



# Mastering the Olympics

## Prof Dr Stephan Wassong

### What role does education play within the Olympic movement?

Education is a central element because it enables objective knowledge-building processes, which aim to prevent an overly one-dimensional assessment of a phenomenon. By stressing education, a more in-depth understanding about the Olympic movement in its complexity allows constructive dialogues to be started and continued.

This clearly supports Recommendation 39 of the Olympic Agenda 2020, in which it is mentioned to foster dialogue within society and within the Olympic movement. In particular, in Olympic education, Olympic values have to be addressed in their origins, development and contemporary application. This is true because information about Olympic values is central to understand the significance of the Olympic movement in and for society. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has enshrined this specific feature in the Olympic Agenda 2020 and IOC president Thomas Bach wants to stress the uniqueness of the Olympic movement and its future-orientated development, which is coined and driven by the Olympic values.

### Which are the most appropriate means to transmit education within the Olympic context?

At the Olympic Studies Centre at the German Sport University Cologne, we asked ourselves how knowledge about the Olympic movement can be spread effectively so that as many target groups as possible can be addressed.

In order to strengthen the process of knowledge distribution, we believe it to be most useful to qualify ambassadors of Olympic education. This has to be done in a practically academic approach, which is not too theoretically driven. In their specific professional fields, the Olympic ambassadors can disseminate their knowledge and therefore act as multipliers of the relevance of Olympic values.

### How is the exclusivity of the MA Olympic Studies mirrored in its contents?

The programme implements a high-level, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary curriculum in Olympic studies. It addresses topics relevant to the Olympic movement such as commercialisation, administration, marketing, anti-doping and corruption strategies, professionalisation, governance, politicisation, internationalisation and athletic career development.

It is a clear benefit of the MA Olympic Studies that all topics are linked with the nature and the significance of the Olympic values. This is important for a modern application and legitimating of Olympism and distinguishes the programme from others which focus on management and administration with only limited consideration of ethical and educational contexts. Such a unilateral approach has to be avoided in order to safeguard the correct understanding of the concept of Olympism as driving force for highlighting the integrity of the Olympic movement within society.

### What are the addressed target groups?

The programme is designed for a wide range of target groups, which include representatives from sport administrations, National Olympic Committees, International Federations, broadcasting companies, sponsorship programmes on the national and international level, and educational institutions.

The target group-orientated approach is reflected in the part-time structure of the degree course, allowing participants to continue with their occupational obligations while being involved in the programme. The participants must attend only five modules of six working days each on site, so they can maintain their professional positions during the two years of the programme. The newly gained knowledge on the Olympic movement can then be implemented in the participants' workplace directly. This is a clear benefit for the participating individual but also for their employer and its profile in developing the Olympic movement.

### How is the MA Olympic Studies structured and organised?

The international MA Olympic Studies is a fully accredited degree programme, offered by an internationally renowned network of universities under the leadership of the Olympic Studies Centre of the German Sport University Cologne. The other involved academic institutions are the Olympic Studies Centres of Loughborough University in the UK, Autonomous University Barcelona in Spain, and the University of Canterbury in New Zealand. The IOC Olympic Studies Centre contributed in the early stage to the development of the academic project concept and the programme is organised with the support of the IOC.

### What are the expectations for the future?

Our expectations have already been met because the MA Olympic Studies is in its fourth intake, with participants from all over the world. We have to follow the objective to guarantee a high standard of professionalisation. An important element of this is a continuous review of the programme through an international group of external examiners and quality assurance institutions. This applies to the structure of the programme but most importantly to its contents.

These have to reflect the tendencies and latest developments within the Olympic movement in all areas, allowing us to meet the expectations of the participants, to integrate their extended knowledge into current and future projects in sport and the Olympic movement.

*For further information, anyone interested can visit our website on <http://www.dshs-koeln.de/olympicstudies>.*

*Prof Dr Stephan Wassong is Full Professor at the German Sport University Cologne, where he is Head of the Institute of Sport History and Director of its Olympic Studies Centre. He is Executive Director of the MA Olympic Studies and member of the IOC's Olympic Education Commission.*