



Professional Accreditation Guidelines



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1. Introduction

The Irish Sport and Exercise Science Association (ISESA) was established in November 2023, with the vision of enhancing the health, well-being and performance of individuals through sport and exercise sciences. The mission of ISESA is to lead, represent, and advance the sport and exercise sciences community through advocacy, knowledge exchange, collaboration, and accreditation.

As of January 2024, ISESA will be taking over the responsibility of the Sport Ireland Institute Professional Accreditation (SIIPA) programme, which has been in place since 2006. This accreditation programme will remain in its current format whilst it is currently under review by the ISESA Accreditation Committee.

Professional Accreditation with ISESA for those who would previously be applying for the SIIPA programme 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 Accreditation 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 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 Accreditation of ISESA, the following information will be taken into account:

1. Certified copy of applicant's relevant qualification (Masters/PhD related to Sport and Exercise Science or relevant discipline).
2. Evidence of 200 days or 1600 hours of work experience in the high performance/elite sport sector within the last 5 years.
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.



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 they have 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.

1.2. Standards required

Qualifications: Level 9 Qualification, (for example, Masters or 2 years of PhD completed in Sport and Exercise Sciences or discipline area of Sport and Exercise Sciences.) level.

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

Experience: Evidence of 1600 hours or 200 days 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 **1st April**, and **1st October**.

Step 1: Applicants must pay the administration fee of **€150** to **Irish Sport and Exercise Sciences Association**. This payment must be made by **bank transfer**. Please ensure to include your name on the bank transfer for reference purposes.

| | |
|------------------------|---|
| Bank Name: | AIB, Blanchardstown |
| Address: Lower: | West End Retail Park, Blanchardstown |
| Sort Code: | 93-75-33 |
| Account No: | 05039002 |
| A/C Holder: | Irish Sport and Exercise Sciences Association |
| IBAN No: | IE78AIBK93753305039002 |
| Swift/BIC Code: | AIBKIE2D |

Step 2: Complete the online application form and upload the following documents to the ISESA Accreditation portal on the ISESA website:



1. Certified copies of your academic qualifications at Level 9 or higher in a Sport and Exercise Science (or relevant) discipline.
2. Utilising the template provided, evidence of 200 days or 1600 hours of work experience in the high performance/elite sport sector within the last 5 years.
3. Written case study, following the set guidelines and word length (see section 3).
4. Three references from individuals of groups within sport to demonstrate your ability to successfully operate in a high performance environment. Please refer to the referee template available on the website.

Step 4: Agreement to comply with ISESA's Professional Member Code of Conduct.

2.2. Procedures

On confirming the paperwork is correct, the Administrator will liaise with the Chair of the Accreditation Review sub-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 the 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 ISESA's Accreditation Review sub-committee will then consider applications in which all relevant information has been received, taking into account the following information:

- Qualifications
- Relevant and sufficient work experience
- 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 they see a 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

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 ISESA Accreditation Review sub-committee to all applicants, successful or otherwise. Applicants who pass the assessment process can use the term ISESA Professional Accreditation. No other terms should be used to describe the accreditation award. Once Accredited, you are expected to maintain ongoing CME/CPD and professional practice on an annual basis. From 2025 it is envisaged that accredited members of the ISESA would pay an accredited membership annual fee to the ISESA.

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. Examples of such feedback are as follows:

- If you fail on qualifications, please obtain the appropriate qualification.
- If you fail on training and experience as outlined in your application, the likely outcome is that more information is required or further training or experience is needed.
- If you fail the case study, you may need to provide more information or submit a new case study.
- If you fail based on the references provided, the likely outcome is that more experience in a high performance environment is required.

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 ISESA's Accreditation Review sub-committee the applicant must send, in writing, to the Chair of ISESA's Accreditation Review sub-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 ISESA's Accreditation 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
- 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 ISESA's Accreditation Committee at its next meeting. This will be the final decision of the ISESA accreditation process.

3. Case Study Requirements

All applicants for ISESA Professional Accreditation 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 one PDF file.

3.1. Criteria for Case Study Submission

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, which can be found in Appendix 2.

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. 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 on 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, including examples of your programs and interventions (where applicable).
- 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 Plagiarism Declaration Statement (Appendix 1).

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 to avoid self-citations.

4. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)

The ISESA Accreditation scheme involves the processing of personal data by ISESA. The information below should be read in conjunction with the ISESA Privacy Notice available on <https://www.isesa.ie/>

The processing activity and purpose is detailed in this document. 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 ISESA's Accreditation Committee

5.1. Committee composition

The ISESA Accreditation Review sub-committee will be made up of the following:

- Chair
- ISESA Director representative
- 6 Professional Members of the Sport Ireland Institute with at least 5 years experience of working in high performance sport.
- ISESA 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 ISESA Professional Membership with regard to 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, and qualifications, make recommendations to ISESA as to the applicant's suitability for Professional Membership.

5.3. Criteria for the Chair

- Understanding of and expertise in accreditation processes.
- Experience of an accreditation process.
- 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 ISESA Chair.
- To make a recommendation to the ISESA Accreditation Review sub-committee.
- To provide feedback to the ISESA Accreditation Review sub-committee for the recommendation made.
- To provide feedback for the committee to provide to the applicant

5.5. Criteria for Case Reviewer

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

6. Maintaining Professional Accreditation

ISESA 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. To maintain Professional Accreditation of ISESA, the Accredited Professional must be able 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 maintaining accreditation.



Appendix 1: Declaration on Plagiarism

I declare that this material, which I now submit for assessment, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

I understand that plagiarism, collusion, and copying is a grave and serious offence, and I accept the penalties that may be imposed should I engage in plagiarism, collusion, or copying. I have identified and included the source of all facts, ideas, opinions, viewpoints of others in the case study references.

Direct quotations from books, journal articles, internet sources, module text, or any other source whatsoever are acknowledged and the source cited are identified in the case study references. This case study, or any part of it, has not been previously submitted by me or any other person for this or any other course of study or for the purpose of accreditation.



Appendix 2: ISESA Professional Accreditation – Case Study Assessment and Feedback Form

| | | | | | |
|---|--|----------------------|--|-------|--|
| ISESA Professional Accreditation Applicant No.: | | Case Study Reviewer: | | Date: | |
|---|--|----------------------|--|-------|--|

| | | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|--------|--------------------|
| 5= Excellent Pass | 4= Very Good Pass | 3= Pass | 2=Fail | 1=Significant Fail |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|--------|--------------------|

| Assessment criteria: Does the case study provide <u>evidence</u> of the following: (see guide sheet) | Score | Feedback on specific criteria |
|--|-------|-------------------------------|
| Scientific Rigour of the Work | /5 | |
| Working in the HP Environment | /5 | |
| Understanding your Role | /5 | |
| Building Rapport and Maintaining Relationships | /5 | |
| Understanding working in a HP team | /5 | |



| | | |
|---|-----|--|
| Overall Assessment and Feedback to Applicant (This will form part of the applicant's feedback) | /25 | |
|---|-----|--|

| Recommendation | | | | |
|--|----------------|------------------|---|-------------|
| Descriptor | Score Achieved | Outcome | Action Required | Please Tick |
| 1. Case study extensively demonstrates the level of expertise required for ISESA Professional Membership: | 23-25 | Excellent Pass | Professional Membership Awarded | |
| 2. Case study fully demonstrates the level of expertise required for ISESA Professional Membership: | 19-22 | Very Good Pass | Professional Membership Awarded | |
| 3. Case study adequately demonstrates the level of expertise required for ISESA Professional Membership: | 15-18 | Pass | Professional Membership Awarded | |
| 4. Case study fails to demonstrate the applicant has the level of expertise required for ISESA Professional Membership: | 10-14 | Fail | APPLICATION POSSIBLE – FOLLOWING FEEDBACK | |
| 5. Case study comprehensively demonstrates the applicant does not have the level of expertise required for ISESA Professional Membership: | 0-9 | Significant Fail | No Reapplication Within 12 Months | |

Note: Applicants must score **at least 3 in all areas** to be awarded a pass, regardless of the overall score.



| Assessment Criteria | Excellent Pass: <i>Demonstrates excellence in their competencies to work with elite athletes.</i> | Very Good Pass: <i>Demonstrates a good level competencies to work with elite athletes.</i> | Pass: <i>Demonstrates competencies to work with elite athletes.</i> | Fail: <i>Does not demonstrate competence to work with elite athletes.</i> | Significant Fail: <i>Demonstrates a lack of competence to work with elite athletes.</i> |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|--|--|
| Scientific Rigour of the Work | Demonstrates excellent grasp of the underpinning scientific theory and research evidence through understanding, evaluation and citations. Synthesises evidence from a broad range of appropriate sources, including contemporary references in APA style, and uses these to provide a scientific rationale for the work undertaken. Justifies and evaluates the use of cutting-edge appropriate data collection methods and analyses. Provides robust evidence of a science-based practice model in all their applied work. | Demonstrates sound grasp of the underpinning scientific theory and research evidence through understanding, evaluation and citations. Makes reference to many appropriate scientific sources, in APA style, and uses these to provide a clear rationale for the work undertaken. Justifies and evaluates the use of appropriate scientific data collection and analyses (may be selected from a range of options). Provides significant evidence of a science-based practice model in their applied work. | Demonstrates a grasp of the underpinning scientific theory and research evidence through understanding, evaluation and citations. Makes reference to appropriate scientific sources, in APA style, and uses these to provide a clear rationale for the work undertaken. Justifies the use of appropriate scientific data collection and analyses (may be selected from a range of options). Provides some evidence of a science-based practice model in their applied work | Demonstrates a poor grasp of the underpinning scientific theory and research evidence with limited understanding, citations and references. Few references to appropriate scientific sources, in APA style. Case study is mainly descriptive. Uses insufficiently rigorous data collection methods. Insufficient rationale for the work undertaken. Little evidence of a science-based practice model in their applied work. | Demonstrates a poor or inaccurate grasp of the underpinning scientific theory and research evidence with limited understanding, evaluation and citations. No references to scientific sources - case study is mainly anecdotal. Uses inappropriate or insufficiently rigorous data collection methods. No scientific rationale for the work undertaken. No evidence of a science-based practice model in their applied work. |
| Working in the HP | Demonstrates a clear athlete | Demonstrates an athlete | Demonstrates some | Demonstrates a limited | Demonstrates a lack of |



| | | | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|
| Environment | centred approach which ensures their views are embedded deeply in the case study narrative. Rich understanding of the context and structures in which they will work. High level ability to manage expectations. Deep respect for the sport culture, and a clear consistent contextually intelligent communication. | centred approach which ensures their views are embedded in the case study narrative Clear understanding of the context and structures in which they will work. Clear ability to manage expectations Respect for the sport culture, and consistent contextually intelligent communication. | awareness of an athlete centred approach which ensures their views are embedded in the case study narrative. Some understanding of the context and structures in which they will work, with an ability to manage expectations. Respect for the sport culture, and consistent contextually intelligent communication. | awareness of an athlete centred approach which ensures their views are outlined in the case study narrative. cursory understanding of the context and structures in which they will work. A highly limited ability to manage expectations. Respect for the sport culture, and awareness of contextually intelligent communication. | awareness of an athlete centred approach. Lack of understanding of the context and structures in which they will work. Inability to manage expectations. Lack of respect for the sport culture, and lack of contextually intelligent communication. |
| Understanding your Role | Demonstrates deep insights and heightened awareness of the issues of role clarity, professional boundaries and professional standards in their practice. Balances ambition and innovation of their interventions with a high-level awareness of potential drawbacks. Clearly aware of complexity of elite sport and potential array of ethical challenges. | Demonstrates significant insights and good awareness of the issues of role clarity, professional boundaries and professional standards in their practice. Ambitious and innovative with awareness of potential drawbacks. Aware of complexity of elite sport and potential ethical | Demonstrates some insights and awareness of the issues of role clarity, professional boundaries and professional standards in their practice. Ambitious with some awareness of potential drawbacks. Some awareness of complexity of elite sport and potential ethical challenges. | Demonstrates limited awareness of role clarity, professional boundaries and professional standards in their practice, with highly limited awareness of adverse consequences of their interventions. Lack of awareness of the complexity of elite sport and predictable ethical challenges. | No clear insights and or awareness of the issues of role clarity, professional boundaries and professional standards in their practice. Lack of awareness of the potential risks from their interventions, and fails to account for the complexity of elite sport and limited awareness of |



| | | challenges. | | | ethical challenges. |
|---|---|---|--|--|---|
| Building Rapport and Maintaining Relationships | Demonstrates a high degree of self-awareness, and expertly effective in building relationships with others. Has high level capacity to influence others, and significantly contributes to a positive sport environment. Communicates in an effective and appropriate way with a range of individuals, and can effectively manage and pre-empt conflict. | Demonstrates a good degree of self-awareness, and highly effective in building relationships with others. Has clear capacity to influence others, and clearly contributes to a positive sport environment. Communicates in a highly effective and appropriate way with a range of individuals, and can effectively manage conflict. | Demonstrates self-awareness, and is effective in building relationships with others. Has the capacity to influence others, and contributes to a positive sport environment. Communicates in an effective and appropriate way with a range of individuals, and can manage conflict. | Demonstrates highly limited self-awareness, and some potential in building relationships with others. Has potential capacity to influence others, and contributes somewhat to a positive sport environment. Communicates in a limited way with a range of individuals, and has a neutral or negative impact on issues of conflict. | Lacks obvious self-awareness, and is ineffective in building relationships with others. Has major challenges influencing others, and an inability to contribute to a positive sport environment. Communicates ineffectively and somewhat inappropriately, and generates conflict. |
| Understanding working in a HP team | Case study demonstrates evidence of expert collaboration with an elite athlete, team or coach. Shows in-depth awareness of the complexity of intervention work with elite athletes within a multidisciplinary team. Can develop a robust shared understanding of the consulting processes. | Case study demonstrates evidence of highly effective collaboration with an elite athlete, team or coach. Shows awareness of the complexity of intervention work with elite athletes within a multidisciplinary team. Can develop a clear shared understanding of | Case study demonstrates evidence of effective collaboration with an elite athlete, team or coach. Shows sufficient awareness of the complexity of intervention work with elite athletes within a multidisciplinary team. Can develop a shared understanding of the | Case study does not demonstrate sufficient evidence of effective collaboration with an elite athlete, team or coach. Shows little awareness of the complexity of intervention work with elite athletes within a multidisciplinary team. Limited skills in creating | Case study does not demonstrate any evidence of effective work with an elite athlete, team or coach. Shows no awareness of the complexity of intervention work with elite athletes within a multidisciplinary team. Inability to create shared understanding of the |



| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| | Readily recognises and manages effectively ethical issues around confidentiality, boundaries and areas of professional competence. | the consulting processes. Recognises all ethical issues around confidentiality, boundaries and areas of professional competence. | consulting processes. Recognises key ethical issues around confidentiality, boundaries and areas of professional competence. | a shared understanding of the consulting processes. May make passing reference to ethical issues around confidentiality, boundaries and areas of professional competence. | consulting processes Does not recognise ethical issues around confidentiality, boundaries and areas of professional competence. |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|