



Capability Statement

Sporting excellence for everyone

The University of Wollongong (UOW) has solid partnerships across a number of codes and local sports competitions that strengthen relationships within communities and encourage participation in higher education.

These partnerships also help develop programs that combine sport with a world-class education to prepare athletes for life after their playing careers.

The University has a proud sporting history, with many students going on to compete at an elite level. The Wollongong Campus is also a training base for several professional teams, including the St George Illawarra Dragons in Australia's National Rugby League competition.

UOW is providing more opportunities for people to further their education by extending our reach through sport and other sectors of the community. We value the role that sport plays on our campuses and in the development of healthy and resilient people.

UOW's Global Sport Programs invite players with promising ability and potential to Wollongong. Players benefit from professional coaching delivered by some of the world's best teams in their chosen sport, while gaining a world-class education.

The UniActive Recreation and Aquatic Centre at UOW is home to some of the best sporting and fitness facilities in the Illawarra and meets the training needs of individuals and sporting teams. It is recognised as a NSW Institute of Sport regional training facility and has been used by the St George Illawarra Dragons NRL team, Sydney Swans AFL team, the NSW Waratahs, the Matildas Football Federation Australia team, as well as many international and national swimming and triathlon squads and visiting sports teams.

In 2021, there were over 427,000 visits to UniActive facilities. Gym member visits over the 12 months from December 2020 totalled 163,000, of which 43 per cent were students, 41 per cent community and 16 per cent UOW staff/alumni/non-UOW students. Due to COVID-19 restrictions the UniActive facilities were closed for 106 days in 2021.

The High Performance Training Area in the Sports Hub is home to a range of NSW Institute of Sport athletes, Illawarra Academy of Sport athletes, St George Illawarra Dragons and the Illawarra Cutters rugby league team.

UOW sporting alliance partners in 2023 include Tottenham Hotspur, the Illawarra Hawks, St George Illawarra Dragons and the Crusaders International Academy.

In 2022, UOW signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Destination Wollongong to become an official UCI Bike City community partner, with UOW Vice-Chancellor and President Professor Patricia M. Davidson announced as a Wollongong 2022 Ambassador for the UCI Road World Championships.

SPORT EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Sport Studies at UOW is ranked in the top 100 in the world (QS World University Rankings By Subject 2023).

Our teaching and research in Sport Studies is spread across our faculties and UOW College Australia through diverse programs such as the Bachelor of Business (Sport Marketing and Management), the Bachelor of Sport, the Bachelor of Exercise Science and Rehabilitation, and the Certificate IV in Fitness.

There was a 50 per cent increase in enrolments in sport-related courses from 2017 to 2022. Our research publishes in sports-related subjects such as psychology, education, medicine, history, Indigenous studies, marketing, nutrition, materials science, exercise science, sport science, engineering and geography.

In terms of research performance alone, UOW's research outputs in sport-related areas rivals institutions ranked in the top 20 in the world.

UOW's Associate Professor Stewart Vella is the most published researcher in the world on the topic of mental health in sport. Professor Vella was part of a group of researchers within UOW's School of Psychology who developed Ahead of the Game.

**UOW demonstrates that
teaming sport and education
successfully encourages
students to aspire to tertiary
education.**



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The sports-based program is funded by global men's health charity Movember. Ahead of the Game equips adolescent males with skills, confidence and support systems to help recognise the warning signs of mental health problems. Resources developed as part of the program include a mental health literacy workshop and a sports-based resilience workshop and app.

The program was the official mental health program of the Rugby League World Cup 2021 and Movember has helped expand the program into other countries including the United Kingdom and Canada.

ST GEORGE ILLAWARRA DRAGONS

National Rugby League team St George Illawarra Dragons and UOW have a long-standing association, which has mutually benefitted both organisations and the wider community since 2009.

This partnership has centred on collaboratively pursuing positive outcomes through research, scholarships, community programs, internships, promotions and facility use. In 2018, UOW was announced as a foundation partner for the Dragons' inaugural NRL Women's Premiership team, and in 2021 a Heads of Agreement focused on UOW and the Dragons partnering to deliver integrated sporting, community and education programs in one setting.

As a result, in 2022 UOW and the Dragons unveiled plans for a state-of-the-art Community and High-Performance Centre (CHPC) at UOW's Innovation Campus. The Dragons secured funding from the NSW Government and the proposed \$50 million project includes multipurpose spaces to be used by the Dragons, UOW and the community.

There are currently eight Dragons players enrolled at UOW studying a broad range of degrees, while UOW students have the opportunity to gain practical experience within the Dragons organisation.

The partnership between UOW and the Dragons demonstrates that teaming sport and education encourages students to strive and achieve across both disciplines. It has been particularly relevant for those from First Nations and low socio-economic backgrounds who aspire to higher education. This has been achieved and demonstrated through the partnership in the delivery of programs in primary and high schools across the region. This includes The Best You Can Be program, which aims to assist teachers

in encouraging children to make positive choices around health and wellbeing. The program, supported by UOW's Woolyungah Indigenous Centre (WIC), has successfully engaged more than 280 teachers and over 8,000 students.

UOW also played a key role in helping the Dragons to establish their club's inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in 2018.

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR FOOTBALL CLUB

The UOW Tottenham Hotspur Global Football Program is a unique opportunity for students to study at UOW's Wollongong Campus while also honing their rugby development with training provided by UEFA-qualified coaches from English Premier League (EPL) club Tottenham Hotspur.

It is open to applications from domestic and international undergraduate and postgraduate students who are studying at UOW or UOW College Australia. As part of the program, participants undertake a full-time professional training program each week for 36 weeks around their academic timetable. There are also opportunities for communities to benefit from these coaching opportunities through our UOW Elite Football Camp, which is available for students in Years 9-12.

CRUSADERS RUGBY PROGRAM

The UOW Crusaders Global Rugby Program is a professional rugby training program that UOW students can undertake alongside their studies.

The program is designed to attract talented rugby players from across the world who can develop their rugby ability in a professional environment while studying at UOW or UOW College Australia.

The program is led by a full-time coach from the Crusaders with extensive expertise in player development and high-performance coaching. Our aim is to implement the same practices and systems used at the Crusaders Academy in Christchurch.

In 2022 UOW was awarded a PacificAus Sports Competitive Grant to support promising young Tongan rugby players. Selected Tongan students will receive high-performance professional training through the UOW Crusaders Global

Rugby Program while they pursue studies at UOW College Australia.

Meanwhile, the Elite Rugby Camp offers high school students in Years 9-12 the opportunity to develop their skills with aspects of the UOW Crusaders Global Rugby Program.

ELITE ATHLETE PROGRAM

The Elite Athlete program was relaunched at UOW in 2019 and is designed to support students who compete in high-level sporting activities nationally and internationally.

UOW has signed a new Elite Athlete Education Network (EAEN) Agreement with the Australian Institute of Sport. This makes UOW an endorsed member of the EAEN, which helps to support UOW elite athletes for the duration of their course study.

The program is designed to make it easier for athletes to transition from elite sport to a career they are passionate about by providing the qualifications and skill sets needed.

The program at UOW currently has just under 100 athletes, of which 22 are part of our Graduates of League Program. The remainder are made up of cricket, swimming, athletics, alpine ski racing, NPL, netball, triathlon, NBL, gymnastics, cycling, surf lifesaving, AFL and archery. The Elite Athlete program also has athletes representing Australia from non-categorised sports such as ultimate frisbee, Oztag and mountain biking.

UOW offers a number of sports scholarships and presents annual awards to students excelling in sport.

GRADUATES OF LEAGUE

The Graduates of League (GOL) is a peer mentoring program established to increase university entry, retention and completion rates of elite athletes and professional sportspeople.

The program was piloted in 2012, with the support of UOW, the NRL and three NRL clubs and was relaunched in August 2019 with the signing of a new five-year MOU with the National Rugby League (NRL).

TEAMING SPORT WITH STUDIES

Andy Rogers, Tottenham Hotspur's Head of Global Football Development, says the UOW Tottenham Hotspur Global Football Program greatly benefits students wishing to improve their football skills while pursuing a degree.

"We are proud of our partnership with UOW," Rogers says.

"The best-in-class training facilities and programs provided by UOW complement the benefits that UOW Tottenham Hotspur Global Football Program has to provide.

"The program offers a unique opportunity for students to develop their football skills while pursuing a degree of their choice. Many students have benefited from this program offering."

The UOW GOL program provides contracted rugby league athletes with assistance in applying and enrolling in their preferred university program, peer mentoring each week of the university semester, and university administration support throughout their studies.

UOW GOL has supported 85 rugby league student-athletes from five clubs and employed 98 peer mentors. As at June 2022, UOW GOL has celebrated 38 graduations on campus.

ILLAWARRA DIVISION RUGBY LEAGUE

In 2018, UOW College Australia and the Illawarra Division Rugby League (IDRL) announced a joint sporting scholarship aimed at assisting local rugby league players or volunteers in achieving their education goals.

As part of a two-year agreement, UOW College is providing financial support up to the value of \$20,000 in course fees to individuals demonstrating sporting success or significant community service accomplishments.

The scholarship is designed to recognise a player or volunteer at the grassroots level who has demonstrated sporting success or significant accomplishments in community service for their club.

SOUTHERN DISTRICTS RUGBY CLUB

Education pathways and financial support for academically-focused footballers are at the heart of a partnership agreement between UOW and Southern Districts Rugby Club.

The partnership provides for a range of joint initiatives of mutual benefit, including ongoing education pathways advice for members of the club at both senior and junior levels and opportunities for internships and work experience for UOW students. UOW also provides the Southern District Rugby Club Scholarship to high-achieving players.

SUTHERLAND DISTRICT CRICKET CLUB

UOW has a sponsorship arrangement with Sutherland District Cricket club to assist with providing talented cricketers with assistance during their time at UOW.

Currently, the partnership provides for a member of SDCC to receive a bursary for their study at UOW's Sutherland Campus.

ILLAWARRA HAWKS

UOW has a longstanding relationship with the Illawarra Hawks, a professional basketball team playing in the National Basketball League (NBL). In 2022, UOW and the Hawks announced an alliance to deliver their joint educational mission including community engagement, educational pathways, work integrated learning (WIL) and research partnerships.

As part of the MOU, UOW will become the "Official University of the Illawarra Hawks." The UOW-Hawks Alliance will build relationships with various parts of the various parts of the community, especially equity groups including women's basketball.

UOW WELCOMES THE OPPORTUNITY TO WORK WITH GOVERNMENT AND INDUSTRY PARTNERS TO DELIVER EXCEPTIONAL OUTCOMES

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