



# EQUESTRIAN CANADA ÉQUESTRE

## **NOMINATION CRITERIA FOR THE SPORT CANADA ATHLETE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM 2026 CARDING CYCLE EQUESTRIAN**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. The purpose of this document is to describe the criteria that applies to the three Olympic disciplines that Equestrian Canada (EC) will use for nominating athletes to Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program (AAP) for the 2026 carding cycle.
- 1.2. The purpose of the AAP is to identify and support Canadian athletes performing at or demonstrating the potential to achieve top 8 results at Olympic Games and FEI World Championships.
- 1.3. The nomination of athletes to the AAP is the responsibility of EC. Sport Canada is responsible for the final approval of nominations to the AAP.
- 1.4. Sport Canada's general policies and procedures governing AAP can be found on the Sport Canada website at: <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html> This includes all information pertaining to the establishment and application of criteria used by EC on the recommendations for the AAP.

## **2. GENERAL INFORMATION**

- 2.1. Support under the AAP is only available to athletes who have executed a current EC Elite Athlete Agreement and who meet the conditions set out in these criteria. Athletes who are approved for inclusion in the AAP will be considered a Carded Athlete.
- 2.2. There are a number of grounds for the withdrawal of funding from a Carded athlete. These include voluntary withdrawal, withdrawal due to lack of participation and withdrawal for violation of agreement. Detailed information concerning grounds for withdrawal of funding is contained in the Sport Canada AAP Policy and Procedures document.
- 2.3. In addition to the regular stipend, other forms of financial assistance may be available through the AAP to both current and retired Carded athletes. These include tuition support (including support for Coach Certification cost) and supplementary support (including Child Dependent Allowance support). Athletes should refer to Section 8 of the Sport Canada AAP Policy and Procedures document for further information.
- 2.4. The 2026 carding cycle for EC is from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2026 to December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2026.
- 2.5. Athletes must sign and return the annual EC Elite Athlete Agreement, AAP application form and competitive program plan to the EC office and complete the CCES online training courses in order for Sport Canada to release any funds.

## **3. NUMBER AND TYPES OF CARDS**

- 3.1. There are three general types of Cards: International Senior Cards; Senior National Cards; and Development Cards. Value of Cards:
  - SR1: Year one of a two year International Senior Card (\$2,175 per month)
  - SR2: Year two of a two year International Senior Card (\$2,175 per month)



- SR: Senior National Card level (\$2,175 per month)
- D: Development Card level (\$1,305 per month)

Athletes that qualify for carding under the Senior International criteria are usually eligible for two years of AAP support, with the card for the first year referred to as an SR1 Card and the card for the second year referred to as an SR2 Card. In the Equestrian program, the second year is subject to the athlete meeting EC's National Team Program criteria in order to be re-nominated in year 2 (SR2).

- 3.2** The current AAP allocation for Eventing is \$104,400 however Sport Canada regularly revises its carding allocation, so this amount is subject to change.

### **3.3 Reallocation of Funding**

#### Within Discipline

- 3.3.1** Notwithstanding the number of cards indicated in section 3.2, should a discipline have funding available that equals the equivalent of four or more months in carding funds, those funds will be reallocated within the same discipline to the next ranked eligible athlete(s) nominated for carding. The first priority is to issue the funds to an eligible Senior (SR) Card (SR) athlete(s). If, however, there are not enough funds available for the Senior level or there are no eligible athlete(s) at the Senior level, the funds will instead be issued to the next ranked eligible Development level athlete(s). This funding will be reallocated in the form of a partial card.

#### Other Disciplines

- 3.3.2** Should a discipline be unable to allocate the full financial value of its AAP Carding, those funds will be combined with funds from other disciplines that are also unable to allocate the full financial value of their AAP Carding for reallocation as outlined in this section.
- 3.3.3** Reallocated funds for the 2026 calendar year will be awarded to the discipline that had the best team performance score at the 2024 Olympic Games (OGs)/Paralympic Games (PGs). The team performance score is calculated by taking the discipline's final team placing, divided by the number of team entries at the OGs/PGs. The scores are compared across a common denominator. The discipline with the lowest score after applying this formula earns the reallocated funds.
- 3.3.4** A discipline without a team does not earn a score.
- 3.3.5** In the event of a tie in team performance scores, the discipline with the highest average individual placing will earn the reallocated funds.
- 3.3.6** In the event that no discipline earns a team performance score, the discipline with the highest average individual placing will earn the reallocated funds.
- 3.3.7** Should the discipline to which the reallocated funds are awarded be without an athlete qualified as per their individual criteria to receive the reallocated funds, the discipline with the 2nd best team performance score at the 2024 OG will be substituted followed by the discipline with the 3rd best team performance score and followed by the discipline with the 4th best team performance score.



#### **4 PRIORITY OF NOMINATIONS**

The annual funding allocations for Eventing athletes are prioritized for the 2026 carding cycle as per the criteria below until funding is exhausted. There needs to be a minimum of four months of funding for allocation of a partial card.

1. Athletes who meet the Senior international (SR1/\*SR2) card criteria
2. If fewer than three (3) athletes meet the SR1/SR2 criteria, the top ranked athletes who meet the Senior national (SR) card criteria until up to a maximum of three (3) athletes are nominated at SR1/SR2/SR
3. Up to a maximum of the top two (2) ranked athletes who meet the Development (D) card criteria
4. The next ranked athlete who meets Senior National (SR) card criteria
5. The next ranked athlete who meets Development card criteria
6. Athletes who were carded in the prior funding year, but fail to meet renewal criteria for health-related reasons

#### **5 MAXIMUM NUMBER OF YEARS OF AAP SUPPORT**

##### **5.1 Senior National Cards**

5.1.1 An athlete at the Senior National (SR) Card level is expected to make progress in their results in order to maintain Senior Card status.

5.1.2 An athlete will only receive a Senior National (SR) Card for a maximum of 10 cumulative years (full carding period (12 months) unless they achieve the criteria described in Section 5.1.4.

5.1.3 Athletes who meet the Senior International (SR1/SR2) card criteria within 10 years of receiving SR cards, may be eligible for additional years beyond the maximum of 10 years outlined in Section 5.1.2. Athletes are not guaranteed more than 10 years at the SR level and will only be nominated if EC is satisfied that the athlete is still demonstrating the ability to meet SR1/SR2 card standards. This must be demonstrated through objective measures and fulfillment of benchmark criteria established by EC in consultation with Sport Canada, in addition to the National Team Program criteria.

5.1.4 Athletes who meet the Senior International (SR1/SR2) card criteria and maintain the Senior International Eligibility requirements outlined in Section 11, will maintain their Senior International (SR1/SR2) card regardless of the number of years carded

##### **5.2 Development Cards**

5.2.1 An athlete is eligible to be carded for a maximum of five (5) cumulative years [full carding period (12 months)] at the Development Card (D) level. To be nominated beyond five years, the athlete must demonstrate a clear progression to the Senior (SR) Card level that is validated through the achievement of specific performance benchmarks established and evaluated by EC.

Development Cards (D) cannot be allocated to an athlete previously carded at the Senior Card (C1, SR, SR1, SR2) level for more than two (2) years.

#### **6 HEALTH RELATED CIRCUMSTANCES AND AAP**

##### **6.1 Curtailment of Training (Short-Term and Long Term)**



An AAP funded athlete who needs to modify or discontinue training and competition due to injury, illness or pregnancy during the carding year, may continue to receive funding based on the following:

#### *6.1.1 Short-term Curtailment of Training and Competition for Health-Related Reasons*

Carded athletes so affected will continue to receive AAP financial support, provided that the health-related circumstances that limit a carded athlete's training and competition are four months or fewer and the information and recovery plan have been submitted to EC.

#### *6.1.2 Long-term Curtailment of Training and Competition for Health-Related Reasons*

Carded athletes who are unable to maintain full training and competition commitments for longer than four months because of injury, illness or pregnancy will continue to receive 100 percent of the AAP financial support to which they would otherwise be entitled, provided the following conditions are met:

- The carded athlete undertakes in writing, to train or rehabilitate, or both, under the supervision of EC, or its designate, for the period of time for which the athlete is unable to fulfil the training and competition commitments included in the Elite Athlete Agreement, and at a level that minimizes risk to the athlete's personal health and ensures optimal return to full training and competition at the earliest possible date;
- The carded athlete signifies in writing, their intention to return to full high-performance training and competition at the earliest date possible following the illness, injury, pregnancy or other health-related circumstance;
- The affected athlete provides a positive prognosis from the EC team physician or equivalent for their return to training and competition at the carded-athlete level in their sport normally within 8 to 12 months.

6.2 A carded athlete who, at the end of the carding cycle has not achieved the standard required for the renewal of carding status because of strictly health-related reasons, may be considered for re-nomination for the upcoming year provided the following conditions are met:

- There are sufficient dollars available when following the priority of nominations as per section 4
- The carded athlete has fulfilled all reasonable training and rehabilitation requirements aimed at a speedy return to full high-performance training and competition during the period of their injury, illness, pregnancy or other health-related circumstance, or is continuing a rehabilitation program approved by EC;
- In the view of EC, the carded athlete's failure to attain the applicable carding standards is strictly related to the injury, illness, pregnancy or other health-related circumstance;
- EC, based on its technical judgement and that of a EC team physician or equivalent, indicates in writing the expectation that the carded athlete will achieve at least the minimum standards required for carding during the upcoming carding period;
- The carded athlete has demonstrated and continues to demonstrate their long-term commitment to high-performance training and competition goals, as well as their intention to pursue full high-performance training and competition throughout the carding period for which they wish to be renewed despite not having met the carding criteria.
- Athletes will be ranked under this priority in the order in which they were nominated for carding in the previous carding cycle, and may be funded until all funds are exhausted.

See <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html> Section 9.



## **7. ATHLETE/HORSE SEPARATION**

- 7.1 A card is revocable during the carding cycle when an international level horse becomes unavailable for whatever reason for the remainder of the carding cycle. The athlete will keep the card if they have another international level horse approved by the EC HPAG.
- 7.1.1 An athlete who meets the criteria but does not have an international level horse at the time of nomination for the next carding cycle may be eligible to receive a card based on their previous performances and benchmarks. However, if awarded a card, they must present a competitive partnership within 90 days following the beginning of the new carding cycle with an international level horse based on performance benchmarks approved by EC. If a new partnership is not achieved within 90 days and/or the partnership does not meet the performance benchmarks specified at the beginning of the carding cycle, the card may be revoked and redistributed.
- 7.2 It is the responsibility of EC to take the appropriate action with the athlete and inform Sport Canada in a timely manner if a competitive partnership cannot be achieved. In these cases Sport Canada AAP Policies and Procedures would apply regarding the nomination of the athlete for “Replacement” carding. See <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance/policies-procedures.html>, Section. 6.3.

## **8. CARDING MAINTENANCE ELIGIBILITY**

### **8.1 The following is the minimum eligibility requirements for AAP support:**

- 8.1.1 At the beginning of the carding cycle, an Athlete must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada and be eligible to represent Canada at major international competitions and also meet the athlete eligibility requirements outlined in the AAP Policies and Procedures (Section 2.3)
- 8.1.2 A nominated athlete must form a combination of athlete and international level horse during the carding cycle and be actively competing at the international level and participating in the national team program.
- 8.1.3 If the carding status of an athlete is withdrawn during the carding cycle, the remaining card may be offered to the next eligible athlete, as per Section 3.3 Reallocation of Funding

### **8.2 In order to maintain eligibility for AAP support a carded athlete must:**

- 8.2.1 Attend and participate in all scheduled activities of the national team program, unless excused by EC (e.g. once invited, an athlete must attend a camp, event or training session and participate in all performance analysis monitoring programs).
- 8.2.2 Senior (SR1/SR2/SR) Card athletes - must have an international level horse, have indicated a commitment to work within the national team program under the supervision of the Discipline Manager and Discipline High Performance Advisory Group, be actively competing at the international (FEI) competitions during the carding cycle, and be available to participate in Major Games/ Championships, if selected.



8.2.3 Development (D) Card athletes – must have an international level horse, be involved in a year-round training program that is supervised and monitored by the Discipline High Performance Advisory Group and must be actively competing at the international competitions during the carding cycle.

8.2.4 Notwithstanding Sport Canada policy for special situations described in Section 6, Sport Canada AAP Policies and Procedures if a carded athlete is unable to enter or maintain the terms of the EC Athlete Agreement, then EC can recommend to Sport Canada to initiate the process to de-card the athlete for the remainder of the carding cycle.

## **9. APPEALS**

**9.1** Appeals of EC's AAP nomination/re-nomination decision or of EC's recommendation to withdraw carding may be pursued only through the EC's Discipline, Complaints & Appeals process, which includes the ability for an application to the Sport Dispute Resolution Centre of Canada (SDRCC). Appeals of AAP Decision made under Sport Canada's Athlete Assistance Program Policies and Procedures Section 6 (Application for and Approval of Cards) or Section 11 (Withdrawal of Carding Status) may be pursued through Section 13 of the AAP Policies and Procedures <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/athlete-assistance.html>.





# APPENDIX 1

## EQUESTRIAN - EVENTING SPECIFIC CARDING CRITERIA

### 10. Carding Priority #1 INTERNATIONAL SENIOR CARDS (SR1/SR2)

10.1 Athletes achieving the following results in events on the Olympic program will be eligible for nomination under Senior International criteria.

On Olympic Game years (SR1/SR2)	
In the team event	Top 8 and top ½ of the field
In the individual event	Top 8 and top ½ of the field. Counting a maximum of 3 entries/nation.

On World Championship years (SR1/SR2)	
In the team event	Top 8 and top ½ of the field
In the individual event	Top 8 and top ½ of the field. Counting a maximum of 3 entries/nation.

*Note: to be eligible for a SR1/SR2 card, you must be in the top 8, assuming a field of at least 16 horse and rider combinations.*

10.2 An Athlete who meets the International Senior Card criteria based on Olympic Games (OG) or World Championships (WC)/World Equestrian Games (WEG) are eligible for two years of AAP support, with the card for the first year referred to as a SR1 and the card for the second year referred to as a SR2. In all EC programs, the second year is subject to the athlete meeting the Senior National Card Criteria to maintain their carded status in year 2 (SR2).

10.3 If there are fewer cards than athletes meeting the International Senior (SR1) Card criteria, the ranking of athletes will be determined by placing at the Olympic Games/World Championships (depending on the year).

### 11. Carding Priority # 2 SENIOR NATIONAL CARD (SR)

11.1 Senior National criteria as set by Equestrian Canada. Senior (SR) Cards are awarded for one carding cycle (one year).

11.2 Senior National Cards support athletes with the potential to reach International Senior Card status.

11.3 Senior National cards are awarded to eligible NTP – 2026 Eventing High Performance A Squad athletes on the basis of international FEI results achieved during the qualifying period (January 1- November 30, 2025).

11.4 To be eligible for nomination at the SR level, the NTP High Performance A Squad athlete /horse combination must, within the qualification period, have completed a CCI 5\*-L/CCIO5\* - L or CCI 4\*- L/CCIO4\* - L Eventing competition and achieved a FEI Minimum Eligibility Requirement as



defined by current FEI regulations.

- 11.5 Ranking:** If there are fewer cards than athletes meeting the Senior (SR) Card criteria, the athletes (with horse as a combination) will be ranked using the EquiRatings algorithm for High Performance Rating (HPR). This rating takes into account the competition quality, difficulty and variance in scoring conditions at each event on a given day/period. It will be averaged across each level.

Average HPR will be used to rank riders based on the star level in the following order: 1. CCI5\*-L average HPR; 2. CCI4\*-L average HPR, all during the qualification period at eligible FEI competitions.

Additionally, average HPR scores must be above a benchmark of 60 at the level to be considered eligible.

- 11.7** Should two athletes (and their horse) achieve the same average HPR at the same level, the tie shall be broken using a comparison of the highest average HPR for the athletes at 1<sup>st</sup> CCI5\*-L, followed by 2<sup>nd</sup> CCI4\*-L, and then finally by CCI4\*-S categories during the qualification period at eligible FEI competition.
- 11.8** Following the maximum number of years, Athletes are expected to make progress in their results in order to maintain Senior (SR) Card status, as outlined in Section 5.

## **12 Carding Priority #3 DEVELOPMENT CARD (D)**

- 12.1** Development Card criteria as set by Equestrian Canada. Development (D) Cards are awarded for one carding cycle (one year).
- 12.2** Development (D) Cards are intended to support the developmental needs of athletes who demonstrate the potential to achieve the Senior Card International Criteria but do not yet meet the Senior National Card Criteria.
- 12.3** Development (D) cards are awarded to eligible NTP – 2023 Eventing High Performance A Squad **OR** B Squad athletes on the basis of international FEI results achieved during the qualifying period (January 1 – November 30, 2025).
- 12.4** To be eligible for nomination at the D Card level, the athlete/ horse combination, within the qualification period must have completed a minimum of one CCI 3\*-L/CCIO3\*-L or CCI 4\*-L/CCIO4\*-L or CCI 5\*-L/CCIO5\*-L Eventing competition and achieved a FEI Minimum Eligibility Requirement as defined by current FEI regulations.
- 12.5 Ranking** If there are fewer cards than athletes meeting the Development (D) card criteria, the athletes (with horse as a combination) will be ranked using the EquiRatings algorithm for High Performance Rating (HPR). This rating takes into account the competition quality, difficulty and variance in scoring conditions at each individual event on a given day/period and will be averaged across each level.



**Average** High Performance Rating (HPR) will rank riders based on the star level in the following order: 1. CCI5\*-L **average** HPR; 2. CCI4\*-L **average** HPR; 3. CCI4\*-S **average** HPR; 4. CCI3\*-L average **HPR** all during the qualification period at eligible FEI competitions.

Additionally, average HPR scores must be above **a benchmark of 60** at the level to be considered eligible.

**12.6** Should two athletes (and their respective horses) achieve the same average HPR at the same level, the tie shall be broken using comparison of the highest average HPR for the athletes at 1<sup>st</sup> CCI5\*-L, followed by 2<sup>nd</sup> CCI4\*-L, followed by 3<sup>rd</sup> CCI4\*-S, and then finally by the lowest CCI3\*-L score during the qualification period at eligible FEI competition.

**12.7** Athletes are eligible to be carded at the Development level for a maximum of five years. During this time athletes are expected to make progress in their performance results in order to progress to Senior Card.



## APPENDIX 2

# ACRONYMS / DEFINITIONS

- FEI - Fédération Equestre Internationale – the IF for equestrian sport Web site: [www.insidefei.org](http://www.insidefei.org)
- CCI - L Concours Complet International Long - the FEI sanctioned international long format Eventing competition (formerly known as CCI)
- CCI - S Concours Complet International Short -- the FEI sanctioned international short format Eventing competition – (formerly known as a CIC)
- CCIO - L denotes a Long format team competition
- CCIO - S denotes a Short format team competition
- Star levels – Effective January 1, 2019 all IF sanctioned Eventing competitions are defined by five star levels – from 1\* (international introduction level) to 5\* (FEI Classics) - Both 5\* and 4\* competitions are qualification opportunities for Olympics and Worlds
- Factors which contribute to the designation of a star level include but not limited to: maximum height and spread of the obstacles, distance of the cross country course, time allowed to complete the cross country course without penalty, types and placement of obstacles, technical questions in cross country and jumping tests (combinations of obstacles vs single obstacles), and technical movements required in the dressage test
- Star levels are subject to modification by the international federation
- High Performance Rating (HPR) The High Performance Rating (HPR) measures the strength of a single performance. For every result, the HPR assesses factors such as quality of opponents beaten, winning margin, course difficulty and scoring conditions. Because these factors vary from one competition to another, not all wins are equal and not all scores exactly reflect the true level of performance. By acknowledging and capturing these variables, the HR can objectively compare performances and placing across different classes.
- Eligible results (SR) Senior card eligible results are achieved by the athlete (with horse as a combination) in the qualifying period at the CCI5\* and CCI4\* FEI competitions.
- Eligible results (D) Development Card - Eligible results are results achieved by the athlete (with horse as a combination) in the qualification period at the CCI 3\* and CCI 4\* and CCI 5\* FEI competitions.



Card	<p>Noun – denoting the allocation of an athlete in to the Athlete Assistance Program, language use includes: Card – the AAP allocation to an athlete</p> <p>Carded – an athlete who has been named to the AAP may be referred to as Carded</p> <p>Carding – an active word linked to the process of AAP, i.e. Carding – the process by which an athlete is allocated AAP funding</p>
Carding Cycle	<p>Period of time that athlete is eligible to receive funding support. The Equestrian carding cycle is January 1st to December 31st.</p>
Qualifying period	<p>Period of time that an athlete achieves results at FEI competitions that would be eligible for inclusion in the calculation of the HPR. Qualifying period for 2026 carding cycle is January 1, 2025 to November 30, 2025.</p>



**Canada**