

Online/distance learning for professional athletes

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Aim of abstract/paper

To give an demonstration of our online sport management program and show how we are able to educate professional athletes online

The University College of Northern Denmark (UCN) originated in September 2011, initiated by our first online Sport Management program. UCN has partnered with the International Players Union and FIFPro, giving their members an opportunity to study within the online Sport Management program, while maintaining player status on professional football clubs throughout Europe.

At the University College of Northern Denmark, we have specified traditions for innovation and excellence within our teaching philosophy. UCN strives to improve the learning experience for our students and believes that innovation can motivate and further educate our cohorts. The latest activity at the university is our online/distance learning program in Sport Management. UCN was originally contacted by FIFPro and asked if we could provide their members with an education and create a program that was suited for professional/semi-professional athletes. With this online program, UCN dealt with a specific segment of students that are highly motivated to obtain an education, with a main focus on professional sports careers. These students, although unable to participate in lectures within the classroom, have instead, access to an online portal, where UCN has suited the program around the student's time schedule and made sure the lectures are accessible to the online students in an unsynchronized manner.

When dealing with online/distance learning, one can categorize the teaching methods into synchronized and unsynchronized teaching. Within the UCN Sports Management program, our faculty has created a mixture of the two, and has ensured that UCN created lectures that suited the athlete's time schedule. Therefore, this portion of

our program is unsynchronized. However, UCN we has additionally created a synchronized teaching aspects within the program, due to the student curriculum requirements, including exams and tests.

One of the key aspects of our program is flexibility – UCN has created a unique situation in which we bring the university to the student. Additionally, UCN has created a virtual classroom for the students through our Learning Management System (Share Point), where our faculty are able to upload documents and communicate with our students. With this online platform, we are able to activate our students and make sure they are receiving all lectures, information and updates from the program. UCN is using a learning management system called Share Point, which encompasses certain features that make online/distance learning possible. Because of this online platform, UCN has created a virtual campus, one which is accessible 24 hours a day, seven days a week, wherever the student or faculty member happens to be in the world. We, at UCN, believe this online platform creates the required flexible to our Sports Management program and creates learning for a specific segment of students.

At the University College of Northern Denmark, we are very focused on communication with our students – we try to create a two-way communication in our lectures. We believe that discussion and debate about certain areas creates a dynamic environment for our students and we believe it will improve the learning experience for our online learners. When we created the online program we wanted to bring the same dynamic environment and learning experience to a virtual platform. We wanted our online students to have the same opportunity for this two-way communication and be able to participate in the discussion and debate about topics within the Sports Management discipline. Having said that, we have created a set-up that allows our online student to follow a lecture unsynchronized and still feel like they are part of the class. In doing so, we utilize a program called Adobe Connect, which is a web conference program that allows communicating, sharing, and collaborating with others online. Adobe Connect has a recording feature, which is utilized during conference sessions and live lectures with on-campus students. These recordings are then uploaded to the virtual classroom for our online students to access. This ultimately provides our online students the opportunity to watch the lectures unsynchronized and during their own time schedule. Afterwards, the students are able to debate and discuss the lectures through our learning management system and within their own virtual classroom.