

International Netball Federation

World Class

Officiating

Programme Review

Stuart Cummings

3-7-2020

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Purpose of the Review	4
Officiating Advisory Groups.....	5
Appointments Process for Major Matches.....	6
Feedback to Officials in Tournaments.....	9
Feedback of Officials Performance to Competing Teams.....	11
Tournament and Game Protocols.....	12
Training of ITP's.....	12
Fitness Demands of Elite Umpires.....	13
Welfare of Umpires in and Out of Competition.....	14
Umpire Exchange Programme.....	14
Reward Levels for International Umpires.....	15
Conclusions.....	15

International Netball Federation – World Class Officiating Programme Review

Executive Summary

The Review Group has reflected on the outcomes of the World Class Officiating Research, which reported to the INF Board in 2017. Our task was to determine if progress had been made against the outcomes of the research and if those outcomes were still appropriate on the sport three years later. Those outcomes were to be progressed over a number of years by the INF in Officiating Advisory Groups (OAG) containing stakeholders and key personnel with expertise in that particular OAG topic.

During the review, the group saw that most of the topics listed for development from the research were still pertinent today but there needed to be an urgency in how they were progressed. The Review Group felt that the OAG's were not making progress and that a more focused group that would deal with all the various topics, and consisting of key stakeholders in the sport, would be able to reach decisions quicker and put them to the Board for approval.

The 2017 research did not look at the appointment's process for selecting umpires to international matches. The cross-game stakeholders on the Review Group felt strongly that the ITP's, who see all the IUA's between them, should have a stronger role in the selection process. It was felt that the Regional Officiating Coordinator (ROC) had too big a role in the process and in some cases did not have the required knowledge or experience.

There are many different aspects of international officiating and the Review Group were looking for a Match Officials Plan that would sit underneath the INF Strategy that would then help to inform other plans and policies. Funds are also restricting the development and roll out of planned activities and, while the INF have a plan to look at commercial opportunities to assist the funding of officiating it has still to be found. The plan was due to start this year but with the Coronavirus lockdown it is unlikely this will take place this year. This will be the case with other topics that were due to start in 2020, so the urgency that the Review Group feels is required to develop these projects and have them operating for match officials is warranted.

The use of technology needs to be developed. There are some very sophisticated match review systems available but there are also some simple ones. What they must do is enable feedback and discussion between umpire and reviewer and this needs to be and can be developed quickly. It will also help to bring some accountability to the assessment process as all games and incidents can be shared amongst ITP's and umpires which will develop consistency. The standardisation of ITP assessment and the standardisation of rules and interpretations in international competition is vital. However, it is clear that the training of officials, in particular ITP's and standardising the way they report, the development of online CPD, the creation of video review and online video resources is hampered by the lack of funding that would allow this to happen quickly.

The INF have made good progress in the understanding of movement patterns and workload of international umpires following their research at NWC2019. They have also progressed to develop a netball umpiring specific fitness test that can be administered anywhere in the world.

This review aims to build on the work done by the INF following the World Class Officiating Research and reset the timetable to allow the recommendations listed at the end of the report to be in place as quickly as possible to benefit the international umpires, international ITP's and the sport of Netball as a whole.

Purpose of the Review.

The International Netball Federation (INF) is the International Governing Body for Netball around the world. It is responsible for organising and appointing match officials for International games in both tournaments and bi-lateral fixtures as well as ensuring that structures are in place to allow officials from developing countries to progress to the higher levels of the game. In 2014 they commissioned a review of their International Umpiring structures which resulted in a series of recommendations, one of which was the appointment of an International Umpiring Manager, with Regional Officiating Coordinators to be appointed, on a voluntary basis, around the various continents to assist the progression of umpires to international competition.

The INF launched a new plan in 2016, Netball 2020 which established three strategic pillars – namely:

- Governing with integrity
- Thrilling world class events
- Empowering through Netball

The plan has nine strategic goals and officiating is covered by Goal 6: World class standards in officiating in international events.

In 2017 the INF commissioned a further review to understand what World Class Officiating in Netball looked like. This in-depth review looked at all aspects of the officiating process, from recruitment and local development through to performance of officials at the higher level. Its findings, delivered in the form of RAG ratings, covered 65 different aspects of the structure, and recognised the progress the sport had made “building from the base upwards”. It identified some priority areas that would need to be developed to achieve the goal of being a world class system. As a result, the INF set up a series of Officiating Advisory Groups (OAG’s), consisting of some key stakeholders, to develop some of these areas identified as priorities.

The World Class Officiating Programme has been developing for two years and the INF Board has felt that it would be appropriate to look at how some aspects of the programme were progressing. To this end the INF resolved to commission a review of some of the current plans to develop the World Class Officiating Programme and formed a group containing key stakeholders who were tasked with determining whether some aspects of the planned programme should be changed/accelerated.

In consultation with the INF Board, it was agreed that the World Class Officiating Programme Review would look at the following topics which all relate to the officiating at the top end of the international game. The agreed topics were:

- The appointment’s process for major matches and tournaments
- Feedback provided to officials in tournaments
- Feedback of officials’ performance to competing teams
- Tournament/Game protocols
- The training of International Testing Panel (ITP’s) members.
- Fitness demands of elite umpiring
- Welfare of officials in and out of competition
- Umpire exchange programme
- Rewards levels for International officials

The review group met six times over a period of six weeks via online video link. Each topic was discussed in detail and headlines from each meeting were then collated and revisited

after all the topics were covered before a final, agreed report was produced. The review group, approved by the INF Board were:

- Stuart Cummings (Chair) – Managing Director of Official Consultancy Ltd, former international rugby league referee, former Match Officials Manager of the RFL and current Match Referee with the England and Wales Cricket Board. United Kingdom.
- Joel Brown – International Umpire Award (IUA). Trinidad and Tobago
- Gary Burgess – England Netball, Head of Officiating, IUA. England.
- Cheryl Danson – Chair of the Rules Advisory Panel (RAP), International Testing Panel (ITP). England
- Chakatsa Lephole – Head of Officiating, Lesotho Netball, IUA. Lesotho.
- Deborah Lynch Theobalds – ITP. Barbados.
- Jill McIntosh – Chair of the Coaching Advisory Panel (CAP). Australia
- Cyrus Medora – CEO Netball Singapore. Singapore
- Nadine Pardo-Zammit – Head of Officiating, Gibraltar Netball Association, International Talent Identified Umpire (ITID). Gibraltar.
- Karla Pretorius – International Netball Player for South Africa currently playing in Australia. South Africa.
- Stacey West – Head of High Performance and Pathways, Netball Australia. Australia.
- Garratt Williamson – National Technical Officials Manager, Netball New Zealand, Oceania Regional Officiating Coordinator (ROC). New Zealand.

Officiating Advisory Groups (OAG's)

OAG's were set up following the World Class Officiating research carried out in 2017. The objective was to use these groups to address the outcomes of the research and respond to the identified priorities in a timely manner. A programme of OAG's were planned to start in 2018 with the last one due to begin in 2022. Some tasks that would be developed outside of the OAG's by the INF Secretariat were also listed for progress following the research. The planned OAG's and their tasks are listed in the document "Addressing the outcome of the World Class Officiating Research" which is available on the INF Website.

The planned OAG's map to most of the topics that are covered in this review but the Review Group felt that the OAG process is taking too long to produce the change that is needed by the sport and its officials. The OAG's have their own Terms of Reference and are clear on the composition and membership of each OAG, although the Review Group felt that the selection of the members of OAG's was unclear. While it is recognised that the World Class Officiating Research from 2017 identified areas that needed developing, not enough progress has been made in these areas and that the INF Secretariat needs a process that will deliver decisions quicker so that they can be put before the INF Board for approval and then be implemented for the benefit of all.

The Review Group recommends that the OAG's are discontinued and a single panel be set up, similar to the make-up of this Review group which covers all regions and different roles within the game, that will have the stature of RAP and CAP to make recommendations to the INF Board allowing the Secretariat to move forward at a faster pace.

Key Questions

Appointments process for major matches and tournaments.

The current process for appointing umpires to international events is explained on the INF website in the document “Appointment of Umpires to Ranking Matches”. The document lays out a clear process, starting with a request for umpires coming from a member nation through to umpires being confirmed and appointed. The rationale for appointments is written in the document and state:

“INF’s vision is to make Netball a Truly Global Game and international play is an important component of this strategy. Matches between the senior teams of member countries may be used for ranking purposes. Because of the importance of the results of such matches, the standard of officiating must be appropriate to the standard of play.”

The ranking system has been in place in international netball since 2008 and provides a “relative gauge” as to the level of performance of a member nation at a particular time as well as providing seeding information for tournaments. The INF has sought, in their guidelines, to apply criteria in their appointments process as to the level of umpire that will be appointed to games dependent on the ranking of the teams. Umpires holding the International Umpires Award (IUA’s) will be appointed to games between teams ranked 1–10 and International Talent Identified Umpires (ITID’s) could be appointed, along with IUA’s to games between teams ranked 10-20. For development purposes ITID’s could be considered for games between teams ranked 6-10 and for all other matches between teams ranked lower than 20 the INF “may specify any requirements that should apply”.

Like all other major international sports, Netball has a wide range of abilities between its top performing nations and its developing nations as the game becomes more popular across the world. Since the World Cup in Singapore in 2011, the same three countries have finished in the top 3 positions in the Netball World Cup. With other nations consistently performing just beneath these countries it will mean that fixtures at the top of the international game are played at a higher standard than those played just a few ranking places further down. All the games at the top level are now high profile, attract large crowds and televised live which adds to the pressure placed on the appointed officials. These are the showpiece games for the INF and inform other nations the level they should aspire to. This is also true of the umpires and why the appointments to this level of the game is important.

According to the INF Website, (www.netball.sport), there are currently 38 IUA’s that could be appointed to the games between the top 10 nations and a further 18 ITID’s that could be considered for games involving teams ranked 6-10. The large number of umpires qualified to officiate international netball is clearly required to service the many international fixtures and events but inevitably it means there will be quite a difference in the level of ability within the umpiring group. This is not a reflection on how hard an individual umpire works, learns or performs, but just a reflection on the level of experiences they have been exposed to during their formative years as an umpire. Some umpires are exposed to high level, intense netball on a regular basis while others must go in search of it. A balance has to be met when appointing officials, to make sure the matches have umpires of the right quality but also allow developing umpires the opportunity to be exposed to higher profile matches as part of their development. It is also the case that there are some very tough games to umpire in some of the matches lower down the ranking system and it is important that these are identified and officials who are able to manage these games are considered for appointment to them.

The Review Group discussed the key question “Are the right officials being appointed to appropriate fixtures.” The group was adamant that this was not about the top officials being on the top fixtures, but it was about getting the “right” officials on the right games. It is not just games between the top ranking nations that need high performing officials but consideration should also be given to the tougher games much lower down the rankings that, due to the situation around that game, might create its own pressure on the players and therefore the umpires. It was acknowledged that this also meant that the right fixtures needed to be identified that can be used to develop and assist the umpires coming through the system and it was important to consider top performing umpires to assist in these matches to aid with their development.

Concern was raised about the profile of the sport being affected when the perception is there that umpires are not up to standard. High profile dignitaries who decide on the countries sport funding can be dissuaded from investing in the countries sport if the feeling, real or imagined, is that the umpires are not up to the standard expected. The cost of bringing officials to a tournament or event is expensive and a major cost and therefore the standard of umpiring should reflect that cost.

The main concern of the group was around the transparency of the appointments system. They felt that the Regional Officiating Coordinators (ROC's) had too much influence in the process and they did not have the experience or knowledge of international officiating to be making such important appointments to games. According to the INF document “Appointment of Umpires to Ranking Matches”, the role of the ROC is to liaise with the ITP's and ITP Cadets to identify which umpires they would recommend for an event. The document then states that the International Umpire Manager (IUM) will appoint the umpires, however, it was felt that the ITP's should have a greater say in the process as they are the ones with current knowledge of performance and can apply this in international netball settings.

One of the issues of the current system is that the ITP's are asked to nominate umpires for matches or tournaments. Sometimes the organisers have asked for umpires from a particular region and all ITP's will not have seen any umpires from that region perform so are not able to nominate. The ITP's will often have some information about the performances of umpires which lead them not to nominate an umpire and are then surprised when that umpire is appointed to a match, series, or tournament. Both the umpires and ITP's have felt at times that the appointments made had been wrong but have no information as to how or why the appointments were made. Host nations feel that there is no communication once their initial request has been made on NetWorld and the received generated response informing them who the officials are. They would like the opportunity, perhaps through a dialogue box on the request form, to suggest, for example, ITP's from different regions for the purpose of exposing their umpires to different styles of assessment/coaching.

ITP Cadets can be made up of current IUA's and they would be asked to nominate umpires for internationals, and they would be able to nominate themselves. They could also be able to affect the progress of their “competition” in the umpiring rankings through their nominations and this was a conflict of interest. The ITP Cadet role is a development role and an important step to becoming an ITP but they should not be in a position that allows them to make decisions about their peers whether that is through match assessment or nominations for games. There are many other development areas that the ITP Cadets could pursue, including shadowing that will give them the required experience to progress. The Review Group recommended that ITP Cadets, who are also IUA's are removed from the

appointments process and any direct performance involvement with their fellow IUA's to avoid a conflict of interest.

It was felt that an appointments panel should be formed to deal with international appointments. However, it was pointed out that this used to be the case but research carried out in 2014 had shown that the umpires did not trust this system and it, too, was not transparent according to the people surveyed. The issue raised was about the transparency of the process and the fact that the ITP's who had good knowledge of the umpires' performance did not feel part of the process. The ITP's could add value to the process if they had the opportunity to discuss the nominations as a group which would also overcome some of the transparency issues raised. While confidentiality of information received would need to be dealt with, given current technology, there would be an opportunity now to develop the appointments process by including all ITP's in a forum meeting to discuss the nominations and appointments with the IUM who would lead and administer the process. The Review Group recommends that the IUM convenes an ITP forum which involves all ITP's to discuss and decide the nominations and selection of umpires to international matches and events. This group will consider all the development opportunities for IUA's to work alongside ITID's in lower level international matches as well as Youth and Under 21 competitions.

Through OAG (2016-2), the INF has been developing a "weighting system" in the assessments of umpires with the objective of introducing a performance ranking system to facilitate umpire appointments. The system was trialled in the Netball World Youth Cup in 2017 and adjusts the final mark awarded to the umpire based on the 'level of difficulty' of the match officiated. An umpire with an assessment mark of 12 on a high profile, intense, close match will benefit from a slight uplift in score by applying the multiplier compared to an umpire who scores 12 on a low key, one sided game. While the criteria to apply are objective, it does give a differentiation of performance and allows for a performance table of umpires to be collated to help inform appointments, particularly in tournaments. It is not clear whether all officials are aware of this system and when it is in use it would assist with transparency if the officials were informed regularly of their position on the table and areas of development that will assist them to move their position upwards. It will also identify umpires whose performances are below the standard expected so that remedial action or removal can be applied.

The group recognised the issues that can arise in the appointment system due to umpire's availability. Some series and events can mean a lot of time away from home for the umpires who all have other jobs. This can lead to unpaid leave being taken or using up holiday entitlement from their full-time roles as well as trying to juggle this with family responsibilities. It also causes the situation where some officials are only available for part of a series and not all of it. This can cause issues for the two teams who might find a new umpire on the series, but it also causes problems for the ITP. Umpires should be available for the whole series or not available at all. The Review Group would like the IUM to investigate a four-year development/performance cycle linked into the four-year cycle of World Cups for match officials. This could allow the IUM and appointments forum to plan the development and progression of the squad leading into the World Cups. This would allow for forward planning for officials which should allow them to be available for more internationals as well as planning the progression of development officials so that they get the appropriate level of competition and support. Unfortunately, the fixture programme at international level does not cover this length of time. The major events organised by the INF are in place well ahead but international fixtures are not in place longer than 2 years in advance. While a team can plan for a four-year cycle without knowing the opposition, it is difficult for umpires to do the same due to their employment conditions. The Review Group recommends that the INF

investigates the development of a fixture calendar that would identify the major fixtures over a four year period between Netball World Cups to allow for the progression planning of officials culminating in the appointment of the right officials being selected to officiate in the Netball World Cup. IUA's should not be allowed to officiate in a series unless they are available for it all.

The Review Group, with its wide range of stakeholders from all regions of the game, felt very strongly that the INF policy of appointing neutral umpires was the right one for the sport and should not be changed. Everyone on the group felt that the image of the sport would be damaged if the umpires were not neutral. Without neutral umpires there is too much pressure placed on the umpires and concerns were raised about the mental health of the officials in these situations. It would also lead to much more scrutiny of the officials' performance when they are not neutral adding more pressure and players would not want to play a major international game with an umpire from a competing country. The policy for the appointment of reserve officials could be altered to allow for a home official to take that role which would also allow the host team budget to be better applied across the two travelling umpires ensuring travel cost of officials is less of a factor. It is very rare that they are required on a game and if an umpire were injured between series games then someone, who was appointed on standby, could be flown in to take over. The Review Group recommends that the INF policy of appointing neutral umpires to international matches should continue to apply but as well as stating this, as it is in the "Appointment of Umpires to Ranking Matches" document, the reasons for this policy should also be explained.

The Review Group decided that throughout the discussion on appointments, there wasn't really an overarching policy covering all aspects of officiating that binds together the purpose, the role and the philosophy behind high performing umpiring and the appointments process would develop from this along with other aspects of umpire and ITP development which would help with transparency and give the sport clarity around these processes. OAG 2019-2 was to look at "The INF philosophy for the role of the umpire" and as this would inform other aspects of officiating as well as the appointments process it should be accelerated and developed quickly. The Review Group recommends that an Officiating plan, aligned to the INF Strategy, Goal 6, be developed and in place to inform all aspects of international officiating.

Feedback provided to officials in tournaments

The 2017 World Class Officiating Research suggested two OAG's that would develop work based on feedback to officials. Both OAG's were to be set up in 2020 so would have been in operation now. OAG 2020-1 was looking to enhance and revise performance analysis and for it to be video based for international fixtures. This type of system should be utilised as soon as possible to bring it in line with how teams are operating and to replicate what happens in other international sports.

Currently, international umpires are assessed live by an ITP who will watch the umpires from a variety of positions. They will then score the umpires based on 8 competencies with a score of 1 being very good and 4 being the bottom level. A perfect score over the 8 competencies would be a score of 8 and at international level any score above 15 (the pass mark for an IUA) would raise a concern. The umpires and ITP's meet shortly after the game and the umpires are given feedback on their performance. It is given in the form of a mini report in tournaments but can be a longer document on test matches. The expectation is that the umpire would go away and do their own analysis from the video which can be time consuming especially during quick turnarounds on tournaments.

The feedback from the ITP to the umpires is subjective and is rarely backed up by video evidence. The ITP is not always in the best position to analyse performance while they are moving to different positions around the court. They have completely different sight lines to the umpires and could reinforce their thoughts by observing the video footage available. If both the ITP and the umpire had opportunity to watch the video before going into a feedback session, then the quality and consistency of the feedback would be improved. By linking comments to video footage, it also allows for some moderation of performance as the comments and video could be passed on to another ITP or designated moderator. This moderation could help with the consistency in quality of feedback which has been said to vary across the world.

For a quality feedback and performance analysis system to be put in place, video footage of each game should be available to the ITP and umpires immediately after the game as a minimum. Even though the quality and type of footage (TV multi cam or single camera) can vary, it would mean that the ITP and Umpires are viewing the same footage for the assessment. Incidents that have been picked up by the ITP but are not shown on video can still be discussed but there will still be evidence on the video of good practice and areas for development. At a basic level, the ITP's and Umpires would note the video time of incidents for discussion along with their thoughts on the incident. The next level would be for the INF to purchase software that allows the user to "clip" incidents as they watch the game and label the video, creating a playlist of incidents for them both to compare. The most expensive way of doing this would be to appoint an analyst whose job would be to "code" all the incidents in a game for the officials to look at. While this can be very efficient, there is no guarantee that the analyst will have the knowledge to know what to look for or understand what the umpires need to be seeing. Whichever method the INF look to develop it will improve the quality and consistency of the feedback given to umpires. Interestingly, the developing umpires, both IUA's and ITID's, felt that the feedback they had been given was beneficial and generally done well while the umpires in the elite games felt that the feedback was more erratic. There would be a benefit for umpires and ITP's if an online video library were created with all international matches available. This would help umpires with their preparation and allow for greater transparency as all official's performances are available to be observed. It is also great source for developing CPD sessions. The Review Group recommends that the INF look immediately to put in place a video-based performance analysis system for International matches which includes the potential to host a video library of all ranking matches.

It is important that the video analysis system is in place quickly. Obviously training on how to use the selected system will be required but once it is in use it gives the INF access to all footage from all games. This can then allow for the moderation of the ITP's assessments and bring a consistent approach to their work. Umpires mentioned that there is an inconsistency both in assessments and in interpretation of rules around the world and sometimes your mark can depend on who is assessing you. ITP's stated that apart from major tournaments, they never get the opportunity to discuss things as a group and they would view the opportunity to see how others are assessing games. Having video-based analysis will allow some cross-peer moderation of assessments or the INF could appoint two moderators to fulfil this role. The moderators do not have to be at the venue as the games will be on video and the moderation can be done remotely. The Review Group recommends that a moderation system needs to be in place to bring consistency and standardisation of the assessment of umpire's performance.

The footage obtained from matches can also be developed into training modules. Both IUA's and ITP's would welcome the opportunity to develop with specific CPD units produced and

placed online. Also, the more frequent use of online video meetings allows the two groups to meet regularly to discuss any issues and to try and develop a consistent approach across the world. OAG 2020-2 was to look at providing KPIs to assess an ITP and ITP Cadet assessor/accreditation programme. The setting up of these modules works towards an accreditation programme and if these could be set up in an expanded NetWorld or similar platform, where all video, assessments and personal development programmes are situated then it would become a very useful tool. These training modules would also strengthen the INF's ability to improve the consistency of assessments around the world by being able to look at match incidents and whole or part matches in order to standardise their understanding and marking ability.

ITPs think that the current system of having to formally assess ITIDs twice before they can be put forward for their IUA test is burdensome, costly and can prove difficult to arrange. Given that ITPs will have been involved in the coaching and mentoring of that umpire over a period of time and on a number of matches, if on the first pre assessment, an ITID meets the required standard then they should be put forward to be tested for the IUA assessment. If a video review system were in place, the ITID's performance could then be verified on video to ensure the right mark was given and reduce the need to perhaps travel regularly to get the required assessments. This will make the system more efficient and transparent.

The current umpire's assessment form does not reflect the needs of the game. Research undertaken in New Zealand showed that game required accuracy and consistency in the umpire's performance, but these are not on the list of competencies that are assessed. There is an "obsession" with positioning and timing, which is the first competency listed, but with the game changing and developing, the accuracy of decision and consistency of decision making, and management should be included. There is also some inconsistency around contest, contact and game management around the world both in the way it was applied on court but also in the way it is assessed. The Review group recommends that the umpire assessment form is reviewed with a view to including accuracy and consistency in the competencies. RAP should look at the way contest, contact and game management are applied and decide on protocols that will be applied in international netball to allow for consistent application and assessment.

Feedback of officials' performance to competing teams.

Pre event meetings prior to Netball World Cup, Commonwealth Games and other tournaments are useful to pass on information to coaches and how certain rules will be interpreted. This meeting is and should be led by RAP who are the guardians of the rules however, if a clear set of protocols were established for international competitions there would not need to be a great deal of explaining and this would benefit the game and assist both coaches and umpires. Current areas of inconsistency across the regions are around contact, contest and game management which would be reduced if an international interpretation could be established. This also would lead to standardisation of assessment across all regions in the World. The Review Group recommends that RAP look to develop interpretations for the officiating of contact and contest and game management in the international game.

Following an international match, countries are entitled to meet with the umpires if they request to discuss any interpretations that they were unsure about during the match. The umpires felt that this was quite a challenging situation and one that you need to be prepared for as it takes place within 10-20 minutes of the match finishing. It was felt that this meeting had become more constructive over time. ITP's attend the meeting as an observer but generally they do not have any input. It was felt that it might be better if these meetings took

place after both the umpires and the coaches had done their own match reviews but often the quick turnaround of matches prevents this from happening. Overall the option for both teams to have this meeting was seen as a positive and the fact it takes place so quickly after the game ends allows both umpires and coaches the opportunity to move on to their next game. However, an umpire can be exposed to criticism and accusation so close after performance when some fatigue will be evident and therefore some protocols should be developed around how these meetings are held. Perhaps the ITP could have a greater role and “host” the meeting to make sure the welfare of the umpires is looked after. It was also felt that captains should have access to these meetings and be able to ask questions although they do have opportunity during the match to approach the umpires. The Review Group recommends that protocols are developed for how this meeting is conducted and that a role for the ITP is considered.

Tournament/Game protocols.

International interpretations of the rules, as mentioned previously, are developed by RAP. It would be appropriate for RAP to be present at major internationals and tournaments to monitor and report on how they see these interpretations are being applied. Umpires would be expected to apply the international interpretations, regardless of any national protocols, adaptations of rules or trials, and ITP would be expected to assess the umpire’s performance based on these international interpretations. This would again improve consistency across both the umpiring and ITP groups by removing the expectation of local interpretations being applied to the advantage of one team. The Review Group recommends that RAP regularly review the international interpretations and are represented at major international and tournaments to provide a report on how the rules and interpretations were applied.

Training of ITP’s.

ITPs and ITP Cadets are appointed to the panel following recommendation from their own member country and their region who in turn submit the names in ranked order to the IUM. The ROCs and the IUM approve the ITPs and cadets. ITP Cadets can progress to ITP level but there is no formal programme or structure for progression and the regulations state that there should be no expectation that an ITP cadet progresses to be an ITP. ITP’s and ITP Cadets are generally all ex IUA’s with some of the Cadets still active at International level but there are currently a couple of ITPs who were not IUA’s. The fact that some ITP Cadets are still active IUA’s is perceived by some as a conflict of interest as they also nominate umpires for matches (including nominating themselves) and could have an influence on the progression of their fellow ITP’s. They could also be appointed to a match that involves one of their umpiring colleagues who they will then have to assess. They should not be in a position to have any influence on a colleague while they are still umpiring, there are many other opportunities for them to gain the necessary experience in order to progress to become an ITP. As a result, this review group has, earlier in this document, recommended that ITP Cadets should not be part of the selection process.

OAG2019-1 and OAG2020-2 was set up because of the World Class Officiating Programme Research in 2017. The first one was to look online continued professional development (CPD) for umpires, ITP’s, and ITP Cadets while the second one was to start this year to develop KPI’s for ITP and ITP Cadets. Both these pieces of work are important in the development of the officiating structure and should be developed immediately. Currently, there are no development or training programmes for ITP’s and has been stated previously, there is no moderation of their assessments which itself could be a vital part of their CPD.

The ITP's will have a crucial role in the selection of umpires, and they carry out the assessment of umpire's performance but there is no real accountability or performance management of their role. In addition, ITP's from different parts of the world have different expectations within the application of the rules which affects how they carry out their assessments and the umpires appear to have no right of appeal against an assessment score. The Review Group recommends that online CPD sessions are developed around all aspects of the ITP role including assessment, delivery of feedback, interpretation of rules and managing people, along with a moderation system developed for ITP assessment standardisation which would link into a performance management system.

The ITP's also play a role in the testing of umpires in their own region. There is a perception that some of these tests are not as stringent as they should be. The development of the video performance analysis system and the ITP assessment moderation system will go a long way to alleviate these perceptions.

The ITPs are usually appointed to games locally even though the umpires will be neutral. There is concern that the ITP can have an influence on the way the umpire will officiate depending on how they are going to mark in their assessments. Inexperienced umpires could be influenced by a local ITP and change the way they operate to gain the marks they need. Often, the ITP can suggest to the umpire certain things that need to be developed during the training sessions with the teams prior to the game which can, unwittingly, influence performance and can raise questions about the role of the ITP. Are they a coach, assessor, a fellow official or all three? Given the influence of the ITP, perceived or otherwise, would it not be of benefit to the sport if neutral ITPs were appointed along with the umpires? This would be a positive for the sport and provide further transparency. The Review Group recommends that the possibility of appointing neutral ITPs to games along with umpires, would be beneficial for the sport, but equally understands that there is a financial impact of this on host countries.

Fitness demands of elite umpires

The research that was undertaken at NWC 2019, looking at the movement patterns and workload of umpires at the elite level was very informative and is a progressive step forward for the officials. The proposed fitness test was specific to the role of netball umpire and obviously reflected the movement patterns carried out during performance. The move to use this new test instead of the multistage fitness test was the right one although it was acknowledged that the multistage served a purpose. The Review Group recommends that the INF continue to develop the fitness data and fitness testing programme that will eventually inform the training of umpires.

The new fitness test which will be administered in the home country of the umpires could now be more transparent as a video could be taken of the umpire carrying out the test which could be sent to the ROC or IUM for verification. This would also alleviate the problem of officials turning up unfit or injured to tournaments. Even though the INF have criteria as to who can carry out the fitness tests on umpires it was felt that the system is open to abuse and this would make the process more transparent. It would be helpful if there was a "Fitness Policy" was produced that would state the expectations of all umpires as well as the ramifications of failure to meet the standards expected. The Review Group recommends that all fitness tests are videoed, and a copy sent to the INF for verification. A fitness policy is produced that outlines all aspects of the testing and the ramifications of failing to meet the standards.

It was acknowledged that the research project will provide some good information on the training required to be an elite umpire to ensure that the right energy systems are being utilised. It was felt that some umpires do not have the knowledge to get themselves fit so as part of the umpires CPD, information should be placed online to assist those who need help to improve their fitness. The Review Group recommends that CPD modules are developed online to assist umpires to improve their fitness for umpiring.

Welfare of officials in and out of competition.

This area does not appear to have been given much thought considering the many pressures that umpires face in carrying out their role. It has previously been mentioned about the issues that can arise following the after-game meeting with an upset coach but there do not seem to be any policies in place that specifically refer to the welfare and safeguarding of umpires. If, after a game the umpire is receiving adverse comments or abuse, who do they speak to or turn to for assistance? They have their fellow umpire or the ITP who are with them, but it can be seen as a sign of weakness if they approach them particularly the ITP who will be assessing the umpire. Likewise, umpires can feel that any discussion about their technique or limitations is a sign of weakness and it may draw an ITP to make conclusions they otherwise might not have. In major tournaments, an Umpire Welfare Officer should be nominated so that they can be approached about any issues that arise.

More thought could be given to travel arrangements which can often leave officials with long flights with connections, timed so that they must go into training sessions as soon as they arrive. The cheapest way is not always the best way when the official must think about preparing to umpire or assess. It is important that consideration is given to what would be appropriate rest, depending on the length and type of journeys undertaken as well as being consistent in the way per diems are paid.

The Review Group recommends that the INF develop a Match Officials Welfare Policy which covers aspects of performance issues as well as travel, accommodation and kit policies which are strictly adhered to.

Umpire Exchange Programme

An umpire exchange programme is seen as a way to provide higher level opportunities to umpires who cannot officiate at that level in their own countries. The exchange implies a two-way movement of umpires to each gain experience umpiring in a different country or region. All these are valuable experiences, not only for the experience of umpiring in a different culture and how that affects your normal officiating routines but also for the knowledge an umpire can bring back to their own country to pass on to other officials. Unfortunately, there is little, or no opportunity for developing umpires to experience umpiring in the high-profile leagues around the world owing to these leagues being, rightly, protective of who officiates and how they officiate in their competitions. The opportunity for umpires to travel is a way of them appreciating that there are different ways of doing these and that different regions may have different emphasis on interpretations than they are used to. This can only help them be more understanding and adaptable as an official. The same could be said for the ITP's who, apart from when they are appointed to tournaments, have little opportunity to work with ITP's from different regions.

Although this is a beneficial exercise, it is recognised that there are cost implications in sending officials to different regions and this will restrict activity. Perhaps the appointments process for lower level tournaments could be looked at as a way of providing opportunities for umpires to travel and at the same time give them the chance of working with experienced

IUA's. All members of the group viewed the World Youth Netball Cup as being one of the main Netball tournaments and its status as a pinnacle event in the calendar should be regarded in the same light as the Netball World Cup and Commonwealth Games. Therefore, experienced IUA's should be appointed to the World Youth Netball Cup as part of their four-year development plan which will add value to the experiences of ITID's and less experienced IUA's. Some of the developing nations have competitions over a shorter period of time so it may be possible to assist those nations by having some umpires travel there while at the same time provide a learning opportunity for those officials.

Reward levels for international officials.

International Umpires and ITP's receive no fee for umpiring the sport and only receive a 'per diem' payment to cover their meals. All travel and accommodation are paid for, but they often have to share a room with another official. This leads many officials to feel undervalued by the INF but some of the ITID's and developing umpires felt that the experience had more value than any sort of payment. Non officiating members of the Review Group did feel that officials' efforts should command a match fee given the status of the games that they are officiating at which would be in line with the policies of other high profile international sports.

Most officials have other jobs and so must take time off work to officiate. To do this they either must take holiday or unpaid leave. If they are away for a significant period, then this can cause problems with their allocation, their bank balance or both. While any fee is not meant to cover wages lost, it would go some way into recognising the job they do and rewarding them for the hard work and dedication that they have shown over the years. This approach might also allow more officials to be available more of the time which would assist with the planning of appointments and the workload of umpires, further supporting the notion of appointing the right umpire to the right match or tournament.

The INF could also liaise more with the IUA's, setting up a leadership group or forum that could help with the development of kit and give input on the best way to travel as well as the type of accommodation that would be suitable. This would also be a good forum to discuss performance issues at the elite level that could inform best practice in the future. Where there has been consultation from the INF, there is a general feeling that responses to questionnaires or requests for information are not followed up or implemented. This was highlighted with the new IUA kit and the problems related to it.

As before, the Review Group is aware of the financial impact that this approach would have but the Group felt very strongly that the officials should receive some form of payment for their work. The Review Group noted that following the World Class Officiating Programme Research in 2017, a group is to be formed to look at a funding programme for International Umpiring activities led by the INF Commercial Committee and INF Sustainability and Development Working group. This work was to begin this year and it is hoped that they are successful.

The Review Group recommends that the INF funds all match official functions which will include the match payments to officials. It is recommended that the INF establish an Umpire Liaison Group.

Conclusions

1. Current OAG's, while recognising several of the tasks that need to be undertaken, are taking too long to finalise. Some have not been completed and some are not planned until 2022 and the work needs to be developed sooner.

Recommendation - OAG's are discontinued and a single panel be set up, similar to the make-up of this Review group which covers all regions and different roles within the sport, that will have the stature of RAP and CAP to make recommendations to the INF Board allowing the Secretariat to move forward at a faster pace.

2. Some IUA's are ITP Cadets and as part of that role are recommending umpires for international competitions and fixtures as well as assessing the performance of their peers raising a possible conflict of interest.

Recommendation - ITP Cadets, who are also IUA's are removed from the appointments process and any direct performance involvement with their fellow IUA's to avoid a conflict of interest.

3. ITP's have a lot of knowledge of the relative performances and form of IUA's. Given this knowledge they should play a bigger role in the selection of umpires. There is also a perceived lack of transparency in the process with ROC's appearing to have an influential role in the process without possessing the necessary skills and knowledge.

Recommendation - The IUM convenes an ITP forum which involves all ITP's to discuss and decide the nominations and selection of umpires to international matches and events. This allows input from all ITPs and will achieve the desired level of transparency.

4. Umpire availability can be an issue when deciding appointments and IUA's should have the opportunity to work with the top umpires. IUA's might only be available for a part of a series and not the whole series.

Recommendation - The INF look to develop a fixture calendar that would identify the major fixtures over a four year period between Netball World Cups to allow for the progression planning of officials culminating in the appointment of the right officials being selected to officiate in the Netball World Cup. IUA's should not be allowed to officiate in a series unless they are available for it all. It is understood that a fixture calendar of this length is not yet in place, but it would benefit the planning and development of officials if it were.

5. The INF has a policy that appoints neutral umpires on all international games. Is this right for the sport and its development?

Recommendation - The INF policy of appointing neutral umpires to international matches should continue to apply. It would be helpful if the reasons for this policy were explained in the INF document, "Appointment of Umpires to Ranking Matches".

6. Working through all the different aspects of this Review, there is no overarching operational plan for Officiating.

Recommendation - An Officiating plan, aligned to the INF Strategy, Goal 6, should be developed and in place to inform and lead all aspects of international officiating.

7. Written and verbal feedback is given to the umpires by the ITP after the game. There are no reference points for the umpires to review the comments on video and the video footage is not used as part of the assessment process.

Recommendation - The INF look immediately to develop a video-based performance analysis system for International matches which includes the potential to host a video library of all ranking matches.

8. The quality and accuracy of feedback given to umpires is inconsistent and not standardised globally.

Recommendation - online CPD sessions are developed around all aspects of the ITP role including assessment, delivery of feedback, interpretation of rules and managing people, along with a moderation system developed for ITP assessment standardisation which would link into a performance management system.

9. ITID's have to be formally assessed twice before they can be tested for their IUA qualification. This can be burdensome and negates many chances of the ITID being awarded.

Recommendation – Given the knowledge of the skills of the umpire that ITP's have, the ITID's should be put forward for IUA testing if the first assessment is successful.

10. The current umpire assessment form does not reflect the modern game and focuses on the wrong competencies.

Recommendation - The umpire assessment form is reviewed with a view to including accuracy and consistency in the competencies. RAP should look at the way contest, contact and game management are applied and decide on protocols that will be applied in international netball to allow for consistent application and assessment.

11. There are inconsistencies around the World in the way that 'contact, contest and game management' are interpreted both by IUA's and ITP's.

Recommendation - The Review Group recommends that RAP look to develop interpretations for the officiating of contact, contest and game management in the international game.

12. The post-match meeting, when requested by coaches, is seen as useful but can be a threatening situation for umpires. There are no procedures in place as to how these meetings are conducted.

Recommendation - Protocols are developed for how this meeting is conducted and that a role for the ITP in conducting the meeting is considered. Consideration should also be given for the team captain to be present.

13. RAP are the guardians of the rules and are the authority of interpretation. They should have a role, and a view, in determining the correct application of the rules.

Recommendation - The Review Group recommends that RAP regularly review the international interpretations and be represented at major international and tournaments to provide a report on how the rules and interpretations were applied.

14. There is inconsistency in the way that ITP's both assess umpires and the way their feedback is delivered, and it appears the ITP's have no accountability.

Recommendation - There should be a moderation system developed for ITP assessments which would link into a performance management system. CPD modules are developed to help deliver feedback.

15. ITP's from the host nation, appointed by the INF, can, often unwittingly, influence the performance of the umpires in the way they coach them before games.

Recommendation – The INF should investigate the possibility of appointing neutral ITPs to games along with umpires, understanding that there is a financial impact of this on host countries.

16. Are the fitness demands of elite umpiring understood?

Recommendation - The INF should continue to develop the fitness research data and fitness testing programme that will eventually inform the training of umpires.

17. Umpires take their fitness tests in their own country and there is a perception that some are not passing the required level.

Recommendation - All fitness tests under the new system are videoed, and a copy sent to the INF for verification. A fitness policy is produced that outlines all aspects of the testing and the ramifications of failing to meet the standards.

18. A number of umpires do not know how to improve their fitness, particularly in a way that is specific to netball.

Recommendation - CPD modules should developed, arising from the current research, and placed online to assist umpires in improving their fitness for umpiring.

19. Is the welfare of officials in and out of competition considered by the INF?

Recommendation – The INF should develop a Match Officials' Welfare Policy which covers aspects of performance issues as well as travel, payments, accommodation, and kit policies, which are strictly adhered to.

20. Match officials receive no payment for umpiring at international level and feel that they should have more of a voice in things that impact on them such as travel and selection of kit.

Recommendation - The Review Group recommends that the INF funds all match official functions which will include the match payments to officials. The INF will create an Umpire Liaison Group so that they have a part in dealing with kit, travel, accommodation, and other policies.
