



Rugby Football League Governing Body Endorsement Requirements

This guidance is to be used for all International Sportsperson governing body endorsement requests made on or after **10 January 2026**

Section 1: Overview of governing body endorsements for the International Sportsperson route of the points-based system

This page provides a brief explanation of what endorsement requirements apply in respect of the International Sportsperson route of the points-based system. The Immigration Rules for the International Sportsperson route can be found at [Appendix International Sportsperson](#).

The International Sportsperson route is for elite sportspeople and coaches who:

- are internationally established and whose employment will make a significant contribution to the development of their sport at the highest level in the UK
- who will base themselves in the UK
- will be filling a post that cannot be filled by a suitable British citizen or person who has a right to enter or stay in the UK without restriction.

The application process explained: migrants applying to come to the UK under the International Sportsperson route need to be sponsored by an organisation that has an International Sportsperson sponsor licence.

If you wish to sponsor such migrants, you must have a sponsor licence. Before you apply to the Home Office for a licence you must be endorsed by the **approved governing body** for your sport. This endorsement confirms to the Home Office that the application for a licence is from a genuine sports club (or equivalent) that has a legitimate requirement to bring migrants to the UK as sportspeople. Once licensed, you can assign certificates of sponsorship to a sportsperson or coach with a job offer that allows them to apply for entry clearance or permission to stay in the UK. Each individual must also have a personal endorsement from the **approved governing body** for their sport before you assign the certificate of sponsorship.

An **approved governing body** is one specified in [Appendix Sports Governing Bodies](#) of the Immigration Rules. Such a governing body must be recognised by one of the home country sports councils such as Sport England, and will have been approved by the Home Office before being included in [Appendix Sports Governing Bodies](#) of the Immigration Rules.

Approved governing bodies will work within the Home Office's '[Code of practice for sports governing bodies](#)' and must comply with any immigration regulations, UK legislation and the principles of the points-based system as detailed on the [GOV.UK](#) website.

Length of endorsement

Governing body endorsements will be issued for a period appropriate to the period of approval for sponsorship, that is:



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| Type of application | Length of endorsement |
|---------------------|---|
| Sponsor | Endorsements for sponsors will not have an end date. They will be valid for as long as the sponsor continues to hold a valid sponsor licence. |
| Migrant | For an initial maximum period of 3 years, with a further extension of a maximum period of 3 years. If the contract is for fewer than 3 years, it will be issued for the length of the contract. |

Change of employment

If a migrant is intending to change employer, their new employer must request a new governing body endorsement. The endorsement can be issued for the length of the contract or to the maximum period permitted within the route, whichever is the shorter. The new employer must assign a new certificate of sponsorship to the migrant to allow them to apply to the Home Office for new permission to stay. Permission to stay must be granted before the migrant can start work with the new employer.

Salary

The salary should be agreed as part of the contract between the migrant and the sponsor. This and the other conditions of employment should be at least equal to those normally given to a resident worker for the type of work undertaken. In the case of players, the RFL will not endorse an application unless the financial package on offer to the player is in the case of:

- Super League clubs – is at least £35,000 per annum
- Championship clubs - is at least £17,500 per annum
- .

The club shall provide such evidence as required by the RFL as to the make-up of the financial package.

Supplementary employment

International Sportsperson migrants are eligible to undertake supplementary employment under the Home Office supplementary employment regulations. The 'Supplementary employment' section [Workers and Temporary Workers: guidance for sponsors - Sponsor an International Sportsperson guidance](#) has more information on this.

Compliance with the Code of Practice for Sports Governing Bodies



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In reviewing this criteria, the Rugby Football League confirm we have reread the Code and agree to our roles and responsibilities as set out within. We confirm we have acted in full compliance with the principles of the Code during this annual review.



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Section 2: Requirements

This page explains the Rugby Football League (RFL) requirements under the International Sportsperson route. These requirements are effective from **10 January 2026**.

Only the roles listed as part of this criteria are eligible for endorsement.

These requirements are applicable to the UK.

Consultation

The following requirements have been agreed by the Home Office following consultation with the RFL and other UK based national federations, the clubs and the Rugby League Players Association. These requirements come into force in relation to applications received by the RFL after the date of issue of the Requirements and remain in force until they are superseded by a revised set of requirements.

Prior to contacting the Home Office during the annual review of this criteria, RFL confirm that full consultation has been carried out, this includes any organisation that could be interpreted as an interested party, such as clubs, bodies, or player associations related to rugby league in the UK.

Review

The requirements will be reviewed annually. The next review will be in December 2026

Length of season

The season for rugby league normally runs from February to November.

Requirements

The table below shows the endorsement requirements for sponsors and migrants.

| Category | Requirement | |
|----------------|--|---|
| Sponsor | <p>Governing body endorsements will be issued to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rugby Football League (RFL)• Scotland Rugby League• Wales Rugby League• clubs participating in any of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ the Super League◦ the Championship | |
| Migrant | Player | <p>Governing body endorsements for an individual must be used to support an individual's application for permission to enter or stay in the UK within 3 months of the endorsement issue date.</p> <p>Initial application: primary requirements</p> |



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| Category | Requirement |
|----------|---|
| | <p>In determining whether a player meets the requirements the following time periods will be considered in relation to the following types of matches:</p> <p>DOMESTIC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National Rugby League (NRL) matches - where the application is made:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• on or before the Super League End of Season Registration Deadline (21st August 2026 in the 2026 Season) the RFL will consider the last 2 complete seasons prior to the application date (i.e. the 2024 and 2025 Seasons for applications made on or before 21st August 2026)• after the Super League End of Season Registration Deadline, the RFL will consider the current and the previous Season (i.e. for applications after 21st August 2026 the 2025 and 2026 Seasons)• French Elite 1 matches – the RFL will consider the last 2 complete seasons. <p>REPRESENTATIVE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• State of Origin and International matches - the RFL will consider the last 2 calendar years from the date of application as the qualifying period. If a country has not played a match in one of those years, the RFL will consider the last 3 calendar years as the qualifying period. The decision of the Rugby League International Federation (the "IRL") as to whether an International Fixture is officially recognised shall be final.• World Rugby Sevens Series <p>The RFL will consider the last two complete seasons. For the avoidance of doubt the World Rugby Sevens season currently runs from December to June. Therefore, if an application is made in 2026, before the final tournament has been played, the relevant seasons will be 2024 and 2025. If the application is made after the final tournament</p> |



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| | <p>has been played, the relevant seasons will be 2025 and 2026.</p> <p>The RFL will grant an endorsement if the applicant club is able to show that the player has achieved at least one of the following:</p> <p>1. NRL - played in 50% of NRL matches including play off matches, but not pre-season matches in the qualifying period.</p> <p>Where the player has played in the NRL for one season of the qualifying period and played in the Super League, the Championship or League 1 in the season prior to that, they will be required to have played in both of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50% of NRL fixtures in the relevant season• 75% of Super League, Championship or League 1 fixtures during the final season of their previous permission, or during the entire period of their previous permission if the period endorsed was less than one season <p>Where the player has played in Super League for both seasons (and the application is made prior to the End of Season Registration Deadline) the Player will be required to have played in 50% of Super League, Championship or League 1 fixtures during the two seasons, or during the entire period of the previous permission if the period endorsed was less than two complete seasons.</p> <p>2. NSW Cup and Queensland Cup: The player must be aged 24 or under at the point of application and the player has played in 75% matches including play off matches, but not pre-season matches, in the last Season (if the application is made before the Super League End of Season Registration Date) or the current Season (if the application is made after the Super League End of Season Registration Date) (i.e. if the application is made on or before 21st August 2026, the 2025 season and, if the application is made after 21st August 2026, the 2026 season)</p> <p>3. State of Origin: the player has played in 1 State of Origin match in the qualifying period.</p> |



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| | <p>4. International: Australia, New Zealand and England or Great Britain - the player has played in 1 match in either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the RL World Cup 2021• the Four Nations or equivalent IRL officially recognised match in the qualifying period. <p>5. International: other - the player must have achieved at least two of the following:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">The player has either played in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 match in the Rugby League World Cup 2021; <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 50% of IRL officially recognised matches for any country in the IRL Rankings, other than Australia, New Zealand, England or Great Britain, in the qualifying period, referred to on Page 5 <p style="text-align: center;">AND</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">either in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a minimum of 40% of IRL officially recognised matches since 1 October 2022; <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 25% of NRL matches including play off matches, but not pre-season matches, in the qualifying period. For the avoidance of doubt, in relation to this strand the qualifying period is NRL seasons (which seasons are relevant is dependent on the timing of the application in relation to the End of Season deadline) and not calendar years. <p>6. International (age-limited) – the player must have achieved the following.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Played in 1 IRL officially recognised match for the Australian Schoolboys, Junior Kiwis or France U19's in the qualifying period referred to on Page 5. NB: The applicant applying for a visa must be 16 or over on the date of application. |



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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Played in 1 IRL officially recognised match for Samoa, Tonga, Fiji and Papua New Guinea at U21's level in the qualifying period referred to on Page 5. NB: The applicant applying for a visa must be 16 or over on the date of application. <p>7. Elite 1 (French Premier Competition) – the player must have achieved the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">Played in 75% of Elite 1 matches including play off matches, but not pre-season matches in the qualifying period. <p>8. Rugby Union players: the player meets the current governing body endorsement requirements as published on the Rugby Football Union (RFU) website only.</p> <p>9. World Rugby Sevens Series players: the player has played in 50% of officially sanctioned tournaments in the qualifying period for countries ranked 1-15. For the avoidance of doubt this does not mean 50% of those played by his team.</p> <p>10. Initial application: (Age limited) secondary requirements</p> <p>If the player does not meet any of the initial criteria set above, the RFL may consider the player against the secondary criteria below:</p> <p>The player must be aged 26 or under at the point of application and the player has played in either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">25% of NRL matches including play off matches, but not pre-season matches, in the last Season (if the application is made before the End of Season Registration Date) or the current Season (if the application is made after the End of Season Registration Date) (i.e. if the application is made on or before 21st August 2026, the 2025 season and, if the application is made after 21st August 2026, the 2026 season).50% of IRL officially recognised matches for any country in Tiers 1 to 3 of the IRL Rankings, other than Australia or New Zealand, in the qualifying period. |



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| | <p>11. NFL (American Football) Players</p> <p>The player must have been on the roster of an NFL franchise and played in at least 1 game in the 24 months preceding the endorsement application.</p> <p>The RFL may, in its absolute discretion, refuse to grant a governing body endorsement under this requirement if it has good reason to believe that the financial package to be provided is being artificially inflated to meet the requirement.</p> <p>Extension and change of employer applications</p> <p>Extension applications will only be considered for players who currently hold a certificate of sponsorship or have previously held a certificate of sponsorship, during the last playing season. Where a player has moved, the player must have been granted new permission to enter or stay in the U.K. before they can play for their new club.</p> <p>The player must have achieved at least one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• played in at least 75% of competitive matches (first team matches not including friendly matches) in the Super League, Championship (as applicable) for the period of the previous permission.• continues to meet any of the requirements set out in 4, 5 or 10 above for initial applications (save that any reference to NRL matches in such requirements shall be deemed to be references to Super League or Championship matches, as applicable). <p>Applications for players whose current/last club is located outside of the U.K., but which competes in Super League, the Championship</p> <p>Any such application will be an initial application not a change of employer application; however, to reflect that they have been competing in a U.K. based competition the player must have achieved at least one of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• played in at least 75% of competitive matches (first team matches not including friendly matches) in the Super |



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| | <p>League, Championship (as applicable) for the period of the previous contract.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• meets any of the requirements set out in 4, 5, or 10 for initial applications (save that any reference to NRL matches in such requirements shall be deemed to be references to Super League, Championship, as applicable, matches). <p>Matches missed</p> <p>Exclusions from selection due to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Injury;• Illness;• International Duty;• A period of maternity/paternity leave• Suspension (subject to the RFL Operational Rules and Section 3 of these GBE Requirements);• Bereavement;• Serious family crisis; <p>will be excluded from the assessment when applying the requirements both in initial applications and in extensions or changes of employer. Clubs should submit supporting evidence in such cases to support the case, together with a detailed record of the exact matches the player has missed for one of the reasons set out above. In relation to injury, illness and international duty, this evidence should be from the team doctor, or other official medical practitioner, or the team manager of the International Team (as applicable) on headed paper.</p> <p>For the avoidance of doubt, the calculation will be that the number of matches missed shall be deducted from the number of matches the player was available to play in. It will not be assumed that the player would have played in those matches if they had been fit/available to do so. For example, if there are 20 matches in a season and the player plays in 10 and misses 5 through injury, they will have played in 10 of the 15 available matches, a percentage of 66%.</p> <p>Suspensions – Exemptions.</p> <p>In relation to Players: <i>The Board on behalf of the RFL shall be entitled to refuse registration of a Player or refuse to accept a Contract (and for the purpose of this clauses “Contract” shall</i></p> |



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| | <p><i>include any Contract renewal, variation or extension) or may impose such terms and conditions as it considers appropriate on a registration in any of the following circumstances...</i></p> <p><i>(b) the Board reasonably believes that to accept the registration or Contract may bring the Game into disrepute or may adversely affect the integrity of any competition;</i></p> <p><i>In exercising its rights under this paragraph (b) the Board shall consider such factors as it considers appropriate which, where relevant, may include (but not be limited to): (a) the severity of any underlying incident(s) / convictions; (b) action taken against any other players who have been involved in similar incident(s) / have similar convictions; (c) any steps taken by the Player to mitigate the underlying incident; (d) any management plan proposed by the Club; (e) the interests of the RFL (including its reputation and need to promote the Game); (f) the interests of other Clubs; (g) the integrity of the RFL's competitions; (g) the interests of the Club's Officials, other Players, supporters, shareholders and sponsors.</i></p> <p><i>In relation to Players, Coaches and Performance Analysts: The RFL may recognise the sanctions or suspensions of any other sporting body including, but not limited to, competent RFL member bodies, the Rugby League European Federation, the Rugby League International Federation, other members of the Rugby League International Federation or the Governing Body of any other sport (a "Recognised Sanction"). A Recognised Sanction shall be enforced by the RFL and its Members until that sanction or suspension has been deemed to have been complied with and served or unless an Off Field Operational Rules Tribunal determines the matter and consents to the Recognised Sanction being lifted.</i></p> <p>Trials</p> <p>Governing body endorsements cannot be issued to clubs for the purposes of having players on trial.</p> |
| Head Coach, Assistant Coach or similar position such as | <p>Initial applications: requirements</p> <p>In determining whether an applicant meets the requirements, the RFL will consider whether the applicant does so for at least 2 seasons; one of the last 2 seasons and one other season. Where applications are made in mid-season or where there are other</p> |



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| Category | Requirement |
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| | <p>Director of Football</p> <p>relevant reasons the RFL will decide which seasons are to be considered relevant.</p> <p>The applicant must have worked in at least one or a combination of the following roles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Head Coach - National Team (England and/or Great Britain, France, Australia or New Zealand)2. Head Coach - Australian State of Origin, from the states of New South Wales and Queensland only3. Head Coach - Australian National Rugby League (First grade)4. Head Coach or Assistant Coach – Super League, Championship or League 1 (only to continue in Super League, Championship as a Head Coach or an Assistant Coach)5. Assistant Coach – Australian National Rugby League (First grade) provided that in the case of NRL assistant coaches the following conditions must also be met by the candidate:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. holds a current Australian Rugby League (ARL) High Performance Coach Award which must be evidenced by the ARL Education Departmentb. has been in post as an assistant NRL first team coach or in an equivalent post for at least 3 seasons (for the avoidance of doubt these do not have to have been consecutive), to include written confirmation from the NRL club of the coaching structure at the club together with verification from the ARL Education department <p>In addition, the Club must meet the advertising requirements set out below.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of the club to provide any evidence required by the RFL.</p> <p>Note: endorsements will only be issued for non-EEA coaches to take the head coach/assistant coach or director of rugby role. Only one governing body endorsement will be awarded per club to</p> |



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| Category | Requirement |
|----------|---|
| | <p>either the head coach, assistant coach or director of football/rugby. Endorsements will not be issued for player coaches.</p> <p>Extension and change of employer applications.</p> <p>Extension applications will only be considered for coaches who currently hold a certificate of sponsorship or previously held a certificate of sponsorship, during the last playing season on the terms set out below.</p> <p>A coach who completes the term of their previous permission will be granted a governing body endorsement for an extension with the same club and the same shall apply if this coach is promoted from the role of Assistant Coach to the role of Head Coach (subject to only one endorsement being granted per Club).</p> <p>A coach who negotiates a termination of an existing contract prior to its expiry in order to take up a contract at another club, or a coach who wishes to move to another club within a month of the expiry of his previous agreement, will be granted a governing body endorsement subject to the new club having satisfied the advertisement requirement below. This will apply whether the coach is applying for any of the roles noted above.</p> <p>Where a coach has been dismissed prior to the expiry of their previous permission a new club must apply under the requirements set out above.</p> <p>Advertising: for coaching posts only (in relation to new post and change of employer applications, but not extension applications)</p> <p>Vacancies for all three coaching positions at Super League, Championship or clubs must be made public by way of official club press releases or by other means that will ensure that suitably qualified resident workers will be aware of the vacancy.</p> <p>Evidence to show that a press release and/or resident labour search as appropriate has been undertaken should be provided. This should include a copy of the press release /advertisement and details of responses. If a club has used alternative recruitment</p> |



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| Category | Requirement |
|---------------------------------|--|
| | <p>methods, they should provide details of why the method was chosen, what they did and the result.</p> |
| Head Performance Analyst | <p>Initial applications: requirements</p> <p>In determining whether an applicant meets the requirements, the RFL will consider whether the applicant does so for at least 3 seasons; one of the last 2 seasons and two other seasons. Where applications are made in mid-season or where there are other relevant reasons the RFL will decide which seasons are to be considered relevant.</p> <p>The applicant must have worked in at least one or a combination of the following roles:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Head Performance Analyst (being the most senior performance analyst whether known as this title or an alternative job title) - National Team (England and Great Britain, Australia or New Zealand)2. Head Performance Analyst (being the most senior performance analyst whether known as this title or an alternative job title) - Super League first team;3. Head Performance Analyst (being the most senior performance analyst whether known as this title or an alternative job title) - NRL first team. <p>In addition, the applicant must hold a degree in Sports and Exercise Science or Performance Analysis or a related discipline.</p> <p>Any application must include written confirmation from the NRL club or national governing body of the analyst structure at the club.</p> <p>In all cases, it is the responsibility of the sponsor to provide any evidence required by the RFL.</p> <p>Note: Only one governing body endorsement will be awarded per sponsor for a Head of Performance Analysis.</p> <p>Extension and change of employer applications</p> <p>Extension applications will only be considered for performance analysts who currently hold a certificate of sponsorship or</p> |



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| Category | Requirement |
|-----------------|---|
| | <p>previously held a certificate of sponsorship, during the last playing season on the terms set out below.</p> <p>A performance analyst who completes the term of their previous permission will be granted a governing body endorsement for an extension with the same club.</p> <p>A performance analyst who negotiates a termination of an existing contract prior to its expiry in order to take up a contract at another club or a performance analyst who wishes to move to another club within a month of the expiry of his previous agreement will be granted a governing body endorsement subject to the new club having satisfied the advertisement requirement below.</p> <p>Where a performance analyst has been dismissed prior to the expiry of their previous permission a new club must apply under the requirements set out above.</p> <p>Advertising: for performance analyst posts only (in relation to new post and change of employer applications, but not extension applications)</p> <p>Vacancies for performance analyst at Super League, Championship clubs must be made public by way of official club press releases or by other means that will ensure that suitably qualified resident workers will be aware of the vacancy.</p> <p>Evidence to show that a press release and/or resident labour search as appropriate has been undertaken should be provided. This should include a copy of the press release /advertisement and details of responses. If a club has used alternative recruitment methods, they should provide details of why the method was chosen, what they did and the result.</p> |
| Absences | <p>Consideration will be given to the following when applying the criteria: injury; a period of maternity or paternity leave; serious illness or any legitimate medical reasons; suspension; international duty; bereavement; or family crisis.</p> |

Further information

This information is available on the [RFL](#) website.



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For any queries relating to the requirements or the endorsement process please contact:
Rugby Football League

Etihad
Campus
Gate 13, Rowley Street
Manchester
M11 3FF

Email: peter.stephenson@rfl.co.uk

Information on visas and immigration is available on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.



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Section 3: Dispute handling procedures

Summary

Where an application for either a player, coach or performance analyst has been refused on the grounds that the player, coach or performance analyst fails to meet the published requirements or the Club fails to provide the mandatory documents required, the sponsor may seek a review of the application. The Rugby Football League will notify an individual in writing of any endorsement request which is refused setting out the reasons for refusal.

The sponsor will have 28 days to request such a review. Any such review will be considered by an independent panel drawn from the Operational Rules Tribunal (the "Independent Panel").

The review may only be requested on the grounds that the RFL have incorrectly applied the regulations, i.e. has made an error in reaching its decision; or failed to act fairly in a procedural sense.

Where possible the sponsor's supporting evidence will be sent to the Independent Panel in advance for their consideration in order to allow an informed decision.

Sponsors should note that, in respect of any application, there will only be one panel available and the decision of the Independent Panel is final. Sponsors should therefore ensure that all evidence it wishes to present in support of its application is presented to the Independent Panel. If the sponsor has previously made an application that was unsuccessful at Independent Panel a further Independent Panel cannot be requested for the same player during the season unless his status changes and he meets the requirements whereby a new application can be submitted.

a. The Review

The request for a review may only be made by the sponsor for whom the governing body endorsement has been initially rejected by the Rugby Football League.

A review shall be commenced by the appellant lodging with the Rugby Football League, a notice of appeal within 28 days of the decision appealed against. The notice of appeal shall:

- i. set out details of the decision appealed against and, if the whole of the decision is not appealed against, identify that part of it which is appealed against;
- ii. set out in full the grounds of appeal (which for the avoidance of doubt is only permitted on the grounds set out in then summary above) and an appellant shall not be entitled to rely in any ground of appeal not set out in the notice of appeal; and
- iii. be accompanied by a deposit of £500.



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The Independent Panel shall have discretion as to whether the deposit is returned or forfeited and, in addition, the Independent Panel may make such order for the payment of costs as it thinks fit.

The procedure for appeal will be in accordance with the Disciplinary Regulations and the Independent Panel shall be comprised as detailed below.

b. The Panel

The Independent Panel will be appointed by the RFL Operations Department.

c. The Decision

The Independent Panel shall consider the appeal and any evidence submitted in support and shall, within 14 working days of the receipt of the appeal, notify the individual of its decision. The Independent Panel will make a decision using the above criteria which shall be final and binding. There are no other grounds of appeal.



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Section 4: process for applying for an endorsement

How to apply for governing body endorsements for International Sportsperson applications

Clubs can apply to become a Home Office licensed sponsor by applying on the appropriate form for an endorsement from the RFL and if that is granted by following the processes set out on [GOV.UK](#).

Clubs must be a Home Office licensed sponsor before applying for an endorsement for a player or coach, all applications must be made on the appropriate form as amended from time to time, which is available on application from the RFL. It is the responsibility of the club to provide sufficient documentary evidence to support the information on the form which should be submitted to the Operations Department. Applications will usually be processed within 2 business days of receipt.

The club will receive a written decision which, in the case of applications which have been approved will take the form of a governing body endorsement letter including reference numbers to use when applying on line for a certificate of sponsorship.