



# **Athlete Handbook and Rules for Ice Dance**

## OVERVIEW

The U.S. Figure Skating National Qualifying Series (NQS) was approved by the 2018 Governing Council and will go into effect in the summer of 2019 to serve the following purposes:

1. An additional / alternative way for singles athletes to advance to the Sectional Singles Final (*formally known as Sectional Championships*) and an additional path for pairs and dance athletes to advance to/secure a spot at the U.S. Pairs or U.S. Dance Final (*new championship events, held in conjunction with one of the Sectional Singles Finals. Click [HERE](#) to see the details for advancement for dance athletes*)
2. An opportunity for couples at the juvenile – senior levels to earn an official national ranking at their level and virtually compete against couples from all parts of the country.

The NQS is a series of official U.S. Figure Skating approved competitions hosted individually by member clubs nationwide, during the summer months, that are held in a standard format and in which athletes earn official scores towards a national rank. The competitions will be held between May 31, 2019 and September 15, 2019.

All competitions accepted into the NQS must agree to the following U.S. Figure Skating requirements:

1. Use a panel of officials, of a minimum level, approved by the Domestic Selections Committee
2. Conduct the NQS pairs events in accordance with U.S. Figure Skating rule 8050 / Composition of Ice Dance Events, so all events are standard and comparable across the country.
3. Utilize U.S. Figure Skating's Event Management System (EMS) for registration, officials' management and results transmission.
4. Utilize the International Judging System (IJS) and the official calculation software with the latest related version of the software and official judging system hardware.

Competitions approved by U.S. Figure Skating as official NQS events can be found [here](#).

## **ENTRIES, PARTICIPATION AND QUALIFYING PROCESS:**

**STEP 1: Enter the National Qualifying Series.** Entry deadline is May 28, 2019, by one partner logging onto [Members Only](#), and selecting, **Event Management System (EMS)**. **Late entries are not accepted.** The overall entry fee to participate in the NQS is \$25.00 per event, (nonrefundable), paid at the time of entry. Couples are not required to select their competitions at this point, only to register as an overall participant.

**STEP 2: Determination of level.** Couples may skate at the level they are test eligible for, or one level higher. They also choose to complete two separate entries (and pay two entry fees of \$25). They may enter two levels, if they wish, or if they are not sure which level they ultimately want to compete, they can enter both and decide later.

HOWEVER: Couples may not compete at two levels in the same competition.

**STEP 3: Determination of section.** The couple's section does not matter for the purpose of the NQS. Rankings will be done on a national basis and the top three couples per level, nationwide will earn an automatic spot at the U.S. Dance Final.

*Note: Singles athletes will automatically be entered in the section of their home club at the time of entry for the NQS, with the top six athletes per section earning a bye to their Sectional Singles Final. If a singles athlete, also competing in dance, finishes in the top 6 in their section, their bye will allow them to compete in whichever section is also hosting the U.S. Dance Final. If they do not earn a bye in singles, and the couple also doesn't earn a bye in dance, the athlete may then enter whichever Regional Singles Challenge within their section is also hosting the Sectional Dance Challenge.*

**STEP 4: Entry to individual competitions.** After officially entering the NQS, the couple then selects competitions to enter. This can be as few or as many as desired, in any location around the country. Couples must enter each competition directly, via [U.S. Figure Skating's EMS](#), in accordance with the entry deadline and entry fees set by that competition. It is the responsibility of the athletes to register for each competition and follow any entry rules set by that competition. Entering the NQS, does not enter the Couple into any competitions.

**STEP 5: Standings and Results.** After each NQS competition is completed, the combined Total Score earned by each couple will be pulled by U.S. Figure Skating, and the running standings updated on Members Only / EMS. Standings will posted for dance events for the entire country. Only each couple's current highest Total Score will be counted. (For example, if a couple competes in competition #2, but had a higher Total Score in competition #1, their score from competition # 1 would remain). The placements of couples at any NQS competition are not relevant, only the Total Score earned by each couple. (See conduct of competition below for details).

Couples that entered the NQS, but haven't competed yet, will not appear in the rankings until they skate a competition.

**STEP 6: Results / The conclusion of the NQS.** After the last event in the NQS, the scores become final, with only one Total Score (the highest) per couple counting. The following will be the official results of the series:

1. There will be a National Ranking for each level, with all couples that competed in at least one competition earning a certificate and a pin.
2. Couples earning a Total Score that is in the Top 3 of their level, nationwide, will have secured their spot at the U.S. Dance Final, and will be offered a bye to the event.
3. Couples that register for the NQS but fail to skate in a competition will not receive a competitor certificate / pin.

### **STEP 7: The Qualifying Season Starts**

After the conclusion of the NQS, the regular qualifying season starts. All couples, regardless of ranking, that wish to continue advancing through the qualifying season must enter the Qualifying Season (Sectional Dance Challenge) by September 1, 2019, no exceptions. All current rules regarding the qualifying system come into play (this has not changed):

- a. Couples must have passed the appropriate test for the level they wish to enter by September 1.
- b. All couples must enter the section of the home club of at least one partner, by Sept 1. (Singles skaters not earning a bye must enter the region of their home club, or the region that is also hosting the Sectional Dance Challenge, if also competing in dance).
- c. How byes earned in the NQS are handled:
  - The top 3 couples, nationwide, in each level, that have also entered the qualifying season (Sectional Dance Challenge) by September 1, are contacted via email and offered a bye to the U.S. Dance Final. They may choose to accept the bye or compete at their sectional. Regardless, they have secured their spot at the U.S. Dance Final. If the couple chooses to compete, and finishes lower than 5<sup>th</sup>, they still advance to the U.S. Dance Final. (If they finish in the top 5, the next highest placing couple without a bye also advances.)
  - Byes may not cross levels. If a couple competed in two levels in the NQS, for example, placing 1<sup>st</sup> in juvenile and 5<sup>th</sup> in intermediate, and wants to use the bye to the U.S. Dance Final, they must compete in juvenile, and be test eligible. If the couple wants to compete intermediate, the juvenile bye would be forfeited, and be offered to the next couple.

**NOTE:** The NQS and official qualifying season, which consists of the Sectional Dance Challenge, the U.S. Dance Final and the U.S. Figure Skating Championships or National High Performance Development Couple, are considered two separate programs/events, with two separate results and rewards. Couples may compete in either or both to be considered qualifying competitors. The only thing that applies to both programs is the “bye” to the U.S. Dance Final earned by the top three couples in each level. Couples **ARE NOT** required to compete in the NQS to enter the Sectional Dance Challenge, and can advance through the qualifying system, simply by entering only the Sectional Dance Challenge by September 1.

**Illustration of the NQS and Qualifying Season –  
They are two separate programs. Athletes may enter either or both:**

NQS.  
Register by May 28<sup>th</sup>.

Official qualifying season. All athletes must register for the qualifying season by Sept. 1<sup>st</sup> and be test / age eligible continue. NQS registration does not carry over.



Time	June - September	October	November	January
Event	NQS - Dance	Sectional Dance Challenge	U.S. Dance Final	U.S. Champs. Or National HPTDC
Entry	Open entry	Open entry	3 from NQS + 15 from sectional	Top 12 Jr / Sr    Top 9 Juv/ Int /Nov
Advancement / Result	Top 3 nationwide are offered a bye to the U.S. Dance Final	Top 5 per section advance to U.S. Dance Final	Top 12 advance to U.S. Championships (Jr. / Sr.) Top 9 advance to NHPDT (Juv., Int., Novice)	Athletes selected for international competitions or High Performance programs

**EVENTS TO BE SKATED and CONDUCT of COMPETITION:**

Pairs events at all NQS pairs competitions will be conducted in accordance with Rule 7060 / Composition of Pairs Events. This states that senior, junior and novice pair events will consist of a short program and a free skate. If a qualifying round is necessary, only the free skate will be skated in the qualifying round. Intermediate and juvenile events will consist of a free skate only.

NQS Pairs Events will consist of the following events, in accordance with the noted technical rule:

- Juvenile Dance / Rule 8450
- Intermediate Dance / Rule 8440
- Novice Dance / Rule 8430
- Junior Dance / Rule 8420
- Senior Dance / Rule 8410

Technical Information regarding the pattern dances, rhythm dances and free dances is as of the latest information posted on the U.S. Figure Skating [Technical Info](#) web page for singles and pairs.

**Additional Dance Events:**

Competitions may choose to offer stand-alone only competition events for dance couples, if there is demand from couples that may want to “practice” competing only one event segment. (i.e., a couple isn’t ready to officially compete in the NQS, and just wants to get feedback on a pattern dance). Please note these separate events are **NOT** part of the NQS and will not be counted. Please pay close attention when entering competitions to ensure you are selecting the events you wish to enter.

## COMPETITION RESULTS, STANDINGS, TITLES and AWARDS

**Results:** Each NQS competition will post event results on-site and distribute awards, such as trophies, medals, ribbons, etc., as usual. These are specific to that competition (not the NQS overall) and are not under the jurisdiction of U.S. Figure Skating. Please see the individual competition announcements for awards on-site at each event.

**Standings:** At the end of the NQS competition, each couple's Total Score (combined PD or RD + FD), is transmitted to the final standings in EMS, which are updated continually, and as soon as possible following each event. Only a couple's current highest Total Score is officially recorded. If a couple finishes a competition and beats their previous high score, their score will be updated. If a couple competes, but does not beat their current high score, the previous score stands.

Couples are welcome to compete as many or as few times as they wish, with only their highest Total Score officially counting towards the national ranking. Earning a lower score at a subsequent competition, will not negatively impact a couple's standing.

**Awards:** At the end of the last NQS competition of the season, all scores will become "official" and competitors will receive the following:

1. A national ranking; with the Top 3 couples per level having secured their spot in the U.S. Dance Final.
2. A national ranking; their ranking among all dance couples at their level in the U.S.
3. A certificate with either their ranking number or "competitor" designated. (*Couples ranking below the top 50% of all competitors, will receive a certificate that says "competitor" in lieu of their actual ranking number*).
4. Couples finishing in the Top 25% nationally will receive a gold pin.
5. Couples finishing in the Top 26-50% nationally will receive a silver pin.
6. All couples below the Top 50%, will receive a competitor pin.
7. Couples that register for the NQS but don't skate complete any competitions will not receive a competitor certificate or pin.

**Titles:** There are NO titles or championships awarded through the National Qualifying Series. Athletes earn a rank, a pin, a certificate and the opportunity to earn to secure their spot at the next level of competition. The highest placing Couple in the NQS is **NOT** considered a national champion. That title is reserved for the U.S. Figure Skating Championships.

## APPENDIX / FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### ***How involved will U.S. Figure Skating be in the running of the individual NQS competitions?***

U.S. Figure Skating requires that NQS competitions follow a set of standards to provide a consistent, high quality competition for competitors to compare scores across the U.S. This includes using the Event Management System (EMS) for registration and transmittal of IJS scores, the approved standard of event conduct (with regards to a combined event), the newest IJS software and the approved level of officials.

U.S. Figure Skating only oversees the conduct of the official NQS events within the competition (Juvenile – Senior), and will not have any authority over the schedule, entry fees, practice ice, deadlines, etc. In addition, U.S. Figure Skating will have no authority over specialty or other events such as solo dance, Excel, showcase, levels below juvenile, specialty events, etc.

### ***We forgot to enter the NQS by May 28<sup>th</sup>. Can we still compete in competitions that are part of the series?***

**Yes!** Any couples can enter any competition, regardless of NQS status, in fact, there may be some non-U.S. competitors participating! If a couple is not registered as part of the NQS, their Total Score will not be extracted from the competition scores transmitted to EMS and will simply be ignored in the NQS standings. So, while you will not receive a national ranking in the NQS, you can still compete as usual for participation and experience.

### ***We didn't start skating together until June, so missed the NQS deadline. Can we still go to the Sectional Dance Challenge?***

**Yes!** You may still enter the qualifying system by September 1, compete at the Sectional Dance Challenge and have an opportunity to advance to the U.S. Dance Final, and thus the National High-Performance Development Team Camp or U.S. Figure Skating Championships.

### ***We entered the NQS by May 28<sup>th</sup>, but I forgot to send in our entry to the competition we wanted to enter and missed their entry deadline. What should I do?***

Each NQS competition entry is handled by the host competition. See the competition announcement for their policy on late entries. If late entries are not accepted, you will not be allowed to enter that competition. However, there are no limits or restrictions which event you can enter, so enter a different competition that has a later entry deadline.

***Can we compete out of our section?***

**Yes!** Couples can enter any NQS competition, in any location they wish. (This is ALSO true for singles skaters).

***Is there an advantage to competing at one NQS competition vs. a different one based on how “competitive” I think it will be?***

**No.** A couple’s placement in a competition doesn’t matter, only their Total Score. The Top three scores in the U.S. may come from the same competition or may be scattered all over the country. Each competition, you are trying to earn your “personal best,” to see if you can top a previous score.

***My partner and I entered the NQS, skated one competition and then broke up. I have a new partner now and want to finish the season competing with him. How does that work?***

**That’s not a problem.** You will receive your national ranking with partner #1, which will be based on the score you earned in the one competition you completed. You can enter any subsequent competition you want with partner #2, however, since you didn’t register for the NQS, your score is simply not counted, and you won’t receive a national ranking with partner #2.

**However,** when it comes time to re-enter the qualifying system, simply enter with partner #2, and compete at the Sectional Dance Challenge, with the opportunity to continue advancing through the system. Since the NQS, and the remaining qualifying competitions are considered separate programs, it is okay to compete in each with different partners.

***I found a partner on May 1<sup>st</sup>! We want to enter the NQS, but we aren’t sure whether we’re going to skate at intermediate or novice this year. What should we do?***

**No problem.** Complete two entries in the NQS – one in intermediate and one in novice. Since you can “skate up” the NQS, and couples may enter two levels. As you progress, simply enter the NQS competition(s) you want at the level you want. If you end up skating intermediate at one, and novice at another, you’ll receive two national ranks and two sets of awards!

However, at the end of the NQS, to continue in the qualifying season, you must enter the Sectional Dance Challenge, by September 1<sup>st</sup>, in only one level, which you are test eligible for. Further, byes do not cross levels. For example, if you finish 3<sup>rd</sup> in intermediate and 10<sup>th</sup> in novice, you must **either** a) enter the qualifying system as an intermediate couple and accept a bye to compete intermediate at the U.S. Dance Final **or** b) skate novice, but decline the bye, and enter the qualifying system in novice dance, entering the Sectional Dance Challenge. Keep this in mind and plan accordingly throughout the summer.

**We competed in Novice Dance at the NQS and finished 2<sup>nd</sup> – so we earned an automatic spot at the U.S. Dance Final! But, we feel it is important for our development to compete in the Sectional Dance Challenge. Can we do that? What if we finish lower than 5<sup>th</sup>?**

**Yes!** Your 2<sup>nd</sup> place national ranking in the NQS has reserved you a spot at the U.S. Dance Final, if you enter the qualifying system, regardless of whether you compete at your sectional. You may choose to compete at your Sectional Dance Challenge, but your placement there won't be considered in advancement. If you finish in the top 5, you'll advance to onto the U.S. Dance Final, and so will the 6<sup>th</sup> place couple in your event. If you finish below 5<sup>th</sup>, you will also advance onto the U.S. Dance Final, along with those who placed 1<sup>st</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>. No matter what, 18 couples (3 from the NQS + the top 5 from each section who don't already have a bye) in each level, will get to compete at the U.S. Dance Final.

Choosing to compete at the Sectional Dance Challenge is a great way to gain more feedback and competition experience without the reduced pressure of already having secured your spot at the next event.

**What happens if a couple ranked in the top 3 at in the NQS forgets to enter the qualifying system by September 1<sup>st</sup>?**

All couples must enter the qualifying system by September 1<sup>st</sup> (just like now), to compete, regardless of whether they earned a bye to the next event. There are no exceptions this rule; if a couple fails to enter the qualifying system by September 1<sup>st</sup>, they may not advance, their spot is forfeited, and the next couple is offered their bye. Byes earned in the NQS will be treated the same way international byes are treated currently. Couples progress automatically, if they enter the qualifying system by the entry deadline.

**Does the five-or-fewer rule apply for the Sectional Dance Challenge to the U.S. Dance Final? If we don't place in the top 3 in the NQS, but there are only 4 couples entered in our Sectional Dance Challenge, do we have to compete, or can we just go right to the Final?**

The five-or-fewer rule does NOT apply to juvenile – novice Couples. Couples not earning a bye are REQUIRED to compete at the Sectional Dance Challenge, to advance to the U.S. Dance Final (as long as there are at least two entries).

It DOES apply to junior and senior Couples. If there are five or fewer Couples entered in one section, or 15 in the country, junior and senior Couples may elect to bypass the sectional challenge and advance directly to the U.S. Pairs Final. From there, the top 12 Couples advance to the U.S. Figure Skating Championships.

This ensures that all Couples can compete in a minimum of two qualifying competitions during the season.