

LSC OFFICIALS CERTIFICATION STANDARDS—FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

This FAQ document is intended to help as we implement the new certification standards. Remember, not every possible scenario is in here. This FAQ is a tool for the LSC Officials Chair to use to help us “do what we do.” *That is, “apply the rules” as best as we can.* We will work through the exceptions if they occur.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW CERTIFICATION STANDARDS

Q. When do the new certification standards become effective?

A. The new certification standards are effective February 1, 2024.

Q. Can an LSC continue with its current certification program?

A. No, every LSC must immediately adopt the new certification standards.

Q. If an apprentice official began training under an LSC’s previous certification standards, can they continue training under the old standards or must they transition to the new standards?

A. Any apprentice as of February 1, 2024, may choose to continue training under the old standards or switch to the new standards. The LSC may not require one standard over the other. All new apprentices after February 1, 2024, must use the new standards.

Q. What happens to currently certified officials who have not met all the training requirements of the new standards? For example, a Referee who does not hold Administrative Official certification.

A. The official will be grandfathered in without having to meet the new requirements. The official should be encouraged, but not required, to obtain the training they may be missing with the new certification standards.

Q. Can any Referee now be assigned as a Meet Referee?

A. Yes. If your LSC assigns MRs, they can select the MR that best meets the needs of athletes and the LSC from the pool of certified Referees.

Q. Can a team assign a Meet Referee that does not have much experience in the role?

A. Yes, although a Referee can always decline an assignment or ask for support. A sanction cannot be withheld solely on the basis of perceived inexperience of the assigned Meet Referee if they are certified as a Referee.

PREREQUISITES TO ON-DECK TRAINING

Q. Is registration, either as an “Apprentice Official”, “Official” or “Junior Official” required before on-deck training can begin?

A. Yes. Apprentices must be registered BEFORE beginning on deck training.

Note that not all LSCs utilize the “Apprentice Official” category, which is valid for only 60 days and cannot be renewed. If an Apprentice Official uses this category of registration, it must be converted to a regular non-athlete “Official” or “Junior Official” membership prior to expiration, or the Apprentice Official will no longer appear in OTS.

Q. Does Athlete Protection Training (APT), Concussion Protocol training (CPT), and the background check (BGC) need to be completed prior to beginning on-deck training?

A. No, but they must be completed before the Apprentice Official can be certified. It is highly recommended that these elements be completed early in the training process so that the lack of completion does not delay certification. Apprentice Officials may begin training regardless of whether they register with the “apprentice 60-day” or “regular” non-athlete membership category prior to completing the APT, CPT, and BGC.

Q. Does the required clinic and certification test need to be completed prior to beginning the on-deck training sessions?

A. No, but completing the clinic early in the process will provide a foundation for the on-deck training. Certification cannot be completed until the clinic is completed.

CLINICS AND TESTING

Q. What online certification clinics will be available through USA Swimming and when will they be available?

A. Online certification clinics are planned for Stroke and Turn, Starter, Referee, and Administrative Official.

The Stroke and Turn apprentice online clinic should be available by April 1, 2024.

The Starter and Administrative Official apprentice online clinics should be available by October 1, 2024.

The Referee apprentice online clinic will be released sometime in 2025.

Q. Will the USA Swimming-based online clinics be required or will LSCs be allowed to offer their own clinics?

A. Once an online clinic becomes available, only that clinic will be recognized for the required training. LSCs are encouraged to continue to offer SUPPLEMENTAL training; however, it cannot be required as part of certification.

Q. How will the availability of online clinics affect the requirement for taking position-specific tests?

A. Each online clinic will incorporate test questions throughout and at the conclusion of the clinic. Once the clinic becomes available, the stand-alone test at the USA Swimming University will be retired. Until then, the stand-alone tests will remain available and are required.

TRAINING AND EVALUATION TRACKING TEMPLATES

Q. Will position-specific training and evaluation tracking sheet/card templates be provided?

A. Yes, training and evaluation tracking templates will be available for Stroke and Turn, Chief Judge, Starter, Referee, and Administrative Official apprentices.

The use of these templates is not mandatory and LSCs may choose to develop their own templates.

Q. Can LSCs require specific items for check off (RTOs, 12&U session, 13&O session)?

A. Yes, if this helps identify the best path for training. However, not attending a certain session is not a reason to deny certification. If an official can demonstrate knowledge of the rules and the performance requirements outlined in the Professional Document and templates, and they have completed all other certification requirements, they must be certified.

TRAINING SESSIONS

Q. What are the minimal requirements for a session to count as a training session?

A. A session must include technical strokes (Backstroke, Butterfly, Breaststroke, or Individual Medley) and/or relays.

Q. Is there a minimum session length?

A. No, there is no minimum session length.

Q. Do Time Trials count as a session?

A. No.

Q. Do Freestyle-only sessions count as a session?

A. No.

Q. Can training cover more than two different meets?

A. Training must occur over a minimum of four sessions and a minimum of two meets. The Apprentice may choose to complete their sessions over two, three, or four meets.

Q. Can an Apprentice request more than the minimum number of sessions?

A. Yes. They may request additional sessions before asking to be certified, but they cannot be required to attend more sessions unless provided with a written action plan that specifies any additional steps needed to complete certification.

Q. Can an LSC limit or exclude training at meets such as their Age Group Championships or Senior Championships?

A. No, training cannot be limited or excluded at these meets. It is suggested that creative ways be found to incorporate training as requested while not negatively impacting the athletes or interrupting the attention of the meet officials (eg, an observation and discussion-only session for a Starter Apprentice).

Q. Can training be limited or excluded at Officials Qualifying Meets (OQMs), either at the LSC or Zone level?

A. Training cannot be limited or excluded at any LSC meets. It is suggested that creative ways be found to incorporate training as requested while not negatively impacting the athletes or interrupting the attention of the meet officials (eg, an observation and discussion-only session for a Starter Apprentice).

Q. Can Officials train in any LSC?

A. Yes. Any Sanctioned or Approved USA meet session will count.

Q. What if the Apprentice does not submit their paperwork within two weeks of their last training session?

A. It is the responsibility of the apprentice to submit their paperwork for review following their final training session. The two-week “clock” starts ticking once they submit the paperwork. If an apprentice is slow in submitting the paperwork, it would be best practice for a Certifier to reach out to the apprentice to encourage the submission.

OFFICIALS TRACKING SYSTEM/CERTIFICATIONS

Q. Will clinic completion be trackable in OTS?

- A. Yes, clinics offered through the USA Swimming University will be tracked in the system and completion will be shown in OTS.

Q. Will test results be shown in OTS?

- A. LSC officials with administrative privileges in OTS can view test results in one of two ways. First, under the “LSC Reporting” tab and then by selecting “LSC Officials Courses Taken,” they can generate a report for specific tests that shows the completion date for tests that have been passed. Second, when viewing an individual’s profile within OTS, clicking on “Online Tests” will display the individual’s testing history including the date a test was completed and if it was passed.

Q. How should certification dates be recorded in OTS?

- A. Currently, December 31, 2026, will be used as the certification expiration date.

Q. How will certifications be tracked in OTS?

- A. Certifications will include Stroke and Turn (ST), Chief Judge (CJ), Starter (SR), Referee (DR), and Administrative Official (AO).

Q. Is there a Meet Referee (MR) certification?

- A. No. MR certifications have been remapped to Referee. The MR designation will still be used when reporting sessions worked for a meet. Sessions reported as MR will count towards Referee sessions.

Q. Is there an Administrative Referee (AR) certification?

- A. No. AR certifications were remapped to AO. The AR designation can still be used when reporting sessions worked for a meet. Sessions reported as AR will count towards Referee sessions, whereas sessions reported as AO will count towards AO sessions.

Q. What happened to Clerk of Course (CC), Computer Operator (CO), Timing Equipment Operator (TO), and Timing Judge (TJ)?

- A. They have been remapped to AO. The positions still exist in OTS for use when reporting what role was performed during the sessions worked.

LSC TRAINERS/CERTIFIERS

Q. Who can train an Apprentice?

A. Trainers should be officials with at least a year of experience in the role.

Q. If there is no one with one year's experience, can an Apprentice still receive on-deck training?

A. Yes. The Referee will assign an Official with the highest level of experience to mentor during that session.

Q. Who can be a Certifier?

A. The LSC Officials Chair selects individuals who can verify that an apprentice official demonstrates the requisite knowledge and is able to satisfactorily perform the position's duties. Certifiers should be experienced officials who can articulate clearly and succinctly areas of competency, deficiency, and action steps to achieve certification.

Q. Must the Certifier be in attendance at apprentice sessions?

A. No. The Certifier may seek input from MRs, the apprentice, or trainers to determine if the apprentice is ready for certification.

RECERTIFICATION

Q. Must an Official holding multiple certifications meet the recertification requirements for EACH position?

A. No. Officials will need to recertify at their highest level. Referee recertifies ST, AO, and SR. CJ is also recertified if the official is a CJ.

Q. How does the CJ certification fit?

A. CJ is a standalone certification. It was kept because it fits in with the progression to National N2/N3 Certification. It is not a requirement for LSCs to offer CJ certification. Referee will recertify CJ if the official is a CJ. SR will not recertify CJ.

Q. Will the required clinic and recertification clinics be merged into a single online course as is being done for initial certification?

A. Yes, this will be done for Stroke and Turn, Starter, Referee, and Administrative Official.

Q. When will the recertification clinic/testing modules be ready?

A. At a yet to be determined date.

Q. How should recertifications be handled until the recertification and testing modules are ready?

A. Whether the recertification and testing modules are available or not, LSCs must follow the new guidelines for certification and recertification. If an online clinic/testing module is available, then its use is required. If an online clinic/testing module is not available, an LSC-designed clinic is acceptable, while the position-specific recertification test available at the USA Swimming University should be used.

OPTIONAL CERTIFICATIONS

Q. Are LSCs allowed to establish training programs for positions other than ST, CJ, SR, DR, and AO (eg, clerk of course (CC), computer operators (CO), or timing equipment operators (TO))? Can these positions be certified positions?

A. Yes, an LSC can train Apprentice Officials for additional positions. Positions such as CC, CO, or TO would be certified as an AO and their meet role shown as CC, CO, or TO.

Although an LSC may choose to use AOs who have specialized, the individual specialties cannot be used as required prerequisites for the ST, CJ, SR, DR, and AO positions.

Q. Can TOs and COs continue to be used without becoming AOs?

A. Yes. However, anyone not becoming an AO is not required to become a registered member of USA Swimming and would not appear in OTS, but you would need an AO of record at the meet to oversee their work.

OTHER MEETS – YMCA, NCAA, HS, USMS

Q. Will YMCA meets count towards the required certification and renewal sessions?

A. Only if they are APPROVED USA Swimming meets.

Q. Will NCAA meets count towards the required certification and renewal sessions?

A. ONLY if they are APPROVED USA Swimming meets.

Q. Will High School meets count towards the required certification and renewal sessions?

A. Only if they are APPROVED USA Swimming meets.

Q. Will Masters (USMS) meets count towards the required certification and renewal sessions?

A. No.

WHAT IS NOT AFFECTED

Q. Does this standardization affect Open Water?

A. No.

Q. Does this affect the National Certifications (N2, N3)?

A. Not currently.

Q. Can our LSC require that a minimum number of sessions be worked, either as a trainee or certified official, before reimbursing an official for their registration and background check.

A. Yes, the LSC can set its own standards for its reimbursement program; however, the LSC cannot require a greater number of training sessions than set by the "LSC Standards for Officiating."