



Introducing NSW school fencing hybrid teams: Growing the sport

Pilot program for 2026 school fencing season (April – August)

INTRODUCTION

We are excited to introduce this new opportunity for public and independent schools, home schoolers, distance education families and students at flexi schools with developing fencing programs. If your school has one or two keen fencers who want to experience team competition, or you're adding a new weapon to your program, this pilot lets you team up with others to make it happen.

This program applies to:

- NSW Schools' Fencing League (sabre only)
- NSW Fencing Association AJ Rae & RA White Schools Teams Championships

Think of this as a bridge, helping your students compete while your program grows. The hope, this year's hybrid team is next year's full school team.

Who is this for?

This program is perfect for schools and home school families that want to give their fencers team competition experience but don't quite have enough students yet in a particular division/age/weapon combination.

Your school, home, flexi or distance education school is a great fit if:

- You have one or two enthusiastic fencers in a specific division/age/weapon
- You are building a fencing program and want to give students immediate competition opportunities
- You are adding a new weapon (Sabre only in 2026) to an existing program
- Your students are eager to experience team dynamics and camaraderie
- You are a home school family or distance education student with competitive fencers who want team experience

To participate, fencers need to:

- Be enrolled at their school
- Be member of the association hosting the tournament, NSWSFL and/or NSWFA
- Have checked in with their school first (more on this below)
- Teams will have:
 - 3-6 fencers from 2-4 different schools (including home school families)
 - Everyone competing in the same division/age/weapon combination



CORE VALUES OF THIS PROGRAM

1. **Students first:** Every decision prioritises student participation and development
2. **Genuine need:** The program exists to solve real participation gaps, not create competitive advantages
3. **Equal recognition:** Hybrid team achievements count just as much as complete team achievements
4. **Fairness:** Rules apply consistently to create a level playing field
5. **Growth mindset:** Hybrid teams are a stepping stone to building stronger programs
6. **Good faith:** We trust schools, clubs, and families to use this program as intended

THE GOOD FAITH AGREEMENT

The heart of this program: it's designed to help students who genuinely need it, not to create supercharged all-star teams. We trust everyone to use this in the right spirit.

The model works when:

- Schools and families focus on their own students first
- Give your enrolled students every chance to form a full team
- Only look at hybrid options when you genuinely can't field a complete team
- Keep us posted if your numbers change (good problem to have!)

Geography makes sense

- Teams generally include participants from the same region
- If participants are spread far apart, just help us understand the connection

Club connections stay appropriate

- Having 1-2 students from the same club is natural
- Having many students from one club needs to be reviewed
- Club coaches should cheer from the sidelines, not manage school teams unless engaged by the schools

Skill levels reflect genuine need

- Mixed skill levels across teammates is completely normal
- If several highly-ranked fencers end up together, we will have a conversation to understand the situation

Principles of honesty, transparency and fair play

- Schools don't discourage their own team formation
- Clubs don't coordinate team compositions
- Coaches support all their students equally
- Teams form because of need, not strategy

When you have three or more fencers

Here's the scenario we are working towards: your program takes off and suddenly you have enough fencers for a full team in your division/age/weapon.

The hybrid team has achieved its purpose and naturally evolves. This transition is automatic, it is a recognition of your efforts and a celebration of your program's growth.

What happens next:

- Fencers from the school/family with three+ students form their own complete team
- Fencers from other schools/families can form a new hybrid team or join their own programs
- Everyone keeps competing; the structure evolves

This applies at any time:

- During the season
- Right before championships
- Whenever numbers change

Why automatic? Because this program exists to help developing programs, not to provide an alternative to complete teams. When you can field a full team, that's the goal achieved.

Important dates

Date	What's happening
15 March	Students express interest to their school/family
22 March	Schools/families confirm numbers and provide support
31 March	Team applications submitted to NSWFA
7 April	NSWFA sends approval notifications
May-August	Competition season (and simple monthly check-ins)
1st of each month	Quick monthly update (May, June, July, August)

About medals

Hybrid teams compete on equal footing with traditional school teams. Your students will earn the same medals and recognition when they compete in:

- NSW School Fencing League, Sabre only (Division A & B)
- AJ Rae & RA White Teams Championships

About results and recognition:

Results belong to the hybrid team, reflecting the collaborative achievement.

Schools and families can and should:

- Celebrate their students' participation and achievements
- Acknowledge the medals and competition experience
- Share in the pride of what students accomplished
- Everyone should remember:
- These are hybrid team championships, not individual school championships
- Recognition focuses on the students and their collaboration



GETTING STARTED

The documentation

We've kept paperwork straightforward while ensuring everyone understands the expectations and requirements.

When you apply (by 31 March) the Application Package includes

- Team Application Form
- Roster and basic information
- Support Certificates: Confirmation from each participant that they:
- Have fewer than three eligible fencers in this division/age/weapon
- Support this hybrid team participation
- Traditional/ flexi schools: signed by principal or authorised delegate
- Home education families: signed by parent/guardian
- Distance education: signed by coordinator or parent/guardian

Acknowledgment forms:

From each fencer and parent (if under 18) confirming they understand how the program works

Current NSWFA or NSWFL membership by the school for all participating fencers

Proof of Enrolment

Simple confirmation

Traditional schools: school letterhead confirmation

Home education: registration number or membership in recognised home education organisation

Distance education: enrolment confirmation

If your team has unique circumstances (participants far apart, several fencers from one club, or several highly-ranked fencers), include a brief summary so we understand your situation.

During the season

Monthly Check-In (due by 1st of each month, May-August):

Each school/family confirms via simple email or form:

Still fewer than 3 eligible fencers

Nothing significant has changed

All good

Quick Updates (just let us know within a few days):

- We now have 3+ fencers
- New student enrolled
- Fencer needs to withdraw
- Any significant changes
- These quick check-ins help everyone stay informed and maintain program integrity.

Competition Details

- NSW School Fencing League – Division A or B (as assigned) sabre only
- AJ Rae & RA White Championships, U14, U16, U19, foil, épée, sabre
- Your Team Name (simple clear and shows the collaboration):

Team name examples:

- **Knox Grammar and Cranbrook Combined U16 Sabre**
- **Sydney Grammar and Home Education Combined U16 Épée**
- **Home Education Combined U14 Épée (if all home educated)**
- **Reddam and Home Education Combined U14 foil**

If something goes off piste

We want this program to succeed. If something needs adjustment, we'll work together to fix it. Our goal is to support success, not penalise honest mistakes. Most issues are easily resolved with good communication.

Minor Issues

Example: Missed a monthly check-in. We'll send a friendly reminder and you'll get caught up.

Pattern of concerns

Example: Regular late submissions or incomplete information

We'll have a conversation to understand what's happening and help improve systems. Occasionally we might need to pause a team while things get sorted.

Serious issues

Example: Evidence of strategic team building or misrepresentation

We'll investigate thoroughly but fairly. This might mean season suspension or limits on future participation.

We need to protect the program's purpose and fairness for everyone.

Major violations

Example: Deliberate falsification

These are rare, but consequences can be serious because they damage trust and fairness. May include long-term restrictions and referral to educational authorities.

Questions or Concerns?

We want to get things right.

You can request review of:

- Application decisions
- Interpretation of rules in your specific situation
- Transition determinations in complex cases

How it works:

- Contact us within 7 days of the decision
- Appeals Committee reviews within 14 days
- Decision helps clarify rules for everyone
- Think of this as a conversation to ensure fairness

Transparency

To keep things open and fair, NSWFA maintains a public registry showing:

- Approved hybrid teams
- Participating schools/families
- Team status updates
- Program statistics and success stories

This transparency helps everyone understand how the program works and ensures fair treatment across all teams.

CHECKLIST

Before season starts:

- Students express interest by 15 March
- Confirmation and support from schools/families by 22 March
- Complete application in by 31 March
- All forms included
- Team Manager has Working With Children Check

During competition season:

- Quick monthly check-in by 1st of month
- Competition entries on time
- Let us know about changes promptly
- Everyone maintains NSWFA membership
- All participants maintain NSWFL membership or valid education registration
- Uniform and equipment requirements met

Things to watch:

- Any school/family getting close to three eligible fencers (great news!)
- New enrolments
- Changes in fencer eligibility
- Monthly check-in deadlines

Get in touch

We're here to help make this work.

Program contact

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For any questions, notifications, team updates, or just to chat about your plans, please reach out anytime.

Quick Start: Your path to schools team competition

- January-February: Start conversations, explore possibilities
- By 15 March: Students register interest with their schools/families
- By 22 March: Schools/families confirm numbers and provide support
- By 31 March: Submit your team application (we're here to help!)
- 7 April: Get your approval (fingers crossed!)
- May-August: Compete, grow, and enjoy the experience
- End of Season: Celebrate what you've built; reapply next season if needed

A FINAL WORD

This pilot program is about possibility. It's about giving students who love fencing, whether they attend traditional schools, learn at home, or engage with school in other ways - a chance to experience team competition while their programs are developing. It's about building connections across the fencing community and creating pathways for growth.

We've built in sensible safeguards because we want this program to thrive and remain available for those who genuinely need it. When everyone participates in good faith, everyone benefits.

Thank you for being part of this pilot. We're excited to see what you and your students achieve together. Your feedback is welcome and will help us improve.

