“This is a fascinating piece of research and really insightful and informative. The survey and partnership we have had with the Uni has been brilliant.”

- CEO Scottish Premier League Football Club 2022

“Thank you very much. I have thoroughly enjoyed these past six weeks and the University of Edinburgh is a place where I am looking at going to study.”

- Football More than a Game Student from Brazil, Future Learn, 2023

“The amount of knowledge received through this course was huge. Not that it was overwhelming to follow the proposed weeks, the course is well dimensioned. But it expands one’s knowledge and understanding of the dimensions of the game, so it could be more than a game. A very nice experience form beginning till end.”

- Football More than a Game Student from USA, Coursera, 2023

“Following the publication of the report Sport for Mental Health at the WISH Conference in Doha 2022 by the University of Edinburgh and an emerging paper looking at the close links between sport, climate change and mental health, it is clearer than ever that sport has the potential to be a powerful platform for addressing these broad issues through its unique global reach and the power to unify people and cultures through a universal language.”

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“The 7th Debate will further highlight and raise awareness of the role of the Commonwealth Secretariat, and its hosting partner the University of Edinburgh, as a global thought leader in SDP policy”.

- Commonwealth Secretariat 2023

“The players are buzzing about their future, how things in school don’t seem as dry or unimportant as they used to.”

- Educated Pass parent 2023

“The Academy of Sport is unique. Its researchers perform cutting edge, rigorous scholarly work on a wide range of topics on sport. It brings together scholars from around the world to develop projects that enhance the role sport plays, e.g., battling racism, sexism, and poverty. It has created innovative community programs that increase access to education and democratize learning.”

- Visiting Professor 2020
University of Edinburgh Academy of Sport 2022-2023 Highlights

- Football More than a Game becomes First Dual MOOC offered by Edinburgh University [Future Learn and Coursera].
- More than 3,000 learners take inaugural run of Football more than a Game [Coursera].
- Partnering Commonwealth Secretariat to run 7th Commonwealth Debate Sport and Sustainable Development - London.
- Co-hosting World Innovation Summit for Health – Qatar.
- 18,380 hits on FC Barcelona Website.
- 52 **Sport Podcasts** on global and local issues and voices.
- 61 **Sport Matters** evidence-based blogs on sport.
- Supporting Generation Amazing Qatar World Cup Legacy Developments.
- New Honorary Professors and PhD students.
- Members supporting the creation of 2 new Olympic centres.
- Co-leadership Eric Liddell Community 2024 Celebrations.
- Advocacy briefs calling for greater equality in Girls and Women’s sport – UK and Canadian Parliaments.
- Sport, Climate Change and Mental Health briefing/policy reports.
- UK Sport and Foreign Policy Green Paper.
- Partnership with the Homeless world Cup Foundation.
- Supporting company formation to advance data analytics in sport.
- Hosting a dedicated Gaelic sports website.

**ACADEMY OF SPORT | IMPACT, STUDY AND DIALOGUE**

2022-2023 was another remarkable year for AOS as our members and associates helped consolidate our position as a bespoke international think tank on sport, supporting communities locally and globally. The following provides a brief insight into our activity, partnerships, research, and open knowledge exchange in and with communities over the last year.

**EDINBURGH GLOBAL**

Sport is a space that facilitates international engagement. Maximizing the contribution of sport to sustainable development, peace, diplomacy, social justice, and human rights has long been a human imperative but there is still much more we can do to enable sport’s international UN mandate, foster common good and realize the international reach of our Edinburgh Global activity through sport.

**Sustainable Development Goals**

Our leadership in the creation of research informed sports MOOCs continues to enable access to education through sport. *Sport and the Sustainable Development Goals* (Banda; Jarvie; Murray) reached 5,400 learners this year.

Quick guide to Academy of Sport  
#AOSsportingsolutions #AOSsportingoutcomes
Our partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat to deliver the 7th Commonwealth debate on sport meant that more than 450 representatives of government, leaders in the sport and development field, policy makers, intergovernmental organisations, academics, students, media and the Commonwealth family of organisations, across 56 countries, were made more aware of the Commonwealth and Edinburgh’s role as a thought leader in SDP and broader issues linked to human rights.

Academy of Sport members Liz Grant, Walker Ross, Corinne Reid and Grant Jarvie joined Baroness Scotland KC in Marlborough House to help host the 2023, 7th Commonwealth Debate on sport. Dr Walker was part of the winning team that argued for the motion that “A compassionate sports sector should enable the charge for a healthy mind, body and planet”. The debate was supported by the International Platform for Sport and Development servicing over 500,000 unique users.
**Sport, Human Rights and Mega Sports Events**

Sport, Human Rights and Mega Sports Events: In 1975 the world held about 160 events per year. This has now grown to about 2,300 per year. In March 2023 we hosted a talk by David Grevemberg CBE, Director with the Centre for Sport and Human Rights, who argued that regardless of the context, the trust, legitimacy and credibility of whatever value is generated, be that economic, social or environmental, depends on whether people’s human rights have been exploited, violated or infringed upon in the generation of such value. The proposition is explored further in our sports podcast Sports Events Legacy and Rights. Our research has also supported The Routledge Handbook of Mega Sporting Events and Human Rights to be published later this year.

**International Evidence and Advocacy for Sport and Mental Health**

Mental health has become a shadow pandemic of COVID-19. Annually more than 750,000 people, many of them young, take their lives. Mental health is the foundation of a flourishing world. A credible roadmap for global and local solutions requires four elements: (i) reach, including to marginalized communities; (ii) potential for growth and scaled-up solutions; (iii) evidence of effectiveness; and (iv) potency in addressing social and ecological determinants driving the mental health tsunami. Sport is arguably the only platform that can address all four. Partnering with the Global Health Academy, WISH, and University of Toronto our evidence based report, Sport for Mental Health: A Global Strengths Based Change System (Reid, Grant, Kerr, Jarvie, Brockett, Morris, Banda, Murray, Almuhammad, Tamminen, Reardon, Simpson) called on governments, sports authorities, and the wider sporting community to maximize the scale and reach of sport to advance mental health benefits for communities.

![Sir Mo Farah helping to launch Sport and Mental Health Report in Doha- October 2022](image_url)

**University of Toronto**

Our partnership with the University of Toronto continues to flourish since its inception in 2014. The complexity of today’s challenges, requires us to seek out complementary expertise from scholars and communities in other fields, other parts of the university and other quality partners whether they be international or local.
Our close association with the University of Toronto has this year, for example, supported research and advocacy efforts to shift the dial on (i) Sport and Mental Health; (ii) Sport, Youth and Covid and (iii) advocacy for closing the equity gap around women and girls sport in Canada and the United Kingdom.

**Sport and the Environments**

There is a global shift with the expectation that individuals, businesses, communities and governments should be accountable for their climate impact including the sports industry. Members have been active influencing the debate, policy, and being part of networks including the Commonwealth Network and 2023 debate (Ross, Reid, Grant) and a Sports for Nature: Research Opportunities webinar alongside partners at the United Nations Environment Programme and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (Ross).

**Sport, Youth and Covid**

Funding from the joint University of Edinburgh and Toronto collaborative research programme enabled the appointment of 3 research assistants (Aubin, Simpson, Walker). The research in year one enabled a systematic review of the impact of Covid on Youth and Sport in Canada and Scotland. Canadian youth sport during the pandemic highlighted inequalities in individuals and the organisations that they represent. Intersectional inequalities surrounding income level, race, and geographical location highlighted existing issues of inclusivity and affordability within sport. Whilst Covid-19 presented new challenges which forced drastic changes to Scotland’s sporting landscape, it also magnified and worsened pre-existing inequalities and issues, especially societies socio-economic gap. A second year of funding has been released to enable more granular examination of the specific ways in which sports organisations responded to Covid-19 and Youth Sport in Canada and Scotland.

**Challenging Sports Systems**

Through our research, evidence, advocacy, and networking there has been a sustained effort to enable the building of better sports systems. This remains work in progress. Submissions were made to both Canadian and UK Parliaments. The report submitted by our Toronto partners and Academy of Sport associates (Kidd, Donnelly, Kerr) to the Canadian Government contained 10 recommendations including that (i) Sports organizations at all levels in Canada adopt and enforce the Universal Code of Conduct to Prevent and Address Maltreatment in Sports; (ii) The Office of the Sport Integrity Commissioner support participants at all levels of Canadian sports; (iii) Canada establish legal protections for children in sports, along lines recommended at the 5th Global Conference on the Elimination of Child Labour; (iv) 1% of the national and provincial health budgets be devoted to ‘sport for all’ and (v) The financial structures of Canadian sport be completely realigned to realize the equal weight given to participation and excellence set out in the Physical Activity and Sport Act and Canadian Sport Policies 1.0 and 2.0.

**The Edinburgh and Toronto Public Symposia and Lectures**

The series was established to open access to research and education and contribute to critical dialogue about sport, physical activity, kinesiology, exercise science and physical education. From Human Rights to Human Physiology **Sports Podcasts** brings you access to more than 50 voices from experts around the world.

**International Reach through Football**

Learners from the following countries enrolled on Football More than a Game United Kingdom; India; United States of America; Egypt; Nigeria; China; Brazil; Mexico; Australia; France; Turkey; Pakistan; Italy; Russia; Spain; Germany; Ireland; South Africa; Canada; Indonesia; Ghana; Netherlands; Ukraine; United Arab Emirates and Colombia.

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Quick guide to Academy of Sport
#AOSportingsolutions #AOSsportingoutcomes
Australia- UK Dialogue

In today’s world, given geopolitical and economic pressures on resources, there is a need to consider realistically what countries and communities can do independently and also where cooperation would be beneficial. The role of sport in delivering soft power, sports diplomacy and advancing trade, business, and influence has grown but still to be convincingly evidenced. Such an observation emerged from the sports diplomacy symposia co-hosted with the Sports Diplomacy Alliance and the British Council in Edinburgh in March 2023.

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, the global response, and the consequent ramifications for sport have put the geopolitical economy of sport front and centre in public debate. With others we have helped to evidence the Geopolitical Economy of Sport; called for Compassion to recharge the Sustainable Development Goals; provide policy briefings on The 2022 FIFA World Cup for Men and a Global History of Sport (Vamplew).

The above is illustrative but not an exhaustive account of where Academy of Sport researchers and associates have strived to make a difference this year working with partners as we collectively tackle global challenges.

Edinburgh LOCAL

Maximizing the contribution of sport to building and strengthening relationships between the University, the City of Edinburgh and our local Scottish and United Kingdom communities is important to us and requires a better understanding of what sport can and cannot do. UN habitat guidance states that a minimum of 15 per cent of urban areas should be allocated as open green spaces and public facilities. Integrating opportunities for sport, throughout such spaces and across urban environments can have widespread and long-term impacts.
Homelessness and the Homeless World Cup

Our work through Edinburgh Local uses the sports resource to work with communities and people on the margins both within and external to the University. Our innovative programmes can and have been used to advance digital literacy, financial literacy, health literacy within the City of Edinburgh and beyond. In February Mel Young CBE, Co-Founder of the Homeless World Cup challenged us help change the lives of 2 million homeless people or those at risk of homelessness by 2025.

You can listen to the talk, proposition and challenge in Homelessness and the Homeless World Cup.

Addressing the Data Equity Gap in Football

Our survey of the national football fans that attended Hampden to watch the Scottish Women’s National Football Team reported that:

(i) 32% of respondents held professional occupations, 24% supervisory positions and the majority reported a household income of above 20k; (ii) The major factor influencing the decision to attend a game was family commitments (61%). The cost of attending was not considered a huge influence nor was the cost of travelling to the game and (iii) The top five factors in creating a very and extremely positive matchday experience are stadium atmosphere, safety, stadium facilities, ease of ticket purchasing and quality of food and drink.
By scrutinizing a range of digital information, national teams and clubs can build a clearer understanding of who their followers are, what they want and how best to engage with them. Tracking data from the Scotland v Ireland and Scotland v Austria World Cup qualifiers suggests that a large viewership is not yet translating itself into an engaged online audience. Anticipation was a higher driver of conversation around the Ireland game than the game itself.

It is important for women’s (and men’s) football clubs to build strong relationships with key influencers within their fan networks and beyond. Key influencers refer to those individuals who have a substantial following and/or act as critical connectors between users on social media. They represent individuals in each of the clubs and or national fan communities that are highly central and visible. They represent those with high levels of social capital in the network and are an essential component of the success and adoption of any marketing communication.

**Widening Access, Social Class, and Inequality**

We continue to offer opportunities to access study at one of the world’s leading universities. From a range of non-credited online courses to open studies for adult learners with credit and supporting courses in the community. These help with knowledge exchange.

**Educated Pass**

The strength of community relationships built up over the years were never more evident than in the discussions with the squads taking part. SYFA boys’ clubs (under 14s) across the central belt from Holytown to Musselburgh took part. The project also including girls’ squads. The project continues to illustrate the relevancy of curriculum to the players through the lens of football. Touching on, for example, foreign languages, modern studies, history, geography, biology, home economics and politics. The project benefits from strong relationships with the Academy of Sport, the Centre for Sport and Exercise and the University Men and Woman’s football teams – along with student athletes from other sporting disciplines.

**Football More than a Game**

This year Football More than a Game became the first Edinburgh University Massive Online Course (MOOC) to obtain a dual listing on both Coursera and Future Learn Platforms. The course review scores were 4.7 and 4.5 out 5 with 5 being excellent. During 2022-23 both courses ran online, were updated, and benefited from the significant amount of football data that has been produced through AOS research. The production of these and our other dedicated sport MOOCS have been part of a university strategy to become a world leader in digital education. We’ve developed partnerships with international education providers, universities and cultural organisations, and our courses have benefited learners worldwide. The project continues to illustrate the relevancy of curriculum to communities through the lens of football –including data, digital health, and financial literacy.

**Sport, Football, and the Wellbeing Economy**

The Scottish Football Association (SFA) commissioned this year a report to inform policymakers about the value of football and assist them with its potential contribution to policies aimed at building a Wellbeing Economy. Football has long been at the heart of Scotland’s communities. The Academy of Sport research and staff contributed to [the Final Report](#).

Earlier in the year Honorary Professor Corine Reid supported a joint workshop between the SFA and AOS around football and mental health. In February Honorary Professor David Bell made the case that sport should amplify the contribution that it makes to both the national accounts and the value of its contribution to welfare and wellbeing.
Based on the National Accounts definition of sport and considering wider sport-related activity such as television/satellite broadcasting and sports gambling, the value of the Sports economy, as measured by Gross Value Added (GVA), was estimated to be £37.3 billion in 2016. This placed sport within the top 15 industry sectors in England and larger than sale and repair of motor vehicles, insurance, telecoms services, legal services, and accounting.

The proposition is explored further in our 2023 Sports Podcast How do we measure wellbeing and value in sport?

Health Inequalities: In 2022, the Health Foundation carried out an independent review of health and health inequalities in Scotland to provide a detailed and thorough analysis of the health trends and wider factors that have influenced people’s health in Scotland over the last two decades. Honorary Professor and AOS Associate David Bell was a member of the Advisory Board for the Health inequalities in Scotland Independent Review,

Eric Liddell 100 and the Olympics

In 2024 it will be 100 years since Eric Liddell won struck gold at the Paris Olympics. Our commissioned work explores the life of Eric Liddell and lessons to be learned for today’s changing world. The funding helped to secure of 2 research assistants (Walker and Fan Hong) one focusing upon Scotland and the UK and the other focusing upon China.

Online Learning Resource for Adults

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Social Sentiment Analysis of Football
Understanding sentiment towards what clubs do can help them develop relationships and more fully understand fans, communities and key influencers who may or may not help with positive, neutral, or negative attitudes towards football clubs and the football industry more fully. Enlarged audiences for SWNT matches at Hampden have not yet been translated into a sustained and enlarged online audience. Empowering fans to create, manipulate, and share football content remains work in progress.

Sport and UK Foreign Policy
AOS, in partnership with ICR research Ltd, held a series of workshops and interviews to facilitate the production of a policy briefing, Green Paper, on sport in UK Foreign Policy (MacDonald, Bell, Grant, Krasnoff, Mackie). The policy paper suggests areas where sport can add value to UK foreign policy goals. Throughout 2022 AOS contributed to a series of workshops hosted by the British Foreign Policy Group and the British Council the purpose of which was to evidence and report on the Future of UK Soft Power and assist with the building of a strategic framework.

University Local collaboration
The complexity of today’s local and global challenges, requires us to be critical and seek out expertise from scholars and communities in other fields, other parts of the University and communities to form quality partnerships that can help globally and locally. We are fortunate to have been able to work with colleagues across the University of Edinburgh through forging strong partnerships with, for example: The Global Health Academy on the sustainable development goals , health and climate change; The School of Informatics on Artificial Intelligence, Data Science and Sentiment Analysis; Moray House School of Education and Sport on International Development and Relations, Advocacy, Communications, and Social and Political Aspects of Sport; Information Services and Edinburgh Futures Institute.

The British Council
Peacebuilding and the erosion of peace are intimately connected to many major challenges facing us nationally and internationally. 2022 brought sport to the fore in the discourse of peacebuilding. Our commissioned report for the British Council examined the role of sport in cultural relations and the peace process. The report being one of 5 reports contributing to the 2023 British Council Cultural Relations Collection.

The above is illustrative but not an exhaustive account of where Academy of Sport researchers and associates have strived to make a difference this year working with partners as we collectively tackle local challenges.

EDINBURGH FUTURES
We bring people, data, and diverse disciplines together in our open, what-if environment to spark the unexpected and create new ideas through sport and related areas—working on live issues with communities, business, citizens, and governments.

We are an International Think Tank, a network of collaborators both within and external to the University of Edinburgh that exchanges knowledge and enables advocacy in and through sport. The Academy of Sport is at the heart of an international sporting landscape providing a home for ideas, solutions, students, staff, sporting communities and organizations to meet and to make a difference today.

An independent gathering place for communities to meet, to develop, influence, exchange, advocate and make a difference through sport. We cannot do this alone.
We will continue to:

- **REACH-OUT** to deepen and broaden our connections locally and globally.
- **ENGAGE** a critical mass of knowledge, research, strategic collaboration, influence, access and opportunity in and through sport.
- **SUSTAIN** an independent think tank working for, in and through sport.
- **INFLUENCE** future agendas through advocacy and evidence based interventions.
- **ADVOCATE** the potential of education through sport to make a difference.
- **PROVIDE** widening access to the University of Edinburgh and sustain a commitment to exploring more than just the potential of sport to reach disadvantaged communities.
- **PROMOTE** the powerful synergy between evidence, knowledge exchange, education and advocacy.

Each year our work is enabled through the production and sustainability of a bespoke set of tools that the Academy of Sport has developed.

**Sport Matters:** A bespoke evidence and research driven blog space that supports knowledge exchange. Since its launch *Sport Matters* has supported to date the production of more than 61 evidence based research blogs.

**Sport Voices:** A bespoke sports podcast service that raises awareness and promotes knowledge exchange about sporting issues, problems, solutions. Drawing upon our network of partners more than 50 sport podcasts are hosted on the *Academy of Sport Dialogue* section of the website.

We continue to support *Gaelic Voices and Dialogue* that helps to enable our commitment to hosting dialogue and discussion about sport locally and more broadly given the interest in sport, for example, The Scottish and Irish Bi-lateral review report.

**Sport News:** A bespoke sports news service that aims to provide a user-friendly evidence-based coffee read about sport in the world that blends with reflective narrative and insight into contemporary sport in geo-political and global affairs.

**Sport Observations:** A bespoke sports briefing and policy insight that provide evidence-based briefings and responses to calls for evidence on national and international concerns involving sport. The objective has been to both respond to government calls for evidence and produce at least two critical briefings per year.
The Road Map 2023-2024

As we move into 2023-24, we will build upon and continue to support and develop the tools, networks and partnerships that have helped us sustain an International Think Tank focused upon sport from our base in Scotland. Faced with the world’s most complex issues neither sport, the Academy of Sport, nor The University of Edinburgh has all the answers and necessary expertise. We remain mindful of the need to be collaborative and co-operative.

We remain committed to enabling sport to play its part in addressing the challenges that face humanity in the 21st Century and be seen to be actively addressing such challenges, working with and in communities. We cannot do this alone.

External funding for some 2023-24 projects is already in place. The following is an illustrative but not exhaustive set of actions for 2023-24:

- Support the development of the Eric Liddell 100 online education consultancy.
- Deliver the inaugural Eric Liddell Annual Lecture.
- Support Moray House School of Education and Sport research and knowledge exchange.
- Explore further outputs on sports contribution to health – the role of sport in sustaining kinship networks, sport and the environment, organizational responses to helping marginalized youth during covid.
- Sustain the production of new research and knowledge exchange contributions to Sport Matters, Sport Voices, Sport Observations and Sports News. For example, the production of a briefing paper on the role of sport in the rehabilitation of child soldiers.
- Support the Commonwealth Ministers Advisory Board on Sport (CABOS).
- Refresh Football More than a Game both online and short course version.
- Scottish Women’s Club Football Survey.
- Support the Centre for Sport and Exercise and Edinburgh Student’s Union as they continue to open opportunities for students and the broader public.
- Promote knowledge exchange and widening access to education by supporting both Football More than a Game in Scottish football stadiums and Educated Pass.
- Explore hosting of more visiting scholars from with a view to co-hosting and planning for international conferences
- Contribute to the Centre for Sport and Human Rights knowledge exchange outputs.
- Co-host a workshop with the Edinburgh Business School.
- Help to sustain and add value to new and current PhD students and research assistants.
- Co-host with Edinburgh Futures Institute a symposia on Sporting Futures.
- Work with the Global Health Academy to seek closer synergy with the Commonwealth Secretariat around the inter-sections between health and climate change.
- Seek funded research for advancing our innovative work on sports comparative role in foreign policy and international relations building.
- Support advocacy for support for Sub-Saharan Africa Para athletes.
Thank You to all who have made 2022-23 a hard but undoubtedly successful year including: The University of Edinburgh; Moray House School of Education and Sport; Global Health Academy; School of Informatics; The Centre for Sport and Exercise; University of Toronto Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education; Peking University; The Commonwealth Secretariat; The Homeless World Cup Foundation; The School of Informatics (UoE); ICR Research Ltd; The Scottish Football Association; Royal Dornoch Golf Club; The Eric Liddell Community; The British Council; The Sports Diplomacy Alliance; The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade – Australia; The Scottish Women’s Professional Football League; Hibernian and Queen’s Park Football Club and all our local and global associates.

Academy of Sport Board Meeting of June 2023