



South African Figure Skating Association

COMMUNICATION S25-007

SAIDS - Substance Use & Testing

Date Approved: 14 October 2025

Effective Start Date: 14 October 2025

1. Purpose

The purpose of this communication is to address an important matter concerning athlete well-being and the integrity of our sport. It has come to our attention that some skaters may be using substances such as cannabis (weed), vapes, nicotine products, and/or alcohol. In order to safeguard the health and safety of our athletes, maintain the integrity of figure skating, and ensure compliance with legal and anti-doping regulations, we wish to clearly outline the rules governing substance use and explain the reasons behind these standards.

2. Communication details

Testing and Doping Control

All athletes, including under-18s, are subject to anti-doping procedures. Doping control refers to the full process of planning, notifying, testing, transporting samples, laboratory analysis, and results management. Testing refers specifically to the collection and analysis of urine or blood samples.

Both testing and doping control can take place at any time: during training, out-of-competition, or at official events. Importantly, they may also be conducted at SAFSA Provincial, Inter-Provincial, or National competitions. If a test result is positive, consequences will follow in line with SAIDS, WADA, and SAFSA rules. For cannabis/THC specifically, WADA has set a urine threshold of 150 ng/mL for an Adverse Analytical Finding.

Substance Rules and Rationale

Below you will find a table summarising how South African law, SAIDS/WADA rules, and our SAFSA Code of Conduct apply to each substance.



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Weed / Cannabis (THC / Cannabinoids)	<p>In South Africa, cannabis remains illegal for under-18s.</p> <p>The 2018 Constitutional Court ruling and the 2024 Cannabis for Private Purposes Act apply only to adults aged 18 and over.</p> <p>Minors who are found using cannabis may be dealt with under the Child Justice Act rather than through the full criminal justice system.</p>	<p>THC is classified by WADA as a prohibited substance in competition.</p> <p>The urine threshold for an Adverse Analytical Finding is 150 ng/mL, and results above 180 ng/mL may be considered in sanctioning decisions.</p> <p>Athletes are subject to strict liability, meaning they are responsible for everything found in their bodies.</p> <p>Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUEs) for cannabis are only granted under very strict conditions.</p>	<p>According to Rule 18 of the SAFSA Code of Conduct, substance abuse is a violation.</p> <p>Rule 19 states that drugs will not be tolerated and that the WADA Code must always be adhered to.</p>
CBD Products	<p>CBD (cannabidiol) is legal in South Africa if it meets local health regulations and THC content restrictions.</p> <p>However, minors should not use it without medical guidance.</p>	<p>CBD itself is not prohibited by WADA. However, the SAIDS Position Statement warns that many CBD products contain trace amounts of THC, which may cause a positive doping test.</p> <p>Because of this risk, athletes are strongly advised to avoid CBD products unless medically prescribed and verified.</p>	<p>The SAFSA Code of Conduct does not specifically mention CBD, but Rule 18 on substance abuse and Rule 19 on drugs still apply.</p> <p>Athletes are reminded that they are responsible for any prohibited substance found in their system.</p>



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Vaping (Nicotine / E-Cigarettes)	The Tobacco Products Control Act prohibits the sale of tobacco products, including nicotine vapes and e-cigarettes, to anyone under the age of 18.	Nicotine is not prohibited by WADA; however, it is listed on the Monitoring Program for 2025 and 2026 so that patterns of use can be tracked.	Rule 21 of the SAFSA Code of Conduct makes it clear that tobacco use while wearing SAFSA colours is not permitted. Please note that tobacco includes the use of nicotine vapes, nicotine patches and e-cigarettes.
Nicotine Patches / Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT)	Nicotine replacement therapy products, such as patches, gums, and sprays, are widely available in pharmacies and are typically used to help people quit smoking. There is no legal age restriction on purchasing them, but medical best practice advises caution in minors and recommends that they only be used under medical supervision.	Nicotine is not banned by WADA or SAIDS. It is, however, listed on the Monitoring Program for 2025 and 2026 so that patterns of misuse can be observed and tracked.	The SAFSA Code of Conduct does not specifically mention nicotine replacement therapy. Patches and other NRT products are acceptable if they are medically prescribed.
Alcohol	Under South African law, alcohol may not be purchased or consumed by anyone under the age of 18.	Alcohol is prohibited in some sports for safety reasons. Excessive alcohol consumption can negatively affect performance, health, and safety.	Rule 20 of the SAFSA Code of Conduct clearly states that alcohol abuse will not be permitted.



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Key Takeaways for SAFSA Athletes

Cannabis/weed is illegal for under-18s in South Africa. In sport, THC is banned in competition. Using cannabis can result in both disciplinary action and consequences.

CBD is not prohibited, but contaminated products can still cause a positive test.

Vaping and smoking nicotine are illegal for under-18s and are prohibited under SAFSA rules.

Nicotine replacement therapy products/patches are legal and not banned in sport, but should only be used under medical prescription, especially by minors.

Alcohol is illegal for under-18s and alcohol abuse is prohibited for all SAFSA athletes.

Why These Rules Exist

The SAIDS Position Statement on CBD and THC highlights the health risks of cannabis and THC use, including impaired cognition, behaviour changes, and potential dependence. Athletes are subject to strict liability, meaning they are always responsible for substances found in their bodies, regardless of how they entered the body. WADA prohibits THC in competition because of its health risks, fairness concerns, and its conflict with the spirit of sport.

What You Must Do

Do not use cannabis, vapes, tobacco, or alcohol if you are under 18.

Always check all medications, supplements, and products using the SAIDS Medication Check tool: <https://drugfreesport.org.za/online-medication-check/>

If you require a prohibited substance for a medical condition, apply for a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE) before using it.

Ask your coach, parent, or SAFSA DSO if you are ever unsure about a product or medication.

Representing SAFSA means more than just skating; it means competing clean, fair, and informed. Your choices reflect on yourself, your teammates, and the sport.

Dr Carin Bergh
National Designated Safeguarding Officer