

UKAD Call for Proposals: Evaluating the psychosocial and cultural influences towards performance enhancement within Rugby League

About UK Anti-Doping

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 intelligence-led testing programmes.

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)

We are a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) which is accountable to Parliament through the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.

Created in December 2009, UKAD follows the World Anti-Doping Code (the Code). We work with a variety of stakeholders, including athletes, to protect the right to enjoy doping-free sport.

UKAD is an active participant in the global fight against doping in sport and recognises the need to take an international approach.

Rugby Football League

The Rugby Football League Limited (“RFL”) is the national governing body for the sport of Rugby League in England. The RFL is committed to and works closely with UKAD to achieve and champion clean sport across both the professional and the community game.

The RFL adopts the UK Anti-Doping Rules pursuant to its Operational Rules.

The RFL condemns doping as it is harmful to the core values of the sport and is damaging to players’ health and wellbeing. In addition, the fairness, reputation and integrity of the competition is affected. The RFL recognises that participants have a right to compete on a level playing field in a doping-free environment.

In order to protect the game against doping, the RFL works closely with UKAD and other relevant organisations in order to provide education, gather intelligence, administer results management, and carry out regular testing.

The RFL is committed to striving to improve attitudes towards doping, whether intentional or inadvertent within the sport of Rugby League. It is recognised that research, evaluation of real-life case examples and data are crucial to this, creating greater awareness, improved education and informing change with the ultimate aim of reducing the number of Anti-Doping Rule Violations within the sport of Rugby League.

Call for Proposals

Proposed project title: Evaluating the psychosocial and cultural influences towards performance enhancement within the top three tiers of Rugby League.

UKAD has partnered with The RFL to jointly commission research on the psychosocial and cultural influences towards performance enhancement within the specific context of the top three professional tiers of rugby league. For the reasons stated above, both RFL and UKAD believe a greater understanding of the unique contributing factors across each of these tiers is required. This would subsequently inform tailored interventions to enhance the effectiveness of preventative strategies within the sport.

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

Aim: To evaluate the psychosocial and cultural influences towards performance enhancement within the top three tiers of professional rugby league.

Objectives:

- Determine the moments of doping vulnerability within a professional rugby league player's career and the influences of support personnel
- Understand how anti-doping education and policy influences their attitudes/behaviour and how they feel it would be most effectively delivered
- Understand the cultural norms around doping/anti-doping and wider societal influences.

Proposal Content

Requirements

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

1. What are the performance enhancement attitudes, motivations and behaviours of professional-level players and support personnel? (Super League vs Championship vs League One)
2. How do these compare across the three professional-level tiers? What psychosocial and cultural influences towards performance enhancement exist within each tier?
3. How is anti-doping education perceived by professional-level players and support personnel? How might it be best delivered? (delivery format, content, frequency; compare each tier)
4. How do players and support personnel perceive the effectiveness of anti-doping testing? What element(s) do they perceive would have the greatest impact on deterrence and detection? (compare each tier)

We request that the design of the project includes:

Required:

- Assess performance enhancement attitudes, motivations and behaviours amongst players and support personnel across the top three tiers of rugby league

- Investigate the psychosocial and cultural influences towards performance enhancement amongst players and support personnel to determine the moments of greatest vulnerability/risk of doping
- Gather insights on how players and support personnel perceive anti-doping education and testing strategies to determine how these might be most effective in rugby league

Desirable:

- Design behavioural change interventions (for The RFL and UKAD) that address the identified moments of vulnerability
- Propose tailored anti-doping education material or resources

What we can offer

To facilitate the research, UKAD and The RFL can provide:

- Access to current and retired players and support personnel within the top three tiers of rugby league
- Opportunity for co-design on data collection methods
- Experience and expertise from RFL management and UKAD staff
- Continuous collaborative involvement through regular project team meetings and/or correspondence

Timescale and budget

Project start: November 2024

Interim Findings: Monthly (at a minimum)

Draft Report: 6 months from start of project

Final Report: 6 weeks post feedback from RFL and UKAD

Budget: Up to £15K

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 further collaborative work, if required, for intervention design and evaluation.

Proposal

Please provide your proposal to UKAD no later than 5pm Monday 30 September. Proposals should be submitted via email to insight@ukad.org.uk

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.

The UKAD and The RFL research team may need to short-list researchers for further discussion on their proposals before final selection. Application outcomes shall be communicated by the end of October, with the successful researcher/team being required to enter into a Research Agreement contract before commencing work and transfer of any funds.

Lead contact

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