



# HORSE SPORT

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## IRELAND

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**Recognition Criteria for Affiliate Bodies of  
Horse Sport Ireland**

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## Executive Summary

Horse Sport Ireland CLG, hereinafter Horse Sport Ireland (HSI) was established in December 2006 by a joint initiative of the Minister for Agriculture and the Minister for Tourism and Sport. This decision was reached following widespread consultation in the industry and with the aim of bringing together equestrian sport and breeding into one body to harness its full potential.

Horse Sport Ireland was established as a non-commercial entity, a company limited by guarantee. On 1 January 2008, HSI became the Governing Body for equestrian sport in Ireland and Northern Ireland. It was recognised by the International Governing Body (Federation Equestre Internationale "FEI"), the Irish Sports Council (now Horse Sport Ireland), and the Olympic Council of Ireland (OCI) (now the Olympic Federation of Ireland). The Dowling Report had recommended that Horse Sport Ireland would maintain the Irish Horse Register and it was transferred to HSI in July 2008. From July 2008 to date, Horse Sport Ireland has operated under approval from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine for the management and administration of the Irish Sport Horse Studbook (& its supplements) and Irish Draught Horse Studbook (& Appendix), the Irish Cob Studbook & Irish Cob Part-Bred Studbook and since 2013 the Irish Sport Pony Studbook. Horse Sport Ireland provides administration services for the following DAFM approved Studbooks: Irish Standard Bred Pacer & Trotter Studbook and the Kerry Bog Pony Society.

In summary, the primary functions of Horse Sport Ireland are to:

- Support the development and growth of the Sport Horse Industry in Ireland and internationally.
- Interface with Government and Government Agencies on behalf of the sector.
- Act as the national Governing Body for Equestrian Sport, as recognised by the FEI, SI, OFI and Sport NI.
- Maintain the Irish Horse Register which incorporates the Irish Sport Horse and the Irish Draught Horse Studbooks.
- Maintain the Irish Sport Pony and Irish Cob Studbook.
- Issue ID documents for horses by way of approval from the DAFM.
- Administer Equestrian High Performance Programmes for selected disciplines Olympic and Paralympic
- Run the National Anti-Doping Programme for the sport horse industry
- Run the National Equestrian Coaching Development Programme with Coaching Ireland.
- Operate the online Pedigree, Progeny and Performance database – CapallOir.

HSI's mission is to lead the equestrian sector to enable it to fulfil its potential. Most HSI's initiatives are focused towards increasing the quality of the equine stock produced and of the training and production of those animals to raise the prices and profits for the Irish producers with a multiplier effect across the wider industry and service providers. Horse Sport Ireland has ambitious plans to accelerate the growth and value of the sport horse sector and believes that there is an excellent opportunity to yield a higher return on investment and to increase the level of sustainable employment in rural Ireland.

The activities involving sport horses are wide ranging and diverse and HSI is the umbrella body for which the following affiliate organisations who are connected:



The work of affiliate bodies should feed into and complement the strategic priorities identified by Horse Sport Ireland in the HSI corporate strategy. Horse Sport Ireland currently recognises over 26 affiliates. The majority of affiliates receive some financial investment and support services on an annual basis from Horse Sport Ireland .

A key focus of Horse Sport Ireland is to assist affiliates to develop sustainable and effective structures to facilitate increased numbers of participants and volunteers in equestrian sport in Ireland.

These Recognition Criteria provide a standard for organisations that are not currently affiliates recognised by Horse Sport Ireland to seek to meet in order to be in a position to apply to Horse Sport Ireland for recognition, and in turn receive support and, where additional Horse Sport Ireland criteria may be met, financial investment from Horse Sport Ireland .

Horse Sport Ireland appreciates that there are wider benefits accorded to sporting organisations as a result of the recognition as an affiliate both in Ireland and internationally and is cognisant of these benefits when deciding on an organisations application for recognition.

## Section 1

### Recognition Process to be recognised by Horse Sport Ireland as an Affiliate Body

1. The applicant body will request a formal meeting with Horse Sport Ireland to discuss its proposed application and the process prior to submitting a formal application for recognition as an Affiliate to Horse Sport Ireland.
2. Horse Sport Ireland has no obligation to consider an application from an applicant body in relation to an equestrian sport/activity which is similar to a that of an existing Horse Sport Ireland recognised affiliate.
3. In the case that two or more bodies (whether one of them (or both of them) are an applicant body or an existing body) are currently organising the development and regulation of a sport or sports which are similar (as determined by Horse Sport Ireland ), Horse Sport Ireland may require those bodies to apply to Horse Sport Ireland for recognition on the basis that they will co-operate with each other and form an umbrella body for the governance of the sport or sports.
4. In a case where there is an existing affiliate recognised by Horse Sport Ireland organising the development and regulation of a sport or sports which is similar to the sport or sports in relation to which the applicant seeks recognition, Horse Sport Ireland may recommend that the applicant body should seek affiliation to, or to develop a formal relationship with, the existing affiliate.
5. An applicant body may apply to Horse Sport Ireland for recognition by submitting such relevant supporting information as Horse Sport Ireland may require (this includes a cover letter, along with any other supporting evidence requested by Horse Sport Ireland).
6. Horse Sport Ireland will endeavour to confirm receipt of the application within 2 working days or as soon as reasonably practicable and will begin to process the application as soon as possible thereafter. It should be noted that whilst Horse Sport Ireland endeavours to deal with applications expeditiously each application for recognition is judged on its own merits, meaning that the level of complexity of each application may determine length of the assessment period .
7. Once the application is processed, it will be presented to the Board of Horse Sport Ireland to consider applications for recognition. The recognition process is not binding on Horse Sport Ireland . Horse Sport Ireland fully reserves its rights to deviate from the process set out where it deems it necessary to do so.
9. The Board of Horse Sport Ireland will make a final decision on the matter.
10. Horse Sport Ireland will notify the applicant body of the decision. If the application is unsuccessful the applicant body has a right to appeal in accordance with the appeal process set out at Section 5.
11. Horse Sport Ireland will publish on its website, a list of its recognised affiliates and indicate those affiliates who hold probationary status.
12. The successful applicant body will be required to execute the Horse Sport Ireland affiliation agreement.

13. Horse Sport Ireland reserves the right to suspend or withdraw recognition from an affiliate where in the opinion of Horse Sport Ireland, acting reasonably, it is appropriate to do so. Examples of where it may be appropriate for Horse Sport Ireland to withdraw recognition from an existing affiliate include, inter alia, the following cases –
- (i) where the can no longer demonstrate to the satisfaction of Horse Sport Ireland its adherence to the Recognition Criteria;
  - (ii) Horse Sport Ireland is of the view that the affiliate is non-compliant with any of Horse Sport Ireland 's terms and conditions of funding;
  - (iii) the affiliate is insolvent or is unable to pay its debts as they fall due;
  - (iv) Horse Sport Ireland is of the view that the affiliate has fallen into disrepute.

The phrase 'disrepute' for these purposes includes but is not confined to misconduct of a serious nature that is not covered by specific offences set out in the Horse Sport Ireland Recognition Criteria. In each case Horse Sport Ireland shall be the sole arbiter as to whether the affiliate is in disrepute.

The following are examples of what Horse Sport Ireland may view as "falling into disrepute"

- (a) conduct that is unbecoming of a recognised affiliate; and/or
- (b) criminal conduct or other misconduct; and/or
- (c) conduct that is or could be harmful to the interests, values and reputation of the sport; and/ or
- (d) conduct that does bring or could bring Horse Sport Ireland and the Horse Sport Ireland Recognition Process for affiliates into disrepute; and/or
- (e) any breach of Horse Sport Ireland policies; and/or
- (f) committing any act, or permitting or suffering to be done, anything which has a negative impact on the image or reputation of Horse Sport Ireland and/or the affiliate or otherwise brings either of them into disrepute.

The above examples at (a) – (f) do not represent an exhaustive list of examples but are merely provided to illustrate the types of circumstances in which Horse Sport Ireland may find an affiliate to be in disrepute.

13. Recognition by Horse Sport Ireland of an applicant body as an affiliate does not automatically confer the right to be allocated Horse Sport Ireland funding. Horse Sport Ireland funding may be provided to support a recognised affiliate at Horse Sport Ireland 's discretion and in line with Horse Sport Ireland 's strategic priorities and investment criteria, grant awards process.
14. It should be noted that the Recognition Criteria apply to all new organisations seeking recognition as a affiliate.

## **Section 2**

### **Criteria for Recognition of an applicant body as an Affiliate of Horse Sport Ireland**

1. Criteria for recognition:

The following are the criteria for recognition by Horse Sport Ireland, (the "Recognition Criteria"):

The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that the body is a non-profit body membership organisation whose objectives align increasing equestrian participation and in Ireland. Where bodies are for profit and commercial operators in the sport horse industry or where a group are deemed a stakeholder group with a defined interest, Horse Sport Ireland will consider the offer of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) as opposed to affiliation, so as to allow those groups a platform of engagement with Horse Sport Ireland. Please contact [phayes@horsesportireland.ie](mailto:phayes@horsesportireland.ie) for further details.

## **Leadership & Organisational Structure**

- 1.1 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it has a written constitution (or in the case of a Company Limited by Guarantee a memorandum and articles of association), that is adopted by the members of the applicant body and approved by those participating in the sport in a fair and transparent manner.
- 1.2 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it has a leadership structure that is elected by the membership in a fair and transparent manner.
- 1.3 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it has been validly established whether as a corporate legal entity in good standing under the Irish Companies Act 2014 or otherwise pursuant to other relevant and applicable legislation, such as the Charity Act for at least three (3) years prior to the application for recognition.
- 1.4 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it has unqualified independent audited financial statements for each of the last three (3) fiscal years . The audited financial statements should satisfy Horse Sport Ireland (at its sole discretion) of the organisations current & future liquidity, solvency and overall financial health. Where applicant bodies cannot provide 3 year statements it must advise Horse Sport Ireland as to the reasons why.
- 1.5 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that the applicant body operates from Ireland . The applicant body should also have been based in and operating from Ireland for at least the three (3) consecutive years immediately prior to the application for recognition.

## **Promotion, Development & Membership**

- 1.6 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that the promotion and development of the equestrian discipline is the core and primary objective of the applicant body.
- 1.7 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it is committed to providing its members with technically, ethically sound and safe equestrian sport activity.
- 1.8 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it has a strategy statement, ratified by its board of directors or management committee. This statement should identify measurable outcomes.
- 1.9 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it is responsible and accountable in Ireland for providing its members with technically and ethically sound, equestrian activity events and that services are accessible



to all. The applicant body's commitment to providing technically and ethically sound, safe equestrian activity events in Ireland must be demonstrated through its policies, programmes, procedures and practices.

- 1.10 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it has a formal policy or policies in place in relation to equity and access, in particular for persons with disabilities, for people as athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers and leaders in the equestrian discipline of the applicant body.
- 1.11 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it is able to evidence membership levels in excess of 100 individual members. These members must be actively involved in and / or fee paying members of the applicant body.
- 1.12 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it is spread out over a wide geographical area.
- 1.13 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it has an established annual subscription income from its members.

### **Dispute Resolution & Compliance**

- 1.14 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it has a formal disciplinary policy in place for use by it and its members and officials.
- 1.15 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it has an internal appeals process in place which is consistent with established principles of due process and natural justice and contains a provision that allows unresolved disputes to be referred to the alternate dispute resolution services of Sport Dispute Resolutions Ireland.
- 1.16 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it has formally adopted the Sport Ireland (Human) Anti-Doping Rules and that it is willing to participate in the HSI National Equine Anti-Doping Programme.
- 1.17 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it complies with (and can evidence compliance with), or is on the compliance journey, the Horse Sport Ireland Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in Ireland.
- 1.18 The applicant body must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it currently complies with (and can evidence that it is compliant with) or is on the compliance journey, the Sport Ireland Governance Code.

### **Additional Points to Note**

- 1.19 Where in the opinion of Horse Sport Ireland an organisation meets several, but not all of the above criteria, the organisation may be recognised as an affiliate and/or as a body suitable for the provision of financial or other assistance where one of the following criteria is met:
  - a. The organisation's activities and responsibilities are in relation to the promotion, development and coordination of sport and the achievement of excellence in equestrian sport ;and/or
  - b. The organisation's activities are focused on developing strategies for increasing participation in equestrian sports.

- 1.19 As outlined in Section 1, in the case that two or more bodies (whether one of them (or both of them) are an applicant body or an existing affiliate) are currently organising the development and regulation of a equestrian sport or discipline which are similar in many respects (as determined by Horse Sport Ireland ), Horse Sport Ireland may require those bodies, for the purposes of recognition as a governing body of that national equestrian body or discipline, to apply for recognition on the basis that they will co-operate with each other to form an umbrella body for the governance of that national equestrian body or discipline, generally.
- 1.20 In the case where there is an existing affiliate as recognised by Horse Sport Ireland currently organising the development and regulation of a equestrian activity which is similar in many respects to equestrian activity which an applicant proposed to organise, Horse Sport Ireland may recommend that the applicant body should attempt to seek affiliation to, or to develop a formal relationship with, the existing affiliate recognised by Horse Sport Ireland.

### Section 3 Compliance

1. Horse Sport Ireland funding will be used to support an affiliate in line with Horse Sport Ireland 's strategic priorities and funding criteria. Horse Sport Ireland may amend these priorities and criteria from time to time as it requires.
2. An affiliate which is of a smaller scale and resources, may receive Horse Sport Ireland funding primarily to support growing participation and membership. Such affiliate is expected to demonstrate to the satisfaction of Horse Sport Ireland that it is fit for purpose and complies with core governance, ethical, legal, operational, risk management and taxation/fiduciary policies to a standard acceptable to Horse Sport Ireland .
3. Horse Sport Ireland may, at its discretion , provide additional investment (where it deems it appropriate and where it is available) to a certain projects and programmes which contribute to improving, performance, leadership and/or operations in that equestrian discipline.
4. Horse Sport Ireland has the absolute right, at its sole discretion, to withdraw, reduce, suspend or terminate funding to an affiliate where there is evidence of non-compliance by that affiliate with the investment criteria by Horse Sport Ireland. Horse Sport Ireland reserves the right to audit an affiliate to ensure it is in compliance with Horse Sport Ireland funding terms and conditions.
5. Horse Sport Ireland requires the management of an affiliate to establish and adhere to appropriate annual auditing and compliance policies to demonstrate to its members that the body is being led, governed and managed appropriately. The affiliate must satisfy Horse Sport Ireland that it complies with (and can evidence compliance with) the Horse Sport Ireland Code of Ethics and Good Practice for Children's Sport in Ireland and the criteria specified at Section 2 of the Recognition Criteria.
6. Horse Sport Ireland requires an affiliate to address without delay and appropriately any weaknesses or issues identified arising from an audit or identified by Horse Sport Ireland . Failure by an affiliate to take such steps may impact on future funding from Horse Sport Ireland .



7. Horse Sport Ireland reserves its right to subject an affiliate and/ or any organisation to a fit for purpose audit if it has cause (in Horse Sport Ireland 's opinion acting reasonably) to believe that the equestrian discipline is in disrepute or that the affiliate is not complying with its responsibilities and obligations as an affiliate.
8. Horse Sport Ireland seeks to monitor trends, issues and developments in equestrian sport which affiliates may need to take account of from time to time. Horse Sport Ireland may advise affiliates from time to time on matters that they should take account of. It is each affiliates responsibility to itself monitor trends, issues and developments in equestrian sport or indeed in the wider sport horse industry and to take such steps to take account for same as are reasonably necessary.
9. Horse Sport Ireland reserves the right to suspend or withdraw recognition from an affiliate where in the opinion of Horse Sport Ireland , it is appropriate to do so. Examples of where it may be appropriate for Horse Sport Ireland to withdraw recognition from an affiliate include, inter alia, the following cases –
  - (i) where the affiliate can no longer demonstrate to the satisfaction of Horse Sport Ireland its adherence to the Recognition Criteria;
  - (ii) Horse Sport Ireland is of the view that the affiliate is non-compliant with any of Horse Sport Ireland 's terms and conditions of funding and/or grant awards;
  - (iii) the affiliate is insolvent or is unable to pay its debts as they fall due;
  - (iv) Horse Sport Ireland is of the view that the affiliate has fallen into disrepute.

The phrase 'disrepute' for these purposes includes but is not confined to misconduct of a serious nature that is not covered by specific offences set out in the Horse Sport Ireland Recognition Criteria. In each case Horse Sport Ireland shall be the sole arbiter as to whether the affiliate is in disrepute.

The following are examples of what Horse Sport Ireland may view as "falling into disrepute"

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- (b) criminal conduct or other misconduct; and/or
- (c) conduct that is or could be harmful to the interests, values and reputation of equestrian sport; and/ or
- (d) conduct that does bring or could bring Horse Sport Ireland and the Horse Sport Ireland Recognition Process for affiliates into disrepute; and/or
- (e) any breach of Horse Sport Ireland policies; and/or
- (f) committing any act, or permitting or suffering to be done, anything which has a negative impact on the image or reputation of Horse Sport Ireland and/or the affiliate or otherwise brings either of them into disrepute.
- (g) Where an affiliate fails to meaningfully engage with Horse Sport Ireland regarding ongoing grievances or perceived differences, or fails

The above examples at (a) – (f) do not represent an exhaustive list of examples but are merely provided to illustrate the types of circumstances in which Horse Sport Ireland may find an affiliate to be in disrepute.

## Section 4. Probationary Period

1. An applicant body that successfully completes the initial recognition process will be given probation status as affiliate for **two years** prior to securing full recognition as an affiliate by Horse Sport Ireland . This means that if that affiliate ceases to comply in any respect with the Recognition Criteria it can be notified by Horse Sport Ireland that it no longer is recognised by Horse Sport Ireland as an affiliate for the equestrian activity/discipline.
2. An applicant body during the probationary period will be permitted to join the Horse Sport Ireland Sport & Recreation Advisory Council Meetings but will hold no voting rights.
3. During the probation period Horse Sport Ireland reserves the right to monitor the affiliates activities and to assess its ongoing compliance with, and adherence to, the Recognition Criteria.
3. During the probation period an affiliate will be eligible for Horse Sport Ireland funding, where applicable and successful. However, if after the probationary period an affiliate does not achieve full recognition, the funding will have to be reimbursed by the affiliate.
4. During the probation period an affiliate must complete the 'On the Adoption Journey Form' as outlined in Appendix 1 of the [Governance Code Guide](#). Being 'On the Adoption Journey' means that an affiliate has made a formal commitment to undertake a process to comply with the Code. It does not mean that it has complied with the Code.
5. Following the probationary period, affiliates will have 1 year to formally adopt the Governance Code and furnish their Statement of Compliance of the Governance Code to Horse Sport Ireland and Sport Ireland.
6. During the probationary period an affiliate may have access to other non-funding support structures of Horse Sport Ireland (such as regular communications and offerings, workshops).

## Section 5. Appeals Process

An applicant body may appeal a decision by Horse Sport Ireland not to offer them recognition status.

The process of lodging an appeal is as follows:

1. The applicant body shall inform Horse Sport Ireland in writing that it wishes to appeal Horse Sport Ireland 's decision not to offer them recognition status or to withdraw recognition status. This written submission must be received by Horse Sport Ireland within 90 days of Horse Sport Ireland notifying the organisation of the decision not to offer them recognition status or to withdraw recognition status as the case may be.
2. The written submission should clearly outline the basis for the appeal including why it believes the Horse Sport Ireland decision is incorrect.
3. The written submission should also include supporting documentation that was not previously supplied to Horse Sport Ireland in the original application to support the recognition claim.
4. Horse Sport Ireland will confirm the receipt of the appeal to the applicant body.
5. Horse Sport Ireland will undertake to refer the appeal to Sport Dispute Solutions Ireland for Arbitration.

6. The decision of SDSI shall be final.

Further queries on the above process, please email Sport & Recreation Manager [phayes@horsesportireland.ie](mailto:phayes@horsesportireland.ie)

Ends/  
February 2022



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