



Home Office

Code of Practice for Sports Governing Bodies

Version 2.1

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Introduction

The International Sportsperson route of the Points Based System is intended for elite sports people and coaches who are internationally established at the highest level and whose employment will make a significant contribution to the development of their sport at the highest level in the UK.

Those wishing to sponsor a migrant sportsperson need to obtain approval from the relevant governing body (which is approved by the Home Office for the purposes of the International Sportsperson route of the Points Based System) in the form of a governing body endorsement of their application for a sponsorship licence before they can issue a certificate of sponsorship to a sportsperson. They also must obtain an endorsement from the relevant approved governing body for all applications made for individual sportspeople and coaches.

If you have any queries about this code of practice or becoming a governing body approved by the Home Office for the purposes of International Sportsperson endorsements, please contact us at economicmigrationpolicy@homeoffice.gov.uk

Role of the governing body

General Principles

1. Under the International Sportsperson route, it is the responsibility of the approved governing body to:
 - a. agree, publish, maintain, and implement requirements under which they will issue endorsements for sponsor licences and initial change of employment and extension applications for migrants.
 - b. consider and issue a governing body endorsement to an organisation (for example a club) who wishes to obtain a licence to become a sponsor under the International Sportsperson route.
 - c. consider and issue a governing body endorsement to a sponsor for each individual migrant either wishing to enter the UK or extend their stay under the International Sportsperson route.
2. The Home Office will approve one governing body for each sport. However, where a sport has a number of home country governing bodies, we will approve one governing body from each home country (England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales), for the purpose of both setting the endorsement requirements and issuing endorsements. Alternatively, the home countries may, if they wish, agree to appoint a lead governing body to represent them all when consulting the Home Office about the endorsement requirements.
3. For a sports governing body to be approved by the Home Office and included in the list of bodies set out in [Appendix Sports Governing Bodies](#), the sports governing body must:
 - be recognised by the relevant Home Country Sports Council (Sport England, Sport Wales / Chwaraeon Cymru, sportscotland / spòrsalba, or Sport Northern Ireland)
 - confirm they will comply with this Code
 - formulate governing body endorsement criteria in consultation with the Home Office
4. The Home Office reserves the right to refuse requests for Home Office approval.
5. The system of endorsement requires the approved governing body to actively participate in ensuring the immigration system is not abused. All approved governing bodies are required to fulfil certain duties as set out in this document.
6. In fulfilling its duties, the approved governing body must adhere to the following principles:

Accountability – The approved governing body must be accountable for its actions and decisions to sponsors, stakeholders and the Home Office. It must:

- a. take a leading and controlling role in its function as the approved governing body.
- b. carry out its role in a responsible manner with regard to the needs of the sport and the Immigration System by complying with timescales set by the Home Office.
- c. be aware of its duties in issuing an endorsement and comply with them in a responsible manner.

Openness – The approved governing body should be as open and transparent as possible in their role. It must:

- a. be clear in its actions and decisions and be prepared to account for them.
- b. ensure the processes it has in place for issuing endorsements are clear and not open to abuse by those administering them.
- c. ensure that its administration systems are rigorous and constantly maintained and developed if necessary.
- d. ensure that documentary evidence is kept to support any changes to the endorsement requirements and decisions on individual applications and make them available to the Home Office officials on request. (See sections on record keeping and retention of information.)
- e. ensure there are no conflicts of interest involved in the making of decisions. If there is a conflict of interest, then the approved governing body must provide a solution to ensure impartiality.
- f. ensure it acts in the best interest of its sport and fully collaborate with any other relevant body.

The approved governing body's relationship with others

Relationship with those involved in the sport

7. It is the responsibility of the approved governing body to formally consult all interested bodies in the sport, for example other governing bodies (where there is more than one governing body for a particular sport in a home country), player associations, employer bodies, and clubs, before the published International Sportsperson endorsement requirements are finalised, or any changes are made.
8. The Home Office is not prescriptive in regard to the sequencing of the formal consultation that must take place, nor the specific stakeholders that must be engaged. However, the governing body must satisfy themselves, as well as the Home Office upon request, that all stakeholders that may be interpreted by the body as relevant interested parties have been consulted in full. This may include, but is not limited to: other UK governing bodies within the sport, leagues, and clubs (sports may choose to establish arrangements where leagues act as representatives of their clubs where engagement with individual clubs themselves is unreasonable).
9. Prior to the Home Office approving criteria, the body must explicitly confirm that a period of formal consultation has taken place and that opposing views have been considered prior to reaching a decision for requirement proposals or any other amendments to the criteria. Full evidence of this formal consultation must be made available on request.
10. If the approved governing body is approached by another body in the sport with a proposal for changing the endorsement requirements, it is the responsibility of the approved governing body to discuss this with all interested parties in full and for it to be given full consideration.
11. Where home countries in a sport are represented by separate approved governing bodies, each body must consult with the other home countries to ensure their International Sportsperson endorsement requirements are compatible and support appropriate cross border movement in the sport. This consultation must be fully completed before consulting with the Home Office.

Relationship with the Home Office

12. The approved governing body must consult the Home Office and provide a final copy of the International Sportsperson endorsement requirements to be used for issuing endorsements in its sport, and of any subsequent changes, for comment before publication. All changes must be explicitly approved by the Home Office before criteria are set and published. Failure to do so will result in endorsements being cancelled. The Home Office reserves the right to withhold consent to the publication of governing body endorsement criteria that does not align with the

wider policy of the International Sportsperson route.

13. Each governing body must provide the Home Office with two primary points of contact and update us should this contact change.
14. The approved governing body must keep a record of decisions made. It must also keep a record of any meetings held with other governing bodies in setting or changing the endorsement requirements or about individual applications. They must make these records available to officials of the Home Office on request.

Complying with this code

15. If the approved governing body is found to be failing to comply with any of its duties as set out in this Code of Practice, the Home Office will meet with the approved governing body to discuss any issues and agree an action plan to address them. If the approved governing body does not adhere to the action plan or the Home Office still has specific concerns, the Home Office, in consultation with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport or relevant home sports council, for example Sport England, where appropriate, will consider changing the approved governing body for that sport at its discretion.

Role of the Home Office

16. The Home Office will not arbitrate on any disputes relating to whether the International Sportsperson endorsement requirements set by the approved governing body are met in a particular case. The endorsement decision, based on the published requirements, is final.
17. Where issues arise relating to a sport, the Home Office expect these to be dealt directly by the relevant approved body. The Home Office will not act as mediator where disputes arise between governing bodies.
18. The approved governing body should raise any queries they have about their duties as endorsers with the Home Office. The Home Office will provide the approved governing body with a contact in relation to the setting and monitoring of the endorsement requirements.
19. The Home Office may periodically monitor endorsements issued, including numbers, and may ask for further information about a given endorsement from the approved governing body responsible.
20. The approved governing body will also be supported by the Points Based System and Economic Migration Unit. An official will be able to answer queries concerning the immigration rules and the governing body endorsement requirements and the Points Based System and Economic Migration Unit can be contacted at: economicmigrationpolicy@homeoffice.gov.uk
21. The Home Office reserves the right to check the activities of the approved governing body's role in the endorsement process at any time.

The approved governing body's role in the process of setting endorsement requirements and the issuing of endorsements

Principles

22. The purpose of an endorsement for a sponsor is to confirm to the Home Office that the application is from a bona fide sports club or equivalent, that has a legitimate requirement to bring migrants to the UK as sportspeople. A sponsor endorsement will be valid for the duration of that sponsor's licence if granted. Approved bodies must consider this when assessing applications for endorsement from sponsors.
23. The purpose of an endorsement for a migrant is to confirm they are sportsperson that meets the following requirements: they are
 - a. elite; and
 - b. internationally established; and
 - c. will make a significant contribution to the development of their sport at the highest level in the UK.
24. Decisions on sponsor and migrant endorsements must:
 - a. be impartial;
 - b. be consistent;
 - c. be based solely on any published endorsement requirements or immigration requirements applying to that sport at the time of the application;
 - d. not act to give unfair advantage or disadvantage to any one sponsor or group of sponsors or individual or group of individuals;
 - e. not advantage or disadvantage entrants from one country over another.
25. The approved governing body must have a clear dispute resolution process in place for those who wish to challenge its decision.

Setting the endorsement requirements

26. The approved governing body is responsible for the published International Sportsperson endorsement requirements against which requests for

endorsements are considered (subject to Home Office approval).

27. Any published International Sportsperson endorsement requirements should be made available in an easily accessible and well-publicised place and kept up to date to ensure those requiring endorsement are clear about the criteria against which endorsements for sponsors and individuals are assessed.
28. The International Sportsperson endorsement requirements must comply with any immigration rules and UK legislation.
29. The approved governing body may set International Sportsperson endorsement requirements for a specified period. This is recommended when the sport operates an approved season.
30. Once the International Sportsperson endorsement requirements have been published for that specified period, no changes should be made during the course of that period, unless required by legislation or changes outside the control of the approved governing body or the Home Office. This enables sponsors and migrants to be clear about the requirements they must meet.
31. All endorsement requirements are required by the Home Office to have a clear end-date of no more than one year. Once this period has expired the approved governing body need to agree new criteria with the Home Office for publication.

The endorsements

32. Approved governing bodies should issue International Sportsperson endorsements for the individual to sponsors only, not direct to the migrant.
33. Endorsements for sponsors or migrants may be issued in any format - email or letter, providing the approved governing body and sponsors have a robust system in place for tracking and confirming the validity of each endorsement. A suggested format for an International Sportsperson governing body endorsement can be found in Annex A.
34. Endorsements for migrants and sponsors will be required for each certificate of sponsorship, that is initial (permission to enter), change of employment and extension (permission to stay) applications.
35. The Home Office and approved governing body will restrict the number of International Sportsperson endorsements in line with wider immigration objectives.
36. Where an approved governing body is also acting as a sponsor it must still follow the same procedure for endorsing the sponsor licence and migrants. It must ensure that it keeps all the documentary evidence to verify the decisions made.

Record keeping

37. The approved governing body must operate a numbering system of International Sportsperson endorsements to easily track those issued. Each endorsement should be assigned a unique reference number in a format specified by the Home Office that will be used by all approved governing bodies irrespective of the sport they represent. An approved governing body must not use a format other than that detailed below.

38. The sponsor endorsement must be in the following format:

Sport abbreviated to four letters and governing body home country number/year/sequential sponsor endorsement number

For example: A Rugby Football Union endorsement in 2020, sequential sponsor endorsement number 16 would be:
RUGU01/20/S016

39. The migrant endorsement must be in the following format:

Sport abbreviated to four letters and governing body home country number/year/allocated sponsor number/sequential migrant endorsement number

For example: A Rugby Football Union player endorsement in 2020, Sponsor endorsement number S016 would be:
RUGU01/20/S016/45

40. The approved governing body must ensure that all information is kept according to the requirements of the Data Protection Act. For more information, please refer to <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1998/29/contents>

Retention of information

41. All documents and information submitted as part of the sponsor's application for an endorsement must be retained for the duration of the sponsor's licence.

42. All documents and information submitted as part of the sponsor's application for a migrant endorsement must be retained for two years after the migrant endorsement expires.

43. For more information about the governing bodies responsibilities concerning data protection, please refer to <https://www.gov.uk/data-protection>

Review and amendments to this code of practice

44. This code will remain in place until reviewed or revised. The Home Office will consult approved governing bodies through the named contacts before making

any major changes. However, the Home Office reserves the right to amend the code at short notice without consultation to deal with situations that have arisen suddenly.

Annex A - Suggested format of International Sportsperson governing body endorsement

(The endorsement should always be on governing body letter headed paper)

The issue of this endorsement confirms that at the time of the request the sponsor / individual met the relevant governing body endorsement requirements for the International Sportsperson route.

Details of the endorsement

Name of applicant*:

Date of birth*:

Nationality*:

Job title*:

Salary*:

Sponsor:

Sponsor address:

Address of migrant's employment*:

Endorsement reference number:

Period of endorsement*:

Date endorsement issued:

Governing body endorsement issued by:

If an extension period is required or there are changes to the above details a new governing body endorsement will be required.

The issue of this governing body endorsement does not guarantee that subsequent endorsements will be issued as each endorsement will be considered against requirements and information at the time of the request.

* not required for sponsor endorsements

Governing Body Endorsements for migrants should be issued for a period appropriate to the period of approval for sponsorship under which the application is being made, that is:

Initial application - length of contract or up to 3 years maximum, whichever is the shorter period

Extension application - length of contract or up to 2 years maximum, whichever is the shorter period.

If stated in their governing body endorsement requirements, governing bodies may endorse an individual for a shorter period than the employment contract, e.g., a season. If this is the case, the individual must be made aware that their certificate of sponsorship and consequently permission to enter or permission to stay will be limited to the length of the endorsement and will not be for the length of the contract.

Endorsements for sponsors must not have an end date. They will be valid for the duration of the sponsor's licence, if granted.

Endorsements should be signed by a named representative of the governing body.