

Selection and Competition

Being selected for a University Sports Team, in particular the Varsity Match Squad, can be hugely important to those people engaged in sport at Cambridge. It is often the culmination of a great deal of hard work and training so not being selected can lead to disappointment, resentment and drop out. As such, the selection process needs to be carefully managed by clubs.

Although the focus can often be selection for a Varsity Match, selection takes place throughout the season; at trials, for individual competitions, for teams competing in leagues, and even tours. Further guidance on these topics can be found below, including some suggestions. Please note that due to the wide range of sports played at the University, clubs will need to adapt the guidelines below so they are specific to their sport and in line with National Governing Body regulations.

Member Recruitment

Across the University of Cambridge, the depth and breadth of University level sport provides a wide range of sporting opportunities. For some clubs, it is an opportunity to grow and develop their club, whilst others may not have the capacity for everyone to join and need to select players through a trial process.

Although we have used the term “trials” below please consider if this is appropriate language for the members you are trying to attract. The term trials could have negative connotations for some prospective members and may limit attendance. Perhaps “taster sessions” or “open sessions” are more inclusive terms.

Trials

Trials are an opportunity for clubs to evaluate individual athletes’ skills, abilities and attitude. As a club, you should give yourself and the trialist the best opportunity to demonstrate their playing level. Investing time to create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere will benefit the club and participants. Clubs should design an appropriate plan for the trial session and ensure it is suitable for the number of participants and the facility. A combination of skills, drills and competitive play will enable athletes to demonstrate a range of abilities. Clubs should also consider how they would measure player ability.

The start of the academic year is an exciting time to welcome new members into your club, but you should take into consideration how you engage with those that have not been successful. You may wish to invite them back the following year or perhaps a change in circumstances later in term means you can now run a second team. What would happen if you have multiple injuries towards the end of the season? How can you keep them in the “system” and give them a positive experience?

The above also applies to setting of Varsity squads, if you select too soon you may demotivate those not selected. By keeping a wider pool engaged for longer you will limit the impact of injury or a change of circumstances.

Ensure there is a pathway to keep unsuccessful trialist engaged with sport by promoting other sporting opportunities. This may be by signposting to their college team or a local league to keep them engaged with sport as they may be ready to compete at a higher level as time progresses.

Selection for Competitions

A selection process and criteria that is clear and transparent can help to minimise selection issues and support a positive, competitive culture in the club.

In order to achieve the key principles above it is important to answer the questions below;

- Where can the Selection Policy be viewed?
- How have club members contributed to or approved the policy?
- How will unsuccessful athletes be supported?
- Can members appeal any decisions made?

When developing a Selection Policy it is important for clubs to consider the timeline required for entry, who sits on the selection panel, the objectives of the club, eligibility for the competition and number of competitors/teams the club have the capacity to support.

Timeline

The selection criteria and timeline for each competition should be distributed to all club stakeholders, e.g. triallists, club members, coaches, club officials, etc. as early as possible in the process. It is good practice to publish selection documents on the Club website, this is particularly helpful for potential members.

Where possible show the dates of the competition, when entries close, and when decisions on selection will be made.

Selection Panel

A selection panel should be put in place to pick teams, individuals or squads. It is worth having a panel opposed to one individual. This helps to reduce the risk of bias entering the process and prevents one individual having unnecessary pressure when picking the team.

A selection panel should represent the club and may include; coaches, club captain, team captain, presidents and the welfare officer. In clubs it is often the case that individuals may have a conflict of interest, for example the president would also like to be considered for the first team. If this does happen it is important conflicts of interests are declared prior to the selection process beginning. Then the club must come up with a suitable process to deal with this situation.

It may be that during discussions regarding their team the panel member withdraws from that part of the meeting. Conflicted members can often add a valuable insight into other team members and are useful to have on a selection panel, if this is the case perhaps it is sensible for them to be able to contribute to the meeting but not have a vote.

Selection Criteria

Selection criteria should be specific to each competition so if a club enters a number of competitions, you may require more than one selection criteria. Because of this and to add clarity it is suggested that you use the subheadings below (see Appendix 1):

- Policy objective
- Performance objective
- Eligibility criteria
- Selection criteria
- Informing athletes
- Appeals process

Policy Objective

This does not need to be more than a sentence explaining that this policy will enable fair and equitable selection of individuals and/or a team.

Performance Objective

This is the aims and outcomes of entering the competition, this might include to win a team medal and 3 individual medals, or could be to provide a first competitive opportunity for new members.

Eligibility Criteria

Eligibility will often be dictated by the league or competition the club is wishing to attend. Depending on the competition it can be worth checking weight categories, experience levels, NGB affiliation, specific disciplines, age categories and university matriculation. All competitions should list this information on the entry information document.

The club may wish to apply limits to entry. This could be due to a financial limit or practical travel arrangements and could be as simple as the club will take 2 members in each category or will enter 2 male and 2 female participants/teams.

Selection Criteria

Where possible, the selection criteria should be objective, i.e. Has a personal best below 11s within the last year. However the nature of team sports often make it very difficult to apply objective criteria so subjective criteria is useful.

When developing selection criteria you may wish to weight the objectives, for example if selecting a Lacrosse team for varsity you might review athletes performance against; highest performance level (International, National, Varsity, BUCS, Collegiate), Coach feedback, attendance at training and fitness testing performance. In this scenario you might give more weighting to Performance level and Coach feedback (40% for each criteria, 80% total) and then weight attendance and fitness test results for the remaining 20%.

Below are some suggested criteria that clubs could use, please add where required, adapt to your sport and the type of competition:

- National / International Rankings
- Representative honours
- Performance in competitions
- PBs and Season best
- Performance against higher ranked athletes
- Fitness testing results
- Attendance at training
- Performance during games at training

- Specific playing position requirements
- Coach feedback
- Sport specific skills
- Attitude
- Commitment – e.g. must play in 80% of BUCS matches
- Personality within the team
- Specific pairings / player combinations
- Athleticism
- Exceptions e.g. an athlete has not made training all season because it clashes with GB training but they wish to play in Varsity
- Extenuating circumstances e.g. injury, illness, course placement

Team selection is always a difficult decision and selection panels often have to look for minor differences between athletes to separate them. Where personal information is used to separate athletes, e.g. commitment, it is best practice to offer athletes a right of reply on these issues. They may have missed training for understandable reasons that they chose not to declare at the time without the understanding it might impact their selection.

Where clubs have criteria for a Blues status it is important to publish this, some clubs may be able to align their selection policy with Blues status. For other clubs this might not be possible but if selection is not aligned to Blues status then this also should be made clear.

Informing Athletes

Informing athletes, both successful and unsuccessful, needs careful consideration. Where athletes have invested a large amount of time and effort into being selected the outcome is often an emotional time.

Which order athletes are informed in, unsuccessful first or vice-versa, should be thought about carefully. The method of informing athletes is crucial, it is recommended unsuccessful athletes have the opportunity to talk face to face. Who is best placed to do this should also be considered, captain, coach, or a selector.

When providing feedback to unsuccessful athletes you need to give them the decision and explain the rationale. Recognise that the athlete may need some time to process the decision before receiving feedback, some may be ready straight away. Where possible keep the feedback positive, constructive and focused on the athlete rather than comparisons with others. If applicable try to promote other playing opportunities which may include, College Leagues, Local Clubs and other sporting opportunities at Cambridge.

Providing feedback to successful athletes often feels easier but still needs careful thought. Make sure they are aware of why they have been selected, that other athletes have not been successful and they need to be sensitive to this. This is often a good time to refocus successful athlete's minds and ensure they keep improving to the day of the competition and not rest now they have been selected.

The Sports Service has a TALS (Talented Athlete Lifestyle Support) trained member of staff, Tristan Coles, who is available to advise Clubs on supporting club members through the selection process. Tristan can be contacted at tristan.coles@sport.cam.ac.uk.

Appeals

It is recommended that where athletes are not happy with the process of selection this is referred to the complaints process outlined in the club's constitution.

Please try and highlight that selection will always be a contentious process and people may be unhappy, but the complaints should be raised where a fair and open process has not been followed - not because athletes are disappointed with the outcome.

Movement between teams

It is not uncommon to review squads during a season, players picking up the sport again may rapidly improve, athletes may progress in training, and sometimes you will have underestimated an athlete in trials.

Where you make changes to squads follow the recommendations above, state you are reviewing this, explain the rationale, and be transparent. Consider carefully how you communicate this to both those moving up a squad / team and those moving down.

Where you promote a player temporarily to cover injury or absence, or a player returning from injury plays down, again, be open and public about it. Remember most leagues have strict regulations about player movement and limit the number of times this can be done (See BUCS regulations in Appendix 2). Ensure all captains, and individuals affected are aware of regulations so players are not unnecessarily tied to a higher team.

Athlete Welfare

When selecting a team or individuals to represent the club the selection panel should put safeguards in place to ensure the desire to win does not negatively impact athlete welfare. Safeguards could include restrictions on the number of events or competitions an athlete does across a specific period or appointing someone removed from the heat of competition who is able to take a longer-term holistic view to check sensible welfare decisions are being made e.g. a team manager, coach, physio, or the club's welfare officers.

Whatever safeguards are in place all involved should be mindful that when in the middle of a competition athletes are not always the best judges of what is good for them, therefore, they should not be the sole decision makers. This particularly applies to medical advice that should be followed at all times, both during competitions and during athlete recovery. Athletes should not be rushed back risking further injury. For example, concussion protocols must be followed to the letter and athletes are only allowed to return to play after the designated number of days rest no matter how willing they are to return to help their team. ([Click here](#) for further information on concussion).

Putting the steps above in place will help look after athletes and ensure the risk of any peer pressure (perceived or otherwise) or the fear of letting others down influencing decisions.

Selectors should be mindful of the number of events an athlete is competing in; this is particularly pertinent with high level or elite athletes representing the club. It may be tempting to ask a high-level athlete to compete in extra events or games to give the club the best chance of winning but selectors should consider the athletes overall workload. The same would apply to an athlete that competes at a high level in other sports and may be competing on multiple competitions in a weekend or on consecutive weekends without sufficient recovery time.

Athletes selected to represent a team, especially if a last minute replacement, need to be of an appropriate level to compete against the opposition. Not only is it unfair to put an inexperienced athlete into a higher level of competition where team mates may have higher performance level expectations it could be dangerous particularly in any combat or high impact sports.

Selectors should ensure athletes are sufficiently recovered from injuries and have had enough training time to return to full fitness and will not cause themselves a long-term injury. Again seeking an independent opinion can help prevent poor decisions being made when not wanting to let teammates and friends down.

For further information on athlete welfare, please consult the [Welfare@Sport](#) Guidance document, the relevant section is linked [here](#).

Appendix 1 – Sample Selection Policy Document

[Edit as required to suit your club]

Policy Objective

This policy is to enable the selection committee to fairly and equitably select members of the [Insert club names] for the [insert name of competition i.e. BUCS Long Course Swimming] Championships.

Performance Objective

To take a team of [athletes e.g. swimmers] who can achieve;

- 2 Relay A finals
- 5 individual finals
- Win 1 medal

Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible athletes must be paid up members of the [insert club name] and matriculated to the University of Cambridge.

The club will enter [four swimmers to each event (2 Male and 2 Female)], athletes wishing to enter must be on the BUCS play app and completed all entry information by the [Insert date]. Any athlete failing to do so will not be considered for selection.

Each competitor will be restricted to [three individual events].

Required entry times for swimmers in distance freestyle events:

Women's 1500m Freestyle	19Min 30Sec 00Ms
Men's 1500m Freestyle	18Min 20Sec 00Ms
Women's 800m Freestyle	10Min 45Sec 00Ms
Men's 800m Freestyle	09Min 45sec 00Ms
Women's 400m Freestyle	05Min 15Sec 00Ms
Men's 400m Freestyle	04Min 45Sec 00Ms

Selection Criteria

[Athletes will be selected using their fastest time for that event in the last 2 years, all times must have been achieved in a competition and appear on swimmingresults.org or their national federation equivalent.

Athletes must have swum in at least 2 competitions during the season prior to BUCS Long Course Championships]

If athletes cannot be separated by [PBs, coach feedback and frequency of training will be used to separate athletes.]

All athletes must be in good standing with the Club and University at the time of the competition, any athlete not in good standing will be deselected.

Informing Athletes

Unsuccessful athletes will be informed by the coach on why they have not been selected.

Successful athletes will be informed via email, which will also contain the competition pack. All selected athletes are asked to bear in mind other athletes have not been selected for this event and recognise the impact this may have on them.

Appeals Process

Athletes wishing to appeal should follow the complaints process outlined in the clubs constitution.

Appendix 2 – BUCS Team Selection Guide



APPENDIX 6 TEAM SELECTION GUIDE

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This document is A GUIDE ONLY and should be read in conjunction with BUCS REG 11 ('TEAM SELECTION AND TEAM SHEETS') and the relevant BUCS Sport Specific Regulations.

This aim of this guide is to aid in the interpretation of REG 11.1. Through the team selection regulations, player movement is restricted in order to safeguard against institutions/Playing Entities moving players down from a higher team in order to gain an unfair advantage when playing lower ranked teams.

The key consideration for establishing an individual's normality and identifying for which team(s) they might be eligible is: Have they featured for more than 50% of the higher ranked team's league fixtures? E.g. If they have featured on the team sheet for 6 out of 10 league fixtures for the 1st Team, then they are not eligible to play for any lower ranked team for the remainder of the season, regardless of how many fixtures a lower ranked team may have remaining. Please note: Exceptions may be possible in cases of 'Medical exemption' (REG 11.1.6) or where the relevant BUCS Sport Specific Regulations allow any variation.

The following pages contain some possible scenarios to assist institutions/Playing Entities with understanding the application of REG 11.1. This guide does not account for every scenario, or the particular circumstances which may surround them. There will be eventualities which cannot be anticipated.

Institutions/Playing Entities are reminded that teams must always be picked as if all teams were playing on the same day (REG 11.1.3).

As well as undertaking random spot checks, if BUCS suspects foul play or the manipulation of regulations with regards to player movement, team sheets may be reviewed throughout the season in order to track the movement of players and review that team selection is in accordance with the regulations. Sanctions for contravention of the team selection regulations may be imposed retrospectively.

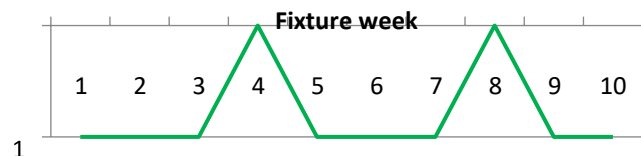
BUCS Regulation 11 – Team Selection and Team Sheets

<https://www.bucs.org.uk/compete/rules-and-regulations/general-regulations/reg-11-team-selection-and-team-sheets.html>

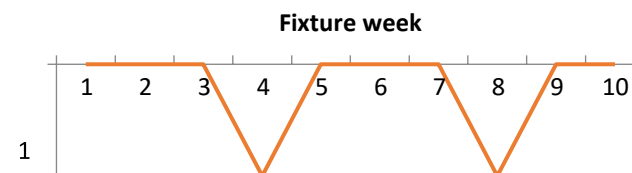
When...	Can said player compete for...?	
	1 st Team	2 nd Team
<p>An institution/Playing Entity's 1st Team has 10 league fixtures for the season. Player X has been listed on team sheet for the 1st Team in six league fixtures and one Trophy knockout fixture to date. The 1st Team lost their knockout fixture, so they only have four league fixtures remaining.</p> <p>The institution/Playing Entity's 2nd Team also had 10 league fixtures for the season and has played four of these so far, so have six league fixtures remaining. They have also won their first two Conference Cup knockout fixtures and so have at least one more knockout fixture remaining.</p>	<p>Yes, as they have established majority in this team.</p>	<p>No. Whilst the 2nd Team may have played less fixtures to date and therefore have as many fixtures remaining as Player X has represented the 1st Team for, Player X has established majority in the 1st Team by representing them in six out of 10 of their league fixtures and therefore cannot play for any lower team. Sanctions would be imposed for any such contravention.</p> <p><i>Please note: Exceptions may be possible in cases of 'Medical exemption' (REG 11.1.6) or where the relevant BUCS Sport Specific Regulations allow any variation.</i></p>
<p>An institution/Playing Entity's 1st Team has 18 league fixtures for the season. Player Y has been listed on the team sheet for the 1st Team in eight league fixtures to date. Player Y did not represent the 1st Team for the last two fixtures due to being absent for the first one and 'dropped' to the 2nd Team for the latter one. The 1st Team have eight league fixtures remaining and have not begun the Championship knockout competition yet.</p> <p>The institution/Playing Entity's 2nd Team had 14 league fixtures for the season and has played eight of these so far, so have six league fixtures remaining. Player Y featured on the team sheet for the last one of these fixtures. The 2nd Team have also won their first Trophy knockout fixture and so have at least one more knockout fixture remaining.</p>	<p>Yes, as they have not yet established a majority and also 'playing up' is always allowed.</p>	<p>Yes, as they have not yet established majority for the 1st Team at this stage. Should Player Y represent the 1st Team in two more league fixtures, then they would become ineligible to represent the 2nd Team.</p> <p><i>Please note: Exceptions may be possible in cases of 'Medical exemption' (REG 11.1.6) or where the relevant BUCS Sport Specific Regulations allow any variation.</i></p>

<p>An institution/Playing Entity's 1st Team had six league fixtures for the season and has played four of these so far, so have two league fixtures remaining. The 1st Team have also won their first Trophy knockout fixture and so have at least one knockout fixture remaining. The institution/Playing Entity's 2nd Team had 10 league fixtures for the season and has played nine of these so far, so have one league fixture remaining. The 2nd Team have also won their first Conference Cup knockout fixture and so have at least one knockout fixture remaining.</p> <p>Player Z has, to date, been listed on the team sheet for the 1st Team in three league fixtures (50% of the 1st Team's total for the season) and for the 2nd Team in one league fixture which took place on the same day as the 1st Team's second league match which they did not play in. Player Z has not represented either team in a knockout fixture yet.</p> <p>Please note: Knockout competition fixtures are not counted in establishing majority/normality, but players must comply with REG 11.1 for team selection.</p>	<p>Yes, as they have not yet established a majority and also 'playing up' is always allowed.</p>	<p>Yes, as they have not yet established majority for the 1st Team at this stage. Should Player Y represent the 1st Team in one more league fixture, then they would become ineligible to represent the 2nd Team in their final league fixture.</p> <p>Their previous appearance for the 2nd Team was also within the regulations as they as an individual had not yet established majority whilst the institution/Playing Entity worked out which team they, and Player A who replaced them that week, should settle with.</p> <p><i>Please note: Exceptions may be possible in cases of 'Medical exemption' (REG 11.1.6) or where the relevant BUCS Sport Specific Regulations allow any variation.</i></p>
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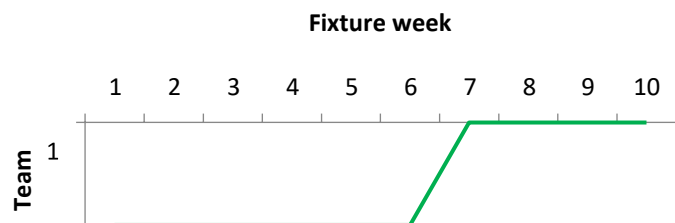
Playing up occasionally = OK



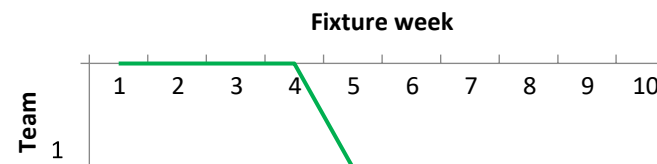
Playing down occasionally = NOT
OK



Playing up and staying up = OK



Playing down and staying
down = OK*



*As long as the individual has not established majority for the higher ranked team.

If you're unsure about team selection/player movement, a nominated Athletic Union representative should contact the BUCS Executive in advance of the fixture for more specific advice!