

Cycling Ireland Policy for the Endorsement and Review of Sport Ireland International Carding Scheme.

This policy covers the endorsement and submission of athlete applications for Sport Ireland International Carding Scheme, and on-going appraisal of carding via quarterly reviews for recipients.

Sport Ireland International Carding Scheme

Sport Ireland (SI) distributes annually in excess of €4 million Euros of athlete funding each year via its International Carding Scheme to over 120 athletes in 16 sports. Every National Governing Body (NGB) agrees it's discipline specific Carding Criteria with Sport Ireland to ensure that the appropriate level of investment is reaching high potential athletes. Sport Ireland state, "the primary purpose of this funding is to support Irish athletes in reaching finals, and achieving medals at European, World, Olympic and Paralympic level."

Supporting Athlete Trajectory – Award not Reward

Cycling Ireland (CI) wants to promote performance-focussed athlete progression within its High Performance athlete support structure, in conjunction with the continued desire to cultivate our squad size and performance, working environments, welfare and enjoyment for all involved.

The Sport Ireland Carding criteria should be seen as an award based off the attainment of a measurable criteria that signals the opportunity for investing in an athlete's potential during the current or next Olympic or Paralympic cycle towards a medal competitive performance - rather than a result that automatically equals a reward.

Objectives

Cycling Ireland therefore has a responsibility to ensure that the investment from Sport Ireland in the Carding Scheme positively contributes to their primary purpose. The award of funding must reflect the shared ambition of SI, CI and the athlete: competitive performances at European and World Championships with the ultimate goal to qualify for and deliver a lifetime best performance at the 2028 LA Olympic or Paralympic Games.

The process outlined below is fully aligned with the Sport Ireland 2025 International Carding Scheme Guidelines published on their website, with particular reference to section 1.6 'Assessment'.

Process

Outlined below is the process by which applications for the International Carding Scheme will be assessed by Cycling Ireland, before applications are endorsed and submitted to Sport Ireland. Additionally, the below aspects are relevant for on-going quarterly reviews for carded athletes during a funding cycle.

1. Athlete eligibility

- All applicants must meet the eligibility criteria to represent Ireland in UCI and IOC/IPC senior/elite competitions.
- Athletes must have fulfilled and agreed to all requirements of the Sport Ireland Carding terms and conditions.
- Athletes can only avail themselves of Carding at any level in one discipline and cannot combine multiples either in same event (EG: track) or across disciplines (EG: road and track).
- Athlete compliance with the Cycling Ireland Team Agreement and with all current anti-doping procedures and protocols.
- Athletes must submit their application within the required timeframe to be considered.

2. Athlete performance

All applicants submitting a performance to evidence their carding application will have their performance scrutinised for eligibility under the applicable carding criteria. Any performances not meeting criteria will not be endorsed.

3. Athlete progression.

If an athlete applying for carding has not demonstrated sufficient progression between one Olympic/Paralympic cycle towards a medal competitive position for the next Olympic/Paralympic cycle, Cycling Ireland may not endorse their application for carding even if criteria are met, if in the opinion of the CI HPU the gap to the podium cannot be bridged or further progress looks unlikely/limited. This may arise from one or more of the points below, or it may stem from the trajectory of the competition redefining medal competitiveness. (e.g. candidate athlete has improved, but field quality/size has improved at a greater rate beyond the athlete's level.)

This perspective is underpinned by the Sport Ireland Carding Criteria Guidelines document in section 1.6.

4. Athlete engagement

Significant resources and support are available to a carded athlete via CI's HPU including coaching, training camps and event and logistics support. There is additionally a range of benefits that come with the expert support of Sport Ireland Institute of Sport also.

These are all designed to help maximise athlete performance and physical and mental welfare. Failure to engage fully with the professionals that are in place to support athletes may result in not being able to endorse an athlete's carding application or suspend it during the year. This includes but is not limited to failure to train as programmed, not uploading training data in a timely manner to inform the coaching process, and failure to following the guidance set out by your Institute practitioners.

Athletes residing within a National HP programme with CI must be coached by the National Lead in your respective discipline, unless in exceptional circumstances other arrangements are agreed **prior** to submitting your application. Applicants are required to allow sufficient time for any agreement to be reached during the application period.

5. Athlete Conduct

If the behaviour of a candidate athlete that has been part of the CI HP programme, or attended CI Team activity during the year or past Cycle relating to the carding performance are found to have contravened the athlete team agreement, or been the cause of complaints from either athletes or staff to management, then CI reserves the right not to endorse a candidate athletes application for carding in the following year, or suspend it during the year.

6. Athlete Daily Training Environment

If in the opinion of the CI HPU the daily training environment of the athlete is adjudged to be sub-optimal for reasons pertaining to the workload of other employment, education or other third-party commitment to the extent that it prevents the athlete from training at the levels expected of their performance profile, and demands of the event, then we may not be able to endorse a carding application, or may have to suspend it following a quarterly review. The same applies should a third party coaching programme not meet the agreed standards required to uphold athlete performance progression, or target performances in competition.

7. Athlete availability

In respect of the discipline for which they are carded, an athlete would be expected to be make themselves available for National Team duties commensurate with qualifying for and competing at Continental, World Championships, Olympic and Paralympic Games, and National Championships, unless with the express prior agreement of the National Lead for your discipline, or HP Director.

8. Panel decision

A CI HPU panel comprised of, but not limited to, the High Performance Director, Head Coach and Discipline Lead (e.g. National Coach) will evaluate if an athlete's application for carding first of all meets the Carding criteria, and then meets the conditions 1-7 laid out above. The final endorsement decision rests with the High Performance Director in accordance with Sport Ireland Guidelines.

9. A quarterly review for each athlete benefitting from Carding is submitted by CI to SI. Failure to remain on track with the above aspects during the course of a year supported by carding may result in an athlete's carding being removed or suspended. See 10.2 below.

10. Outcomes

10.1 Applications

- If the HPU panel endorse an athlete's application, it will be submitted within the published timeframe to Sport Ireland.
- If the Panel determine that an applicant's performances do not meet a) the criteria, or b) the funding level for which they have applied we will write in the first instance to inform them of the outcome, and the reasons why.
- If the panel agree that an applicant meet the carding criteria but fail to meet the conditions of this Endorsement Policy we will write in the first instance to inform them of the outcome and the reasons why.
- The appeals process, 12) below may be invoked if grounds to appeal exist.

10.2 Reviews

- If during the course of the year a carded athlete fails to maintain the conditions of the Endorsement and Review policy 1-7 above we will suspend their carding and in the first instance write to them and explain the reasons why. We would aim to continue working with them to solve such issues and it would be possible to reinstate carding subsequently at the next review if successful. Under such circumstances there exists no right of appeal.

11. In relation to endorsing and submitting a carding application on behalf of a candidate athlete, or a quarterly review thereafter, any outcomes do not prejudice the potential for major championships selection.

12. Appeals Process for the Endorsement of Carding Applications.

If an athlete has met the Carding Criteria, but their application for carding is not endorsed for one or more reasons from 1-7 above, then they have the right to appeal to Cycling Ireland. Such Appeals will take place in accordance with the Sport Ireland Carding Appeals Policy. If an athlete does not meet criteria there is no right to appeal.

Appeals should be made in writing to ceo@cyclingireland.ie within 24hrs of being notified of the outcome of their application for carding. Appeals can only be made on the basis of an error of fact when the HPU panel met to consider an athlete's application (e.g. incorrect results, performance not considered etc) and not to debate the opinion of the panel should all matters have been correctly considered in accordance with this policy.

When submitting their appeal to the CEO the appellant should outline the material facts which they consider have been erroneously considered by the HPU panel. The CEO will appoint an independent chair to review the appeal for eligibility. If in the opinion of the chair there are sufficient grounds for appeal, they shall assemble an appeals panel (no less than three persons in total) to consider the appeal.

The findings of the appeals panel are final. If the appeal is upheld the HPU panel will be directed to reconsider the candidate athlete's carding application. If the appeal is rejected the matter will be considered closed and no further communication will be entered into.

13. Exceptional Circumstances

Where exceptional circumstances prevail we will endeavour to work closely with the candidate athlete and Sport Ireland to work towards a reasonable outcome. Such conditions may relate to, but are not limited to, late cancellation/non-staging/non-attendance of a major championship event, a high impact pandemic such as Covid-19, or in the case of para-tandems non-availability of pilot/stoker impacting ability to perform.

(Ends 30/09/24)