

Maintaining Professional Boundaries with QAS Supported Athletes

Professional boundaries

As a QAS staff or contractor it is your responsibility to establish a safe and respectful environment.

Professional boundaries are the standard of behaviour that separates personal from professional.

Maintaining professional boundaries helps set the acceptable standards of behaviour between you and the QAS supported athletes you are working with. Establishing trust and respect and a clear understanding of where your role starts and finishes, assists you to do this. It is also essential to communicate your boundaries to the athletes you are supporting, upfront.

You **set** the boundaries, **share** them, and then **stick** to them.

To maintain professional boundaries, you should not:

- ✘ Blur the line between personal and professional – **remember: friendly, not a friend.**
- ✘ Favour, isolate, or single out an individual athlete.
- ✘ Initiate contact with an athlete outside of the QAS, including through social media, unless an established relationship already existed (family or friends).
- ✘ Offer support to an athlete, or their family, outside of QAS services, such as babysitting or financial support.

HOT TIP: Having a uniform and wearing it, such as your QAS polo is a good way to help determine your boundaries – uniform on when you are in your professional role and off when you are not. It is also a good way to communicate it to your athletes.

DEFINITIONS

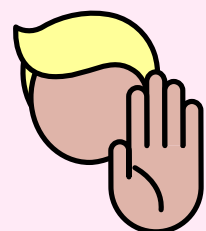
-  **Child:** a person under the age of 12
-  **Young Person:** a person aged between 13-18
-  **Athlete:** any QAS supported athlete (any age / any category)
-  **Safeguarding:** having active measures in place to *prevent* institutional harm and abuse of athletes and *respond* to any safety concerns, disclosures, allegations or suspicions of harm and abuse of any athlete.
-  **QAS Staff or Contractor:** any person engaged by the QAS

Unlike the law, or policies, professional boundaries may need to be applied differently in different circumstances.

Relationships

Consensual relationships are non-existent between QAS supported athletes and staff because of the power imbalance that exists. Therefore, an intimate relationship between an athlete and staff member should never exist.

As a QAS staff or contractor you are not to get involved in the athletes lives outside of normal training or clinical hours or in relation to their personal lives.





Communication (online / social media)

When communicating with QAS supported athletes, consider the **intent** and **content** and how it may be received as outlined in the [Communicating with QAS Supported Athletes](#) resource.

Offering lifts

Ideally, all QAS supported athletes should have their own transportation to and from training and sporting events. In circumstances that the team is travelling together, written approval should be obtained by parents and guardians.

In this event, QAS staff or contractors should ensure that...

For athletes under 18:

✔ The travel has been approved by the athlete's parent/guardian/carer in writing

For any athlete:

✔ The travel has been approved by a line manager or other QAS manager.

🚫 **HOT TIP: Avoid being in a car 1:1 by taking another staff member or even another athlete.**

Giving gifts

As a staff member it is important you are not favouring one QAS supported athlete over another. Avoiding giving gifts or incentives is a good way of maintaining boundaries, unless you were distributing these fairly between all athletes and they are proportionate to the circumstances.

Eg. Physios providing sports tape for everyone to keep in their sports bags is both fair and proportionate. Giving one athlete a whole new set of gym equipment is neither fair nor proportionate.

When accepting gifts from athletes or their families always ensure your line manager or someone within the QAS People and Culture Team is aware that you have received the gift – transparency is key, and again, consider if the gift is proportionate to the circumstances. If you are unsure about receiving gifts or have any further questions, speak to the QAS People and Culture Team.

Use, possession or supply of alcohol or drugs

While supervising or interacting with QAS supported athletes, you must not:

- ✘ use, possess or be under the influence of an illegal drug
- ✘ consume alcohol to the extent that it impairs your ability to perform official duties or maintain proper conduct in public
- ✘ consume alcohol in the presence of a Child (under 18)
- ✘ be incapacitated by any other legal drug such as prescription or over-the-counter drugs
- ✘ supply alcohol or drugs (including tobacco) to athletes
- ✘ smoke cigarettes or use e-cigarettes during sporting activities.

Assume everyone is watching or listening and behave in a way that models respectful, responsible, and lawful behaviours. Boundaries are the standard of behaviour that separates personal from professional.

You **set** the boundaries, **share** them, and then **stick** to them.