

**What are the roles and opportunities for universities
before, during and after
an international sporting event?**

*Sharing experiences from the London Olympics and Paralympics
to forge a deeper UK-Japan collaboration*

Symposium summary

Date: 18 December 2015

Venue: Belle Salle Iidabashi Ekimae, Tokyo

Summary:

The Olympics and Paralympics offer unique opportunities for people and organisations in the host country to get involved in creating both the Games and their legacy. 94% of UK universities nationwide participated in the 2012 Games, taking on roles ranging from hosting teams or creating media stories to holding events to interest the public in science through sport. Moreover, they actively created opportunities for their students to participate in the Games, giving them valuable experiences which added to their global employability.

This symposium aimed to share UK universities' experiences and knowledge with the Japanese participants, and to stimulate new UK-Japan higher education collaborations in the runup to the Tokyo 2020 Games. One of the UK representatives who shared their expertise stated that you may not realise what a great opportunity this is going to be for you.

Key points arising from the symposium:

- There are many ways for universities to get involved in the Olympics and Paralympics, including through hosting teams, student volunteering, commissioned research, and leveraging expertise in culture, tourism, physiotherapy, dentistry, drug testing, construction, traffic management, urban landscaping.
- Universities need to be strategic, think about what they can offer and what they want to achieve.
- Universities can offer a breadth of facilities and expertise that few others can match, but creating synergies between these is key.
- Legacy takes many forms including profile-raising, stronger links with partners, and improved facilities; legacy opportunities should be included in the strategy and the initial plans.
- Partnerships are essential; universities should both use existing partnerships, and identify gatekeepers with whom new relationships need to be built.
- The Olympics and Paralympics provide an unparalleled opportunity for universities to tell their stories to the world. This requires a high degree of professionalism in terms of communications.
- Students valued involvement with the Games as volunteers or interns, since these were unique opportunities to acquire skills needed for employability in a global market.
- Applying for volunteering and internship opportunities with rigorous selection processes also helped to prepare students for employment.
- As well as gaining relevant work experience, student volunteers acquired people skills and event management skills. They learned time-keeping, conflict resolution, adaptability, communication, and teamwork. Since graduation, they are using these experiences in a variety of fields.
- Japanese universities are active in the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic preparations, and are keen to work with UK partners in a variety of ways, including Olympic-related student projects, exchanges, curriculum development, and collaborative research.

Opening remarks:



Matt Burney, Director of the British Council in Japan, opened the event by stating that the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics represent a **once in a lifetime opportunity** for the people of Japan, not only in the area of sports, but also in terms of cultural and business interactions with the world. The Games have a great impact on people, leaving both **tangible and intangible legacies**, and so Japan has a unique opportunity to think about the society it wants to create using the Games as a catalyst.

UK universities, in particular, played a critical role in the success of the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics, using their involvement to **strengthen public engagement**. The British Council commissioned a survey of British universities, introduced below, to pass on their knowledge and experiences, and intends to collaborate strategically and practically with Japanese universities on their plans for involvement.

Chiharu Shinjo, Director of Event Coordination at The Tokyo Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, explained that the Committee has **reached out to Japanese universities and colleges** in order to collaborate with them on using the opportunities provided by the Olympics and Paralympics to promote **Olympic and Paralympic education** and equip students with the **skills needed to work globally**. 786 universities and junior colleges are now involved, representing about 80% of the nationwide total.

Some joint projects have already been put into action, such as the development of an app to introduce local tourist spots to foreign visitors, or classes on the Olympics and Paralympics. The Committee also hopes that **young people will volunteer** during the Olympics and Paralympics, and that these activities will lead to a **legacy of globalisation**.

Presentations:

UK universities' experiences and learning points during the London Olympics and Paralympics

Louise Simpson

Founding Partner, The Knowledge Partnership / Director, The World 100 Reputation Network

Louise Simpson introduced the findings of a survey on UK universities' involvement with the London Games. The Olympics and Paralympics are about more than just sport: they **offer universities opportunities to improve their reputations and to realise strategies**. Recognising these opportunities, **94% of universities across the UK were involved** in a variety of ways. 30 universities (around 20% of the total number in the UK) hosted teams, but many more contributed towards the cultural Olympiad. This encompassed all the events that were not directly part of the sporting competitions, whether business events, local outreach, exhibitions, or poetry readings.

Partnerships are key to getting involved. The majority were either **with local government agencies or with other universities**. Podium was an organisation set up for the Olympics, in order to facilitate the participation of further and higher education institutions: it acted as the central agent for disseminating information about tenders, promoting research, and coordinating media involvement.

Using the Olympics and Paralympics as opportunities for **marketing and reputational amplification** was the single most important activity for UK higher education institutions. **Consultancy** was also of

major significance: universities leveraged the expertise of their academic and professional staff, and created opportunities to engage with partners. For students, the biggest opportunities came through **volunteering** as Games Makers, and many universities worked hard to generate such opportunities and incorporated them into their courses. The Olympics and Paralympics also provided UK universities with the chance for **outreach to local businesses and communities**, raising awareness of research and technology and inspiring local communities to get involved with sports.

Louise Simpson introduced some **case studies of universities that had been particularly successful** in various types of partnership. **Sheffield Hallam University** took the strategic decision to use the Games to **amplify their research**, and to **engage the local community**. They created an **exhibition called SportsLab** to engage the public in science through sports-related activity such as a virtual reality bobsleigh ride. The exhibition was so successful in Sheffield that it moved to the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, attracting **250,000 visitors** across the two venues, and this success helped the university to win a **£5 million grant** to establish the National Centre for Sport and Exercise Medicine.

The University of Birmingham carried out particularly impressive **media relations activities**. The PR team created a **relevant research story based on the Olympics each day** during the Games, and had a university expert on hand for media comments. The university hosted the Jamaican team, and obtained global media coverage valued at about £5 million, with the highlight being when **Usain Bolt praised his hosts on live television**. An added bonus of the Jamaican team's presence was interaction with the large local Caribbean community, who had not previously had much contact with the university.

The University of Leeds also hosted teams, despite their location in the north of England. They worked with the local council and built on longstanding contacts with China to attract the **Chinese Olympic team**, as well as hosting the Canadian Paralympic team. They **sent two chefs to China for a week** to learn about Chinese cuisine, and emphasised the cultural aspect of the Chinese presence in the city. As a legacy of the Games, they have a **stronger relationship with their local council**, and have subsequently established a **research partnership** with Beijing Sports University.



Universities which **thought carefully about their particular strengths and what they wanted to achieve** tended to be successful in winning and making the most of contracts. Universities which wish to host a team need first to **visit them in-country**. There are also a **range of other opportunities**, including in culture, tourism, physiotherapy, dentistry, drug testing, construction, traffic management, urban landscaping; **each university should focus** on its flagship or niche areas.

The Olympics and Paralympics will **not necessarily lead to a profit** for all universities, but **legacy takes many other forms**, such as profile-raising, stronger links with local and international partners, publicity for research, and better sports and other facilities. It is important to **plan for this legacy** in the initial strategy. After the Games are over, universities can use the expertise acquired as **consultants** to the next Olympics, as UK universities are already doing in Brazil, and are prepared to do in Japan.

The London Olympics and Paralympics and university strategy Dusty Amroliwala, Deputy Vice Chancellor, University of East London



Dusty Amroliwala introduced the case study of his university, University of East London, a medium-sized university with two campuses. One of these, the Stratford campus, is very near the Olympic Park.

The university's aims for the Olympics and Paralympics were to develop major sports facilities and to establish a reputation in the field of sports, attracting top sports students. They **created a shortlist to see where they could add value**. They knew that the US team were looking for large-scale facilities near to the venue. Although they had no established sporting reputation or facilities, they turned this into an opportunity, **offering custom-built facilities**. The SportsDock was co-designed with the US team, to exacting standards. It cost the university £20 million to build, but the US Olympic Committee equipped it, and **left this equipment for students** after the Games.

The university also succeeded in **establishing a reputation in sports**. They soon set up a **sports scholarship programme** which attracts many donations, and have also been chosen as a partner for the 2017

World Athletics Games. They have **opened several successful programmes** in sport and related studies, which are set to generate **£40 million in new income** over the ten years after the Olympics.

Winning a contract takes time. The university began discussions with the US Olympic Committee in 2008, and once this contract was finalised, they used it to generate others. The university hosted not just athletes, but also the Chinese media corps, and the ASICS sportswear company. **Universities are in a good position to host teams** and their support staff, who require a range of facilities from physiotherapy and catering to accommodation and a press centre. There are **few organisations other than universities** that can offer this range. The key is working out how to **package them together to create synergies**.

The role of **volunteers as co-creators of the Games** was emphasised by their title of Games Makers. Students participated in many different roles, including assisting visitors to London with travel and tourism advice, working with the different countries' teams, or performing in the opening and closing ceremonies. Some of these have developed into ongoing volunteering schemes.

The IOC **commissions a major piece of research** around each Olympics and Paralympics. In London, this was carried out by the University of East London. Academics, rather than consultants, are often best placed to do this. Since there is a longitudinal element, research needs to begin in advance.

The London Olympics and Paralympics and human resource development through event management

Debbie Sadd, Programme Leader, Event Management / Senior Academic in Leadership and Strategy, Department of Events and Leisure, Faculty of Management, Bournemouth University

Debbie Sadd explained how her university, Bournemouth, had been able to **engage fully in the Games despite being a small institution located at a distance** from the main venues. The university made a **strategic decision** that their best chance for involvement was at the nearest venue, Weymouth, which hosted the water sports. **Networking and partnerships were crucial** for a smaller university without a global reputation. Looking at the organisational structure of the Games, they realised that they needed to network with the "nations and regions" group. At the same time, they **worked with local partners** including local government, strategic business partnerships, the venue, police, and regional sports bodies. They began by networking with those with whom they had **existing links**. By **offering to carry out research** into community views on hosting the Games on behalf of local councils before Weymouth was chosen as the venue, they were in a strong position once the decision was made. The university's dedicated Regional Community Engagement Manager played a key role in this work.

The university considered how to get students from their different courses involved in order to **enhance their employability**. Students who spoke several languages worked as **translators or VIP hosts**. When the Olympic organisers put out a request for young people to take part in the **medals ceremonies**, the university bid successfully for the opportunity and trained the students. Three staff and seven students were chosen to run with the **Olympic torch**. These types of involvement created **important media opportunities**, on which the university capitalised.

The **expertise gained** during the Olympics and Paralympics continues to be put to use. The unique training provided for the Games Maker volunteers was developed into **"Festival Maker" training** for volunteers at festivals in the area. An **Olympic Studies Programme** ran for five years; it was very popular and students who took the course found it enhanced their employability. Debbie Sadd emphasised the importance of **telling the story of the university's involvement** with the Games, as this has led to new contacts, research, and student recruitment.



Introduction to the Tsukuba International Academy for Sport Studies

Satoshi Shimizu, Associate Provost, Professor, Graduate School of Comprehensive Human Sciences / Chair, Master's Program in Health and Sport Sciences/ Vice-chair, Tsukuba International Academy for Sport Studies (TIAS), University of Tsukuba

The University of Tsukuba has recently established the Tsukuba International Academy for Sport Studies (TIAS), which aims to **develop human resources with the ability to manage international sporting organisations and events**, as part of the Top Global Universities project. It first offered **short summer programmes** introducing international students to Japanese culture and sports, and

inviting guest speakers from the field, in partnership with AISTS, a sports management graduate school based in Lausanne.

In autumn 2015, TIAS launched its first Masters programme, an 18-month course in **Sport and Olympic Studies**. The course is **taught entirely in English**, and takes an interdisciplinary approach. It has enrolled 20 students, **15 of whom are international students on full scholarships**, selected from among 75 applicants. Attention was paid to **diversity** when selecting participants, which is groundbreaking in Japan. Indeed, TIAS staff see the Olympics and Paralympics as a good opportunity to bring greater diversity to Japan.



The course content is high-level, with lectures by leading academics and visiting practitioners, and lively discussions; **such courses are still rare** in Japan, and it is a challenge for the Japanese students to keep up. The internship of four weeks is included in the course, and students are encouraged to undertake this **internship** with organisations around the world. Collaboration with overseas partners is therefore very important for TIAS, and staff are **keen to collaborate with UK universities** on events such as the Rugby World Cup and the Olympics. They would like to **share experience on curricula for Olympic education**, and to develop and share texts. They are also seeking to set up international networks with practitioners.

Panel discussion:

The Olympics, the Paralympics, and the development of human resources



All the presenters took part in the panel discussion, which was chaired by Chika Takahashi, Head of Education at the British Council in Japan. The discussion covered issues such as the development of graduates with the skills to work globally, ways in which universities can use the Olympics and Paralympics to provide opportunities for their students to develop such skills, opportunities for further UK-Japan university partnerships around the Games, and advice from the UK participants to their Japanese partners. Some of the questions covered were as follows.

Equipping students with the skills that they need in order to work globally is an issue of great importance in Japan, as it is in the UK. What are the most relevant skills that students need to develop to prepare themselves for the global market place?

Japan is located a long way from the headquarters of international bodies such as FIFA or the IOC, and needs **better connections** with these bodies. **Communications and foreign language skills** are essential. Graduates also need **hands-on sport experiences**, as well as **management skills**, which is to say, the ability to play a larger role in major international organisations.

There are also **soft skills required by all employers**, not just those in the field of sport. **Presentation skills** are one such example. These do not just mean the use of PowerPoint; they are about how to present oneself, via language, body language, dress, or conduct - aspects which are not generally taught in the education system. Similarly, in students' everyday lives, **management skills** include time-keeping and managing their resources, while **networking** means sustaining and building relationships, including via social media.

Japanese graduates need to learn about **diversity**, since in a large international organisation, they may be working in an environment where there are no other Japanese. Diversity is about learning to communicate with various people, regardless of their backgrounds.

The Olympics and Paralympics will provide students with increased opportunities for international experiences here in Japan, which will make them more employable. What kind of skills can students gain from their involvement with the Games, and how do universities create these opportunities?



Students gained **key people skills**, plus **experience of running mega events**. They learned people management, reliability, dealing with conflicts, adaptability, communication (face to face, especially), and teamwork. Students today are not good at basic problem-solving, or responding to the unexpected. They gained important practice at this while volunteering at the Olympics. All of these skills were **useful when looking for jobs**.

For students, **employability is second only in importance to obtaining a degree**. However, students need to

understand that the environment is **highly competitive**, since they come from an entitlement culture. UK universities conducted **rigorous testing and selection**, including interviews, for volunteers for the Games. **Internships and work experience** are part of more and more UK programmes, as they give students a much better chance of getting a good job. This is not simply due to the internship experience itself, but also to the **preparations and application process**.

The **concept of internships is still quite new in Japan**, and seems very different from that in the UK. They are included in the TIAS Masters curriculum: students have a contract, and are evaluated on performance. However, they are **not rigorous**: in many cases, students simply experience the workplace environment. One reason for this issue is that **most faculty members have no industry experience**.

Japanese universities are seeking to recruit overseas students. What kind of global outlook is needed?

There are several aspects. First, you need to conduct **market research and analysis**. Look at what you offer. Do you have a **curriculum with an international perspective**? Are you **offering the subjects** which international students want to study? From which countries do you want to attract students? If you want students from China, for example, do you offer courses in Chinese? International students have **high expectations**, such as around accommodation. Check these expectations.



Communication is also essential, so you need to look at your website, and at your place in world rankings. Build your institution’s reputation and **differentiate yourself** from others using a strategic approach. **Good quality marketing and PR staff** are needed for this.

How can our university link “Japan”, our science expertise, and the Olympics in our branding?

If you are talking about graphic design, universities have to be a bit careful with branding, as the Olympic brand has **very strict copyright rules**, and can only be used by permitted sponsors. UK universities got round this by **creating new brands with agencies, such as Podium**, which devised the Inspire Mark. In the wider sense of branding, there are many ways to amplify your university’s reputation through the Games, as the case studies in the report ‘What are the roles and opportunities for universities before, during and after an international sporting event? - How UK Universities contributed to, and benefitted from, the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games: Lessons for success in Tokyo 2020’ show. (The report is available on the British Council website.)

How can Japanese universities create opportunities around the Games? Key advice from UK colleagues

When seeking to host a team, it does not matter if universities in Japan do not have the opportunity to form a close bilateral relationship directly with a visiting country. **Understand local mechanisms and work with local gatekeepers**. Several teams will come to Japan, and they will **require facilities which few organisations other than universities can offer**.

Japanese universities also have many things to offer besides facilities, wherever in Japan you are located. Look at your staff, students, and alumni to **see what is special** about them. The world will be looking at you, so use the **opportunity to tell those stories**.

You **know your strengths**. The University of Leeds won the bid to host the Chinese team partly because they precisely replicated the Olympic table tennis venue. Japan is also very precise and clever; you can use these strengths.

Try to partner with a country with which your university has **shared research interests** (not necessarily in the area of sports).

What is the **legacy challenge** for Japanese universities? Perhaps **professionalising your communications** by introducing specialist staff.

What are the opportunities for new collaboration between UK and Japanese universities around the Olympics and Paralympics?

TIAS would like our students to **work together with UK students on a project, such as attracting teams and developing a legacy**. The biggest difference is the UK expertise in strategy and project management. Japanese universities do not yet have a business focus. The Games provide us with an opportunity to learn project management methods.

There are opportunities for **student and staff exchange**, as well as for **collaborative research**. Each Games, the IOC commissions a major piece of research, which the University of East London carried out in 2012; we would be happy to collaborate on this.

Japan and the UK have many commonalities. Japanese universities could **hold summer schools** and attract students from a younger age, when there are fewer barriers.