



Sport Ireland Institute Professional Accreditation Guidelines

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1. Introduction

Sport Ireland Institute was established in July 2006, with the vision of providing world leading service provision to elite Irish athletes. The mission of the Sport Ireland Institute is to produce sporting champions for Ireland. Its overall purpose is to create an environment which influences, supports and ensures that talented Irish athletes will achieve sustained levels of excellence in elite sport.

Sport Ireland Institute Professional Accreditation (SIIPA) has been established to assist the Institute in ensuring that all Irish Institute athletes are supported by service providers of the appropriate quality, i.e., the best practitioners work with the best athletes. SIIPA will be awarded to those applicants who demonstrate the ability to apply their professional knowledge to bring about a significant positive change in elite performance, within an ethical framework.

Professional Membership will be awarded to those who are considered to meet the four key elements:

1. Underpinning professional knowledge.
2. Elite sport understanding and context.
3. Ability to apply knowledge to make a difference.
4. The personal skills to bring about the required change.

Professional Membership is the minimum accepted standard for individuals who wish to work with Irish high performance athletes, coaches and programmes. It is the minimum standard that the Institute believes is necessary for independent, autonomous practice as an applied practitioner within high performance and requires applicants to have professional knowledge to Masters level or equivalent.

The application will be assessed on the applicant's **qualifications, training and experience**, considered together. In order to consider someone for Professional Membership of the Institute, the following information will be taken into account:

1. Certified copy of applicant's relevant qualification (Masters Level or equivalent¹).
2. CV outlining relevant training and experience.
3. Peer evaluation of ability to apply professional knowledge to high performance sport as shown by a case study.
4. References from individuals or groups within sport to show the applicant's ability to successfully operate in a high performance environment.
5. Appropriate professional indemnity.

¹ For Strength and Conditioning this is the UKSCA Accredited membership (ASCC), NSCA Accredited membership (CSCS) or Australian S&C Association (ASCA) Accredited Membership.

1.1. Aim of process

The main aim of this evaluation is to identify whether the applicant can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the evaluators that he or she has achieved **all the competencies** necessary within their specialty to apply their professional knowledge effectively, in order to bring about a significant positive change in elite performance within an ethical framework as an independent autonomous practitioner. Each area (i.e. qualifications, training, experience, case study and references) must be passed. Acceptance onto the Institute register of Professional Members is not a guarantee of funding or employment. However, only Institute Professional Members are eligible to receive Institute funding to work with high performance athletes, coaches and programmes.

1.2. Standards required

Qualifications: Masters level or equivalent in the appropriate area².

Training: Evidence of ongoing CPD in your discipline that is relevant to high performance sport.

Experience: Evidence of 1600 hours or 200 days post Masters experience in working in the discipline relevant to high performance sport.

You may be asked to provide evidence of the post Masters experience you have accumulated. This should include details of clients that you have worked with, the dates and the time logged in each case. (Please note that one day equates to 8 hours, therefore 200 days equals 1600 hours).

2. Professional Member Application Process

2.1. Application

Applications will be considered twice per year. The closing date for applications is **01st March**, and **01st September**.

Applicants must submit the following to the SIIPA Administrator:

1. Application pro forma and administration fee of **€120**, payable to **Sport Ireland**. This payment must be made by **bank transfer** to Sport Ireland. (Please ensure to include your name on the bank transfer for reference purposes).

Bank Name:	Bank of Ireland
Address: Lower:	Baggot Street, Dublin 2
Sort Code:	90-14-90
Account No:	69855189
A/C Holder:	Sport Ireland
IBAN No:	IE83 BOFI 9014 9069 8551 89
Swift/BIC Code:	BOFIE2D

2. 1-page summary CV detailing training, postgraduate experience, current/recent employment, plus details of current/recent support work within elite sport.

3. Photocopied proof of membership of the appropriate professional association (see section 5).
4. Certified copy of all relevant qualifications.
5. An electronic copy of the case study, following the set guidelines and word length (see section 3).
6. The names, email addresses and contact details of three referees, one who must be a coach, one an athlete, plus one other who can make reference to your work within high performance (these individuals will be contacted to request confidential feedback).
7. Agreement to comply with the Institute's Professional Member Code of Conduct (attached).

2.2. Procedures

On confirming the paperwork is correct, the Administrator will liaise with the Chair of the Institute's SIIPA committee to assign three reviewers to each application.

- These will include at least two panel members from the same discipline as the applicant where possible.
- Will not include any reviewer who has a known connection to applicant (e.g. work connection, from same institution, a referee)

The application will not be processed until all the relevant paperwork is received. Reviewers will be sent the anonymous case study to independently assess whether the candidate has demonstrated the required ability to apply professional knowledge to bring about an effective intervention.

The Administrator will also contact the applicant's named referees, requesting that they complete the Institute feedback forms. The Administrator will follow up the referees to ensure that their reports are available for review at the next scheduled SIIPA committee meeting. If after 4 weeks a referee has not responded the applicant will be informed and the application will be put on hold. The Chair will review all feedback prior to the meeting to ensure process has been followed both by the applicant and the reviewers.

The full Institute SIIPA committee will then meet and consider only applications in which all relevant information has been received, taking into account the following information:

- Qualifications
- Applicant's CV
- The recommendations from case study reviewers
- Feedback from the named referees

The anonymity of the applicant will be maintained until a final decision has been made by the committee. Committee members must exclude themselves from the process if there is any conflict of interest. The Chair will exclude committee members from the process in cases where he/she sees possible conflict of interest.

2.3. Review

The committee will review the information in the following order to preserve the anonymity of the applicant for as much of the process as possible.

1. Case study
2. References
3. Qualifications
4. CV

2.4. Outcomes

The committee will come to one of three possible outcomes on each applicant

- Pass
- Fail
- Pending – further clarification or information requested

Pass: Written feedback will be provided by the Chair of the SIIPA committee to all applicants, successful or otherwise. Applicants who pass the assessment process will be given membership for a 5-year period and are expected to maintain ongoing CME/CPD. Please refer to Re-Accreditation criteria of examples of CME and CPD activity.

Fail: In those cases, in which the candidate fails, general and specific feedback will be given to the applicant outlining the reasons for the decision.

- If you fail on qualifications, please obtain the appropriate qualification.
- If you fail on training and experience as outlined in CV, the likely outcome is that more information is required or further training or experience is needed.
- If you fail, the case study the likely outcome is that more information is required or you need to submit a new case study.
- If you fail, the references the likely outcome is that more experience in high performance environment is required.
- If you fail to have appropriate professional indemnity the likely outcome is that you will be requested to produce proof of same.

Pending: In those cases, in which the candidate is requested to give more information feedback is given as to what specific information is required. The candidate has a period of 4 weeks in which to supply any information requested. If the information is not received the application will be deemed to have failed.

2.5. Appeals Process

In a case where an applicant wishes to appeal the decision of the SIIPA committee the applicant must send, in writing, to the Chair of the SIIPA committee the specific grounds on which they are appealing together with €120 appeal fee to cover administration (this is refundable if the appeal is successful).

Grounds for appeal:

- Failure to follow correct procedure.
- Specific challenge to any element of the reasons given for failure of the application.

The Chair will review the appeal letter and present this to the SIIPA committee at its next meeting. If the committee accepts the grounds for the appeal, then the complete application

including review information will be sent anonymously to three new reviewers for their consideration. Specifically, this will include the following;

- The original qualifications and CV
- The original case study and assessors' reports
- The applicant's letter of appeal
- The original referee's reports.

The feedback from the referees will be considered by the SIIPA committee at its next meeting. This will be the final decision of the SIIPA process.

3. Case Study Requirements

All applicants for Institute Professional Membership must submit an electronic copy, the total length of which must be no more than 3,000 words (Excluding References). Additional information may be included in appendices. e.g. Figures, tables relating to case study. The case study encompassing references and appendices must be in within one PDF file.

3.1. Criteria for Case Study Submission^[D1]

The following criteria will be used to assess the case study submission:

- Scientific rigour of the work
- Working in HP environment
- Understanding your role
- Building rapport and maintaining relationships
- Understanding working in a HP team

Detailed descriptions of the assessment criteria are provided in the case study assessment form.

3.2. Content of the case study

The case study narrative should include reference to the applicant's philosophy of support work. Embedded in the work should be reference to the core principles and values that the applicant brings to their applied work, citing as appropriate relevant sources and experiences that have shaped their thinking and applied practice.

The case study should clearly outline an account of an applicant's recent involvement with a high performance team or athlete/coach partnership to solve a stated problem or issue or attain a sporting goal. We recommend that the timeline should include initial contact, assessment to the final outcome of the intervention with a reflection element. To assist in the evaluation of the case study by the reviewers it is recommended that athlete data is anonymised where possible, if not possible to anonymise athlete(s), consent is required; in order to provide a means to demonstrate the performance impact of the intervention.

The case study report structure should reflect the dimensions which are deemed important by the practitioner. Traditionally, linear and sequential models have been applied across the sport sciences (e.g. Hardy, Jones & Gould, 1996). We particularly welcome more dynamic approaches that account for the complexity of issues in high performance that are prioritised by the practitioner. For example, research on good practice delivery in sport science and medicine support has recently recognized the role of non-technical skills, with an increased emphasis the delivery model with evidence-based practice taken as a given (Alfano & Collins,

2020). Optimising the delivery model requires environmental appreciation (see Contextual Intelligence, Brown et al., 2007), role appreciation, understanding people and operating within a high performance team. The updated criteria now embed these criteria and thus enable more creative approaches to the case study description, formulation, and reflection.

CASE STUDY (3,000 words excluding references).

In selecting their case study applicants should ensure the example chosen **provides evidence** of:

- their ability to work with elite athletes
- the type of support they would be providing to elite athletes
- full adherence to ethical conduct and respect athlete confidentiality.
- Capacity to work within a high performance team.

3.3 Plagiarism Policy

Applications submitted require agreement with the completed Plagiarism Declaration Statement.

The case study must be submitted in such a way as to enable a blind review to take place. Your name, or other ways in which you could be identified e.g., your name in the document properties, should not appear in your case study and try avoid self-citations.

4. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The PQAQ Scheme involves the processing of personal data by Sport Ireland Institute. The information below should be read in conjunction with the Sport Ireland Privacy Notice available on <https://www.sportireland.ie/privacy-policy>.

The processing activity and purpose is detailed in this document. We process this information under public authority of the functions of Sport Ireland outlined in the Sport Ireland Act. There are some important points below to note:

- The information is only used for the purposes for which it was collected
- We have defined retention periods for these records. Records relating to successful applicants are kept for 5 years. Records for unsuccessful applicants are kept for 2 years
- This information is not shared further than the process outlined in this document. Personal information is removed from the documents prior to sharing with reviewers to ensure a balanced assessment.

Details of accredited providers are published on our website. This information is published with your consent provided via the application form. You are not obliged to provide your consent.

5. Composition and remit of the Institute's SIIPA Committee

5.1. Committee composition

The SIIPA committee will be made up of the following:

- Chair
- SII Director representative
- 6 Professional Members of the Institute with at least 5 years experience of working in high performance sport.
- SIIPA Administrator

The Chair and discipline representatives will be recruited via a process of open advertisement and interview. All committee members will be paid a €150 fee per meeting plus travel expenses (max of €50) for those based outside Dublin. In addition, the Chair will receive an honorarium of €300. Posts will be held for a period of 3 years (with a maximum consecutive time of 6 years subject to successful re-application).

5.2. Committee terms of reference

- To assess applications for Institute Professional Membership with regard their technical (and practical) knowledge as applied to high performance sport and the ability to bring about positive change within an ethical framework.
- On the basis of the case study reviews, the references, mentor feedback where applicable, qualifications and CV, make recommendations to Institute as to the applicant's suitability for Professional Membership.

5.3. Criteria for the Chair

- Understanding of and expertise in an accreditation processes
- Experience of an accreditation processes.
- Evidence of prior experience and expertise at chairing meetings.
- Current or recent (within the last 12 months at the time of application) involvement in the provision of high performance support services to elite athletes/programmes on the island of Ireland would be desirable.

5.4. Case reviewers' terms of reference

- To assess case study applications against the following criteria as requested by the SIIPA Chair.
- To make a recommendation to the PQAC.
- To provide feedback to the PQAC for the recommendation made.
- To provide feedback for the committee to provide to the applicant

5.5. Criteria for case reviewer

- Professional Member of the Institute.
- At least 5 years experience of working in high performance sport.
- Currently working with elite level performers/sports.

6. Recognised Professional Associations

Those wishing to be considered for Professional Membership of the Institute must be fully paid up members (for Strength and Conditioning this includes proof of either NSCA or UKSCA accreditation) of one of the following professional associations or an International equivalent:

Nutrition	Member of Irish Nutrition and Dietetic (INDI) Sports Nutrition Interest Group (SNIG) or international equivalent e.g.; Australian Dietetics Association and SDA; British Dietetics Association and SDUK; British Dietetics Association and be on the Sports and Exercise Nutrition Register (this will apply to Nutritionists and Sport and Exercise Scientists who are not Dietitians).
Strength & Conditioning	National Strength and Conditioning Association Ireland (NSCA Ireland Certified Strength and Conditioning Exam (CSCS)), UK Strength and Conditioning Association (UKSCA Accredited Strength and Conditioning Consultant (ASCC) exam) or Australian Strength and Conditioning Association: Accredited ASCA Level 3 Coach.
Physiology	British Association of Sport and Exercise Science (BASES) or American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM)
Psychology	Psychologist with membership to the Psychological Society of Ireland or international equivalent e.g. British Association of Sport and Exercise Science (BASES); Association for Applied Sport Psychology (AASP)
Biomechanics	British Association of Sport and Exercise Science (BASES)
Performance Analysis	British Association of Sport and Exercise Science (BASES)

7. Re-accreditation

SIIPA re-accreditation accepts that an accredited individual has already demonstrated that they meet the minimum knowledge, skills and understanding necessary for independent, autonomous practice as an applied practitioner within high performance sport.

Re-accreditation requires the applicant to demonstrate continued delivery of services and continued professional development as a practitioner via:

- Continued application and delivery
- On-going record of personal development activities and subsequent reflection

All current professional members will be contacted prior to their membership expiring and forwarded all the relevant documents and guidelines required for re-accreditation.

Sport Ireland Institute Professional Member Application Process

