

Name of Protocol	Guidelines for Supplement Use
Author of Protocol	Carnegie School of Sport
Last Reviewed	09-2025
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Version number	1.4

Guidelines for supplement use within teaching and research activities in the Carnegie School of Sport

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Note: *this guide should be used as a reference point for both staff and students and should be read in conjunction with the following related documents:*

[Supplement Procedure for students](#)

[Supplement Procedure flowchart](#)

[Sport Science Teaching and Research Laboratories Standard Operating Procedures](#)



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Working definitions of supplements for the purpose of the guidelines:

For the purpose of these guidelines, the term ‘supplement’ is used largely in reference to the international sport science and performance context and literature where the term ‘*dietary supplement*’ is used - including in guidance from the International Olympic Committee (IOC). However, within the UK legal and regulatory framework, such products are formally defined and regulated as ‘*food supplements*.’ This distinction is important for compliance with national law and university ethics requirements.

The International Olympic Committee¹ definition of a *dietary* supplement is:

‘A food, food component, nutrient, or non-food compound that is purposefully ingested in addition to the habitually consumed diet with the aim of achieving a specific health and/or performance benefit.’

Dietary supplements come in a variety of forms, including fortified and nutrient enriched foods, formulated foods and sports foods, isolated or concentrated forms of nutrients, food components and herbal products, and multi-ingredient products. They may be ingested in various forms including tablets, capsules, gummies, powders, drinks, gels and bars.

The term *dietary supplement* originates from the US but is not a legally recognised term in the UK or EU.

The Food Standards Agency² definition of a *food* supplement is:

‘Any food the purpose of which is to supplement the normal diet and which is a concentrated source of a vitamin or mineral or other substance with a nutritional or physiological effect, alone or in combination and is sold in dose form.’

A wide range of nutrients and other ingredients might be present in food supplements including vitamins, minerals and amino acids. They are intended to correct deficiencies, maintain intake of nutrients, or to support specific functions. They are not medicinal products and therefore their use is not intended to treat or prevent diseases.

Importantly, a *food supplement* is a legally defined term under the Food Supplements Regulations 2003. Therefore, in the UK, food supplements are required to be regulated as foods and are subject to the provisions of general food law and are regulated by the Food Standards Agency. They must comply with rules on composition, labelling, safety and health claims.

¹ <https://bjsm.bmj.com/content/52/7/439>

² <https://www.food.gov.uk/business-guidance/food-supplements>

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1) Purchasing of supplements

1a) Information

- Research has shown that some supplement products may be contaminated / adulterated with substances prohibited by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA). Therefore, competitive athletes need to be vigilant regarding their use of these products, as they can be harmful to health and pose a risk of inadvertently violating the anti-doping rules.
- UK Anti-Doping (UKAD) provide clear guidance on using supplements, given that there are no guarantees that any supplement is free from prohibited substances. Whilst they cannot endorse or approve supplement products, they advise that only batch-tested supplement products be used to minimise the risk of inadvertent doping. Athletes / support personnel / researchers / other relevant practitioners should also make sure they check the actual batch number on the product aligns to that on the batch testing evidence prior to use. UKAD refers to the Informed Sport¹ website (<https://sport.wetestyourtrust.com/>) to check the products that have been batch-tested so that individuals can make informed decisions on which products present less risk if used (in terms of potential health harms / committing an inadvertent anti-doping rule violation). Whilst a growing number of supplements are available for purchase in a batch-tested form, other supplements are not. Currently, no supplement testing programme can test for all substances which would be considered prohibited in sport.
- Several assurance certification systems for supplements in sport have been established. These certification systems all have in common:
 - systemic and batch-specific testing of products on behalf of the industry
 - providing manufacturers certificates of the tests performed
 - having a publicly accessible database of certified product batches
- At the time of the publication of these guidelines, the below are established testing and certification programmes - listed in alphabetical order:
 - Banned Substances Control Group (BSCG) Certification and Testing
 - Cologne List®
 - Human and Supplement Testing Australia (HASTA™)
 - Informed Sport (also includes Informed Choice, Informed Ingredient, Informed Manufacturer, Informed Protein)
 - NSF Certified for Sport®
 - NZVT - Dutch Safeguards System for Dietary Supplements in Elite Sport

¹ *Informed Sport certification is voluntary for supplement companies who wish to certify some, or all, of their products onto the programme. Once certified, products can carry the Informed Sport logo or on-*



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pack descriptor. Athletes who see the Informed Sport mark on a product can be assured it has undergone a rigorous screening programme for banned substances in sport and is safer for use.

- In the Carnegie School of Sport, the expectation is that both staff and students only use batch-tested products certified by **Informed Sport** in both teaching and research, as this is aligned with UKAD policy.

Note: *You should always check Informed Sport if a product is batch-tested before you proceed with a purchase. It is also important to check the batch number of the purchased product matches the batch tested IDs on the webpage.*

- Batch-tested, certified products we have purchased in the past include whey protein, creatine, BCAA, beta alanine, beetroot shots, caffeine gum, multi-vitamins, isotonic gel. This is not an exhaustive list and is accurate at the time of writing this guidance document.

Note: *Since botanicals and herbs (i.e., CBD oil, maca root etc.) are either associated with increased risk of contamination/adulteration with banned substances or legal status is debatable, the Carnegie School of Sport have taken the decision to not permit their use for any undergraduate or MSc projects. Use of colostrum is also not permitted – whilst colostrum is not on the WADA List of Prohibited Substances, WADA recommends athletes do not to take colostrum. For any questions/queries please liaise with the Local Research Ethics Coordinators.*

1b) Recommendations to minimise the risks of supplement use

- Purchase batch-tested certified products (i.e., by Informed Sport) where available and report batch number and batch expiration date. Please also check storage requirements as well as the best-before and expiry dates of the products to ensure products are stored appropriately and used as per manufacturer recommendations.
- If a batch-tested product is not available, a strong and justifiable rationale and risk minimisation strategy needs to be provided to use a product that has not been through a rigorous certification programme. Cost of supplements should not be a key driver for informing the decision for which product to use. For any questions/queries please liaise with the Local Research Ethics Coordinators and seek guidance from our University Clean Sport Co-leads and/or UKAD National Trainer, Dr Debbie Smith.
- To ensure we are providing accurate information to participants involved in research and/or teaching activities involving ingestion of supplements, there should be



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detailed information within the participant information sheet about the supplement(s) classification, the supplementation protocol, and ingredients. In addition, relevant statements should be clearly evident in:

1) the participant information sheet:

a) If the supplements in the study are batch-tested certified products:

“Consuming the supplements provided during this experiment does not pose any greater risk than purchasing and consuming these supplements in everyday life. Furthermore, the supplements provided during this experiment have been batch-tested to screen for prohibited substances (i.e., those substances prohibited for use by competitive athletes by the World Anti-Doping Agency). This significantly reduces the risk of any product contamination/adulteration. However, given the detection thresholds of doping control tests, we cannot provide a 100% guarantee that the supplement is completely absent of banned substances. Please consider this information if you are an athlete subject to anti-doping rules”.

b) If the supplements are non-batch tested products:

“Consuming the supplements provided during this experiment does not pose any greater risk than purchasing and consuming these supplements in everyday life. However, given these supplements have not been batch-tested, there is a greater risk that they may contain prohibited substances (i.e., those substances prohibited for use by competitive athletes by the World Anti-Doping Agency). Competitive athletes subject to anti-doping rules should not proceed with this experiment.”

2) the consent form:

- *“I understand that the supplement(s) involved in this experiment are: *Batch tested/**Non-batch tested [please delete as appropriate].”*
- *“I understand the information provided with regards to the supplement(s) in the participant information sheet.”*
- *“I can confirm that I am not allergic to any of the ingredients listed on the label, and I have informed the researcher of any known allergies/intolerances”.*



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- Applicants should also acknowledge whether the supplements are batch-tested or non-batch tested within the ethics application, and highlight the safeguards put in place within the participant information sheet and consent form.
- In terms of supplement purchasing behaviour, students and staff are asked to refrain from requesting that Learning Support Officers (LSOs) purchase supplements from the internet especially from unknown companies based abroad. Such behaviour carries increased risk. The purchase of supplements should only be done by the LSO team and not by the applicants.

2) Preparation of supplements

2a) Information

- The risks associated with incorrectly preparing supplements has been highlighted by the accidental overdosing of caffeine in a sports science department at a UK University. Therefore, for each project involving the use of supplements by students, the approved supplement calculation sheet needs to be signed by their supervisor before data collection commences. The supplement calculation sheet should be attached to an ethics application of undergraduate and taught postgraduate students.

2b) Recommendations for the preparation of supplements prior to consumption

- All supplement dosage calculations are to be checked by the module or seminar leader for teaching activities, or by the primary supervisor for research activities and dissertations.
- Applicants (e.g., students primarily and/or staff) must be supervised by an appropriately trained Learning Support Officer when preparing supplements, in the current designated areas (CSSG11 and CSS125).
 - Applicants should also comply with the approved Nutrition Laboratories and Changing Facilities Standard Operating Procedures: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1V2LfyBzke6mi1JiKsQDaxy09k5Mblg9/edit>
 - The current risk assessment for supplement preparation must be included in ethics applications and followed for all activities involving supplement use:



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https://docs.google.com/document/d/1t52leJG5fqAtV6i006VrBj_ShebroSRm/edit

The safeguards highlighted in the above recommendations should be referred to within any relevant ethics application.

3) Administration of supplements

3a) Information

- In addition to correct preparation of supplement dosage highlighted above, special consideration should also be given on the administration protocol, which should also be outlined within the ethics application and supplement calculation sheet. For example, if for an activity a participant is expected to ingest daily 500 mg/kg of body weight of sodium bicarbonate for a period of five days (serial loading), it would be imperative to clarify within the supplement calculation sheet whether the daily dosage (e.g., 40 g for an 80 kg individual) will be split into four smaller doses (e.g., 20x4) in order to avoid gastrointestinal side effects as a result of sodium bicarbonate ingestion, and whether this will be mixed with water (either by the researcher or by the participants themselves). Similarly, it is important to note the details of any placebo that may also be purchased, prepared and administered.

3b) Recommendations

- As aforementioned, the participant information sheet must state the ingredients contained within the supplements that are to be used during the experiment. It must be stated that participation is not allowed for anybody who has any known allergies to the ingredients or who has experienced any adverse reactions to the ingredients. Participants should confirm that they are not allergic to any ingredients in the consent form. Moreover, where relevant, competitive athletes subject to anti-doping rules should be advised not proceed with proposed research that includes non-batch tested products.
- Participants must not be provided with more than one dose of caffeine supplementation for consumption away from the laboratory (i.e., the participant must collect separate doses at the relevant time for any studies involving caffeine consumption on multiple occasions). The safeguards highlighted in the above recommendations should be referred to within the ethics application.