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# **WEIGHING GYMNASTS SAFEGUARDING POLICY**

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Version 1.0



## Version History

Version	Summary of amendments/changes	Published Date
Version 1.0	Document Created	October 2024

## Contact Information

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## Introduction

Everyone involved in gymnastics holds the responsibility to create a positive and safe environment for all participants. The Independent Gymnastics Association (IGA) recognizes the duty of care to protect the physical and mental well-being of gymnasts.

The requirements outlined in this document are based on IGA's Safeguarding Policy, which defines its scope and who it applies to. Should you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to the IGA Welfare team.

The IGA acknowledges the complexities associated with weighing gymnasts. This policy aims to prevent inappropriate practices and address potential concerns, given the psychological risks associated with weighing, such as eating disorders, anxiety, and depression. Improper or excessive weighing of gymnasts could contribute to emotional distress.

Inappropriate weighing practices for gymnasts can constitute poor practice and may verge on abuse. Repeated instances of such behavior could escalate into abuse. The use of belittling or humiliating language concerning body weight and composition is classified as emotional abuse.

For clarity, the term 'coaches' used in this document refers to coaches, helpers, and gymnastics instructors.

This document was developed in consultation with advisory panels, sports science practitioners, and external experts, ensuring gymnasts are central to weighing decisions.

Additionally, the document provides support and guidance for preventing poor practices. More information about the complaints process can be found in the IGA Complaints and Disciplinary Policy. Clubs and coaches should refer to the Weighing Gymnasts Guidance for Good Practice document to ensure the implementation of safe weighing practices.



## Key Responsibilities

Clubs, coaches, and sport science/medicine practitioners must follow the guidelines in this document to ensure safe and appropriate weighing practices are implemented.

## Safeguarding Policy

- **Voluntary Weighing:** It is always the gymnast's choice whether to be weighed. Their decision must be respected and acted upon. Gymnasts, as well as their parents or guardians (in the case of minors), must not feel pressured to consent to weighing.
- **Coaching Protocol:** Coaches must not weigh gymnasts. Gymnasts can choose to self-report their weight in a gymnastics environment. Aside from self-reporting, only qualified sports science or medicine practitioners\* are permitted to conduct weigh-ins in a gymnastics setting. Body composition assessments can only be performed by a qualified sports science or medicine practitioner\* who holds at least a current level 1 qualification from the International Society for the Advancement of Kinanthropometry (ISAK).
- **Written Consent:** Every year, written consent must be obtained from both the gymnast and their parent or guardian (in the case of minors) by the qualified sports science or medicine practitioner, outlining the purpose for the weighing.
- **Verbal Consent:** Verbal consent must be obtained from the gymnast each time they are to be weighed.
- **Data Confidentiality:** Qualified sports science or medicine practitioners\* must not share the gymnast's weight data with anyone other than the gymnast. It is crucial to prioritise tact and discretion when measuring weight. Gymnasts may choose to share their weight data with their parents or coaches, but it is entirely their choice. No one should coerce or encourage gymnasts to share their weight data. All stored data must comply with data protection and GDPR regulations.
- **Right to Withdraw Consent:** Gymnasts and their parents or guardians (in the case of minors) have the right to refuse or withdraw consent at any time without facing any consequences.
- **Weighting Restrictions:** A gymnast must be over the age of 10 to be weighed in a gymnastics setting. Weighing must be conducted with the gymnast's long-term development in mind and should have a clear, scientifically valid rationale. Weighing should only occur for growth/maturation or performance purposes, and weight should always be considered alongside another measurement:
  - **Growth and Maturation:** For growth and maturation assessments (e.g., using weight and height to identify growth spurts via the Khamis-Roche method), weighing should occur no more than monthly and ideally at the same time each month.
  - **Performance Purposes:** For performance metrics (e.g., calculating power-to-weight ratios or relative peak force, programming strength and conditioning exercises, or conducting body composition assessments). Note that body composition assessments must only be conducted by a qualified sports science or medicine practitioner\*, holding at least a current level 1 qualification from ISAK.



- **Definition of Qualified Practitioners:** A qualified sports science or medicine practitioner refers to individuals who possess a minimum of an undergraduate degree in sports science or sports medicine (or equivalent) and are registered with Independent Gymnastics (or an equivalent organisation) through the Sport Support Services.
- **Dual-Role Coaches:** Some coaches may hold relevant degrees, qualifications, or professional accreditations (e.g., physiotherapist, nutritionist) that allow them to support various roles within the sport. However, if an individual with a dual role is coaching within a club, they are prohibited from weighing gymnasts in that club as per policy due to their coaching responsibilities (please refer to the Safeguarding Children: Safe Environment policy for further information on dual roles).

## Implementation of Policy

This Policy shall be deemed effective as of 1st July 2024. No part of this Policy shall have retroactive effect and shall thus apply only to matters occurring on or after this date.

This Policy has been approved and authorised by:

Name: Chris Adams

Date: 23rd June 2024

Due for Review by: 1st June 2025

Signed

Chris Adams | Chief Executive