



**WORLD
AQUATICS**

TECHNICAL OFFICIALS PATHWAY & APPOINTMENTS RULES

OPEN WATER SWIMMING

In force as from 1 January 2025

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CHAPTER A – BACKGROUND

According to the Rights and Duties of the Bureau under the World Aquatics Constitution (Article 17.1, p), followed by World Aquatics By-Laws (Article 6.5), the World Aquatics Bureau has established the World Aquatics Referees and Officials Committee ('ROC') for each World Aquatics sport on 17 October 2023 in Lausanne, Switzerland.

The establishment of such Committees should further enhance the integrity of each sport and ensure an efficient and reliable Officiating system in Aquatic sports.

Each World Aquatics sport has its own Referees and Officials Committee (except for High Diving, which is to be established at a later stage). Each Committee is represented by three (3) members of which one is the Committee Chair. All members shall be independent from the Sport Technical Committee of each sport and cleared of any conflict of interest.

The new World Aquatics International Technical Officials System is a comprehensive, revamped framework designed to enhance the competency and professionalism of Technical Officials in aquatic sports. Built around three core components—education, experience, and evaluation—this system ensures a holistic approach to skill development and performance assessment. It introduces a tiered structure with Bronze, Silver, and Gold levels, each representing a progressive standard of competency. These levels serve as benchmarks to assess and validate the capabilities of technical officials, enabling precise and merit-based appointments to World Aquatics events. This modernized system aims to foster excellence, consistency, and transparency, elevating the standards of officiating across all six aquatic sports.

CHAPTER B – TECHNICAL OFFICIALS

Technical Officials must be on current World Aquatics Lists approved by the respective Technical Committee for the Aquatics sport in order to officiate at Olympic Games, World Aquatics Championships or World Aquatics Competitions. Nominated officials must be members of the nominating Federation and certified by the Member Federation in submitting their nomination (World Aquatics Competition Regulations, Part one, Article 11.3)

As per the rules, the maximum age of Technical Officials when officiating at World Aquatics Championships or World Aquatics Competitions, except Masters, High Diving and Water Polo, shall be sixty-five (65) years when application is made for the respective World Aquatics List.

All International Technical Officials must be on World Aquatics Lists while National Technical Officials must be approved by the Member Federation in which country the event takes place.

Roles:

International Technical Officials – Chief Referee, Referees, Chief Timekeeper, Timekeepers, Chief Finish Judge, Finish Judges, Clerk of the Course, Race Judges, Turn Judges, Feeding Platform Judge, Relay Judge, Starter, Recorder, Safety Officer, Medical Officer, Course Officer, Video Review Judge

National Technical Officials – same as International Technical Officials.

CHAPTER C – TECHNICAL OFFICIALS’ EXPENSES

There are several financial aspects to be considered for Officials' education, certification and appointments.

All Official's Education and Certification opportunities costs (courses associated fees, course expenses such as travel, accommodation, transportation, meals) sit with the Technical Official candidate and/or his/her National Federation.

Besides, World Aquatics reserves the right to promote or demote officials upon recommendation from the Technical Committee.

Once appointed for the World Aquatics Event (Tier 1 and Tier 2) the expenses are covered as per the following for all International Technical Officials for each Aquatic sport*:

Expense type	Tier 1		Tier 2	
	Olympic Games	World Aquatics Championships	World Aquatics Junior and Youth Championships	World Aquatics World Cup
Travel (economy airfare, train fare, bus fare, by car)*	Organising Committee	National Federation	National Federation	National Federation
Visa (and visa fee associated costs)	Organising Committee	National Federation	National Federation	National Federation
Accommodation *	Organising Committee	Organising Committee	National Federation	National Federation
Ground Transportation	Organising Committee	Organising Committee	Organising Committee	Organising Committee
Meals (full board)	Organising Committee	Organising Committee	Organising Committee	Organising Committee
Per Diem (as per World Aquatics Per Diem policy**)	Organising Committee	World Aquatics	World Aquatics	World Aquatics
Health Insurance	Organising Committee	World Aquatics	World Aquatics	World Aquatics
Uniforms ***	Organising Committee	Organising Committee	World Aquatics	World Aquatics

* Unless it is differently stipulated in the Hosting Agreement between World Aquatics and the Organising Committee

** May differ for the Olympic Games

*** Unless differently stipulated by World Aquatics

For National Technical Officials all expenses shall be covered by the Organising Committee or National Federation.

CHAPTER D – ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

REFEREES AND OFFICIALS COMMITTEE

The Referees and Officials Committee's responsibilities, per Sport, shall be as follows:

- to appoint the necessary Officials (international referee, starter or judge, etc.) for all World Aquatics Events based on the lists of eligible Officials as well as the minimum required number and level-qualified Officials per event Tier;
- according to the feedback and evaluations from the relevant Technical Committees to appoint the necessary Officials on a daily basis –if required- or to amend appointments during competitions ; and
- to provide any other professional activity as deemed necessary by World Aquatics.

Referees and Officials Committee shall work in synergy with each Sport Technical Committee, World Aquatics Sports and Development department.

TECHNICAL SPORT COMMITTEE

Throughout the technical aspects of the sport, each Technical Sport Committee's role is to support the World Aquatics in creating and delivering Officials' education and certification opportunities, evaluation, and monitoring. In addition to this, the Technical Sports Committee shall work closely with the Referees and Officials Committee and World Aquatics Sports Management team, ensuring an efficient and successful officiating system at all World Aquatics Events.

WORLD AQUATICS MANAGEMENT

World Aquatics Management must work closely with the Technical Sports Committees and Referees and Officials Committees while ensuring that the Officials List and database remain up to date. In addition, it must maintain collaborative communication regarding the appointments with the National Federations and Organizing Committees.

World Aquatics shall oversee the work of the Referees and Officials Committee.

To enable a smooth and efficient working approach World Aquatics Management has introduced a new recognition system of Officiating (more information is provided in Chapter C).

CHAPTER E – FRAMEWORK

World Aquatics has put in place a progressive recognition system of Officiating level that identifies all International Officials and enables the Referees and Officials Committee to achieve their duty as an appointment body. The system is defined by three levels: Bronze, Silver and Gold.

Besides, World Aquatics reserves the right to promote or demote officials upon recommendation from the Technical Committee.

The pathway to becoming a World Aquatics International Official is outlined below.

References to the tier of competitions are based on the Competition Regulations, Part One, 2 International Competitions and World Aquatics Calendar.

International Competitions are divided into the following tiers:

Tier 1. Major Aquatics Competitions - the Olympic Games, World Aquatics Championships, World Aquatics Swimming Championships (25m);

Tier 2. Other World Aquatics Competitions - World Junior and Youth Championships in each sport, World Cups, World Leagues, and other World Aquatics competitions;

Tier 3. Continental and Regional Competitions - Continental or Regional Multi-Sport Games, Competitions organised by Continental or Regional Organisations;

Tier 4. Member Federation International Competitions - Events organised or sanctioned by a Member Federation in which other World Aquatics Member Federations, clubs or individuals participate.

Tier 5. Other competitions of major international importance as defined by World Aquatics.

BRONZE LEVEL

PATHWAY TO ENTER BRONZE LEVEL

Over 1 year

CANDIDATES' PROFILE

Officials with:

- good knowledge of the rules;
- experience in officiating as a referee at 2 competitions of Tier 4 or above and
- ethical, physical and mental readiness;

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO ENTER BRONZE LEVEL

National Federations can nominate **4** number of Officials* (validation is made by World Aquatics).

- 1.** Age: Min 18, Max 65
- 2.** Proof of experience as a referee at 2 competitions, of Tier 4 or above
- 3.** English language certificate (intermediate level B1/B2)
- 4.** Application submitted by the National Federation for the candidate to take the Bronze level e-learning course
- 5.** Completed the Bronze level e-learning course within one year on the World Aquatics Learning Platform, concluded by a successful online assessment.

* World Aquatics competitions' Host National Federations will be entitled to nominate up to 10 officials at this level

REQUIREMENTS TO MAINTAIN BRONZE LEVEL
Over 4 years

EDUCATION

- Annual Online Exam: Open for one month on the World Aquatics Learning Platform. Must be completed in a single attempt with Bronze passing grade.
- Online sessions: Participate in online sessions on Rules changes or other specific topics.

EXPERIENCE

- Referee at least at one (1) Tier 4 competition every 4 years

PRACTICAL EVALUATION

- No practical evaluation at Bronze Level*

*An NF can apply for the Official to be considered for Silver if 2 evaluations at Tier 3 and Tier 2 competitions have happened within 2 consecutive years.

Next: Option 1	Next: Option 2	
They don't meet the requirements of Bronze level	They meet the requirements of Bronze level	
- They are excluded from Bronze level - In order to re-enter Bronze level, they need to meet eligibility criteria of Bronze level.	They will be considered to move to Silver if they have stayed in Bronze for a period of 4 years. This period can be shortened if the 2 evaluations at Tier 3 and Tier 2 competitions have happened within 2 consecutive years. If all 2 evaluations happen on their first year, the second year still needs to be completed.	They intend to remain in Bronze level. Limit of age to maintain Bronze: 65

SILVER LEVEL

PATHWAY TO ENTER SILVER LEVEL Over 4 years
CANDIDATES' PROFILE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • very good knowledge of the Rules; and • experience in officiating as Referee at Tier 2 & 3 competitions
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO ENTER SILVER LEVEL
<p>National Federations can nominate 4 number of Officials (validation is made by World Aquatics)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Age: Min 18, Max 65 2. Successfully completed 4 years in Bronze (education and experience) 3. Application submitted by the National Federation for the candidate to attend the Silver level in-person course. 4. Completed the Silver level in-person course, including classroom and practical sessions at a competition, concluded by a successful assessment and practical evaluation.
REQUIREMENTS TO MAINTAIN SILVER LEVEL Over 4 years
EDUCATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Online Exam: Open for one month on the World Aquatics Learning Platform. Must be completed in a single attempt with Silver passing grade. • Online sessions: Participate in online sessions on Rules changes or other specific topics. • Mentorship opportunities will be available for further development.
EXPERIENCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referee at least at one (1) Tier 3 competition every 4 years.
PRACTICAL EVALUATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pass practical evaluation at Tier 3 and Tier 2 competitions. 90% required.

Next: Option 1	Next: Option 2	
They don't meet the requirements of Silver level	They meet the requirements of Silver level	
- They are excluded from the Silver level - They are demoted to Bronze level. In order to be back in Silver level, they need to meet the eligibility criteria of Silver level.	They will be considered to move to Gold if they have stayed in Silver for a minimum of 4 years with at least 3 evaluations at Tier 3, Tier 2 and Tier 1 competitions during this period of time.	They intend to remain in Silver. Limit of age to maintain Silver: 65

GOLD LEVEL

PATHWAY TO ENTER GOLD LEVEL Over 4 years

CANDIDATES' PROFILE

- exceptional knowledge of the Rules and competition management; and
- strong experience in officiating as Referee at Tier 1 & 2 competitions

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA TO ENTER GOLD LEVEL

National Federations can nominate **4** number of Officials (validation is made by World Aquatics):

1. Age: Min 18, Max 65
2. Successfully completed 4 years in Silver (education, experience and evaluations)
3. Application submitted by the National Federation for the candidate to attend the Gold level course (webinar or in-person course).
4. Completed the Gold level course (webinar or in-person course), concluded by a successful assessment.

REQUIREMENTS TO MAINTAIN GOLD LEVEL Over 4 years

EDUCATION

- Annual Online Exam: Open for one month on the World Aquatics Learning Platform. Must be completed in a single attempt with Gold passing grade.
- Online sessions: Participate in online sessions on Rules changes or other specific topics.
- Knowledge sharing: Gold Officials to mentor and share their expertise with Silver Officials

EXPERIENCE

- Chief Referee at least at one (1) Tier 3, 2 and/or 1 competitions every 4 years
- Referee at least at one (1) Tier 3, 2 and/or 1 competitions every 4 years

EVALUATION

- Pass practical evaluation at Tier 3, Tier 2 and Tier 1 competitions. 90% required.

Next: Option 1	Next Option 2
They don't meet the requirements of Gold level	They meet the requirements of Gold level
- They are excluded from the Gold level. - They are demoted to Silver Level. In order to re-enter Gold level, they need to meet the eligibility criteria of Gold level.	They intend to remain in Gold level. Limit of age to maintain Gold: 65

CHAPTER F – OFFICIALS TRANSITIONING

To ensure consistency in officiating World Aquatics will determine the transitioning process for the existing pool of International Technical Officials, based on several criteria, using the Bronze, Silver, and Gold star system.

This point will apply only to any official on the existing and active list 15. Once officials are already placed into the relevant category any official wanting to enter the system, remain in a category or upgrade their category, they shall refer to Chapter E.

The criteria includes current Officials' **certification** and **experience** officiating at World Aquatics Events.

The following Table outlines the criteria for Open Water Swimming Officials:

OPEN WATER SWIMMING	Bronze	Silver	Gold
Certification	Passed OWS Certification course within 4 years of application	Passed OWS Certification course within 4 years of application	Passed OWS Certification course within 4 years of application
Experience*	Referee at least at one (1) Tier 4 competition within the last 4 years	Referee at least at one (1) Tier 3 competition within the last 4 years	Within the last 4 years: - Chief Referee at least at one (1) Tier 3, 2 and/or 1 competitions - Referee at least at one (1) Tier 3, 2 and/or 1 competitions

*Experience will have to be presented via application form sent by the NF.

CHAPTER G – WORLD AQUATICS COMPETITIONS

World Aquatics defines five (5) different Tiers of International Competitions as per World Aquatics Competition Regulations, Part One, Article 2.2.1. For the World Aquatics Officials Appointments, the Competitions of relevance are:

Tier 1. Major Aquatics Competitions - the Olympic Games, World Aquatics Championships, World Aquatics Swimming Championships (25m), and

Tier 2. Other World Aquatics Competitions - World Junior and Youth Championships in each sport, World Cups, World Leagues, and other World Aquatics competitions.

The following Table outlines the number of events per each Tier (World Aquatics events only), for Open Water Swimming sport (per single calendar year and one Olympic cycle):

SPORT	Tier 1		Tier 2		Total	
	Per Calendar Year	Per Olympic Cycle	Per Calendar Year	Per Olympic Cycle	Per Calendar Year	Per Olympic Cycle
OPEN WATER SWIMMING	1 every two years	3 (1 OG and 2 WCH)	5-7	20- 28	6-8	23-31

The following table outlines the number of International (ITOs) and National Technical Officials (NTOs) required for each sports event:

Open Water Swimming	Event	# ITOs	# NTOs
Tier 1	Olympic Games	15	10
	World Championships	15	10
Tier 2	World Cup	5	20
	World Junior Championships	15	10

The Table below outlines the current ratio of **Gold**, **Silver** and **Bronze** levels of International Technical Officials (ITOs) at the following event Tiers:

OPEN WATER SWIMMING								
Tier	% Bronze	# Bronze	% Silver	# Silver	% Gold	# Gold	% total	# total
Tier 1	32%	10	40%	18	28%	7	○	○
Tier 2*	32%	10	48%	20	20%	5	○	○
Tier 2**	72%	18	20%	5	8%	2	○	○

*Juniors || ** World Cups (depends on HMF)

CHAPTER H – APPOINTMENT POLICY

World Aquatics Officials and Referees Committee shall be the only body that has the mandate to recommend and appoint International Officials for all World Aquatics Events, subject to World Aquatics Bureau approval.

The Officials and Referees Committee should proceed to Officials appointments (referees, judges, starters, technical controllers, etc.) for all World Aquatics Events as soon as the World Aquatics Event Calendar is released. In principle, the appointments should take place no later than six (6) months before the commencement of the sports event.

The following shall be taken into consideration when making the Officials appointments:

1. Tier level of the event;
2. Required percentage for appointment of Bronze, Silver, and Gold level Officials;
3. Officials' education, certification, evaluation and experience;
4. Continental/Regional representation;
5. Gender representation;
6. Appointed Referee shall always be a member of the respective Sport Technical Committee to ensure the necessary experience required to uphold such duty.
7. Officials' development opportunities;
8. Available support through National Programmes;
9. Perceived or actual conflict of interest.

Once the appointments are made, and upheld by the World Aquatics Bureau, the World Aquatics Management Team shall communicate appointments to the relevant Officials, National Federations and Organising committee/s.