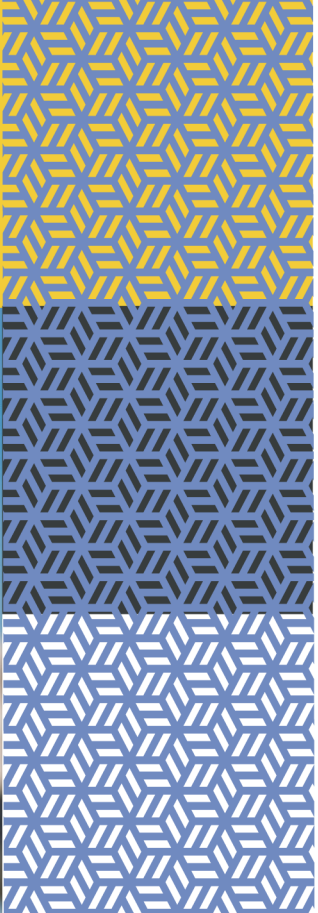
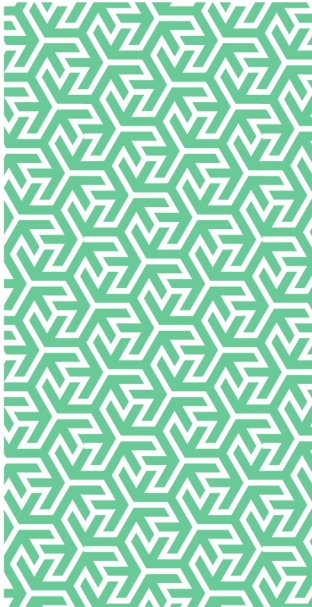


rmp

Risk control
Students – Sports Injuries



In partnership with



Students – Sports Injuries

Introduction

Universities offer countless possibilities and opportunities for students throughout their time at the chosen institution. These opportunities include the offer to participate in sport. Sports of all types can be on offer, including everything from American Football to Wind Surfing. Sports clubs and societies provide important opportunities for students to build social networks, improved physical performance, relaxation, self-confidence, and fitness. With sporting activities comes physical risk, however, if professionally managed then any risk of injury will be reduced.

Benefits of Sport

People who exercise regularly have a lower risk of developing many long-term conditions, such as heart disease, type 2 diabetes, stroke, and some cancers.

Research shows that physical activity can boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reducing risks from stress, clinical depression, dementia, and Alzheimer's disease.

Engaging in sport and exercise is encouraged within institutions not only for the health benefits described but also for social aspects within the student population. Developing life-long participation in sport provides profound benefits to individuals and to their communities.

Students can interact with sports and physical exercise in a number of ways, these include:

- The use of established sports facilities
- Membership of societies and clubs
- Taking part in events such as Varsity Competitions
- Part of their studies or research

Risk Assessments

Every institution needs to manage health and safety and control any hazards to employees and others. The adequacy of controls is identified during a risk assessment and there is a duty to ensure the risk assessment is suitable and sufficient. Any adverse incident will draw attention to the risk assessment to ensure it is suitable and sufficient.

All sporting activities and events will require a risk assessment being undertaken as this will enable suitable control measures to be identified. Identified controls may include, numbers of coaches, instructors or activity leaders, the type of equipment to be used, any training required and first aid arrangements that need to be in place.

Arrangements

Suitable arrangements need to be in place to ensure sporting activities are managed that encourage a culture of safety and injury prevention within any sporting activity. This would include regular safety inspections of any grounds and equipment and adherence to any applicable rules and regulations.

Coaches / Instructors

The level of training and qualifications required varies from sport to sport. However, it is likely that National Governing Bodies for the specific sport or activity will be able to assist on defining the levels that qualified coaches / instructors must meet. This level of qualification required should be included within the risk assessment undertaken to ensure that institutions establish and maintain these standards.

For sporting events, the risk assessment process will allow the organisers to establish the level of first aid cover that will be required. Organisers must ensure that the relevant first aid cover is suitable and sufficient. Understanding the types of injury that may occur will allow for the correct type of care to be provided. For example, in rugby head injuries do unfortunately occur from time to time and so having first aiders that maintain a knowledge of treating head injuries would potentially reduce the risks of serious or lasting injuries.

The appropriate level of first aid training should be identified, National Governing Bodies may provide help and support to establish the appropriate levels required.

Institutions may also require Disclosure and Barring Services (DBS) checks for coaches and instructors. Undertaking a DBS check is a way for institutions to check criminal records to help decide whether a person is suitable to work as a coach or instructor. This includes deciding whether it is suitable for them to work with children or vulnerable adults.

It is essential that training for all coaches and instructors is ongoing to enable them to remain up to date with latest guidelines and best practice.

Remote Locations

Sporting activities do not all take place within sports buildings as some may take place on playfields or grounds. Some institutions may have access to remote locations where sports activities take place. Planning to ensure that relevant arrangements are in place for emergency response is essential. Identifying the relevant first aid equipment will assist first aiders with their response to incidents. For example, will defibrillators be supplied or made available?

And if so, are they maintained in accordance with manufacturer's instructions?

First Aid Provision

First aid boxes should be inspected on a regular basis to ensure that they have sufficient contents and that the contents are in date. These inspections should be recorded. Identifying when first aid provisions are used is essential. Institutions should implement processes for regular checks to be conducted on all first aid boxes and replenishment undertaken as required.

Each sporting activity should have relevant first aid measures in place. Having immediate response for common sporting injuries, such as sprains, strains and fractures will enable better management of care for the injured person.

Guideline for recognising and managing head injuries, including concussions should be established where this risk is present.

Ensuring that rehabilitation and physiotherapy is available to support students' recovery and safe return to sporting activities will be beneficial. Identifying arrangements for supporting injured person with any psychological challenge associated with injuries, including access to counselling may assist with their recovery.

Outdoor Gyms

Institutions may install outdoor gym fitness equipment into their campuses which can be used by staff, students, and members of the public. Any installation must consider the following factors:

Equipment – the equipment should comply with relevant standards such as ISO EN16630.

Locations – having suitable layouts, surfacing, and waterlogging solutions. Security and visibility should also be considered.

Signage – suitable safety signage should be installed to inform user of the correct methods of use. Providing contact details in case of injury is recommended.

Maintenance – any equipment should have regular inspections and maintenance conducted to prevent injury from defective equipment.

Goalposts

Serious accidents have occurred that involved goalposts of all types and sizes. Both portable and fixed goalposts have been involved in causing serious injuries and in some cases resulting in fatalities. Goalposts for any sport should be

installed to an appropriate safety standard. There are specified standards for football, rugby, hockey, basketball etc.

To improve the safety of goalposts:

- Portable goalposts must be secured to the ground or other suitable structure(s). Portable goalposts must be erected and secured as directed by the manufacturer's instructions
- Goalposts must be always anchored whether in use or storage
- Goal-post sockets should be set in a suitable material as directed by the manufacturer's instructions
- Signage should be considered, instructing not to climb on or swing from the goalposts.
- Treat goalposts as assets, and label them accordingly.
- Undertake regular inspections to check safety and condition.
- Portable goalposts should not be left in place after use. They should be dismantled and stored securely.

- Nets should be secured using plastic hooks or suitable net grips or tape and not by metal cup hooks.

Attach appropriate padding to goalposts when required ensuring they are used during matches, training, and warm-up sessions.

Inspections should be conducted on playing fields or grounds to ensure no objects or items are present that could cause injury. For example, bottles, cans, broken glass, or stones. Checking the goalposts should be included in these inspections.

Records should be kept of any inspection and retained as per the institutions document retention policy.

It is recommended that inspections take place weekly and before any game or training activity taking place.

The following should be checked:

- Loose / missing nuts, bolts, pins, and other fixings
- That there is no movement when goalposts are in the sockets or anchoring points
- Missing net fittings or broken net cords
- Bent sections, sharp edges, or other damage to the goalposts
- All identification labels and instructions are attached and legible.

When repositioning goalposts the following checks should be undertaken:

- That anchors are secure, and the goalpost are firmly in position

- If any weights are used, ensure they are all present and positions are per manufacturer's instructions
- That there is any other damage

Annual / New Season Inspections

In addition to the checks listed above, the strength and stability of every goalpost should be checked in accordance with relevant British Standard and manufacturer's instructions.

Damaged Goalposts

If damage is identified through inspection or reports are received, then the goalposts should be immediately removed from use until the damage or defect is repaired. Any replacement part should be purchased from the original manufacturer or supplier. Any repairs or modifications to goalposts must be undertaken by the manufacturer or authorised agent.

Equipment

Any equipment provided as part of the sport/activity must be in good order, regular inspected and processes in place ensuring that any defective equipment is taken out of use.

Reporting of Incidents

Institutions must establish methods for reporting of incidents for damaged equipment, injuries to participants or staff. Understanding the levels of incidents that occur within an institution will allow for better planning and resource allocation to prevent or reduce the risks of reoccurrence. Some instances may require further notification to the relevant health and safety enforcing authority under the Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013¹ (RIDDOR). More information can be found on the Health and Safety Executive's website².

Conclusion

Participating in sports activities brings benefits to the individuals, the institution, and the community. Ensuring that sports activities are professionally managed and take place in safe environments with adequate arrangements in place will reduce the risk of adverse incidents occurring. It is essential that all those involved in delivering student sporting activities work together to minimise the risk of injuries and to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of participants to promote the benefits of sport and the overall student experience.

References

1. [The Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)
2. [Reportable incidents - RIDDOR - HSE](#)

Further information

For access to further RMP Resources you may find helpful in reducing your organisation's cost of risk, please access the RMP Resources or RMP Articles pages on our website. To join the debate follow us on our LinkedIn page.

Get in touch

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