



BRITISH SWIMMING WORLD CLASS PROGRAMMES - MONITORING OF BODY WEIGHT & COMPOSITION



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British Swimming acknowledges the complexities surrounding body weight and composition in athletes and recognises the duty of care to safeguard the physical and mental health of the athlete. Despite the differing physical requirements of our sports, body weight and composition are important to performance. Therefore, like any other performance measure, we encourage athletes and coaches to appropriately monitor them to help optimise performance.

Best practice monitoring of body weight and composition will differ across the aquatic disciplines, however there are some shared principles which apply to all [of our sports].

The athlete is at the centre of all monitoring

The athlete should be comfortable with all body weight and composition monitoring processes before partaking. Fundamental to this is clearly communicated intentions, with a performance and long-term development focus. Coaches and support staff are responsible for ensuring the athlete is sufficiently aware of monitoring processes, why these are being employed, how the data is utilised and that the athlete is provided with ample opportunity to question and clarify.

Whilst the monitoring of body weight and height can be employed by any suitable member of the performance team, the monitoring of body composition should only be undertaken by suitably qualified individuals.

Body weight and composition data as one of many performance metrics

All data collected is objective and as such any subsequent conversations and actions are based on the data and not subjective assessment. Similarly, like any performance metric, the data is not viewed in isolation. Coaches, support staff and athletes are encouraged to consider the context, connect sources (e.g. body weight and composition or performance data) and look for patterns or changes in like-for-like measures which allow for better interpretation on an individual athlete level.



Communication

When discussing body weight and composition data (with or without the athlete) appropriate language should be used; objective data delivered with feelings-based communication. Furthermore, data should not be shared further than the athlete's performance support team and discussion must always be linked to performance and the athlete's individual goals. There is also a responsibility to ensure that data is interpreted and communicated to the athlete in a timely manner.

Individual context

It is acknowledged that an athlete's body shape, weight and composition will change throughout their lifespan (for example due to growth, development, training adaptations) and thus adopting a fixed view on their optimal state is counter-productive. Furthermore, athletes develop at differing rates which further emphasises the need for individual plans and avoidance of comparisons between athletes.

Frequency of monitoring

The individual sports are responsible for deciding the appropriate approach towards body weight and composition monitoring for their programme; however, the frequency of monitoring should always be clearly linked to performance and individual athlete goals. Both over- and under-frequent measurements can lead to misinterpretation and trigger reactive actions which may be detrimental to performance. Please refer to each disciplines guidance for further details of the specifics of their body weight and composition monitoring processes.

We encourage any coaches, support staff or athletes who have concerns in the area of body weight and composition monitoring to contact their safeguarding officer.