



// OFFICIALS



Official Qualifying Meet Considerations Prior to Application

Qualifying Meets for National Officials Certification (OQMs)

OQMs provide opportunities for evaluation of USA Swimming officials for N2 and N3 Certification and Recertification. Meets must meet the requirements contained in the Meet Requirements section of this document to be considered for approval as an OQM. These meets may include Region, Zone, Sectional, and LSC Championship meets. USA Swimming National, US Open, Pro Series, Junior National, and Futures meets are automatically approved and do not require an application.

Evaluator Considerations and Requirements ([Evaluator Appointment Guidelines](#))

N2 Evaluators

- Are chosen by the LSC Officials Chair
- Must have current N3 Stroke & Turn Certification
- Must possess a current N2 certification in the positions they are named to evaluate: Chief Judge (CJ), Starter (SR), Deck Referee (DR), Administrative Referee (AR) and/or Administrative Official (AO)
- An N2 AO may perform an N2 AR evaluation if granted permission by the LSC OC
- May only give advancing and recertification evaluations at the N2 level
- Has attended a Futures meet (2 Star and above) within the last five years

N3 Stroke & Turn Evaluators

- Are chosen by the LSC Officials Chair
- Possess a current N3 Stroke & Turn certification

N3 National Evaluators

- Are experienced officials authorized by the National Officials Committee (NOC)
 - The list of “Approved N3 Evaluators” is maintained by the NOC for the respective positions on the [USA Swimming website](#)
- May provide evaluations for N2 advancement and recertification
- May only provide evaluations for which they are approved by the NOC for N3 initial and/or N3 final
- N3 initial evaluators are also permitted to complete recertification evaluations

Additional Considerations

- Provision of approved National Evaluators is the responsibility of the meet host or LSC
- Recommendations may be solicited from the USA Swimming NOC
- It is recommended that National Evaluators not officiate during meets unless only a few candidates are being evaluated. Also, it is recommended that National Evaluators limit themselves to eight (8) advancement evaluations per OQM. Chief Judges may be tasked with

evaluating the Stroke and Turn team or other members of the Chief Judge team as a part of their duties

- One mentor per 250 - 300 athletes is highly recommended to ensure adequate interaction between mentors and mentees at OQMs. If a deviation from this guideline is requested, the previous year's OQM meet will be taken into consideration.
- All N3 National Evaluators on the national list will be aware of current national officiating procedures, and available for clinics, briefings, presentations, clarification of issues, and mentoring related to the art of USA Swimming officiating
- N2 and N3 advancement and recertification evaluations can only be given at approved OQMs
- Meet Referees or designee are responsible for compiling those requesting mentoring and forwarding the requests to the Evaluators, no later than 14 days in advance of the meet
- Evaluators are responsible for the final vetting of those requesting mentorship in advance of the meet for **all** required components and communicating with the Meet Referee regarding those not eligible

Official Tracking System (OTS)

- Sessions and positions worked by all officials at the meet must be entered into OTS by the Meet Referee, their designee, or the Evaluator
- Evaluators must complete the on-line OTS evaluation form for each evaluated Official using the [evaluation templates](#)
- If no evaluations are made, the Meet Referee shall ensure all evaluators mark all evaluations as complete

Online Application Considerations and Requirements

Review by LSC Leadership and Evaluator

Prior to submission of the OQM online application, all National Evaluators for the meet must review the application and meet the announcement for any discrepancies or concerns. Create an account, complete the form, opt to save for future submission, and save to desktop to share with required reviewers. Questions and issues should be resolved with the Meet Referee, LSC Officials Chair, and Evaluators.

LSC Officials Chair Responsible Party

The LSC Officials Chair is responsible for the submission of the application and all communication. The online form shall be submitted **a minimum of 30 days** prior to the meet start date. The application should be submitted on the OQM Online form and **must include the final meet announcement or link**. A notice of "Receipt of Application" will be sent to the applicant's email address as soon as it is submitted.

Meet Referee

The Meet Referee must be a current N2 or N3 Referee. If the Meet Referee does not meet this requirement, a National Evaluator must be present for all sessions being evaluated.

The Meet Referee must limit the number of evaluations performed to 2-3, so that their primary focus is on the athletes and the meet responsibilities.

OQM Level

LSCs have the opportunity to request the level of permitted evaluations, N2 positions only, N2 plus N3 Stroke and Turn, or N3. There are multiple considerations including National Evaluator availability, the number of sessions, the age of athletes, and the level of competition. A rubric exploring the basic requirements for each official position at a meet is available at the end of this document.

For non-LSC Championship meets this meet must be open to officials from outside of the LSC for assignment and/or evaluation.

The OQM Working group will determine the highest level (N2/N3) and positions each evaluator is available to complete. It is incumbent on the Meet Referee and LSC Chair to determine which positions each evaluator is to complete and what level. For example, an N3 evaluator for Deck Referee may be present at the meet and show in the published grid. However, if the meet has only been approved for N2 advancement no N3 Deck Referee evaluations may be performed.

The National Officials Committee OQM working group will make the final determination as to the meet's OQM viability and level of evaluations permitted.

Meet Requirements

An OQM must meet the following minimum requirements.

- The meet must follow USA rules
- The meet must be **sanctioned**¹
- The Meet Referee agrees to run the meet using deck protocols approaching that expected at National Championship meets²
- The National Scratch rule will be used (LSC modifications are permitted as noted in the meet rubric)
- A fully automatic timing system will be used
- A broad range of senior events in most evaluation sessions (*some sessions may be age group, 13-14, sessions*). LSC Age Group Championships may be exempted from the "senior" event requirement
- The meet is expected to attract and include swimmers capable of achieving qualifying times for Futures and above

Venue and Pool Description

Meets operated in multiple venues and pools are eligible for consideration for all approved sessions provided officials and assigned teams are divided equally between sites and the agreed-upon National Championship protocols are followed.

Required Sessions

For an OQM there must be a minimum of 2 days and 4 sessions meeting requirements for official observation. Not all sessions may be counted toward the minimum. The count is dependent on age group, level of competition, and events offered.

The following **are** eligible for OQM consideration

- Prelims and Finals except as noted in bullets below
- Timed Finals Sessions that include 13 & over 400IM and/or Relays

The following sessions are **not** eligible for OQM consideration.

¹ *Sanction is defined as a permit issued by an LSC to a USA Swimming group member to conduct a meet in conformance with all USA Swimming rules in which all swimmers are athlete members of USA Swimming, except as provided in Article 202.5.1*

² *For the purpose of this document, USA National Championship meets include Nationals, US Open, Pro Series, and Junior Nationals.*

- Timed Finals Sessions that **exclusively** include 1650Y/1500M, 1000Y/800M, or 500Y/400M Freestyle³
- Sessions that are exclusively for athletes aged 12 & under (see Zone exemption above)
- Time Trial sessions

Evaluated Positions

LSCs may request the level of evaluations to be available based on Evaluator availability. If an Evaluator determines that the meet does not fulfill the requirements for the position at the requested level, an evaluation should not be given. Below are the minimum requirements for requesting a meet and evaluations of a particular position. These are not all-inclusive. The [professional documents and evaluation templates](#) should be consulted for additional information

Select evaluation level for the meet based on the **level of opportunities** that can be fulfilled. Recertifications will be included on the final grid.

- N2 must include opportunities for education, discussion, mentoring, and introduction of concepts
- N3 must include everything for N2 so officials may show proficiency, plus additional opportunities

Position	N2	N3
<p>Minimum Deck Official Staffing Requirements</p> <p>If multiple venues or pools, officials must be equally divided for equity. The assigned team should also be balanced by site/pool.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet Referee • Admin Referee • Deck Referee • Starter • 2 Chief Judges on a dedicated team (may include a Team Lead CJ) * • Preferred Stroke officials • Preferred 1 start/turn official per 2 lanes <p>*A minimum of 2 CJs per pool if multiple pools are used.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet Referee • Admin Referee • Asst Admin Referee • 2 Deck Referees • 2 Starters • Team Lead Chief Judge • 2 additional Chief Judges on a dedicated team* • Stroke officials • Preferred 1 start/turn official per 2 lanes <p>*A minimum of 2 CJs per pool if multiple pools are used. N3 meets should have no fewer than 3 CJ’s including a team lead.</p>
Stroke Briefing	<p>Provided all officials attend, a minimum of one stroke briefing must precede the meet and be observed by National Evaluator. Additional briefings may be conducted prior to sessions as deemed necessary by the Meet Referee or designee.</p>	
Stroke and Turn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstration of deck protocols and jurisdiction defined during Officials Briefing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rotation through Stroke and Turn positions, • Possible rotation through relief and/or reserve

³All USA National Championship meets including Futures are exempt from this requirement.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion and/or demonstration of lead-lag 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possible mentoring of new officials • Use of lead/lag where feasible • Discussion of AQUA protocols
Chief Judge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interacting with CJ team for building team skills • Dedicated pre- and post-session meetings with the CJ team • Engaging in stroke briefing including jurisdiction, protocol, and assignments • Communication with the assigned team during meet operations • Introduction to paperwork, clearing relays, and DFS and NS procedures • Introduction of radio use and radio protocols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Lead has pre-meet interaction with Meet Referee • Pre-meet CJ planning meetings • Delivering stroke briefing, jurisdiction, protocol, and assignments • Demonstration of deck personnel management and mentoring skills • Defined preparation duties for sessions, i.e., gathering of needed equipment • Use of radios and radio protocol
Starter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrating familiarity with equipment and learning how to check equipment • Interacting with Deck Referee • Understanding of false start scenarios • Development of appropriate commands • Introduction to and/or discussion of backstroke ledge starts • Cadence refinement • Delivery of Timers Briefing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with multiple Deck Referees and Starters in rotation • Extending observation skills • Backstroke ledge starts if the equipment is available • Invigilating warm-up session(s) • Possible mentoring of new officials
Deck Referee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the role of Deck Referee versus Meet Referee • Communication and interaction with assigned team • Developing observation skills • Implementation of whistle protocols and pacing as defined for meet • Understanding of meet jurisdiction and protocol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with multiple Deck Referees and Starters in rotation • Extending observation skills • Refinement of conflict resolution with deck personnel and/or coaches • Invigilating • Radio use and protocol • Possible mentoring of new officials

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to NS and DFS procedures • Interaction with coaches • Introduction of radio use and radio protocols 	
Admin Referee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the role of Admin Referee versus Meet Referee • Communication and interaction with assigned team • Understanding of championship protocol outlined in meet announcement and rule book • Use of National Scratch rule (may use LSC modifications) • Discussion of the use of scratch procedures for prelims and finals • Developing a process of tracking all pertinent paperwork • Introduction to NS and DFS procedures • Understanding of timing rules and process for corrections • Interaction with coaches for positive check-in, scratches, and other related questions • Introduction to and discussion of Meet Manager software and timing equipment. • Introduction of radio use and radio protocols 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-meet interactions with Meet Referee to discuss meet operations • Pre-meet responsibilities for the development of psych sheets, heat sheets, timelines • Keen understanding of proofs • Possible unique seeding and flighting situations • Use of scratch procedures for prelims and finals; not a pre-seeded session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ N3i may use electronic/virtual clerk/resolution table (4/30/26) ○ N3f must use a traditional paper method for the clerk/resolution. Emphasis is on interactions with coaches and athletes, and tracking paperwork for national procedures.(4/30/26) • Use of penalties for preliminary and/or positive check-in events and finals • LSC variations are permissible. Some examples of NS penalties: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ NS in prelims and/or positive checked-in events is positive check-in for subsequent day's events to be seeded, or removed from the swimmer's next event as a penalty swim. ○ NS in finals out of the next day's events or meet • Anticipating potential issues • Management and mentoring of an administrative team • Radio use and protocol

Admin Official	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding the role of Admin Official versus Admin Referee• Follows guidelines set by Admin Referee• Similar opportunity as Admin Referee with emphasis on the flow of paperwork and timing corrections	Not Available
-----------------------	--	----------------------