
**ATHLETIC STIPEND PROGRAM AT A BRAZILIAN FEDERAL UNIVERSITY:
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND ATHLETE PROFILES**

**PROGRAMA DE BOLSA ATLETA EM UMA UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL BRASILEIRA:
CRITÉRIOS DE ELEGIBILIDADE E PERFIS DE ATLETAS**Junior Vagner Pereira da Silva¹¹Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul, Campo Grande-MS, Brasil.**RESUMO**

A bolsa atleta é apoio financeiro relevante para atletas, com iniciativas específicas em universidades, como as federais. Entretanto, pouco se conhece acerca dos requisitos e dos perfis demandados por estes programas. Este estudo teve como objetivo identificar os critérios de elegibilidade e os perfis de atletas demandados pelo Programa Bolsa Atleta da Universidade Federal de Mato Grosso do Sul. Trata-se de uma pesquisa documental, longitudinal retrospectiva, exploratória e qualitativa, com análise temática dos editais publicados entre 2013-2024. Os critérios de elegibilidade foram agrupados em quatro dimensões: disciplinar, burocrática, de *marketing* e esportiva. Observou-se baixa sistematização entre 2013 e 2016, limitado-se às dimensões disciplinar e burocrática. Entre 2017 e 2020, além dos critérios anteriores, passaram a vigorar exigências como auxílio na organização de eventos institucionais, carga horária semanal de atividades, disponibilidade para viagem e atuação no *marketing*. De 2021 a 2024, os critérios do segundo período foram mantidos. Os perfis demandados foram compostos por dimensões demográfica, acadêmica e esportiva. O perfil demográfico foi introduzido em 2023, com delimitação entre 16 e 25 anos. O perfil acadêmico, até 2022, restringia-se a estudantes de graduação, passando a incluir mestrands e doutorandos a partir de 2023, além da exigência de bom desempenho acadêmico desde 2022. O perfil esportivo esteve voltado ao esporte recreacional (2013-2016), ao estudante-atleta (2017-2020) e ao atleta-estudante (2021-2024). Conclui-se que o PBA-UFMS passou por reformulações significativas, demandando atualmente atletas-estudantes com foco na representação institucional em competições da Confederação Brasileira de Esporte Universitário.

Palavras-chave: Bolsa atleta. Dupla Carreira. Estudantes-atletas. Atletas-estudantes. Perfil.

ABSTRACT

Athlete scholarship is a significant source of financial support for athletes, with specific initiatives in universities, such as federal universities. However, little is known about the requirements and profiles demanded by these programs. This study aimed to identify the eligibility criteria and athlete profiles demanded by the Athletic Scholarship Program of the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul. This is a documentary, longitudinal, retrospective, exploratory, and qualitative study, with a thematic analysis of the public notices published between 2013 and 2024. The eligibility criteria were grouped into four dimensions: disciplinary, bureaucratic, *marketing*, and sports. Low systematization was observed between 2013 and 2016, limited to the disciplinary and bureaucratic dimensions. Between 2017 and 2020, in addition to the previous criteria, requirements such as assistance in organizing institutional events, weekly workload, availability for travel, and experience in marketing came into effect. From 2021 to 2024, the criteria from the second period were maintained. The profiles sought were composed of demographic, academic, and sports dimensions. The demographic profile was introduced in 2023, with an age range of 16 to 25 years. Until 2022, the academic profile was restricted to undergraduate students, but from 2023 onwards, it includes master's and doctoral students, in addition to the requirement for good academic performance since 2022. The sports profile was focused on recreational sports (2013-2016), student-athletes (2017-2020), and athlete-students (2021-2024). It can be concluded that the ASP-FUMS has undergone significant reforms, currently requiring athlete-students to focus on institutional representation in competitions organized by the Brazilian University Sports Confederation.

Palavras-chave: Athletic stipend. Dual career. Students-athletes. Athletes-students. Profile.

Introduction

The first sports scholarships for student athletes in Brazil date back to the 1980¹. Educational institutions began offering scholarships², including Universidade Gama Filho in Rio de Janeiro, which stood out for attracting and supporting athletes. Through this policy, several athletes represented Brazil in editions of the Olympic Games³.

Subsequently, other institutions, such as the Lutheran University of Brazil, the University of Southern Santa Catarina, and the University of Caxias do Sul, began to invest in modern infrastructure aimed at training and preparing athletes for sports competitions

representing their respective institutions⁴. This strategy contributed to higher education institutions (HEIs), such as Universidade Paulista – champion of the University Olympics from 2005 to 2009 – achieving significant sporting results.

The increase in investments by private universities in supporting university sports – through the granting of scholarships to outstanding athletes, as well as the financing of food, housing, medical care, access to the gym and financial aid (athletic stipend) – contributed to these same institutions becoming predominant in specific events, such as the 2014 National Women's Handball League⁶ and the Brazilian University Games⁷⁻⁹.

Although private institutions were pioneers in granting scholarships, since 2010 Brazilian federal universities have begun to award sports athletic stipend to athletes. The Sports Incentive Scholarship Program, established by the Federal University of Ceará, was a pioneer in this context. Subsequently, similar initiatives were adopted by other institutions: in 2012, by the University of Brasília and the Fluminense Federal University; in 2013, by the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul; in 2016, by the Federal University of Sergipe; and in 2017, by the Federal University of Pernambuco, the Federal Rural University of Amazonia, and the Federal University of Amapá¹⁰.

Unlike private universities, where scholarships consist of tuition waivers, Brazilian federal universities, whose academic affiliation with undergraduate or graduate courses does not involve tuition fees, provide a direct monthly stipend in Brazilian reais to cover other types of expenses, i.e., a athletic stipend. The maximum amount and workload are guided by the criteria established for scientific initiation student financial aid by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development.

The expansion of sports support in Brazilian federal universities – especially through the granting of scholarships and athletic stipends to athletes – is important because it can function as a public policy that helps students balance their athletic and academic demands. These students, as conceptualized by Ryba et al.¹¹, are referred to as dual-career athletes. The importance of financial support has been widely demonstrated in scientific literature, with positive impacts both on the continuity of sports practice^{6,12} and on the academic trajectory at university^{6,12,13}. In addition, such policies can contribute to mitigating dropout rates, considering that the loss of benefits is associated with abandoning sports^{6,12,14,15,16} and, in some cases, dropping out of school^{12,14,17}. In this context, the institutionalization of scholarship programs for athletes in Brazilian public universities would not only strengthen university sports but also act as a mechanism for equity and inclusion, promoting fairer conditions for the retention and holistic development of student-athletes, since financial resources are one of the essential preconditions for success in the dual career of sports¹⁸.

Despite advances in the field of university sports, information on scholarship programs for student-athletes at Brazilian federal universities is still scarce. Understanding the eligibility criteria for obtaining these benefits, as well as the profiles of athletes in demand, is essential to deepen our understanding of the dynamics of dual careers in Brazil. In addition, this knowledge can support comparative analyses between programs developed at Brazilian federal universities and those implemented at international universities.

According to the models presented by Aquilina and Henry¹⁹, Brazil is approaching the *laissez-faire* paradigm, characterized by the absence of structured public policies. This is evident in the lack of federal legislation—whether educational or sports-related—that regulates dual careers for athletes linked to higher education^{10,20}. This regulatory gap contributes to ambiguity in the trajectory of student-athletes, who, according to the typology proposed by Reyes-Bossio et al.²¹, may prioritize sports (athlete-students) or education (student-athletes), revealing different levels of commitment and vulnerability in the absence of institutional support.

Brazil, as an emerging country, still lacks national policies focused on dual sports careers. Until the end of 2024, there were no structured federal initiatives on the subject. Only during this period did the Ministry of Sport establish a Technical Group on Transition and Dual Sports Careers, with the aim of developing an action plan for the implementation of the “Excellence for Life” program²², aimed at promoting dual careers and the transition of athletes to post-sports careers.

Considering that sporting excellence in Brazil is legally structured in four phases—sports specialization (consolidation of the potential of athletes in training), sports improvement (development of skills and abilities in regional and national competitions), high performance (pursuit of maximum performance in national and international competitions), and career transition (reconciling formal education and training)²³-, it is clear that public policies comprising academic, economic, and sporting support are fundamental to the comprehensive development of athletes. However, it is essential to recognize that each of these phases requires specific measures, aligned with their objectives and the characteristics of those involved. The absence of targeted and contextualized actions can compromise athletic and academic progress, in addition to making it difficult for athletes to remain in the national sports system.

It is important to consider that public policies aimed at dual sports careers, as well as their results, are conditioned by demographic, political, and cultural factors specific to each country, region, state, municipality, and institution. This complexity requires scientific research that provides contextualized data capable of reflecting the particularities of each reality. Not surprisingly, Capranica et al.²⁴ warn about the limitations of applying transnational dual career programs proposed by the European Union to member countries, precisely because of differences in local legislation. This observation reinforces the need for flexible and adapted approaches that respect the normative and sociocultural frameworks of each context.

In view of the above, this study aimed to analyze the Athlete Scholarship Program (ASP) of the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (FUMS) between 2013 and 2024. Specifically, it sought to: identify the eligibility criteria for obtaining the athlete scholarship and the respective dimensions to which they are linked; outline the profiles of the athletes in demand and the dimensions that characterize them; identify possible changes in the eligibility criteria and profiles of athletes in demand over the 11 years of the program's implementation.

Methods

This study is qualitative, retrospective longitudinal, exploratory, and documentary in nature²⁵.

The analysis technique adopted was content analysis, considered one of the main forms of data processing in qualitative research, operationally applied in readings of speeches, testimonials, and documents. Specifically, thematic analysis was used, which is linked to inference about a given subject based on the identification of phrases that reveal the presence or frequency of nuclei of meanings relevant to the object analyzed²⁶.

Operationally, it was structured in three stages: a) Pre-analysis, b) Exploration of the material; c) Treatment and interpretation of the results obtained. The description of each of the phases, in accordance with Minayo²⁶, is described below.

Research procedures and corpus

In the pre-analysis stage, the documents to be examined were selected, consisting of the public notices for the awarding of athletic stipend at the FUMS, for the period from 2013 to 2024. Based on the previously outlined objectives and supported by the literature on dual careers, a floating (exploratory) reading of the notices was carried out, followed by the

development of guiding indicators for the analysis – especially the requirements and obligations assigned to scholarship recipients, as well as the athlete profiles demanded by the notices. The definition of the research corpus was based on qualitative validity criteria: representativeness, homogeneity, and relevance

The corpus of analysis consisted of 14 duly approved ASP-FUMS selection notices. The notices were identified through searches in the Official Gazette (<https://boletimoficial.ufms.br/>), using the following filters: administrative unit (PROECE), type of publication (Notices), start date (01/01/2013), end date (31/12/2024), and the search text “bolsa atleta” “bolsa-atleta”. The time frame between 2013 and 2024 stems from the interest in understanding the trajectory of the ASP-FUMS since its creation in 2013 until the year 2024 (Table 1).

Table 1. Public notices for the opening of the ASP-FUMS concession – 2013/2024.

Year	Opening announcements
2013	PREAE/FUMS nº 53
2014	PREAE/FUMS nº 13
2015	PREAE/FUMS nº 10
2016	PREAE/FUMS nº 9
2017	PROECE/FUMS nº 17
2018	PROECE/FUMS nº 64
	PROECE/FUMS nº 84
2019	PROECE/FUMS nº 44
2020	PROECE/FUMS nº 63
	PROECE/FUMS nº 89
-2021	PROECE/FUMS nº 138
2022	PROECE/FUMS nº 30
2023	PROECE/FUMS nº 159
2024	PROECE/FUMS nº 62

Source: The author

In the subsequent stage, the material was read thoroughly, resuming the exploratory nature of the analysis in order to verify the need to formulate or reformulate the initially proposed objectives. For coding purposes, the sentences that were directly related to the defined indicators were established as units of record—specifically, those that highlighted the requirements, obligations, and profiles demanded of scholarship recipients in the analyzed notices.

In the second stage, corresponding to the exploration of the material, the information was classified by identifying categories – recurring textual expressions – and reducing them to meaningful expressions. The texts were segmented into previously identified units of record (sentences) and characterized in the research as analytical items. Next, a counting rule was established, based on the presence or absence of these items in the notices, allowing for their subsequent classification and aggregation into analytical dimensions.

Statistical analysis

The third stage corresponded to the treatment of the results and their interpretation. Based on the dimensions and items that composed the indicators, a frequency analysis was performed, considering the presence of the elements in each year investigated. Subsequently, interpretations and inferences were made, interrelating the findings with the theoretical framework on dual sports careers, previously outlined in the introduction and theoretical basis. To present the results, two tables were constructed to visually represent the presence or absence of regularities in the items that comprised each dimension in the two indicators analyzed. Additionally, a third table of results was prepared to present the sports modalities covered.

Results

During the period investigated, the eligibility criteria for ASP-FUMS scholarship recipients were grouped into four dimensions: disciplinary, bureaucratic, *marketing*, and sports. Each dimension presented macro items, which remained constant throughout the period analyzed, and specific items, which underwent changes according to the institutional context and the guidelines of the public notices.

The disciplinary criteria were associated with the absence of sanctions, whether resulting from disciplinary infractions, administrative disputes, or unsatisfactory performance. In addition, this dimension included a prohibition on accumulating student financial aid. These requirements were present in all years evaluated, without undergoing changes throughout the period (Table 2).

Bureaucratic performance constituted the second dimension of the eligibility criteria established for scholarship recipients, covering participation in meetings, preparation of reports on activities carried out, and assistance in organizing sporting events. In the first period (2013-2017), bureaucratic requirements were limited to attending meetings and submitting monthly reports. From 2017 onwards, in addition to maintaining these requirements, scholarship recipients were also required to be involved in organizing sporting events.

Starting in 2018, the announcements began to require scholarship recipients to send information and materials related to competitions to the university's communications agency. The requirement to wear the program's standard uniform at interviews and award ceremonies was also included, as well as the explicit mention, during interviews, of the benefits received through the ASP-FUMS, all related to the *marketing* dimension.

The athletic requirements were related to the availability of time for training, travel to competitions, and participation in a minimum number of sporting events per year. These requirements were incorporated into the ASP-FUMS only in 2017, when 12 hours per week were set aside for training, in addition to 8 hours per week for working as sports monitors and mandatory availability for travel. In 2018, there was a reformulation: the 20 hours per week were now entirely devoted to training, and the requirement for minimum participation in three annual competitions was regulated.

DIMENSIONS INDICATORS	ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA	YEARS OF PUBLIC NOTICE											
		2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Disciplinary	Not complying with disciplinary action												
	Not having been excluded from student financial aid due to unsatisfactory performance												
	Have no pending administrative issues												
	Not receiving any other scholarship, except for meal assistance												
	Not receiving any other type of scholarship, except for a retention grant												
	Not receive any other type of scholarship												
Bureaucratic	Attend meetings												
	Assist in organizing sporting events												
	Monthly report on training and mentoring in sports projects												
	Bimonthly report on training and competitions												
Marketing	Send photos of participation, information, and related materials for institutional publicity												
	Wear a ASP T-shirt and cap at award ceremonies and interviews												
	Mentioning scholarship status in interviews												
Sporting	Complete 20 hours per week - 12 hours of training and 8 hours of monitoring												
	Complete 20 hours of training per week												
	Willingness to travel to competitions												
	Participate in at least three competitions per year												

Table 2. Eligibility criteria by athletic stipend Program for Athletes at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul - 2013/2024.

Source: Author.

Table 3. Profiles of athletes required by the athletic stipend Program for Athletes at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul - 2013/2024.

			INDICATORS OF THE PROFILES REQUIRED	YEARS OF PUBLIC NOTICE											
				2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
DIMENSIONS OF INDICATORS	Demographic		Be of minimum and maximum age in accordance with the requirements of the Brazilian University Sports Confederation												
		Academic	Academic link to the undergraduate program												
	Academic link to the stricto sensu graduate programs														
	Achieve satisfactory performance in the undergraduate program														
	Sporting	Competition levels	International												
			National												
			State												
			Location												
		Rankings	Fits												
			Second												
			Third												
			Fourth												
			Fifth to tenth												
		Minimum score						-	100	150	150	150	300	300	
	Validity period of securities					3	-	4	4	4	3	3	3		

Source: Author.

With regard to the profiles of athletes sought by ASP-FUMS, three dimensions were identified: demographic, academic, and athletic (Table 3). Each of these dimensions includes specific criteria that guide the selection and monitoring of scholarship recipients, reflecting both institutional objectives and the performance and commitment requirements of athletes.

Between 2013 and 2022, there were no established demographic criteria for the selection of athletes. Starting in 2023, in line with the regulations of the Brazilian University Sports Confederation for participation in the Brazilian University Games, the age range of 16 to 25 was adopted as a parameter. This requirement was maintained in 2024, serving as a parameter for the demographic profile of scholarship recipients.

Between 2013 and 2022, the academic profile was limited to undergraduate education. From 2023 onwards, it began to include students enrolled in *stricto sensu* graduate programs.

Between 2013 and 2016, the selection process only considered the candidates' sporting résumé, academic record, and interview. There were no objective classification criteria, time limits for validating qualifications, or minimum score requirements. All athletic achievements were accepted, regardless of date or competitive level, and there was no minimum score requirement for awarding the athletic stipend.

With the start of a new administration in 2017, significant changes were implemented in the selection process. Only titles referring to the top four placements obtained in the three years prior to the application were considered. This measure directed the selection towards athletes with better sports performance. In 2019, a minimum score of 100 points was introduced, establishing a quantitative parameter for the awarding of scholarships. In 2020, the athletic performance criteria were further improved, with the minimum score raised from 100 to 150 points, a value that remained in effect until 2022.

The third period, from 2021 to 2024, marked a transition toward valuing high-performance athletes. The calls for applications became more selective, maintaining the requirement for titles in the top four positions and restricting the validity of achievements to the previous three years. In 2023, the minimum score for granting the scholarship was raised to 300 points, consolidating a selective model more focused on high athletic performance.

During the first cycle of the program, there was no formal definition of the sports to be included. The selection of athletes was based on spontaneous demand, with no restrictions on the type of sport or connection to official competitions. Starting in 2017, more comprehensive guidelines were established, covering sports featured in the Brazilian University Games and the Olympic Games, as well as generically described categories such as team sports, combat sports, racket sports, board games, and parasports. Starting in 2023, institutional policy began to prioritize sports directly linked to major official competitions, especially the Brazilian University Games and the Olympic Games. This change outlined an athlete profile focused on institutional representation in events with greater visibility and sporting prestige.

Table 4. Sports covered by the athletic stipend Program for Athletes at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul - 2013/2024.

SPORTS MODALITIES	YEARS OF PUBLIC NOTICE											
	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Athletics	-	-	-	-	2	3	1	3	3	-	1	2
Basketball	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2
Breaking	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
E-Sports	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	-	1	1
Team sports	-	-	-	-	-	8	8	10	-	-	-	-
Racket sports	-	-	-	-	-	1	1	1	1	-	2	2
Bodybuilding	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Soccer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-
Futsal	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

Gymnastics	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Handball	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2
Jiu Jitsu	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Board games	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2	-	1	1
Judo	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Karate	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kickboxing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Martial arts	-	-	-	-	-	5	3	5	5	-	1	4
Swimming	-	-	-	-	2	2	2	3	3	-	1	2
Parasport	-	-	-	-	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	1
Taekwondo	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Table tennis	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Archery	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Volleyball	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	2
Beach volleyball	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	-	2	2
Chess	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
Not reported	10	10	6	7	-	5	-	8	-	18	-	-
Total	10	10	6	7	15	27	21	38	18	20	23	25

Source: Author.

Discussion

Within the scope of Brazilian Federal Higher Education Institutions, there is a lack of specific funding sources for university sports. Most sports initiatives developed at these institutions are subsidized by funds from general programs, such as the National Student Assistance Policy, incremental transfers from the Ministry of Education, parliamentary amendments, among other indirect financing mechanisms.

At FUMS, student financial aid, including those related to the ASP, are paid through transfers from the Ministry of Education, specifically from budget source 20GK. This budget item is intended to promote activities related to undergraduate and graduate studies, teaching, research, and university extension. Athletic stipends under the ASP are institutionally classified as university extension activities²⁷.

The disciplinary requirements that form part of the eligibility criteria for scholarship recipients are aligned with the constitutional principles that govern Brazilian public administration, such as legality, impartiality, morality, and efficiency. These criteria aim to ensure integrity in the application of public resources, requiring beneficiaries to have no irregularities, pending issues, or sanctions that could compromise the fairness of the process and the proper use of public resources.

Participation in meetings, among bureaucratic requirements, is an important mechanism of public policy, as it is through these meetings that information is passed on directly; future actions – such as participation in competitions – are planned; and alignment between the actors involved is achieved. According to Keeling and Branco²⁸, meetings are an essential vehicle for resolving difficulties, as they provide high-quality communication. They are the driving force behind teamwork and the basis for overcoming obstacles, in addition to promoting the adjustments necessary for project development.

The bureaucratic requirement to prepare reports stems from the role of these documents as instruments of accountability in public administration. This sphere, because it makes use of public resources, demands the systematic recording of information that justifies financial expenditure, demonstrates its execution, and presents the results obtained. This is a central element of public governance, especially with regard to accountability. According to the Federal Court of Accounts²⁹, accountability consists of the obligation of those who use public

financial resources to assume responsibilities – fiscal, managerial, and programmatic – and to report on the fulfillment of the commitments made to those who delegated such responsibility to them.

In addition to accountability, reports can significantly contribute to the program management process through monitoring and evaluation. Documents from the Public Administration serve as evidence that generates relevant information and enables situational analysis³⁰. The data extracted from these reports are fundamental for the formulation of public policies, especially in the data assessment phase³¹. Additionally, they can serve as a record of indicators that, from a programmatic perspective, are operational tools³², supporting monitoring with strategic information on aspects that require adjustments.

As for the requirement that scholarship athletes participate in the organization of sporting events and act as monitors for eight hours – as was the case in 2017 – these demands are inappropriate. This is because athletes pursuing dual careers in sports already have significant responsibilities, both in the sporting sphere (training, travel, competitions, physical therapy) and in the academic sphere (curricular classes, preparation for activities, participation in extracurricular projects, and preparation of assessment work).

Involvement in extra tasks can compromise both academic and athletic performance, contradicting the principles of balance and support that should guide policies aimed at the retention and comprehensive development of athletes in dual sports careers. According to Cifuentes³³, this type of career path is, in most cases, unfeasible due to the incompatibility between the schedules, locations, and agendas of the two educational processes. Academic life, on the one hand, requires physical presence to complete educational activities and take exams on predetermined dates; on the other hand, a sports career demands intense dedication to training, physical preparation, concentration, and frequent travel to competitions outside the city. In this context of limited time, the physical well-being of athletes tends to be impacted by the simultaneous demands of the academic and athletic environments³⁴.

The accumulation of tasks by individuals in dual sports careers can compromise the continuity of this trajectory, often leading them to the need to choose to remain in only one of the activities. The incompatibility of schedules, resulting from the overlap between academic and sporting commitments, is one of the main obstacles to maintaining these spheres in parallel, with dropout being a recurring consequence³⁵.

The inclusion of demands unrelated to sports and academics as eligibility criteria is inappropriate in the context of dual career policies. Such policies should prioritize the provision of favorable conditions for the athletic and academic development and well-being of athletes, rather than serving as mechanisms for institutional compensation through trade-offs.

It is understood that a more appropriate and less costly alternative would be for athletes to participate in lectures aimed at the university community. As Brown, Basil, and Bocarnea³⁶ point out, athletes are often recognized as role models and have the potential to positively influence the behaviors and attitudes of other members of the academic community.

It is essential that managers – as well as bureaucratic agents involved in issues related to university sports – be mindful that the relationship between the university and ASP beneficiaries does not take the form of service provision. This logic, evident in the NCAA in the 1950s, was widely criticized by scholars in the field, such as Gasaway³⁷ and Staurowsky and Sack³⁸, who believed that the educational and human development principles that should guide dual career sports programs were being compromised.

The sharing of information and materials related to competitions with the communications sector required during the period 2018-2024, as an institutional responsibility, stems from the use of sport as a marketing strategy. This practice was common among private Brazilian universities in the 1980s, a period in which sporting achievements were widely exploited as a tool for promoting educational institutions¹.

Although the dissemination of programs and their results, regardless of whether they are sports-related, is a legitimate action and inherent to the interests of institutions that wish to publicize their programs and actions in a wide range of áreas – contributing to greater visibility, appreciation, and a sense of belonging in the local Community – it is essential that this not be the main focus of actions aimed at creating dual career sports programs. Attention, care, and initiatives should be directed primarily toward the academic, athletic, and personal development of athletes, respecting the formative principles that justify the existence of such policies.

With regard to sports dedication, initially 12 hours per week were required (in 2017), increased to 20 hours per week from 2018 onwards, which is directly related to the need for physical, tactical, and technical preparation of athletes³⁹. Considering the guiding principles of sports preparation, the annual planning of the season should be organized into macrocycles, consisting of the preparation, competition, and transition phases⁴⁰. The requirement for availability for travel is due to the fact that the main competitions take place at the national and regional levels. Thus, the participation of athletes requires travel that varies according to the level of competition, which implies a commitment to the previously planned calendar. This commitment justifies the established requirements.

Regarding the strategy of using part of the workload to act as sports monitors, adopted in 2017, it is considered that this measure was misguided. This practice, still present in the Brazilian cultural context, is based on the assumption that athletes' mastery of technical and tactical aspects would be sufficient to qualify them as coaches, regardless of specific academic training. It was from this perspective that the General Sports Law²³ allowed former athletes to work as sports coaches, provided they had proven experience in the sport for three consecutive years or five intermittent years, through participation in courses promoted by the corresponding confederation. Although the inadequacy of this requirement is recognized, it is important to highlight the sensitivity of managers in eliminating it in the years following 2017.

The 20-hour weekly workload required by ASP-FUMS is higher than that dedicated to training by most athletes participating in the Brazilian University Games from 2018 to 2019. Data indicate that athletes from public universities predominantly train between 0 and 5 hours per week, while those from private universities and colleges exceed an average of 10 hours⁴¹.

However, the data obtained from the analyzed notices do not allow us to understand whether the 20 hours per week required by ASP-FUMS are effectively fulfilled in training. In some cases, Brazilian federal universities follow the parameters of the scientific initiation scholarship of the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development in relation to the value and dedication requirements²⁰, which may not necessarily reflect the reality of the weekly schedule of the athletes covered.

Athlete profiles requested by ASP-FUMS

The profiles of athletes required by the public notices are related to demographic, academic, and sporting aspects (dimensions). Throughout the period analyzed, they underwent changes, giving specific contours to the program, which reflects the political choices of the managers who occupied the central administration of the university, as well as the bureaucrats who were at the forefront of the position of trust focused on the development of the institution's sports policy.

The position of trust is a temporary political promotion given to career civil servants in order to keep the public administration active based on their technical competence and accumulated experience, participating in all stages of the public policy cycle – agenda, formulation of alternatives, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation⁴².

Taking advantage of university autonomy and discretionary power, these political actors, subordinate to the rectors and pro-rectors, established priorities in their management

agendas and formulated institutional policies aligned with their political-administrative guidelines. Considering that the period analyzed covers three terms of rectors and three administrations of the sports directorate, the changes in the direction of the ASP-FUMS are inherent to the dynamics of government public policies, which now incorporate specific characteristics consistent with the political platform of the respective managers.

The demographic profile was only included in the ASP-FUMS criteria from 2023 onwards, with the age range set between 16 and 25 years old. Until then, with no defined age restriction, the program covered diverse groups of athletes, including those at the beginning of their careers, at the peak of their sporting performance, in the final stages of their linear careers, and even in post-career transition. This openness was in line with the theoretical assumptions underlying dual careers, since, according to Torregrossa et al.⁴³, several predictable chronological changes occur during the athletic transition, such as the transition from junior to senior categories and athletic retirement (normative transitions).

The establishment of a specific age range indicates a strategic direction by program managers regarding institutional representation in the Brazilian University Games, whose regulations restrict the age of competitors to between 16 and 25 years old. Although understandable – considering that this competition is the main national university event – this alignment limits the program's reach by excluding athletes over the age of 25, including those who may be at the peak of their sporting careers.

According to López Subjana et al.⁴⁴, peak athletic performance tends to occur between the ages of 20 and 30. In the Brazilian context, the average age of athletes who participated in the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2021 was 27.4 years for women and 27.9 years for men⁴⁵. At the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, athletes over the age of 25 predominated in sports such as athletics (29.5), judo (27.8), volleyball (29.5), boxing (27.4), artistic gymnastics (25.4), and women's soccer (27.5)⁴⁶, with 59.56% of Brazilian athletes over the age of 25⁴⁷.

Thus, the age restriction established in the demographic profile required by ASP-FUMS limits participants to a specific group, making it impossible to include most Brazilian athletes of Olympic age. Such limitations hinder the development of high-performance sports within the university setting – which the program could foster – as well as support for career transition, especially at critical stages of an athlete's career.

In addition to excluding a significant portion of athletes who might be interested in the program, the age limit of 16 to 25 suggests a focus primarily on institutional interests. This strategy is similar to the model adopted by private Brazilian universities in the early 1980¹⁻⁵, to the detriment of the European model consolidated since the 2000, which began to direct – and still directs – a set of supports, including financial ones, so that athletes in dual sports careers have better conditions for transitioning to post-sports careers^{10,18}.

In the academic sphere, until 2022, the program was exclusively for undergraduate athletes, which may be related to budgetary issues. Among these, we highlight the linking of university extension stipend to undergraduate students⁴⁸ and the prioritization of resources from the Student Assistance Program, linked to the National Student Assistance Police, for students in situations of socioeconomic vulnerability enrolled in face-to-face undergraduate courses⁴⁹. However, limiting the program to undergraduate students restricted educational opportunities.

In turn, the inclusion of *stricto sensu* graduate students from 2023 onwards proved to be a pertinent measure, as it enabled the participation of athletes enrolled in master's and doctoral programs, given that opportunities for professional preparation for life after a sporting career should also enable specialization in higher academic degree programs.

The inclusion of aspects related to academic performance in the profile of athletes required by the ASP-FUMS, starting in 2023, represents an essential advance in programs focused on dual sports careers – an element that, until then, was absent. Simultaneous

involvement in high-performance sports and academic training is the main characteristic of a parallel dual sports career⁴⁸.

According to the assumptions of holistic theory, the development of athletes should occur globally and simultaneously in the athletic, psychosocial, psychological, academic, professional, and financial dimensions⁵⁰. This approach recognizes that success in sports and academic careers depends on a balanced articulation between these dimensions, requiring continuous institutional support and individualized monitoring strategies.

Obtaining a degree is an effective strategy for preparing athletes for the transition after their sporting careers⁵¹, with the voluntary decision to end their careers being more common among those with academic training²⁸. In contrast, low levels of education at the end of a sporting career are associated with difficulties in entering the job market, such as a lack of specific skills, obstacles to finding employment, and financial instability⁵². In addition to obtaining a degree, it is essential that athletes in transition perform well throughout their academic training so that, upon reaching retirement from sports, they have the skills, abilities, and conditions necessary to take on new professional responsibilities.

In light of the pillars that support dual sports careers, it is essential that athletes are committed not only to athletic performance but also to academic excellence, as this will be decisive for their professional integration after the end of their athletic careers. By including academic performance among the selection criteria, the program demonstrates a clear understanding of the relevance of this aspect for the transition from a sports career, reinforcing its commitment to the comprehensive development of athletes.

With regard to the sports profile, in the initial period (2013-2016), there was a low level of demand, characterized by the absence of specific criteria for the classification of results; no time limit for the validation of titles; no minimum score for the granting of support; and a lack of definition of the sports covered. This suggests that the ASP was geared toward recreational sports.

In the second period, specific sports were specified, although without restriction to specific competitions, which allowed for a wider range of athletes. It can be seen that, starting in 2017, the profile demanded by the ASP-FUMS notices was that of student-athletes, defined by Reyes-Bossio et al.²¹ as individuals whose main objective is to pursue an academic career, but who also dedicate themselves to sports, alternating between physical activities and competitive sports, such as participation in university teams or federated clubs.

Therefore, the second period proved to be more focused on creating opportunities for student-athletes to remain in the program than specifically on having them represent the university in specific sports competitions. In other words, the program was more centered on the demands of scholarship recipients. Although designed for student-athletes, it did not prevent athlete-students from participating. In fact, the establishment of a minimum score of 100 points in 2019 marks the beginning of the inclusion of athletes with the best sports results.

In the third period, the ASP-FUMS adopted stricter criteria regarding athletic performance. In 2023 and 2024, the minimum score required was raised to 300 points, three times higher than that stipulated in 2019 and twice as high as that for the period between 2020 and 2022. In addition, during this same period, an age restriction between 16 and 25 years old was implemented, and starting in 2023, there was a clear focus on sports featured in the Brazilian University Games and Olympic Games, signaling the program's demand for athlete-students.

According to the definition by Reyes-Bossio et al.²¹, athlete-students are those involved in high-performance sports and include Olympic athletes, professionals, or members of national teams who balance the demands of their sporting careers with academic activities, the latter being subordinate to the former.

Although the increase in technical requirements can be interpreted as an advance in the qualification of beneficiaries, the age limit excluded potential candidates over the age of 25 – an age group that, in the Brazilian context, as discussed earlier, is below the average age of participants in the Tokyo and Paris Olympic Games.

Therefore, the internal logic of the profiles required by the notices and eligibility criteria from 2023 onwards is ambiguous, because, on the one hand, they were aimed at athletes with higher sporting performance, with links to sports present in the Brazilian University Games and Olympic Games, and expanded beyond undergraduate studies, but limited maximum participation to 25 years of age. Furthermore, with the exception of the second period, the other stages of the ASP-FUMS did not integrate diverse groups.

International universities adopt a broader and more inclusive perspective on dual sports careers, contrasting with the model observed in some Brazilian universities, including FUMS. The Carlos III University of Madrid, for example, includes in its sports activities both athletes who represent the institution in local and national university competitions and high-performance athletes⁵³. Similarly, the University of A Coruña includes in its university sports programs athletes who represent the institution or Spain in official regional, national, or international competitions, as well as high-performance athletes linked to national teams affiliated with different sports federations or who participate in Olympic and Paralympic association programs. Such models demonstrate a broader understanding of the sporting trajectory, recognizing its diversity and promoting policies that reconcile academic development with high-level sporting performance.

The design of programs aimed at dual sports careers that cover a wider age range and, consequently, different normative transitions – as observed in the period prior to 2023 – constitutes an inclusive alternative that is strategically aligned with the recommendations of the holistic development model proposed by Wylleman and Rosner⁵⁰. This model recognizes the interdependence between the athletic, psychosocial, psychological, academic, professional, and financial domains.

The inclusion in dual career sports programs of both athletes of an age compatible with university competitions and high-performance athletes involved in international events and the Olympic Games would significantly expand the scope of institutional action. Such a measure would avoid discontinuity in the support offered to experienced athletes, contributing to the consolidation of sporting trajectories at different stages of their careers. In addition, it would strengthen the transition between competitive categories – from junior to senior and, later, from senior to master – promoting a more sustainable and integrated approach to long-term sports development.

In this sense, considering what is already in place, it would be relevant to expand the scope of the ASP-FUMS by excluding aspects that impose time restrictions through non-essential bureaucratic tasks – still present in FUMS notices – such as mandatory participation in the organization of events. In order for athlete-students to have better conditions to join the program, it is also essential to review the age limit, especially the exclusion of the criterion that establishes a maximum age of 25.

Such adjustments would be more in line with the assumptions that guide the dual sports career geared toward athlete-students, as well as the set of supports that these individuals require throughout their academic and sports careers¹⁹. Some of this support is already provided by FUMS, such as the payment of athletic stipend and assistance for participation in sporting events⁴³, compensation for absences and assessments in cases of absence due to official sporting commitments⁵⁵, as well as specific selection processes for the admission of athletes to higher education⁵⁶.

This approach would also allow athletes with sporting excellence in the improvement and high performance phases to enjoy the benefits of the program and participate in the career

transition process. This transition, far from being unidirectional and linear—restricted only to those who compete in world competitions or the Olympic Games—also includes individuals who remain at a high competitive level, competing in master categories. Career transition can occur at different stages of an athlete's career and is a multidirectional process.

Considering the regional particularities of Mato Grosso do Sul, such as the absence of a club sports tradition, the aforementioned adjustments would allow the ASP-FUMS to include student-athletes with high sports performance, in addition to athlete-students. This expansion would enable athletes in transition from junior to senior categories – recognized as one of the most complex stages in an athletic career and with high dropout rates⁵⁷ – who have not managed to remain in elite sports to prolong their athletic careers through university sports, representing the university institutionally. Simultaneously, these athletes could prepare for the transition from competitive sport to the professional market, strengthening the role of the university as an agent of support for sporting continuity and comprehensive training.

Despite the limitations pointed out, the development of actions aimed at individuals involved in competitive sports in the context of ASP-FUMS is fundamental to expanding the possibilities for athletes to remain in higher education. It is important to note that Brazil is still an emerging country in terms of policies aimed at the simultaneous development of sports and academic activities. As evidenced by Silva¹⁰, support mechanisms, such as athletic stipend for university athletes, are still in their infancy at federal universities.

Conclusões

The eligibility criteria for obtaining an athletic scholarship under the ASP-FUMS program cover multiple dimensions – disciplinary, bureaucratic, institutional *marketing*, and sports – highlighting the complexity of the selection process. In addition, the profiles of the scholarship recipients were defined based on demographic, academic, and sporting criteria, which reinforces the multifaceted nature of the support policy and its attempt to address the different realities and demands of athletes who engage in both sporting and academic activities.

Throughout its 11 years of existence, the program has undergone significant changes. In its initial phase, it prioritized the granting of scholarships to recreational athletes enrolled in undergraduate programs, with no specific requirements regarding the sport or athletic performance, focusing on a recreational profile. Starting in 2018, the program maintained the disciplinary and bureaucratic criteria already established, incorporating the dimension of institutional marketing with the aim of increasing the visibility of the university and the program itself. During this same period, the sporting dimension was introduced, formalizing commitments related to the availability of beneficiaries for training, travel, and participation in competitions, which marked the beginning of a public policy specifically aimed at student-athletes representing the institution. In 2023, the requirements related to athletic performance were expanded, inaugurating a new stage of the program, more aligned with the demands of excellence and representation in the university context, especially through participation in the Brazilian University Games, that is, for athlete-students.

It can be concluded that, throughout its history, ASP-FUMS has gradually moved toward the institutionalization of a public policy focused on sporting excellence, through financial support in the form of athletic stipend to cover additional expenses. However, this progress presents ambiguous nuances: although, in the third stage, the profile outlined is that of athlete-students, it remains restricted to the age group compatible with institutional representation in the Brazilian University Games.

Although the advances and opportunities promoted by the program are recognized, the evidence analyzed indicates the need to review the demographic profile of beneficiaries,

especially with regard to the current age limit and the inclusion of requirements unrelated to sports and academic activities. Making these criteria more flexible would broaden the program's reach, covering athlete-students at different stages of their sporting and academic careers, without restricting them to institutional representation in university competitions. Such a reorientation would contribute to the consolidation of a more inclusive and equitable public policy aligned with the real demands of the university community, while also recognizing student-athletes as a legitimate part of the program's target audience.

Despite the original and unprecedented contributions that this research offers to the debate on university sports – especially with regard to dual sports careers – it is necessary to acknowledge some limitations. Although it covered an extended period of time, the analysis focused on a single university and was restricted to institutional documentation, which limited the understanding of the phenomenon in its holistic and ecological complexity and at the national level. This methodological limitation also made it impossible to access accurate data on the number and level of competitions in which the athletes effectively participated. This limitation compromises an in-depth assessment of the actual profiles of scholarship recipients, restricting the analysis to the profiles required in the public notices, without considering actual athletic performance and its implications for the academic and athletic trajectories of students.

Based on the evidence obtained, it is suggested that further research be conducted to deepen knowledge about the eligibility criteria and athlete profiles required by Brazilian federal universities that have implemented ASPs. Additionally, it is recommended that field research be conducted with the athletes covered, since such studies can contribute significantly to a deeper understanding of public sports policies within Brazilian federal universities, as well as to the characterization of the profiles of athletes effectively served.

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