

STUDY GUIDE

LONG-TERM TALENT DEVELOPMENT IN AN ELITE FOOTBALL ACADEMY

Organised by
Universidad de Cantabria

1. IDENTIFYING DATA.		
• Course Name.	LONG-TERM TALENT DEVELOPMENT IN AN ELITE FOOTBALL ACADEMY	
• Coordinating University.	Universidad de Cantabria	
• Partners Involved.	Real Racing Club de Santander	
• Course Field(s).	Sport Science; Psychology; Physical Therapy; Education	
• Related Study Programme.	N/A	
• ISCED Code.	[Indicate the International Standard Classification of Education that is used internationally as a reference for organising education programs and related qualifications by levels and fields]	
• SDG.	Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being; Goal 4: Quality Education	
• Study Level.	N/A	
• EUNICE Key Competencies	Problem solving Teamworking Communication Self-management Cognitive flexibility Digital competence Technical competence Global intercultural competence	GREEN YELLOW YELLOW GREEN GREEN N/A RED RED

• Number of ECTS credits allocated.	0.4 ECTS Credits
• Mode of Delivery.	Online self-study
• Language of Instruction.	English
• Course Dates.	11 January – 29 January, 2027
• Precise Schedule of the Lectures.	During the weeks of the Course, there will be one Video-Lecture every other week and one Question-and-Answer session every other week

• Key Words.	Talent Development; Youth Development; Growth and Maturation Effects; Safeguarding Children; Football Learning
• Catchy Phrase.	Because talent is scarce, we cannot afford talent loss
• Main Targeted Audience.	Practitioners working with young athletes, especially footballers; this may include sport coaches, strength and conditioning coaches, physical therapists, nutritionists, psychologists, doctors, and designated safeguarding officers

• Prerequisites and co-requisites.	Content-wise, the level required is having completed Secondary Education Language-wise, students must speak English at an intermediate (B1) level at least
• Number of students that can attend the course.	50

2. CONTACT DETAILS.

• Department.	Department of Education
• Name of Lecturer.	Hector GARCIA RODICIO
• E-mail.	hector.garciarodicio@uncan.es
• Other Lecturers.	Gonzalo SILIO SAIZ (gsilio@realracingclub.es) Rafael SELLES VERGARA (rselles@realracingclub.es)

3. COURSE CONTENT.

The Course analyses the conditions that have to be met in order for young athletes to fully develop their talent, based on the scientific evidence available and on the experience of an Elite Football Academy. These conditions are related to main three areas: basic psychological needs, social and emotional human development, and growth, maturation, and injury prevention. Practitioners in an Elite Football Academy will provide the contents, design the learning activities, and assess learning outcomes. Specifically, a designated safeguarding officer will provide the Module related to basic psychological needs, a psychologist will provide the Module related to social and emotional human development, and the coordinator of the department of wellbeing will provide the Module related to growth, maturation, and injury prevention.

4. LEARNING OUTCOMES.

The student will learn the current framework and policies regarding safeguarding children in sports
The student will be able to prevent, detect, and intervene in cases of child maltreatment
The student will learn how children and adolescents develop socially and emotionally
The student will be able to promote social and emotional learning in young athletes

The student will learn how growth and maturation status relate to injury risk
The student will be able to detect growth spurs and/ or maturation velocities and make decisions accordingly to prevent injuries.

5. OBJECTIVES.

To understand the basic psychological needs every child has and how to provide them
To understand how children and adolescents develop socially and emotionally and how to promote such development
To understand how growth spurs and maturation velocities relate to injury risk and make decisions accordingly

6. COURSE ORGANISATION.

UNITS/MODULES

- | | |
|----|---|
| 1. | Basic psychological needs: safeguarding young athletes. Types of child maltreatment, effects of child maltreatment, indicators of maltreatment, maltreatment prevention, intervention. |
| 2. | Social and emotional development: promoting talent development. Expertise, intrinsic motivation, self-esteem, emotional regulation, social skills. |
| 3. | Growth and maturation: load management and injury prevention. Most prevalent injuries in youth football, growth spurs, maturation status, methods to estimate peak height velocity and maturation rate, best practices in managing training load in different developmental stages. |

LEARNING RESOURCES AND TOOLS.

Each Module will be accompanied with an Executive Summary of the contents and two-three key scientific papers as a backup

PLANNED LEARNING ACTIVITIES AND TEACHING METHODS.

Video-lectures; Question-And-Answer Sessions; Case-Based Learning; Multiple-Choice Exams

7. ASSESSMENT METHODS, CRITERIA AND PERIOD.

Each Module will have a Video-Lecture and backup documents the students will have to study in a self-paced manner. For each Module, the students will have to solve a case-based learning activity and a multiple-choice exam. The week after the Video-Lecture is released there will be an online Question-and-Answer session. Both the activities and the exams will have to be completed to the end of the eight-week program.

The Course is non-graded: the students will only get a Pass/Fail final assessment.

OBSERVATIONS.

8. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND TEACHING MATERIALS.

Guellich et al 2025. Recent discoveries on the acquisition of the highest levels of human performance
<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.adt7790>

Liu et al 2025. Basic psychological need support, need satisfaction, and autonomous motivation in coach-athlete relationships: A systematic review and meta-analysis
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/17479541251400621>

Sullivan et al 2023. Methods to predict the timing and status of biological maturation in male adolescent soccer players: A narrative systematic review
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10490883/>

9. OTHER COMMENTS (IF ANY).