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**Governance Code for Sport**

**Athlete Selection**

Guidance Notes

Disclaimer

Sport Ireland is making available a range of resources including guidance notes, policy documents and templates for selected areas aligned to the Governance Code for Sport which will support sport organisations, boards, management and staff in the development of relevant governance processes and procedures particular to their own organisation.

For the avoidance of doubt, the final decision on the nature, type, extent and format of approved governance policies, procedures and processes for each organisation is a matter for the board / highest governing structure of the organisation and the resources and material provided may assist the approval process.

This document is not, nor is it intended to be, a definitive statement of the law and it does not constitute legal advice.

This document is not a substitute for professional advice from an appropriately qualified source and it is recommended that sport organisations consult their governing document or obtain their own independent legal advice where necessary. Sport Ireland does not accept any responsibility or liability for any errors, inaccuracies or omissions in this document.

**Why an organisation needs an athlete selection policy?**

An athlete selection policy provides clear direction on how and by what mechanism athletes are selected for competition at regional, national and international level. It provides a clear framework and roadmap for the athletes, athletes families, coaches and officials, and helps avoid subjectivity or perceived subjectivity on behalf of others when selecting athlete for competition. It shows transparency within the organisation, and that a clear process has been defined, and one that should be set keeping the welfare of the athlete at its heart.

Having a published and transparent athlete selection policy can help the organisation avoid time-consuming legal and arbitration processes, often conducted within days of competition, where an athlete feels he/she has been unfairly passed over in favour of another. Having an athlete selection policy is part of a suite of sporting, rule book, and athlete related documentation that an effective sporting organisation should develop as part of good practice and effective stakeholder communications.

Having an athlete selection policy speaks to all of the principles of the Code:

Principle 1: ‘Leading Our Organisation’

Principle 2: ‘Exercising Control over our Organisation’

Principle 3: ‘Being Transparent and Accountable’

Principle 4: ‘Working Effectively’

Principle 5: ‘Behaving with Integrity’

Whilst an athlete selection policy is not a stated requirement for compliance with the Code, it will support type A, B and C organisations to be more effective organisations with better delivery of their goals. An athlete selection process is also a mandatory requirement for the high-performance sports who are in receipt of High-Performance funding from the Sport Ireland HP unit.

There are a number of governance reasons why athlete selection guidelines are important:

* To manage, support and hold to account those who volunteer or work on behalf of the organization, including coaches and selectors
* To comply with regulatory requirement, which may be international competition regulation
* To ensure effective communication with stakeholders – in this case athletes and their families, as well as selectors and coaches
* To make sure that coaches and selectors understand their: role, duties, and responsibilities
* To be honest, fair and independent
* To manage conflicts of interest and conflicts of loyalties.

Furthermore, from a sporting perspective, it is also important:

* To support coaches and selectors in their decisions
* To provide clarity to athletes and their families
* To provide process within the competition and performance development structures
* To provide goals and milestones within the athlete/player development pathway

Whose responsibility is it to develop an athlete selection policy?

It is the responsibility of the Board to ensure that all the principles of the Code are being upheld and delivered. It will generally be the responsibility of someone with technical (sporting) expertise to write and deliver an athlete selection policy, so the Technical Director or Head Coach or Head of Selectors, if such a role exists, or the technical or coaching committee. If there is an international or European federation, they will provide much of the detail, and in most sporting organisations with a history of international competition there will be an existing selection policy, but one that may need updating or greater sharing amongst stakeholders. Sport Ireland and the Sport Ireland Institute can help with greater specific detail around athlete selection, carded athletes, etc.

What is an athlete selection policy?

An athlete selection policy is a technical/sporting document, which sets out the technical criteria required for an athlete to be eligible for selection for specific nominated events or competitions.

This may include elements such as:

* Definitions
* Competition structure and goals
* Athlete ranking
* Athlete qualification
* Selection process
* Judging or selection panels
* Trials
* Eligibility
* Reserves
* Coaches’ selection
* Injury or illness
* Team composition and places
* Selection appeals process
* Financial agreements and expenses
* Anti-doping criteria and registered testing pools
* Discretionary selection considerations

How should the athlete selection policy be implemented?

The athlete selection policy can be implemented in the following ways:

* Displayed on the website
* Shared with development squads and on coaching courses
* Made available via company intranet and shared files
* All selection policies should be made public at the commencement of a competition season. Any changes to a selection policy made during the season should be communicated.

It should be regularly reviewed to ensure it is still up to date, and keeping abreast of any changes in legislation (for example around safeguarding and child protection for underage athletes) or common practice. Sport Ireland can support in this area.

Further links and resources

[Sport Ireland High Performance Unit](https://www.sportireland.ie/high-performance)