



**The Swimming Canada
Competition Framework
2017-2020
Improvement Plan
Question and Answer Document**

April 2016

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1. COMPETITION REVIEW PRINCIPLES AND DEFINITIONS

Q1: Why complete a competition review?

A1: Swimming Canada has identified a variety of gaps in Canadian swimming. Conducting a competition review and making changes to our competition structures will start to address some of these gaps. Conducting a competition review as part of our greater LTAD strategy has also been identified as a funding requirement placed on us by Sport Canada. All sports are required to implement their LTAD models, including a full competition review and revised Athlete Development Matrix. Provincial governments are soon going to require that all PSOs are aligned with their respective NSO's LTADS, which includes competition restructuring.

Q2: What are our guiding principles for the competition review?

A2: The guiding principles of the competition framework review are as follows:

1. That the nationally proposed competition framework be followed by all level of swimmer in the country (girls 13 yrs and older, boys 14 yrs and older)
2. That all swimmers of all levels (including university) are targeting peak performance in the same performance windows of the spring (March/April) and then the summer (July/August).
3. That appropriate dedicated training blocks will take place in the September – February timeframe and the May – June timeframe.

Q3: What are some of the gaps that Swimming Canada has identified in Canadian swimming?

A3:

1. Low percentage of top 8/16 performances in distance (400m +) events at Senior and Junior World Championships in 2015
2. Lack of depth nationally in the 400m and longer events compared to the rest of the world
3. Low percentage of swimmers making “on track times” in the 400m and longer events as well as the 200 fly
4. Very few swimmers are capable of competing in multi events, both nationally and internationally
5. Poor stroke technique and technical skills (turns, underwater work, starts etc) observed in the vast majority of swimmers across most events at all developmental levels in Canada
6. Swimmers are peaking at the wrong time in the season, resting too often and not establishing an appropriate training base
7. High percent of “failed” swims at nationals/trials – swimmers swimming slower than their entry times
8. Swimming Clubs run open meets to make money and thus serve as fundraisers rather than part of the development of an appropriate competition structure based on the principles of LTAD

Q4: What are Swimming Canada's definitions for the following terms: a) taper, b) shave, c) peak performance windows, and d) Meaningful competitions?



- A4:** a) A **taper** is when the coach significantly alters the athletes' training by reducing the number of training session in a week, reducing the volume swum in training, decreasing the length of training sets and altering the intensity of the training sets. In general, tapers last longer than resting in that resting would entail 3 to 4 days of rest in a week and a taper is for periods from 5 up to 21 days.
- b) A **shave** is something that senior athletes should do in the final taper phase leading into peak performance competitions in the spring (March/April) and in the summer (July/August).
- c) **Peak performance windows** are periods where qualification times can be achieved (i.e. March/April and July/August). Long course times which are achieved while representing Canada as part of a national team can be used for qualification even if they are outside the peak performance window.
- d) **Meaningful competitions** are structured to emphasize the use and development of LTAD stage-specific skills and abilities. They are more specifically defined as an ideal competition opportunity in terms of the length of the sessions and the appropriate use of facilities.

2. CALENDAR AND TIMELINES

Q5: Will a calendar containing the Olympic and Paralympic Program dates be created for the next quadrennial (2017-2020)?

A5: A calendar will be created that includes all Olympic and Paralympic Program competition dates, as well as confirmed provincial championship dates. A stand-alone Olympic and Paralympic Program calendar and planning document will also be made available.

Q6: What are the changes and when will they come into effect?

A6: There will be a phased approach to full implementation as follows:

2017

- i) Eastern and Western Canadian Championship will move to April and take place post trials.
- ii) Canadian Junior Championships will be introduced (replacing the Canadian Age Group Championships). Ages are 13/14 girls, 15/16/17 girls, 14/15/16 boys and 17/18 boys.
- iii) Only long course qualification times will be accepted from the entire 2016 and 2017 seasons for any Swimming Canada designated competitions or national level meet (Swimming Canada Trials, Canadian Junior Championships, Canadian Championships and Speedo Eastern/Western Canadian Championships.)
- iv) Rankings from the approved Peak Performance window (including Eastern and Western Canadian Championship and all long course provincial championships) will be used to qualify Olympic event relays for the Canadian Junior Championships (male and female relays in the following events 4x100 FS, 4 x 200 FS, 4 x 100 Medley) in



the appropriate age groups. The top 20 ranked club relays will be invited to swim and if a club turns down their spot, the next ranked club will be accepted.

- v) Provinces are encouraged to move their Provincial Championships into the Peak Performance windows (March-April and July- August) and run them long course
- vi) Trials competitions will have age specific qualification standards based on the World Junior Championships age groups – 14, 15, 16, 17 year old girls and 15, 16, 17, 18 year old boys, age as at 31st December (age groups would be 14/15 girls, 16/17 girls and 15/16 boys and 17/18 boys)

2018

- i) All Provincial Championships will take place as a long course competition in the March-April timeframe for swimmers aged 13 and over for girls and 14 and over for boys.
- ii) No championship competitions will be conducted from September to February and in May or June for any swimmers aged 13 and over for girls and 14 and over for boys.
- iii) Only long course qualification times will be accepted from the entire 2017 and 2018 seasons for any Swimming Canada designated competitions or national level meet (Swimming Canada Trials, Canadian Junior Championships, Canadian Championships and Speedo Eastern/Western Canadian Championships.)

2019

- i) Only long course qualification times will be accepted from the **Peak Performance** windows from the 2018 and 2019 seasons for any Swimming Canada designated competitions or national level meet (Swimming Canada Trials, Canadian Junior Championships, Canadian Championships and Speedo Eastern/Western Canadian Championships)

Q7: Can competitions still be scheduled during the September to December timeframe?

A7: Competition can take place throughout the year, however, the competitions that take place outside of the Peak Performance windows are meant for experience, refining technical skills, learning tactical skills and racing whilst in full training.

Q8: Why does a performance in the March/April timeframe work better than in the February timeframe?

A8: Swimming Canada Trials and/or Nationals will be taking place in the April timeframe for the next quad and therefore, a swimmer's top performance should take place at this point. There is still a need for fast swimming in January and February in order to be prepared for the March/April timeframe but the swimmer should not be shaved and tapered for these performances.

Q9: What are the next steps planned for the Competition Review?

A9:

1. Swimming Canada to review and update its sanction policy and process to ensure alignment of the competition calendar



2. Swimming Canada to review other policies to ensure they support our proposed competition framework
3. Prepare and operationalize a communication strategy to clearly communicate messaging about the Competition Review and the upcoming changes
4. Outline what phase 2 of this project looks like around the development of the "content" of competition
5. National Strategy for Open Water swimming linked to competition
6. Conduct an assessment of the facilities required to host competitions at all levels
7. Thorough review of NCCP and create a plan to fully integrate LTAD elements
8. Explore the feasibility of integrating LTAD in the Learn to Swim programs
9. Look at Swimming Canada rulebook and potentially create an Age Group rulebook to be in line with the future proposed changes of age group competition
10. Look at different event structures for different stages of athlete development depending on maturation
11. Conduct an assessment of what reward and recognition look like once our competition system changes
12. Explore in further detail the benefits of age on day vs Age as at 31st December in year of competition
13. Bonus Swims and Time trials to be considered in further detail.
14. CIS follow up regarding the potential movement of their Championships into early March and how this could work for FISU qualification.
15. Establish the annual review and tracking requirements for the whole competition framework.

3. QUALIFICATION TIMES AND DATES

Q10: Have other countries used blackout periods and have they had these periods in place long enough for a valid assessment to take place that could be used for comparison purposes?

A10: The model that we will be implementing is not currently being done in any nation. British Swimming implemented a different system where times for the Summer British Age championships can only be recorded through a window in April/May each year. This was a much tighter band and the first year analysis seems to have been positive

Q11: Will there be an annual review put in place to assess the success of the changes?

A11: It will take a full quad to properly evaluate the success of the changes since we are not implementing all changes at once nor can you effectively measure progress after one year of implementation. However, we will track data yearly based on the changes that are implemented and we will also continue to track the stats that we normally collect to see if there is a correlation between them. We also need to recognize that the gaps identified will not be closed purely through these changes in competition. Other systematic changes will need to take place to compliment the competition changes in order for us to see a significant difference including changes to our coaching education system.



- Q12:** What happens if a swimmer makes a Swimming Canada competition qualifying standard in the 'blackout period' despite not being rested or shaved?
- A12:** If a swimmer does a qualification time outside of a Peak Performance window, unrested and not shaved, this should be considered a success but the time still cannot stand for qualification to a Swimming Canada competition.
- Q13:** What happens if a swimmer is injured during the March-April Peak Performance window and cannot qualify for the summer competitions?
- A13:** The swimmer can use a long course qualifying time from the previous season (either entire season or Peak Performance windows only depending on what year this scenario takes place in).
- Q14:** Can swimmers achieve a Trials qualifying time in the spring window (i.e. March) and then compete at Trials a couple of weeks later?
- A14:** As long as the qualifying time is achieved within the Peak Performance window AND it is achieved before the entry deadline to the competition, it can be used as a qualifying time.
- Q15:** What can short course qualifying times be used for?
- A15:** Short course times would still gain the swimmer entry into provincial championships (as determined by the province), other provincial competitions and/or club meets.
- Q16:** Can swimmers use times from long course competitions, other than provincial championships and Speedo Eastern/Western Canadian Championship, conducted in the peak performance window for qualification to Canadian Championships and Trials?
- A16:** Yes, other long course competitions in the Peak Performance windows can be used for qualification purposes, such as a club open meet, invitational and other countries' nationals, providing that they fit the specified windows and qualification period. Also, times swam by swimmers representing Canada on senior, para-swimming and junior national teams can be used to qualify for our national level championships.
- Q17:** What is the qualifying window for all Swimming Canada national competitions and can a swimmer qualify with short course times as well as long course times?
- A17:** Starting in 2017, only long course qualifying times from 2016 and 2017 (entire season) will be permitted for qualification up to the entry deadline
- Starting in 2018, only long course qualifying times from 2017 (entire season) and 2018 **Peak Performance windows** will be permitted for qualification up to the entry deadline
- Starting in 2019, only long course qualifying times from 2018 and 2019 **Peak Performance windows** will be permitted for qualification up to the entry deadline
- Q18:** Can the provincial spring (March/April) and provincial summer (July/August) championships be used to qualify for a national competition in the same season?



A18: Yes providing that the competition meets the entry deadline of the competition. For example, a swimmer can qualify for an April Trials from their March provincials and can qualify for a Summer Nationals from a summer provincials.

Q19: How will qualifying standards be determined?

A19: Qualifying standards will be published in advance as they are now. We will review how they are derived and determine whether we need to make changes based on the changes being proposed to the competition structure.

Para-swimming standards are created for a 4-year period. Canadians will only be eligible to qualify for Can Am Para-swimming Championships using a long course qualification time, but since this is a joint hosted competition between Canada and the USA, there will be short course and yards standards for USA members.

Q20: How long are qualification times good for?

A20: Qualification times will be good for the whole of the previous year prior to the specific competition in 2017 and 2018. However from 2019 onwards only times made in the Peak Performance windows and when on national teams will be permitted.

Q21: Has there been a consideration to include Short Course (SC) time standards for the Canadian Junior Championships and Canadian Championships held in the summer?

A21: The focus of the summer should be on long course racing and therefore all swimmers need to have a long course qualifying time to participate in Swimming Canada's competitions. Long course times from previous season will be eligible for qualification and there will also be multiple competitions in the summer Peak Performance window that will meet the needs of all swimmers (Provincial Championships, Canadian Junior Championships and Canadian Championships)

4. PROVINCES

Q22: Are there any recommendations with regard to the qualifying period or restrictions for the provincial championships?

A22: Currently there are no proposed restrictions on times needed to qualify for provincial championships.

Q23: Where do provincial level junior and senior age level swimmers (LTAD Train to Train) fit into the new competition pathway? Do these swimmers align their long course season with the national calendar starting in January or separate and later into the spring? When should their season finish?

A23: All swimmers will follow the same principles with regards to the timing of their peak competition (i.e. March/April and July/August). In order for Canada to catch up with other nations currently ahead of us in the medal table at the World, Olympic and Paralympic level, swimmers need to train for more weeks in a year and only take short breaks.



Q24: What is the rationale for scheduling the provincial championships in the March/April time?

A24: The philosophy is to have the whole nation targeting to swim fast in the Peak Performance windows of March/April and July/August. All swimmers and coaches need to become accustomed to this competition scheduling at the provincial level, so that if they move up to the national level, they will more easily adapt to what is required for national team level qualification and representation. With all competitions, such as provincial championships and Speedo Eastern/Western Canadian Championship, in the same time frame as Trials in the spring (i.e. March/April), coaches can now prepare all of the athletes in their program for the same targeted competition period. This also applies to the summer meets with all swimmers targeting the same period for the Canadian Championships, Canadian Junior Championships, Provincial Championships, Canada Games and National Team representation.

Q25: If the majority of swimmers competing at a provincial championships are not national level swimmers, then why do the spring provincial championships need to be held in a long course format?

A25: There has to be a national framework that allows swimmers from each province the same opportunity to qualify in the same time frames and in a 50m pool. All swimmers need to aspire to reach the next level (i.e. provincial championships to Speedo Eastern/Western Canadian Championship to the Canadian Championships, provincial championships to Can Am Para-swimming Championships) and we collectively need a whole nation work towards the same goals. We should continue to rise to the highest common denominator and not to the lowest in order to improve. Times recorded by these swimmers in a long course provincial championship in March/April can also qualify a swimmer for the summer national championships (i.e. Canadian Junior Championships and Canadian Championships).

Q26: Where do the provincial level 'learn to train' and early 'train to train' athlete fit into the competition model? Is this level of swimmer also supposed to start their long course competition season in January?

A26: The Canadian Junior Championships will cater to female swimmers age 13 to 17 years old and male swimmers aged 14 to 18 years old. Age group and senior swimmers should be following the national philosophy of a September to December short course racing focused preparation and then from January onwards as a long course racing focused preparation for the long course meets in the spring and again in the summer. Swimmers below this age will be serviced by a program of events provided by the provinces. In the future, Swimming Canada will recommend guidelines for this level of swimmer, however this is not currently covered by this competition framework review. It would not be practical to do this at this stage and the phased approach we are implementing is the best way forward.

Q27: Many provinces do not have many long course pools, so many of the long course competitions would be held in the same city. Hosting meets in the same city and pool becomes a capacity issue for clubs and officials and might limit opportunities for other clubs to host competitions.

A27: The principles have been established to allow for distinct blocks of short course and long course racing. This does not mean that you cannot run a long course meet before January or



a short course meet after January. In order to prepare for a long course Trials in March/April, ideally you need long course preparation competitions in the months prior. However, if this is not possible in certain provinces, these PSOs can run short course preparation competitions.

Q28: Will the provinces be responsible for implementing the competition requirements for the 'learn to train' and 'train to train' swimmers so that it fits the competition framework?

A28: All provinces will run provincial championships in the permitted windows ideally as of 2017, however it is recognized that some specific issues may arise which will need to be addressed, in order to improve and adapt to the changes. Swimming Canada will determine content for approved aged athletes in the next phase of this review.

Q29: Does Swimming Canada have plans to provide a national framework for running provincial competitions or will each provinces be able to set their own program within the blocks of dates provided?

A29: For 2017, provinces will be able to set their own provincial program of events. As part of the next stage of the full competition review, Swimming Canada will be considering a recommended format for the program of events for 2018 and onwards. The event list and the qualifying times for the para-swimming component for provincials will still be provided from Swimming Canada.

5. CLUBS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Q30: Knowing how few clubs have access to consistent LC training (and in many cases, ANY LC training) are you worried about how these changes will affect smaller programs, and in turn many of the coaches involved in these programs?

A30: Without doing an in depth study on training accessibility of all Canadian swimming programs it is quite easy to determine that far more programs have access to training in LC facilities in Canada on a regular bases than many other nations around the world. Having seen other nations shift to only accepting LC qualification times for National level competitions that are conducted in LC facilities the shift was made very well. With the changes being implemented in Canada as outlined in this competition framework improvement plan all swimmers will need to qualify for National competition from LC competitions and as such be better able to repeat their performances at the National level competitions in 50m pools. For provincial championships SC qualification will be permitted.

Q31: Will coaches be given the opportunity to feed into this process?

A31: A report along with this Q&A document was shared with the membership in April along with a survey for all to pose questions and comments. The survey will be open until May 20, 2016. An information session is also being planned for the coaches' conference in September 2016. As we move forward, there will be other opportunities for coaches to engage in the process.



Q32: How will Swimming Canada approach educating the membership regarding the changes to the competition framework/structure?

A32: There will be a variety of opportunities that will be used to educate the membership throughout this process. We started by including key technical staff from the provincial sections as well as the ED of the CSCTA in our initial discussions so that they were fully aware of the process and so that they could answer questions that were posed to them. We then developed an information document as well as a Q&A document to share with the membership to explain the changes. We will also be conducting an information session at the CSCTA conference in September 2016.

6. PARA-SWIMMING

Q33: What is the qualifying process for para-swimming for provincial championships?

A33: Swimming Canada will continue to publish the PSO qualifying standards as a single national time that will be sent to all the PSOs in the spring of the preceding year.

Q34: What events will be offered for Para-swimmers at the Can Am Para-swimming Championships?

A34: Swimming Canada and US Paralympics will still be setting the order of events collaboratively, but qualifying for the competitions will be based on Paralympic sport class events only.

Q35: How and when will Para-swimming information be shared and built into the competition review?

A35: The Para-swimming review is happening in parallel to the Olympic Swimming proposals and the document being prepared for March 11th will be inclusive of the Para-swimming proposals.

7. OPEN WATER SWIMMING

Q36: How and when will Open Water swimming information be shared and built into the competition review?

A36: The details for OWS will be worked on in 2017 for future implementation. The LTAD review and competition framework review is a massive undertaking for swimming and needs to be done in phases for a successful roll out.

8. EVENT AND AGE REQUIREMENTS, RANKINGS

Q37: Will Swimming Canada and the events department be issuing requirements for events that must be complied with (i.e. wedge block, backstroke ledges etc.)?

A37: Swimming Canada's events team and sport department will consider this in due course, along with event presentation issues.



Q38: Has Swimming Canada considered moving the minimum age requirement to December 31st in the year of competition across all age groups?

A38: Setting the minimum age requirement date for all competitions to December 31st of the competition year would be an easy solution, however it would not provide diversity.

The competition format proposed for Trials will now include age specific qualification standards based on the World Junior Championships age groups, which are set as December 31st in the year of competition.

The Canadian Junior Championships as well as the Eastern and Western Canadian Championship will be based on the swimmer's age on the first day of competition.

Provincial championships can continue to offer competitions based on their specific age on day requirements, however we need to make sure that no age bands or athletes born during a specific month are caught in a position of having no events made available to them.

Q39: Will girls as young as 13 and boys as young as 14 be able to qualify for Trials within the junior age time standards even if the ages being considered are the World Junior Championship ages (14, 15, 16, 17 girls and 15, 16, 17, 18 boys)?

A39: No ages under those of the World Junior Championship ages are being considered to enter the meet. If a 13 and under girl or a 14 and under boy made the **senior** qualification time, they could still enter the trials.

Q40: How will the Swimming Canada rankings be affected by the changes?

A40: All Swimming Canada rankings will continue to be generated as they currently are.

Q41: How will bonus swims be addressed moving forward?

A41: Bonus swims have been removed from the Trials as of 2015-16 and will be removed from the Canadian Senior Championships, Canadian Junior Championships and Eastern and Western Canadian Championship as of 2016-17. Time Trials are being considered for all of these competitions moving forward.

Q42: Why are all 50m events being removed from Swimming Canada events?

A42: Swimming Canada is focused on Olympic events and the 50m events in Butterfly, Backstroke and Breaststroke are not Olympic events. These events lead swimmers and coaches to focus and prepare for a set of events not on the Olympic program. Through some of the statistics we have gathered, there is a noticed lack of development in distance swimming and this partly shows that Canada is overly focused on sprint events. 50m events do favour early maturing swimmers who tend to focus on swimming these events based on their strength and maturation and not, due to technical skills developed. This leads to swimmers not building the appropriate aerobic base in the key developmental years.

In reviewing the results of the Canadian Age Championships since its inception in 2006 there have only been 13 winners in 50m stroke (non-free) events that have gone on to represent Canada at the Olympic Games or World Championships. Twelve of these 13 winners also



won a 100m+ event at the Age Championships. With only one exception over a 10-year period, the 50m stroke (non-free) events have not had impact on developing world-class swimmers.

9. CIS

Q43: Does Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) fit into the new competition pathway?

A43: A meeting happened with Swimming Canada and the CIS in order to discuss the competition framework and the appropriate positioning of the CIS competition. Nothing has been finalized yet but discussions will continue in order to hopefully align the 2 programs.

10. CANADA GAMES

Q44: How does the Canada Games fit into this competition framework review?

A44: Canada Games fits perfectly into the summer peak performance window of the competition framework. Each province can now select their provincial teams for the Canada Games and any other representative opportunity from the March/April timeframe and mix of provincial championships, Speedo Eastern/Western Canadian Championship and Trials. This is a very positive change, as it mirrors how all Junior and Senior National Team selections are done and therefore prepares all swimmers and coaches to perform when it counts and for future selections.

11. LTAD AND COACHING

Q45: Will Swimming Canada's competition review address development and grassroots competitions as well?

A45: Swimming Canada will be looking at development and grassroots competitions as part of the whole LTAD review. This more detailed assessment will be schedule to take place following the implementation of the competition framework.

Q46: Will the Competition Review changes address the following key issues: Age specific skill development, Age specific speed and endurance development, Senior sprint, middle and distance training, and Senior stroke specific development (sprint to mid distance)?

A46: It was not the intent to drill into too much detail at this stage of this process, however this will all be considered in the next steps of this process.

Q47: Should senior (18+) vs age group (17U vs 15U vs 12U) have different shave/taper strategies?

A47: Yes, and this will be included in the LTAD review that is also going to be conducted. It was not the intention at this stage to go into this detail.

Q48: Is there scientific support for the changes being proposed as a result of the competition review?



- A48:** The science regarding the development of children and teenagers is well documented through the work completed in this area and specifically in the work done by Istvan Balyi. The competition framework to be implemented fully supports the LTAD principles of the sport of swimming. It is also well documented that the annual plan for any sport needs to allow for a significant period of training in order to build a base and capacity.
- Q49:** Will this degree of prescription have better outcomes than leaving some latitude for coaches and individual programs to mould the seasonal plans to the needs of a specific athlete or group of athletes?
- A49:** Coaches can still be creative in how they structure their programs however, they need to make sure that their swimmers peak when performances are required (March/April and July/August). The main competitions will always take place in these time frames therefore performances need to match this.
- Q50:** Does this proposal consider the research that suggests the optimal training cycles to be 12-14 weeks?
- A50:** Yes, it considers all appropriate training cycles. The 12 to 14 week cycle is one option of an appropriate training cycle and there are many varied training cycle lengths used in world swimming. Another example is 3 x 15 week cycles, where the first block of 30 weeks could be split SC racing focused (first 15 weeks) and then a 15 week block focused on LC racing with the taper in to the trials. The coach still has the ability to create whatever training cycle lengths they wish in this model, however the key principles for the competition framework will be observed