

## **Appendix 5.4 – Supplementary Methods Information Chapter 5.**

Information sheets including a link to the survey with an integrated informed consent form, were emailed to each participant group (24 athletes and 7 staff). All participants were known professionally to the lead author (LB) and made up the entire study sample. Reminders were sent over the course of a two-week data collection period after which the survey was closed. All surveys were pilot tested, refined and redrafted in consultation with two academics with expertise in survey design. Modifications included improved technical terminology, clarity on the phrasing of the questions and removal of irrelevant questions. A trial analysis using sample data was conducted once the surveys were finalised. The athlete, coach and MDC surveys consisted of 28, 26 and 13 questions respectively. Surveys included open and closed questions and used branch, display and skip logic functions to tailor the content depending on the specific responses. All responses from the surveys were exported to Microsoft Excel for analysis, using frequencies and percentages. These surveys were followed up with a semi-structured online focus group session (MDCs) or semi-structured interview (coaches). The interviews/focus group scripts were developed, drafted and refined as per the athlete evaluation survey. The focus group and interviews were held online (Microsoft Teams) and followed a semi-structured format using the survey responses to formulate the basis of the discussion. The focus group and individual interviews were recorded for video and audio through Microsoft Teams. The interviews/focus group was conducted by the lead author (LB). LB is a PhD candidate and strength and conditioning coach within Swim Ireland's National Centre structures. No external people were present during the process. LB (female) is integrated within Swim Ireland's support staff and leads the training load and injury/illness surveillance project. She has completed specific qualitative research methods modules throughout her academic career. Interviews lasted between 25-30 min, with the focus group extending to 40 min. Once data collection was finalised, transcripts were downloaded and cross-checked for errors. The participants also cross-checked the transcripts before being analysed. Focus group and interview transcripts underwent a thematic analysis, where themes were derived from the data using NVIVO version 10 software (NVivo, [www.qsrinternational.com](http://www.qsrinternational.com)). Due to the overlap/similarity in themes developed from the interviews and focus group, it was decided that these data would be presented together. This process was jointly conducted with one of the co-authors (KMcC), an experienced qualitative researcher and physiotherapist, who was independent of the Training Centre and did not know any of the participants. All themes were discussed and jointly agreed upon.

