



**FENCING**  
I R E L A N D

# New Refereeing Structures Information for Competition Organisers

## Introduction

Fencing Ireland has recently (April 2021) launched a new initiative to deliver our Level 1 refereeing qualifications entirely online.

Alongside this, we are actively taking steps to grow and strengthen our cohort of referees and to improve the culture and level of organisation surrounding refereeing in Ireland. It is Fencing Ireland's goal that, in a few years, Ireland will no longer rely on 'self-refereeing' at competitions, especially at our higher level 'National Circuit' events.

To these ends, we are reviewing our referee training structure and introducing a number of refereeing policies and initiatives.

This document provides the necessary details for competition organisers in Ireland regarding the new policies. The most prominent change will be the one, in a system similar to that used in FIE events, clubs will be required to provide referees for competitions based on the number of fencers from that club entering events. There are a number of other policies being introduced too and we would ask you to familiarise yourselves with the details of all requirements.



## Clubs' responsibilities to provide referees to competitions

From the start of the 2022/23 season, fencing clubs in Ireland will be required to provide referees to competitions based on the number of fencers from a club enter the event. For every four fencers to enter an event at a competition the club will have to provide a qualified referee for that event.

For example, if a club enters four women's foilists into the East of Ireland Open, the club will have to provide a qualified foil referee for that women's foil event. If, however, a club enters two women's foilists and two men's foilists, that will not require the provision of a referee as those four entries are split across two events. If a club enters between eight and eleven people to an event, they will be required to provide two referees, and so on for each four entries.

The aim of this new policy is to increase the amount of referees available to you to organise competitions without the organising clubs having to do all the work in gathering those referees. It is hoped that some of the burden of providing referees being placed upon fencing clubs will induce those clubs to encourage their members to engage with the Fencing Ireland refereeing qualification system.

There are a number of secondary rules that will come into effect at the same time, the start of the 2022/23 season:

- Referees provided by clubs must be appropriately qualified. They must hold a refereeing qualification in the relevant weapon(s) and this qualification must be recognised by Fencing Ireland.
- Where a club does not provide a referee in accordance with this policy, they will be subject to a fine of €100 for each referee not properly provided. Competition organisers are asked to report any such infractions to Fencing Ireland at the following email address: [development@irishfencing.net](mailto:development@irishfencing.net) Fencing Ireland will collect the necessary fines. Fines collected will be divided equally between Fencing Ireland and the competition organiser. Fencing Ireland reserves the right to take more serious steps to address the issue if a club or clubs systematically do not engage with the system but we hope this will not be necessary.
- Competition organisers will be asked to close normal entry for competitions at least a week before the event. It is at this stage that the calculation will be made of how many referees clubs must send. This is to provide ample time for clubs to organise referees for the event. If competition organisers wish to accept entries after this standardised closing date, you may do so. Fencers who enter after the standardised closing date will not count to a club's entry total for the purposes of providing a referee. If you accept late entries we ask that you charge a higher than previously normal later entry fee - at minimum €30. This is to incentivise fencers to enter early and to ensure that entries are counted towards the calculation for provision of referees.

## Referees database

Fencing Ireland is working towards a situation where fencing events in Ireland will no longer rely on 'self refereeing'. Achieving this will take time but we are asking competition organisers to begin making efforts in that direction now.

Fencing Ireland is establishing a database with contact details for qualified referees. Referees will have the option to opt in to the database or not. This database is being put together to support you in organising referees for competitions.

This refereeing database will also allow you to check whether or not a referee is qualified.

The referees provided by clubs based on number of entries will not be enough to fully referee competitions. As clubs will, at some point in the weeks leading up to a competition, be trying to organise referees due to the number of fencers entered from that club. Fencing Ireland recommends that competition organisers contact a base number of referees early in the process of organising the competition.

There will be a number of rules associated with the access to and use of this database to ensure that the data of referees is not misused. These rules will be as follows:

- The referees have agreed to share their information for competition organisers to contact them regarding refereeing at competitions - contact details acquired through this database may not be used for any other purpose.
- Referees may ask for their details to be removed from this database at any time so each time you send out a general email asking for referees, please do so having rechecked the database and only include referees who are listed in the database at that time. The current date is at the top left of each spreadsheet to allow you to check that the list is up to date.
- When emailing more one referee you **MUST** use BCC for all email address acquired from this database.
- When requesting access to the contact list please provide your name, club, and the event(s) being organised in the message box. You will only be provided access to the databases which are relevant to the competitions your club organised - e.g. a club who run exclusively sabre events will not be provided access to the épée or foil databases.
- Only one representative per club will be allowed access at any time. This person can be changed if/when roles change in your club's organisation. Access will NOT be provided to general club accounts/email addresses, only to those of named individuals. You may not share access to the data with a person who has not been officially provided access.

## Referee Manager

With the aim of improving communication between referees and competition organisers as well as enhancing the experience of referees at a competition, we are asking all competitions to designate a *Referee Manager* for their competition. This designated person may be the DT or a member of the DT (if the DT is a team) but due care and consideration should be given to choosing a person who will have enough spare time during a competition to fulfil the role.

The role of the Referee Manager would be:

- Communicating with referees before, during, and after the competition
- Being available to address issues a referee may face during a competition
- Organising the facilities for referees (see below)
- After a competition, sending Fencing Ireland a log of referees who were involved in refereeing a full event(s).
- Report to Fencing Ireland when clubs do not organise for a suitably qualified referee to be present when required.

## Facilities for referees

Fencing Ireland is setting a standardised, base level of facilities to which referees will be entitled when working at an event and which must be provided by the competition organisers. These are:

- In advance of the competition, referees must be provided with clear start times for the events they will be refereeing. An approximate schedule of the day should also be available in advance.
- Tea/coffee/water must be provided by the organisers.
- Lunch or a lunch voucher must also be provided.
- Referees must be allowed adequate breaks to consume the water/tea/coffee/lunch provided.

We are also asking competition organisers that referees are treated in a clear and logical manner in the way in which they are assigned matches. Organisers will be asked to make every effort to ensure that qualified referees who volunteer for events are given an appropriate amount of matches to referee.

This is the minimum standard of facilities that must be provided, fencing competitions are, of course, welcome to provide more or better facilities to referees, if they so wish.

## Respect for referees

At times, referees in Ireland face unwarranted and unacceptable behaviour from members of the fencing community, ranging from dismissive to abusive.

This must stop.

In a document being issued to all Fencing Ireland members at the same time as this document is issued to competition organisers, a set of guidelines on proper

behaviour is laid out. Likewise, referees have been issued a document which details the rules relevant to this behaviour. Referees have also been told that they can turn to the Referee Manager and the competition DT for support and backing if they experience disrespectful, insulting, or abusive behaviour.

[What we ask from competition organisers to aid in this situation is the following:](#)

- At a number of events during the 2021/22 season, Fencing Ireland will arrange to gather all fencers together and set out these guidelines in person. If your event is one of those chosen, we ask you to facilitate Fencing Ireland in doing so.
- Support of referees: a referee's first port of call if facing unacceptable behaviour will often be the Referees Manager and/or the DT. We ask that any reports made by referees are documented and passed on to Fencing Ireland after the event. We also ask that referees are backed up by organisers. If a penalty card is warranted for the reported behaviour and the referee has not already issued the relevant card, the DT should look to do so.
- Please ensure that you do appoint a Referee Manager (see above) to liaise with referees when they experience behaviour that does not reach the standards we expect of all members of the fencing community.

Regarding the specific rules relevant to this situation, we draw your attention to the following section of the FIE offences and penalties chart, the 3rd group of offences (3.1 and 3.4 are the most relevant parts here) and the full text of two relevant rules, t.109 and t.111:



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	OFFENCE	ARTICLES	PENALTIES (Cards)	
			1st time	2nd time
	<b>3rd group</b>			
3.1	Fencer disturbing order when on piste. In the most serious cases, the Referee may award a black card immediately (t.168).	t.108.2, t.109, t.110, t.137.2	<b>RED</b>	<b>BLACK</b>
3.2	Dishonest fencing *	t.121	<b>RED</b>	
3.3	Offence against Publicity Code	<b>Publicity Code</b>		
3.4	Any person not on piste disturbing good order. In the most serious cases, the Referee may award a black card immediately (t.168).	t.109, t.110, t.111, t.132.2, t.133, t.137.3/4, t.168	<b>YELLOW</b>	<b>BLACK</b>
3.5	Warming up or training without wearing fencing clothing or equipment that conforms to the FIE regulations.	t.20.2		
3.6	Anti-sporting behaviour	t.121.2		

t.109

Everybody taking part in or present at a fencing competition must **remain orderly and must not disturb the smooth running of the competition**. During bouts no one is allowed to **go near the pistes**, to **give advice to the fencers**, to **criticise the Referee** or the judges, to insult them or to attempt to influence them in any way. Even the **team captain** must remain in the space assigned to him and he may only intervene in the situations and in the manner provided for in Article t.130 of the Rules. The Referee must stop immediately any activity which disturbs the smooth running of the bout which he is refereeing (cf. t.137.1-3).

Any person who, for any reason, threatens or insults an official commits an offence of the 4th group and is penalised according to article t.169.

t.111

The Referee and/or the Directoire Technique, on their own authority or at the request of an official delegate of the FIE or of the Organising Committee, can decide to **expel from the competition venue**, with or without a warning, any person who by his gestures, attitude or language disturbs the good order or smooth running of the event.

The other rules referenced in the above section of the penalty chart can be found on the FIE website. The entire penalty chart can be as t.170 in the FIE Technical Rules. The '4th group' of offences mentioned at the end of t.109 are offences that warrants a black card on the first incident.

Fencers are being informed of Fencing Ireland's focus on addressing this area of concern in a document issued for them at the same time as this document is being issued to referees. At a number of events in the coming season, entrants will be gathered together and will be informed of what is and what is not acceptable behaviour. Ignorance of the rules will, therefore, not be a valid excuse from anybody should unacceptable behaviour of this sort occur.

Fencers will be informed that they may politely request that a referee re-read a phrase. Per t.172.2, if a fencer believes a referee "is ignorant of or misunderstands a direct rule" they may appeal to the DT to that effect. They may not, however, cast "doubt on the decision of the Referee on a point of fact during the bout" (again, t.172.2). If a fencer infringes rule t.172 they are subject to penalty as a 1st group offence under the heading "Unjustified appeal, casting doubt on the decision of the referee on a point of fact." (1.17 in the FIE offences and penalties chart).

## Weapons testing

It is our intention that ranked competition in Ireland will be more consistent in weight and gauge testing foils and épées at each round of competitions (at the start of poules and before every DE match). We will be asking referees to test accordingly.

What we ask of competition organisers to facilitate this is the provision of testing weights and gauges to referees/pistes. If you have any issues in doing so, please contact Fencing Ireland so that a solution can be found.

## Relevant referees for relevant matches

Finally, we would like to draw your attention to Fencing Ireland's plan to ensure that the referees of an appropriate standard are put in charge of the toughest matches.

Events	Youth Referee	Level 1 Referee	Level 2 Senior Referee	Level 3 National Referee
Senior National Circuit Events			Poules Direct Elimination Matches	Semi Finals and Finals
Non-National Circuit Senior Events		Poules and Direct Elimination Matches	Semi Finals and Finals	
Youth Events	Referee Poule matches at all age categories and DEs at age categories 2 levels below own category	All Stages: Poules, Direct Elimination matches, Semi Finals and Finals		

Fencing Ireland recognises that it will not be possible to fully apply this structure for the foreseeable future as we further grow and develop our refereeing community. At the moment we simply want to bring it to your attention as a competition organiser and ask that you continue to consider the standard of referee when appointing them to important matches at your events.