

A Proposal for a NSW Schools' Fencing League Competition in Boys Team Foil Fencing in 2018

Note: This document references and acknowledges the hard work of Mr Graham Potter, former MIC Sport of Newington, who wrote "A Proposal for the Introduction of a GPS, CAS, ISA Competition in boys Fencing in 2012.

Rationale:

There is an emerging demand for inter-school competition in fencing that is affordable and accessible to schools that have fencing programs as part of their school sport curriculum.

The objectives of creating a NSW Schools' Fencing League Program are to:

- Be run by schools to ensure that the schools' needs are the priority.
- Increase meaningful participation in inter-school fencing activities.
- Foster good will, co-operation and camaraderie between schools by creating and maintaining working relationships across the schools involved.
- Make fencing affordable and accessible to more schools.
- Be fair and transparent in all organisational decisions.

Current situation:

New South Wales Fencing Association (NSWFA) is currently the only provider of inter-school fencing competitions in the state. As of 2018, the regular competition timetable and format that has been used over the past few years has been replaced with a new program based around the NSW Government \$100 Active Kids voucher rebate scheme. In line with this scheme, the new NSWFA program encourages participants to use this voucher towards the NSWFA's 8-week competition program. As NSWFA is a community service provider, this program is not considered to be an official inter-school competition.

The fee proposed by NSWFA is \$240 per student (without the rebate) to participate in the 8-week program, consisting of 3 multi-week individual competitions and 5 multi-week team competitions. The existing Roberta Nutt and AJ Rae Competitions have been merged into this multi-week program without prior consultation with schools on the updated rules, particularly the complex and subjective nature of determining ranking points if schools choose to only enter the single day individual and team competitions finals events.

For the option of the 'round robin' team format in a 5-week program, NSWFA charges a fee of \$360 per team this year (up from \$200 per team last year for the pilot U15 Boys Foil Team Premiership). This 5-week program does not qualify for the Active Kids rebate and can be seen as a way to discourage schools from selecting this option in favour of the 8-week program that includes the 5-week team competition and qualifies for the Active Kids voucher.

As most students are expected to participate in more than one sport each year (summer and winter), it is unreasonable to expect them all to use the voucher towards the NSWFA program to subsidise the cost. As such, this new fee structure and competition schedule is unnecessarily complex and confusing to many in the school fencing community. The significant increase in fees makes it a financial challenge for schools, students and parents to manage and implement.

Upon review of the proposed competition schedule, competition format and new fee structure, Sydney Boys High School (SBHS) have raised their concerns with NSWFA. After receiving the feedback, NSWFA have decided to continue ahead with their program. As such, SBHS has chosen not to participate in the NSWFA 8-week program this season, as it does not meet the needs of the school's fencing program.

This proposal provides an alternative solution to the current offering from NSWFA to service the need for inter-school competition.

Purpose:

The NSW Schools' Fencing League Competition will provide an alternative opportunity for inter-school fencing through the introduction of an annual inter-school boys foil team competition in the winter season during terms 2 and/or 3.

Giving schools collective agency over inter-school fencing activities helps to ensure that the participating schools' needs are considered and prioritised.

There is an opportunity to raise the profile and increase participation of the sport in the respective school sporting organisations (GPS, CAS, ISA).

Significant cost savings for participating school fencing programs can be achieved as resources, such as competition equipment and venues, are shared. Schools do not have to be aligned with any particular club and students are not required to pay NSWFA membership and NSWFA competition entry fees.

By making a niche sport such as fencing more affordable and accessible, it will help to encourage and grow fencing programs in schools and the wider community.

Eligibility:

All NSW schools are eligible to enter teams in the event.

Situation analysis:

In 2018, Fencing is actively practiced by the following GPS Schools:

- Newington College (Foil and Sabre)
- Saint Ignatius' College (Foil only)
- Sydney Grammar School (Foil only)
- Sydney Boys High School (Foil, Sabre and Epee)

In the following Combined Associated Schools (CAS):

- St Aloysius' College (Foil and Epee)
- Barker College (Foil only)
- Knox Grammar School (Foil and Epee)

In the following Independent Schools Association (ISA) Schools:

- St Andrew's Cathedral School (Epee only)
- Oxley College (TBC)

Insurance:

All participating students must be covered by their respective school's insurance policy.

SBHS has an insurance policy with AON that has worldwide cover for the following:

- Accidental death and bodily injury to full-time students while engaged in school or organised sporting activities.

More information regarding this policy can be found here:

<http://www.sydneyboyshigh.com/sport/insurance-policy>

Participating schools must have similar insurance arrangements in place in order to participate.

Insurance cover through NSWFA membership is not required as the program would be an inter-school competition run by schools. Students will have cover through their school insurance policy. Other school sports activities are similarly covered in this way.

Organisation:

Each participating school will nominate an MIC to co-ordinate their school's participation.

Sydney Boys High School undertakes to co-ordinate organisation of the event in the first year of operation. In subsequent years, the event will be co-ordinated by a committee of the MICs of each participating school.

Format:

The event will be held annually, over a number of Saturdays (depending on the number of fixtures) in terms 2 and/or 3 for Foil only.

The event is a "Round Robin" format. Each school entered will compete in a fixture against each other school entered.

Venue Hosts:

- To assist in establishing the initial season, the co-ordinator seeks the assistance of schools to act as Venue Hosts during the season.
- Venue Host Schools undertake to supply three fields of play (3 full electric set ups) per Saturday of the competition held at their venue.

Rules:

Except where specifically determined by the participating schools, the Rules of Fencing adopted by Australian Fencing Federation shall apply.

Entries:

- Entries are requested to be submitted by week 8 of term 1 (23/03/18).
- A fixtures list will be issued by the end of term 1 (13/04/18).

Fixtures:

Selected schools will compete at each of the Venue Hosts in the week of the competition per the draw published prior to the season commencing.

- A fixture is a series of matches between schools.
- A fixture between schools will be comprised of three teams matches. One in each of the age groupings.
- The matches are between age categories (at 1 January)
 - Under 14
 - Under 16
 - Under 19
- A team will comprise of three fencers per age category (plus one reserve per age category, who may substitute per the Rules of Fencing)
- The team match format is the Team First to 5 victories, 45-touch format. All matches are fenced to conclusion.
- Where a team forfeits, the full allocation of points is awarded to their opponent.

Point Score:**Overall Championship**

- To determine the overall Premier school:
 - For three victories, a school will receive three points, two for two victories and one point for one victory. A score of zero applies for winning no bouts or for a forfeit.
 - Where teams finish on equal points, ranking will be determined by the indicator of season's victories (victories divided by matches) and subsequently on points difference hits given less hits received (for and against points hits difference aggregated for the season).

Age Group Championship

- To determine the age group champion school:
 - A separate table will be kept for each age group: Under 14, 16 and 19.
 - For each match the winning team will be awarded three points. The Champion Age Group School will be that with the highest accumulation of points by an age group.
 - Where teams finish on equal points, ranking will be determined by the indicator of season's victories (victories divided by matches) and subsequently on points difference hits given less hits received (for and against points hits difference aggregated for the season).

Results and Records

- Results will be provided by the organising school MIC to the event co-ordinator by 10:00am on the Monday following the round. Sydney Boys High School offers to nominate itself as the event co-ordinator in year one.

Referees

- Each school is obliged to supply three referees per fixture. Each fixture/venue will have three schools attending. A referee from a school that is not participating in the match will referee the match.

Clothing and Equipment:

- All inter-school competitions are fenced using electrical apparatus.
- All competitors must wear full fencing uniform. Competitors are encouraged to wear long socks in school colours.

Trophies and Titles:

The Champion school in overall and in each age category will have its name inscribed on a perpetual trophy that will be held by the school during the year of currency.

The members of the winning teams (must have competed in a majority of matches) will be awarded a medal or certificate recognising their achievement.

There are opportunities for perpetual trophies to be dedicated to each of the overall under 14, under 16 and under 19 events. Sydney Boys High School wishes to express its interest in donating and naming one of the trophies.

The trophies may reflect a school or an outstanding contributor to fencing from within that school over its fencing history.

Entry Fees:

To ensure the supply of medals, certificates, engraving and incidental expenses, each participating school will pay an entry fee to be agreed upon annually at a meeting of the MICs before the season commences. A suggested amount for the first year is \$300 per school (\$100 per team or \$25 per fencer). Details to be discussed and confirmed at the inaugural meeting.

Expression of interest and pilot program:

SBHS will reach out to existing fencing schools and request a round table meeting with the respective MICs to discuss this program in the near future. As a pilot program for 2018, the Schools' Fencing League Competition can start with a single age category. In the event the pilot program does not proceed this year,

fencing exchanges can be arranged to foster connections between schools in preparation for implementation the following year.

Fencing exchanges:

Students who aren't in a team can still be involved and participate in inter-school fencing activities through friendly fencing exchanges. The exchanges are considered friendly matches and run informally as teams or individual poule bouts (to be discussed and decided between participating schools).

It is hoped that the opportunity for fencing exchanges will be ongoing throughout the season and supplement inter-school fencing activities for those who did not make the school team selection.

Other areas of investigation and discussion:

- The possibility of having a division 1 (First Grade) and division 2 (Second Grade) etc., or multiple teams (A, B, C etc....) in the same age category from one school should be discussed upon review of the pilot program after the first year. The aim is to increase student participation, but it is recognised that Fencing teams are traditionally limited to 4 members.
- The possibility of exploring and trialling new team formats should be discussed that allow for more members in a team to increase opportunities for more students to participate. E.g., 10-person team relay to 50 points with 5-point incremental bouts.
- A similar proposal for a NSW Schools' League in Boys Team Epee Competition is possible with the co-operation of Sydney Boys High School, St Andrews Cathedral School and St Aloysius' College.
- All aspects of this document are open for discussion and require co-operation and co-ordination from at least 3 schools in total to start the program.

Please contact Mr Dat Huynh if there are any issues or questions regarding this document:

Huynhd@sbhs.nsw.edu.au