



In partnership with



**University of
Sunderland**

Foreword from the Sporting Director



Welcome to South Shields FC International Academy

My name is Lee Picton and I have spent the last 15 years of my professional career creating and developing high performance environments for young football players, with the purpose of facilitating accelerated growth both on and off the field of play.

We are so excited to present this amazing new program to you that partners South Shields Football Club with University of Sunderland and gives high level student athletes from around the world the opportunity to combine a first rate degree education at a top 50 UK university, with a highly professional, full time football development program.

Too often, talented young footballers with real academic ability are presented with an uncomfortable choice. They either have to decide to sacrifice their academic progression and future career opportunities in order to become a full time footballer, or they sacrifice their pursuit of professional football in order to fulfil their academic potential. The South Shields FC International Academy program, that has been collaboratively designed by the Club and the University, gives talented individuals from around the world the opportunity to maximise all of their abilities and potential, both academically and athletically, so no compromises are required.

The information presented in this document focuses on the football provision that will be delivered as part of the overall program, and hopefully demonstrates that we are hugely committed to the technical, tactical, physical and personal development of each and every player that we work with.

Thank you for taking the time to find out more about this amazing opportunity and we look forward to you hopefully joining us here in the north east of England, the heart of English football, sometime soon!

Sporting Director
South Shields FC

SSFC Coaching Team



Lee Picton

Lee is the SSFC Sporting Director and has been at SSFC since 2016. His initial role at the Club was 1st Team Manager where he guided the team to consecutive league titles and promotions, along with FA Vase success at Wembley Stadium. Lee then stepped away from the touchline in November 2020 to become Chief Executive at the Club, and then moved to the position of Sporting Director in May 2022. Lee has accumulated over 15 years of experience developing football academy programs and formerly worked as a Lead Coach at Newcastle United FC Academy before joining SSFC. He currently holds a UEFA A Coaching Licence and will be a prominent member of our delivery team for the International Academy.

Adam is our Head of International Academy and joined South Shields having previously worked for the illustrious and historical Champions League Club Rangers, where he headed up the academy and training ground operations. Adam started his career founding his own sports coaching company at the age of 18, which he grew to over 50 coaches and sold 5 years later. Prior to Rangers he worked for the EFL overseeing their operational aspects. Adam has acted as either a consultant, Non-Exec Director or Coach to many football clubs including Newport County, Stevenage, Newcastle United Women and more. He also consults for sports technology company Okkulo and holds a Masters Degree in Sports Directorship.



Adam Shaw



Phil Naisbett

Phil is an ex-professional goalkeeper who started his playing career at Sunderland AFC before going on to play for other clubs such as Exeter City FC and Scarborough Athletic FC. Phil has been at SSFC since 2017 and is the Head Goalkeeper Coach for our 1st Team and our domestic U16-U19 Academy. Phil is a UEFA B Licence Coach and will be responsible for delivering the goalkeeper specific sessions for our International Academy goalkeepers.

SSFC Coaching Team



Elliot Dickman



Andy Morris

Andy is our Head of Physiotherapy & Medical here at SSFC and is now in his 16th year at the Club. He has a BSc (Hons) in Physiotherapy and is a fully qualified member of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. Andy also has over 10 years of experience working in the National Health Service as a musculoskeletal physiotherapist and also holds a FIFA medical diploma. He will oversee all physio and medical related issues that occur within the International Academy program and will ensure that each and every player will receive the best possible medical

Duncan is responsible for delivering our mental skills training program at the International Academy and aims to bring an increased awareness to what is “mental fitness” and how it plays out in personal and high performance environments. He was a former player here at SSFC, and is also a PhD graduate from the world famous Loughborough University and brings a blended approach, integrating movement, mind and emotional awareness into his coaching and teaching practice. Duncan is accredited by the Association for Coaching and has 12 years of experience as a personal trainer and more recently a Leadership and Action Learning Facilitator. His mindfulness influences come from Positive Intelligence, Transcendental Meditation, The Listening Space and many more embodiment focused practices.



Duncan O'Brien

SSFC Coaching Team



Kris Thackray

Kris is Academy lead coach. Chris started his career with Newcastle United, after being released age 16 he went on to make over 200 professional appearances most notably in Italy and Germany. Having appeared for clubs such as Seria A side Reggina. Chris, a UEFA licenced coach brings wealth of international experience for you to draw upon and is fluent in Italian.

Martin Nugent – Martin holds a Masters degree and NSCA accreditation in Strength & Conditioning and is also currently undertaking a PhD in Elite Performance, researching the underpinning performance qualities of deceleration of female footballers. Martin has 20 years of experience within professional sport, including working with national governing bodies such as the English Institute of Sport and has also worked as a consultant for the Premier League and with international footballers such as Sam Greenwood (Leeds Utd), Jacob Murphy (Newcastle Utd), Adam Armstrong (Southampton FC), Dan Barlasier (Middlesbrough FC), Elliott Embleton (Sunderland AFC), Josh Coburn (Middlesbrough FC). Martin's world class facility is also the northern performance hub for the PGMOL, tasked with the job of conditioning professional Premier League, EFL and UEFA/FIFA match officials. Martin and his team will be fully responsible for the design and delivery of our strength and conditioning program for the players at the International Academy.



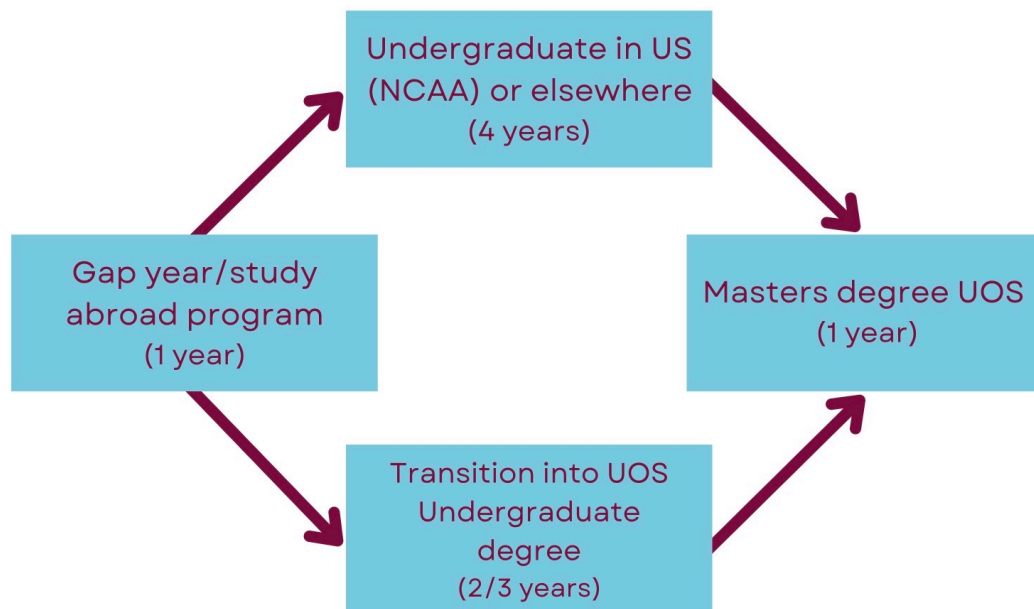
Martin Nugent

“Our strength is in our people”

Academic Programs



Student Athlete Pathway



Whether a student athlete has just graduated from high school or has already completed an undergraduate degree at another university, we have fantastic degree level courses delivered by a top 50 UK institute at the University of Sunderland (UOS), that allow our players to take the next step in their educational journey.

Option 1 – Gap year/study abroad program (1 year duration)

This option is available for players who have just graduated high school but don't necessarily want to commit to a full undergraduate degree in the UK. Instead, they can study a mix of degree level modules across a range of subjects that will give them 120 higher educational credits that can either be transferred into an undergraduate degree at a university back home, or potentially used to transition into year 2 of an undergraduate degree at the University of Sunderland if they decide to stay in the UK.

We see this as a fantastic option for high school graduates who aspire to gain a soccer scholarship opportunity at a US college, but don't currently have the level of offer they are looking for. Combining this opportunity to massively develop as a player, student and person for a year in the UK, whilst accessing SSFC's ever-expanding network of high-level US collegiate soccer coaches, student athletes will put themselves in the best position to achieve their scholarship goals.

Please see link below for a more detailed breakdown of this academic program.

[South Shields International Academy Study Abroad Program](#)

Academic Programs



Option 2 – Full undergraduate degree (2 or 3 year duration)

This option is for players who have either just graduated high school or have completed option 1, as above, and want to top up to a full degree. Whichever category you potentially fall into you would graduate at the end of your program with a full undergraduate degree.

Please see link below for a more detailed breakdown of these academic programs.

[BA \(hons\) Business and Management](#)
[BSc Sport and Exercise Science](#)

Option 3 – Masters degree (1 year duration)

This option is available for players who have completed an undergraduate degree at UOS and wish to continue their journey with us, or for those who may have attained an undergraduate degree elsewhere and wish to join our program for their 1-year masters degree.

We see this as a great option for those student athletes who no longer have any NCAA eligibility left and for those who would like to complete their masters degree in 1 year as opposed to a 2-year timeline at most US colleges.

This program also gives players the opportunity to maximise their ongoing soccer development in a high-performance environment and explore professional / semi-professional playing pathways around the world beyond graduation.

Please see link below for a more detailed breakdown of these academic programs.

[Masters in Business Administration](#)
[MSc in Sport and Exercise Science](#)
[MA in Sports Journalism](#)

Included in the Program



Here is what a typical weekly schedule looks like at SSFC International Academy:

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
A.M.	Academic tuition	Academic tuition	Academic tuition	Academic tuition	Academic tuition	GAME PROGRAMME (MALE)	GAME PROGRAMME (FEMALE)
P.M.	Transport to SSFC	Transport to SSFC	GAME PROGRAMME (MALE & FEMALE)	Transport to SSFC	Transport to SSFC		
	Technical/ tactical training	Technical/ tactical training		Video analysis performance review session	Technical/ tactical training		
	Strength & conditioning	Mental Skills training		Strength & conditioning	Squad food/ social event		
	Transport to Accommodation	Transport to Accommodation		Transport to Accommodation	Transport to Accommodation		

Players can expect to receive the following:

- Up to 8 hours per week of on-field technical and tactical sessions from our UEFA qualified coaching team. This will incorporate full squad sessions and more specialised position specific sessions in order to maximise player understanding and development.
- 2 designated strength and conditioning sessions per week, delivered by Martin Nugent and his highly qualified support staff at his world class facility.
- In addition to this, each player will receive ongoing athletic screening and testing from Martin and his team in order to identify any weaknesses or vulnerabilities to injury. The results of which will be used to develop individual and specific S&C programs for each player.
- 1 session of mental skills training per week, to help players develop effective strategies across the areas of sports psychology and general mental wellbeing.
- Comprehensive training kit package provided by Umbro
- Highly structured games program across a 9 month competitive season. This will include representing SSFC International Academy in league competitions, cup competitions and showcase games, against other professional and semi-professional teams. Players will also get regular opportunities to represent Sunderland University (Team Sunderland) in regional and national level BUCS leagues and cups.
- At least 2 physiotherapy clinics per week for all injured players to receive assessment, treatment and rehabilitation work from our Head Physiotherapist and his team.
- 1 video analysis and performance review session per week in order to give highly specific and detailed feedback from our coaching team and analysts to the players via game video and GPS data. Each player will have access to our Hudl analysis platform so they can analyse, review and share their footage at any point.
- Transport will be provided to and from all games and training sessions
- Top level training facilities and equipment for all sessions



Martin Nugent Elite Performance

Student athletes will be able to access world class strength and conditioning facilities and will be given tailored strength and conditioning programs from a team who also look after world class elite sports men and women



We Don't Just Train Athletes, We Produce Them

Watch Martin working with Newcastle United star Jacob Murphy:

[Jacob Murphy training](#)

Football Facilities



The football coaching delivery of the International Academy will be split across two sites:

1st Cloud Arena



- 1 x grass match pitch
- 1 x artificial turf training pitch
- 2 x changing rooms and showers

- New restaurant and bar
- Classroom facilities

New £3 million main stand completed in the summer of 2022!

Ford Quarry Football Hub



- 3 x artificial turf training pitches
- 6 x changing rooms and showers

- Classroom facilities
- Café and lounge area

Cost of the Program



Our prices range depending on what course you have chosen to study.

Below is a breakdown of the costs for each program. All program costs include full academic tuition, accommodation and football / soccer delivery.

Accommodation

- Your own private room in UOS accommodation block
- Kitchen, Sitting Room & Bathroom – shared provision with other SSFC International Academy student athletes
- All bills – gas, electric, tax, water, wifi and insurance

Football / Soccer

- Technical / Tactical sessions
- Analysis
- Strength & Conditioning
- Mental Skills
- One to one additional sessions
- Transport
- Kit
- Competitive games program

Gap year/Study Abroad Program £27950

Regardless of the academic modules you choose the price will remain the same.

Undergraduate Program £31500 - £33500 per year

[BA \(hons\) Business and Management](#): £31500

[BSc Sport and Exercise Science](#): £33500

Masters Program between £34000 - £36000

[Masters in Business Administration](#): £36000

[MSc in Sport and Exercise Science](#): £34000

[MA in Sports Journalism](#): £34000

For your exact individual quote please contact us directly.

Testimonials



Callum Ross

"I cannot speak highly enough of my time at South Shields Football Club. The people, the facilities, the coaching, are all top class and any young player out there looking to develop themselves both on the field and off the field couldn't wish to be part of a better environment. I spent 4 years on a top scholarship in the USA and then went on to play professional soccer over there too, so I fully understand the challenges of combining your academic studies with high level athletic training and competition. I can honestly say that the way the International Academy program at SSFC has been set up, and with the people that they have on board, this is an incredible opportunity for any young aspiring player from overseas to get an incredible experience that will help take themselves to the next level in so many ways."

NCAA National Champion 2016 – Wingate University
NSCAA All-American Team 2016
Charlotte Independence FC 2017
Oklahoma City Energy FC 2018-2019
South Shields FC 2020-2023



Gary Hamill

"I visited South Shields Football Club and Sunderland University in early February 2023, and personally spent a lot of time with all the staff that are involved with the International Academy program. I have to say that the vision and preparation that has gone into developing this project has been hugely impressive and the student athletes who get the opportunity to access this program will get to work, day in and day out, with some fantastic people and within some tremendous facilities in a highly professional environment. This is a program that is purpose built for talented student athletes with aspirations to play at the highest level. Every element of the provision is geared towards high performance and development, and aims to provide a pathway to professional soccer. The program is also situated in a beautiful part of the UK with a great combination of coastline, city life, and countryside all within 30 minutes travel so the players will enjoy an incredible life experience too."

Head Coach – Wingate University, North Carolina (32nd season)
NSCAA National Coach of the Year 2016

Testimonials



Ryan Dougherty

Attended NCAA Division 1 Rider University

“The level and style of play has been much better than in the US... When you compare it to the cost of US schools and masters degrees, it’s incomparable”

Click here to watch Ryan talk about his experience at SSFC International Academy:

https://youtu.be/MW5HLyK_IZQ



Daniel Rovira

Attended NCAA Division 2 West Liberty University

“The program has exceeded my expectations, the overall development I have been going through with the high quality training sessions, analysis, S&C and how it translates onto the field”

Click here to watch Daniel talk about his experience at SSFC International Academy:

<https://youtu.be/KTB70LJBy4o>



Osman Padilla

Attended NCAA Division 3 Northland International University

“It’s the best opportunity I have had in my life, I always dreamed of playing football in England, I have been able to achieve a lifetime goal... I would have loved this experience even sooner”

Click here to watch Osman talk about his experience at SSFC International Academy:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JU6_rBfLVtI

Frequently Asked Questions



How do we recruit our players – How / where did you find me?

We use a stepped approach to our recruitment procedures broken down below;

- 1) We search the NCAA, building a database of players and the different years they are in through their collegiate and educational journeys
- 2) We use our contacts, networks and agents to help us identify players who we believe would be a high match for our program
- 3) We work very closely with a large number of youth soccer clubs to identify possible student athletes for our program (both for the next cohort intake and for future years)
- 4) We background search the schools Instagram handle and in turn the individual player handle
- 5) We reach out to players directly to inform them of our program
- 6) We send the initial informational video to inform players of our program and what we have to offer
- 7) Interested players are then invited onto a call to further explain the program and answer any questions
- 8) Further individual calls are held with players and their families until a decision has been reached.

Why do we do it this way?

There are several reasons why we use this approach;

- 1) We have come to understand that the data that historically we may have used to prioritise approaches or to “best fit” players has no correlation to those who are best suited for our program
- 2) Nuances such as the short NCAA season, style of play, coach turnover, playing out of position, injuries etc. all contribute to biased data.
- 3) We know that student athletes who are serious about this opportunity will have the base level and mindset needed to maximise their ability. Therefore, the most important factor in our recruitment process is highlighting good people that match our core values and ethos as a club
- 4) Using this approach, we can identify those we would like to offer an official invitation to, to join our International Academy

Frequently Asked Questions



Where do our players live?

Our student athletes live in University of Sunderland accommodation situated at Panns Bank, Sunderland.

How much does the program cost?

Prices range so please see our “Cost of the Program” page.

Do you offer scholarships?

Unlike other programmes around the world and the American Collegiate system, we only have squad rosters of around 25 student athletes to deliver a real professional experience. We see this as a real USP and important part of our program. However, the caveat to this is that because we don't have hundreds of student athletes, we don't have a surplus of finance to then offset costs and offer scholarships. All our revenue is driven back into the program for an unmatched experience.

Is there an age limit?

No, there is no age limit to our program. We do play in age restricted competitions however we also are able to play “overage” players in these competitions.

Can I play for the first team?

There is not a straightforward answer to this questions as every player is judged on their own individual circumstances. However, there are certain restrictions that do prohibit players playing for our first team team. These include; if you you are an international student athlete on a student visa, you cannot play for our first team however, if you are at the required level, you will be given the opportunity to train and play certain 1st team fixtures. Once graduated there are potential other routes to explore, but again this is a very case by case, individual basis.

If you are a UK domestic student joining our program, there are no restrictions around playing for our 1st team.

Why Choose Us?



We are confident that through exploring our program, the resources within this the brochure, video resources, the group and subsequent individual follow up calls, further calls with your family and potential onboarding process, you will see us repeatedly evident the professional nature of our program. Furthermore, showcasing how we can make a substantially positive difference on your football and educational journey. Every element of this program will be the replica of what you would expect to receive as a full-time professional footballer, here at a professional football club in England.

Alongside the impressive program elements, we truly believe our real strength lives within our people and those who would be responsible for you and your development during your time on our program.

We take real pride, honour and responsibility in being given the privilege to mentor and support the young adults who put their trust in us to make their next steps on their journey a successful and impactful one. We are driven as a group of staff to provide the leadership and guidance to help you truly become the best version of yourself both on and off the pitch.

Our promise to you is that we will provide the environment, culture, expertise and support to maximise your talent, education, personal development and overall experience.

When looking towards your future it can often be a daunting and somewhat difficult decision to know what to do for the best. We absolutely see our programs as providing a catalyst period in your life whereby, not only do we use our expertise and experiences to maximise your time whilst on the program, but we also provide the best future potential options aligned with your football and career goals.

Thank you for reading through our brochure and we would always welcome a further conversation about our International Academy.

Adam Shaw
Head of International Academy



[Click here to watch our promotional explainer video](#)





Contact:

Lee Picton

Email: lee.picton@southshieldsfc.co.uk

Adam Shaw

Email: adam.shaw@southshieldsfc.co.uk

Website: sunderland.ac.uk/ifa

Instagram: [SSFC International Academy Instagram](#)

South Shields Football Club
1st cloud arena, Shaftesbury avenue,
South Shields, NE32 3UP, United Kingdom