

XXV Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026

Qualification System Principles

INTRODUCTION

In order to participate in the Olympic Games, athletes and teams will have to respect and comply with the Olympic Charter as well as with the rules of the relevant International Federation (IF). By-law to Rule 40 of the Olympic Charter stipulates that each IF needs to establish its sport's rules for participation in the Olympic Games, including qualification criteria in accordance with the Olympic Charter. Such criteria must be submitted to the IOC Executive Board for approval.

The IOC Executive Board reserves the right to revoke the Olympic Qualification status of a qualification event, including without limitation in case any of the below principles have not been met or the Olympic Charter has not been adhered to.

The IOC Executive Board may delegate any of its powers related to the qualification systems, including without limitation its approval authority, to the IOC administration.

All relevant information related to the qualification process for a sport/discipline in the Olympic Winter Games must be included in the respective qualification system per sport.

Qualification systems are the regulations established by IFs that consist of rules, procedures and criteria for athletes to be able to participate in competitions of the Olympic Winter Games Milano Cortina 2026 (Games) subject to final selection by each National Olympic Committee (NOC) upon recommendation of the respective National Federation (NF). These Qualification Systems must conform to the Qualification System Principles (QSP) set forth below (as approved by the IOC Executive Board in September 2022).

Each qualification system shall be clear and easy to comprehend for NOCs/NFs, athletes and coaches and should leave no room for interpretation.

The application of the qualification criteria lies with the IFs, their affiliated NFs and the NOCs in the fields of their respective responsibilities. The NOCs have the exclusive authority for the representation of their respective countries at the Games.

Each qualification system must follow the official IOC approved template and shall not be published in any other format without prior IOC approval. The official qualification system for each sport/discipline shall be accessible on [Olympics.com](https://olympics.com)

All qualification systems for the Games shall be developed based on the following principles:

1. SELECTION OF ATHLETES

Qualification Systems must allow for the participation of the best athletes through a fair and transparent process concerned to maximize the opportunity for continental representation at the Games.

2. QUALIFICATION EVENTS

NOCs/Athletes/teams shall have more than one (1) opportunity to qualify. However, the Qualification Systems should not necessitate extensive and expensive travel requirements. If possible, continental events should be used to reduce athletes' participation costs.

IFs shall use existing IF events in their calendar for qualification where possible. Events that are identified as Qualification Events should be announced by the respective IFs before the start of the qualification period and defined in the Qualification System accordingly even if the location has not been confirmed by this time.

All qualification events must be completed by no later than **18 January 2026**.

3. QUALIFICATION PERIOD

The qualification period shall cover a maximum of eighteen (18) months (two (2) winter seasons, including the season in which the Games are taking place) prior to the entries deadline unless otherwise approved by the IOC following a reasoned request by the relevant IF.

4. COMPLIANCE WITH QUOTAS

The Qualification structure method and pathway shall ensure strict compliance with the quota allocated by the IOC Executive Board.

5. ENTRIES

All sports/disciplines will have a common closing date for athlete entries by name (approximately ten (10) days prior to the Opening Ceremony of the Games (**26 January 2026**) which is specified by the IOC in coordination with the Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (hereafter the "OCOG").

The qualification period shall conclude at least seven (7) days prior to the OCOG's entry by name deadline (**18 January 2026**) for NOCs to accept nominations from National Federations (NFs) and complete entry formalities.

6. ALLOCATION OF PLACES

For each sport, the Qualification System should clearly indicate whether the quota is allocated to the athlete by name (nominal qualification) or to the NOC (slot allocation). If places are allocated to NOCs, it should be clear whether NOCs have an open right of selection or if there are requirements for athletes to meet minimum eligibility standards and criteria.

When relevant, the IF should ensure that the technical ability of each athlete is sufficient to ensure safe participation. If quota places are allocated to athletes by name, publication of the list of athletes who have obtained these nominal quota places shall include the provision that an athlete's participation in the Games is subject to selection by their NOC.

7. NOC RESPONSIBILITIES

NOCs have the exclusive authority for the representation of their respective countries at the Games, and may decide not to accept an allocated quota place.

8. PROCESS AND TIMELINES FOR NOCS

In order to avoid unused quota places and to ensure fairness to all athletes and countries looking to participate in the Games, the Qualification System must include the process and timeline for NOC acceptance/rejection of quota places, as well as the process for reallocation of unused places. This shall be clearly defined in the Qualification Systems.

In principle, for specified qualification events taking place during the qualification period, the IFs should notify the NOCs within two (2) weeks of the date on which the quota place was earned according to the Qualification System. The acceptance/rejection of quota places by NOCs should be within two (2) weeks (but no less than five (5) working days) of the date on which the quota place was confirmed by the respective IF.

For Qualification Systems which conclude during the last two (2) weeks of the qualification period, or similarly for events taking place during the last two (2) weeks of the qualification period, notification of acceptance/rejection of allocated quota places by NOCs shall be limited to forty-eight (48) hours in order to maximise the potential for reallocation of any unused quota places. For

those sports/disciplines with allocation to the NOC, a Late Athlete Replacement policy will be developed and published by the time of the Chef De Mission seminar.

9. ADHERENCE TO DEADLINES

Strict deadlines with regard to the determination and publication of allocated quota places by IFs as well as to the NOCs' acceptance/rejection of quota places must be applied.

10. TEAM QUALIFICATION

For events that are final Olympic team qualifying competitions, the Qualification System should clearly indicate whether NOCs are required to submit any form of preliminary documentation related to the acceptance of quota places (where applicable). Team sports at the Games are defined as follows: Ice Hockey and Curling.

11. MINIMUM STANDARDS

For sports in which qualification is based on meeting specified minimum standards, the respective IFs shall specify the events in which such standards must be met and implement clear regulations regarding the verification and communication of the official results from these events.

12. HOST COUNTRY PLACES

In principle, all sports/disciplines should include quota places for Host Country participants. However, these are not automatic in view of safety requirements and should be dealt with specifically in each Qualification System, subject to attainment of a minimum level of performance by athletes or teams.

If there is an exceptional reason that there is no provision for Host Country places within a given sport, this should be stated in the Qualification System to avoid any doubt.

13. CONTENT OF QUALIFICATION SYSTEMS

All relevant information related to the qualification process for the Games shall be included in each Qualification System. References to criteria, rules and regulations published in external IF documentation should be kept to a minimum, and should include a precise link to access each concerned document on an IF's website.

Any changes on these external documents if linked to the Qualification systems need to be captured and reflected in the Qualification system changes log file in the NOCnet. The qualification systems shall set forth clear eligibility criteria to be fulfilled by each athlete in terms of doping controls.

The Qualification System of each sport should be easy to access and to comprehend for NOCs/NFs and athletes and should leave no room for individual interpretation.

14. COMMUNICATION

IFs are responsible to inform and keep any of their constituents as well as the NOCs and NFs informed of the qualification system and any update and/or communication related thereto.

NOCs are responsible to inform and keep any of their constituents, including without limitation athletes under their responsibilities, informed of the qualification system and any update and/or communication related thereto.

IFs must communicate directly with NOCs, at the same time as with their respective NFs as well as with the Milano Cortina 2026 Sport Entries Department when confirming and distributing the allocated quota places and list of qualified athletes.

This includes, but is not limited to, advice regarding amendments to the Qualification System, publishing of qualification lists or requests for confirmation of the acceptance of quota places. The OCOG Sport Entries team shall be informed of all quota places allocated to the NOCs.

- The confirmation of an NOC, by the authorised NOC representative, to reject or accept the allocated quota places must be done in writing via email or letter or via any other official way of communication and this is considered final and cannot be reversed.

15. CHANGE MANAGEMENT AND ISSUE RESOLUTION

Qualification systems once agreed by the IOC and IFs, shall not be changed. In exceptional circumstances, should an IF require amending their qualification system, a request can be submitted to the IOC for review. Any changes other than changes to qualification event locations or dates shall be approved by the IOC Executive Board.

Once the IOC confirms the amendments, a revised system will be published by the relevant IF. IFs have full responsibility to communicate any amendments to the NOCs and NFs via their official communication channels. The IOC will keep a change log and will issue newsletters to NOCs via the IOC NOCnet.

Any dispute arising between an IF and an NOC in connection with the interpretation or execution of a qualification system should be resolved through direct consultation between the IF and the NOC. Should such dispute not be resolved through the consultation, it shall be referred exclusively to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) in Lausanne (Switzerland).

In the case of divergence between the French and English texts of these Qualification System Principles and the various qualification systems approved by the IOC, the English text shall prevail.

16. MODIFICATIONS

Once agreed upon by the IOC and IFs, the Qualification System for each sport/discipline shall not be changed without the prior agreement of the IOC and shall not be published in any other format without IOC approval.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF EACH QUALIFICATION SYSTEM

The IOC shall provide a standard template in January 2023 (including all key principles and terminology) to IFs, which shall be used to develop each Qualification System. The detailed structure and content of the Qualification System for each sport/discipline will be as follows:

- Specification of events in the Olympic programme, using official event names as defined and approved by the IOC Executive Board (the event names will be updated in accordance to the ORIS document once finalised)
- Athletes' quota
 - Total quota for the sport/discipline
 - Breakdown between women and men
 - Number and breakdown of Host Country Places
 - Maximum number of athletes per NOC (per sport/discipline and/or per event)
 - Maximum number of athletes per event (where applicable)
- Type of allocation of quota places: by athlete or by NOC (or both)
- Athlete eligibility requirements: compliance with Olympic Charter (including nationality rules), age requirements, medical certification, additional IF regulations, etc.
- Detailed qualification pathway:
 - Detailed allocation of quota places per qualification event, including qualifying order of events
 - Qualification time standards and defined period during which they can be obtained (where applicable)
 - Any rules and criteria applicable to the participation in each qualification event
- Host Country Representation
- Confirmation process for obtained quota places
- Reallocation process for unused quota places
 - IF quota places
 - Host Country places
- Detailed qualification timeline:
 - Period of qualification
 - Dates and locations of all qualification events for the Games
 - Dates at which rankings are considered (where applicable)
 - Timeline for NOC acceptance/rejection of quota places
 - Timeline for reallocation of unused quota places
 - Final entries deadline for all sports
 - Milano Cortina 2026 Delegation Registration Meeting dates