

Hockey Ireland

National Performance Pathway

(U16, u18 an u21 Breakthrough)

Selection & Appeals Policy

1. Introduction

The Hockey Ireland Junior Age Group Programme provides training, domestic, and international competition development opportunities for the highest potential U16 U18 and U21 players, including their first introduction to international hockey. It takes a holistic approach to player development and is part of the Hockey Ireland National Performance Pathway, which consists of a progressive squad structure and a performance-focused environment to help talented junior players realise their potential. The purpose of this document is to set out the qualification and selection criteria for the Hockey Ireland Age Group Programme.

2. Eligibility

In line with competition regulations set by the World and European federations, junior international hockey is based on calendar years, not school years.

To be eligible for selection for the Programme and competitions, a player must:

- Not be currently serving a period of ineligibility as a result of a transfer of allegiance.
- Be an Irish citizen with a valid passport
- Be a current member of Hockey Ireland
- Have signed a Hockey Ireland Code of Conduct
- Not be serving any current or pending Anti-Doping suspension;
- Not be serving any current or pending code of conduct suspension
- Be available to participate in the Programme

If an athlete holds, or is eligible to hold, an Irish passport but has played for another junior international team in an International Hockey Federation (“FIH”) competition during the last three years, they may be invited to join the Programme in a training context.

2.1 Notification: Any formal assessment phase will be communicated in advance to all potential athletes and will be attended by selectors nominated by Hockey Ireland.

2.2 Ad hoc open trial opportunities: Invitational assessment may be conducted at additional times in all years of the cycle. This will be based on nominations from school and club coaches and/or National Coaching Team observations.

3. Selection Framework, Principles, Criteria and Panel

3.1 Selection Context: The aim of the selection process is to select a squad for the Programme or a tournament that will support Hockey Ireland’s vision of becoming a Top 8 Nation. The makeup of each squad will reflect the primary purpose of achieving this vision.

3.2 Squad size is determined by:

- The performance context and need (e.g., development priorities, proximity and volume of match play / proximity to major milestone events).
- Available talent that meets criteria.
- Squad numbers will be adjusted throughout the year and are likely to reduce as the Programme gets closer to International matches.

3.3 Selection Framework: The selection criteria set out below are those identified by the performance staff as fundamental to selection for the Programme or tournament. In developing this framework, it is recognised that hockey is a team sport and, ultimately, it is those athletes who can realise their potential and perform within a team that will be selected. The following points detail several key considerations:

- Acknowledgement is made that combinations of athletes, the balance of a squad and the ability of athletes to play in more than one position will be considered by the selectors in determining squad selection.
- Valid and robust selection in a multi-faceted team sport is most effectively achieved through the combination of expert decision making, the triangulation of multiple opinions (coaches), objective and subjective information, and longitudinal performance information (where available / relevant).

The selection criteria below are not definitive and may be revised from time to time as a result of further feedback from the Performance Director, Head Coaches, performance staff and other relevant stakeholders (e.g athletes, funding bodies etc) All athletes being assessed, (or joining) the Programme will be sent a copy of this policy.

3.4 Selection Principles: The following principles underpin the selection policy:

3.5.1 To select players with the greatest potential, regardless of their background, ethnicity, school, or club, to perform at junior international level and progress towards and contribute to Top 8 success at senior level.

3.5.2 The selection process focuses on identifying players who demonstrate exceptional strengths whether physical, psychological, technical, tactical, or skill-based—that can significantly enhance the overall quality and effectiveness of the squad

3.5.3 The selection process is designed to identify players based on their potential for future success at Senior international level, rather than solely selecting those who are currently the highest-performing at the time of assessment.

3.5.4 Competition for places on the Programme and competition team is high, and demonstrating competency in these areas does not guarantee selection.

3.5 Selection Criteria:

The selection panel (as referred to in paragraph 3.7 below) will consider all relevant factors in exercising its discretion to select a squad which, in its reasonable opinion, demonstrates the strongest blend of current performance capability and future potential. The aim is to identify players who not only contribute effectively to the current programme but also show clear potential to progress towards senior international level, aligning with Hockey Ireland's long-term vision of consistently being a Top 8 Nation. Selection decisions will balance immediate readiness with a focus on sustained development within the National Performance Pathway.

3.5.1 Hockey Ability and Potential

- Proven ability to understand the game and apply highly skilled actions under the intensity / pressure of the game
- Ability to learn, understand and make decisions within identified systems of play and tactical principles, whilst demonstrate the ability / potential to execute good options effectively and consistently

- Proven ability to apply highly skilled actions when in possession (e.g., receiving, passing, carrying, leading and goalscoring), in transition (e.g., reading of the game, positioning and movement) and when out of possession (e.g., marking, intercepting, closing down space and tackling)
- Tactical understanding and decision making under pressure

3.5.2 Set Piece and Special Skills

- The ability to contribute to, score and defend 'set-pieces'
- Proven ability in an attacking set piece skill (e.g., inject, trap, score off the top, deflect, rebound)
- Proven ability in a defensive set piece skill (e.g., post player, blocker, runner, second phase)
- If / where relevant, ability in penalty strokes and 1v1s

3.5.3 Physical Abilities and Tournament Fitness

- Current ability or the potential to deliver repeated high intensity performances over the length of a tournament
- Physical profile to cope with the demands of international hockey without accruing significant injury
- Physical profile underpinned by core competencies of (1) speed (acceleration, top end speed and ability to accelerate, decelerate and reaccelerate rapidly), (2) conditioning (aerobic and repeated sprint ability) and (3) strength (physical on pitch dominance, robustness, balance and explosivity)
- Adherence to set Strength and Conditioning programme monitored by the national S&C leads.

3.5.4 Mental Skills

- Psychological skills that aid elite performance, supporting a player's progression, performance and mental health
- Mental skills that aid progression: ambition, commitment, and desire / ability to learn
- Mental skills that aid performance: confidence, emotional regulation, and ability to focus / re-focus
- Mental skills that aid health and wellbeing: a commitment to dual career, resilience and purpose

3.5.5 Team Player

- Possesses the psychological and interpersonal skills that help the player *and* the team excel in a team sport environment
- Demonstrates the following (or the ability to excel in) the following skills: communication, emotional intelligence, collaboration, conflict resolution and leadership

3.5.6 Versatility, Impact, and Squad Balance

- Players who can perform across multiple lines (attack, defence, and midfield) at points in matches and between matches.

- Players who meet the tactical and game identity needs of the Programme

3.5.7 Goalkeeping Ability and Potential

- Proven ability to understand the game and apply highly skilled actions under the intensity / pressure of the game
- Ability to learn, understand and the ability / potential to execute good options effectively and consistently
- Proven ability to apply highly skilled actions e.g., shot stopping, blocking, clearances, stick skills, second phase play and 1v1
- Psychological skills that aid elite goalkeeper performance (as detailed above), whilst providing the leadership skills (proven or potential) to positively impact the team, particularly in areas of set-piece play

3.5.8 Team Fit

As a complex, multi-faceted team sport, consideration will be given to the overall team composition and selection decisions will be made to ensure that the selected players combine to make the best possible overall team.

3.6 Selection Panel & Decisions

3.6.1 The selection panel will be a minimum of 3 and maximum of 6 people made up of the following (the Head Coach will have the deciding vote and will consult with assistant coaches and additional support personnel as required):

- Hockey Ireland Talent Development Manager or Performance Director (Chair-non-voting, to oversee the process)
- National Head Coach
- National Assistant Coaches
- National Senior Head Coach or Assistant Coach
- Goalkeeping Coach (Goalkeepers only)

3.6.2 Hockey Ireland is committed to maintaining high standards of integrity. Any person involved in the selection process must declare conflicts or potential conflicts of interest and refrain from participation where such conflicts exist. The selection panel will review each athlete in relation to the framework, principles and criteria set out in paragraphs 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6 above when making each selection decision.

3.6.3 Players will be notified of their selection or non-selection via email as soon as reasonably possible after each assessment phase, and squad lists will be published on the Hockey Ireland website and social media accounts. This will normally occur within two weeks of the end of an assessment phase. Any delays will be communicated by email.

4. Assessment Process

The identification of prospective players for the Hockey Ireland National Pathway Programme will be conducted through the following channels:

- **Interprovincial Competitions:** Players participating in designated Interprovincial competitions will be assessed and identified by Hockey Ireland coaches and talent scouts.
- **National Scouting Group (in development):** Players may be scouted by members of the National Scouting Group (NSG) during school or club competitions at any point in the season.
- **Open Trials:** Players nominated by clubs, schools, or other recognised talent identification structures may be invited to participate in open trials.
- **Pathway Recommendations:** Following the conclusion of summer (U16/U18) or Junior World Cup (U21) international competitions, players will either be retained and continue within the National Performance Pathway or transition to the Provincial Performance Pathway, based on their development and performance.

Additionally, Hockey Ireland reserves the right to introduce new players into the age group environment at any stage of the programme.

5. Player Progress and Retention

The Programme is designed to be progressive and support athlete development. Athlete progress is monitored through regular observation and review meetings.

5.1 Review Meetings: Player Review Meetings will include the following core elements:

- Review of progress and establishing best performance environment for each player
- Setting areas for development and capturing areas of progress
- Confirmation of athlete status within the programme (using the matrix below)

5.2 When: Pathway Player reviews will take place twice annually at a minimum. Due to the nature of the international and domestic calendar, there may be occasions when this frequency is not possible. In these circumstances, review meetings will take place as soon as possible as the calendar allows but no later than six months after the previous review.

5.3 Who: Wherever possible the High Performance Director, Talent Development Manager, Senior Coach(es) and Pathway Head Coaches will be present at player review meetings.

5.4 Review outcomes – Athlete Status: At the end of the review meeting each athlete should understand their position in the Programme via the following mechanisms:

- Hypothetical “status” of selection for future major events (e.g., next World Cup, Europeans) if the team was to be selected today: very likely / possible / unlikely.
- Red, Amber, Green (“RAG”) programme status in accordance with the table above

Via the review process all athletes should be clear on status and their development areas. Athletes may remain on green or amber status indefinitely. Athletes cannot move directly from Green to Red status and must transition through Amber below).

Traffic Light	Status
Green	<p>Progressing well within the National Performance Pathway, demonstrating strong development across key areas (technical, physical, tactical, psychological) and showing clear potential to contribute to future international success.</p> <p>OR</p> <p>A developing athlete making steady progress and adding valuable depth to the squad, with the potential to advance toward higher levels of the pathway.</p>
Amber	Further development required to meet the standards expected within the National Performance Pathway. The athlete is not yet consistently demonstrating the necessary attributes for the anticipated style of play or is not currently on track to progress toward senior international level.
Red	At this time, the athlete is no longer considered to be on a trajectory toward progression within the National Performance Pathway. The player will exit the programme and may return to provincial or club development environments for further growth.

All players currently engaged in the National Performance Pathway will be subject to continuous assessment in line with the criteria set out in Section 5. Ongoing participation is contingent upon demonstrated progress and a positive performance trajectory. Players may be released from the Pathway if their rate of progress and performance trajectory does not meet the required standards. Released players will return to the provincial performance pathway, or if over 20 years old, to their club.

5.5 Oversight: Head Coaches must seek agreement from the Talent Development Manager in or Director of High Performance prior to communication with an athlete in relation to any change in status from orange to red.

6. Acceptance Programme Place

Following selection to the Programme, players will be formally accept by signing and returning the Hockey Ireland Code of Conduct.

7. Feedback

7.1 Principles of Feedback

- **Constructive:** Feedback will focus on areas for improvement and strengths.
- **Timely:** Feedback will be provided promptly after assessments, trials, or player reviews.
- **Respectful:** Feedback will be communicated in a professional and supportive manner.
- **Regular:** Players will receive regular feedback formally and informally. Formal reflective feedback will come in the form of updated Player Profiles and follow up conversations around these. Dynamic real time feedback will also be provided at National & Regional

sessions and during competition and it is imperative that players track this feedback in a manner that works for them (notebook, notes app etc)

7.2 Feedback for Non-Selected Athletes:

- Where possible, players not selected to be part of national/regional panels will receive position specific feedback by email.
- When a player is not selected for a match series, feedback sessions will be offered within three weeks of the announcement of selection. This can happen either online or in person.
- Feedback will highlight performance areas for improvement, along with areas for growth and development.

8. Data Protection

Hockey Ireland adheres to strict privacy standards in accordance with applicable data protection regulations. Any data gathered during the selection process will only be shared with legitimate interest or with necessary consent.

9. Policies

All selection, assessment, and feedback processes will comply with Hockey Ireland's policies, including but not limited to Child Welfare and Safeguarding, Anti-Doping and Inclusion & Diversity policies.

10. Appeals

Appeals Procedures

10.1 The following procedures have been adopted by Hockey Ireland in consideration of any appeal made by or on behalf of any athlete wishing to appeal by virtue of their deselection from the Programme

10.2 This is the only applicable appeals procedure and forms the entire agreement between the parties as to how selection decisions relating to the Programme and carding decision are to be challenged. The parties agree to submit any dispute concerning any matter connected with or arising out of any such selection decision to binding arbitration in accordance with the provisions of these Appeals Procedures.

10.3 The parties agree that they will not commence, continue or maintain any legal challenge to any matter falling under the jurisdiction of these Appeals Procedures, or any decision made under these Appeals Procedures before any court of law or dispute resolution body without first following this Appeals Procedure. The parties will treat all decisions under these Appeals Procedures as final and binding upon each of them.

10.4 Grounds of Appeal: These Appeals Procedures shall only apply to a Hockey Ireland Selection Decisions and not to any grievances in relation to Hockey Ireland generally (you should follow the Hockey Ireland Grievance procedure for this) The grounds upon which a Hockey Ireland Decision may be appealed are limited to the following:

- there has been a failure by Hockey Ireland to follow the relevant Selection Procedures (i.e. there has been a procedural defect);

- there is evidence that the selection panel's decision-making was improperly influenced by a conflict of interest or undue bias that was not appropriately declared or managed, and that materially affected the fairness of the outcome;
- Hockey Ireland Decision has been reached on the basis of an error of fact; or
- the Hockey Ireland decision is one that no reasonable decision maker could ever have reached.

Any appeals which do not satisfy the grounds of appeals above will be dismissed automatically.

10.5 Notice of First Appeal: These Appeals Procedures are commenced when an athlete affected by a Hockey Ireland Decision submits a formal written (including email) appeal (the "Notice of First Appeal") to the Hockey Ireland CEO and pays an appeal fee of 250. If the appeal is upheld the deposit will be refunded in full. The timeframe is mandatory, and any appeal made outside this **will not** be considered.

1. The Notice of First Appeal must be received by the CEO within five working days of the decision being communicated to the athlete. "working days" excludes weekends and Bank Holidays. If the athlete fails to submit the Notice of First Appeal within the time limit they will have lost his/her right of appeal unless, in the opinion of the Chairperson (acting reasonably) it was not practical or if there was some other good reason for the submission not being made within the time limit. Please note: all athletes over the age of 18 must submit this directly, no appeals will be accepted by a parent/guardian once the athlete has turned 18.
2. The Notice of First Appeal must set out full details of the athlete's ground(s) of appeal and include:
 - Details of the decision which the athlete is appealing;
 - Details of the ground(s) of appeal upon which the athlete relies, including the precise manner in which the athlete alleges that the Selection Policy has not been followed; and
 - Any documents or written evidence upon which the athlete relies in support of their appeal. These documents must be relevant specifically to the athlete's grounds of appeal.
3. The CEO will appoint an independent panel and Chairperson (which can be the CEO). The Appeals Panel will convene a hearing to take place as soon as practical, and in any event within five working days of receipt of the Notice.

The Appeal Panel: The Appeals Panel shall be entitled to record the appeal hearing, including the decision reached, in whatever form it shall determine.

- The Appeals Panel may also make recommendations for the future revision and/or smoother execution of the Selection Policy and Appeals Procedures. Hockey Ireland reserves the right to amend these Appeals Procedures at its sole discretion and will make the amended version publicly available. An athlete's continuing membership of Hockey Ireland shall be deemed as continued acceptance of these Appeals Procedures as amended from time to time.
- Any notification, correspondence or any other document submitted under these Appeals Procedures shall be sent by email and such document shall be deemed to have been received by the intended recipient on the date of transmission, provided no error message is received. Any notification or correspondence for Hockey Ireland shall be marked for the attention of the Chief Executive and sent by email to anne.mccormack@hockey.ie

An athlete is entitled to attend the hearing and present their case and be accompanied by one other person who may act as their representative. The Appeals Panel shall give such directions as are appropriate for consideration of the matter, in particular:

1. (i) the date and place at which the appeal will be determined;
2. (ii) whether the parties and Interested Parties should be required to submit statements of their evidence and/or written submissions prior to the hearing, and if so, a timetable for doing so.

The Appeals Panel will consider the grounds set out in the Notice and establish to their reasonable satisfaction whether or not there has been a failure to apply the applicable selection criteria and/or that there has been a failure to adhere to the procedure set out in the Selection Policy in reaching the Hockey Ireland Decision.

There are two possible outcomes of the First Appeal:

1. Appeal upheld

In the event that the First Appeal is upheld, the Hockey Ireland Decision will be set aside and the selectors will be asked to undertake the selection process again. It is possible that selectors will reach the same decision.

2. Appeal dismissed

In the event that the First Appeal is dismissed, the athlete will be (i) informed that their appeal has been dismissed in writing within 5 working days, (ii) provided with reasons for the dismissal, (iii) provided with the date on which the decision was made and the date it takes effect, (iv) copies of any supporting documents, and (v) provided with a secondary opportunity to appeal to an independent body, Sport Dispute Solutions Ireland ,

10.6 Sports Dispute Solutions Ireland: A decision of the Appeal Panel may be appealed exclusively to Sport Dispute Solutions Ireland (SDSI), for resolution in accordance with the SDSI Arbitration rules. For Olympic Games appeals, any appeal must be filed within two (2) days from receipt of the Hockey Ireland Appeals Panel decision by the Appellant. Within the context of the Olympic Games, the appeal will be to the SDSI Olympic Tribunal. Thereafter, the procedural rules of SDSI will apply.

10.7 No further right of appeal: There is no further right of appeal after the decision of Sports Dispute Ireland.

11. General Conditions

Hockey Ireland reserves the right to amend this Selection Policy at its sole discretion and will make any amended version available to all players who are at that time a member of the Programme. A player's continuing membership of the Programme shall be deemed as continued acceptance of this Selection Policy as amended from time to time.