ANNEXURE A
GUIDELINES ON FITNESS CRITERIA FOR UNDERWATER HOCKEY SELECTION POLICIES

The South African Underwater Sport Federation (SAUSF) requires that all national team selection policies submitted for ratification include clearly defined fitness criteria to ensure that athletes representing South Africa are physically and mentally prepared for international competition.

Underwater Hockey is a high-intensity physical and mental sport, requiring exceptional cardiovascular capacity, breath control, strength, agility, and mental resilience. It is therefore essential that fitness standards reflect the demands of the international game.

While the SAUWHF's HPD Coach may determine the specific fitness tests to be used, SAUSF will only ratify fitness criteria that include the following minimum requirements:

1. Water-Based Fitness Tests (Minimum of 3)

- A minimum of **three water-based tests** must be included.
- **At least one of these tests must be a simulation test**, designed to replicate match conditions.

Simulation tests are important as they:

- Replicate the **physical intensity and movement patterns** experienced during competition.
- Build **breath-hold capacity under pressure**.
- Develop **decision-making ability under fatigue**.
- Strengthen **mental toughness and resilience** in a competitive environment.

2. Land-Based Fitness Tests (Minimum of 4)

A minimum of **four land-based fitness tests** must be included.

Land fitness is a crucial component of underwater hockey performance, particularly for:

- **Upper body strength**, which is essential for stick handling, puck control, and battling for possession.
- **Core strength and stability**, which supports underwater body control.
- **Explosive power and endurance**, required for repeated high-intensity efforts during matches.
- **Overall injury prevention and athlete longevity.**

3. Justification of Tests

For each fitness test included in the selection criteria, the following must be provided:

- A brief explanation of the exercise/test.
- The physical or physiological output that the test measures (e.g. aerobic endurance, anaerobic capacity, strength, breath-hold ability, agility).
- A justification of the benefit of the test for an underwater hockey athlete, demonstrating how the test relates to the demands of the sport.

This ensures that all fitness standards are evidence-based and directly relevant to performance in underwater hockey.

Below is an example template illustrating how these criteria may be structured when presented in a selection policy submission.

WATER FITNESS	QUANTITY | TIME							
	Elite Men	U24 Men	U19 Men	Master Men	Elite Ladies	U24 Ladies	U19 Ladies	Master Ladies
Simulations	30	22	20	20	25	20	20	20
400m Puck Push	7 min 15 sec	8 min	10 min	8 min 30 sec	9 min	9 min 30 sec	11 min	11min 30 sec
20 x 25m Unders & Overs	6 min	6 min 30 sec	7 min	7 min 30 sec	7 min	7 min 15 sec	8 min	8 min 30 sec
LAND FITNESS								
Squats | 3 minutes	150	140	135	135	140	135	130	130
Push-ups | 2 minutes	80	75	70	70	45	40	35	35
Sit-ups | 2 minutes	90	80	75	75	80	75	70	70
Triceps Dips | 2 minutes	135	125	90	90	100	90	70	70

4. Justification of Fitness Tests in the above table:

The following fitness tests have been selected to measure the key physical and physiological attributes required for successful performance in Underwater Hockey at an international level. The sport places significant demands on athletes' breath-hold capacity, anaerobic endurance, upper body strength, core stability, and the ability to perform repeated high-intensity efforts with limited recovery.

The tests therefore assess both sport-specific performance in the water as well as foundational strength and endurance on land, ensuring athletes possess the physical capacity required to compete at elite international standards.

4.1 Water-Based Fitness Tests

4.1.1 400m Puck Push (Simulation Test)

The athlete is required to push the puck continuously over a distance of 400 metres while swimming with fins. This test replicates key elements of match play, including puck control, propulsion, and repeated breath-hold efforts while under physical stress.

Performance Output Measured

- Sport-specific endurance
- Breath-hold capacity under load
- Puck control while fatigued

Relevance to Underwater Hockey

This test closely simulates the physiological and technical demands of competition. Athletes must maintain **technical puck control while managing oxygen limitation and fatigue**, thereby assessing both physical conditioning and mental resilience under simulated match conditions.

4.1.2 Unders and Overs (20 x 25m)

Athletes complete a series of repeated 25 metre underwater and surface swims with minimal recovery between efforts.

Performance Output Measured

- Breath-hold capacity
- Anaerobic endurance
- Recovery between repeated dives

Relevance to Underwater Hockey

Underwater hockey requires players to perform **frequent, repeated dives with short recovery intervals throughout a match**. This test measures the athlete's ability to sustain repeated underwater efforts while managing oxygen debt, a critical component of competitive gameplay.

4.2 Land-Based Fitness Tests

4.2.1 Push-ups (2 Minutes)

Athletes perform the maximum number of push-ups within a two-minute period.

Performance Output Measured

- Upper body strength endurance
- Shoulder and chest muscular capacity

Relevance to Underwater Hockey

Upper body strength is essential for **puck handling, stick control, and physical contesting for possession**. Strength and endurance in the shoulders and chest also contribute to overall stability and assist in reducing injury risk.

4.2.2 Sit-ups (2 Minutes)

Athletes perform the maximum number of sit-ups within a two-minute period.

Performance Output Measured

- Core strength and muscular endurance

Relevance to Underwater Hockey

Core strength is fundamental for **maintaining body control, stability, and efficient movement underwater**. A strong core assists athletes in maintaining streamlined positioning and executing rapid directional changes during play.

4.2.3 Triceps Dips (2 Minutes)

Athletes perform the maximum number of triceps dips within a two-minute period.

Performance Output Measured

- Triceps strength and endurance
- Upper body stabilisation

Relevance to Underwater Hockey

Triceps strength plays an important role in **puck propulsion, stick handling, and stabilising the upper body during underwater contest situations**. Strong triceps also support repeated pushing actions required during gameplay.