

National Orienteering League

Special rules in 2021 arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

In 2020 the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in travel and public gathering restrictions which prevented national orienteering events being held after March 2020. While it is hoped that there will be fewer restrictions in 2021, allowing NOL 2021 to proceed, local outbreaks and secondary waves of infections may result in local restrictions and these may occur at relatively short notice.

It is likely that international travel restrictions for Australian residents will continue well into 2021 putting at risk Australia's participation in international orienteering events.

If a national domestic competition is allowed but it is not possible to participate in international events, then athletes will be keen to have a continuing national season beyond the current planned NOL for the first half of the year.

Current NOL 2021 calendar

NOL Round 1	March 13-14	Castlemaine Vic – Eureka Challenge - sprint, middle, Hagaby long (JWOC and WOC trials)
NOL Round 2	April 2-5	Molong NSW – Easter 3 Day – sprint, middle, long, multi-day (JWOC and WOC trials)
NOL Round 3	April 24-25	Renmark SA – middle, long (60-70min loop race) (WOC trials).
NOL Round 4	May 15-16	Broulee NSW (ACT event) – chasing start middle, relay

Special rules for 2021

1. Ability to participate in events.

State restrictions may make it possible to hold a NOL event, but travel may not be possible from all states and territories who compete in NOL. A NOL event will only count toward both the team and individual season point score if more than 90% of domestically based national squad members are allowed to travel freely to and from the event. Being able to travel freely means by air or ground transport without having to quarantine or self-isolate at any stage of the trip.

If less than 90% but more than 50% of squad members are allowed to attend, the event can proceed as a NOL event, but it will not contribute to the team season point score. It can contribute to the individual point score as only about half the events are counted in an individual's season total.

If less than 50% of squad athletes are able to travel freely to the event and the event can still be held, then the event will revert to a state level event and not have NOL status. Travel restrictions can change at short notice, but a decision will be made on NOL status before entries close.

The decision to cancel NOL status for either individual or team competitions will be made one week before entries close. If subsequent restrictions prevent people from attending the event, then it can be cancelled as a NOL event at shorter notice. An already cancelled NOL event will not be reinstated if there is a subsequent easing of restrictions.

For this rule, 'squad members' means members of the Elite High Performance Squad, High Performance Squad, National Development Squad and Australian Junior Development Squad.

2. Number of events for the season to be completed

It may not be possible to hold all 11 events of the planned NOL 2021 calendar because of local restrictions on organising sporting events, or for all 11 events to count toward the seasonal point score (see above). The current NOL rules state that there must be a minimum of 10 events in a NOL season so without special consideration for COVID-19 only one further round needs to be cancelled for the season to be void for a second consecutive year. Given the special circumstances in 2021, it will now be that a minimum of six events will need to contribute to calculate a seasonal point score instead of ten. That could be Easter plus one other round or three rounds if Easter does not qualify. The possibility of additional rounds is discussed below.

3. Additional events

OA will approach States to propose alternate later season events to be used as NOL events if earlier season NOL races are cancelled or if the lack of international events means we want to continue a domestic competition later into the year. The aim is to conclude the NOL season with a stand-alone weekend of a chasing start and if possible, a relay. A decision to extend the NOL season will be made in late April, a few weeks before the planned final NOL weekend in May. If the season is to continue beyond May then the chasing start for event 10 will revert to a normal interval start. The relay event will still be held as event 11. States who have agreed to host a NOL event in 2021 will be given first option to propose an alternative later season event to use if their event is cancelled, including the possibility of deferring the existing planned event to a later date. Other states can propose events to be used in addition to the current calendar or as a replacement for existing events which are unable to be replaced by the host state. If required, events in the Australian Championships carnival can be used to bring the total events above the minimum of six events if no other events can be organised.

In addition, if world level events cannot be attended by Australia and New Zealand, or are cancelled, but there is a travel bubble in place with New Zealand then OA will look to plan for a higher profile ANZ test match series that involves our best athletes.