



SPORT SCIENTIST CANADA

**Para Sport
Area of Focused Competence (AFC)
for Sport Scientists**

Applicant Guidelines



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PREAMBLE

This document provides the information necessary for a candidate to prepare to apply for the Para Sport Area of Focused Competence (AFC).

INTRODUCTION

The Para Sport AFC is an area of enhanced competence within high performance (HP) sport. It is a **para-specific specialization** that builds upon the designation of High Performance Certification at any level. The objective of the Para Sport AFC is to evaluate both the practitioner's knowledge and experience in HP sport environments.

This specialization is designed to ensure that the system employs skillful, qualified practitioners who deliver safe and effective service to para sport athletes and coaches. A shared goal of the AFC is to attract, develop, and retain exceptional practitioners in Canada.

The Para Sport AFC is a Sport Scientist Canada (SSC) program under the leadership of Own The Podium, developed in consultation with our Canadian sport partner organizations.

The Para Sport AFC and associated standards are recognized by the SSC Management Group consisting of representation from Sport Canada, Canadian Paralympic Committee, Canadian Olympic Committee, and the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute Network.

The Para Sport AFC supports the Canadian sport system by:

- Providing a validated para sport-specific credential across all sport science disciplines
- Promoting clarity through the use of common language and standards across the Canadian sport network
- Increasing effectiveness of practitioners working in HP Para sport
- Defining the career pathway which describes the development required to meet expected standards in HP para sport
- Increasing sport science community engagement, knowledge translation, and connection as a benefit of membership
- Providing valuable audit information to allow the system to monitor and enhance the development of sport scientists working in HP para sport in Canada
- Improving the HP service delivery to para athletes in the Canadian sport system

The Para Sport AFC adheres to the following principles:

- Specialization is a voluntary process by which a nongovernmental entity grants a time-limited recognition to an individual after verifying that they have met the predetermined and standardized criteria.
- To become certified, an individual must meet eligibility requirements and pass an assessment.
- The specialization assessment may cover a broad area of knowledge and skills at entry, specialty, or advanced levels.



Practitioners must demonstrate the requisite knowledge, skills and behaviours applied across working with a broad and diverse group of para sport athletes and coaches. The AFC allows practitioners to meet supplemental competencies that enhance their practice in HP environments. It assesses a specific scope of practice applied to para sport regardless of scientific discipline.

ELIGIBILITY

The Para Sport AFC is available to scientific practitioners working for a National Sport Organization (NSO) in Canada, or for the Canadian Olympic and Paralympic Sport Institute (COPSI) Network.

PRE-REQUISITES

To be considered for the Para Sport AFC assessment, candidates must provide evidence of meeting both:

1. High Performance Certification (any level) **AND**
2. 3 years of HP para sport experience

How to calculate years of experience:

- In this context, HP sport refers to Paralympic, and para NextGen athletes on an NSO podium pathway competing at an international level.
- To calculate years of experience:
 - Either full-time or part-time work in HP para sport can be included in the calculation of total years.
 - If you include a year of part-time work in HP para sport, your resume must show both frequent and consistent sport science provision throughout the year.
 - A year of inconsistent or infrequent work in HP sport while servicing other non-HP sport populations should not be included.



PARA SPORT AFC - CORE COMPETENCIES

This AFC is comprised of five core competencies and their element statements. Applicants must **respond and provide examples** to each of the competency elements. The five competencies are as follows:

1. **Knowledge of Paralympic Sports:** This competency assesses the knowledge of the Paralympic sport system and pathways. It assesses understanding towards which athletes are eligible to compete in sport, and why, and how athletes are grouped together for competition.
2. **Training and Competition Environment:** This competency assesses how practitioners identify and handle the special considerations involved with the environment and individual in Paralympic sport.
3. **Physical Considerations:** This competency describes the practitioners understanding of the potential variations within the physiological system and how it may inform their practice and their approach to working with the athlete(s).
4. **Psychological Considerations:** This competency focuses on the practitioners understanding of unique psychological factors involving Paralympic sport and the awareness of how to correctly address each situation.
5. ***Assessment, Adaptation, & Innovation:** This competency describes a practitioner's ability to assess specific key performance indicators, collect information and generate best practice solutions to make decisions and deliver outcomes.

Each competency has up to 4 elements describing the detail that contributes to the competency. **Candidates must provide specific knowledge and/or examples for each element.** Unique examples are encouraged.

Competencies 1-4 are assessed using the competency submission form.

*Competency 5 is assessed via a singular case study presented orally and supported by a PowerPoint slide deck.

All competency statements begin with an action verb tied to a domain (cognitive, affective, psychomotor) and level of learning aligned with the certification level (Practitioner, Senior, Leader) *Adapted from Writing Learning Outcomes – 2010 BCIT Learning and Teaching Centre.*

- **Knowledge Elements: Describe, List, Identify**
- **Example Elements: Provide**

Applicants must demonstrate evidence of achieving all competencies through a combination of the following methods:

1. Written materials
 - a. Competency submission form
 - b. PowerPoint presentation of case study
 - c. Resume
 - d. Reference letter from your NSO or CSI
2. Video-Interview with the Reviewer including oral presentation of the case study provided above

To review the competency element statements, please download the Para Sport AFC Competency Form on the SSC Website.



SUBMISSION CHECKLIST AND TIMELINES

Application Preparation:

1. Download AFC information and submission materials on the SSC Website.
2. Review pre-requisites to ensure you meet both experience and HP Certification.
3. Prepare a copy of your resume and a reference letter.
4. Prepare competency statements and examples in the Competency Submission form.
5. Prepare your case study PowerPoint presentation slides using the template.

AFC Specialization Process:

6. Apply directly on the SSC Website.
7. Once pre-requisites have been screened, a reviewer will be assigned, and you will receive a confirmation email.
8. The Reviewer will contact you directly to set up your interview and presentation.
9. If the interview is completed successfully and you have met all competencies, an email will be sent to you confirming your Para Sport AFC and your membership will be updated as "HPC, AFC (Para Sport)".

Timelines:

- The completion time for the Para Sport AFC is estimated to be between 3 to 10 hours; however, in some cases, it may take longer than this estimation. Download the AFC Competency Submission Form and complete the responses on your own time. You will attach this form to your submission when you apply.
- Download the Case Study Power Point Template. Attach this to your submission.
- The pre-requisite screening will be completed within 5 days of submission.
- The Reviewer will schedule an interview to occur within 6 weeks of your competency form submission.



PREPARING YOUR COMPETENCY SUBMISSION FORM (Competencies 1-4)

Overview:

- Each knowledge or example element must not exceed 500 words.
- Examples should be drawn from the HP para sport environment.
- It is recommended that you review the para sport specific resources identified at the bottom of this document.

Critical information:

- **Refrain from using specific organizational names or individual names.** Instead, refer to type of organization (NSO, MSO, PSO, Organizing Committee, etc) or title/roles to describe the individuals (HPD, IST Lead, Coach, Practitioner, Committee Chair, etc).
- The Glossary of Terms is available for reference in the Appendix.

Where indicated, provide **examples** of how you demonstrate each competency element. Applicants must utilize the **STAR** framework for any example. These can be included in paragraph form or bullet points.

- **Situation** – provide the context for the example, the environment or situation, the individuals (titles or roles) or types of organizations involved
- **Task** – your role, how **you** applied the competency
- **Action** – the action **you** took
- **Result** – the outcome or result of **your** action

Please note:

Applicant information will be stored in the SSC database (housed by Own The Podium).

PREPARING YOUR POWER POINT PRESENTATION (Competency 5)

The presentation will serve as a case study response to the fifth competency – Assessment, Adaptation, & Innovation. Follow the instructions below in your preparation.

Step 1: Identify one athlete (current or retired) that you have worked with in the past or are currently working with and use it throughout the case study

Step 2: Follow the instructions on each slide and build a presentation around each of the competency elements.

- The presentation should be minimum 10-minutes and maximum 20-minutes in duration.
- You will receive a 2-minute warning prior to the 20-minute mark, and the presentation will be stopped at the 20-minute mark.
- Ensure that you have acquired consent from your athlete(s) to use their cases in completing this AFC application.
- **Do not include identifiers** (names, specifically unique data) as best as you can in answering the competency elements.
- Do not include additional slides. The template is built to remain within the 20min timeline.



ASSESSMENT AND OUTCOME

Pre-requisite screening

Upon receipt of the application, the resume and reference letter will be used to verify the pre-requisites and minimum eligibility. If applicants fulfil the minimum requirements, the application will proceed to the next stage.

Reviewer Assignment and Conflict of Interest

- Applicants will receive an email confirming receipt of their submission, pre-screening completion, and assignment of a Reviewer.
- Reviewers are assigned from outside the applicant's employer (CSI, CSC, or NSO) and outside of the applicant's scientific discipline to avoid potential conflict of interest.
- If there is a conflict of interest, either Reviewer or Applicant must bring this to the AFC Committee Chair's attention to request re-assignment.

Interview

The interview must be completed within 6 weeks of your Reviewer assignment.

The interview will begin with applicant delivering the oral presentation of the case study (fifth competency). The remainder of the interview will be conducted by the Reviewer to allow for a complete assessment.

The competency submission form will be assessed by your Reviewer prior to the interview. The PowerPoint slideshow will be reviewed prior to the interview and assessed following the presentation during the interview. Reviewers will focus on statements and examples in the application that did not sufficiently demonstrate the competency. Reviewers will then request either a) additional detail to the provided example **and/or** b) a new example to demonstrate the competency element.

It is recommended the candidate and the Reviewer both have the completed competency submission form open during the interview process.

Outcome

Confirmation:

Based on the evidence presented, the Reviewer will confirm:

- AFC Awarded – all competencies achieved
- AFC Awarded with conditions – additional evidence required to determine an outcome. The applicant will be contacted by SSC with the requirements, process, and deadline
- AFC Declined - the applicant did not meet one or more competencies

The applicant will receive formal notification from SSC via email upon completion of the interview. If AFC is awarded, SSC will automatically register the applicant as a **Para Sport Specialist**. The designation is **AFC (Para Sport)** (Eg. Jane Doe, PhD, HPC, AFC (Para Sport))

Reviewers are HP Certified members at the senior or leader level with Para Sport AFC. They have completed training and meet regularly to review competencies and case studies. Competency achievement is at the discretion of the skilled Reviewer based on the standardized assessment tool.



Maintaining Para Sport AFC

- On a bi-annual basis you will be asked to update your personal information (via a short survey) to ensure our records are accurate.
- Professional development in support of your goals may be required. Additional information will be provided to you in advance of the requirement deadlines.

Appeals

If the applicant believes that the correct AFC assessment process has not been followed, then they are entitled to appeal the decision by writing to SSC within two weeks of being informed that they were declined. The appeal must outline in detail where due process has not been followed. This appeal will be referred to a third HPC assessor who will review all the paperwork against the grounds put forward for the appeal. The third assessor will either decline or uphold the appeal based on the evidence presented and this decision will be final.

Action Plan

The applicant is participating in a review of competencies. The Reviewer may suggest elements where the candidate could improve competencies as discussed in the interview. Any recommendations will be general in nature. It is the responsibility of the candidate to meet with their respective employers to discuss opportunities that may relate to AFC competencies.



APPENDIX – Resources and Glossary

Resources

- 3 Steps of Classification & the 10 Types of Impairments:
<https://www.paralympic.org/classification>
- Paralympic Sports & Classification for Each Sport:
<https://paralympic.ca/paralympic-sports>
- SSC Para Sport Knowledge Hub
<https://www.sportscientistcanada.ca/resources/Resource-Dashboard>
- SSC Para Sport Modules
<https://www.sportscientistcanada.ca/en-CA/Programs/Modules/Parasport-Module>
- Game Plan – Mental Health Resources
<https://www.mygameplan.ca/resources/health>

Glossary

- This list includes terms within the context of AFC competencies.
- This is not an exhaustive list, nor are global definitions provided.
- These descriptions are provided to assist you in preparing your materials.

Terms in alphabetical order:

Activities of Daily Living (ADL): Fundamental, essential, and routine tasks required to independently care for oneself, such as eating, bathing, and mobility.

Athlete Development Pathway: A structured progression guiding para athletes from initial talent identification to elite competition through tailored training, competition, and support systems.

Integrated Support Team (IST): A multi-disciplinary team of sport science, sport medicine and sport performance professionals that support coaches and athletes in their Daily Training Environment/Competition Environment (DTE/CE).

High Performance (HP): A sport system that supports athletes that have stepped onto the Podium Pathway (or equivalent). It includes the resources and support personnel in place to support them that culminates in performance at the Olympic / Paralympic Games and/or single sport Senior World Championships. Practitioners working with Olympic, Paralympic, and Next Gen athletes, coaches and training groups competing at an international level.

Next Generation (Next Gen): Athletes that are identified by the NSO's using their validated Podium Pathway (Podium Results Track, WSP and GMP) who are 5 to 8 years away from achieving a performance required for a podium result at a subsequent Olympic / Paralympic Games.

Physical Effect: Physiological, biomechanical, medical, muscular skeletal, and neurological impacts an impairment can have on the athlete.

References:

- *Canadian High Performance Sport Strategy by Government of Canada (2019)*
- *Canadian Culture of Excellence in High-Performance Sport Position Statement (2021)*