



**WORLD
AQUATICS**

**TECHNICAL OFFICIALS'
EVALUATION FRAMEWORK**
OPEN WATER SWIMMING

V2
In force as from August 2026

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1. Background

The new World Aquatics International Technical Officials System is a comprehensive 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.

Developing an effective evaluation system for international Open Water Swimming technical officials requires a comprehensive and structured approach. This includes clearly defined evaluation criteria, consistent assessment standards, and transparency in the selection of evaluators.

The primary purpose of building such a system is to ensure that international Open Water Swimming technical officials possess the necessary knowledge, competencies, and leadership qualities to officiate at the highest level. This system aims to uphold fairness, consistency, and credibility in competitive Open Water Swimming events worldwide.

Specifically, the evaluation system is designed to:

- 1) **Enhance Objectivity and Accountability:** Systematic evaluation allows for the identification and correction of biases or inconsistencies, ensuring decisions are grounded in rules rather than personal interpretation;
- 2) **Improve Technical Official Performance and Development:** Regular feedback and performance reviews help technical officials identify their strengths and areas for improvement, promoting continuous education and professional growth;
- 3) **Maintain High Standards Across Competitions:** A standardized evaluation system ensures that technical officials across all regions adhere to the same level of excellence, supporting uniform officiating at international competitions;
- 4) **Support Selection for Major Events:** Transparent and data-driven evaluations aid in selecting the most qualified technical Officials for high-stakes events like World Championships or the Olympics;
- 5) **Build Trust Among Athletes, Coaches, and Spectators:** A reliable evaluation system promotes transparency and fairness, reinforcing trust in the judging process and in the integrity of the sport; and
- 6) **Support promotion of the Technical Officials** to another level within the pathway as well as maintaining the level.

2. Roles of Open Water Swimming Technical Officials

World Aquatics outlines various officiating roles conducted at the World Aquatics Open Water Swimming events, as described in the Competition Regulations Part Three, Section 2 – Officials. The following roles fall under the category of Technical Official and are:

- Chief Referee
- Referee
- Chief Timekeeper
- Chief Finish Judge
- Clerk of Course
- Race Judge (except for events with a course of 10km or less)
- Turn Judge
- Feeding Platform Judge
- Relay Judge
- Starter
- Recorder
- Video Review Judge

3. Level-specific Requirements

	Education	Experience	Practical Evaluation
Bronze	•Annual Online Exam •Online sessions	Officiating as Referee at least at one (1) Tier 4 competition every 4 years	Not required
Silver	•Annual Online Exam •Online sessions •Mentorship opportunities	Officiating as Referee at least at one (1) Tier 3 competition every 4 years	Pass one (1) practical evaluation within the 4-year period at Tier 3 or Tier 2 competitions. 90% required.
Gold	•Annual Online Exam •Online sessions •Knowledge sharing	1) Officiating as Chief Referee at least at one (1) Tier 3, Tier 2 or Tier 1 competitions every 4 years. 2) Officiating as Referee at least at one (1) Tier 3, Tier 2 or Tier 1 competitions every 4 years	Pass two (2) practical evaluations within the 4-year period at Tier 3, Tier 2 or Tier 1 competitions. 90% required.

4. Technical Officials at World Aquatics Competitions & World Aquatics Recognised Competitions

World Aquatics defines five (5) different Tiers of International Competitions as per World Aquatics Competition Regulations, Part One, Article 2.2.1.

The following tables outline the number of events per Tier (per single calendar year and one Olympic cycle) and the minimum number and optimum ratio of Technical Officials at the respective events:

Minimum Number of Technical Officials 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

Optimum Ratio of Technical Officials

Open Water Swimming							
Tier	% Bronze	# Bronze	% Silver	# Silver	% Gold	# Gold	% total
Tier 1	32		40		28		100
Tier 2 - WJCH	32		48		20		100
Tier 2 – OWSWC*	72		20		8		100

*Depends on HMF

Number of Events per Tier - Breakdown

Competitions		Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Olympic cycle (4yrs)
Tier 1. Major Aquatics Competitions						
The Olympic Games, World Aquatics Championships						
Olympic Games		0	0	0	1	1
World Championships		1	0	1	0	2
Total		1	0	1	1	3
Tier 2. Other World Aquatics Competitions						
World Junior, World Cups, World Leagues, and other World Aquatics competitions						
Open Water Swimming World Cup		5	5	5	5	20
World Junior OWS Championships		1	0	1	0	2
Total		6	5	6	5	22
Tier 3 - Continental and Regional Competitions						
Continental or Regional Multi-Sport Games, Competitions organised by Continental or Regional Organisations						
EU	Continental Championships	1		1		2
	Continental Age group champs	1	1	1	1	4
	Continental OWS Cups	6	6	6	6	24
AM	Continental Championships	1		1		2
	Continental Age group champs		1		1	2
	Continental multi-sport Games			1		1
	Regional Competitions - CARIFTA, CCCAN, ODESUR	2	2	2	2	8
	Continental OWS Cups	3	3	3	3	12
AS	Continental Age group champs	1		1		2
	Continental multi-sport Games		1			1

	Regional Competitions – SEA Games, SEA Age Group Championships	2	1	2	1	6
OC	Continental Championships		1		1	2
	Continental multi-sport Games			1		1
AF	Continental Championships		1		1	2
	Continental Age group champs	1		1		2
	Continental multi-sport Games			1		1
	Regional Competitions - CANA Zone IV Championships	1	1	1	1	4
Recognised international events	ANOC World Beach Games		1		1	2
	FISU University Games	1		1		2
	Pan Pacific Championships & Junior Championships		2		1	3
Total		20	21	23	20	84
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.						

Numbers of Events within one Olympic cycle (4yrs)

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3	Tier 4&5	TOTAL
3	22	83	TBC	108+

5. Evaluation of Technical Officials

Practical evaluations will be conducted for the Technical Officials who will officiate as Referees and Chief Referees at World Aquatics competitions (Tier 1 and 2) and World Aquatics recognised competitions (Tier 3, 4 and 5) to assess the technical officials' officiating competencies and demonstration of professionalism at the practical settings.

The practical on-site assessment constitutes the primary basis for the official evaluation of a Technical Official. It assesses the official's performance in a real competition environment and therefore remains the decisive element of the evaluation.

Written knowledge assessments and oral situational discussions are complementary evaluation tools. Their purpose is to verify the Technical Official's current knowledge of the Competition Regulations, support the evaluator's professional judgement and, where appropriate, supplement observations that could not reasonably be made during competition. They do not replace the practical assessment and should not outweigh the demonstrated performance during competition.

The evaluations shall be performed by an Evaluator who is duly approved by World Aquatics Technical Open Water Swimming Committee (TOWSC) Commission.

Appointment of Evaluator

Tier 1 and 2: Appointment of an Evaluator for each competition is made by the World Aquatics TOWSC Commission.

Tier 3: Appointment of an Evaluator for each competition is made by the Continental Organisation and/or Host Member Federation (to be approved by the World Aquatics TOWSC Commission).

Tier 4 and 5: Appointment of an Evaluator for each competition is made by the Host Member Federation (to be approved by World Aquatics TOWSC Commission).

The appointed Evaluator shall be void of conflicts of interest in advance of their appointment and have an obligation to declare any possible conflicts of interest that may arise, for which the World Aquatics TOWSC Commission shall determine whether a conflict exists.

Evaluator Eligibility

a) Standard Eligibility

Evaluators must hold a current World Aquatics Open Water Swimming Officials Certification at Gold Level and meet at least one of the following experience criteria:

- Officiated as Chief Referee at World Aquatics Tier 2 or higher events within the last 3 years;
- Served as Referee at World Aquatics Tier 2 or higher events within the last 4 years; and
- Demonstrated sustained positive performance at World Aquatics Tier 3 or higher events within the last 8 years.

b) Commission Discretion Clause

In justified cases, the Commission may nominate an Evaluator who does not fully meet the baseline eligibility criteria, provided that the individual demonstrates:

- Proven senior leadership at major international Open Water Swimming events (e.g. World Aquatics Championships, Olympic Games, or equivalent), and
- A documented record of professionalism, sound judgment, and contribution to the development of officials at international level.

Any nomination made under this provision shall:

- be explicitly justified by the Commission;
- be documented in the nomination record; and
- be limited to cases where the individual's profile clearly supports the objectives and credibility of the evaluation system.

Training for Evaluators

Training will be provided on an annual basis. All the nominated candidates for the Evaluator pool shall be required to complete the training in order to be assigned to a World Aquatics Event as an Evaluator.

The evaluation process is intended to be constructive and developmental. While maintaining high international officiating standards, Evaluators should support continuous learning and professional growth through objective observation and professional feedback.

6. Core Competencies required for each level

Bronze level

Bronze-level officials are independent and confident Referees who apply the rules accurately to a consistently high standard. At this stage, they are beginning to develop their international experience and are focused on refining the foundational skills, judgment, and professionalism required for progression to higher levels of officiating.

Upon successful completion of the Bronze Level Course, officials will be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- Operate within the World Aquatics officiating structure;
- Execute the duties of a Referee with consistency and professionalism;
- Apply rules in line with international standards;
- Collaborate effectively within an officiating team; and
- Support the organisation and delivery of international Open Water Swimming competitions.

Silver level

Silver-level officials are experienced international Referees who demonstrate advanced rule understanding and application, consistent control, and strong communication within officiating teams. They uphold World Aquatics' standards, policies and directives across diverse competitive environments and contribute to the quality and fairness of competitions at international level.

At this stage, officials focus on refining their high-performance mindset, adapting to complex competition scenarios, and preparing for potential advancement to the highest level of the sport.

Upon successful completion of the Silver Level Course, officials will be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- Lead consistent and fair officiating at international competitions;
- Critically employ rules with insight and precision;
- Collaborate and lead within officiating teams; and
- Contribute to the organisation and integrity of competitions.

Gold level

Gold-level officials are elite Referees with exceptional technical mastery, competition insight, and leadership skills. They officiate at the most prestigious competitions—including World Championships and Olympic Games—and are trusted with positions at the highest-level competitions. These officials demonstrate exemplary decision-making, manage high-pressure environments with integrity, and set the standard for professionalism in international events.

At this stage, they also contribute to the development of the global officiating community through leadership, mentoring, and maintaining high officiating standards worldwide.

Upon successful completion of the Gold Level Course, officials will be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- Lead officiating practice at the highest level of international competition;
- Exercise specialist-level rule understanding and a decision-making;
- Mentor and lead officiating teams;
- Model professional conduct and continuous development; and
- Contribute to the planning, delivery and review of world-class competitions.

Officials at all levels should always conduct themselves in an appropriate manner and ensure their neutral status.

7. Evaluation Criteria for Technical Officials

The practical on-site assessment evaluates international Open Water Swimming Technical officials in the roles of Referee and Chief Referee in a holistic manner, covering three key competency areas:

I Knowledge and application of Open Water Swimming Rules (45%)

Evaluation Criteria

- **Rule Understanding and Application**
 - Are they aware of and able to implement recent rule changes?
 - Can they correctly distinguish and apply technical rules?
 - Can they apply rules precisely without overreaching or missing violations?
- **Positioning and Mobility within the course**
 - Are referees properly positioned within the course to observe all necessary elements?
 - Do they move discreetly and effectively when needed?
- **Real-Time Decision-Making**
 - Can they quickly and accurately spot infractions during live races without hesitation?
- **Consistency Across Situations**
 - Are rules applied uniformly under the same standard across all swimmers and races throughout the competition?
- **Ethical Application**
 - Are all swimmers treated equally without bias of favouritism?
- **Confidence in Application**
 - Do they make decisions assertively and professionally, without second-guessing themselves too much?
- **Use of Proper Procedures**
 - Are disqualifications properly reported using correct forms and protocols?
 - Do they know when they need to escalate issues to the Chief Referee /Technical Delegate?
- **Avoiding "Over-judging"**
 - Do they avoid penalising minor or uncleared infractions?
 - Do they apply benefit of the doubt appropriately?

Evaluation Method

- **Practical Application by nominated Evaluator (45 points):** Based on live observation and review of decisions made during actual competition settings. The Evaluator may also consider information obtained through written knowledge assessments and oral situational discussions, where these assist in confirming or clarifying observations made during the practical evaluation.

Score Range

- **Excellent (38-45 points):** Comprehensive and accurate rule application.
- **Good (30-37 points):** Solid understanding with minor inaccuracies.
- **Needs Improvement (0-29 points):** Outdated or insufficient rule knowledge.

II Interpersonal skills, Professionalism, Ethics and Communication (45%)

Evaluation Criteria

- **Attention and Focus**
 - Do they remain alert and attentive throughout their duties?
 - Did they stay engaged and avoid distractions?
- **Communication Skills**

- Was the pre-race briefing concise, respectful and conveyed all necessary information in an effective manner?
- Were decisions communicated respectfully and clearly to coaches, swimmers, and other officials?
- Were reports and paperwork properly completed?
- **Professionalism**
 - Was attire appropriate and behaviour respectful?
 - Were they punctual and cooperative?
- **Leadership and Decision-Making**
 - Could they lead a team and coordinate actions during events?
 - Did they mediate disputes, handle conflicts, and ensure team collaboration?
 - Were they capable of making accurate and effective decisions under pressure?
- **Handling Pressure**
 - How did they respond to stressful situations, like appeals or controversial calls?
 - Did they remain calm and composed?
- **Teamwork**
 - Did they work collaboratively with other technical officials and administrative staff?
- **Ethics and Integrity**
 - Did they maintain impartiality and uphold the spirit of fair play?
- **Adaptability and Openness to Feedback**
 - Are they willing to learn from evaluations and adapt to new rules or technologies (like VAR system)?

Evaluation Method

- **Grading by nominated Evaluator (45 points):** Based on live observation.

Score Range

- **Excellent (38-45 points):** Professional, fair, composed, and collaborative.
- **Good (30-37 points):** Generally strong, with some room for growth.
- **Needs Improvement (0-29 points):** Lacking key interpersonal or ethical competencies.

III Operational Communication in English (10%)

Evaluation Criteria

- Uses correct technical terminology in spoken and written communication;
- Explains rules and decisions clearly, calmly and neutrally to athletes, coaches and team officials;
- Communicates effectively under pressure (appeals, informal protests, controversial decisions); and
- Produces clear, structured and accurate written communication in English, where required (e.g. incident reports, written explanations, official documentation).

Evaluation Method

- **Operational Communication (10 points):** Assessed during event interactions on the ability of the Referee or Chief Referee to communicate effectively in English in an international competition environment, both orally and in writing where and/or when required. The focus is on clarity, accuracy, professionalism and mutual understanding. Formal shortcomings should not be penalised if the message is correct, professional and understood.

Score Range

- **Excellent (9-10 points):** Fluent and clear communication.
- **Good (6-8 points):** Generally effective, with some minor errors or areas of improvement.
- **Needs Improvement (0-5 points):** Struggles with effective communication; frequent grammatical or terminological errors.

Scoring Rubric:

- **Total Points:** 100
- **Evaluation Scale:**
 - **Excellent (85-100 points):** Demonstrates exceptional knowledge, communication, and professionalism.
 - **Good (65-84 points):** Meets the expected standards with minor areas for improvement.
 - **Needs Improvement (below 65 points):** Requires further development in key areas.

In addition to the overall total score, a critical minimum standard applies to the two core competency categories.

A score below 40% in Category 1 (Knowledge and Application of OWS Rules) or Category 2 (Interpersonal Skills, Professionalism, Ethics and Communication) indicates a critical deficiency and results in an overall evaluation outcome of “Does not meet the expected standard”, regardless of the total score.

The 40% thresholds are:

- Category 1: below **18 / 45**
- Category 2: below **18 / 45**

Additional Notes:

- **Ongoing Evaluation:** Technical Officials evaluations should be conducted periodically, not as a one-time, to ensure continued compliance with updated rules and expectations.
- **Training and Development:** Technical Officials who fall in the “Needs Improvement” range should be offered targeted training sessions to enhance specific areas before their next evaluation.

8. OWS Technical Officials – Evaluation Form

Evaluation Type

☐ Referee ☐ Chief Referee

Event

Title:	Tier:	Date:	Location:
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Technical Official

Name:	NF Code:	Certificate Level: Gold / Silver / Bronze	Role assigned:
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Scoring Guide

Categories 1 and 2 are scored on a 0-3 scale per criterion:

3 = Excellent (fully meets or exceeds the expected standard)

2 = Good (meets the standard with minor weaknesses)

1 = Needs Improvement (partially meets the standard; clear weaknesses)

0 = Unsatisfactory (does not meet the standard)

N/A = Not observed / not applicable (excluded from scoring)

Category 3 (Operational Communication in English) is scored on a 0-2 scale per criterion:

2 = Meets the standard

1 = Partially meets the standard

0 = Does not meet the standard

This scoring form records the practical on-site assessment. Written knowledge assessments and oral situational discussions, where conducted, support the evaluator's judgement but are not scored as part of this form.

If the Technical Official scores **below 40% (below 18 points)** in **Category 1** or **Category 2**, this indicates a critical deficiency and the overall evaluation result must be recorded as "Does not meet the expected standard", regardless of the total score. **Category 3** is not applied as an independent fail threshold, but a low score should trigger a targeted development recommendation.

Category 1 – Knowledge and Application of OWS Rules (45 points)

No.	Criterion / Question	3	2	1	0	N/A
1	Are they aware of and able to implement recent rule changes?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Can they correctly distinguish and understand technical rules?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Can they apply rules precisely without overreaching or missing violations?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Are they properly positioned within the course to observe all necessary elements?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Do they move discreetly and effectively when needed?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Can they quickly and accurately identify infractions during live races?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Are rules applied uniformly across all swimmers and races throughout the competition?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Are all swimmers treated equally without bias or favouritism?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

No.	Criterion / Question	3	2	1	0	N/A
9	Do they make decisions assertively and professionally, without undue hesitation?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Are penalties and disqualifications reported correctly using the appropriate forms and protocols?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	Do they correctly identify situations that require escalation to the Chief Referee or Technical Delegate?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	Do they follow the correct decision-making chain and procedures in complex situations?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	Do they avoid penalising minor or unclear infractions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Do they apply the benefit of the doubt appropriately?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	Overall technical control and application of Open Water Swimming rules during the competition	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Category 1 Total: _____ / 45

Category 2 – Interpersonal Skills, Professionalism, Ethics & Communication (45 points) – Evaluation as Chief Referee

No.	Criterion / Question	3	2	1	0	N/A
1	Do they remain alert and attentive throughout their duties?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Do they stay engaged and avoid distractions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Are decisions communicated clearly and respectfully to athletes, coaches and officials?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Is communication timely and appropriate to the situation?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Is attire appropriate and behaviour professional at all times?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Are they punctual, cooperative and reliable?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Do they demonstrate leadership and coordination appropriate to their role?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Do they manage disputes and conflicts effectively and fairly?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	Do they make accurate and effective decisions under pressure?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Do they remain calm and composed under pressure?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	Do they work collaboratively with other technical officials and administrative staff?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	Do they maintain impartiality and uphold the spirit of fair play?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Chief Referee Briefing – Final Call Room						
13	Structure, clarity and completeness of the briefing in the Final Call Room	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Coverage of safety, procedures and key operational points	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	Authority, time management and confirmation of understanding	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Category 2 Total: _____ / 45

Category 2 – Interpersonal Skills, Professionalism, Ethics & Communication (45 points) – Evaluation as Referee

No.	Criterion / Question	3	2	1	0	N/A
1	Do they remain alert and attentive throughout their duties?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Do they stay engaged and avoid distractions?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Are decisions communicated clearly and respectfully to athletes, coaches and officials?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Is communication timely and appropriate to the situation?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Is attire appropriate and behaviour professional at all times?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	Are they punctual, cooperative and reliable?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7	Do they demonstrate leadership and coordination appropriate to their role?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8	Do they manage disputes and conflicts effectively and fairly?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9	Do they make accurate and effective decisions under pressure?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10	Do they respond appropriately to stressful situations, such as appeals or controversial calls?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11	Do they remain calm and composed under pressure?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12	Do they work collaboratively with other technical officials and administrative staff?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13	Do they maintain impartiality and uphold the spirit of fair play?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14	Are they open to feedback and willing to adapt to new rules or technologies?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15	Overall professionalism and interpersonal effectiveness	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Category 2 Total: _____ / 45

Category 3 – Operational Communication in English (10 points)

No.	Criterion / Question	2	1	0	N/A
1	Clarity and professionalism in spoken communication in English	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	Correct and consistent use of technical terminology	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	Effectiveness of communication under pressure (appeals, informal protests, critical situations)	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	Ability to ensure mutual understanding in an international environment	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	Quality and structure of written communication in English, where required	☐	☐	☐	☐

Category 3 Total: _____ / 10

Overall Result

Category 1 – Knowledge and Application of OWS Rules (max. 45 points)		☐ below 18
Category 2 – Interpersonal Skills, Professionalism, Ethics & Communication (max. 45 points)		☐ below 18
Category 3 – Operational Communication in English (max. 10 points)		
Total Score: _____ / 100		If any box above is ticked, the overall result must be "Does not meet the expected standard".

- o **Excellent (85-100 points):** Demonstrates exceptional knowledge, communication, and professionalism.
- o **Good (65-84 points):** Meets the expected standards with minor areas for improvement.
- o **Needs Improvement (below 65 points):** Does not meet the expected standards and requires further development in key areas.

EVALUATOR'S COMMENTS / SUPPORTING OBSERVATIONS

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge, the above assessment has been conducted in a consistent, accurate, and fair manner.

Evaluator
(signature)
Date
Location