



THE OLYMPIC  
> STUDIES  
CENTRE

# International Olympic Case Study Competition

Background and Context

2021/2022 Competition

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# 1. BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The Olympic Games are the biggest event on Earth. No other event brings so many elite athletes and nations together, no other event attracts so much television viewership worldwide.

What few people know is that when Baron Pierre de Coubertin, a French educationalist, established the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Olympic Games in 1894, his vision was for the Olympic Games to promote the educational and social values of sport in society and ultimately help foster understanding, respect and peace between nations. He was convinced that the character of the young could be critically developed through the individual experience of sporting activity and extended from there to life as a whole. The Olympic Games and the Olympic athletes should hence encourage citizens across all age groups and social classes to engage in sport in their leisure time.

The [Olympic Charter](#), which governs the responsibilities, actions and operations of the IOC, the Olympic Movement and its organisations, which include International Sports Federations (IFs), National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and the Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOGs), states in this regard: “***The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to building a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practised in accordance with Olympism and its values.***” It also defines the Fundamental Principles of Olympism as “a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example, social responsibility and respect for universal fundamental ethical principles”.

From the first edition of the modern Olympic Games in Athens in 1896, the size of the Olympic programme has grown from 43 events in 9 sports to more than 300 events (339 events) in 33 sports in Tokyo (in 2021), bringing more than 10,500 athletes together from 206 NOCs at the Olympic Summer Games and around 3,000 athletes in 109 events in 7 sports at the Olympic Winter Games in Beijing in 2022.

In order to remain attractive and relevant for future generations, the IOC and the IFs continually review and adjust the Olympic sports programme. While doing this, the challenge is to stay true to the above-mentioned core principles and find a right balance between traditional sports and newer sports and disciplines. In recent years, the programme has evolved, welcoming sports that are more urban, more youthful and more female. This trend is underlined by the inclusion of sports such as skateboarding, sport climbing and breaking in the sports programme.

## 2. ESPORTS AND GAMING AND THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT

Digital, international and flexible, esports and gaming have experienced exponential growth in recent years and are hence gaining increased attention from the media, sports and technology industries, as well as the international sporting community. Being aware of this global phenomenon, the IOC and the IFs are of course asking themselves the critical question about what opportunities and threats this phenomenon means for them and how they need to develop virtual versions of their sport to be able to engage new and young audiences.

2020, the first year of the COVID pandemic, saw a 75 per cent increase in gaming usage and 30 per cent increase in the number of gamers. At this time, several IFs were already organising physical esports competitions and championships, and a large percentage of IFs are currently working on or planning to launch physical or non-physical esports projects in the coming years. Virtual sports are also among the plans of future hosts for the Olympic Games.

When referring to this topic, it is important to note the difference between, on the one hand, the two forms of virtual sports and, on the other hand, video gaming. There are both physical (such as cycling) and non-physical forms of virtual sports (such as football), while video gaming includes both competitive gaming (such as *League of Legends*) and casual gaming (such as *Super Mario*).

In its most recent strategic paper, [Olympic Agenda 2020+5](#), the IOC encourages in recommendation 9, “the development of virtual sports and further engage with video gaming communities”. The main objectives being to:

- leverage the growing popularity of virtual sport to promote the Olympic Movement, Olympic values, sports participation and grow direct relations with young people
- strengthen the roles and responsibilities of IFs in establishing virtual and simulated forms of sports as a discipline within their regulations and strategies
- launch unique Olympic products and experiences through virtual and simulated forms of sports, in support of the IOC’s digital engagement strategy
- consider the addition of physical virtual sports in the Olympic programme in cooperation with the respective IFs
- support local partnerships between sport and video gaming communities to encourage young people to engage in physical activity and with the Olympic Movement
- make available Olympic athlete-related online programmes and digital tools to the competitive video gaming community to support their physical and mental well-being.

On 22. April 2021, the IOC announced that it will be partnering with five International Sports Federations (IFs) and game publishers to produce the Olympic Virtual Series (OVS), the first-ever, Olympic-licensed event for physical and non-physical virtual sports. The OVS will be launched on 13. May and run through to 23. June 2021. Find the details [here](#).

### 3. THE CASE STUDY CHALLENGE – “ESPORTS AND THE OLYMPIC MOVEMENT”

Fully understanding today's young people's affinity with video games and digital entertainment, the IOC and the IFs are interested in creating unique Olympic products and experiences through virtual forms of sport and growing direct engagement with these new audiences. The IFs are hence interested in developing virtual forms of their sports to put forward to the IOC for consideration and decision for the Olympic programme of future Olympic Games.

As a consulting company, you are asked to develop an integrated strategical and operational business case for an IF (the Federation will be chosen by you according to the success of Task 1) to explore new market opportunities in physical and non-physical esports to further engage with young people. The experiences should contribute to the positive perception and value of the IF's brands.

In order to respect the Olympic ideals and principals, which is a core interest of the IOC, your consultancy is challenged with developing methodologies to promote the educational values of sport and the Olympic Games (pursuit of excellence, joy of effort, fair play, respect for others) in the experiences and promote physical activity as part of their solutions.