

RESEARCH ASSOCIATE – Empowering young elite athletes: advancing voice and participation in the Olympic movement through children’s rights.

Part-time (0.1 FTE, 3.7 hours per week); Fixed-term until 31st August 2027

Job Ref: REQ250711

As part of the University’s ongoing commitment to redeployment, please note that this vacancy may be withdrawn at any stage of the recruitment process if a suitable redeployee is identified.

Internationally recognised for its contribution to the study of sport, exercise and health, the School has wide-ranging expertise, encompassing such diverse areas as biomechanics, medicine, molecular and cellular biology, nutrition, pedagogy, psychology, physiology, sociology, economics and sport management.

The School has an active and ambitious plan to grow capacity and influence through developments as part of the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine, Loughborough in London, and StemLab.

The School is extremely proud to have held an [Athena Swan Silver Award](#) since 2013, recognising the commitment and work of the School in addressing gender inequalities in Science, and to improving career progression for female academics.

The School is committed to ensuring that female students and staff are able to achieve their full potential, and provides a flexible and open working culture to enable staff to maintain a work-life balance.

We support our Athena SWAN initiatives by investing in:

- Bespoke leadership programmes to encourage and build confidence in women to take leadership roles.
- Working lunches, where needed, to enable meetings to be held between 10.00am and 4.00pm (as per our Silver Action Plan).
- Monthly coffee mornings which provide opportunities for networking and develop a sense of community within the School.

We also welcome applications from those who are looking to work part-time.

Research and Innovation

Research and Innovation within the School is characterised by excellence and breadth, and its quality was recognised in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework where Loughborough University ranked top for research power (GPA x volume) in Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism. Loughborough University has also placed Number 1 in the QS world ranking for sport-related subjects for eight consecutive years (2017-2025, every year since the category was introduced). A broad range of social and natural sciences contribute to the School's research and innovation activity which is organised within three overlapping themes:

- **Sport performance**, understanding and supporting the enhancement of athletes’ performance in competitive sport;
- **Lifestyle for health and well-being**, encompassing research across several disciplines with the common goal of facilitating healthy living and ageing across the lifespan; and
- **Sport, business and society**, exploring how individuals, communities and organisations engage with and facilitate sport and exercise opportunities.

The School’s research themes articulate in particular with the Sport and Exercise Beacon and the Health and Wellbeing Global Challenge which are key elements of the University’s [CALIBRE](#) (Collective Ambition at Loughborough for Building Research Excellence) framework.

Project Summary

Project: Empowering young elite athletes: advancing voice and participation in the Olympic movement through children's rights.

We are looking for a Research Associate to work on our project, funded by International Olympic Committee (IOC). The project focuses on elite youth (under 18) athletes' voices, as one of the priority areas of the IOC, by putting young elite athletes at the centre of its research design and process. Conceptually, the project is based on children's rights of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the right to be heard under Article 12 of the Convention, a key general cross-cutting principle and participation right standard, is at the centre of the conceptualisation of 'voice' in the project. The project will utilise the Lundy model of child participation as its analytical framework to guide the project. Through these conceptual lenses, the project aims to critically investigate how existing engagement mechanisms by sport organisations not only providing spaces but also facilitating influence of young athlete voice in decision-making. The project involves a robust qualitative research design, incorporating semi-structured interviews, and focus groups as methods, to explore the nuanced perspectives and experiences of young elite athletes and the representatives of sport organisations concerning athlete voice in the Olympic movement. Overall, the project aims to advance young elite athlete voice to promote and lead to a more inclusive and athlete-centred sporting environments.

The ideal candidate will have a research and practice background in sport and children's rights; knowledge of the research with children; a capacity to work on their own initiative and in teams; and a capacity to work to deadlines.

Job Description

Job Family & Grade: Specialist and Supporting Academic (Research) Grade 6

Job Purpose: To jointly manage, develop and deliver this project, funded by IOC, in accordance with the above requirements.

Job Duties:

To work closely with the Principal Investigator and Co-Investigators to ensure the successful delivery of the project, including the following:

- To jointly manage all aspects of this project in accordance with its principal- and co-investigators.
- To lead the day-to-day pursuit and achievement of the main aims of the project.
- To undertake continuous liaison across principal- and co-investigators and IOC.
- To undertake desk research to identify and develop current landscape of athlete voice research to assist and guide with developing the project.
- To lead the research by designing qualitative methodology that will involve interviews and focus groups.
- To conduct the research to collect empirical data that will underpin the outputs of the projects.
- To develop and support the project outputs
- To coordinate one-day project symposium at Loughborough University.
- Uphold high ethical research standards, maintain confidentiality, and ensure that data protection requirements are met at all times.
- Engage in training programmes in the University (or elsewhere) that are consistent with the needs and aspirations of the project and those of the School, including any training relevant to the administration of the proposed project.
- Undertake other duties as may be reasonably requested and that are commensurate with the nature and grade of the post.

Points to Note:

The purpose of this job description is to indicate the general level of duties and responsibility of the post. The detailed duties may vary from time to time without changing the general character or level of responsibility entailed.

Special Conditions:

All staff have a statutory responsibility to take reasonable care of themselves, others and the environment and to prevent harm by their acts or omissions. All staff are therefore required to adhere to the University's Health, Safety and Environmental Policy & Procedures.

All staff should hold a duty and commitment to observing the University's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy and procedures at all times. Duties must be carried out in accordance with relevant Equity, Diversity and Inclusion legislation and University policies/procedures.

Successful completion of probation will be dependent on attendance at the University's mandatory courses which include Belonging and Inclusion and, where appropriate, Recruitment and Selection.

Organisational Responsibility:

Reports to Dr Serhat Yilmaz, Principal Investigator

Person Specification

Your application will be reviewed with respect to meeting the essential and desirable criteria listed below. Your application will be reviewed against the essential and desirable criteria listed below. Applicants are strongly advised to explicitly state and evidence how they meet each of the essential (and desirable) criteria in their application. Stages of assessment are as follows:

- 1 – Application
- 2 – Test/Assessment Centre/Presentation
- 3 – Interview

ESSENTIAL

Area	Criteria	Stage
Experience	Experience in the sport for development field.	1,2,3
	Knowledge of sport for development programmes and initiatives.	1,2,3
	Experience of working with NGOs in the sport for development field.	1,3
Skills and abilities	Ability to effectively communicate with individuals and organisations to aid project development and recruitment	1,2,3
	Ability to keep up-to-date with knowledge and understanding in the sport for development field.	1,3
	Good time management, organisation, and interpersonal skills and the ability to work to tight deadlines	1,3
	Ability to work remotely and flexibly and use initiative to drive projects forward according to their objectives and timelines.	1,3
	Competence in developing and writing reports.	1,3
	Oral communication skills sufficient to be able to address audiences clearly and effectively.	1,3
	To organise, attend and contribute to relevant meetings.	1,3
	Ability to work as part of a team and to collaborate with others.	1,3
Training	Willingness to undertake appropriate further training and to adopt new procedures as and when required.	1,3
	Ability or willingness to learn how to effectively communicate/present research questions, ideas, analyses and findings to both scientific and non-scientific audiences.	1,2,3
Qualifications	PhD (or near completion) in sport for development or related area.	1
Other	Commitment to observing the University's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion policy at all times	3

DESIRABLE

Area	Criteria	Stage
Experience	Experience in conducting research in sport for development	1,3
	Experience of working with different stakeholders in the sport for development field	1,3
	Experience in researching and/or implementing training in sport for development	1,3
	Experience in managing externally funded research projects	1,3
	Experience working with external partners	1,3
Skills and abilities	Skills in working with diverse groups on collaborative initiatives	1,3

Conditions of Service

This part-time post is offered on a fixed-term contract until 31st August 2027, within the *Specialist and Supporting Academic (Research)* job family at Grade 6 (from £35,116 per annum pro rata). Starting salary to be confirmed on offer of appointment.

The appointment will be subject to the University's normal [Terms and Conditions of Employment](#) for staff on Grade 6 and above.

The University is committed to enabling staff to maintain a healthy work-home balance and has a number of [family-friendly policies](#).

We also offer an on-campus nursery with subsidised places, subsidised places at local holiday clubs and a childcare voucher scheme (further details are available at: [Childcare Support](#)).

In addition, the University is supportive, wherever possible, of flexible working arrangements. We strive to create a culture that supports equity and celebrates diversity throughout the campus. The University holds a Bronze [Athena SWAN](#) award which recognises the importance of support for women at all stages of their academic career.

Loughborough University is committed to allowing its employees to work [dynamically](#) with a combination of working on campus and remotely, where possible. This has been identified as a role that could work dynamically and, if successful, your line manager will discuss these informal arrangements with you. Please note that there is a general expectation that the successful candidate will spend the majority of time working on the Loughborough campus.