

can be challenging for those who previously attended college on scholarships, Mr Lythcott said. "It's very difficult to get these programmes to sustain," he said.

Many of the business school programmes offer only certificates, Mr Lythcott said. Business schools looking to be helpful should consider more graduate degree opportunities for the athletes, he continued, because of the increased rigour and correspondingly higher value to the student.

And the athletes often can handle the demands, despite common stereotypes depicting them as unenthusiastic and ill-prepared scholars, Mr Lythcott said. Many scholarship athletes, however, received relatively poor educations during their undergraduate years as institutions allowed them to concentrate on their sport, Mr Lythcott said. Academic transcripts are not always good indicators of substandard undergraduate experiences, as "there's so much manipulation that happens", he said.

Some athletes do arrive at business programmes with undergraduate transcripts suggesting poor performance, yet they "come into class doing algebra in their heads", Mr Lythcott said. "And then there are people from great schools and

[with] great scores who can't count."

Yet overall, from his experience at several institutions, those professional athletes who arrive at business schools are at a point in their lives where they understand the stakes. "I've never had a faculty member complain about the quality of the students at the graduate level," Mr Lythcott said.

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Excellence initiatives

Taiwanese universities outside excellence initiative 'improve faster'

Taiwanese universities that are outside the country's excellence initiative have improved more quickly than institutions that received additional support through the scheme, according to a study that raises questions about the merits of such schemes.

Research and development funds given to universities in Taiwan's "World Class University Project", which was implemented in 2005,



were on average five times greater than the amount given to institutions outside the scheme between 2006 and 2010.

While funding for both groups increased between 2001 and 2005 and between 2006 and 2010, "world-class universities" (WCUs) received a 39 per cent boost over the two periods, compared with a 32 per cent increase for non-WCUs.

However, universities outside the scheme improved at a faster rate, boasting a 94 per cent increase in their average publication output between 2001 and 2005 and between 2006 and 2010, compared with a 69 per cent rise for institutions that participated in the initiative, according to researchers.

For the study, published in *Higher Education Policy*, scholars at Taiwan's National Chung Cheng University, Pennsylvania State University and New York University compared the publication rates of the 10 universities that were designated WCUs with 14 institutions that had applied to join the initiative in 2005 but were unsuccessful.

They also found that, while nine of the non-WCUs raised their share of papers in the highest-impact journals, just three of the WCUs did the same and seven lost their share.

Authors Yuan-Chih Fu, David Baker and Liang Zhang said that their findings show that funding provided by excellence initiatives "generates growth in scientific publications among the selected universities, but not with the much-anticipated extreme accumulated advantage that would lift these universities well beyond where they were at the baseline".

Dr Fu, the lead author and an assistant professor at National Chung Cheng University, said that "competition itself is driving cultural change" in Taiwan's universities and the excellence initiative had encouraged all institutions to

"see research as a number-one priority".

He added that some of the stronger universities outside the scheme improved quickly because they wanted to differentiate themselves from other non-selected universities.

Dr Fu said that the findings show that governments should "keep the competition" for funding "open", rather than boost support for a small number of universities through "meaningless" excellence initiatives.

"If we study American higher education history, there is not one university that has dominated all the areas. They continually compete with each other so we can see a lot of good research from different American universities," he said.

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Management and governance

Finance director preceded v-c out of LJMU exit door

Liverpool John Moores University's finance director and deputy chief executive preceded its vice-chancellor out of the exit door, it has emerged, making a pair of sudden senior departures at the institution.

The university said on 14 September that Nigel Weatherill, appointed vice-chancellor in September 2011, had resigned "with immediate effect".

Now it has emerged that Julie Bertolini, formerly deputy chief executive, university secretary and finance director, resigned on 30 August. The university did not announce her departure.

Rod Hill, the university's chair

