

Terms of Reference

INDEPENDENT REPUTATION STUDY OF THE INTERNATIONAL TESTING AGENCY (ITA)

1. Background and context

The International Testing Agency (ITA) is an independent non-profit international organisation entrusted with the delivery of anti-doping programs on behalf of international sports bodies. Acting within a complex and highly scrutinised global governance environment, the ITA exercises delegated authority that requires a high degree of institutional trust, legitimacy, and credibility.

The effectiveness of the ITA's mandate depends not only on technical and operational performance, but on the confidence placed in the organisation by delegating partners, athletes, and other actors within the international anti-doping and sports ecosystem. This confidence is shaped by perceptions of the ITA's independence, competence, fairness, governance, and ability to act consistently under pressure.

At the same time, the ITA operates in a public and media-exposed context, where external narratives and visibility can influence partner confidence and the organisation's capacity to fulfil its mandate effectively.

To support strategic and governance reflection, the ITA seeks to commission an **independent, methodologically robust reputation study**, conducted by an external entity with recognised expertise in reputation, trust, governance, or related fields.

By commissioning this study, the ITA seeks to subject itself to the same level of independent scrutiny and evidence-based evaluation that it promotes within the global anti-doping system. This reflects ITA's commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous institutional improvement.

2. Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to assess the **reputational capital of the ITA** among key stakeholders within the international anti-doping and sports governance ecosystem.

The study shall examine how the ITA is perceived as an independent, credible, and fair delegated authority, and how institutional and public-facing perceptions interact to sustain confidence in the ITA's mandate.

The study is intended to inform **strategic, governance, and organisational reflection** within the ITA. The outcome of the study might also be used for general messaging aimed at the public, existing and potential partners, existing and potential sponsors, athletes and other audiences.

3. Scope of the study

3.1 Conceptual scope: reputation dimensions

The study shall assess the ITA's reputation across a set of core dimensions relevant to its mandate, including in particular:

1. **Independence and impartiality**
 - Perceived autonomy from political, commercial, or sporting influence
 - Confidence in independent decision-making
2. **Technical and scientific credibility**
 - Trust in the ITA's expertise across anti-doping activities
 - Perceptions of rigour, quality, and professionalism
3. **Procedural fairness and respect for athletes**
 - Perceptions of due process, proportionality, and fairness
 - Respectful treatment of athletes within anti-doping processes
4. **Governance, transparency, accountability, compliance**
 - Clarity of roles, responsibilities, and decision-making structures
 - Transparency and explainability of actions and outcomes
 - Compliance with the international regulatory anti-doping framework
5. **Reliability as a delegated authority and partner**
 - Confidence in the ITA's ability to deliver consistently, including under pressure
 - Organisational maturity, continuity, and risk management
6. **Strategic leadership in clean sport**
 - Perceptions of thought leadership, innovation, and future-readiness

Bidders may propose refinements or additional dimensions, provided these are clearly justified and aligned with the ITA's mandate.

3.2 Stakeholder scope

The study shall focus on stakeholders whose perceptions are material to the ITA's legitimacy and ability to exercise delegated authority, including in particular:

- International Federations
- Major Event Organisers
- National and Regional Anti-Doping Organisations
- World Anti-Doping Agency

- The International Olympic Committee and National Olympic Committees
- Olympic Movement and international sport governance actors
- Athletes and/or athlete representatives with relevant experience
- Where justified, specialised journalists or governance experts

3.3 Public- and media-facing reputational exposure

While the primary focus of the study shall be on institutional and stakeholder perceptions, the study should also consider the ITA's reputational exposure in the public and media sphere insofar as this exposure:

- Influences the confidence of delegating partners
- Affects the ITA's resilience in high-profile or contentious situations
- Interacts with perceptions of independence, fairness, and legitimacy

This component is not intended to measure public awareness or popularity, but to analyse how external narratives and visibility affect institutional trust.

4. Methodological requirements

4.1 General principles

The study must be:

- **Independent** in design, execution, analysis, and interpretation
- **Methodologically rigorous**, with transparent justification of approaches
- **Analytically meaningful**, going beyond descriptive results to explain underlying drivers of perception

4.2 Methodology

Bidders are invited to propose an appropriate methodology. Proposals are expected to:

- Employ **mixed methods** (quantitative and qualitative) where relevant
- Demonstrate clear stakeholder segmentation and analytical depth
- Explicitly address limitations and potential sources of bias
- Be designed in a way that enables **repeatability** for future benchmarking

The use of validated instruments, peer-reviewable methods, or established reputation and trust frameworks is encouraged. Where possible, the methodology should allow comparison with relevant institutional benchmarks or comparable governance bodies (e.g. integrity units) to assess the ITA's reputation and independence within the broader governance landscape.

5. Independence and ethical considerations

Safeguarding independence is a core requirement of this study.

Proposals must clearly demonstrate:

- Institutional and professional independence from the ITA and its partners
- Absence of conflicts of interest, or transparent disclosure where relevant
- Full control by the contractor over data analysis and interpretation
- Senior scientific expertise in reputation, institutional trust, governance, or related fields, including a proven track record of leading independent research projects of comparable methodological complexity
- Ethical standards, including:
 - Informed consent
 - Anonymity and confidentiality
 - Data protection and GDPR compliance
 - Ethics approval where applicable

The ITA will not interfere with analytical findings.

6. Deliverables

Expected deliverables include:

1. A **comprehensive analytical report** presenting findings and interpretation
2. An **executive summary** suitable for senior leadership and governance bodies
3. A **methodology annex** detailing design, instruments, sampling, and limitations
4. A **presentation of findings** to ITA leadership and/or the ITA Board

Recommendations may be included if methodologically justified, but advocacy or prescriptive communication advice is not required.

7. Governance and interaction with the ITA

The ITA will designate focal points for coordination. Interaction will be limited to:

- Initial clarification of objectives and scope
- Facilitation of stakeholder access where appropriate
- Limited interim check-ins focused on progress, not content
- Support and guidance regarding data security, privacy and ethical frameworks
- Final presentation and discussion of results

The independence of the study must be preserved at all times.

8. Timeline

Bidders shall propose a realistic timeline, including key milestones.

The anticipated duration of the study is expected to be **6 months** from contract signature.

9. Budget

The budget for the study will be determined and contractually agreed with the selected project lead, taking into account the proposed scope, methodology, and expertise required.

9. Eligibility

Proposals are invited from:

- Universities or academic research institutes
- Independent research organisations or consultancies
- Consortia combining academic and applied expertise

Demonstrated experience in reputation, trust, governance, or institutional research is required.

10. Evaluation criteria

Proposals will be evaluated on the basis of:

- Methodological quality and rigour
- Demonstrated independence
- Relevance of expertise and experience
- Understanding of the governance and institutional context
- Feasibility and value for money

11. Ownership and confidentiality

The ITA will retain ownership of the final deliverables and data.
Any use or publication of findings by the contractor will require prior written agreement from the ITA.

12. Contact

For questions or the submission of your collaboration proposal, please contact:

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