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## SPORTS COMMUNICATION IN THE SPANISH BACHELOR'S DEGREES IN JOURNALISM CURRICULUM

### LA COMUNICACIÓN DEPORTIVA EN LOS PLANES DE ESTUDIO DE LOS GRADOS EN PERIODISMO EN ESPAÑA

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#### ABSTRACT

In the past, sports journalism was regarded by universities as a “soft” specialization. The picture began to change at the end of the 20th century when schools were incorporating it into their programs. Nowadays, it’s one of the most popular specializations among journalism students, who demand specific training in this field. This paper investigates the status of sports communication pedagogy at universities in Spain. For this purpose, exploratory research is conducted to describe the presence of sport as an object of study in the teaching plans of journalism degrees. The method used is content analysis. 38 curricula and 1748 syllabi of their courses are examined. Findings show that 58% of the universities offer a stand-alone course on sports communication, while 24% address the subject as part of a specialist journalism course. Other courses not related to sports journalism or specialist journalism (mainly those focused on radio, photojournalism, media law, press, and television) also include sports in their syllabi in a shorter form. For 11% of universities, the latter is the only way in which the subject is addressed, and in one case an institution does not include any reference to sport. Therefore, most Journalism degrees in Spain cover, to a greater or lesser extent, the demand for training in sports communication, although data indicates that this discipline is not yet fully established and that there is room for improvement.

**Keywords:** sport communication, sports journalism, specialist journalism, higher education, journalist education, courses, curricula.

#### RESUMEN

En tiempos pasados, el periodismo deportivo era contemplado desde la Universidad como una especialización menor. El panorama comenzó a cambiar a finales del siglo XX, cuando las facultades fueron incorporándolo a sus programas. Actualmente es una de las áreas de más interés entre los estudiantes de Periodismo, los cuales reclaman una formación específica en la materia. Este artículo analiza la respuesta que ofrecen los grados en Periodismo en España a esa demanda. Para ello, se realiza una

investigación exploratoria que describa la presencia del deporte como objeto de estudio en la planificación docente de las universidades. La metodología empleada es el análisis de contenido. Se examinan 38 planes de estudio y 1748 guías docentes de sus asignaturas. Los resultados muestran que el 58 % de las universidades ofrecen una asignatura específica sobre comunicación deportiva, mientras que el 24 % aborda la materia dentro de una disciplina sobre periodismo especializado. Otras asignaturas de campos distintos –principalmente las dedicadas a la radio, el fotoperiodismo, el derecho de la información, la prensa y la televisión– también estudian el deporte de forma puntual. Para el 11 % de universidades esta supone la única forma en la que se aborda la materia, e incluso hay una institución que no incluye referencia alguna al deporte. Por tanto, la mayoría de los grados en Periodismo españoles cubren, en mayor o menor medida, la demanda de formación en comunicación deportiva, aunque los datos indican que esta disciplina aún no está completamente asentada y que tiene margen de desarrollo.

**Palabras clave:** comunicación deportiva, periodismo deportivo, especialización periodística, enseñanza superior, formación de periodistas, asignaturas, plan de estudios.

## **A COMUNICAÇÃO DESPORTIVA NOS PLANOS DE ESTUDO DE GRADUAÇÕES EM JORNALISMO NA ESPANHA**

### **RESUMO**

Em tempos passados, o jornalismo esportivo era visto pela Universidade como uma especialização menor. O panorama começou a mudar no final do século 20, quando as faculdades o incorporaram em seus programas. Atualmente é uma das áreas de maior interesse dos estudantes de Jornalismo, que demandam formação específica no assunto. Este artigo analisa a resposta oferecida pelos cursos de jornalismo na Espanha a essa demanda. Para isso, é realizada uma pesquisa exploratória para descrever a presença do esporte como objeto de estudo no planejamento de ensino das universidades. A metodologia utilizada é a análise de conteúdo. São examinados 38 planos de estudo e 1748 guias de ensino de suas disciplinas. Os resultados mostram que 58% das universidades oferecem uma disciplina específica sobre comunicação esportiva, enquanto 24% abordam o assunto dentro de uma disciplina de jornalismo especializado. Outros sujeitos de diversas áreas –principalmente os dedicados ao rádio, fotojornalismo, direito à informação, imprensa e televisão– também estudam ocasionalmente o esporte. Para 11% das universidades, essa é a única forma de abordar o assunto, havendo até uma instituição que não inclui nenhuma referência ao esporte. Assim, a maioria das licenciaturas em Jornalismo espanhol cobrem, em maior ou menor medida, a procura de formação em comunicação desportiva, embora os dados indiquem que esta disciplina ainda não está totalmente estabelecida e que tem espaço para desenvolvimento.

**Palavras chave:** comunicação esportiva, jornalismo esportivo, especialização jornalística, ensino superior, formação de jornalistas, disciplinas, currículo.

Translation by **Paula González** (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At the end of 2014, American Journalism Review published a study about new trends in curriculum development in American journalism schools (Wordsman, 2014). The journal wanted to know which new subjects had been implemented recently and which ones would be added in the future. The incessant technological revolution experienced by the media explains that data journalism, data visualization, digital audience analytics, computer coding, and gamification were the protagonists of the new subjects in the curricula. A more classical field was also added: sports. The idea of the article, endorsed by Coche and Haught (2021, p. 27), is that the increase in sports communication courses in U.S. journalism schools is due to the rise of the sports business, which has made sports journalism one of the fastest growing areas in the media. Employment opportunities in the sector now extend beyond traditional companies, emerging from very different digital projects, as well as through entrepreneurship (Manfredi Sánchez et al., 2015). Also in sports clubs and federations, not only in their communication offices but also in the entities' own media, which now have to produce their own content to serve directly to the audience.

Thus, as Lobillo (2017) points out, sports journalism is evolving towards sports communication, which encompasses both the information and the strategies within sports organizations. These transformations have to find a response in a University that, in the author's opinion, lags behind the changes. Marín-Montín (2013) agreed when he denounced that, although the professionalization of sports activity has been demanding new figures to develop different communication tasks related to sporting events, Spanish universities have not been able to respond adequately to these demands.

### 1.1. The progressive articulation of the discipline

Through the doctoral thesis of Real-Rodríguez (2004), which includes information on the different curricula of the Journalism degree that Spanish universities have been offering over the years, as well as through direct consultation of these documents in the search engine of the Official State Gazette, it is known that sports journalism did not have an independent subject in higher education in Spain until the 1990s. Specifically, it was in 1992 when the first study plans were approved that included this subject. The Universidad de Sevilla (US) did it on April 21<sup>st</sup>, within a curriculum that included the subject of Sports Journalism; the Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB), on March 13<sup>th</sup>, with a more singular proposal, Theory and Technique of Sports Broadcasting; and the Universidad Pompeu Fabra (UPF), on May 12<sup>th</sup>, also with Sports Journalism. The three plans were approved at the session of the Academic Commission of the Council of Universities on September 28<sup>th</sup> of the same year, although the respective publication resolutions of each university and the final appearances in the BOE varied<sup>1</sup>. What the three institutions did agree on was to concentrate the teaching load of the course on the practical aspects as opposed to the theoretical ones<sup>2</sup>, as well

<sup>1</sup> The curricula of the US, UAB, and UPF were published in the Official State Gazettes of November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1992, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 1993, and February 12<sup>th</sup>, 1993, respectively.

<sup>2</sup> The US course was 4.5 credits (1.5 theoretical + 3 practical); the UAB course was 5 (2+3), and the UPF course was 4 (1+3).

as to make it an optional subject. Years later, in 1996, the Universidad Antonio de Nebrija raised the profile of sports journalism by including in its curriculum<sup>3</sup> a core subject of the same name.

The beginning of the take-off of sports communication as an academic subject in Spain occurred simultaneously with that of other countries. Taking the United States as a reference, Coche and Haught (2021, p. 29) establish the turn of the century as the starting point for the proliferation of sports journalism programs in higher education. Two factors contributed to this development: the dramatic increase in media coverage of sports (Higgs and McKinley, 2005, p. 12) and the alleviation of the stigma under which a subject traditionally considered a minor was viewed and is now taken more seriously than ever (Washburn and Lamb, 2020, p. 190). Hardin et al. (2006, p. 430) noted that in 2003 nearly a quarter of U.S. journalism schools offered courses in sports journalism. Less than a decade later, a study by the John Curley Center for Sports Journalism (Penn State University, 2012) raised the percentage to 48%. Spain shows a similar figure. According to Rojas-Torrijos (2021a, p. 274), 54 % of journalism degrees in Spanish universities include in their curricula some subject on sports. Although it should be noted that the structure of university education in the United States differs significantly from that in Spain because the curricula are more flexible, among other reasons. In our field of study, Pedersen et al. (2020, pp. 12-16) describe how North American students of the European equivalent of the degree can choose from a wide range of courses, both general - "Sports Communication" or "Sports Journalism"- and specific - "Ethical Issues and Sports Communication", "Sports, Gambling, and the Media", "Sports Video Production", etc.-. The referred Penn State University research (2012) indicated that courses in sports writing and sports broadcasting had the highest presence, followed by those dedicated to public relations and sports advertising, sports marketing, and sports media production.

Although the differences in the approaches of each study prevent comparisons such as those made between Spain and the USA, different works in territories such as Brazil (Perdigão, 2017) or the nations of the former Yugoslavia (Mučalo and Galić, 2021) coincide in denouncing a scarce supply of content on sports journalism in the universities of their respective countries.

## **1.2. Attraction and motivation factor for students**

On the demand side, student interest in this subject is high. A survey of students taking the subject Sports Journalism at the Universidad de Sevilla established that for almost 42% of them, working in this field was their top professional priority, while nearly 54% considered it as one of the various areas of information in which they could work in the future (Méndez-Muros, 2015, p. 459). The truth is that sport stands as one of the main factors that motivate students to pursue a career in journalism (Carpenter et al., 2016, p. 18) so many universities use it as a factor for attracting students. This is the opinion of Hull et al. (2019), who point out that, applying the commercial logic, according to which the student is conceived as a customer, many high education

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<sup>3</sup> Syllabus approved by Royal Decree 2305/1996 of October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1996, published in the BOE of November 26<sup>th</sup>, 1996.

institutions have been incorporating programs related to sports communication into their curricula to favor the recruitment of students and improve their income.

However, the decision to offer specialized studies in sports information for the education of aspiring journalists goes beyond the business that it may imply for the institution that offers them. In this sense, the case of Argentina is paradigmatic, where the Universidad Nacional de La Plata created in 2009 the *Tecnicatura Superior Universitaria en Periodismo Deportivo* (University Degree in Sports Journalism). This proposal, as explained by López et al. (2019), was the first and only option for free education in the field of sports journalism at an Argentine public university. The non-existence of an economic barrier for access to this program has allowed many lower-class students, with no previous university tradition in the family, to access higher education. In this way, sports journalism functions as a gateway to a university that promotes equal opportunities beyond the different economic resources of the students.

### **1.3. Basic approaches to the subjects**

Returning to the Spanish context, the aforementioned work by Rojas Torrijos (2021a) shows how, in this country, the subjects of sports journalism in undergraduate degrees have fairly homogeneous formal characteristics in the universities where they are taught and are configured, in most cases, as optional subjects to be taken in the 3rd or 4th year with a load of 6 credits.

When the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization elaborated the Model Plan of Studies in Journalism, to establish the subjects that should integrate the curriculum of this career, it included, as an example, Sports Journalism within the catalog of electives (UNESCO, 2007, p. 33). For its part, the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation, when describing the general structure that the Journalism degree should have in the White Book on undergraduate degrees in Communication, does not stipulate specific subjects -logically, not even one on sports communication-, but it does establish specialized journalism as one of the subjects of the mandatory common contents, to which it assigns a course load of 16 credits.

In the description of the minimum training contents that the specialized journalism subject must develop, ANECA indicates that these must offer the "Study of the informative production of different areas of journalistic specialization, as well as the trends that this subject develops with the different supports, media, and systems: political, economic, cultural, society, sports, scientific, local, research, and precision, etc.". (ANECA, 2005, p. 314). There is, therefore, an express allusion to sports journalism, which is left to the judgment of the universities as to how to develop it in their curricula: either as a section within a general subject on specialized journalism or as an independent discipline. As an autonomous subject, sports journalism is one of the areas of thematic specialization with the greatest presence in Spanish curricula. Elías and Luengo-Cruz (2014, p. 32) placed it in the third position, only surpassed by economic and scientific journalism and above cultural and political journalism, among others.

Doménech-Fabregat and López-Rabadán (2012, p. 286) highlight the eminently practical nature with which these subjects are approached, which seek to teach

students to create specialized journalistic content. Those dedicated to sports journalism are by no means an exception. Rojas-Torrijos (2021b, p. 30), justifies the primacy of practical approaches by the fact that they are subjects that seek to transmit knowledge and techniques applicable to the journalist's work and that are aimed at students who are in the last or second-to-last year of their degree, with an intellectual background that has had to be accumulated in the first years and that will soon have to be put into practice in the working world. This proximity to the actual performance of journalism favors experiences such as the one practiced by Arizona State University, which, in a subject on report writing, belonging to its sports journalism degree, implemented the immersive model of a university hospital (Reed, 2018). Emulating medical students, who complete their training by attending to real patients under the supervision of registered physicians, aspiring journalists were required to develop stories about current sports events in their community and, in coordination with professors and media managers, work on them until they were published.

## **2. OBJECTIVES**

The general purpose of this article is to know what competition the sports phenomenon has as an object of study in the degrees in Journalism offered by Spanish universities. A presence that, as expected, is distributed in three different levels, which implies a greater or lesser dedication to study time. In the first place, as an autonomous subject focused entirely and specifically on sports communication, an option that requires more attention than the rest. In a second step, as one of the sections dedicated to the different areas of specialization that make up the syllabus of a general subject on specialized journalism, an alternative that entails less teaching load for the study of the sports field as it has to be shared with the other contents of the discipline. And, finally, as a subject addressed within the program of the rest of the subjects of the undergraduate curriculum, which could observe some specific aspects of sports communication from the perspectives of their respective formal objects. Logically, at this last level, the treatment of sport is more succinct.

Identifying the presence of sports communication as an educational subject is a necessary starting point from which to establish the scenario that the Spanish University draws for those students of Journalism degrees who are interested in this specialization. The epistemological orientation under which the training is conceived, its compulsory or optional nature, the teaching load assigned to it, the moment of the career in which it is planned, or to elucidate whether there are differences between the approaches of public universities and those conceived by private centers are questions to which we intend to answer.

Another objective of the research is to analyze the relationship established between the training offered at the undergraduate level and that offered at the postgraduate level. This connection can provide continuity if it is offered in both cycles, but it is also possible that it is conceived only in one of them. As the university is understood in the European Higher Education Area, undergraduate studies are the initial stage. Their objective is the basic and general education of the student in the chosen field of knowledge, as opposed to postgraduate studies, which pursue advanced training of a specialized nature. In this way, sports communication, being a thematic specialization,

would find its natural place in master's degrees and other second-cycle degrees. However, the importance of sport in contemporary societies is of such magnitude - undoubtedly in its media aspect - that its presence in the degrees seems necessary, either as an introduction to the specialization or because it is understood as a phenomenon that manifests itself transversally and, therefore, it is necessary to include it in the training of all journalists. In this regard, the article seeks to know from which areas greater attention is paid to sports communication outside the one dedicated to the study of thematic specializations.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The research, of an exploratory nature, is conceived based on a descriptive methodology, articulated through a quantitative content analysis aimed at two objects: the curricula in force during the 2021-2022 academic year of the degrees in Journalism of the Spanish universities and the teaching guides of the subjects that compose them. To find out which institutions are to be searched for these documents, the Registry of Universities, Centers, and Degrees (RUCT by its acronym in Spanish) of the Ministry of Universities<sup>4</sup> is used. The search engine offered by the RUCT website provides a list of the institutions that offer the degree course in Journalism. Subsequently, we proceed to compile the curricula of these courses as published both in the RUCT and on the respective websites of each institution. Once the documents have been obtained, they are read to determine the existence of subjects with references to sports. If so, the following aspects are recorded: university, name of the subject, nature (basic, compulsory, or optional training), year in which it is programmed, and the number of ECTS credits.

In the second phase, the offer of general subjects on specialized journalism is recorded. In this case, besides the aforementioned data obtained from the curricula, it is noted whether a subject, section, or module dedicated to sports communication is included. For this purpose, the teaching guides extracted from the official web pages of the universities are analyzed.

Thirdly, attention is focused on the teaching guides for the rest of the subjects (excluding Final Degree Projects and Internships). To discover the presence or absence of references to sport in them, an automated search for keywords with the root "deport" in Spanish-or its equivalent in another language when the guide is written in a language other than Spanish- is carried out. For any subject with a key term in its syllabus, the university where it is taught, its name, its nature, the year in which it is taught, the number of ECTS credits involved, and the extract in which the reference to sport appears, as well as the section in which it is located, are recorded.

Finally, to find out which universities offer a postgraduate degree in sports communication, as well as a degree in Journalism, another search is carried out in the RUCT. However, this registry only contains information on official degrees, so to find out about the existence of possible degrees, it is necessary to explore the academic offerings of each university on their websites.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.educacion.gob.es/ruct/consultaestudios?actual=estudios>

#### 4. RESULTS

As shown in Table 1, there are 38 (19 public and 19 private) Spanish universities offering a degree in Journalism in the 2021-2022 academic year. The degrees in Audiovisual Communication and Journalism at the Universidad de Lleida and Journalism and Corporate Communication at the Universidad Ramón Llull have not been included, since, as their names indicate, they include particularities that distance them from the ordinary approaches of a general degree in Journalism.

**Table 1.** Spanish universities in which the degree in Journalism was taught in the 21-22 academic year.

Public universities	Private universities
Autónoma de Barcelona (UAB)	A Distancia de Madrid (UDIMA)
Carlos III de Madrid (UC3M)	Abat Oliba CEU (UAO)
Complutense de Madrid (UCM)	Antonio de Nebrija (UAN)
De Castilla-La Mancha (UCLM)	Cardenal Herrera CEU (UCH)
De Extremadura (UJEX)	Católica San Antonio (UCAM)
De La Laguna (ULL)	De Navarra (UNAV)
De Málaga (UMA)	De Vic (UVIC)
De Murcia (UMU)	Europea de Madrid (UEM)
De Santiago de Compostela (USC)	Europea del Atlántico (UEA)
De Sevilla (US)	Europea Miguel de Cervantes (UEMC)
De València (UV)	Fernando Pessoa-Canarias (UFPC)
De Valladolid (UVa)	Francisco de Vitoria (UFV)
De Zaragoza (UNIZAR)	Internacional de Catalunya (UIC)
Del País Vasco (UPV)	Internacional Isabel I de Castilla (UI1)
Jaume I de Castellón (UJI)	Internacional Villanueva (UIV)
Miguel Hernández de Elche (UMH)	Pontificia Comillas-CESAG (UPC)
Pompeu Fabra (UPF)	Pontificia de Salamanca (UPSA)
Rey Juan Carlos (URJC)	San Jorge (USJ)
Rovira i Virgili (URV)	San Pablo CEU (USP)

**Source:** Own elaboration based on RUCT information from the Ministry of Universities.

##### 4.1. Sports journalism as an autonomous subject

Most of the universities analyzed include an autonomous subject on sports communication. Specifically, as shown in Table 2, 22 do so (half of them public, half of them private), representing 58% of the total, compared to 42% of the 16 universities that do not offer this subject.

**Table 2.** Spanish universities that offered a subject on sports communication in their undergraduate degree in Journalism in the 21-22 academic year.

University	Name of the subject	Nature	Year	ECTS
UAB	Sports Journalism	Elective	3º and 4º	6
UC3M	Sports Journalism	Elective	3º and 4º	6
UCLM	Sports Journalism	Elective	4º	6
UCM	Education and Sports Journalism	Elective	4º	6



UDIMA	Sports Journalism	Elective	2º, 3º, and 4º	6
UEM	Sports and Communication	Compulsory	3º	3
UEMC	Sports Journalism	Elective	4º	6
UFPC	Sports Journalism	Elective	3º	6
UIC	Sports Journalism	Elective	3º	3
UIV	Sports Journalism	Elective	4º	6
UJI	Sports Journalism	Elective	4º	4,5
UMH	Sports Journalism	Elective	4º	6
UNAV	Sports Journalism	Elective	3º and 4º	3
UNIZAR	Sports Journalism	Elective	3º and 4º	6
UPC	Sports and the Media	Elective	3º and 4º	3
UPF	Sports Journalism	Elective	3º and 4º	4
UPSA	Sports Journalism	Elective	3º and 4º	3
US	Sports Journalism	Elective	3º	6
USP	Sports Journalism	Elective	4º	6
UV	Sports Journalism	Elective	4º	4,5
UVa	Sports Journalism	Elective	4º	6
UVIC	Sports Journalism	Elective	3º and 4º	6

**Source:** Own elaboration based on the information contained in the curricula offered in the RUCT of the Ministry of Universities and on the websites of each university.

Almost all these subjects are presented under the denomination of Sports Journalism, except in the cases of Education and Sports Journalism (UCM), Sports and the Media (UPC), and Sports and Communication (UEM). The latter university is even more unique in terms of the nature under which it conceives the subject, being the only one to make it compulsory, thus departing from the elective nature of the other institutions. However, the obligatory nature of the subject is associated with a lower teaching load than most. While it is usual to set the number of credits for the subject at 6, as 14 of the 22 universities do, the UEM rates it at 3 ECTS, as do four other institutions (UNAV, UPC, UPSA, and UIC). Below the statistical trend of 6 credits are also the proposals of the UJI and the UV, both with 4.5 ECTS, and the UPF, with 4.

Chronologically, the general tendency is to schedule the subject in the second half of the degree course. Some universities place it in 3<sup>rd</sup> year, others in 4<sup>th</sup> year, and the rest allow it to be taken in either of the last two years, given the optional nature with which it is conceived. The only particularity in this aspect is presented by the UDIMA, where it can be enrolled even from 2<sup>nd</sup> year since it is one of the disciplines that gives access to the Specialized Journalism Mention.

The autonomous subjects on sports communication are not limited to those that generically present the subject. Others deal with more specific issues within sports information, offering a greater depth of specialization. These are part of the degrees offered by two private universities which, although they follow the model of postgraduate studies, are offered as degrees associated with the degree in Journalism, to be taken simultaneously with it (see Table 3). These are the University Diploma of

Specialization in Sports Journalism of the Universidad Cardenal Herrera CEU, which implies a load of 24 ECTS besides the 240 ECTS of the degree in Journalism, and the Diploma in Sports Journalism of the Universidad Francisco de Vitoria, with double the number of credits, 48.

**Tabla 3.** Spanish universities that offered their own degree in sports communication associated and simultaneous to the degree in Journalism during the 21-22 academic year.

UCH (University Diploma of Specialization in Sports Journalism)			UFV (Diploma in Sports Journalism)		
Subject	Year	ECTS	Subject	Year	ECTS
Sports on the Airwaves	1º	4	Sports Writing I	1º	3
Sports and Social Networks	1º	2	Sports Content Creation	1º	3
The Sports Story on Television	2º	6	Event Coverage	1º	3
Sports on Paper	3º	2	Sports Broadcasting	1º	3
Sports Communication Design	3º	2	Radio Sports Programs (Production and Editing)	2º	3
Sports Event Communication	3º	2	Sports Writing II	2º	3
Sports Infographics	4º	2	Press Conferences	2º	3
Sports on the Web	4º	4	Digital Formats in Sports	2º	3
			Sports Programs on Television (Production and Editing)	3º	3
			E-Sports	3º	3
			Live Sports Event Narration	3º	3
			Sports Video Production	3º	3
			Sports Management and Corporate Communication	4º	3
			Sports Content Strategies in Social Networks	4º	3
			Final Project	4º	6

**Source:** Own elaboration based on the information contained in the curricula offered on the websites of each university.

#### 4.2. As a section of a course on specialized journalism

Some universities reserve space in their curricula for one or more general courses on specialized journalism. Besides examining the basic fundamentals common to all news specialization and offering a global perspective on how concentration on a specific subject affects journalistic work, these courses usually present the different areas of specialization. Of the 38 universities analyzed, 22 have some of these subjects, as shown in Table 4. Of these, in 12 cases, sports communication appears as one of the sections of the syllabus<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> The teaching guide of the subject Specialized Journalistic Information, of the UCM, mentions sports as one of the areas of journalistic specialization to be known in its section dedicated to the objectives, but later it does not appear in the syllabus.

**Table 4.** Spanish universities that during the 2021-2022 academic year offered a course on specialized journalism and the explicit presence of a module on sports communication in it.

<b>Inclusion of sports communication in a specialized journalism subject.</b>	
<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
UAN	UCH
UAO	UCLM
UCAM	UCM
UEX	UEA
UMA	UEMC
UMU	UJI
UPC	ULL
UPV	UMH
USC	URV
USJ	US
USP	
UVa	

**Source:** Own elaboration based on the information contained in the syllabi and teaching guides available on the websites of each university.

Contrary to what happened with the subject of sports communication, which was conceived as an optional subject by all universities except one, in the case of general subjects on specialized journalism, compulsory subjects predominate, with the sole exception of the URV, which configures it as an optional subject. This means that all students, regardless of their level of personal interest in sports, come into contact with some initial notions about the particularities of sports information.

#### **4.3. As a matter addressed from the other subjects in the curriculum**

Outside the field of informative specialization, other subjects in the curricula of Spanish university journalism degrees also deal, in a more tangential way, with issues related to sports communication. The content analysis carried out on 1748 teaching guides<sup>6</sup> has allowed us to identify 50 cases of these additional subjects which, distributed among 26 universities, deal with the sports phenomenon from the perspective of each discipline. Regarding their nature, 6 are basic training courses, 31 are considered compulsory, and 13 are optional. Table 5 shows these subjects grouped by the field in which they are included within the information sciences.

**Table 5.** Subjects of the Journalism degrees of the Spanish universities that in the 21-22 academic year included references to sports (beyond those dedicated to sports communication and specialized journalism).

<b>Field</b>	<b>Subject</b>
Radio	Radio Communication (UDIMA)
	Radio Journalism (UDIMA)
	Radio Workshop (UAN)
	Audiovisual Journalism: Radio (UCLM)

<sup>6</sup> Of the study plans of the Internacional Isabel I de Castilla and Internacional Villanueva universities, only the subjects of the first two years of the degree could be analyzed. Since they were implemented in 2020-2021, at the time of this study there was no teaching of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years, since they would begin in the 22-23 and 23-24 academic years, respectively.

	Specialized Com. Projects: Radio Magazine (UNIZAR)
	Radio Fundamentals (UEM)
	Radio Journalism II (UMH)
	Informative Genres in Radio (UNIZAR)
Photojournalism	Photojournalism (UFPC)
	Photojournalism (UFV)
	Photojournalism (UMH)
	Photojournalism (URJC)
	Technical Photography and Photojournalism (USJ)
Information Law	Information Law (UDIMA)
	Information Law (UC3M)
	Information Law (UCLM)
	Communication Law (UV)
Press	Written Journalism II (UDIMA)
	Press Workshop (UPC)
	Press Writing Workshop II (UVIC)
	Journalistic Genres in the Press (UI1)
Television	Television Journalism (UDIMA)
	TV News and Direct TV Production Workshop (UEM)
	Informative Television (UFV)
	Journalistic Genres in Television (UI1)
Language	Written English for Journalism (UVIC)
	Spoken English for Journalism (UVIC)
	English II (UEMC)
Voiceover	Presentation and Voiceover (UAN)
	Voiceover Techniques for Radio and Television (UI1)
	Voiceover for Audiovisual Media (UPF)
Local Journalism	Proximity Journalism (UAB)
	Local Journalism (UC3M)
	Local Journalism (UNIZAR)
Fundamentals of journalism	Information Sources for Journalism (UEX)
	Journalistic Production (US)
Journalistic genres	Interpretative Journalism (UC3M)
	Journalistic Opinion Genres (UV)
Current affairs	Seminar on Current Affairs Analysis (UPF)
Design	Journalistic Design (UVa)
Documentation	Informative Documentation (UCM)
History of journalism	History of Journalism (UAO)
Language	Spanish Language (UMA)
Science journalism	Biomedical, Technological, and Environmental Communication (ULL)
Travel journalism	Tourism and Travel Journalism (ULL)
Digital journalism	Internet Journalism (URV)
Advertising and marketing	Sports Marketing (UVIC)
Other	Communication and Gender Studies (UAB)
Other	Conflict and Peace Journalism (UV)
Other	Pragmatics and Discourse in Journalism (UCM)

**Source:** Own elaboration based on the information contained in the teaching guides published on the website of each university.

The field with the greatest number of incursions into sports information is radio, with 8 subjects. In these subjects, some sections of the syllabus are devoted to the study of the characteristics of the formats dedicated to sports news. Although the hegemonic focus is on the program concept, UDIMA goes further in its two subjects, since Radiophonic Communication studies the characteristics and language of sports information on radio, and Radiophonic Journalism also deals with issues such as the history of sports radio or its future.

In second place comes photojournalism. Five subjects dedicated to this subject are about sports as one of the particular topics of photojournalism. Four do so by including it in the syllabus, while the one at UMH does so by proposing to students the making of a photographic report on a sporting event. In line with photojournalism, the subject that encompasses the subjects on the press appears one step below, with only one case less. As far as the latter is concerned, the focus is on the genre of the chronicle and its writing.

Television also appears with 4 subjects. While in the case of radio it was mainly articulated through the study of formats, in the television medium this framework is only proposed by one university (UDIMA), as the others focus on the concept of sports information. Four cases also provide information law. The subjects of this field coincide in dealing with the issue of audiovisual broadcasts of sporting events and how to reconcile the right to information with their commercial exploitation by those companies acquiring the broadcasting rights.

In the area of audiovisual journalism, consubstantial to the field of radio and television, there are three subjects on voice-over that offer students the necessary rudiments to give voice to sports, especially in live event narrations. At the same level is the subject of local journalism, with a trio of subjects in which sports is highlighted as one of the areas of importance in the coverage of local information, and languages, with three instrumental subjects on sports language in English.

Two subjects that can be framed within the field of the fundamentals of journalism provide teachings on the Sources of information in the sports field. The same number of subjects study journalistic genres, one from interpretative journalism (UC3M) and the other from opinion journalism (UV).

Finally, sports appear in only one subject belonging to the following fields: current affairs, design, documentation, history of journalism, language, scientific journalism, travel journalism, digital journalism, and advertising and marketing. Furthermore, there are three more subjects that cannot be framed in any classical subject of Journalism studies, but respond to original approaches of the universities where they are taught: Communication and Gender Studies (UAB), Conflict and Peace Journalism (UV), and Pragmatics and Discourse in Journalism (UCM).

#### **4.4. Postgraduate courses**

Nine of the universities that offer a degree in Journalism also offer a postgraduate degree in sports communication, as shown in Table 6. Of these, only the UEM organizes an official degree, the Master's Degree in Sports Communication and Journalism -to

which it adds another program in English, the Master in Communication and Sports Journalism-.

**Table 6.** Spanish universities that offered a degree in Journalism and a postgraduate degree in sports communication during the 2021-2022 academic year.

University	Title of the postgraduate degree
UAN	Master's Degree in Sports Journalism and Broadcasting
UCAM	Master's Degree in Sports Journalism
UEM	Master's Degree in Sports Communication and Journalism
UEMC	Master's Degree in Multimedia Sports Journalism
UIV	Master's Degree in Sports Journalism
UPF	Master's Degree in Sports Journalism
UPSA	Master's Degree in Sports Communication
US	Master's Degree in Sports Journalism
USP	Master's Degree in Specialized Sports Journalism

**Source:** Own elaboration based on the information contained in the universities' websites.

Although the study of the university training offer in the postgraduate cycle exceeds the objectives of this article, it should be clarified that this is not limited to the nine institutions mentioned, as others also organize similar degrees, such as the Universidad de A Coruña -which has not been taken into account because it does not have a degree in Journalism- or the Ramón Llull -disregarded for the reasons already explained at the beginning of this section-.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The results obtained, in terms of the offer of autonomous subjects on sports communication, are congruent with those presented by Rojas Torrijos in his article published in 2021. While that research identified the presence of the discipline in 54% of the degrees in Journalism, the present work places this figure at 58%. This slight variation is due, on the one hand, to the fact that in this research, for methodological reasons, the degree in Journalism and Corporate Communication at Universidad Ramón Llull, which was part of Rojas Torrijos' work, has not been taken into account. And, on the other hand, two new degrees in Journalism, those of the UI1 and the UIV<sup>7</sup>, have been launched since the reference study. It so happens that the former has not programmed any subject on sports communication, while the latter has, thus following the trend that this type of course is included in about half of the degrees in Journalism.

The subjects continue to be quite homogeneous in terms of their formal features. They are usually taken in the last two years of the degree, once the basic training has been passed; they involve 6 credits, following the model of the semester courses, which are the most common in the degrees; and they are optional. Regarding the denominations under which they are presented -an aspect that allows us to understand the epistemological orientation with which they are conceived-, the fact that most of them

<sup>7</sup> Before becoming a university and developing its own degree in Journalism, the UIV offered the degree as a center attached to the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

receive the title of Sports Journalism suggests that they offer a general approach to the phenomenon of this area of specialization. Contrary to what happens in the USA (Pedersen et al., 2020, p. 14), currently, Spanish degrees do not include proposals such as that of that pioneering subject at UPF that is now disappeared, Theory and Technique of Sports Broadcasting. Specific approaches to sports communication, depending on the medium, genre, or technique, are confined to postgraduate courses or to specific degrees, such as those of the UCH and the UFV, which can be taken simultaneously with the degree, but with an additional credit load.

Another issue that emerges from the naming of the subject as Sports Journalism is that, as suggested by Lobillo (2017) and Marín-Montín (2013), it tends to focus on journalistic information, leaving aside other plots of sports communication related to strategies and actions within sports organizations. Although, from the classical divisions of the information sciences, it is consistent that in a degree in Journalism, the study of what was traditionally understood as the unintentional communication of documentable facts (Martínez-Albertos, 1991, p. 1004) prevails over other modalities of discourse more related to persuasion, entertainment, or the commercial facet, which find their place in the degrees in Audiovisual Communication and Advertising and Public Relations.

The optional nature of the subjects on sports communication contrasts with the obligatory nature of its study from the general disciplines dedicated to journalistic specialization. However, there are only 12 universities that have a subject of this type in which the syllabus includes sports among the informative areas to be covered. In other words, only a dozen plans guarantee, on paper, that every student who finishes their degree will do so having received some training in the treatment of sports in the media. To this must be included the incursions on the sports phenomenon that are made from the rest of the subjects of the curricula, outside the field of thematic specialization. Although they represent few subjects compared to the whole (less than 3%), most of them are compulsory, thus favoring the contact of students with sports issues. They do so to a greater extent from another specialization, the media, with audiovisuals as the main pole of interest and radio above all. This is in line with the weight that sports radio has historically had in Spain, where nightly magazines or the so-called "carousels", which include live coverage of the main competitions, are among the most important formats in the schedules of the main radio stations. Aspiring sports journalists also show their preference for radio, as indicated by the survey conducted by Méndez-Muros (2015) to students of Sports Journalism. In it, more than 52% chose radio as the sector in which they would prefer to develop their professional career, followed by 20% who preferred television. Subjects on this medium are also among those that most often deal with sports issues, which is appropriate given the vital role that television plays in the sports industry, with the broadcasting of competitions as a cornerstone. The regulation of the business explains why so many subjects of information law appear in this classification, constituting the discipline outside the media or thematic specialization that most alludes to sports issues. And the fact is that, after audiovisual journalism, written journalism is another of the subjects that are most closely related to sports. As with radio, the historical strength of sports newspapers in Spain, first in print and currently in their digital versions, explains why subjects of the

press, as well as photojournalism, focus their attention on sport.

In the relationship between undergraduate and postgraduate courses, there is a predominance of continuity. Of the 9 universities studied that offer master's degrees in sports communication, 7 also have a specific subject on sport in the previous cycle, which is consistent when assessing its relevance. The other two institutions, the UCAM and the UAN, despite not programming a specific subject, do include the sports area in the syllabus of the specialized journalism subjects. In the case of the UAN, the absence of an undergraduate subject is striking, taking into account that in its 1996 curriculum it was included in the undergraduate degree and, for the first time in Spain, as a core subject. This preeminent position given to sport is now shifted to the master's degree, in a policy that, as we can see, has not been followed by most universities, which do not restrict their undergraduate students from taking a specific subject dedicated to the area because the institution subsequently offers a postgraduate course on it.

## **6. CONCLUSIONS**

Sports communication is present in the vast majority of Spanish universities where Journalism degrees are taught. The articulation of education in this field is mainly carried out through the offer of a specific subject. This is the case in 22 of the 38 institutions analyzed (58%). In 3 of them, the sports phenomenon is also approached from one of the subjects dedicated to the general study of journalism specialization. On the other hand, 9 universities (24%) include the study of sports communication in this subject, thus avoiding duplication of contents.

The fact that, with one exception, the universities offer the specific subject of sports communication as an elective, makes possible a more in-depth study of the topic in comparison with the more reduced approach that can be offered to sports within the subjects that deal with specialized journalism in general. However, it must be taken into account that, on occasions, not all students interested in a given elective can take it, since the number of places offered may be less than the number of students who demand it. Therefore, the model of including the sports area in the general subject of specialized journalism ensures that all students receive instruction in the field. This seems advisable not only for those students who wish to work in the profession in this area but also for the rest since sports is not exhausted in its facet of spectacle or the routines of competitions. It is a complex phenomenon that currently manifests itself in a cross-cutting manner, with political, social, economic, scientific, and cultural repercussions. It is therefore advisable for all future journalists to know the particularities of sports information. The fact that there are subjects outside the field of thematic specialization that include in their teaching content issues related to sport demonstrates the power of penetration of this reality, which goes beyond its recreational facet.

Understood in this way, sports communication cannot be restricted to the postgraduate level, since most future information professionals will not take a master's degree or a degree in the subject. However, universities should give continuity in a second cycle to the teachings that have been transmitted in an introductory way in the first cycle,



as occurs in almost all institutions that program both a degree in Journalism and a postgraduate degree specializing in sports communication.

There is a minority of curricula that do not address the treatment of sports information either with a specific subject or within a subject dedicated to thematic specialization. The universities Francisco de Vitoria and Cardenal Herrera CEU optionally offer their own degrees that delve into sports communication with an additional load of credits but do not contemplate any training in this field for those students who do not choose these proposals. The lack of attention to sports communication at the universities of La Laguna, Internacional Isabel I de Castilla, Rey Juan Carlos, and Rovira i Virgili, where sport only appears occasionally and tangentially in some subjects outside the study of the specialization, and at the European University of the Atlantic, where no reference to sports has been found in any of its subjects, is even greater.

It should be remembered that ANECA (2005) expressly mentioned sports when describing the minimum training contents of a subject, such as journalism specialization, which was included in the compulsory common contents to be included in Journalism curricula. It is necessary to offer a more or less intense approach to sports communication during the degree in Journalism. Although most universities assume this, there is still room for promoting a general framework that would make possible adequate training in this field in all higher education centers.

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