

**Science Olympiad National Policy on Team Qualification – Update Including Virtual Schools  
Ratified by the Executive Board, August 29, 2011**

**Background:**

Science Olympiad is a private non-profit organization founded in 1984. Science Olympiad holds more than 280 regional, state and national competitive tournaments across the United States, involving nearly 6,200 secondary school teams in 2011. It provides teacher workshops and training to science teachers across the United States. As a private association, Science Olympiad is legally allowed to set its own requirements for participation.

During the past decade, Science Olympiad has seen a significant growth of participation by students who are enrolled in qualified study programs other than public or private schools. The rules of participation for alternative students have been developed as new forms of education are authorized under state law.

The policy below is intended to be useable in any state, and it was formulated with a number of goals in mind: First, Science Olympiad wishes to be as inclusive as possible. There is no good reason to deny access to students who wish to participate in Science Olympiad events. Second, Science Olympiad wishes to be fair. Students who are schooled in non-traditional settings must participate on the same relative terms and conditions of students who attend public or private schools under existing Science Olympiad policies. Third, Science Olympiad wants consistency across the program. Therefore, this policy provides guidelines that are to be used with all schooling options and in all states. Primary enrollment at a school will be determined by what school holds the student's records and matriculates the student (this is a general definition of primary enrollment), and a student may only be primarily enrolled at a single school.

This policy is intended to be the only Science Olympiad Policy on Team Qualification. States may not draft or adopt amendments without the prior written approval of the Science Olympiad Executive Board.

**Policy:**

***A Team Endeavor***

Science Olympiad requires all participants in Science Olympiad competitions to participate as members of a team, not as individuals.

***Public School Students***

Public school students may participate in Science Olympiad only as members of a team that is formed in the local public school that they all attend. In the case of 9<sup>th</sup> graders, public school students may compete on the team from the middle school that they most recently attended. Public school students may not opt to participate as a member of any other school's team.

***Private, Charter and Alternative School Students***

Private schools, "governor" schools, charter schools, and any other school that is qualified by the state and is housed in a single geographic location, may form Science Olympiad teams from among the students in their student body, regardless of where that student's home of origin is located. Such schools may not solicit or enlist public school or home-schooled students on their teams.

***Cyber or Virtual School (Online) Students***

**Option 1 - Participation through a Local Public School** If the state in which a cyber/virtual school student resides allows cyber/virtual school students to participate in local public school activities, cyber/virtual school students may either (1) choose to participate as a member of the Science Olympiad team at the local public school they would attend were they not enrolled in the cyber/virtual school, or (2) form a cyber/virtual school team from among the students in that school's student body as if they were students in a private/charter school as set forth above. A student may only participate on a single team.

**Option 2 – Participation solely through a State-Recognized Cyber or Virtual School** If the state in which a cyber/virtual school student resides recognizes and financially supports cyber/virtual schools, Science Olympiad will also recognize Cyber/Virtual School Teams consisting only of students who are enrolled at that cyber/virtual

school. Such schools may not solicit or enlist public school, private school or home-schooled students on their teams.

### ***Home-Schooled Students***

**Option 1 - Participation through a Local Public School** If the state in which a home schooled student resides allows home schooled students to participate in public school activities, home schooled students may either (1) choose to participate as a member of the Science Olympiad team at the local public school they would attend were they not home schooled, or (2) form a home school team as set forth in Option #2, below.

**Option 2 - Participation through a Home School Team** Science Olympiad will recognize Home School Teams consisting only of students who live within the boundaries of two contiguous (side-by-side) geographic counties in a single state. As of July 20, 2011, the two-contiguous-county/single state policy will apply to all Science Olympiad Home School Teams who wish to attend to the 2012 Science Olympiad National Tournament and Science Olympiad will no longer qualify multi-county or multi-state Home School Teams. (This home school portion of the policy was adopted in 2008 and a three-year grace period of qualification followed.)

### ***Registering and Qualifying Teams***

The state Science Olympiad organization is responsible for registering and qualifying all Science Olympiad teams. In the case of a public, private, charter, cyber or other alternative school Science Olympiad team, a roster signed by the principal of the school is considered proper validation. In the case of a Home School Team, a roster signed by the President of the home school association or the head of the independent home school is considered proper validation.

### ***Investigation of Team Qualifications***

If a state Science Olympiad organization suspects that a team is comprised of students who are not members of that school's student body or that a team is not legitimate, the Science Olympiad State Director may ask the coach to provide verification of that team's qualifications as follows:

- A public, private, virtual or charter school student's qualification may be verified by some form of school identification, school roster, recent report card, evidence of residence in the school district or other similar documents appropriate to the situation.
- A home-schooled student's qualification may be verified by the student's annual notice of intent to home school and some proof of residency within the two contiguous designated counties.

State Directors or officials may not contact individual students to determine qualification. All inquiries must go through official channels that are relevant to and can confirm the student's enrollment status, such as the administrative offices of a school district, private school, charter school or virtual school, or the registered Home School Team coach or head of an independent home school.

### ***Sanctions for Non-Qualified Participation***

If, after investigation, the State Director determines that a team or its members are not qualified, it may impose a sanction that may include disqualification of a student team member, disqualification of a team coach, or a team's disqualification from a tournament. In the event of multiple cases of disqualification, a coach or home school team may be barred from future competition.

*Reviewed at the Annual Directors Meeting on May 23, 2011; Updated June 2011  
Ratified August 29, 2011 by the Science Olympiad Executive Board*

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