



**NC Sports Academy
EMERGING ATHLETE PROGRAMME**

2026 Cohort

Contents

Background	Page 3
About the NC Sports Academy	Page 3
Built on a Foundation of Success	Page 3
Cost of Participation	Page 3
Number of Participants Annually	Page 3
Programme Vision	Page 4
Core Values	Page 4
Important Dates – 2026 Intake	Page 4
General Eligibility	Page 5
Role of Parents, Guardians and Caregivers	Page 5 – 6
Selection Guidelines and Procedures	Page 6
Application Process	Page 7
Athlete Induction	Page 7
Programme Selection Committee	Page 7
Programme Staff	Page 8
Programme of Activities	Page 8
Active Health services	Page 9 - 10
Communication Guidelines	Page 11

Background

After operating in the sports and recreation sector for over 30 years, NC Sports has identified the need for up-and-coming athletes with great potential, typically in their senior years of high school, to access appropriate resourcing and support in their campaign to reach elite levels in their chosen sport. This is particularly relevant for those in the North Canterbury regions of Waimakariri and Hurunui, who have previously had to travel to Christchurch for such resources and professional services.

The NC Sports Academy is the solution to this.

It is a programme, geared towards providing young athletes with these much needed tools and means of support to enable them achieve their full potential without having to travel outside of the region. Services provided free of charge to athletes will cover a holistic approach to managing their career endeavours as well as provide vital aspects of an athlete's toolkit – from mental skills training, to strength and conditioning, nutrition, physiotherapy, load guidance and time management.

About the NC Sports Academy

The NC Sports Academy is an annual programme geared towards providing young aspirational athletes with much needed tools and means of support to enable them to achieve their full potential without having to travel outside of the region.

The unique aspect of this programme is its athlete-centred, holistic nature, provided through professional services configured to the needs of the individual, via a one-on-one approach.

In collaboration with Active Health North Canterbury, the NC Sports Academy will offer participants support from the most experienced sporting, health and performance-based practitioners from the wider North Canterbury region, with a core focus on enabling athletes with great potential to achieve their personal sporting aspirations through the active design of a tailor-made career pathway, whether their final goal is to represent their country or pursue a sporting career.

Built on a foundation of success

The NC Sports Academy will be underpinned by the North Canterbury Sport & Recreation Trust, a charitable trust with a strong reputation of providing successful programmes for all ages in the North Canterbury region.

Cost of participation

There is no cost to the athletes or their families, once a scholarship has been awarded.

Number of participants annually

In general, no more than 10 athletes will be awarded scholarships within the NC Sports Academy within a calendar year.

Programme Vision

To provide young North Canterbury based athletes, with identified potential, a holistic, bespoke sport-focused support structure through which they can achieve their personal ambitions.

Core values

- Commitment
- Progress, not perfection
- Accountability
- Connection
- Engagement
- Respect

Important Dates – 2026 Intake

The scholarship programme will run from February to November 2026.

Key dates are as follows:

- Launch of 2026 Programme Friday, 31 October 2025
- Promotion commences Friday, 31 October 2025
- Applications open Monday, 3 November 2025
- Closing date for applications Friday, 28 November 2025
- Assessment of applications Monday, 1 December - Thursday, 4 December 2025
- Notification of selection to athletes Friday, 5 December 2025
- 2026 Programme commences
(Athlete testing and one-on-ones) Last week of January 2026
- First Meet and Greet Monday, 2 February 2026 (evening)
- 2025 Programme ends December 2025

General Eligibility

Applicants must meet the following general criteria to be considered for the programme:

1. **AGE:** Athletes should be between 14 years and approximately 24 years of age. Although there is no formal age restriction, the programme is geared towards athletes within this age bracket. The NC Sports Academy panel does, therefore, reserve the right to engage athletes outside of this age group, dependent on individual circumstances and sports.
2. **PARTICIPATION:** Athletes are required to be actively participating in their chosen sport/s to the best of their financial, physical and geographical ability. This may include being aligned with a local club or school or national association, in the event that the sport has no local representation.
3. **SKILL LEVEL:** This is not a high performance programme. Rather, it is geared to the emerging athlete who shows great potential to excel in their sport of choice, while displaying the right attitude, discipline and mental approach.
4. **EXPERIENCE:** The athlete is most likely participating at representative level in their chosen sport - either for their club, region or school, but is not compulsory. It is NOT mandatory for the athlete to have represented their sport at national or international level.
5. **CHOSEN SPORTS:** Athletes can apply on the basis they are actively participating in multiple sports at representative level.
6. **RESIDENCE:** Athletes should be domiciled in North Canterbury or at least have their main family home located in the region. The North Canterbury region encompasses the districts of Kaikoura, Hurunui and Waimakariri. This does not mean that the athlete cannot travel outside of the North Canterbury area for schooling, boarding or participation in competition or training.

There is some flexibility within the above criteria and discretion will be applied on a case by case basis when assessing applications.

Role of Parents, Guardians and Caregivers

As a programme which is primarily targeting late high schoolers, we understand that parents, guardians and caregivers play a pivotal part in the support structure of the young athlete. For athletes under 18, we understand that parents want to do everything they can to ensure their child enjoys a positive sporting experience. The NC Sport Academy champions an integrated approach, which includes full family and community support, so to aid the athlete in meeting their goals and expectations.

Family members can assist the delivery of this programme by:

- Being a positive support, especially at times when there are greater demands on the athlete
- Helping the athlete get to their commitments on time
- Helping the athlete build good time management skills
- Encouraging the athlete to take responsibility for their performance
- Using good nutritional principles to ensure their diet meets their performance needs
- Talking with the athlete about how they feel about all aspects of their journey
- Encouraging the athlete to provide notification well in advance of any schedule conflicts
- Encouraging the athlete to provide information around any health issues and/or injuries
- Providing notification of any outside distractions that may be affecting their athletic performance

Selection Guidelines and Procedures

The NC Sports Academy has limited the number of scholarships available each year to 10, however the NC Sports Academy has absolute discretion throughout the rigid selection process to appoint more or less than this number, where circumstances warrant.

The following selection guidelines will be used to assess each application on relative merit. Please note that the criteria outlined below should not be viewed in isolation as all selection guidelines will be taken into consideration.

Selection Guidelines:

- Scholarships will be awarded based on the identification of an athlete as an emerging talent within their respective sport. This identification can be through local coaches, sporting groups and associations.
- Consideration will be given to applicants who are progressing along their chosen sport's national pathway.
- The applicant must demonstrate potential and commitment to their chosen sport, either through progression of performances over time or through referral from a high-standing coach.
- Capacity for NC Academy to 'make a difference' to the athlete's ongoing development.
- Capacity and willingness of the athlete to utilise NC Sports Academy's services to enhance their athletic development in the areas identified by the main sporting body.
- The athlete's performance, results and commitment over the past year.
- An Athlete Interview – potential scholarship holders may be requested to meet with the selection committee.

Application process

- Admission to the programme is via application, supported by referrals.
- Applications should be received by the deadline date outlined in the 'Important Dates' section above.
- All enquiries regarding applications should be directed to Programme Co-ordinator via cwhittaker@sportstrust.org.nz
- The selection committee will convene and review all scholarship applications and recommendations, following the closing date.
- The selection committee may look to verify any statement of claims, rankings and performances with athlete coaches or performance managers and will be guided in their decision-making process bearing these discussions in mind.
- The Programme Manager may also notify an athlete of the selection committee's intention to interview individuals prior to making any final decisions.
- A final meeting will be held with the selection committee to finalise the successful applicants.
- In the event of the selection committee being unable to make a majority decision on an applicant, the Programme Manager has final decision over selection.
- The Programme Manager will notify successful and/or unsuccessful athletes within a month of the closing date for applications.
- The Programme Manager will advise respective coaches with an email of scholarship selection outcomes shortly thereafter.

Athlete Induction

New individual scholarship athletes and their local coaches, if available, will be required to meet the Programme Manager prior to commencing training for a personalised induction.

Planning meetings with successful athletes will occur within the first month of selection and individual service plans agreed.

Programme Selection Committee

The Selection Committee are made up of sporting personnel, highly respected in their fields, and overseen by the North Canterbury Sport & Recreation Trust Board. Selection committee members are primarily based in North Canterbury with a deep connection and commitment to the wider Waimakariri and Hurunui regions.

Programme Staff

Michael Sharpe	NC Sports CEO	msharpe@sportstrust.org.nz
Fraser Gauld	NC Sports Programme Manager and Athlete Co-ordinator	fgauld@sportstrust.org.nz 027 544 8991
Ricki Jacobs	NC Sports Programme Leader, Strength and Conditioning	riacobs@sportstrust.org.nz 022 192 4679
Bex Gold	NC Sports Nutritionist	Bexgold31@gmail.com 027 215 5150
Caroline Whittaker	NC Sports Programme Co-ordinator	cwhittaker@sportstrust.org.nz 027 222 0943

Programme of Activities

Due to the bespoke nature of the programme providing for each athlete's specific needs and sporting requirements, there is no definite schedule of events and activities. However, there is an expectation that the following services will be provided for each athlete within the annual programme:

- Monthly one-on-one meetings with the NC Academy's Programme Facilitator, from February to November
- Weekly sessions with the NC Academy's Strength and Conditioning Trainer (located at Stadium Fitness Centre, MainPower Stadium)
- Fitness testing x 3 sessions
- Nutritional consult x 5 sessions
- Physiotherapy services (provided by Active Health)
- Mental Skills Coaching (provided by Active Health)



Active Health is proud to be supporting the NC Sports Academy.

Active Health was first established in Christchurch in 1999 and has developed into an industry leader in holistic health and wellbeing. Active Health provides a multidisciplinary approach with physiotherapy, podiatry, fitness and mental skills services available and aim to add true value to the community.

Since its inception, Active Health has had a strong presence in North Canterbury and has a long-standing relationship with the North Canterbury Sport & Recreation Trust (known as NC Sports). This has culminated with the development of Active Health Rangiora, currently based at three sites: Durham Health Medical Centre, Rangiora Fitness Centre (Flaxton Road), and MainPower Stadium (Coldstream Road).

Active Health already has strong relationships with several sports teams and sporting organisations in North Canterbury. We recognize the amazing opportunity the young sporting population have available to them in North Canterbury, and we are excited to continue to be a part of developing and supporting this through the NC Sports Academy programme.





We have invested in **VALD Performance Products** in the form of Dynamometers and Force Decks.

These systems provide quantitative high-level data and information to assess base-line strength, balance and performance in a way that is easy to visually understand. These systems are utilised across the Super Rugby franchises to direct individualised training or rehab plans to get the most out of the time spent in the gym or training ground.



What Active Health is providing:

A Baseline Injury Prevention Screening Assessment incorporating the use of the VALD equipment. The insight from this will help young athletes understand physical imbalances, areas at higher risk of injury and facilitate the development of training programmes with the trainers.

Active Health will also contribute costs towards Podiatry and Physiotherapy consultations either as a proactive measure or in response to injury management over 12 months:

A Baseline MSK Assessment including VALD measures	\$150
3 x further VALD Assessments throughout the year	\$300
Contribution to consultation costs	\$550

Total: \$1000 worth of consultation services per athlete.

We look forward to working with each athlete and alongside the team at NC Sports to provide the best possible support as these young athletes develop both personally, and within their respective sporting codes.

Communication Guidelines

Point of Contact

The Programme Manager should be the athlete's first point of contact for anything relating to the programme.

If, for some reason the athlete is not comfortable speaking with this person, they can contact the Programme Co-ordinator for a confidential chat.

Forms of Communication

It is important that professional boundaries are maintained, therefore all communication outside of face-to-face should be via email or a phone call. In circumstances when email or direct text message is not appropriate, the athlete should contact the Programme Manager on their cell phone.

Note: Social media channels (i.e. Facebook Messenger, Snapchat etc) are not acceptable forms of communication.

Child Protection and Safeguarding Health and Welfare

NC Sports are committed to ensuring the wellbeing and safety of rangatahi and young adults in the pursuance of their personal sporting goals. This programme is geared to provide support services for the individual that is bespoke to their personal needs and includes, but is not limited to, the areas of strength and conditioning, mental skills coaching, injury prevention, rehabilitation, and nutrition. During this programme, the NC Sports and Active Health staff will fully adhere to child protection and safeguarding policies to ensure participation remains supportive, safe and inclusive.