GYMNASTICS IRELAND

Recognition of Prior Learning and Prior Award Policy

Gymnastics Ireland Coach Education Pathway

Sport Starts Here.

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1. Purpose and Scope

This policy explains how Gymnastics Ireland assesses and formally recognises coaching awards, learning and experience gained outside its coach education pathway. It applies to applicants aged 18 or over who want to coach in a Gymnastics Ireland registered club.

Key terms

Term	Meaning
RPL - Recognition of Prior Learning	Assessment of an applicant's formal, non-formal or informal learning against the learning outcomes and assessment standards of a Gymnastics Ireland award.
RPA - Recognition of Prior Award	Assessment of a formal external award against a Gymnastics Ireland award to determine the recognition outcome.
Sponsor	A person with a recognised role in a Gymnastics Ireland registered club who signs the application and confirms the club's support and intended role. The sponsor does not certify competence or influence the decision.
SafeSport Department	The Gymnastics Ireland department that administers vetting and safeguarding requirements and provides the written confirmations required by this policy. It does not assess RPL or RPA.
Recognition decision	The written RPL or RPA outcome. It records what has been recognised, any requirements and the applicant's coaching status. It is not a certificate.
Certificate	The Gymnastics Ireland qualification issued only after Outcome 3 and all certification requirements have been met.
Supervised arrangement	An arrangement confirmed in writing by Gymnastics Ireland that allows an applicant to coach within the scope sought under a named qualified supervisor. It is not a qualification or provisional recognition.

Who may apply

An applicant may apply where they have one or more of the following:

- A gymnastics coaching qualification from a World Gymnastics affiliated federation, another recognised governing body, World Gymnastics Academy or European Gymnastics.
- A relevant academic or other-sport qualification with learning that may transfer to gymnastics coaching.
- Substantial documented gymnastics coaching experience without a relevant formal qualification.
- Relevant Irish national-squad experience. A gymnast who represented Ireland at a European or World Championships may seek non-standard entry at Club Coach level in the same discipline. Athlete status alone does not prove coaching competence.

A successful application may lead to non-standard course entry, exemption from named modules or full recognition at a Gymnastics Ireland coaching tier. An external award does not, by itself, authorise coaching in a Gymnastics Ireland registered club.

Who this policy does not cover

No RPL or RPA application or fee is required for:

- A current Gymnastics Ireland coach moving club, progressing within the Gymnastics Ireland pathway or transferring discipline.
- A coach with an earlier Gymnastics Ireland award who needs revalidation or bridging continuing professional development (CPD).
- GymSTART or another programme pathway, or judging qualification, coach developer or assessor qualifications.

These matters are managed through the Coaching Policy, Coach Transfer Journeys document, Judging Policy, Club Staff Recruitment Process or the relevant programme rules.

Related documents

This policy should be read with the current:

- Club Staff Recruitment Process
- Garda Vetting Policy and Procedure - E-Vetting
- Safeguarding Training Policy
- Coaching Policy and Coach Transfer Journeys document
- Complaints and Disciplinary Rules and Procedures
- Data Protection Policy and retention schedule.

Each document governs its own subject; this policy governs only RPL and RPA recognition decisions.

2. Vetting and Application

An applicant's RPL/RPA application and their Garda vetting should be initiated concurrently.

Vetting is a legal requirement in Ireland. It is conducted in respect of any person who is carrying out work or activity, a necessary and regular part of which consists mainly of the person having access to, or contact with, children or vulnerable adults.

Please refer to the GI Club Staff Recruitment Process for further detail.

A pre-application enquiry to the Education Manager is optional. It may identify the likely route and evidence, but it is not a decision and does not advise the club on recruitment or employment.

3. Applying and Evidence

Application requirements

Every application must include:

- A completed application form signed by the applicant and sponsor.
- The €50 application fee, unless Gymnastics Ireland confirms a waiver or deferral in writing.
- Proof of identity and age, current contact details and the evidence supporting the application.
- The required declarations, verification consent and information-sharing consent.

The fee becomes non-refundable when Gymnastics Ireland confirms that the application is complete and assessment has started.

Evidence

Evidence must be relevant to the award sought, sufficient to support the claim, genuine and reliable, and current enough for the learning outcome being assessed. It may include:

- Formal learning such as certificates, transcripts, programme documents, assessment records and course syllabi.
- Non-formal learning such as workshop certificates, module materials and an account of what was learned.
- Informal learning such as a reflective account, coaching record, recent coaching video or supporting statements.

Documents not in English must include a certified or official translation at the applicant's cost. Untranslated documents cannot be assessed.

An applicant may request reasonable adjustments because of disability or another access need. Requests should be made to the Education Department as early as possible. An adjustment must not change the learning outcomes or assessment standards.

Missing information

If information is missing, Gymnastics Ireland will explain what is required, why it is relevant and when it is due. The application closes if the material is not received within three months. An extension of up to three months may be allowed where an outside organisation causes the delay. Gymnastics Ireland will send a reminder at least 20 working days before closure. A closed application requires a new form, and any new fee is determined under the Fees Schedule.

Verification

Gymnastics Ireland may verify evidence with the organisation that issued it or request a relevant reference where necessary. It may accept alternative evidence where a document cannot reasonably be obtained and the applicant has shown why it is unavailable.

If Gymnastics Ireland becomes aware that an applicant may have made a materially false statement or left out important information, it will write to the applicant explaining the concern. This applies whether the application is still being assessed or a recognition decision or certificate has already been issued. The applicant will have 10 working days to respond. Gymnastics Ireland will appoint an independent decision-maker or a new panel, as appropriate, to consider the matter. Anyone involved in the original assessment or decision must take no part in this review. The review may result in an application being refused or an existing recognition decision or certificate being withdrawn. Gymnastics Ireland will give the applicant written reasons, and the applicant may appeal under Section 8.

4. Assessment and Decision

Gymnastics Ireland assigns each complete application to one of two routes.

Route 1 - Approved Award Mapping

Route 1 applies where the external award appears on the Approved RPA Mapping Schedule. The Education Manager checks the applicant's identity, the authenticity of the award, whether the award is still current and any mapping conditions before applying the published outcome. A case moves to

Route 2 where the evidence is disputed or out of date, mapping conditions are not met, or the applicant seeks recognition beyond the award.

The panel records and audits Route 1 decisions at each quarterly review cycle in which Route 1 decisions have been made. The Schedule is reviewed at least annually and whenever a listed award, Gymnastics Ireland award, syllabus or Coaching Development Programme for Ireland (CDPI) requirement changes materially.

Route 2 - Individual Assessment

Route 2 applies to every other application. The panel compares the evidence with the learning outcomes and assessment standards of the award sought. It may require an observed practical assessment at the published rate. Years of experience, job title, reputation, athlete results or competitive results are not enough on their own.

The panel

The three voting members are the chair, an experienced Gymnastics Ireland Coach Developer or assessor, and an independent external member with relevant quality-assurance experience. A fourth voting member with relevant discipline or award-level expertise is required for Master Coach and may be added for Advanced Coach, proposed full recognition or disputed evidence.

Quorum is three, or four for Master Coach, including the chair and independent member. A conflicted member must be replaced before the panel proceeds. Decisions are by majority. A tied vote requires further evidence or an additional eligible voting member. Minority views are recorded. Members must keep application materials, deliberations and decisions confidential except where disclosure is authorised by policy or law.

If current Sport Ireland quality-assurance rules require its involvement, a Sport Ireland nominee fills the independent-member seat. The panel does not increase in size for that reason. A decision requiring Sport Ireland agreement remains provisional until written agreement is received.

Courses not yet operational

Gymnastics Ireland may assess a Club, Advanced or Master Coach application against a completed controlled syllabus before that course is running. If the mapped tier cannot yet be assessed and certified, the applicant may be certified only at the highest lower tier for which full equivalence and certification are available. The decision records the higher mapping and an expiry date no later than 24 months after the decision.

Before issuing the higher certificate, Gymnastics Ireland confirms that the syllabus and assessment standards have not changed materially and that any required assessment has been passed. A material change returns the mapping to the panel without a new application fee. Until the higher certificate is issued, the coach may work only at the tier actually certified.

The recognition decision

The Education Manager issues the written decision after the Route 1 or Route 2 assessment and any required Sport Ireland agreement. It records the outcome, reasons, requirements, certificate eligibility and the applicant's coaching status until certification. The applicant receives the full reasons. The sponsor receives the outcome and information needed to arrange deployment or supervision, but not sensitive background information unless disclosure is necessary and lawful.

The decision letter must state whether the applicant may coach under a named supervised arrangement before certification and, if so, the permitted scope and conditions. Unless the letter expressly permits coaching, the applicant must not coach within the scope sought until a certificate is issued.

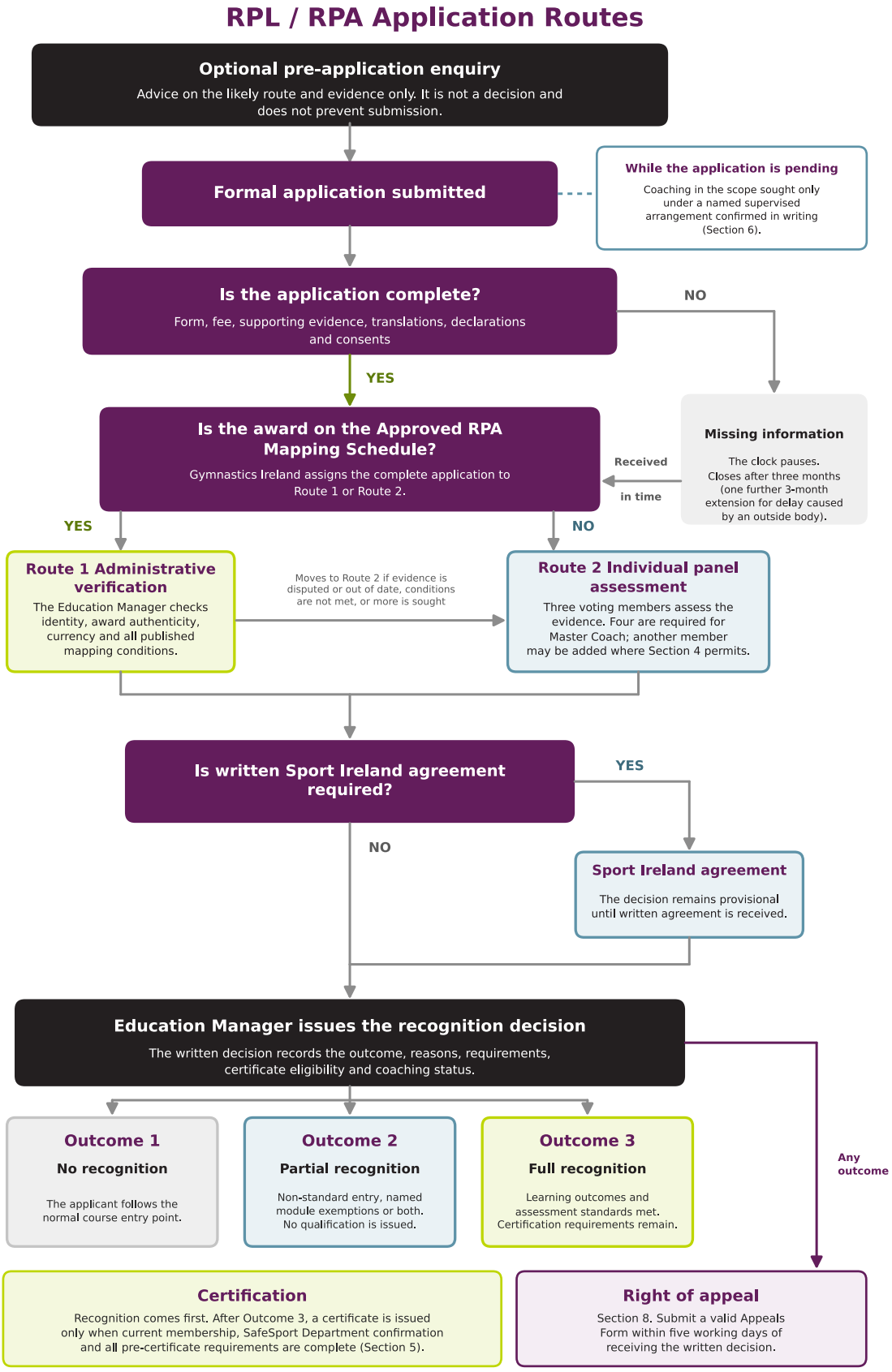


Figure 1: RPL/RPA application routes — a summary of Sections 3 to 8. The written policy takes precedence.

5. Outcomes and Certification

Gymnastics Ireland records one of three recognition outcomes:

- Outcome 1 - No recognition. The applicant follows the normal course entry point.
- Outcome 2 - Partial recognition. The applicant may receive non-standard course entry, named module exemptions or both. No qualification or certificate is issued.
- Outcome 3 - Full recognition. The learning outcomes and assessment standards of the award sought have been met. Certification requirements may still remain.

An Outcome 2 decision may identify coaching theory, a practical assessment, bridging CPD or other pathway requirements to be completed through the Coaching Policy. An Outcome 3 decision may include only certification conditions that do not reassess whether the learning outcomes and assessment standards have been met, such as induction or a period of supervised practice. The only exception is a required assessment for a higher-tier mapping under Courses not yet operational (Section 4). The decision states what must be completed, the deadline and whether it applies before or after certification.

Recognition and certification are separate. A certificate is issued only after Outcome 3 and confirmation of:

- Current Gymnastics Ireland membership.
- SafeSport Department confirmation that all matters are in order and that the candidate, as presented, meets the required compliance checks.
- Every requirement identified as a precondition to certification.

Unless the decision states otherwise, pre-certificate requirements must be completed within six months. A written extension may be allowed where the delay is outside the applicant's reasonable control. If the decision lapses, no certificate may be issued under it. The applicant must submit a new application; evidence may be reused where it remains current, relevant and verifiable, and any fee is determined under the Fees Schedule then in force.

After certification, the coach must follow the qualification scope, CPD requirements and any conditions set under the Coaching Policy.

6. Coaching While an Application is Pending

Pending completion of an RPL/RPA application, an applicant must not coach beyond the scope and conditions authorised in writing by Gymnastics Ireland. The written permission does not grant the level sought. Recognition is determined only when the assessment process is complete. The applicant may coach at the recognised level only after the applicable certification requirements have been satisfied and the certificate has been issued. Until certification, the applicant may coach only within the specific scope and conditions stated in Gymnastics Ireland's written supervised-arrangement confirmation. The recognition decision must state whether supervised coaching may continue after the decision and, if so, the scope and conditions (Section 4).

Before Gymnastics Ireland issues the confirmation, all of the following must be in place:

- The formal application has been submitted and remains active.
- SafeSport Department confirmation that all matters are in order and that the candidate, as presented, meets the required compliance checks.
- The sponsor club has named a currently registered Gymnastics Ireland coach who is qualified in the relevant discipline and at an appropriate level.

While the confirmation applies:

- The named supervisor must attend the same session, actively supervise and be able to intervene immediately.
- The applicant must not coach alone or supervise other coaches and must remain within the supervisor's qualification scope.
- If the named supervisor is absent, the applicant must not coach unless Gymnastics Ireland has confirmed an eligible replacement supervisor in writing, including a back-up supervisor named in the confirmation.
- The club must not present the applicant as holding the level sought or as having completed RPL or RPA.

The pending-application confirmation ends when the recognition decision is issued, the application closes, a required condition is no longer met or Gymnastics Ireland withdraws it. After the decision, coaching must follow the status stated in the decision letter and, when issued, the certificate and any conditions.

Coaches already working in Ireland

A coach already working in a Gymnastics Ireland registered club when this policy commences, whose external qualification or prior learning has not been formally recognised, must submit an application and ensure that the applicable vetting and safeguarding requirements are current. The coach may continue while the application is pending only under the same written supervised arrangement described above. Previous employment, deployment or informal permission does not create authority to coach.

7. Timelines

Stage	Service standard
Acknowledge the application	Within 5 working days of receipt
Confirm it is complete or request missing information	Within 15 working days of receipt
Confirm supervised coaching status	Within 5 working days after all Section 6 requirements are confirmed
Issue the Route 1 recognition decision	Within 15 working days of the application being complete
Route 2 panel decision	Within 30 working days of the application being complete
Route 2 complex case extension	An extension of up to 20 working days, notified before the original deadline

Stage	Service standard
Send a provisional CDPI decision to Sport Ireland	Within 5 working days of the panel decision
Issue the Route 2 recognition decision where no Sport Ireland agreement is needed	Within 10 working days of the panel decision
Issue the recognition decision where Sport Ireland agreement is needed	Within 10 working days of receiving written agreement, with a progress update at least every 20 working days while waiting
Issue the certificate	Within 10 working days of all certification requirements being confirmed

A working day is a day on which the Gymnastics Ireland office is open. A timeline pauses while requested information is outstanding and resumes when it is received. Gymnastics Ireland cannot set Sport Ireland a deadline. The three-month closure rule in Section 3 applies whenever requested information remains outstanding, whether requested before or after the application is confirmed complete.

8. Appeals

RPL RPA Decision Appeal

An RPL / RPA Decision Appeal can only be submitted on one or more of the following grounds:-

1. The RPL / RPA process was not followed correctly.

2. Material evidence was not available at the time of the original application and could not reasonably have been submitted.

3. There is a reasonable basis to believe a panel member had a conflict of interest that influenced the outcome.

Appeals Process

The RPL /RPA Decision Appeals process is initiated only where a valid Appeal is received in writing by the Complaints & Disciplinary Department (C&DD) - complaints@gymnasticsireland.com

Requirements for a Valid Appeal

A valid Appeal must:

1. Be submitted in writing by fully completing the GI RPL/RPA Appeals Form within five working days from the date the applicant receives written notification of the RPL/RPA decision.

2. Clearly state the grounds for the Appeal.

3. Identify the alleged breach, or submit the additional material evidence, and explain why this information was not provided as part of the initial application.

4. Be accompanied by a fee of €25. This fee will be refunded if the Appeal is upheld.

The Director of Community Support & Operations (DCSO), or their nominee, will confirm whether the Appeal meets the criteria of a valid Appeal.

Procedure following the receipt of a Valid Appeal

Once a valid Appeal is confirmed:

- The appeal & all supporting documents from the original decision will be reviewed independently by the Director of Performance & Technical (DPT) / or their nominee.
- The DPT / their nominee will issue a decision in writing to the DCSO within 2 weeks of receipt of a valid appeal.
- The DCSO / their nominee will provide the applicant with formal written notification of the DPT decision.
- The decision of the DPT / their nominee is final and cannot be appealed.

In addition, the DPT and any nominee must not have participated in, advised on or been consulted about the original assessment, recommendation, moderation or decision and must have no actual or perceived conflict of interest.

9. Governance, Commencement and Review

Records and monitoring

Gymnastics Ireland records the application, evidence, verification, conflicts, decision, minority views, Sport Ireland agreement, certificate and any appeal. Records are handled under the Data Protection Policy and retention schedule. The Education Manager monitors application numbers, decision times, outcomes, mappings awaiting certification, appeals and recurring evidence gaps. Detailed panel administration, verification and escalation procedures are set out in the internal operating procedure.

Commencement

This policy applies from the date Gymnastics Ireland publishes it as operative. Any application or written supervised-coaching permission already in place on that date must be reviewed under Section 6. Existing permission continues only until Gymnastics Ireland confirms, changes or withdraws it.

Review

The policy will be reviewed twelve months after the full Assistant-to-Master pathway is running or after the first ten applications are decided, whichever comes first. It will then be reviewed at least every two years. It may be reviewed earlier if required by changes to the law, Sport Ireland or CDPI requirements, the Coaching Policy or the pathway, or if considered necessary by the Education Manager or Director of Performance & Technical.