



**WORLD  
AQUATICS**

# **RULES ON THE PROTECTION FROM HARASSMENT AND ABUSE**

In force as from 1 January 2023

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## CHAPTER A – INTRODUCTION

World Aquatics is committed to creating and preserving a sport setting that ensures positive, healthy, and fulfilling experiences for all individuals. In doing so, World Aquatics prioritizes the welfare, safety, and rights of every participant at all times.

In furtherance of that objective, World Aquatics has adopted the present Rules which are in harmony with the 2016 International Olympic Committee Consensus Statement on “Harassment and Abuse in Sport”.

These Rules are the foundation for athlete safety, well-being and the prevention of harassment and abuse. The Rules define misconduct; create standards that set boundaries between professional and athlete members; mandatory reporting; establish a structure for investigation of complaints and their underlying circumstances; and promote greater accountability and compliance.

World Aquatics is committed to promoting a non-violent, supporting and safe sport environment for all its members related to the prevention of harassment and abuse in sport, by raising awareness, improving access to reporting, providing education / prevention, decreasing stigma and supporting research to determine the breadth and depth of the problem in the aquatic sports to inform our prevention interventions.

World Aquatics delegated the enforcement of the present Rules to the AQIU, a unit operationally independent of World Aquatics.

All Covered Persons are responsible for knowing the information set out herein and, by virtue of being a Covered Person, expressly agree to the jurisdiction of World Aquatics and the applicability of these Rules, including those governing arbitration. World Aquatics reserves the right to make changes to these Rules as necessary. Once such Rules become public, notice is deemed to have been provided and changes are effective immediately unless otherwise noted.

### **1. APPLICATION AND SCOPE**

- 1.1 These Rules apply to all Covered Persons.
- 1.2 Each Covered Person shall be automatically bound by, and be required to comply with, these Rules by virtue of such participation, assistance, involvement, or preparation in any Covered Events.
- 1.3 It shall be the personal responsibility of every Covered Person to make himself or herself aware of these Rules including, without limitation, what conduct constitutes Forbidden Conduct and to comply with the requirements set out in these Rules. Covered Persons should also be aware that Forbidden Conduct may also constitute a criminal offence and/or a breach of other applicable laws and regulations. Covered Persons must comply with all applicable laws and regulations at all times.

**2. JURISDICTION**

- 2.1 Covered Persons submit to the exclusive jurisdiction of World Aquatics and the AQIU to investigate and adjudicate allegations that a Covered Person engaged in one or more acts of Forbidden Conduct during a Covered Event.
- 2.1.2 If the Forbidden Conduct is alleged to occur in or between both Covered and Non-Covered Events, jurisdiction under these Rules only applies if the predominant nature and duration of the Forbidden Conduct occurred during Covered Events.
- 2.1.3 If the Forbidden Conduct is alleged to occur at a Non-Covered Event or does not involve a Covered Person, World Aquatics does not have jurisdiction. In such situation, the aggrieved party should contact his/her Member Federation and/or competent legal authorities.
- 2.2 Final decisions and decisions on provisional suspensions rendered by the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU are appealable exclusively to the Appeals Arbitration Division of the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne, Switzerland in accordance with the CAS Code of Sports-related Arbitration. The CAS shall also have exclusive jurisdiction over interlocutory orders and no other court or tribunal shall have authority to issue interlocutory orders relating to matters before the CAS or the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU.
- 2.3 If a Major Event Organisation has its own rules on the protection from harassment and abuse (or similar), and either (a) an allegation asserting Forbidden Conduct against a Covered Person is first filed with the Major Event Organisation; or (b) it is determined by an Independent Protection Officer that the predominant nature of the alleged Forbidden Conduct took place during an event organized by a Major Event Organisation, World Aquatics may defer jurisdiction to the Major Event Organisation.

**3. DEFINITIONS**

- 3.1 **“AQIU”** means the Aquatics Integrity Unit.
- 3.2 **“Athletes Safeguarding Counsel”** means a group of (former) athletes and experts (medical, legal) supervising the processes as described in these Rules. The responsibility implies among others supervising the work of the Independent Protection Officer, supervising correct implementation of the Rules, confidentially advising athletes on the procedures and providing support for the victims and other potentially affected individuals (teammates, support personnel), acting as an initial point of contact for any victim, raising awareness and advising World Aquatics Bureau and World Aquatics Executive.
- 3.3 **“Claimant”** means the Covered Person(s) (or legal guardian in the event the Claimant(s) is a minor or incapacitated) who is alleged to have experienced conduct that constitutes a violation of these Rules.

- 3.4 **“Covered Event”** means a World Aquatics Championships, World Aquatics Competition, Competition of a Major Event Organisation or any World Aquatics-sanctioned or organized meeting (i.e. World Aquatics Convention, World Aquatics Congress, World Aquatics Development activities, etc.).
- 3.5 **“Covered Person”** means any natural person(s) who participates in, assists in, is involved in, or prepares an Athlete(s) to participate in a Covered Event, which includes any natural person(s) belonging to one of the following categories:
- 3.5.1 **“Athlete”** means any person or group of persons, participating or qualified to participate in, a Covered Event.
- 3.5.2 **“Athlete Entourage Member”** means any coach, trainer, manager, agent, team staff, team official, medical or paramedical personnel working with or treating Athletes, and all other persons working with Athletes.
- 3.5.3 **“Official”** means all World Aquatics members, World Aquatics staff, persons elected or appointed to any position within World Aquatics or the Continental Organizations, Technical Committee Members, World Aquatics Bureau, Judges, Jury Members, Referees and other individuals engaged in World Aquatics activities, including organisers, consultants and any other accredited or engaged persons in contact with Athletes.
- 3.6 **“Forbidden Conduct”** means any conduct set out in Section 4.
- 3.7 **“Independent Investigation Officer”** means the AQIU Investigatory Body
- 3.8 **“Independent Protection Officer”** means the AQIU Chief Ethics and Compliance Officer.
- 3.9 **“Major Event Organisation”** means any international, multi-sport organization that acts as the ruling body for any continental, regional or other international Competition.
- 3.10 **“Member Federation”** means the national federations affiliated to World Aquatics in a country or a sport country recognised by World Aquatics.
- 3.11 **“Minor”** means a person under the age of 18 years or, where applicable, a person who is under the age of majority and meets the definition of a child for the purposes of protection in the country where the predominant nature of the alleged misconduct occurred.
- 3.12 **“Non-Covered Event”** means any event that is not a Covered Event.
- 3.13 **“Rules”** means the present rules on the protection from harassment and abuse.

## CHAPTER B – RULES

### 4. FORBIDDEN CONDUCT

4.1 The following Forbidden Conduct shall constitute a violation of these Rules:

#### 4.1.1 **Harassment**

Any acts of hazing, neglect, psychological abuse, physical abuse, and sexual harassment. These forms of harassment and abuse may occur in combination or in isolation.

#### 4.1.2 **Hazing**

Any intentional action taken or any situation created that causes embarrassment, harassment or ridicule, and risks emotional, physical or sexual harm to a Covered Person, regardless of the individual's willingness to participate.

#### 4.1.3 **Neglect**

The failure of a Covered Person with a duty of care towards another Covered Person to provide a minimum level of care to that Covered Person which is causing harm, encouraging harm, allowing harm to be caused, or creating imminent danger of harm.

For example, forced training in unsafe training venues/equipment; failure to provide adequate nutrition/ fluids while training; or failure to protect the athlete from environmental risks (heat/cold/dangerous open water swimming environments).

#### 4.1.4 **Psychological Abuse**

A pattern of deliberate, prolonged, repeated non-contact behaviours within a power differentiated relationship. This form of abuse is at the core of all other forms.

#### 4.1.5 **Physical Abuse**

Any deliberate and unwelcome act – such as, for example, punching, beating, kicking, biting and burning – that causes physical trauma or injury. Such act can also consist of forced or inappropriate physical activity (e.g., inappropriate age or physique training loads; when injured or in pain), forced alcohol consumption, or forced doping practices.

#### 4.1.6 **Sexual Harassment**

Any verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which is unwelcome. Sexual Harassment includes sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly. Sexual Harassment may take the form of Sexual Abuse.

#### 4.1.7 **Sexual Abuse**

Any conduct of sexual nature, whether non-contact, contact or penetrative, where consent is coerced/manipulated or is not or cannot be given. The activities may include, but are not limited to assault by penetration (for example, rape or oral sex) or non-penetrative acts such as masturbation, kissing, rubbing and touching outside of clothing. Sexual Abuse may also include non-contact activities, such as involving individuals in looking at, or in the production of, sexual images, watching sexual activities, encouraging to behave in sexually inappropriate ways, or grooming a person in preparation for abuse (including through the internet).

4.2 The following are not considered Forbidden Conduct and shall not be reported under these Rules: pool or equipment issues; financial disputes; scores; competitive progression concerns; and/or employment disputes. Moreover, Forbidden Conduct does not include professionally accepted coaching methods within Aquatics for skill enhancement, physical conditioning, team building, appropriate discipline, or techniques used to improve Athlete performance.

## **5. PROCEDURE**

### **5.1 Reporting Requirements**

Any Covered Person may report an incident under these Rules. The reports of harassment and abuse may be made in writing or verbally to an Independent Protection Officer so long as the allegations concern Forbidden Conduct against a Covered Person during a Covered Event. Reports shall be made in writing (by email) and addressed to an Independent Protection Officer with a copy to the World Aquatics Office. All reports shall include the following information:

- The name, title, address, contact information and signature of the Claimant (or legal guardian in the event of a minor), subject to Article 5.2;
- The name and surname of the Covered Person alleged to have committed Forbidden Conduct;
- A complete factual description of the alleged Forbidden Conduct, including date(s) and location(s) of the Forbidden Conduct;
- Any evidence in the Claimant's possession supporting the allegation that Forbidden Conduct occurred; and
- Provision(s) of these Rules that are alleged to have been breached.

### **5.2 Anonymous Reporting**

Reporting under these Rules may be made anonymously. Anonymity means that Independent Protection Officer will not know the personally identifying information of the reporter. However, an anonymous report may limit the Independent Protection Officer's ability to investigate and respond to a report. Consequently, World Aquatics encourages Claimants to provide their name and contact information when reporting.

The identity of any Claimant may only be disclosed if such disclosure is both necessary for the purposes of any investigation into an alleged violation of these Rules and the consent in writing of the person to the disclosure of his or her identity has been obtained.

### 5.3 **Initiation of Complaint**

When an Independent Protection Officer receives a complaint of Forbidden Conduct that falls within the exclusive jurisdiction of World Aquatics, he/she will notify the relevant Member Federation (if appropriate), conduct a preliminary inquiry with the Claimant and/or Covered Person, and (if appropriate) undertake an investigation into the alleged violation of these Rules.

Notice under these Rules to a Covered Person who is under the jurisdiction of a Member Federation may be accomplished by delivery of the notice to the Member Federation. The Member Federation shall be responsible for making immediate contact with the Covered Person to whom the notice is applicable.

### 5.4 **Parties**

The parties to a complaint are the Claimant and the accused Covered Person.

Neither the Claimant nor accused Covered Person are required to participate in the investigation or any form of resolution under these Rules. Cooperation and participation in the resolution process, however, is important to ensure that all relevant information and evidence are adequately presented to determine whether a violation occurred. If a Claimant or accused Covered Person declines to cooperate or participate in an investigation, the Independent Protection Officer and/or the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU will make their decision based on the available evidence. Alternatively, an Independent Protection Officer may, in his/her discretion, choose not to proceed.

Where a Claimant declines or is otherwise unable to participate in an investigation, procedure or hearing, the ability to resolve the allegations may be limited. An Independent Protection Officer may, nevertheless, pursue the allegation in his/her sole discretion if it is possible to do so without the Claimant's participation (e.g., where there is other relevant evidence of the Forbidden Conduct, such as recordings, corroborating reports from other witnesses, or physical evidence).

An Independent Protection Officer reserves the right to notify the guardians of any Claimant and/or any Covered Person regarding any perceived health or safety risk as a result of any alleged Forbidden Conduct.

### 5.5 **Investigation**

Following the initiation of a complaint, the Claimant and accused Covered Person will have an opportunity to submit information and relevant evidence, identify witnesses who may have relevant information, and to submit questions that they believe should be directed by an Independent Protection Officer to each other or to any witness.

If during the investigative process (i.e., prior to the issuance of any report prepared by an Independent Protection Officer), information or evidence that was available to the Claimant and/or accused Covered Person, including testimonial evidence, is not provided or disclosed to an Independent Protection Officer, such information or evidence may not be considered in determining whether a violation of the Rules occurred. If such information or evidence is provided after the investigative process, absent good cause, it may be afforded less weight during any subsequent hearing by the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU.



## 5.6 **Independent Investigation**

An Independent Protection Officer may appoint an Independent Investigation Officer to investigate the alleged Forbidden Conduct.

Upon the conclusion of the Independent Investigation Officer's investigation, a report shall be prepared setting out his/her findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Such report will be addressed to an Independent Protection Officer, with copies provided to the Claimant and accused Covered Person.

## 5.7 **Methods of Resolution**

### 5.7.1 **Administrative Closure**

An Independent Protection Officer, in his/her discretion, may administratively close a matter. This may be done as a result of lack of jurisdiction, insufficient evidence, a Claimant who elects not to participate in the resolution process, or other factors as determined by an Independent Protection Officer. An Independent Protection Officer may, upon receipt of new information or evidence, or a change in circumstances, reopen the matter for further investigation.

### 5.7.2 **Informal Resolution**

The accused Covered Person may, at any time before a matter is final, elect to resolve allegations of Forbidden Conduct by accepting responsibility for a violation of these Rules. In doing so, an Independent Protection Officer will determine the appropriate sanction following consultation with the parties and in accordance with Section 6 of these Rules. An informal resolution constitutes a final and binding disposition of the matter. The outcome and sanctions of an informal resolution may be published by the AQIU.

### 5.7.3 **Formal Resolution**

Formal resolution occurs after an Independent Protection Officer completes an investigation, the parties are heard (in writing or otherwise) and the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU issues its decision.

If the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU determines that the allegations of Forbidden Conduct are false, vexatious, retaliatory or frivolous, they may recommend disciplinary action against the Claimant.

The outcome of a formal resolution may be published by the AQIU.

## 5.8 **Referral to the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU**

If, following an investigation, the procedure is not administratively closed or informally resolved, the complaint will be forwarded by an Independent Protection Officer to the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU for formal resolution.

The Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU shall have the competence to conduct any further investigation and/or adjudicate the alleged violation of these Rules, as needed. If, after consulting the parties, the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU considers itself sufficiently well informed to decide the complaint based on all associated documents and evidence submitted during the investigation, it may decide to issue its decision without an oral hearing.

#### 5.9 **Suspension of the Proceedings**

An Independent Protection Officer and/or the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU shall have the discretion to suspend any investigation pending the outcome of investigations and/or legal procedure conducted by other competent authorities, notably law enforcement authorities or criminal courts.

#### 5.10 **Burden of Proof**

The Claimant (or an Independent Protection Officer, in the event the Claimant declines or is unable to participate in the procedure) bears the burden of gathering sufficient evidence to reach a determination, based on the preponderance of the evidence, that a Covered Person violated these Rules. A “preponderance of the evidence” means “more likely than not.”

#### 5.11 **Consolidation**

Complaints involving more than one Claimant or more than one accused Covered Person may, in the discretion of Chairperson of the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU, be consolidated into a single matter.

#### 5.12 **Confidentiality**

Complaints, decisions, investigation and interview reports, audio and/or video recordings, transcripts and other work product produced under the Rules are confidential, except where disclosure is required by law. Any violation of this provision, including by an advisor and/or associate of a Covered Person, may constitute an abuse of process.

While physical documentation and/or recordings must remain confidential, the AQIU and/or the relevant Member Federation may disclose the outcome of the matter, including a summary of any decision, to those parties or organizations with a need to know so that the outcome can be properly effectuated or understood.

If any person or entity misrepresents the process by which the outcome was determined, the underlying facts, or the outcome of a matter, World Aquatics reserves the right to publicly correct the record.

#### 5.13 **Obligation to Report**

All Covered Persons shall have the obligation to report to the AQIU, in accordance with these Rules, any act or behaviour that may objectively be considered Forbidden Conduct, or retaliation for not reporting Forbidden Conduct, for investigation and possible charge. Failure to report under these Rules may result in consequences under these Rules.

**6. SANCTIONS****6.1 Range of Sanctions**

If the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU decides that a Covered Person has committed Forbidden Conduct, the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU shall be entitled to impose the following sanctions in accordance with these Rules.

**6.1.1 Warning**

An official, written notice and formal admonition that a Covered Person has violated these Rules and that a more severe sanction may result should the Covered Person be involved in other violations.

**6.1.2 Probation**

A specified period of time, during which should any further violations of these Rules occur, additional disciplinary measures, including a period of suspension or permanent ineligibility may apply. This sanction may also include loss of privileges or other conditions, restrictions, or requirements.

**6.1.3 Ineligibility**

A suspension from the participation, in any capacity, in any program, activity, event, or competition sponsored by, organized by, or under the auspices of World Aquatics or a Member Federation, or at a facility under the jurisdiction of the same, for a period up to the lifetime of the Covered Person.

A Covered Person is eligible to return after the suspension lapses, but reinstatement may be subject to certain restrictions or contingent upon the Covered Person satisfying specific conditions noted at the time of suspension.

**6.1.4 Other Discretionary Matters**

The Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU may, in its discretion, impose other sanctions, including, but not limited to, other loss of privileges, no contact directives, requirement to complete educational or other programs, return of World Aquatics awards, or any other restrictions or conditions as deemed necessary or appropriate.

In the discretion of the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU, a sanction may include restrictions or prohibitions from some types of participation but allowing participation in other capacities.

**6.2 Aggravating and Mitigating Factors**

In imposing sanctions in accordance with these Rules, the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU shall be entitled to consider the existence of any aggravating and/or mitigating factors.

**Aggravating factors may include:**

- 6.2.1 Failure to cooperate by the Covered Person with any investigation or requests for information by the Independent Protection Officer, Independent Investigation Officer and/or Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU.
- 6.2.2 Forbidden Conduct directed towards a minor(s) or other dependant person(s), notably, but not limited to, conduct arising from positions of power, caregiving, employment or any other form of dependant relationship.
- 6.2.3 The type of and/or repeated nature of the Forbidden Conduct.
- 6.2.4 Any previous violation under these Rules (or other rules of domestic law or related governing Forbidden Conduct) by the Covered Person.
- 6.2.5 Lack of remorse of the Person bound by these Rules.
- 6.2.6 Any other aggravating factor that Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU deems relevant.

**Mitigating factors may include:**

- 6.2.7 Cooperation by the Covered Person with any investigation or requests for information.
- 6.2.8 Timely admission of a violation by the Covered Person.
- 6.2.9 The Covered Person's clean disciplinary record.
- 6.2.10 Youth or inexperience of the Covered Person.
- 6.2.11 The Covered Person's remorse for his/her actions.
- 6.2.12 Any other mitigating factor that Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU deems relevant.

**6.3 Educational Measures and Rehabilitation**

As part of an informal or formal resolution of any matter, a Covered Person may be required to complete an appropriate education or rehabilitation programme pertaining to the prevention of harassment and abuse as a condition of eligibility or as an independent sanction.

**6.4 Provisional and Voluntary Suspension**

Upon request from an Independent Protection Officer and/or the Claimant, and after hearing from the accused Covered Person, the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU shall have discretion, in circumstances where it considers that the seriousness of the allegations against a Covered Person, the safety or well-being of the Claimant, or the dignity of the sport of Aquatics could otherwise be seriously undermined, to provisionally suspend a Covered Person pending the investigation and adjudication of the alleged violation.

Alternatively, a Covered Person bound by these Rules may accept a voluntary suspension from the participation in the sport of Aquatics provided that it is confirmed in writing to an Independent Protection Officer. A voluntary suspension shall be effective only from the date of receipt of such written confirmation to an Independent Protection Officer. Where a provisional suspension is imposed upon a Covered Person, consideration of time served shall be credited in the determination of any further period of suspension or other sanction which may be ultimately imposed.

The Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU can also impose other provisional measures it deems appropriate such as no contact directives and chaperones.

## 6.5 **Costs**

The Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU may order a Covered Person who has committed a violation of these Rules, to pay to World Aquatics a contribution towards the costs and expenses of and incidental to any investigation, hearing and adjudication of the matter.

## 6.6 **Publication and Notification**

Any determination of a violation made under these Rules, including any associated sanction, may be publicly disclosed by the AQIU and may be reported to the appropriate Member Federation and law enforcement authorities.

## **7. IMPLEMENTATION BY MEMBER FEDERATIONS AND WORLD AQUATICS**

7.1 Member Federations shall implement similar rules and regulations or incorporate the present Rules into their rules, as modified appropriately for national-level competition, in order to prevent against Forbidden Conduct under their respective jurisdictions.

7.2 To the extent allegations of Forbidden Conduct occurring at a Non-Covered Event are filed with a Member Federation, such Member Federation shall immediately inform the Independent Protection Officer. To the extent the Member Federation does not timely investigate and/or resolve the allegations of Forbidden Conduct, an Independent Protection Officer may open a procedure for investigation and resolution under these Rules.

7.3 Any violations(s) or sanction(s) determined under these Rules shall be reciprocally recognized and enforced by and between all Member Federations.

7.4 Any decision rendered by a Member Federation concerning Forbidden Conduct shall be immediately reported to the Independent Protection Officer, who will initiate the necessary recognition and enforcement procedures, as needed. Any determination by the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU recognizing the decision of a Member Federation shall be enforced by all Member Federations.

7.5 The failure of a Member Federation to comply with Sections 7.1 - 7.4 may be referred to the Adjudicatory Body of the AQIU.

## **8. STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS**

### 8.1 **Statute of Limitations**

The statute of limitation period for claims filed under these Rules is ten (10) years from last date upon which the Forbidden Conduct is alleged to have occurred.

In the event the Forbidden Conduct is alleged to have occurred while the Claimant was a Minor, the statute of limitation period is ten (10) years from the date upon which the Claimant turns the age of majority in the country where the predominant nature of the alleged Forbidden Conduct occurred.

The foregoing statute of limitations does not apply to claims for Sexual Abuse.

## **9. AMENDMENTS AND INTERPRETATION**

- 9.1 These Rules may be amended from time to time by the World Aquatics Bureau.
- 9.2 Unless stated otherwise, these Rules shall be interpreted as an independent and autonomous text and not by reference to existing law or statutes.
- 9.3 The headings and sub-headings in these Rules are for convenience only and shall not be deemed to be part of the substance of these Rules or to affect in any way the language of the provisions to which they refer.
- 9.4 If any subpart(s) of these Rules is held to be invalid, unenforceable or illegal for any reason, it shall be deemed to be deleted and the Rules shall otherwise remain in full force and effect. If a Covered Person retires, ceases to participate in, assist in, or remain involved in the sport of Aquatics while a disciplinary procedure under these Rules is underway, World Aquatics shall retain jurisdiction to complete the relevant procedure and to impose any appropriate sanction. If the Covered Person retires, ceases to participate in, assist in, or remain involved in the sport of Aquatics before any disciplinary procedure has begun, World Aquatics shall nevertheless have jurisdiction to conduct the relevant procedure and impose any appropriate sanction.

For the Bureau:

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