SLSA Guidelines for Competition Eligibility

1. OVERVIEW

SLSA conducts surf sports competitions to prepare participants for lifesaving duties and to celebrate the broad diversity of skills required of its members to undertake their responsibilities as a lifesaver. SLSA also recognises the physical, cognitive, social and emotional role that surf sport participation can have on the development of its members. It recognises that participation in surf sports is a powerful medium for developing the 'whole person' as a citizen, an athlete and as a lifesaver.

Eligibility to participate in SLSA Championship events as a competitor requires that members have demonstrated a commitment to the ideals of service expected of and celebrated by Surf Life Saving. Accordingly, participation in Championship events is only for lifesaving members who satisfy additional requirements as detailed in SLSA Policy 5.04 Competition Eligibility and these accompanying Guidelines. Where the Guidelines specifically refer to a "Championship" competition, it includes Open, Age, Masters, Pool, IRB, Endurance and all other competitions deemed to be a Regional, Branch, State or Australian Championship. It also includes SLSA endorsement to participate in ILS and ILS member country Championships.

This SLSA Guidelines for Competition Eligibility document provides the parameters for interpretation and application of the SLSA Competition Eligibility Policy 5.04.

For the purposes of Policy 5.04 and these guidelines, a SLSA Patrolling Award may include the following: Surf Rescue Certificate, Bronze Medallion, Radio Operators Certificate, First Aid Certificate, Advanced Resuscitation Techniques Certificate, Resuscitation Certificate or the Observers Award. The award required for participation varies for each event and is defined in the Surf Sports Manual for each discipline.

2. ELIGIBILITY AND AWARD REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN SURF SPORTS

AWARD MEMBERS U14 TO MASTERS

To be eligible to compete in SLS Championship and Non-Championship competitions all award members from the Under 14 age group up to and including Masters must:

- Be a registered and current financial member of SLSA.
- Be the holder of the appropriate SLSA award relevant to the age category and event as detailed in the current edition of the Surf Sports Manual or hold the equivalent overseas ILS member country award.
- Be SLSA proficient as prescribed for the relevant SLSA Award required for competition.
- Be eligible under the applicable age category.
- Have met their patrol and or service commitments as determined by their Club, Branch/State.
- Not be in default with their Club, Branch, State Centre or SLSA (or overseas ILS member associations) in relation to their service, financial or discipline obligations.
- Have met any other competition eligibility qualification requirements for specific events e.g. IRB, Surf Boat (sweep), Patrol Competition, First Aid.

Note 1: For Non-Championship events, continuing U14 and U15 age proficient award holding members may continue to participate in events with their existing age award up until 31 December each year.

Note 2: Continuing U17 age proficient award holding members may continue to participate in Ocean events with their existing SRC age award up until 31 December each year.

Note 3: Under 14 members are not required to perform patrol hours to compete in Championship events.

NON-AWARD MEMBERS U14 TO MASTERS - OCEAN EVENTS

Non-Award Members aged U14 to Masters may, for a maximum of 120 days from the date of joining SLSA (Refer policy 1.02), be eligible to compete in SLS Non-Championship Ocean competitions provided that:

- They are a registered and current financial member of SLSA.
- They have completed the basic assessment for the appropriate SLSA award relevant to the age category as detailed in the current edition of the Surf Sports Manual i.e. 200m or 400m pool swim and run-swim-run relevant to the award or competition evaluation swim.
- They be eligible under the necessary age category.
- They have received instruction from a current accredited SLSA Coach regarding any craft to be used in the event and the event procedure.
- A current accredited SLSA coach supervises the participation of Non-Award Members in the event.
- The Non-Award Member's Club or the organising authority provides water safety for the unqualified participant as per the Water Safety Policy.
- Have met any service commitments as determined by their Club.
- Not be in default with their Club, Branch, State Centre or SLSA (or overseas ILS member associations) in relation to their service, financial or discipline obligations.

Note 1: Non-Award Members are not permitted to participate in IRB events in any role or in Surf Boat events as a sweep.

Note 2: Should prevailing surf conditions require a change of competition conduct or restriction of starters for safety reasons, non-award holders, will not be permitted to participate.

NON-AWARD MEMBERS U14 TO MASTERS - BEACH & POOL RESCUE EVENTS

To be eligible to compete in SLS Non-Championship Beach and Pool Rescue competitions, Non-Award Members from the Under 14 age group up to and including Masters must:

- Be a registered and current financial member of SLSA.
- Be eligible under the applicable age category.
- Have received instruction from a current accredited SLSA Coach regarding any equipment to be used in the event and the event procedure.
- Not be in default with their Club, Branch, State Centre or SLSA (or overseas ILS member associations) in relation to their service, financial or discipline obligations.

Note 1: For the purposes of these guidelines Beach events includes Two Person R&R and March Past.

JUNIOR ACTIVITY COMPETITION

To be eligible to compete in SLS Junior Activity (U8 to U13 age) competition members must:

- Be a registered and current financial member of a club affiliated with SLSA.
- Complete the relevant Junior Competition Evaluation (as detailed in the Education Section of the SLSA Members Hub) prior to being eligible to participate at interclub (non-championship) competitions.
- Complete the appropriate SLSA Age award and Junior Competition Evaluation relevant to the member's age category by the normal closing date of entry in any Championship competition.
- Be eligible under the applicable age category.

Note 1: Junior Activity Members (U14 and below) who hold a SLSA Patrolling Award are exempt from having to perform patrol hours.

Note 2: Under 8 members shall not be permitted to compete in water events other than the Wade Race and Wade Relay (the Junior Competition Evaluation does not form part of the Junior Preliminary Skills Assessment for Under 8 members).

SLS Championships and Endorsement to Participate in ILS and/or Membership Championships

Prior to the normal closing date of entries:

- a member must hold the appropriate SLSA award relevant to the age category and event as detailed in the current edition of the Surf Sports Manual or hold the equivalent overseas ILS member country award.
- Have met any additional competition eligibility qualification requirements for specific events e.g. IRB, Surf Boat (sweep), Patrol Competition, First Aid.

Note 1: Continuing members of SLSA are eligible to gain an award and enter Championship competition or receive SLSA endorsement to participate in an ILS and ILS member country Championships after the closing date of normal entries provided that all other participation requirements are met and if late entries are permitted.

Note 2: New SLSA members who have not obtained the necessary award by close of normal entries of a SLSA Championship are ineligible to participate in that SLSA Championship event or receive SLSA endorsement to participate in an ILS and ILS member country Championships.

3. PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR PARTICIPATION IN SURF SPORTS

All Award holding members must be proficient to participate in competition events and to undertake lifesaving duties.

Continuing members from Under 14 up to and including Masters age categories wanting to participate at any SLSA competition must successfully complete the SLSA Proficiency Requalification Test relative to their Award by 31 December each year (31 July in the Northern Territory).

Members who gain their Surf Rescue Certificate, Bronze Medallion or other SLSA Patrolling Award in the period from 1 June of the preceding year will be considered as satisfying the proficiency requirements for entry to competition

Award Members who are not proficient as at 31 December must complete their proficiency prior to participating in further competition events (and patrol activity).

The Proficiency requalification must be completed by close of “normal” entries to be eligible to participate in a SLSA Championship or other event i.e. late entries will not be accepted for members who have not completed their proficiency requalification by the normal close of entries.

Proficient age group members, who gain their Surf Rescue Certificate or proficient Surf Rescue Certificate members who gain their Bronze Medallion after the close of entries of a championship, are considered as continuing members, not new members, and therefore may be entered as a late entry into competition, in events where late entries are accepted.

Junior Activity members must have completed the relevant Junior Competition Evaluation (as detailed in the Education Section of the SLSA Members Portal) prior to being eligible to participate at interclub (non-championship) competitions.

Note: Members gaining their respective award (or SLSA proficiency in the case of recognition of an ILS overseas equivalent member country award), after the normal closing date of entries for a championship, are not permitted entry to that championship.

4. PATROL AND SERVICE HOUR REQUIREMENTS FOR CHAMPIONSHIP COMPETITION ELIGIBILITY

SLSA Clubs are required to enter into a Patrol Contract/Lifesaving Service Agreement with their Branch/State Centre. It is the SLSA Club’s responsibility to ensure it complies with the Patrol Contract/Lifesaving Service Agreement and to oversee that its members are undertaking their obligations as required by the State Centre and the club (as per the club’s constitution, regulations and/or rules).

Award members who wish to participate in any SLSA Championship competition must fulfill their patrol and/or service hour requirements relevant to their category of membership.

Under no circumstance shall any member be granted an exemption from patrol obligations solely for competition reasons.

The patrol hour requirement does not apply to SLSA Patrolling Award members wishing to compete in Under 14 competitions or events.

5. PERSONAL PATROL AND SERVICE HOURS

For returning and continuing Active, Reserve Active and Under 15 members wishing to participate in any SLSA Championship competition, the minimum annual personal patrol hour requirements from 1 January to 31 December of the preceding year is as follows:

Table 1 (Refer Competition Eligibility Policy 5.04 2 (c)): Minimum Annual Service Hour Requirements for Active, Reserve Active and U15 Members				
Category	Active and Under 15 QLD/NSW	Reserve Active QLD/NSW	Active and Under 15 VIC, SA WA, TAS & NT	Reserve Active VIC, TAS, SA, WA & NT
Option A. Patrol Service Hours per annum	25 hours	12 hours	16 hours	8 hours
Option B. Patrol Service Hours per annum | Other Service	A minimum of 10 patrol hours and minimum 15 hours of service for other activity as endorsed by the club	A minimum of 5 patrol hours and minimum 7 hours of service for other activity as endorsed by the club	A minimum of 8 patrol hours and minimum 8 hours of service for other activity as endorsed by the club	A minimum of 4 patrol hours and minimum 4 hours of service for other activity as endorsed by the club
Option C. Other service recognition	Application to Branch/State			

The minimum personal service hour obligations of new members joining or rejoining after **January 1** and before **December 31** of the preceding year is a minimum of four patrol hours or proportionate additional patrol and service hours up to the minimum hours detailed in Table 1, whichever is the higher requirement. The proportion is determined as 1/12th of the hours detailed in Table 1 for each month from the next month after the member has obtained their award/become proficient (as applicable), as set out in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Minimum Patrol Hours for new members joining or rejoining to compete in Championship events the **following** year		
Month Award Obtained	Active and Under 15 QLD/NSW	Active and Under 15 VIC, SA WA, TAS & NT
January	23 hours	14.75 hours
February	20.75 hours	13.25 hours
March	18.75 hours	12 hours
April	16.75 hours	10.75 hours
May	14.5 hours	9.25 hours
June	12.5 hours	8 hours
July	10.5 hours	6.75 hours
August	8.25 hours	5.25 hours
September	6.25 hours	4 hours
October	4.25 hours	4 hours
November	4 hours	4 hours
December	4 hours	4 hours

Note: If a member obtains their award in the same year as the Championship they wish to compete in, the minimum requirement is four patrol hours. E.g. a member obtains their award in January or February and wants to compete at a Championship event in March or April of the same year.

Patrol obligations include all volunteer rostered, substitute, voluntary, Duty Officer and Water Safety at club and intra club activities and special events.

Refer to Section 6 for the types of other voluntary service that may be approved by clubs in lieu of (partial) patrol obligations (as per Competition Eligibility Policy 5.04 Section 2 (c), Option B and C).

Where clubs consider their members are disadvantaged by the recommended minimum personal patrol and service requirements for continuing members in this document, they may make an application for a variation to the patrol and service hour requirement through their respective Branch and/or State Centre. This application must be made on an annual basis.

Should Clubs not comply with their Patrol Service Agreement, SLSA reserves the right to review that club's lifesaving performance including the personal patrol hours of participants entered in Championship events. If the patrol hours of entered participants do not meet the recommended minimum relevant to the membership category, SLSA may decide not to accept entries.

All patrol hours must be recorded in the patrol logbook and entered in SurfGuard. Clubs may record directly into an electronic patrol management system or SurfGuard.

A club may choose to maintain a separate record of service hours for voluntary service other than on patrol.

A member will be credited with and recognised for all patrol hours completed, irrespective of the club where those hours were completed. The practical aspect of this is that a member may patrol for one SLSA club and compete for a different SLSA club. Providing that they are not in breach of their financial and club obligations, or patrol hour requirements, at either club, they will be eligible to compete.

6. ALTERNATIVE SERVICE HOURS AND OTHER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES THAT MAY BE APPROVED

A Club may approve partial exemption from Patrol Service (as per Competition Eligibility Policy 5.04 Section 2 (c), Option B) for members who provide voluntary service provided that the minimum patrol hours and service relevant to their membership category is completed (as per table 1).

A Club must apply to their Branch or State (as appropriate) for approval of full exemption from patrol obligations for members who complete voluntary service hours relevant to their membership category (as per Competition Eligibility Policy 5.04 Section 2 (c), Option C).

The range of alternative voluntary service in lieu of patrol hours and other circumstances that may be approved by the Club or State/Branch (as appropriate) includes:

- Club Board and Executive Committee positions.
- Accredited volunteer Club Coaching/Officiating.
- Qualified volunteer club training officers and assessors.
- Club members contributing in a significant volunteer club activity other than competition.
- Members undertaking lifesaving duties in other areas such as offshore rescue boat, aerial services, support services, operational support and similar areas of active surf lifesaving.
- A member granted leave of absence and returning from overseas who maintained membership but because of their continued absence abroad could not undertake patrol duties.
- Members of the armed services on special deployment.
- Members, who in the view of the club committee have undertaken ongoing service to the club which they believe is of benefit to their own club's delivery of lifesaving service.

A Branch or State may also approve full or partial exemption from patrol obligations for injured members or members suffering a medical condition upon receipt of:

- Copy of Medical Certificate
- Clearance by Medical Practitioner to return to duties and competition
- Details of when the injury occurred and date of return to duty

Note 1: These documents are to be sighted and a copy held by the club together with the request for exemption.

Note 2: Confirmation of medical clearance to return to active duty to be copied to Branch/State to ensure that members meet all insurance/WorkCover requirements and endorsed by Branch/State before recommencing any lifesaving activity.

7. AUTOMATIC EXEMPTION FROM PATROL AND SERVICE REQUIREMENTS FOR COMPETITION

SLSA recognises the following members for automatic Competition Eligibility without Patrol and/or other club service:

- Club, Branch, State and National Life Members.
- Club Long Service Members.
- Members holding Executive office at Branch, State or National level.

Note: If a member is competing for a different SLSA club to where their Long Service or Life Membership was awarded, the patrol/other service exemption will still apply.

Clubs do not need to advise SLSA of any of these members receiving automatic exemption from club patrol and service obligations.

8. INTERNATIONAL COMPETITORS

International competitors seeking to compete in any SLSA championship for their own International Club need to obtain an endorsement from their ILS member organisation that they are not in default of their service, financial or discipline obligations.

International competitors seeking to compete in any SLSA championship for a SLSA Club must satisfy entry requirements as detailed in this document.

Note: SLSA recognises International Lifesaving member Federation equivalent awards but members participating for Australian clubs are required to undertake the SLSA Proficiency.

9. COMPETITORS WITH SIGNIFICANT MEDICAL ISSUES AND/OR PERMANENT LIMITING DISABILITIES

Upon application, the SLSA Chairs of Lifesaving and Sport may jointly consider and approve an application from a competitor with a significant medical issue and/or permanent limiting disability, in accordance with the relevant policy, who cannot obtain or maintain a proficient age award, or SLSA patrolling award to participate in non-ocean based competition i.e. Beach events, Two Person R&R, Champion First Aid, March Past or Pool Rescue competition, provided that all other aspects of membership as detailed in this policy are fulfilled. Any approval is subject to annual review.

Note 1: This section is not to assist competitors who have suffered an injury. This section is intended to assist members with a significant medical issue or permanent limiting disability to participate in SLSA competition. Please refer to the Limiting and Permanent Disability Policy.

10. RULINGS ON SURF SPORT PARTICIPATION ELIGIBILITY AND RIGHT OF APPEAL

A right of protest shall apply to the relevant Branch, State or SLSA Chairs (or Directors – as appropriate) of Lifesaving and Surf Sports in the event the member and/or member's Club considers that a decision to deny entry to a competition (or Championship) is inconsistent with this document.

Protests must be made in writing within 24 hours of receiving a decision or prior to the start of the championship event in question, whichever occurs first. The relevant Chairs of Lifesaving and Surf Sport may seek additional information and consult with the Member, Club Branch, State, and/or SLSA, as appropriate.

All decisions by the relevant Chairs of Lifesaving and Surf Sports shall be made prior to the commencement of the competition event in question.

Any appeal against decisions shall be managed utilising the Appeal processes detailed in the SLSA Surf Sports Manual.

The SLSA Chair, Lifesaving and Surf Sports will be jointly responsible for all matters, of which final settlement is not covered in this Guideline.

11. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information or enquiries, contact SLSA on (02) 9215 8000 or info@slsa.asn.au.

12. DOCUMENT CONTROL

Title: SLSA Guidelines for Competition Eligibility
Policy Reference: 5.04
Last Review Date: September 2026
Next Review Date: September 2027