

Dear Northland Figure Skating Competition Excel coaches, parents and skaters:

2019 is the inaugural pilot season of the Excel competition Series. The Northland competition is one of the first competitions to host this new program which was launched by the Program Development Committee of US Figure Skating.

Protocol for the running of an Excel Series competition are laid out in the 2019 Excel Series Handbook. That handbook originally (and up through Friday, January 11th) stated the guideline for Group Size as follows:

"Group Size:

All events scored using the IJS will compete as a single group per event level. Events scored as 6.0 will be split at the discretion of the chief referee."

It recently came to our attention that this specific directive had resulted in a few of the Excel events at the Northland competition to become quite large, in one case specifically to over 30 skaters.

While skaters' placement within the Series is not affected by a larger group size for IJS events, we agree with concerns that this has created a situation that is in conflict with the objectives of the Excel program. Specifically, to create a challenging, yet positive competitive opportunity for the skaters who choose to compete in Excel - both for those skaters joining the Series as well as for those who are competing in an Excel event, but not in the Series.

It is common that the guidelines shaping new US Figure Skating programs are tested and amended or revised based on situations that present themselves or as seems necessary during the first few seasons of a new program.

After reviewing this guideline when we became aware of the number of skaters registered to compete in a few of the Northland Excel events, the committee quickly discussed and contacted US Figure Skating on Friday to see if we could amend the handbook right away, instead of waiting until the end of the pilot season.

It was decided that, because we are very early in the Excel Series season, the change could be made now. On Friday, January 11th, US Figure Skating worked with us amend the Excel Series Handbook to the following:

"Group Size:

All events will be split at the discretion of the chief referee."

The Northland competition chair and chief referee were 100% in compliance with the 2019 Excel Series Handbook regarding parameters for grouping skaters for their Excel events with the initial groupings they posted. While the specifics of what is stated in the handbook typically stand as of the close of entries for a competition, the Northland Competition organizers have graciously agreed to rework the event groupings for the affected Excel events in order to promote a more positive experience for these skaters.

That being said, skaters competing in Excel IJS events should anticipate group sizes at competitions with more entries per event to be between 10 and 16 skaters, give or take.

Lastly, I want to thank the Duluth Figure Skating Club, the Northland competition chair and chief referee, who have handled this situation professionally and have agreed to work with us swiftly to amend the group sizes for the affected events in advance of the 2019 Northland competition.

Thank you for your patience, understanding and support of the new Excel Program; I hope the 2019 Northland competition is a great event!

Best,
Elise Preston
Chair, Program Development Committee
US Figure Skating