



Return to competition guidance v2

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Virtus - World Intellectual Impairment Sport

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Registered in England No: 1173901 | Virtus is a recognised member of the International Paralympic Committee.

INTRODUCTION

This guidance has been published by Virtus as the organisation prepares to resume international competition in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Like many sporting organisations across the world, Virtus wants to see a return to competition as soon as possible. However, we are committed to ensuring this can only happen in a safe environment for athletes, volunteers, officials, spectators and event staff.

It is important to understand that an inherent risk of exposure to COVID-19 exists in any public place where people are present. COVID-19 is an extremely contagious disease that can in some cases lead to severe illness and, in a small number of cases, death. According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, senior citizens and individuals with underlying medical conditions are especially vulnerable.

Event organisers and Virtus cannot prevent any participant from becoming exposed to, contracting, or spreading COVID-19 while participating in this event. Therefore, if you choose to participate in competition you may be exposing yourself to and/or increasing your risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19.

By participating in competition you voluntarily assume all risks associated with exposure to Covid-19 and cannot hold the Organisers or Virtus liable in the future.

This document sets out the guidelines Virtus will use to ensure events are delivered with minimal risk, that we can monitor and evaluate readiness, and the role and responsibility of member organisations/teams.

Please note that as the pandemic is an evolving situation, it may be necessary to update this guidance at short notice and without prior warning, in response to the ever-changing legal and good practice guidelines in place around the world. In particular, the guidance will be updated to reflect the changes enabled through the roll-out of a vaccination programme.

KEY PRINCIPLES

1. In providing this guidance, the following key principles apply at all times:
 - a. The final decision to enter an athlete into a Virtus event and overall responsibility for their safety at all times from leaving their home country until returning to that country remains with the Virtus Member Organisation and their nominated team manager. Member Organisations should use all available information from their nations Public Health Department to make an informed decision regarding entry to a Virtus competition.
 - b. The legal requirements and laws within the host nation in respect of event safety take precedence over all Virtus rules and policies. Normal event operations may be amended or altered to satisfy local laws and these could vary even within a nation and at short notice.
 - c. A key responsibility for any event organiser is spectator safety. To minimise risk, Virtus has determined that there will be NO spectators at any Virtus event (excluding team and event officials present) until further notice. In general this also includes family members who are not part of the team however LOC's may choose to allow family members to attend where safety measures can be implemented effectively including, but not limited to, a negative COVID-19 test taken no more than 72 hours before attending and isolation on any symptoms.

- d. Quarantine rules (either entering the country of competition or return home) are additional to this policy and should be considered by the Member Organisation in line with national regulations.
- e. The guidelines and policies should be followed by all participants including those who have received a vaccine, ie. vaccinated individuals are not exempt from other covid-safe procedures. The guidance will be updated to reflect national policies as vaccination programmes grow worldwide.
- f. At all times, Virtus reserves the right to cancel an event where it is felt that the risk remains too high. This decision will be taken by the Governing Board after advice from the Medical Committee.

EVENT SAFETY PROCESS

The following guidance will be followed to minimise risk:

Pre-event

- a. All nations who bid to host a Virtus event must complete the COVID-19 risk assessment as part of their bid submission. The risk assessment will be considered by the Virtus Medical Committee who will make a recommendation to the Governing Board as part of the bid approval process. The LOC should use the assessment to highlight areas of risk and to outline their proposed mitigation measures.
- b. Virtus will work with the winning host/LOC to continue to oversee necessary mitigation and safety measures. It is acknowledged that these will change over time, and at short notice, so the risk assessment and mitigation measures must be updated regularly on the basis of 'known and reasonably expected factors'.
- c. All LOC's will be obligated to nominate a Medical Officer (s) who will be responsible for overseeing all COVID-19-safe measures within the event and for liaison with Virtus. Medical Officers should be independent of the LOC or competing teams, must be qualified medical practitioners, and be on-site 24/7 for the duration of the event.
- d. All events will be delivered in line with the sports IF, WHO and governmental guidance. As a minimum, all participants must (on arrival) show evidence of a negative PCR test taken no more than 72 hours before travelling. Anyone testing positive must not travel.
- e. As part of the entry pack, LOC's will publish full details of any requirements or obligations on teams within the entry pack and then keep teams updated of any changes before travelling. LOC's will also publish a clear cancellation/withdrawal policy regarding event entry fees (including deposits) in the event of cancellation.
- f. Virtus Member Organisations who are planning an entry to competition are advised not to book any non-refundable/amendable travel or commit any other expenditure that cannot be recovered through refund or insurance.
- g. All participants (staff, volunteers, athletes, team staff etc) in the event will be required to sign an 'opt-in' form confirming they understand their responsibilities and choose to take part in the event.
- h. Member Organisations should ensure that entrants have appropriate travel and medical insurance in place, and including cover for COVID-19 risk. LOC's should see evidence that such insurance is in place.

Competition time

Note: In this context, 'competition time' includes all transportation and accommodation arrangements as well as competition and training venues.

- a. All participants will be made aware of and are expected to follow all local laws and guidance in respect of social distancing and Covid safety, and the LOC must advise the Team Manager of all risk and mitigation plans on arrival
- b. Attendance at the competition is restricted to those individuals that are essential to the delivery of the Competition.
- c. All nations must be prepared to stay within bubbles and not leave the accommodation or competition venue/s
- d. Virtus and the LOC retain the right to remove any individuals from the competition whose actions are viewed to breach any health and safety protocols (COVID-19 related or otherwise)
- e. LOC's will make PPE (equipment and training) available for safe management of the event, particularly in the event of an injury or need for medical treatment.
- f. The LOC will have a GP/doctor available 24/7 for the duration to respond to anyone who develops symptoms.
- g. All participants should undertake a PCR test at the mid-point of the event or no later than 72 hours before departure (whichever is sooner).
- h. The LOC should make a number of LFT tests available for the duration of the event for on-site testing. Positive results should be confirmed by a PCR test and the person should be isolated in the interim.
- i. LOC's should be prepared to isolate groups/individuals (including where this prevents them from returning home) and follow local COVID-19 testing and reporting protocols.
- j. Every effort should be made to support athletes who find it difficult to take a test for medical reasons however the requirement for a test remains and cannot be waived.