



Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy for Officials

Revised June 2021

Due to the timing of when this policy was updated, it will be posted as separate compliance requirements for referees/judges and technical panel officials for the 2021-22 season, which means officials holding both types of appointments will be asked to agree to the same policy twice for the 2021-22 season only. It will not be part of the compliance requirements for accountants, announcers, ice technicians, and music officials until the 2022-23 season.

Background

This Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy for Officials applies to all individuals appointed by U.S. Figure Skating to serve as officials at U.S. Figure Skating sanctioned events. Officials subject to this policy include accountants, announcers, ice technicians, judges, music officials, referees, and technical panel officials.

This policy combines and replaces the Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest Procedures for Judges, the Technical Panel Code of Ethics and Conflict of Interest Policy, the U.S. Figure Skating Technical Panel Critique Guidelines, and the SYS Guidelines for Critiques at Synchronized Skating Competitions.

Beginning June 1, 2021, the Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy for Officials serves as the single source of truth, and the aforementioned documents are considered null and void.

Purpose

The purpose of the Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy is as follows:

- 1) Reinforce and demonstrate that the highest standards of accountability, fairness, honesty, integrity, respect, truthfulness, ethical behavior, and positive sporting attitude govern all individuals appointed by U.S. Figure Skating to serve as officials at U.S. Figure Skating sanctioned events.
- 2) Ensure that all such officials comply with the fundamental policies and values of U.S. Figure Skating.
- 3) Inspire the confidence of the participating athletes, the public, and U.S. Figure Skating's members.
- 4) Eliminate the appearance of impropriety.

Policy – All Officials

- 1) I agree to read and comply with the bylaws, standards, codes, and rules and policies of U.S. Figure Skating as they pertain to the ethics and conduct of officials.

These include, but are not limited to:

- a) General Rules GR 1.01-1.07 and Performance Sections and Eligibility Rules PSER 4.70; and
- b) Domestic Officials Rules DOR, 1.00-10.07; and
- c) Rule Sections 2100, 3030 and 4500; and
- d) SafeSport Program Handbook; and
- e) U.S. Figure Skating Social Media Policy for Officials; and
- f) U.S. Figure Skating Travel and Expense Policy.



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- 2) I agree to comply fully with these bylaws, standards, codes, and rules and policies, and to exemplify by my conduct and my oral and written expressions, the highest standards of accountability, fairness, honesty, integrity, respect, truthfulness, ethical behavior, and positive sporting attitude.
- 3) I will always conduct myself with absolute independence and neutrality.
- 4) I will show no favoritism for, or prejudice against, individuals involved in U.S. Figure Skating sanctioned events.
- 5) I agree that my performance, conduct, and comments should stimulate trust and confidence. I recognize that even the appearance of misconduct or impropriety can be damaging.
- 6) I agree that U.S. Figure Skating properties, funds, services, and influence, including, but not limited to, any use of my position or identity as an individual appointed by U.S. Figure Skating to serve as an official in U.S. Figure Skating sanctioned events, are not to be appropriated or misused for my private gain.
- 7) I agree that all activities of U.S. Figure Skating are to be conducted in compliance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, and U.S. Figure Skating bylaws, standards, codes, and rules and policies.
- 8) When acting as an official, I agree not to accept cash or other benefits and favors for my participation in any U.S. Figure Skating sanctioned events (except for nominal gifts that meet applicable IRS rules and regulations). I understand that expenses authorized and incurred in the performance of U.S. Figure Skating business will be reimbursed according to the U.S. Figure Skating Travel and Expense Policy.
- 9) I understand that my failure to abide by this Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy for Officials may result in my suspension for a definite period, or may forever exclude me, from all U.S. Figure Skating events.

Conflicts of Interest – All Officials

- 1) If I find myself in the situation where I have been asked to officiate, or have been assigned to serve as an official, in an event where any personal, family, or financial interest that could reasonably be thought, by myself or others, to give rise to a possible conflict of interest, or give the appearance of a possible conflict of interest, I will promptly report the possible conflict to the chief referee or test chair of the event(s) in question.

Further, I will recuse myself from officiating the event in question if, after disclosure, the chief referee or test chair agrees that a possible conflict, or the appearance of a possible conflict, does exist which precludes me from serving as an official.
- 2) Officials may employ coaches for lessons for themselves or their family members. This does not necessarily create a conflict of interest in the same discipline of the lessons or in another discipline even though there is a tangible financial benefit. Additionally, this does not create a conflict for the official to evaluate other students of the coach. However, where possible, this situation should be avoided, and it is incumbent on each official to use their discretion.
- 3) If I am a coach or parent of a skater/team competing in a competition where I am also assigned as an official, I will avoid entering the officials' room for at least one hour before and at least one hour after the event in which my skater/team is competing unless it is necessary due to my officiating responsibilities.



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Conflicts of Interest – Judges, Referees and Accountants

- 1) I will not serve as a judge, referee or accountant on any U.S. Figure Skating sanctioned events if I am teaching figure skating, except for teaching lessons as a part of learn to skate programs (Learn to Skate USA/ISI Tots, etc.) and/or being a college student currently enrolled in the Coach and Judge program (if serving as a judge).
- 2) I will not be compensated for serving as a judge, referee or accountant, teaching seminars, providing feedback critiques, private critiques and/or monitoring, but I may be reimbursed according to the U.S. Figure Skating Travel and Expense Policy.
- 3) I will not serve as a judge, referee or accountant on U.S. Figure Skating sanctioned events in which I may have a possible conflict of interest or an appearance of a possible conflict of interest, either personal or financial.

Such possible conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to:

- a) Teaching/coaching test candidates or competitors, either privately or semi-privately, in (for example) ballet, gymnastics, ballroom dancing, and/or physical fitness within the past one year.
 - b) Commercial activities that may suggest or have an appearance of a conflict such as sharpening skates, selling boots or blades, making costumes, or providing financial support to athletes (*refer to PSER 4.70*) within the past one year.
 - c) Being the relative of a test candidate or competitor or being the relative of a test candidate or competitor's coach.
 - d) Serving on events in which I may be competing later in the season (i.e., judging an adult bronze event if I am planning to compete in the adult bronze division later in the season).
 - e) Serving as a team manager of a synchronized skating team or skating as a partner and/or teammate of a test candidate or competitor within the past one year.
 - f) Serving as the mentor of another official or prospective official who is a test candidate or competitor.
- 4) For qualifying events (including NQS events at nonqualifying competitions), I will not participate in the entirety of any event in which I have a conflict of interest in any portion of the event (i.e., conflict in intermediate ladies free skate group A would block an official from officiating in any other intermediate ladies groups and/or final rounds).



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Conflicts of Interest – Technical Panel Officials

- 1) A direct conflict of interest exists when I (or my parent, sibling, child, spouse, skating or life partner) have accepted any monies during the past one year for teaching, choreographing, or consulting for any competitor in an event.

Such possible direct conflicts of interest include, but are not limited to:

- a) Teaching/coaching competitors, either privately or semi-privately, in (for example) ballet, gymnastics, ballroom dancing, and/or physical fitness within the past one year.
 - b) Commercial activities that may suggest or have an appearance of a conflict such as sharpening skates, selling boots or blades, making costumes, or providing financial support to athletes (*refer to PSER 4.70*) within the past one year.
 - c) Being the relative of a competitor or being the relative of a competitor's coach.
 - d) Serving as a technical panel official on events in which I may be competing later in the season (i.e., serving as a technical specialist on an adult gold event if I am planning to compete in the adult gold division later in the season).
 - e) Serving as a team manager of a synchronized skating team or skating as a partner and/or teammate of a competitor within the past one year.
- 2) An indirect conflict of interest could exist through any personal, family, or financial relationship that could be perceived as a conflict of interest. This includes any situation that has the potential to undermine the impartiality of a person.
 - 3) Any technical specialist, data operator, and/or video operator who accepts payment to conduct a seminar is required to disclose the names of all participants within the past one year.
 - 4) For qualifying events (including NQS events at nonqualifying competitions), I will not participate in the entirety of any event in which I have a conflict of interest in any portion of the event (i.e., conflict in intermediate ladies free skate group A would block an official from officiating in any other intermediate ladies groups and/or final rounds).
 - 5) I will disclose all direct and indirect conflicts of interest to the LOC when accepting an invitation to serve at a nonqualifying competition. If a conflict is discovered after the invitation has been accepted, I will notify the chief referee immediately.
 - 6) I will disclose all direct and indirect conflicts of interest when submitting my availability to serve at qualifying competitions. If a conflict is discovered after I have been assigned to a qualifying competition, I will notify the technical panel captain immediately, if known, or the chair of the Domestic Selections Committee.



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- 7) If I discover a conflict or possible conflict while at a competition, I will immediately notify the technical panel captain (if applicable), technical controller of the event, and chief referee.

After disclosure, if the technical panel captain (if applicable), technical controller of the event, and chief referee agree that a conflict exists, I will remove myself from serving on that event. If those officials do not agree, the chief referee will make the final decision.

Critiquing/Monitoring Skaters/Teams – Judges and Technical Panel Officials

Feedback Critique

A feedback critique is an explanation of technical levels and/or judging feedback at the conclusion of an event segment at nonqualifying competitions or qualifying competitions. (*Below, see General Reminders for specific caveats.*)

Nonqualifying competitions or independent/stand-alone feedback critique sessions may require additional fees from the skaters/teams. These additional fees do not preclude officials from participating.

- It is appropriate for an official (technical panel and/or judge) to provide feedback at nonqualifying competitions and independent/stand-alone feedback critiques if the feedback critique is open and offered to all skaters/teams (even if the feedback critique requires additional fees).
- For the sectional singles finals/U.S. Pairs Final/U.S. Ice Dance Final/synchronized skating sectional championships, after ALL segments of an event have concluded and results have been posted, judges and the technical controller (even if the aforementioned officials are assigned to the corresponding U.S. Championships) may provide feedback to all skaters/teams including skaters/teams that are advancing to the U.S. Figure Skating Championships and/or the U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships.

Officials who are assigned to U.S. Figure Skating Championships and/or the U.S. Synchronized Skating Championships are advised to not go beyond commenting on the sectional singles finals/U.S. Pairs Final/U.S. Ice Dance Final/synchronized skating sectional championships performance and marks (i.e., officials are advised not to speculate/comment on how a team might make improvements, review videos of potential improvements, etc.).

This designation applies to U.S. Figure Skating sanctioned synchronized regional/sectional monitoring sessions.

Additionally, this designation applies to feedback critiques hosted as independent/stand-alone events which are not associated nor held in conjunction with a competition. The event must be offered to all skaters/teams.

Private Critique

A private critique is a private request to an official (technical panel and/or judge) requesting that the official attend a private session (i.e., NOT available to all skaters/teams) for evaluations and suggestions.

- This designation also includes private correspondence requesting feedback on specific elements, programs or interpretation of rules.



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- This designation does NOT apply to nonqualifying competitions nor independent/stand-alone feedback critique events when the feedback critiques are offered to all skaters/teams.

Private Critique Embargo Periods for Assigned Officials

Event	Judges & Technical Panel Officials
Tests	15 days prior to the start date of the test session
Nonqualifying	15 days prior to the start date of the competition
Qualifying (including NQS events)	30 days prior to the start date of the competition
Championships	30 days prior to the start date of the competition

The embargo periods apply within the respective discipline only. For example, a judge may give a private critique to a synchronized skating team and then judge the singles/pairs/dance test of a member of that synchronized skating team within the 15 day embargo period.

Monitoring

A session for evaluation for International Selection Pool consideration or international readiness.

- Officials (technical and/or judge) may monitor (including private correspondence requesting feedback) skaters/teams despite the aforementioned private critique embargo periods, if the monitoring is requested by the International Committee or one of its discipline subcommittees, or the International Committee Management Subcommittee.

Coach Connect

An invitation-only program run by U.S. Figure Skating.

- Officials (technical panel and/or judge) may participate in Coach Connect (including private correspondence requesting feedback) despite the aforementioned private critique embargo periods for test sessions and nonqualifying competitions, including NQS events, if the monitoring is requested by U.S. Figure Skating.

General Reminders

- Officials may not be paid for providing feedback critiques, private critiques, and/or monitoring, but may be reimbursed according to the U.S. Figure Skating Travel and Expense Policy.
- After any nonqualifying or qualifying event is concluded, any questions regarding element technical levels must be directed to the technical controller of the event. Unless directed by the technical controller, it is not appropriate for any other member on the panel to provide this information.
- A feedback critique can be conducted ONLY after ALL event segments are concluded for NQS events.
- A feedback critique can be conducted after any event segment ONLY at nonqualifying competitions (excluding NQS events), if the feedback critique is offered to all skaters/teams in that event (even if the feedback critique requires additional fees).



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- If the feedback critique is not offered to all skaters/teams at a nonqualifying competition, it is not appropriate for a coach to contact the technical controller/judge, until ALL event segments are concluded.
- Feedback critiques that follow these guidelines do not create any conflicts of interest and do not limit an official from serving in a future event regardless of the time period between the end of the feedback critique and the start of the next competition to which the official is assigned.
- Officials who are also active skaters or a parent of an active skater and are frequently in a rink should only provide feedback, opinions, and critiques when such information is directly requested by a coach or a skater.

Reporting Violations

The Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy for Officials relies on the honesty and integrity of each person to whom it applies. Any alleged violation of this Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy for Officials should be brought to the attention of the Chair of the Domestic Officials Recruitment and Management Committee and the Chair of the Ethics Committee of U.S. Figure Skating.

Modification of the Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy for Officials

U.S. Figure Skating reserves the right to modify this Ethical Conduct and Conflict of Interest Policy for Officials at any time.