

Introduction

There are 5 levels of swim officiating in Canada. After starting at Level I, you are encouraged to move “up the ladder” through to higher levels of officiating.

Moving up the ladder through the various levels requires a combination of additional clinic instruction, deck experience and deck evaluation.

This document explains the certification process in Ontario.

The Ontario Swimming Officials’ Association

The following reflect the operations of OSOA:

Terms of Reference

1. This Association is established under the authority of the by-laws of Swim Ontario.
2. There shall be two members from each region plus a representative from Master Swimming.
3. The Association will elect a President, a Vice-President, a Secretary and a Treasurer to serve a term of two years. In the event of a vacancy, an Interim Chairperson will be elected for the remainder of the term. Signing officers will be appointed at this time. Elections are to take place at the OSOA AGM. The President determines its sub-committee structure each term.
 - a. A quorum at all meetings shall be 50% plus one of the members.
 - b. The President shall vote only in the case of a tie.
4. The President or delegate shall be the representative from this Association to the Ontario Board of Directors and the National Officials Committee (NOC).
5. The Association will meet at the call of the President but not fewer than three times a year. Meetings at the discretion of the Board may be by teleconference.
6. The purpose of this Association is to promote excellence and consistency in officiating within the Province of Ontario.
7. The Association will be responsible for the evaluation of all applicants for Senior and Master official status (Master status must be ratified/approved by the OSOA Board, then by the NOC Chair).
8. The association will investigate all matters referred to it by the Board of Directors or by the regions and make recommendations to the Board or regions as required.
9. The association will provide leadership for clinics and seminars.
10. The Association has the responsibility for developing and maintenance of educational material. (Powerpoint clinic presentations and corresponding questionnaires).
11. Should there be a conflict between these terms of reference and the By-Laws of the Swim Ontario Board of Directors, the By-Laws of the Board of Swim Ontario will take precedence.
12. Members of the Committee shall be responsible for monitoring and evaluating clinics, seminars and meets.

13. This association will provide the leadership for rule interpretation in conjunction with the National Officials Committee (NOC) and FINA, and may make recommendations on rule changes to the NOC.
14. These terms of reference may be amended by a simple majority of the association.

Requirements for Position on the Board of the Ontario Swimming Officials Association

1. Regional Representatives should be Master Officials; where an interested Master official is not available, a Senior official may serve; in this instance, the Senior official may not be an evaluator.
2. Members must attend the OSOA meetings according to the terms of reference for the OSOA and abide by those terms of reference.

Rationale:

Because the above terms require experience and knowledge, it is mandatory that all OSOA members be able to meet these requirements. All regions have Master Officials; consequently, no region should be represented by less than a Master Official.

N.B. Due to the infrequency of meetings and the workload involved, as well as the importance of regional representation, regional “reps” who are unable to attend an OSOA meeting are encouraged to send a substitute.

The People Involved

Swimming officials at all levels in Canada are entirely volunteers and are dedicated to the development of the sport of competitive swimming.

The Level I Candidate:

Parents of new swimmers, students, local service club members, master swimmers, any interested parties, and some of the swimmers themselves may become officials.

The Level II and III Candidate:

Those who are interested in moving up the ladder, and increasing their value as an official to their club, as the clubs conduct meets.

The Level IV (Senior) Candidate:

Level IV involves those officials who have worked actively at Level III for at least 1 year and have given every indication of continued participation. As a successful candidate they will become eligible to be the Session Referee for any swim meet planned by their club or Region.

The Level V (Master) Candidate:

Level V officials, who have obtained considerable experience at all levels of meets including national calibre meets and have demonstrated a dedication to continuing active officiating, are eligible for elevation.

The Club Officials' Chairperson (COC)

The OSOA recommends that each club appoint an officials' chairperson. This person should play a major role in both developing and advancing officials within the club. He or she should organize clinics for club parents and other interested parties, and keep records.

The COC has the responsibility to communicate, to the club officials, the availability of regional, provincial, and national clinics and seminars as well as relevant publications concerning rules. The COC also has the responsibility of submitting a copy of the Clinic Certification Form (or facsimile) to the Regional Officials Representative (ROR) as completed, and of notifying the ROR of any officials who have met the requirements for Level II or Level III status (note that Level III status must be confirmed and signed off by the ROR before the Level III pin is presented).

We expect our ever-improving swimmers to perform to their maximum potential. We, in turn, have an obligation to provide them with an adequate number of trained officials so that swim meets can be run efficiently and professionally.

The Regional Officials' Representative (ROR)

Each of the six regions of Ontario has two officials' representatives who are elected by regional Level III, IV and V officials at annual regional meetings. Their responsibilities are shared and include the following:

- monitor clinics within the region;
- co-ordinate evaluations;
- set up senior seminars;
- provide leadership within the regions for presentation of clinics, officiating and on the pool deck;
- maintain regional Official's records;
- evaluate candidates for Senior and Master official status;
- present Level III, IV and V pins to successful candidates;
- motivate, encourage, and recommend candidates to the position of Senior/Master official status;
- attend OSOA meetings, representing their regions;
- promote excellence and consistency in officiating within their regions;
- work with COC's to ensure that club meets are adequately staffed in accordance with CSW 1.2.1;
- assist all clubs to conform to the required Club Development Plan in order to host meets;
- have an awareness of the resources available in the region and encourage clubs to appoint COC's and assist them in developing officials;
- make recommendations to the Region's Sanction Officer regarding Sanctions.

It is recommended that the ROR be a member of the region's Board of Director.

Certification

Level I – Red pin

To be certified as a Level I official, you must:

- Be at least 14 years of age
- Take the approved SNC/OSOA introductory clinic, in-person or online.
- Successfully complete the associated questionnaire.

Once you have completed the introductory clinic and quiz, you will be awarded your red pin and given your Official's Record card. Keep the card in a safe and dry place – you are going to use the card to obtain signatures of future clinics and deck evaluation.

Now you are ready to get some deck experience working as a timer.

Level II – White pin

To be certified as a Level II official, you must:

- Be at least 16 years of age
- Be certified as a Level I official and obtained two successful deck evaluations as a timer
- Take the clinics and complete the questionnaires for the Strokes and Turns Judge PLUS one other designated Level II position
- Obtain two successful deck evaluations for each of these positions.

When you have completed the requirements for Level II, submit your documentation to your Club Officials Chair. The COC will present you with your white pin.

The following positions are designated as Level II positions for the purposes of certification:

- Judge of Strokes / Inspector of Turns / Head Lane Timekeeper
- Clerk of Course
- Chief Timekeeper
- Chief Finish Judge
- Chief Judge Electronics
- Meet Manager
- Recorder/Scorer
- Starter

Level III – Orange pin

To be certified as a Level III official, you must:

- Be certified as a Level II official

- Attend all clinics and complete questionnaires for all designated Level II positions.
- Obtain two successful deck evaluations for three additional Level II positions
- Conduct a Level I clinic under the direction of a Level V official or at regional clinics
- Take the Referee clinic and complete the questionnaire.

When you have completed the requirements for Level III, inform your Club Officials Chair and seek their help in submitting your documentation to the Regional Officials Representative (ROR) for your region. The ROR is responsible for confirming that all Level III requirements have been met, and awarding the orange pin and name badge.

- Your documentation should include:
- Your completed card (or verified on-line record from osoa.ca)
- A log of meets worked (Sample Log)

Note the following:

We expect candidates for Level III to develop a broad base of experience by officiating a wide variety of meets at different pools. Consider gaining single- and double-ended experience, as well as experience with Masters and para-swimming meets.

Once you have certified as a Level III official you are qualified to work as a session referee. You should now seek deck experience as a referee to lay the foundation for your evaluation and certification for Level IV.

Consider reviewing the Deck Evaluation Clinic (35 minute video) for greater understanding of the the evaluation process.

Level IV – Senior Official – Green pin

To be certified as a Level IV official you must be successfully evaluated as a Referee.

Specifically, you must:

- Serve a minimum of one year as a certified Level III official, during which time you must have worked five meet sessions as a referee.
- Have completed the Referee's clinic within the previous 2 years
- Conduct two clinics for Level II positions under the supervision of a Level V official or at a regional clinic.
- Fully completed all clinics and deck evaluations at Level II/III positions.
- Attend a regional seminar/clinic.
- Complete three favourable personal training records (PTRs) in the position of referee during your time as Level III official . The three PTRs you submit with your request to be evaluated must be from three different meets and completed by three different Master Officials.
- Successfully complete a formal evaluation by two Master Officials while working two sessions as a referee.

The formal evaluation process includes:

- Completion of the first two sections of the Senior Official Evaluation Form by the candidate

- Evaluation by two Master Officials selected by OSOA over two sessions worked as a referee
- Attendance at a debriefing with the evaluators following the sessions worked.
- Submission of a completed and signed evaluation form to the ROR for OSOA approval.
- Awarding of the green pin by the ROR.

(In the case of an unsuccessful evaluation, the candidate must wait at least 6 month and complete 3 new PTRs before re-applying for evaluation)

In preparation:

- Seek the help of your Regional Officials Representative in obtaining and scheduling PTR observations by qualified senior officials.
- Maintain your log of meets worked
- Select sessions of 3 or more hours for your PTRs – shorter sessions may not be accepted.
- Notify the ROR when you have completed 3 PTRs and are ready to be formally evaluated.
- Know that successful evaluation is not guaranteed; success depends upon the candidate being able to demonstrate the skills and knowledge necessary to be an effective referee.
- Review the Deck Evaluation Clinic (35 minute video) for greater understanding of the the evaluation process.

Forms involved:

- Referee's Assessment / Personal Training Record – This same document is used for both PTR and Evaluation
- Application for Certification as a Level IV Official

Level V – Master Official – Blue pin

To be certified as a Level V official you must be successfully evaluated as a Referee OR a Referee and Starter.

At the time of evaluation you must:

- Served a minimum of one year as a senior (Level IV) official at SNC approved meets, officiating at a minimum of five meets approved by your Regional Officials Representative, working three of the following positions: Referee, Starter, Chief Finish Judge or Chief Judge Electronics, Clerk of Course or Meet Manager.
- Have completed the Referee's clinic within the previous 2 years
- Conduct an additional two clinics for Level II positions under the supervision of a Level V official or at a regional clinic.
- Complete three favourable personal training records (PTRs) in the position of referee during your time as Level IV official . The three PTRs you submit with your request to be evaluated must be completed by three different Master Official and be from three different meets, one of which must be out-of-region.
- Worked a minimum of two sessions at a national-level meet.

When all of the above is complete, evaluation by two Master Officials designated by OSOA while the candidate works two sessions as a referee, or as referee and starter.

The formal evaluation process includes:

- Completion of the first two sections of the Master Official Evaluation Form by the candidate
- Evaluation by two Master Officials selected by OSOA over two sessions worked as a referee or as a referee and a starter
- One of the evaluators must be an out-of-region official.
- Attendance at a debriefing with the evaluators following the sessions worked.
- Submission of a completed and signed evaluation form to the ROR for OSOA approval
- Awarding of the blue pin by the ROR.
- Ratification/approval by the OSOA board and the chair of the National Officials Committee of SNC.

(In the case of an unsuccessful evaluation, the candidate must wait at least 6 month and complete 3 new PTRs before re-applying for evaluation)

In preparation:

- Seek the help of your Regional Officials Representative in obtaining and scheduling PTR observations by qualified senior officials.
- Maintain your log of meets worked
- Notify the ROR when you have completed 3 PTRs and are ready to be formally evaluated.
- Know that successful evaluation is not guaranteed; success depends upon the candidate being able to demonstrate the skills and knowledge necessary to be an effective referee.
- Review the Deck Evaluation Clinic (35 minute video) for greater understanding of the the evaluation process.

Forms involved:

- Referee's Assessment / Personal Training Record - This same document is used for both PTR and Evaluation
- Application for Certification as a Master Official

Evaluation Guidelines

Evaluation by experienced officials is part of the education and certification process. Here are some guidelines to help you obtain and track your deck evaluations.

How to get a Deck Evaluation

If you are ready to be evaluated at a deck position, follow these guidelines:

- Approach the session referee before the start of the session to ask for the evaluation
- Report to the same session referee at the end of the session to debrief
- If the referee believes you have demonstrated the requirements of the position, he or she will sign your card.

- Make sure you know the referee's name, as you will need it to complete the online part of this process.
- As soon as possible after the session, log-in to the OSOA Registration system and enter the required information from your evaluation.
- Your Club Officials Chair must verify the online entry. If there is a delay in doing so, you might want to email or call your COC to let them know your entry is awaiting their approval.
- Unless your COC was present when the evaluation was completed, expect that they will want to see the your signed card as evidence of the completed evaluation.

Policies regarding Evaluations

- You cannot be evaluated the first time you perform the duties of a position. You should only ask for an evaluation after performing the duties and feeling comfortable in doing so.
- You cannot be evaluated twice for the same job at the same meet. We want to see that you can perform the duties of the position in different conditions.
- However, you can be evaluated for two different jobs at the same meet.

Additional Considerations

- No evaluation is ever guaranteed. The referee must be assured that you know how to perform the duties of the job.
- Always bring your card to the pool in case you are asked to work and you are ready to be evaluated. Keep it in a waterproof container like a resealable plastic bag to avoid getting it wet.

More About Deck Evaluations

OSOA has prepared a 35 minute video clinic on deck evaluations for both evaluators and candidates. The clinic goes further into the Officials certification and evaluation system. You find the clinic at www.osoa.ca.

Up the Ladder to New and Greater Heights

It is necessary to advise the Club Officials Chair (COC) when you have completed the requirements for Level II or III. It is very difficult for the COC to be on top of all elevations to Level II or Level III.

By the time a candidate has completed the requirements for Level III, the motivation to continue should come primarily from the candidate him/herself. The focus should be directed to selfimprovement through attendance at regional and provincial seminars, travel afield in the region, the province, and across the country. The candidate should also be active in providing more help to upcoming officials at the local club.

1. The Level III official maintains an active role in officiating at all positions (certification at all positions is mandatory before continuing to Level IV).
2. The candidate is also expected to teach clinics at all levels and to attend regional seminars.

3. Level III candidates are to secure blank PTR's from their COC, Regional Officials Representative, or the OSOA website for the purpose of completing their requirements as Referee for Senior Official (Level IV) evaluation. The minimum session length for the completion of a PTR is approximately three (3) hours.
4. The Level III candidate should request (in writing) of his/her Regional Officials' Representative that he/she be put on the list for future evaluation.
5. Candidates are encouraged to apply to their Regional Officials Representative for acceptance into the assistance program towards provincial travel for the purpose of gaining experience (Level III/IV Training Program).
6. The Regional Officials Representative, the Meet Manager of the designated meet, and the candidate for evaluation arrange with written confirmation (fax or email is fine), the details of the upcoming evaluation. The location, time, and responsibilities should be determined at this time. Candidates who must travel out of their region must arrange their own travel and accommodation.
7. By the time the candidate is to be evaluated, the OSOA Certification of Senior Official form must be completed and presented to the evaluators. Note: All data requested in the first two sections of the form must be completed before an evaluation can take place. The evaluators will then complete their portion and make recommendations regarding elevation to Level IV.
8. In the case of an unsuccessful evaluation, no documentation is retained by the evaluators. Candidate must wait a minimum of six (6) months, and complete three additional PTRs in the position of Referee, prior to re-applying for evaluation.
9. Successful candidates will be presented with their Level III pin and name badge and Level IV pin at a suitable time and place.
10. Over the next year, Senior officials must have completed three further favourable PTR's for the position of referee at three different meets by three different Master officials, one of which is completed outside of region before seeking evaluation as a Master official. As an apprentice Level V official, the candidate will continue to teach clinics at all positions of officiating, attend regional and provincial seminars, and will travel outside the home region to work at high calibre meets. Candidates shall also work a national level meet.
 - a. Following successful evaluation Level IV, the candidate's name may be placed on the list for future evaluation as Level V, ensuring appropriate practice sessions are provided at away from home meets.
11. If his/her name is not already on the list for future evaluation, a potential Level V official shall notify (in writing) his/her Regional Officials Representative of his/her desire to be evaluated for Master official. The Regional Officials' Representative will then add the candidate's name to the list of future evaluations. The same procedure is followed for finding a suitable meet and notifying the officials concerned as was done for the candidate observed at Level III (step 6).
12. Prior to the elevation, the candidate must complete the necessary information in the first two sections of the Certification of Master Official form, and record details of clinics presented and National experience. The Regional Officials' Representative must sign the form, verifying that the required PTRs have been presented. This form, with the required information recorded, is presented to the evaluators prior to the start of the meet.
13. It is the responsibility of the Regional Officials Representative to familiarize the candidate with the evaluation forms and procedures prior to any evaluation for Levels IV and V.

14. The Regional Officials Representative may suggest that a candidate gain further experience before being evaluated. However, the final decision on evaluation lies with the candidate. All candidates should note that a successful evaluation is not guaranteed. Success will depend on the candidate being able to demonstrate to the evaluators the knowledge and skills necessary to be an effective referee.

Incentive Programs For Officials

The Ontario Swimming Officials Association has developed or administers several programs to recognize the dedication and outstanding achievements of officials in the area of officiating.

These programs are designed to encourage and inspire development in the officiating ranks. The following is a list of the current incentive programs:

- Swim Ontario Recognition Awards
- Level III \ IV Training Program
- Level V Assistance (JG Memorial Fund)
- Senior / Master Officials' Seminars
- Elizabeth Collins Ralph Trophy
- NOC Official of the Year

Looking Ahead

Currently, a list of officials throughout the province is being developed through OSOA. It is imperative that a copy of the Officials' Tracking Form be forwarded to the Regional Officials Representative so that the list can be updated continually.

Record keeping lies in the hands of the two Regional Officials Representatives; however, they rely on information provided to them by the Club Officials' Chairperson. The success of this procedure depends upon the following key elements:

- The appointment of a COC in each club.
- The reporting of successful upgrading by each individual candidate to the ROR via the COC.

Note: The awarding of Level III to any official requires that the information of the clinics taken and the deck evaluations on the official's card be accepted by one of the RORs before Level III becomes official and the Level III pin and name tag are presented to the official.

And finally...

Not all situations can be covered on paper. Club Officials Chairs should keep their lines of communication with their Regional Officials Representatives open, and obtain advice or clarifications when necessary.

Should you have comments on the guide, please raise them with the Ontario Swimming Officials Association board of directors through your Regional Officials Representative.

Officials Code of Conduct

1. Have a POSITIVE ATTITUDE when going to work at a meet.
2. BE AT THE POOL AND READY TO WORK at least 45 minutes before the session is to begin, particularly if you are doing strokes and turns. The Referee, at this time, will be giving instructions as to any rule changes or interpretations and procedures for the session.
3. REPORT PROMPTLY to the officials' area and sign in. This lets the Referee know that you have arrived. STAY IN THAT AREA. It is frustrating to have a list of people checked off and to find that they have disappeared when the briefing or meet is ready to begin.
4. ACCEPT AN ASSIGNMENT TO OFFICIATE AT A MEET ONLY IF YOU INTEND TO HONOUR THAT COMMITMENT. If, for any reason, you are unable to attend, courtesy demands that you let the person in charge of officials know as soon as possible. NEVER simply be a "no show". The swimmers suffer from your negligence.
5. ACCEPT THE ASSIGNMENT you have been given at the meet. The Meet Manager or Referee has placed you there for a reason. Also, keep in mind that it never hurts for a senior or master official to time a session, or to be the clerk of course, etc. You would be surprised at how "rusty" you have become in the interim! If you find yourself doing the same job for several sessions, a word to the Referee can usually alter the situation.
6. When you arrive at your assigned station for the session, DON'T LEAVE YOUR POST. Timers have been known to change lanes to time their own children and others have left their jobs to watch their sons/daughters compete. BE IN THE RIGHT POSITION to do your job properly.
7. In many cases, you will be officiating at a meet where your son/daughter is competing. It is a great temptation to leave the pool deck when your swimmer is done. Speak to the Referee, preferably BEFORE the session commences to ARRANGE FOR A REPLACEMENT. If you leave the deck in the middle of a session without someone to replace you, you are being unfair to both the swimmers who have not yet competed and your fellow officials who are left to carry the load.
8. KNOW THE RULES THOROUGHLY as they apply to your assigned position. It is NOT a waste of time to glance over the pertinent sections in the rule book prior to the session.
9. Officials and officiating should be as UNOBTRUSIVE and INCONSPICUOUS as possible. Do NOT be overly "officious" in your authority, particularly as it applies to stroke and turn judging and refereeing. Keep in mind that swim meets are held for swimmers: you, as an official, are there to assist them by providing adequate technical supervision for the meet.
10. BE IMPARTIAL. Be careful not to use your position to the advantage or detriment of any swimmer or team. Remember: Officials do NOT COACH NOR CHEER while working.
11. Keep in mind that the DRESS CODE is WHITES, preferably long pants for men and dress slacks or skirts for women.

12. Remember that, at any session, the REFEREE'S DECISION IS FINAL. Do not take offence if your decision is overturned.
13. Do not lecture a coach or debate disqualifications with a swimmer while working the deck. REMAIN COOL AND PROFESSIONAL AT ALL TIMES. REFER ANY QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS THAT COME YOUR WAY TO THE REFEREE