



Local Organizing Committee Handbook / Requirements to Host

OVERVIEW

The U.S. Figure Skating National Qualifying Series (NQS) was approved by the 2018 Governing Council and will go into effect in the summer of 2019. The NQS is a series of competitions hosted individually by member clubs nationwide, during the summer months, in which athletes will enter and earn a score. They will receive a placement in the individual competition they enter, and an overall NQS ranking in their level, section and nationwide.

The NQS will be comprised of existing non-qualifying competitions that agree to a set of standards and requirements relating to registration process, scoring system, conduct of competition and officials. Any U.S. Figure Skating member club that is hosting a non-qualifying competition may apply to be part of the series. These requirements ensure a standard, consistent and fair experience for participation athletes.

There will be a separate NQS for Singles, for Pairs and for Ice Dance. The host club / competition may designate which discipline (Singles, Pairs, Ice Dance) they would like to host and are responsible only for meeting the standards in that discipline. They may select only one, two or all three disciplines.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the NQS is to allow athletes at the qualifying levels (juvenile – senior) to earn an official national series ranking, a sectional ranking and can earn a bye/automatic advance through their first level of the qualifying competition structure. For singles, this bye is to their respective Sectional Singles Final, for ice dance to the U.S. Ice Dance Final and for pairs to the U.S. Pairs Final. All three events will be held in November.

Athletes will select any NQS events they wish to participate. There is no minimum or maximum number of competitions required and they may enter any event in any geographic location. Only the athlete's highest score will count towards their final national and sectional ranking, and for earning a bye.

REQUIREMENTS & INFORMATION TO HOST A NATIONAL QUALIFYING SERIES COMPETITION

To be accepted into the NQS, a competition must agree to all the requirements, for the discipline(s) they wish to host. It is strongly recommended but not required that a competition have been established for a minimum of five prior seasons before applying to become an NQS event.

SafeSport Compliance

Host clubs of NQS competitions must be in compliance with SafeSport rules and policies. This includes the club having a SafeSport Compliance Chair that has passed a background check and completed the SafeSport training. Click [here](#) for the current SafeSport Handbook. See page 20 for information on clubs' responsibilities with regards to a SafeSport Compliance Chair.

Calendar / Schedule

Competitions in the NQS must begin on or after Friday, May 31, 2019 and conclude by Sunday, September 15, 2019.

There are no restrictions regarding the actual competition scheduling during the competition. The Chief Referee will determine the competition schedule within the scope of the overall NQS requirements as listed within.

Registration/Event Management System

Athletes first register to participate in the NQS, overall, with U.S. Figure Skating, via EMS, by May 28th and pay an entry fee of \$25.00, which will be used to administer and support the series. Late entries into the series will not be permitted. (Skaters may, however, enter any competitions regardless of their NQS entry status. Scores of athletes not registered for the series simply won't count in the series).

All NQS competitions must use U.S. Figure Skating's Event Management System (EMS) for registration and event management for their NQS events to ensure participating athletes are tracked correctly, the scores recorded, and officials are recorded/assigned properly. (Note: this refers to the Juvenile – Senior NQS portion of the competition).

Athletes register separately and directly for each competition they wish to enter, via EMS. Host clubs set and receive all entry fees and practice ice fees for their competition; these fees are established by the competition and are not subject to approval by U.S. Figure Skating.

Host competitions set and manage the entry deadlines and applicable late fees for their competitions.

In addition to the entry and results transmittal, EMS provides host competitions with the following tools to manage their event, ensuring all U.S. Figure Skating rules and policies are met:

- **System compliance:** Connectivity to the U.S. Figure Skating database allows the LOC to monitor and enforce SafeSport and compliance requirements for LOC leadership, coaches, officials and volunteers automatically (don't need to manually use the compliance reports).
- **Credentials:** A credential print portal, attached to the member database, allows LOCs to quickly and easily print credentials for everyone associated with the competition, with a standard look and feel.
- **Officials management:** Automatically verifies officials' eligibility for NQS, invites them to your competition and communicates with them.
- **Financial:** Budget module and reports support the LOC in planning, tracking and settlement of finances. All entry fees and practice ice fees are processed by U.S. Figure Skating and remitted to the LOC within 24 hours of receipt.
- **Practice ice & schedule:** Creation and publication of full competition schedule, sale of practice ice through customizable pathways pre-purchase, open and onsite sales. (For on-site sales, skaters can purchase practice ice through their mobile device)
- **Volunteer management:** Tool for sign-up, management, tracking and SafeSport compliance.

The use of U.S. Figure Skating's Event Management System (EMS), is completely free of charge to all NQS host competitions.

Judging System

As stated in the U.S. Figure Skating Rulebook, rule 1232, the official calculation software with the latest related version of the software and the official judging system hardware must be used. Hardware can be supplied by U.S. Figure Skating or an approved third party as listed on the Members Only site in the General Info tab under IJS rental. This ensures consistency across all competitions and a timely and accurate publication of current standings on Members Only.

Officials

The host competition will select their panel of officials, in cooperation with U.S. Figure Skating's Domestic Selections Committee. For the official events of the NQS competitions, the following is required:

1. **Referee:** The Chief Referee must be at the Regional level or higher. In the case of the Dance series, the Dance Referee must be at the Sectional level or higher.
2. **Technical Panel:** Technical controller and technical specialists must be at the Regional level or higher for singles and Sectional level or higher for dance and pairs. Data operator must be Regional level or higher.
3. **Judges:** The panel of each event segment will consist of 5-7 judges. All judges must be at least the Regional level or higher for singles and pairs events and Novice Sectional or higher for dance events.
4. **Accountants:** The Chief Accountant must be at the Sectional level or higher. The Chief Technical Accountant must be Level 2 or higher if using a mini or micro system. Assistant accountants/TA's may be Regional/Level 1 or higher.

When submitting the application to host, competitions must submit the name of their proposed Chief Referee, along with the anticipated pool of officials that will be invited / have accepted an invitation to the competition and are expected to serve on the panels for the Juvenile – Senior events. U.S. Figure Skating will not be involved in any officials' panels that are not included in the official NQS portion of the competition. It is required that the competition will submit revised panels to U.S. Figure Skating if any changes are made after initial approval.

In addition, U.S. Figure Skating reserves the right to add a small number of officials to the list of officials, by the Domestic Officials Recruitment and Management Committee* or Domestic Selections Committee*. If confirmed, the host club will be provided with a financial contribution from U.S. Figure Skating to offset the additional official's air travel and lodging.

No later than 30 days prior to the start of the first competition day, the Chief Referee must provide the Domestic Selections Committee with a list of officials that will be assigned to each event segment. The Domestic Selections Committee will have one week to approve and/or make any adjustments.

Exceptions / Additions: There may be circumstances where an official lower than the above level is permitted officiate, with the approval of the Chair of the Domestic Selections Committee and NVC of the

appropriate Subcommittee. The Chief Referee may make that request up to 30 days prior to the start of the competition.

Budget & Finances

The host club is responsible for all expenses incurred in hosting a NQS competition, except for financial assistance being provided if a U.S. Figure Skating Committee adds an official to the event (see above). The host club sets their own entry fee, and additional fees (i.e., practice ice, tickets, etc.), and athletes pay these fees directly to the club, via EMS. U.S. Figure Skating does not have financial involvement in the competition. (Except for processing entry and practice ice fees, on behalf of the competition, and remitting it back within 24 hours of receipt via ACH. If applicable, the stipend for an additional official will be paid to the LOC through this system, as well.)

Results Publication

The host club, and their Chief Accountant / Technical Accountant, will work with U.S. Figure Skating's Events Department, and the Competitions Committee, on the transmission of the competition database files to HQ staff and publication of NQS standings / results. The standings will be generated by EMS and the accounting system, with current standings being maintained on the Members Only web site. The Technology Subcommittee of the Competitions Committee, in partnership with HQs will oversee this process.

Events to be Skated & Conduct of Events

Competitions must allow athletes to "skate-up" one level from their current test level. (Athletes may register for the NQS in two levels, however, they may only compete in one level at an individual competition. Athletes entering two levels will complete two entries and pay two entry fees).

SINGLES

All National Qualifying Series competitions for singles must offer the following events:

- Juvenile Girls, Intermediate Ladies, Novice Ladies, Junior Ladies, Senior Ladies
- Juvenile Boys, Intermediate Men, Novice Men, Junior Men, Senior Men

If more than 24 skaters enter an event, qualifying Rounds and seeding will be conducted in accordance with Rule 2460.

Conduct of events:

The final result of all NQS Singles events will be a "championship round," consisting of a combined short program and free skate score for intermediate – senior, and a free skate for juvenile. When there are 24 or fewer competitors entered, all competitors proceed directly to this championship round. Generally, NQS events within a competition will follow the same competitive format as Regional Singles Challenges. (See Rule 2460).

- A. When there are more than 24 entries in an event, qualifying rounds will be held in accordance with Rule 2466. The number of qualifying round groups as well as the total number of skaters advancing to the championship round are shown in this chart:

Entries	Qualifying Round (QR)			Championship Round (CR)
	Number of Groups	Number Advancing/Group	Additional Number Advancing by Score	Total Number Advancing
25-36	2	4	+4 next highest scores	12
37-54	3	4	+4 next highest scores	16
55-72	4	4	+4 next highest scores	20
73-90	5	4	+4 next highest scores	24
91-144	6	4	+4 next highest scores	28
145-196	7	4	+4 next highest scores	32

- B. Qualifying rounds will consist of the free skate program only. (Same as Regional Singles Challenge)
- C. Qualifying rounds, if necessary, will be seeded in accordance with rule 2463. (Same as Regional Singles Challenge)
- D. If there are NOT enough competitors for qualifying and championship rounds, then the combined short program and free skate Total Score will qualify for the NQS ranking.
- E. If there ARE enough competitors for qualifying and championship rounds, skaters not qualifying for the championship round will not have a Total Score entered in the NQS for that competition. They may, however, compete their short program in a consolation round hosted by the competition. (See below)

Consolation Rounds:

To allow ample opportunities for skaters to compete their short program, and consistency across competitions, if an NQS competition has enough competitors in an event to hold qualifying and championship rounds (in accordance with the rules above), it is recommended they hold a consolation round short program competition, for intermediate and higher levels, for any competitors that do not make the championships round.

Host competitions may divide the remaining competitors into group sizes of their choice, not to exceed 28 competitors per group and awards are at the discretion of the competition. Consolation round short program scores do not count towards official NQS standings and are considered an event under the jurisdiction of the competition.

Consolation rounds for juvenile singles are at the discretion of the competition and should be communicated to skaters in the competition announcement.

PAIRS (for those competitions choosing to host pairs)

All National Qualifying Series competitions for Pairs will offer the following events:

- Juvenile Pairs, Intermediate Pairs, Novice Pairs, Junior Pairs, Senior Pairs

Conduct of events:

The result of all NQS Pairs events will be a combined short program and free skate score for novice, junior and senior, and a free skate score for juvenile and intermediate. Generally, NQS events within a competition will follow the same competitive format as a qualifying competition. Teams are not required to officially enter the NQS to compete in a competition.

DANCE (for those competitions choosing to host dance)

All National Qualifying Series competitions for Dance will offer the following events:

- Juvenile Dance, Intermediate Dance, Novice Dance, Junior Dance, Senior Dance

Conduct of events:

The result of all NQS Dance competitions will be a combined pattern dance and free dance score for juvenile, intermediate and novice and a combined rhythm dance and free dance for junior and senior. Teams are not required to officially enter the NQS to compete in a competition.

Critiques

The ability for athletes and coaches to receive feedback on their performances is important and must be balanced with the competition and officials' ability to provide correct, appropriate and quality feedback. Competitions may offer competitors critiques but must follow current guidelines from the Technical Panel Committee. Updated guidelines will be provided to competition hosts by June 1, 2019 and should be distributed by the Chief Referee to all officials conducting critiques. Highlights of the guidelines include:

- All critique sessions abide by the [U.S. Figure Skating SafeSport Policy](#) on two-deep leadership (see page 4).
- When possible, officials should include the Technical Controller or Assistant Technical Specialist on the event.
- A group critique setting is recommended.
- Officials should be certified at the Regional level or higher.
- Other guidelines include information for the critique official.

Application to Host:

Clubs wishing to host an official National Qualifying Series event must apply via EMS by February 1, 2019. Clubs will be asked to choose which discipline(s) they are applying for and agree to all the details throughout this handbook:

- ✓ Proposed Composition of Officials Panel
- ✓ Conduct of Events
- ✓ Registration System (EMS) for NQS events
- ✓ Results publication
- ✓ Upload of a past competition announcement
- ✓ Understanding of the Critique Recommendations
- ✓ Agreement to comply with SafeSport policies
- ✓ Agreement of willingness to partner with U.S. Figure Skating in preparation for the competition

Selection of Competitions:

For 2019-20, the NQS events will be selected by the U.S. Figure Skating Competitions Task Force, with input from the Competitions Committee. There is not a maximum number of competitions that will be selected. Competitions that are able to agree the host requirements will be selected.

Competitions will be informed of their acceptance to the NQS no later than Feb. 25, 2019,

Next Steps:

After a competition is informed they are accepted to be an official NQS event, the chair / contact person completing the application will receive a communication from U.S. Figure Skating's event department with regards to preparation of their competition announcement, sanction application process and training on EMS to build their competition.

Note: As this is the first year of the NQS, we request that sanction requests are not submitted in advance due to new functionality that will be associated with this program. As soon as your competition is accepted, you'll receive instructions on the sanction process.

Questions:

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APPENDIX / FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How involved will U.S. Figure Skating be in the running of our competition?

U.S. Figure Skating requires that NQS competitions follow a set of standards to provide a consistent, high quality competition for competitors. This includes using the Event Management System (EMS) for efficient results tracking, the approved standard of event conduct, the newest IJS software and the approved level of officials.

U.S. Figure Skating only oversees the conduct of the official NQS events within the competition (Juvenile – Senior), and will not have any authority over the schedule, entry fees, practice ice, deadlines, etc. In addition, U.S. Figure Skating will have no authority over specialty or other events such as Excel, levels below juvenile, specialty events, etc.

U.S. Figure Skating expects a supportive partnership with the competition host, leading up to the competition to ensure the best and most fair experience for participating athletes.

How will awards work?

Competitions will post results and give out medals, ribbons, etc., for their own events, as they always have, without regards to the NQS. Only the athlete's Total Score from the final/championship round of the competition will carry over to the NQS standings, not their placement. NQS awards will be provided to **all** competitors from U.S. Figure Skating Headquarters at the end of the series and will include certificates and pins.

Can skaters that didn't officially enter the NQS with U.S. Figure Skating compete in our competition in an NQS event?

Yes. There are no restrictions on who may enter your event. If an athlete has officially entered the NQS, their Total Score will be extracted from the competition results and carried over to the NQS standings. If they have not, their score / result will simply be ignored in the NQS standings.

Does our competition need to worry about which region or section participating skaters live in / represent?

No. Skaters enter the NQS by May 15th with U.S. Figure Skating, and for rankings and earning byes, they are assigned to the section their home club is located. However, skaters may enter any competition, in any section they wish (Regions are not relevant to the NQS). When their Total Scores are extracted from the competition results, they are simply sorted into the appropriate section for the NQS.

Before September 1st, a skater can elect to switch clubs and compete out of a different region / section for the Regional Singles Challenge / Sectional Singles Final than they did for the NQS. However, byes will not carry over. For example, if a skater finished 4th in Intermediate Ladies in the NQS – Pacific Coast Section, she would be offered a bye to compete in the Pacific Coast Sectional Singles Final. If she chose to then switch to a home club within the Southwestern Region, she would forfeit her bye, and be required to compete at the Southwestern Regional Singles Challenge and place in the top 4, to advance to the Midwestern Sectional Singles Final. The 7th place skater in the Pacific Coast NQS would be offered the bye the skater switching sections forfeited.

(Note: The example in paragraph 2 is for information only, the host clubs from NQS competitions do not need to worry about this or take it into consideration).

Can skaters enter more than one level?

Skaters may complete two separate entries for the NQS, in two different levels, if they choose, and are test-eligible for both. (I.e., a skater that has passed Juvenile FS may enter both Juvenile and Intermediate). **However**, they may not enter two levels at the same competition. (i.e., they could enter Juvenile at the Broadmoor Open, and have their score count towards the Juvenile NQS standings, and enter Intermediate at Skate Detroit, with that score counting towards the Intermediate NQS standings.)

Further, at the end of the NQS, to continue in the qualifying season, the skater must enter the Regional Singles Challenge in only one level, which they are test eligible for, as of September 1, and any byes do not cross levels. For example, if a skater that has passed Juvenile FS, finishes 5th in Midwestern NQS in Juvenile, and 10th in the Intermediate NQS, she may elect to **either** a) stay Juvenile and accept a bye to compete Juvenile at the Midwestern Singles Final **or** b) pass the Intermediate FS test, decline her bye, and compete in Intermediate FS at the appropriate Regional Singles Challenge. In the event she elected option b, the 7th place finisher in Juvenile would earn the bye to the Midwestern Singles Final.

What happens if a skater doesn't ever make a "championship round" in any competition?

If more than 24 skaters enter a NQS competition, in a level, a qualifying round will be held at that competition, following the format described in the host requirements and rulebook. Only a skater's Total Score from the final/championships round will carry forward to the official NQS results. If there are fewer than 25 entries in a given competition, only one round is held, with that Total Score carrying forward to the NQS results.

Because skaters may enter any competitions they want to, they are encouraged to take that into consideration when choosing their competition calendar. In the event a skater competes the entire summer without qualifying for a final round, or entering a competition with only one round, they will be considered a competitor and receive a competitor pin and certificate, but not a ranking number.

What about the short program for competitors not making the championship round?

NQS competitions that have more than 24 entries in a particular event (and there for necessitate qualifying and championship rounds, held in accordance with Rule 2460) should also host a consolation round for the short program, for competitors that don't qualify for the championship round.

Can we add additional Well-Balanced Program Only or Short Program Only events to our competition?

It is preferred that competitions don't do this, to avoid confusing the skaters and coaches. Athletes in the "competitive" track, at the juvenile level or higher, that compete in well balanced program events should be encouraged to simply enter the NQS competition, whether or not they have officially signed up for the NQS. Less "competitive" athletes should be encouraged to enter the Excel competition. Offering a consolation round for the competitors not qualifying for the championship round will ensure all skaters have the opportunity to compete both programs.

Is our competition allowed to accept late entries?

Each NQS competition sets and enforces its own entry deadline, and late entries at each competition will be at the discretion of the host club. While the host club may choose to accept late entries, and collect a late fee, the policy must be stated clearly in the competition announcement, it must be followed, and all competitors must be treated the same. For example, if the competition announcement states, "late entries are not accepted," they must uphold that.

When developing your competition announcement, please consider your late entry policy. It is anticipated that there will be a higher demand for late entries this year, as skaters may not earn a score they were hoping for and want to "make up for it" by entering another competition. This is especially true of competitions towards the end of the series. It is imperative that all competitors are treated equally and fairly and that rules are spelled out in the beginning. It is not acceptable, for example, to allow your own club's competitors a late entry and not others. The Chief Referee of each competition will be held responsible for ensuring that all competitors are treated fairly and equally.

Note: *Late entries are NOT allowed to register overall for the NQS. Athletes may compete in competitions without being part of the NQS but may not decide to join the series after May 28th.*