Special Rules for New Zealand Secondary Schools Orienteering Championships
Valid from 1 April 2026

CHANGE LOG

DATE	RULE	DESCRIPTION
1 August 2022	Jury selection	Up-date to conform to ONZ Rule 29
29 May 2024	Top School	Points system revised
20 Jun 2024	Relays	Definitions clarified
27 March 2026	Control descriptions	Minor clarification
27 March 2026	Sprint distance	Addition of difficulty levels to Course/Class table
27 March 2026	Appendix 2b	Addition of definition of difficulty levels for Sprint

These rules define the specific regulations pertaining to the New Zealand Secondary Schools Orienteering Championships (NZSSOC), where they deviate from the New Zealand Foot-O competition rules. https://www.orienteering.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/ONZ-Rules-February-2023.pdf

These rules are binding on the New Zealand Secondary Schools Championships, and it is strongly recommended that they are also adopted by the organisers of the South Island and North Island Secondary Schools Championships, and other regional Schools Championships. Requests for rules deviations should be made to the Technical Committee at least six months before the event. There is no guarantee that these requests will be granted.

Definitions

1) NZSSOC is officially sanctioned as the schools orienteering championship by the School Sport NZ (formerly New Zealand Secondary Schools Sport Council, NZSSSC). It shall be the organiser's responsibility, working with the ONZ Event Liaison, to ensure the requisite sanctioning forms are completed.
2) NZSSOC should be run to the equivalent standard as an A-level event (as defined in the Competition Rules for New Zealand Foot Orienteering Events)
3) The NZSSOC will include three separate races - Individual Sprint, Individual Long Distance and School Team Relay.
4) The NZSSOC will ideally be held on the last weekend of the July/August school holidays, either Thurs-Sat or Fri-Sun.

Organisers

Organising clubs will be allocated in accordance with the ONZ major events allocation system.

Eligibility

A student eligible to compete officially in the NZSSOC must:

1) Be enrolled as a bona fide (Year 9 or above) student in New Zealand at the school of representation and studying at least 80% of a program that is part of the timetable provided by the school for at least four weeks immediately prior to the event.
2) Have a satisfactory attendance record at the school. The final decision will be at the principal's discretion.
3) Be under 19 years of age at the first of January in the year of the competition.
4) Year 7 & 8 students must meet equivalent criteria as bona fide students in Year 7 or 8. Younger children are not eligible to enter any of the events.
5) Under School Sport NZ guidelines, home-schooled students that provide current evidence of MoE approval for home schooling may participate in an NZSSSC sanctioned event. However, home-schooled students are not eligible for medal placings although their placing in events will be recognised. The parent or guardian of the home-schooled student must sign off the registration document accepting full responsibility for their student including the event health and safety plans.

Additionally, competitors at the North or South Island schools' champs must be at a school on that island to be an official competitor. Where an ineligible or non-competitive student is participating (e.g. a student visiting from overseas or attending the other island championships), their performance may be recognised by organisers in prize-giving, but they are not eligible for an official placing. The same approach may be applied to non-competitive relay teams.

Individual Classes

1) Competitors are divided into classes based on their gender and current year level at school.
    a) Year 7/8 (Year 7 and 8)
    b) Junior (Year 9)
    c) Intermediate (Year 10 and 11)
    d) Senior (Year 12 and 13)

2) There are also maximum ages for each class as follows:
    a) Junior (Year 9) must be under 14 years of age at the first of January in the year of the competition.
    b) Intermediate (Years 10-11) must be under 16 years of age at the first of January in the year of the competition.
    c) Senior (Years 12-13) must be under 19 years of age at the first of January in the year of the competition.

If someone is over the maximum age for their class, they must run up a class regardless of what year they are in at school.

3) Determining year at school:

    a) Regardless of what level they are studying at, year at school should be determined by how many years the student has been at school. For example, if someone is in Year 11 but studying a mixture of NCEA Level 1 and 2 papers then they still compete as a Year 11.

    b) If someone has skipped a whole year, then they compete at their new year level. For example, if someone skips straight from Year 9 to Year 11 (missing year 10) then they compete as a second-year Intermediate class.

4) Classes for the individual Long-Distance event are further subdivided on skill into Championship, Standard and (depending on class) Novice categories.

Note: The practice of competitors "running up" a class is not endorsed by Orienteering NZ, however it is recognised that in some cases this may be the best approach for a small number of top competitors with significant past experience. It is recommended that only those who have a chance of obtaining a podium place in the class above consider running up.

Note: See Appendix 2a and 2b: "Definition of Classes and Difficulty Levels" for a description of the differences between the classes that can be used as part of the event information.

Control Descriptions

Control descriptions, both loose and on the map, must be in text format for the following classes:

- Sprint - Year 7/8; Junior; Intermediate.
- Long - Year 7/8 standard and championship; Junior standard and championship; Intermediate standard and championship; Senior standard and novice.
- Relay - Year 7/8; Junior; Intermediate.

For Senior courses in Sprint and Relay, and for Senior Championship courses in the Long, all control descriptions, both loose and on the map, are expected to be in symbol format.

Organisers are encouraged to provide additional loose control descriptions in symbol format for Intermediate Championship and Senior Standard courses in the Long, and for Intermediate courses in the Sprint.

Estimated Winning Times

On occasions an exceptional athlete is found in the school classes. Courses set for these athletes may become too demanding for other competitors. Under these circumstances, in classes that contain one or two exceptional athletes, organisers may wish to use the expected finishing time of the second or third place athlete in place of an expected winning time.

Sprint

1) The following classes are offered in the individual sprint event: Senior Boys, Senior Girls, Intermediate Boys, Intermediate Girls, Junior Boys, Junior Girls, Year 7/8 Boys, Year 7/8 Girls.
2) All classes should adhere to the estimated winning time of 12-15 min.
3) The sprint must be a predominantly urban event.

Recommended course/class combinations:

Sprint			
Course	**Classes**	**Estimated winning time (mins)**	**Difficulty**
Course 1	Senior Boys	12-15 min	Difficult
Course 2	Senior Girls	12-15 min	Difficult
Course 3	Intermediate Boys	12-15 min	Difficult
Course 4	Intermediate Girls	12-15 min	Difficult
Course 5	Junior Boys	12-15 min	Moderate
Course 6	Junior Girls	12-15 min	Moderate
Course 7	Year 7/8 Boys	12-15 min	Easy/Moderate
Course 8	Year 7/8 Girls	12-15 min	Easy/Moderate

Long

1) The following classes are offered in the individual long-distance event:
    - Senior Boys & Senior Girls Championship (Red), Standard (Orange) and Novice (Yellow)
    - Intermediate Boys & Intermediate Girls Championship (Orange) and Standard (Yellow)
    - Junior Boys & Junior Girls Championship (Yellow) and Standard (White)
    - Year 7/8 Boys & Year 7/8 Girls Championship (Yellow) and Standard (White)
2) All classes should adhere to their respective estimated winning times.
3) The long-distance event must be a non-urban event (e.g. forest or farmland terrain)
4) The terrain should be complex enough to plan suitably challenging red courses.

5) Courses must be planned to a challenging level within the stated rules for each course (ONZ Foot- O rules section 16). In particular, runners on the Yellow course should be able to gain a significant advantage by being able to cut cross-country, while the orange course should provide similar opportunities to take a more direct and/or technically challenging route.

Recommended course/class combinations:

Long			
Course	**Classes**	**Estimated winning time (mins)**	**Difficulty**
Course 1	Senior Boys Championship	45-50 min	Red
Course 2	Senior Girls Championship	45-50 min	Red
Course 3	Intermediate Boys Championship	35-40 min	Orange
Course 4	Intermediate Girls Championship	35-40 min	Orange
Course 5	Senior Boys Standard	35-40 min	Orange
Course 6	Senior Girls Standard	35-40 min	Orange
Course 7	Junior Boys Championship, Intermediate Boys Standard	25-30 min	Yellow
Course 8	Junior Girls Championship, Intermediate Girls Standard	25-30 min	Yellow
Course 9	Year 7&8 Boys Championship, Senior Novice Boys	25-30 min	Yellow
Course 10	Year 7&8 Girls Championship, Senior Novice Girls	25-30 min	Yellow
Course 11	Junior Boys Standard, Yr 7/8 Boys Standard	20-25 min	White
Course 12	Junior Girls Standard, Yr 7/8 Girls Standard	20-25 min	White

Relay

For a Relay team to be Official, as per NZSSSC:

1) The students must be from the same school.
2) Official teams comprise of 3 different competitors, none of whom have completed a leg for another team in the relay in the current competition.
3) Girls may run officially in a boys' team as long as they run the equivalent boys' class. Boys may not run officially in a girls' team (for mixed schools)
4) Year 7/8 students cannot run up in the secondary school classes in official teams (this would disadvantage Year 9-13 schools).
5) Within the secondary school competition, Junior or Intermediate students may run up a class
6) All other combinations will constitute a non-competitive (NC) entry with regard to points contributing to the Top School competition.

Non-competitive teams (NC) and composite teams.

1) Mixed boys' and girls' teams will normally run the 'boys' version' of the highest-class runner in the team. However, when the competition is not compromised by non-competitive teams running in the girls' class or in lower classes, this can be permitted at the controller's discretion. These teams should be entered as a 'Full Team' when completing the initial entry forms.
2) Individual students that have been selected to run in a composite team will be placed in teams of the same class and gender.
3) Non-competitive junior teams may be entered in the year 7/8 relay.
4) In official result lists, non-competitive teams should be listed with their times at the end of the results, below the competitive teams but above teams that mis-punch.

Notes

1) All classes should adhere to their respective estimated winning times.
2) The relay event must be a non-urban event (eg forest or farmland terrain)
3) Courses must be planned to a challenging level within the stated rules for each course (ONZ Foot- O rules section 16). In particular, runners on the Yellow course should be able to gain a significant advantage by being able to cut cross-country, while the orange course should provide similar opportunities to take a more direct and/or technically challenging route.
4) The following table defines the classes and winning times in the relay event.

Relay			
Course	**Classes**	**Estimated winning time (for each leg)**	**Difficulty**
Course 1	Senior Boys	30 min	Orange
Course 2	Senior Girls	30 min	Orange
Course 3	Intermediate Boys	25 min	Yellow
Course 4	Intermediate Girls	25 min	Yellow
Course 5	Junior Boys	20 min	Leg 1 and 3 yellow, Leg 2 White
Course 6	Junior Girls	20 min	Leg 1 and 3 yellow, Leg 2 White
Course 7	Yr7/8 Boys	20 min	White
Course 8	Yr7/8 Girls	20 min	White

Costs

1) The entry fee for the event should be kept as low as reasonably possible.

Information about the event

1) The event (including organising club) must be placed on the official ONZ calendar by the end of September in the year preceding the event.
2) Event information including dates, start block times, maps being used and any accommodation options must be published by the end of March.
3) A call for entries shall also include detailed information about the definition of difficulty of each class. This allows team managers to ensure that competitors are entered in appropriate classes. See Appendix 3 for suggested example text.
4) Detailed event information as per the ONZ Foot-O rules 8.2 must be published by the end of May.
5) Final information as per the ONZ Foot-O rules 8.3 must be published at least one week before the beginning of the event.

Jury Selection

The ONZ Rules as they pertain to Jury Selection (Section 29) shall apply. However, it is recognised that at a Schools Championship event there may not be enough approved controllers in attendance from clubs other than the organising club, and association with a school rather than a club is the more important factor. Associated means, for example, a current parent, coach or teacher.

To this end, the ONZ Technical Committee will pre-select a panel of 5 controllers who are:

1) known to be attending the event; and
2) associated to 5 different schools; and
3) preferably from clubs other than the organising club; and
4) preferably representing a diverse geographical spread

A jury convenor will be pre-selected by the ONZ Technical Committee. The convenor should select a jury of 3 members from this panel of 5 ensuring that any jury member has no association with the school or the family of the protestor.

If 3 acceptable A-level controllers cannot be present on the day per the ONZ rules, there must be at least one qualifying A-level controller available in addition to the event controller. Other jury members may be replaced by experienced orienteers without a personal interest in the protest.

Results/Prizegiving

1) Provisional results shall be announced and displayed in the finish area, or assembly area, during the competition.
2) Final results shall be made public upon completion of the event as long as there are no outstanding complaints or protests.
3) A prizegiving will be held for the presentation of trophies, including the schools points results.

4) It is the organising club's responsibility to ensure a volunteer is appointed prior to the event to calculate the schools points for all the events. (See Appendix 1 for the points system, and note that ONZ has some software that may be able to be used)

Event Report

1) An event report should be completed by the overall organiser and the relevant controller for each of the days and sent to the Technical Committee.

Appendix 1: Points competitions

Top Secondary School Competition

This is the longest running competition and caters for the broadest spread of students. It is intended that the trophies go to the schools that display the greatest depth of orienteering talent at all levels. There are separate trophies for boys and girls.

1) Only 3 competitors in each age class will contribute to the school's points for any one race. Therefore, a maximum of 9 competitors (3 at each age group) will be able to earn points for their school for any one race for either the boys or girls trophies. Over the full competition, different team members may score on different days meaning many more than 9 athletes may contribute to a school's points. A "no-blocking rule" applies (see below): remaining competitors from the school are removed from the results for the purpose of points allocation only.
2) In the individual Sprint competition, the best three results at each age class will be counted. Only one level is offered.
3) In the individual Long competition, the best three results at each age class, whether in the Championship, Standard or Novice event, will be counted. A school can gain points from no more than two athletes from outside the Championship class, except when the "same points rule" applies (see points calculation notes below).
4) When the points for the third contributing competitor for a school in a class could come from different classes, the "same points rule" applies (see points calculation notes below).
5) In the relay, only the highest positioned team from any school in each age class will count. (Runners in composite or non-competitive teams do not count).
6) When two competitors receiving points tie in any race, they each gain the points appropriate for their placing. For example, if there is a tie for 5th place both get points for 5th place. The next counting athlete gets points for 7th place.

Points for this competition are as follows:

Individual Sprint:	1st = 25 pts, 2nd = 24 pts, 3rd = 23 pts, down to 25th = 1 pt
Individual Long Championship:	1st = 25 pts, 2nd = 24 pts, 3rd = 23 pts, down to 25th = 1 pt
Individual Long Standard:	1st = 15 pts, 2nd = 14 pts, 3rd = 13 pts, down to 15th = 1 pt
Individual Long Novice:	1st= 3pts, 2nd = 2pts, 3rd= 1pt.
Relays:	1st team = 60 pts, 2nd = 54, 3rd = 48, down to 10th = 6 pts

Premier School Competition

This competition is for Boys and Girls with a Trophy for each. It is aimed at encouraging schools to support their top performing competitors at national level. The winners are the schools that have the best performance by their top competitors at Championship level only. The results of one competitor from each school in each Championship age class count, with points from 10 for 1st to 1 for 10th.

Small Teams Competition

This competition is to cater for schools who have insufficient numbers or an inadequate spread of students to compete seriously in the Top School Competition. It is restricted to schools that have entered 5 or fewer competitors, as determined on the day of close of entries. There are separate boys' and girls' Competitions. Mixed schools with more than 5 competitors in total but whose boys', girls', or both teams number fewer than 5 competitors are eligible for the Small Teams Competition. Certificates are awarded to the winning school and the place getters. This competition will be based on results in the Top School Competition.

Year 7/8 Competition

This competition follows the rules of the Top Schools Competition. There are only 2 classes: Boys and Girls.

Points Calculation Notes

1. *The "no blocking" rule*. This means that once a school has scored its best competitors then any further competitors from the same school do not interfere with points. For example, in the top school competition, if a school has runners at 2, 4, 6 and 7, the school will score 24, 22 and 20 points. The 7th place getter is then removed from the equation so the runner who is 8th will score 19 points (as though he/she were 7th).
2. *The "same points" rule.* This relates to the unusual case where a school has two team members on the same points, either of whom could be considered to generate the points for the third counting runner in a class. This has arisen when two athletes from the same school and same class, but competing in different classes (championship, standard, or novice) have shared the same points. The points are to be awarded only for the runner from the less technical class (novice -> standard -> championship). This does not affect the School's points but leaves more points available for distribution to remaining competitors in the more technical class. An example is where the runner 11th in Championship and 1st in Standard are both at the same school in the long distance. By attributing 15 points from the standard class, the 15 points for 11th place in the championship class remain available and now given to the 12th place competitor (as the 11th place championship competitor will be removed from calculations by the no blocking rule). Although points are not allocated to the higher technical class competitor, their achievement is valued.

Appendix 2a: Definition of Classes and Difficulty Levels for Long Distance and Relay (Forest or Farm terrain)

The following is provided to guide team managers in which course to enter individual athletes for the long event. Forest/farm orienteering courses are colour coded by difficulty. The skills required for each difficulty level are indicated below. We expect that many athletes will not securely have the requisite skills for the Championship course at their age class. We strongly encourage these less experienced athletes to enter the Standard course for their class. Competing on the right course will improve an athlete's enjoyment and confidence in the sport.

RED: Red courses are set to make the navigation as difficult as possible. They require competitors to be very competent at reading contour detail, using bearings and handling the full complexity of an orienteering map. Frequently fences are left off maps used for red courses, requiring greater dependence on terrain recognition for navigation. Control sites on red courses can be on small features with no catching or collecting features. Competitors should be experienced at running red courses and have good route planning skills. Inexperienced runners can find it difficult to relocate if they do not navigate successfully to a control.

Used for: Senior Championship classes.

ORANGE: Orange course competitors must be competent at reading distinct contour features, very competent at reading vegetation patterns, watercourse, rock, track types and building features, and be able to set and follow a basic compass bearing and have some ability to judge distances in event terrain. The best route between controls will often be away from simple navigation features like fences and tracks. Competitors should have extensive experience in running yellow courses and have some experience at the orange level of difficulty prior to entering the championship. Orange courses are set so that there is a catching feature (e.g. a distinct track, fence or stream) some distance after the control. This means that inexperienced runners should be able to relocate if they overrun a control.

Used for: Senior Standard, Intermediate Championship, Senior Relay.

YELLOW: Yellow courses follow linear features (e.g. tracks, fences, vegetation boundaries and streams) however controls are frequently sited off the route being followed. Competitors need to be able to orientate their map using a compass in order to choose their direction to go in and be able to recognise features that will lead them from their linear feature and into the control. The fastest route between controls may be away from the network of linear features. Competitors should be confident running white courses and have run yellow courses successfully before entering the championships. The structuring of courses around linear features means that an athlete with good recognition of these features on the map and the ground should be able to relocate easily.

Used for: Senior Novice, Intermediate Standard, Junior Championship, Y7/8 Championship, Intermediate Relay, Junior Relay (legs 1 & 3).

WHITE: White course competitors need to be able to read basic map features, follow linear features (e.g. tracks, fences, vegetation boundaries and streams) to control points and use a compass to orientate their map to north. There will be controls at each significant decision point around the course. The white course is designed to minimise the chance that a competitor will become lost and need to relocate.

Used for: Junior Standard, Y7/8 Standard, Junior Relay (leg 2), Y7/8 Relay.

Appendix 2b: Definition of Classes and Difficulty Levels for Sprint Distance (Urban terrain)

Sprint races are held in largely urban environments with an emphasis on high-speed navigation. Controls are not difficult to find; the challenge comes from choosing and completing the best route choice between controls in a complex environment.

SPRINT DIFFICULT COURSE

Route choices should be as complex as possible, and the aim should be that every leg poses a route choice challenge. The most obvious way out from a control should not necessarily be the most favourable one. The average leg length should be short with frequent changes of direction (cross-over loops are good). Long legs may be set as long as they require a high rate of decision making along the way, and multiple route choice options. The course should be set to require the competitor's full concentration throughout the race.

Used for: Senior, Intermediate classes.

SPRINT MODERATE COURSE

Route choice should be a feature of most legs but the complexity of the route choices should be less than that for difficult sprint courses. The obvious exit direction from a control should be the correct direction in which to start the leg (avoid legs that require a "backwards" exit) and ideally give the runner a chance to progress partway along the leg before having to make route choice decisions. Direction changes should be a feature but the overall course design should not be so complex as to confuse the runner.

Used for: Junior classes.

SPRINT EASY COURSE

Route choice should be restricted to simple two-option choices, and only one option per leg. Controls should be sited so that they are visible from all approach directions, and so that they lead the runner to the correct exit direction. Controls should be placed at the point of each major directional change. Long legs should be avoided, unless very simple. Course design should be simple and clear.

Used for: Y7/8 classes (some legs may be of Moderate standard).

Appendix 3: Information for Team Managers

Text similar to the following can be included in the entry information to schools. The purpose is to get as many students as possible running courses appropriate to their ability which improves overall event safety and timeliness.

Selecting the appropriate courses for students

The technical difficulty of the Championship courses will match those recommended by Orienteering NZ for the NZSSOC – see Appendix 2a and 2b.

Please be responsible when choosing which competition class to enter. Orienteering is difficult and not much fun when you can't complete a course because it is too hard. If a student has not completed a course at the Championship level for their age group, then they should enter the Standard class. This is a Championship Event and the Championship courses are set as difficult as possible within the guidelines to test the most able orienteers in each age group.

The Standard class courses still provide a good level of technical and physical challenge. We estimate that roughly half of the competitors should be running in the Championship class, with the rest running Standard or Novice class.

The Novice class is available for Senior students who are new to orienteering