



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

## New Refereeing Structures Information for Fencers

### Introduction

Earlier this year Fencing Ireland launched a new initiative to deliver our Level 1 refereeing courses and 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 fencers in Ireland regarding the new policies. The most prominent change will be that, in a system similar to the one used in FIE events, clubs will be required to provide referees for competitions based on the number of fencers from that club entering events.



## Clubs' responsibilities to provide referees to competitions

A key component of Fencing Ireland's new refereeing policies is that for every four fencers from a fencing club who enter an event, that club will have to organise for a qualified referee to officiate for that event. This applies to each weapon event. So, if your club enters four women's foilists, for example, into the East of Ireland Open, the club will have to provide a qualified foil referee for the women's foil event. If, however, your 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.

There are a number of aims with this policy. We are working to move away from 'self-refereed' competitions and, to do so, will need more referees. By encouraging the attendance of more referees and ensuring that those referees engage with the Fencing Ireland referee qualifications beforehand, we also aim to raise the level and consistency of refereeing in Ireland and thus to improve competitions for you as fencers.

The practical organisation of this system will necessitate some secondary procedures, the following are those which may directly impact fencers:

- Competition organisers will be asked to standardise the closing of regular competition entry one week prior to the competition. It is at this point that the calculation of how many referees a club must provide will be made.
- Late entries will be possible at the discretion of the organisers but will incur a late entry fee of at least €30. This is to encourage fencers to enter on time and for their entry to be properly counted for the new refereeing system.
- When a club does not provide a suitably qualified referee as required, the club will be subject to a fine of €100.

## Weapons testing

We have asked competition organisers and referees to ensure that ranked competition in Ireland are more consistent in weight and gauge testing foils and épées at each round of competitions (that is, at the start of poules and before every DE match).

So this is not an issue for you, you should ensure that:

- Your foils and épées pass these tests;
- You have spare equipment beside the piste in case a weapon fails a test;
- You know how to repair the weapons with faults which would cause them to fail these tests.

## Respect for referees

At times, referees in Ireland face unacceptably disrespectful behaviour or abuse from members of the Irish fencing community. Fencing Ireland is committed to putting a stop to such behaviour through ensuring that inappropriate behaviour is penalised in accordance with the rules of our sport.

To provide clarity to our members, what follows is some guidance on what is and is not allowed when interacting with referees and other members of the fencing community.

We are involved in a competitive sport and there is a great drive to win amongst all our members. We value that drive but would ask you to remember that referees are people and are volunteering their time and effort to help run the event in which you are taking part. **Referees are deserving of your respect and your thanks**, not your ire or insults. Referees must be saluted at the start and end of each match.



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In a match, a fencer (or a team captain in the case of team matches) may politely ask a referee to re-read a phrase. Fencers may not argue with the referee or cast doubt on a referee's decision and may be carded for 'disturbing order when on the piste' for doing so. The appropriate card for offences like this is a red card for the first offence and a black card for the second. If the offence is serious enough, a black card may be issued for the first offence.

Per the rules, no appeal can be made against referees regarding a point of fact. For example, if a referee perceives that a fencer left the back of the piste completely with both feet that cannot be appealed by the fencer or team captain. Likewise, if a referee says that an attack from one fencer started before the other for the purposes of determining priority/right of way, that is a fact that cannot be appealed. There are exceptions for this with regard to video refereeing but, in the vast majority of cases, that is not relevant to competitions in Ireland.

What is possible is making an appeal in the situation where a referee is not aware of a rule or misapplies a rule. At Irish events, the DT will decide such an appeal. If the appeal is deemed to be 'unjustified' the fencer will be penalised accordingly with a yellow card (or a red card if they have already received a card in that match).

Insulting or threatening a referee is deemed a '4th group offence' in the FIE rules, that is to say, an offence warranting a black card on the first offence. This is the case for fencers, coaches, spectators, or anyone else who may commit this offence. **Insulting or threatening behaviour will not be tolerated.**

We expect all members of the Irish fencing community to behave politely and to create an atmosphere in our events of which we can all be proud. Achieving this

comes not just from officials penalising behaviour that breaks the rules but also from you and your fellow fencers calling out poor behaviour when you see it. Do not accept your friends demeaning our volunteers or other fencers. If you see it, call it out.

## Making a report

If you spot someone engaging in disrespectful, insulting, abusive, or threatening behaviour to a referee or to anyone else, you may report such behaviour to the competition DT or you may do so through official Fencing Ireland channels. For further information on how to make such a report to Fencing Ireland, please see: [www.fencingireland.net/make-a-report/](http://www.fencingireland.net/make-a-report/)

This reporting structure can be used for a wide range of issues including child safeguarding.

If you spot something that you feel needs to be reported, please do so, don't assume someone else will.