funding, your application should outline how your project will be sustainable
- Partnership funding over the lifetime of the project
- Buy-in and support from the wider university
- On-going consultation can help ensure your project remains relevant, delivering the right offer to the right audience

# Appendix 1: Consultation and feedback

## Some general principles

- Be clear about what you're trying to find out
- Who should you ask?
  - The people you are targeting (e.g. those who are not already taking part or are more at risk of dropping out)
  - A mix of these people, by demographics (e.g. male, female), behaviour (e.g. doing some sport, not doing sport), motivations (e.g. social, competitive)
  - It can be particularly useful to consult with leaders / early adopters who are likely to bring other students along with their opinions and actions
- How should you ask?
  - Questionnaires and asking direct questions are not the only way to gain insight
  - Observation provides data on what people do as opposed to what they say they do.
  - Do you have student card data to tell you who uses what facilities at what times?
  - Analysis of social media (Twitter, Facebook etc..) can provide access to honest, unprompted comments and insights into what your students are interested in, talking about etc..
  - Peer to peer can be effective, perhaps working with the student union with students so students are gathering feedback from other students
- What should you ask?
  - You don't need to have all the answers in advance. Research can support the design of your programme by finding out what people are interested in, not just gather levels of interest in your ideas.
  - Make sure you ask for the information you want to analyse your results by e.g. if you don't record gender, you can't then analyse the differences between male and female
- For more information, try the [market research society](#)

# Appendix 2: Example of sporting pathways



# Appendix 3:

## Further information and insight sources

- [Sport England](#)
- [Our national partners](#)
  - These organisations can provide expertise on specific audiences of interest, for example the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation and the English Federation of Disability Sport
  - Our partners produce their own research which is available on their website and can also be contacted for support and advice
- [British Universities and Colleges Sport](#)