

Scottish Student Sport
Conference
2026

Digital Programme

10th - 11th June

University of St. Andrews



Welcome to Conference 2026!

It is a pleasure to return to the University of St. Andrews for SSS Conference 2026 - our first time here since 2018.

The agenda has been designed to cover a range of topics which should prove insightful to lots of you across the sector.

It's great to see plenty of our members presenting with **RGU, Dundee & Angus College, the University of Dundee, Glasgow City College, Edinburgh Napier University** and **GCU** all represented.

Full information on each breakout session can be found in this programme. Please ensure you select your sessions before we get underway.

We remain indebted to Headline Partner **Technogym**, Official Kit Suppliers **Canterbury** and **BE Uniforms**, and **Playwaze** who join us today - please check out their stalls!

Should you have any issues, please seek out a member of SSS staff who will be on hand to offer assistance.

We hope you have a brilliant experience at Conference 2026!





SCOTTISH STUDENT SPORT

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Agenda - Day 1

Time	Session	Speaker
10:00	Arrival & Registration	
11:00	Welcome & Opening Address	Stew Fowlie & Clare Peddie
11:15	Keeping the Ball in the Air: 40 Years in Student Sport	Paul McPate
12:00	Partner Breakouts Pick 1 to attend See Programme for details	Technogym Ops Pal BUCS
12:45	Lunch & Activities	
14:00	Creating Conversations Through Connections	Danielle Grieve
14:30	Afternoon Breakouts Pick 2 to attend See Programme for details	Kaden Houghton Josh Darley Lauren Simpson Waiyin Hatton
16:00	In Conversation with Scotland's Sporting Leaders	Calum Gauld, Judith McCleary Chris Purdie
16:45	Round Up & Evening Activities	

Agenda - Day 2

Time	Session	Speaker
09:00	Arrival & Registration	
10:00	Positioning Sport at the Heart of the Institution	Prof. Susan Brown
10:45	AM Breakouts Pick 2 to attend See Programme for details	Alison Cox MBE Phoebe Moncur & Stew Fowlie Eilidh Stewart
12:30	Lunch & Activities	
13:30	In Play: Tackling the Big Challenges in Student Sport	SSS Staff do 'Unconference'
15:00	Break	
15:15	From Exclusion to England Captain	Sam Gough
16:00	Round Up & Close	

Day 1 Main Room

Paul McPate | University of Dundee

Keeping the Ball in the Air: 40 Years in Student Sport

Drawing on more than 40 years in student sport Paul will share the lessons, relationships and defining moments that have shaped both his career and the wider sector.

From adapting to an evolving sector to recognising the lasting impact of creating opportunities for others, the session will encourage attendees to reflect on what truly matters in sport and leadership, and what experiences from the past can teach us about shaping the future.

Danielle Grieve | University of Aberdeen

Creating Connections through Conversations

This interactive networking session will provide delegates with the opportunity to build new connections and strengthen relationships with colleagues from across the student sport sector.

Alongside creating space for conversation and community-building, the session will also encourage the development of mentoring and peer-support relationships across the sector. Be prepared to get involved!

Day 1 Main Room

Chris Purdie and Friends In Conversation with Scotland's Sporting Leaders

This fireside-style panel session will bring together senior leaders from across SGBs for an open and reflective conversation on the role of student sport.

Hosted by our very own Chris Purdie, the discussion will explore the opportunities, challenges and priorities shaping the sector, alongside the role student sport plays within Scotland's wider sporting landscape.

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Partner Breakouts

Please pick 1x session to attend

David Howatson | Technogym
Burnout: Being Fit for Purpose

Based on the latest research into the syndrome of burnout, David from Conference Headline Partners Technogym will be discussing the impact in the context of fitness professionals and sports coaches.

Craig Campbell | Ops Pal
What Good Looks Like Managing Operations

Running a leisure site safely involves a staggering volume of tasks, risk assessments, and procedures. You already know the sheer effort it takes. The challenge isn't doing the work – it is proving the work is consistently getting done.

Join Ops Pal to learn how to know things are okay, rather than just thinking they are.

Molly Byrne | BUCS
Participation in Focua: National Trends and Parasport Perspectives

This interactive session will explore emerging insights and trends from UK-wide participation data gathered through BUCS Play, alongside a focused deep dive into findings from the recent Para & Disability Sport Survey.

Bringing together national perspectives, lived experiences and sector-wide challenges, the session will examine what the data tells us about engagement, inclusion and the future of student sport participation.

PM Breakouts

Please pick 2x sessions to attend

Kaden Houghton | Robert Gordon University **The Role of Sport in Transitions**

This session draws on Kaden's MRes programme, exploring the transition to university and the role of physical activity in supporting psychological wellbeing.

It will consider the challenges students face when entering higher education, including social adjustment, identity, and connection, and position sport and physical activity as key enablers within this transition improving overall student experience..

Josh Darley | Liverpool John Moores University **Building Belonging in Competitive Teams**

This session draws on student-led research on the role of student sports team in creating a sense of belonging. Combined with research into practice from a year as VP Activities at Liverpool John Moore University Student Union, Josh will explore how sports teams can enhance but also negate a sense of belonging within their internal structures.

In providing real life examples from their year in role, Josh outlines the tangible changes that have been made to create positive club cultures through the enhanced role of student leaders.

PM Breakouts

Please pick 2x sessions to attend

Lauren Simpson | Dundee & Angus College
Using Sport for Social Change: The Positive Masculinity Project

This session explores how sport can be used as a powerful platform to engage young men in meaningful conversations around critical social issues. Lauren's sessions throughout a dedicated programme explored how sport could be an entry point for dialogue that challenges attitudes, builds awareness and encourages positive behaviour change.

Attendees will gain insight into approaches such as these and consider how they can equally be applied within their own programmes and communities.

Waiyin Hatton & Jordan Dawson | SSS Equality Action Group
Turning Ambition into Action: Creating the SSS Equality Strategy

This interactive session will bring members together to help shape the future direction and delivery of SSS' Equality Strategy. Building on existing progress and recognising the challenges still ahead, the session will focus on how collective action, shared responsibility and meaningful engagement can drive long-term change.

Designed as an active and participatory session, this workshop will provide members with the opportunity to contribute directly to the development of future strategy and help shape a shared vision for equality, inclusion and belonging.

Day 2 Main Room

Prof. Susan Brown | Edinburgh Napier University The Collision Engine: Sport as a Strategic Catalyst

Opening Day 2, Professor Susan Brown will explore her role as University Head of Sport Engagement and what this means for Edinburgh Napier University. As the University's first post-holder in this area, her role brings together sport, research and student experience into a single, strategic vision—positioning sport as a key driver of innovation, inclusion and external impact.

Bringing together student experience, research, partnerships and civic engagement, this role represents a step-change in how sport can contribute to institutional priorities. Susan will reflect on what it means to position sport as a driver of innovation, inclusion and impact—sharing insights into how this approach is shaping culture, strengthening connections, and opening up new opportunities across the university and beyond.

In Play: Tackling the Big Challenges in Student Sport

Our 'unconference' format puts you in the driving seat. Just like in sport, this is where tactics are tested, challenges are faced head-on, and team-mates come together to find solutions in real time.

Rather than a fixed agenda, this session is shaped by you — our members. You'll bring the topics, set the priorities, and lead the conversations that matter most across the student sport landscape. Come ready to play your part — bring a challenge, an idea, or simply your experience. The strength of this session comes from the collective knowledge in the room. The more you put in, the more you, and the sector, will get out.

Day 2 Main Room

Sam Gough | England Captain From Exclusion to Inclusion

In this closing keynote, Sam Gough will share her journey through sport, education and leadership as captain of England's first ever blind women's football squad. Drawing on her lived experience as a visually impaired athlete, Sam will reflect on the barriers she encountered in accessing sport, the transformative impact of inclusive opportunities, and the growing visibility of blind women's football on the international stage.

From navigating exclusion within school sport to representing England and advocating for the future of the women's game, Sam's story highlights the power of sport to build confidence, identity and belonging. Her keynote will explore themes of resilience, representation and systemic change, challenging institutions and organisations to think differently about inclusion and access in sport.

AM Breakouts

Please pick 2x sessions to attend

Alison Cox MBE | Glasgow Clyde College

Stay Well and Thrive: Using Insight and Evidence to Drive Change

This session, will share how Glasgow Clyde College has developed a whole-college approach to student wellbeing, using induction, digital engagement and data-informed practice to create a more supportive and connected student experience.

Drawing on the College's "Stay Well and Thrive" initiative, the session will explore how wellbeing has been embedded from enrolment onwards through accessible digital resources, proactive support and institution-wide collaboration. Alison will explore the role that data, insight and evidence can play in demonstrating the value and impact of wellbeing-focused work to senior leaders and decision makers.

Phoebe Moncur & Stew Fowlie | Robert Gordon University & SSS Turning Ambition into Action: Creating the SSS Equality Strategy

This session will examine how different approaches to funding student sport can be developed and delivered within institutions. The session will showcase RGU Sport Training and Education Programme (STEP) as a practical example of how targeted investment can support participation, development and wider student outcomes.

This will be followed by an overview of the Summer of Sport funding initiative and the journey to delivery, offering a broader sector perspective on how funding can be used to enhance opportunities and drive impact.

AM Breakouts

Please pick 2x sessions to attend

Eilidh Stewart | Glasgow Caledonian University

Stay Well and Thrive: Using Insight and Evidence to Drive Change

This session will explore how student insight and institutional policy can work together to shape the future of Wednesday afternoons across tertiary education. The first part of the session will showcase a SSS student internship project examining student perceptions, experiences and expectations of Wednesday afternoons, providing valuable insight into students experiences.

Building on this, the session will then explore a policy-focused approach to creating change in this space from GCU, considering how institutions can respond to evolving student needs while balancing sport, wellbeing, academic commitments and wider engagement opportunities.

Together, the session will offer both an evidence-informed student perspective and a strategic discussion on how Wednesday afternoons can be reimaged to better support participation, belonging and student life.