

UKAD Call for Proposals: Investigating effective anti-doping education delivery to talented-level athletes

About UKAD

Protecting the right to participate in clean sport

UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) is the national organisation dedicated to confidence in clean sport. Every day, we are raising awareness of the issues through our extensive education and smart testing programme.

We help athletes to understand and follow the rules, and prosecute offenders.

Ultimately, we are working for everyone who loves sport – whether competing, training or spectating. Together, we’re creating an environment where all athletes know they can compete in the true spirit of sport.

Our role and remit

UKAD is responsible for ensuring sports bodies in the UK are compliant with the World Anti-Doping Code through implementation and management of the UK’s National Anti-Doping Policy.

Our functions include:

- a prevention through education programme
- intelligence-led athlete testing across more than 40 Olympic, Paralympic and professional sports
- investigations and exclusive results management authority for the determination of Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs)

Talent Project

At present, Talented athletes are defined within the World Anti-Doping Agency’s (WADA’s) International Standard for Education Guidelines as “athletes training regularly and committed to sport, identified as talented through some formal mechanism such as attending talent camps, or part of a talented development program”. Recent estimates suggest that between 100,000 - 150,000 athletes are currently engaged in various talent pathways across all sports in the UK. These

pathways differ significantly in structure depending on the sport, with athletes entering at a wide range of ages and developmental stages.

Typically, Talented athletes are on some form of performance pathway within their sport and can be subject to anti-doping rules. They are likely to go on to represent their country at national and international events where testing takes place.

National-Level Athletes (NLA), and Athlete Support Personnel (ASP) associated with them, should also be included within a National Anti-Doping Organisation's (NADO's) Education Pool. UKAD's ambition is to ensure we have a robust education offer at every stage of the athlete pathway. Whilst *ad hoc* education has been delivered to various talent pools, including youth Commonwealth/Olympic teams and requests from NGBs, a more risk-based and financially sustainable offer is required to ensure that a wider pool of talented athletes can be reached.

Call for Proposals

UKAD-funded evidence-based research will be undertaken to identify best practices in educating young people, with a particular focus on anti-doping education. It should also consider mainstream education pedagogy. This research will explore current trends and innovations in youth education to enhance learning effectiveness and engagement. The goal is to ensure that athletes within talent pathways receive impactful, evidence-based anti-doping education that supports their development and integrity in sport.

We are inviting applications of project proposals to address the following aim and objectives:

Aim: To investigate the most effective methods for delivering anti-doping education to talented-level athletes (aged 12–23), considering online and in-person pedagogical best practices and stakeholder perspectives across the UK talent pathway.

Objectives:

- Review pedagogical approaches to youth education across wider sectors and assess their relevance and applicability to anti-doping education, with consideration of whether differentiated approaches may be needed within the talented athlete population (aged 12–23), given the variation in age, cognitive development, and sporting context.
- Evaluate current anti-doping education provision for talented athletes and their support personnel across UK and international contexts.

- Identify gaps, risks, and opportunities in current education delivery across diverse athlete demographics.
- Develop recommendations for scalable, impactful education interventions tailored to the talent pathway.

Proposal Content

Requirements

We are expecting the successful proposal to address the objectives by answering the following research questions:

- What pedagogical approaches from other sectors are most effective in educating young people aged 12–23, and how might these be adapted to meet the varied developmental needs of talented-level athletes in anti-doping education
- How do talented athletes and their support personnel perceive current anti-doping education? What improvements do they suggest? In what ways might these relationships influence engagement with education, particularly among younger athletes within the talented population?
- What are the differences in education needs and delivery preferences across age groups, sports, and regions within the UK talent pathway?

We request that the design of the project includes:

Required Components

- Literature review of pedagogical methods relevant to youth anti-doping education.
- Focus groups with a group of talent-age athletes, incorporating diversity in sport, gender, ethnicity, and geography.
- Engagement with Talent Pathway managers across all home nations to understand regional nuances and potential alignment with existing education structures.
- Recommendations for education delivery models tailored to age, sport, and context.

Desirable Components

- Separate focus groups with Talent Pathway Athlete Support Personnel (ASP), including key influencers, incorporating diversity in sport, gender, ethnicity, and geography.

What UKAD can offer

To facilitate the research, UKAD can provide access to:

- NGB Anti-Doping Leads
- UKAD's Educator Delivery Network
- Home Nation Sport Council's talent pathway staff
- Universities and stakeholders in the talent pathway landscape such as BUCS and TASS
- Access to athletes through mechanisms such as the UKAD Athlete Commission
- Access to UKAD's Clean Sport Hub to obtain evaluation data
- Experience from UKAD's Education Team (and other teams as required).

Outputs required

Outputs:

- Interim findings & updates: Monthly (at a minimum)
- Literature review: Delivered by end of February 2026 to support ongoing work and inform subsequent stages of the project
- Draft final report: Delivered by end of April 2026
- Final report: Delivered 2 weeks post feedback from UKAD

Timescale and budget

We would like to work collaboratively with the successful applicant(s) to review and develop talented-athlete anti-doping education, meeting regularly to discuss progress.

The UKAD research team will include at least one member of staff from the Insight & Innovation team and one from the Education team. UKAD's level of involvement in the project would be dependent on the project design, determined by agreement between UKAD and the selected applicant's project team. Clear roles and responsibilities would be defined at the outset.

Project Start	January 2026
Literature Review	27 February 2026
Draft Report	30 April 2026
Final Report	1 June 2026

Budget

UKAD has up to £15k funding available for this project.

Please provide an itemised financial estimate for the delivery of this project, including any academic institution fees. Please also include financial fees/consultancy rate payable for any future collaborative work.

Proposal

Please provide your proposal to UKAD no later than 5pm on 24 November 2025. Please outline how you would meet your brief and include CVs of all the staff who would be working on this project with details of time spent by which staff member on each element of the project.

We also welcome joint proposals from a collaborative of researchers/academic institutions – please also demonstrate how this collaboration meets our need and how you envisage the work to be managed and delivered between the individual members.

We would be expecting the successful candidate to be in a position to start the project with immediate effect.

Lead contact

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