

JOEL MCFARLANE | MLA Class of '25



Raised in Monikie, Scotland by a family engaged in the studies of science, mathematics, and literature, Joel is fascinated by how the creative mind works: “After studying kinesiology, I’m curious about extending physical and mechanical concepts to the metaphorical crafting of ideas into a narrative. The MLA program allows me to explore multiple creative and innovative paths to acquiring knowledge and perspectives.”

An international student athlete, Joel moved to Texas after high school and earned his B.S. in Kinesiology at UTSA while competing at the highest levels of NCAA track and field as a decathlete. He enrolled in TCU’s MLA program and finished his fifth year of eligibility competing as a Horned Frog in the Decathlon’s ten events: 100m race, long jump, shot put, high jump, 400m race, 110m hurdles, discus throw, pole vault, javelin throw, and 1500m race to finish.

On TCU’s All-Time Top 10 list, Joel holds the records as No. 1 Outdoor Decathlon, No. 1 Indoor Heptathlon, No. 2 Outdoor Javelin, and No. 8 Indoor High Jump. He holds the TCU school record for both Decathlon and Heptathlon, and the 2024 Big 12 OTF Bronze Medal in Decathlon and 2024 Big 12 ITF Bronze Medal in Heptathlon. He is still the record holder in Scotland for U17 and U20 Decathlon as well as the British U17 decathlon record.

Joel is a Graduate Assistant in TCU’s Bob Scheiffer College of Communications, where he assists students and researchers with AI software queries while he continues to train individually for the Decathlon at the 2026 Commonwealth Games. He is currently a professional decathlete and trains with the Fort Worth’s elite “Goon Squad,” made up of other internationally renowned decathletes including world record holders. “The Decathlon appeals to me because of the varied mix of events, and I’m constantly engaged and challenged in multiple ways. I am fortunate to be a part of the TCU community which continues to support me in pursuing my athletic career.”

Highly motivated and even-keeled, Joel has a cheerful outlook and strong moral compass that guides his life both on and off the field. “The driving forces in my life are sports, God, and family. In fact, those words are engraved inside my class ring, a graduation gift from my grandparents. I’ve learned through the ups and downs of training that staying focused and finding joy in what I’m doing are the most important keys to success, in whatever ways I define it.”

Outside of training for the 2026 Commonwealth Games decathlon, which will be held in Scotland so he will be competing on home turf, Joel enjoys golf, learning to cook new recipes, playing the violin, and listening to Scottish ceilidh country music. The older brother to two younger sisters, post-graduation he is looking forward to traveling – New Zealand and Scandinavia are on his list – and raising a family of his own one day.