Player CARE Charter

Draft criteria for consultation

> **Status:** Draft for comment. Consultation closes 15 November 2026. Final criteria published 1 December 2026.
>
> **Awarding body:** Play Aid CIC
>
> **Scope:** University esports societies, esports degree programmes and professional esports teams. Northern Hemisphere cycle: UK, Ireland, USA and Canada. A Southern Hemisphere cycle for Australia and New Zealand, with its own dates, will follow later in 2027.

What this Charter is, and is not

The Player CARE Charter recognises that an organisation **has arrangements in place** to support the wellbeing of its players and members.

It does not certify that players are safe, that welfare outcomes are assured, or that any individual is competent to manage a crisis. It certifies process, not outcome.

Holding the Charter does not transfer responsibility for player welfare to Play Aid CIC, and does not replace the duties of the host institution or employer.

Award levels

Level	Intent	Typical effort
Bronze	The basics exist and are documented	Achievable in one term by a society with no budget
Silver	Arrangements are embedded and survive committee turnover	Requires some institutional engagement
Gold	Welfare is integrated into how the organisation operates, with evidence of review	Requires institutional backing and a track record

Awards are **annual**, running from **1 May to 30 April**. Organisations holding a current award may renew at a reduced fee. If an award lapses for a cycle, a new application is required at the full fee.

Applicants who meet a lower level than the one applied for receive that award immediately, with written feedback identifying the specific gaps and **one resubmission for the higher level between 1 and 21 March**. No applicant is publicly recorded as unsuccessful. Only awards are published.

Annual timeline

Stage	Dates
Applications open	1 December
Applications close	31 January
Assessment	February
Feedback issued	by 28 February
Resubmission window	1–21 March
Awards announced	1 May
Award year	1 May – 30 April

Domain 1 — Accountability

Someone is responsible, and it is clear who.

Bronze

- A named welfare lead is identified within the committee, with contact details published to members.
- The role is described in writing, including what it does and what it does not cover.

Silver

- The welfare lead role is written into the society constitution or programme terms of reference.
- A named contact in the host institution (student services, sport, or equivalent) is identified and has been notified of the role.

Gold

- Welfare is a standing item at committee meetings, with minuted decisions.
- The institutional contact has confirmed the relationship in writing.

Domain 2 — Capability

People in player-facing roles can recognise distress and respond appropriately.

This criterion is met by current certification from any of the following routes:

- Play Aid Player CARE Coach
- Mental health literacy training from an accredited provider or host institution

- Mental Health First Aid (MHFA England or national equivalent)
- An institutional programme meeting the conditions at Annex A
- Another route approved by Play Aid on application

Play Aid training is one of several acceptable routes. Assessors do not assess institutions they have trained.

Bronze

- The welfare lead holds a current certification.
- At least 50% of the executive committee hold a current certification.

Silver

- 100% of the executive committee and all team captains hold current certification.
- Coaching or support staff, where they exist, hold current certification.

Gold

- The organisation has at least one qualified Player CARE Lead (or equivalent) able to provide support to colleagues.
- Certification is included in the induction of every incoming committee member.

Domain 3 — Response pathways

A member in difficulty knows where to go, and the person they tell knows what to do.

Bronze

- A written signposting document lists institutional and external support services, including out-of-hours routes.
- The document is accessible to members and is reviewed each academic year.

Silver

- A written escalation procedure sets out what a committee member should do when a member discloses distress, including what to do outside working hours and in online spaces.
- The procedure states clearly the limits of the committee's role.

Gold

- The escalation procedure has been reviewed and endorsed by the host institution's student support function.
- Committee members can describe the procedure when asked during assessment.

Domain 4 — Online environment

The spaces the organisation runs are governed, not unmanaged.

Bronze

- A code of conduct covers the organisation’s online spaces (Discord, team channels, competitive play) as well as physical ones.
- A route to report concerns is published and does not require reporting to the person complained about.

Silver

- Moderation responsibilities are assigned to named individuals.
- Reports are logged, with a record of action taken.

Gold

- Reporting data is reviewed annually by the committee and informs changes to practice.

Domain 5 — Continuity

Arrangements survive the annual turnover of the committee.

This domain exists because committee membership changes almost completely each year. It is the most common point of failure and is weighted accordingly.

Because committee elections usually take place after the application window closes, continuity is evidenced as a plan at application and checked at renewal.

Bronze

- A written handover pack covering welfare arrangements exists and will be passed to the incoming committee.

Silver

- A written plan sets out how and when the incoming welfare lead will be elected, trained and briefed, including a handover meeting with the outgoing lead.
- Training for the incoming committee is scheduled before the outgoing committee leaves, not after.
- *At renewal:* evidence that the previous year’s handover plan was carried out.

Gold

- A member of staff or a returning student provides continuity across at least two committee cycles.
- *At renewal:* evidence that arrangements have been maintained across at least one full handover.

Domain 6 — Review

The organisation checks whether any of this is working.

Bronze

- An annual self-review against these criteria is completed and retained.

Silver

- Members are asked at least annually about welfare and culture, and results are seen by the committee.
- At least one change made in the last year is attributable to what members said.

Gold

- Review findings are shared with the host institution.
- The organisation can evidence a change in practice resulting from review, and its effect.

Evidence and assessment

Evidence burden is deliberately light. Applicants submit existing documents, not new ones written for the Charter. Where a criterion asks for something written, a single page is sufficient.

Assessment is by Play Aid's academic team: chartered psychologists based in the UK, Ireland and Australia. Every assessor is named, and their background is published.

Assessment is proportionate to the level applied for:

Level	Process
Bronze	Self-declaration against each criterion with evidence attached. The assessor verifies that what is described is present.
Silver	Full assessment against each criterion, with a second opinion on any borderline decision.
Gold	Full assessment, plus written confirmation from the applicant's named institutional contact.

Decisions are made against the published criteria. Where a criterion is partially met, the assessor records which specific element is missing.

Conflicts of interest. Nobody assesses an organisation they have advised, worked for, or have a personal connection to. Esports is a small sector and Play Aid has delivered training to many organisations within it; where an assessor has trained an applicant, a different assessor takes the application. Where that is not possible, it is stated on the decision.

Play Aid's own training confers no advantage in assessment, and is one of several acceptable routes under Domain 2.

If an applicant disagrees with a decision, they may say so within 14 days. Someone not involved in the original decision reviews it, and Play Aid responds within 21 days.

Governance of the Charter

Play Aid CIC owns and administers the Charter, and publishes these criteria in full before each application window opens. The criteria do not change mid-cycle.

The criteria were developed with an **advisory group** of academics, university sport and student services staff, esports operators, player representatives and welfare specialists from outside esports. The advisory group reviews the criteria once a year and its members are published.

As the scheme grows, assessment will open to trained peer assessors drawn from award-holding organisations, and the advisory group will become a standing standards committee.

Annex A — Conditions for an institutional training route

An internal or third-party programme meets Domain 2 where it:

1. Covers recognition of distress, initial response, boundaries of the helper role, and referral.
2. Addresses online and remote contexts, not only face-to-face.
3. Is delivered by someone with relevant qualification or experience.
4. Issues a dated record of completion.
5. Is renewed at least every three years.

Questions for consultees

1. Is Bronze achievable by your society this term? If not, which criterion is the barrier?
2. Is any criterion asking for something that does not exist in university esports?
3. Is the Continuity domain weighted correctly against your experience of handover?
4. Who in your institution would need to be involved for you to reach Silver?
5. What is missing?