



Universities Pool Council summer 2026 update blog

Introduction from Ben Hubbard, Executive Chair

Another season is in the books and it was another successful season for us at the Universities Pool Council (UPC)! There are lots of preparations and conversations that go into each event we put on, such as planning schedules with our venues and the comms with our ever-increasing number of stakeholders, and I am pleased at the value we're continuing to add to each event.

Some of our notable 'value adds' included the refereeing seminar at the BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Pool Championships, the amazing facilities we benefitted from at the Student Home Internationals, and links we have with Ultimate Pool and GB9 as regards our Individual Championship winners. Our events are currently at a very good 'baseline' which gives us the resource to make these 'value adds' - This wouldn't be the case without our host venues who continue to support us.

I am delighted to have been re-elected as Executive Chair for a second term of three years. I've achieved much in the last three years and passion from the community makes me want to continue to push this forward for another three years as Chair. Elsewhere on the Board, I would like to announce Daniel Rhymer will be joining the Board as our new BUCS Nine-Ball Pool Championships Tournament Director. Daniel brings forward much experience in his time at university as a UPC regional co-ordinator and the organiser of the 'Birmingham 9-ball' event over the past few seasons. This is following Gerald de Oliveira stepping down from the Board where we wish to thank him for all of his past contributions.

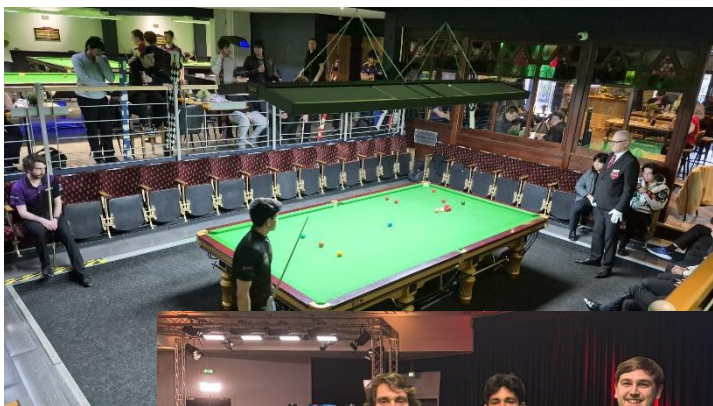
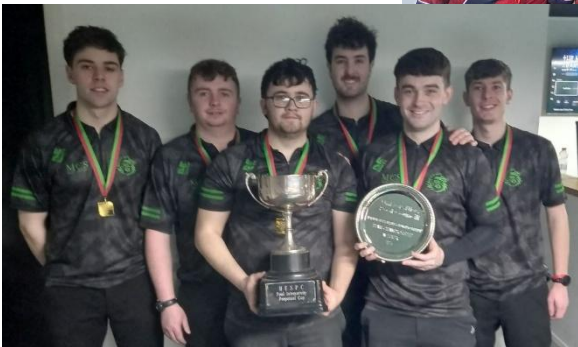
Elsewhere, Ollie Lowe will be stepping down as England Team Manager. The UPC Board wish to thank him for his efforts, where his England teams put together the 'perfect' clean sweep of all four team competitions at last season's Student Home Internationals. In his place, we are delighted to announce that Cliona Saunders-Cooney will be stepping up from Assistant Team Manager to be the new England Team Manager.

There is also a high amount of turnover in regional co-ordinators with Daniel being promoted and a few others leaving. We welcome the following people as new regionals for next season (regions they are leading in brackets): Joe Clayton (Scotland), Kai Bareham (East Midlands & East England), Ben Wornes (North West), Sam Lamb (West Midlands & London), and Kristina Mladenovic (South East). Along with Heather Jaques (South West) and Aimee Benn (moving to the North East & Yorkshire), and George Gregory covering Wales in his role as Team Manager, this will ensure more productive interaction between the UPC and individual clubs.

A big push of mine is to get more institutions and players to the UPC Irish Intervarsities event. To help in this, we've set-up new Irish regional co-ordinator roles to help generate momentum in the cue sports scene on the island of Ireland. We welcome Eoghan McGrath (University of Limerick) and Charlie Buckley (Dublin City University) into those roles. The UPC will hopefully also be in discussion with Student Sport Ireland again soon.

This blog post outlines the confirmed calendar for next year, as well as some of the changes we have made for next season's competitions.

Photographs from the 2025-26 season



Schedule and venues for the 2026-2027 season

Please see below for a list of the dates and venues confirmed:

BUCS-UPC Nine-Ball Pool Championships: Saturday 21st to Tuesday 24th November 2026 at the Northern Snooker Centre in Leeds

UPC Irish Intervarsities Pool Championships: Friday 19th to Sunday 21st February 2027 at Antrim Sports Club in Antrim, Northern Ireland

BUCS-UPC Eight-Ball Pool Championships: Saturday 27th February to Tuesday 2nd March 2027, jointly held in the three venues of Plaza Snooker & Pool Club in Stoke, Longton Snooker & Pool Club also in Stoke, and Players Pool & Snooker Lounge in Newcastle-under-Lyme

BUCS-UPC Snooker Championships: Thursday 11th to Sunday 14th March 2027 at the Northern Snooker Centre in Leeds

UPC Student Home Internationals: Saturday 3rd to Sunday 4th July 2027 at the Ultimate Pool Arena at Loughborough University

I am pleased to again be announcing the full schedule before the academic year has started. Apart from the Irish Intervarsities event, I believe these dates are essentially on the equivalent weekends from the 2025-26 season, providing good continuity in everyone's calendars.

The BUCS Eight-ball Pool Championships is fitting into a good place in the calendar to suit our venues without any mainstream pool competitions apart from the end of the European Championships. This does mean there are again only nine days between the BUCS Eight-ball Pool Championships ending and the BUCS Snooker Championships beginning. This is primarily because the fact Easter is early this season meaning these snooker dates are the last ones before term ends for some universities before Easter, although this may be a more longer-term strategy from us to schedule the events in this way. The Irish Intervarsities has been pushed back in the calendar two weeks this season to allow Irish institutions more time to build up teams, and while it is on the weekend before the BUCS Eight-ball Pool Championships begins this only affects Northern Irish institutions.

There has been much better awareness of not bringing outside food and drink into venues this season, which was a bug bear of a number of venues in the 2024-25 season. We are pleased with the progress but this standard needs to continue going forward – without strong relationships with the venues, we risk losing those venues which impacts a wide number of people going forward.

Social media update

The 2025-26 season was the first one for our new Instagram account at [Universities Pool Council \(@studentpoolandsnooker\)](#) • [Instagram photos and videos](#). This page specialises in engagement friendly content such as photographs of medallists, and general community engagement. Please given the page a follow if you have not already and have an Instagram account!

Our Facebook page will remain the primary social media for important information such as announcements, statements, entry and event details, blog posts etc which can be found at [Universities Pool Council | Facebook](#).

Ultimate Pool Varsity Pool

We have had some good discussions with Ultimate Pool in recent months. These discussions have not solely been on our partnership with them, where they support us by providing tables at one of their Ultimate Pool Arena dates for the UPC Student Home Internationals, as well as provide Challenger Tours spots to individual winners. These discussions have included exciting opportunities they are undertaking as part of their 'Ultimate Pool Varsity Pool' brand.

The 'Ultimate Pool Leagues for Universities' concept is bringing further structured, professional, weeknight team competition into universities across the UK, where Ultimate Pool believe it could completely change the way students experience competitive pool. Their concept is great competition, a brilliant atmosphere, and matches that are genuinely exciting from the first frame to the last, with a chance of the national prize fund of up to £50,000 next season subject to the number of participating university leagues. Unlike traditional league pool, Ultimate Pool Leagues uses the 'UPScore' handicap system, meaning players are given a rating based on their ability and the match-up is adjusted accordingly. This creates genuinely competitive matches between players of different standards, so experienced players can compete alongside complete beginners without one-sided matches becoming the norm.

For transparency for all, these 'Ultimate Pool Leagues for Universities' are completely separate to any events that us at the UPC run. While we are in frequent discussions with Ultimate Pool as consultants on the higher education cue-sports community, we primarily concentrate on our events including the ones sanctioned by the British Universities & Colleges Sports (BUCS). This is because the UPC is an organisation made up of volunteers and Ultimate Pool are the ones that should have primary control over running these leagues.

Some clubs may have received an e-mail from Ultimate Pool in recent days about these leagues. Those e-mail addresses were sourced solely from publicly-available sources we provided to Ultimate Pool to assist in their initial communications with clubs and unions. We will not share any personal data such as BUCS Play entries with Ultimate Pool.

There will be more communication from Ultimate Pool on this as we go further into the season. We encourage clubs and universities get involved in such leagues, where there are opportunities for both players for competitive play with handicapped system as well as organisers to run leagues.

New partnership with the International Referees Organisation

The UPC are delighted to be partnering with the International Referees Organisation (IRO) from the 2026-27 season onwards! They will be our refereeing partners for pool events going forward for UPC events. More information can be found in our recent press release here: <https://upc-pool.org.uk/cueaction/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/UPC-IRO-partnership-press-release-September2026.pdf>.

Dress code changes

The UPC Board has been reflecting on the amount of time we spend at events looking at the colour of clothes worn to determine if they are black and therefore fulfilling the dress code. To make this easier for you as players as well as us as officials, the word “black” has been removed from our dress code. This means players will now be able to wear other colours of formal shoes along with other colours of trousers or knee-length skirts that are not just black.

Note that formal shoes along with tailored trousers or knee-length skirts will still be required, other shoes like trainers will still not be permitted under the UPC dress code. As an additional note, we are still requiring all players at the UPC Student Home Internationals to wear black formal shoes along with black tailored trousers or a knee-length skirt due to the prestige of the event and the fact it is the only event on the UPC calendar where team photographs are also taken before the event begins.

Prize money for individual events

For BUCS events, prize money won in the Individual Championships will now be paid to players' institutions rather than the individuals themselves. This is a requirement put upon us by BUCS following their legal advice. Due to this change and to remove the handing out of cheques to club bank accounts or unions, we will be asking all institution contacts listed on Team Details Forms to get in contact with their Athletic Union or sports office if they win money at a BUCS event. The Union or sports office themselves will then need to provide the UPC the bank account details directly from an institution contact, where the UPC will now bank transfer the prize money to winners. This process will be explained to any team or individual who wins prize money during the season. Note that the actual amount of prize money using the formulae listed in the general competition regulations remains unchanged.

Team limit caps for pool events

Due to the reduction of nine-ball pool tables at the Northern Snooker Centre, the team limit cap at the BUCS-UPC Nine-ball Pool Championships will be lowered to 48 teams with only three qualifiers from each group. Please be aware of this when entering multiple teams as we already had to cap out a number of institution third teams last season when the cap was 56 teams.

The team limit cap at the BUCS-UPC Eight-ball Pool Championships will be set at 96 teams per category (Open and Womens). This means the Open category will have a 48-team Championship/Trophy tier and a 48-team Shield/Vase tier. This will be a hard limit that will not be relaxed unless the number of institution first teams exceed this number. The Irish Intervarsities does not have a cap currently due to its numbers.