

ACADEMIC ACCREDITED TOURNAMENT ORGANISER POLICY

FOREWORD

As esports gains momentum in New Zealand, recognised officially as a sport, it is our mandate at NZ Esports to ensure that it not only thrives but is conducted with integrity and safety. Esports is unique and differs from traditional sport in a lot of ways and we always look for ways to be innovative and fresh in our approach to growing this as a sport, however it's also important for us to recognise the years of experience traditional sporting bodies like School Sport NZ have and leverage those invaluable lessons as we strive to enhance the safety and overall experience of school esports.

In recent years, our esports community has confronted significant challenges, most of which are not exclusive to esports. Instances of unfounded allegations of sexual assault, cheating during high-profile competitions, unauthorised representation of schools in esports events, and commercial operators exploiting student data for profit, have underscored the urgent need for a more robust framework to protect school esports.

This policy is our response to these challenges. The Academic Accredited Tournament Organiser (AATO) Policy sets out basic safety and integrity guidelines, providing a pathway for consistency, transparency, and a safe environment for competition across all school esports in New Zealand. These are guidelines that, in an ideal world, all operators would already be adhering to. For those who are not yet up to the mark, this policy not only illuminates areas of deficiency but also offers assistance on how to enhance their practices. In tandem, this policy aims to give validation, recognition, and opportunity to those operators who are already implementing these standards.

Our vision for this policy is to level up school esports in every possible way. It's about cultivating a culture of safety, fairness, and respect. Our goal is to reassure educators, students, parents, publishers, and operators alike that school esports competitions are regulated spaces where safety and integrity are paramount.

Through this policy, we strive to make esports a safer, more competitive, and ultimately more rewarding for all.

INTRODUCTION

KUPU WHAKATAKI

Welcome to the Academic Accredited Tournament Organiser (AATO) Policy, a pathway to enhancing your school esports competitions in New Zealand. This guide will walk you through the process of gaining AATO status, ensuring safety, quality, and consistency in your events. By becoming an AATO, you'll be sanctioned to run school competitions under the NZ Secondary School Esports trademark, unlocking important benefits and credibility for your leagues.

OBJECTIVES

WHĀINGA

The AATO Policy exists to:

- Provide a framework for identifying and accrediting quality esports providers for school competitions.
- Establish a consistent experience for teachers and schools participating in esports under the NZ Secondary School Esports trademark and brand across multiple esports titles.
- Integrate esports as a recognised school sporting activity within the School Sport NZ system, enabling support from in-school sports coordinators and national tournaments to align with the NZ school sport calendar.
- Protect students from potential risks and commercial exploitation.
- Encourage collaboration between NZ Esports, game publishers, schools, and esports providers to promote safety and integrity in school esports competitions.
- Promote physical, mental and emotional wellbeing best practices within esports.

HOW TO APPLY

To register to become an Academic Accredited Tournament Organiser:

1. Review and familiarise yourself with the AATO Criteria below.
2. Collect any documentation you will need including but not limited to:
 - a. New Zealand Business Number (NZBN),
 - b. Privacy Policy, Rulesets, Code of Conduct, Evidence of past run competitions,
 - c. Completed Police Vetting forms,
 - d. Proof of completion of the Child Safeguarding course.
3. [Submit your application here.](#)

NZ Esports will assess the application and may request further information or clarification if necessary. Once the assessment is complete, NZ Esports will either approve or reject the application. Approved providers will be granted AATO status. This status will be reviewed every two (2) years.

NZ Esports reserves the right to conduct reviews of AATOs at any time to ensure ongoing compliance with the criteria and may revoke AATO status and the associated trademark licenses if the provider is no longer compliant.

ACADEMIC ESPORTS CLASSIFICATIONS

NGĀ KĪREHE TĀKARO ĀKONGA

NZ Esports classifies and interacts with academic esports events, AATOs, and NZ Secondary School Esports (NZSSE) based on the following framework.

I. UNSANCTIONED | KORE-WHAKAAETIA

Any competition that is run by an operator without an AATO status.

II. SANCTIONED | WHAKAAETIA

Any competition run by a provider with an AATO status. These operators can run school esports events under the following restrictions:

1. Must be completed within a school term.
2. Must not conflict with an official NZSS competition day/time of the same title.
3. Competitions cannot include 'Championships', 'Academic', 'School' or any other terms in the name that could be misconstrued as the official NZSS competition.
4. Competitions must not offer prize money in the form of cash and the value of any prizes must be directed to schools, not students, and are capped at \$2,500 NZD.



FIGURE 1 - SANCTIONED BADGE

III. NZSS ESPORTS PROVIDER

AATOs can apply to be the official pathway provider for any esports title they have the license or endorsement for. The NZSSE pathway will be granted the following benefits.

1. License to use the NZSS Esports trademark and imagery when promoting their competition.
2. Exclusive delivery rights for the applied game title within NZSS Esports.
3. Assistance from in-school sports coordinators through School Sport NZ
4. Promotional access to our school network for registrations.

The following restrictions apply to NZSS Esports events:

1. Competitions must not offer prize money in the form of cash and the value of any prizes must be directed to schools, not students, and are capped at \$2,500 NZD.
2. Competitions must follow the predetermined NZSS Annual Calendar (Released in Term 4 the year prior) to give schools appropriate time to register and compete.



FIGURE 2 - NZSS ESPORTS BADGE

ACADEMIC ACCREDITED TOURNAMENT ORGANISER (AATO) CRITERIA

To register as an Accredited Academic Tournament Operator, you must:

1. Be an entity registered and operating in New Zealand.
2. Either hold a minimum of [Silver ATO status](#), or meet the following requirements:
 - a. Demonstrate a history of running successful esports competitions by providing evidence of having run two (2) esports competitions in the last 12 months.
 - i. These competitions must have at a minimum followed the community guidelines set by the game publisher.
 - ii. These competitions must have had a minimum of 4x teams or 16x individual competitors.
 - b. Provide evidence you have run prior competitions using an official ruleset.
 - c. You have a privacy policy compliant with the New Zealand Privacy Act 2020.
 - d. During registration, participants agree to the [NZ Esports Code of Conduct](#) or your own Code of Conduct.
 - e. Have a clearly visible link to the [NZ Esports Complaints page](#) on your website or main communication platform.
3. All administrators who will be interacting with students during the competition must:
 - a. Complete and maintain the [NZ Esports Child Safeguarding training](#)
 - b. Complete a [New Zealand Police vetting form](#)
4. Agree to follow and enforce the [NZ Esports Child Safeguarding Policy](#).
5. Agree to follow the [NZ Esports School Sports Rules & Guidelines](#).
6. Offer a transparent pricing structure for schools and ensure there are no hidden costs or unfair commercial practices.

Additional Criteria for NZSS Esports Providers

7. Publisher license or written endorsement from the game publisher for each game title you wish to run. This may not be a generic community license.

LEVEL-UP TOOL KIT

If you're wanting to offer school competitions but don't meet any of the criteria above, you can download our [Level-Up Tool Kit](#), which includes privacy policy templates, code of conducts, rulesets, and all other information and resources you need to quickly level-up your administrative game.

OPERATIONAL BEST PRACTICES

NGĀ MAHI WHAI HUA

All AATOs are encouraged to adhere to the following guidelines to ensure operational consistency in school esports competitions:

Female Competitors: Consider the creation of separate tournaments or divisions for female participants and providing additional support and resources to encourage their participation. This may include but is not limited to:

- Allowing female players to participate in both the open and female tournaments.
- Working together with nearby schools to form female teams where one school doesn't have enough interest.
- Specific recognition of female participant achievements.

Registration Windows: Sanctioned events must provide a minimum of four-week advanced notice for registration, allowing sufficient time for schools to plan and prepare for esports competitions. AATOs should communicate registration deadlines clearly and provide regular reminders to ensure schools can register their teams in a timely manner.

NZSS Esports events will follow a predetermined timeline released the prior school year.

Communication Methods: Establish clear and effective communication channels for students and staff involved in school esports competitions. All communication regarding event registration, scheduling, rules, and other relevant information is directed to teachers or designated school staff members in charge. Students must not be allowed to register themselves for competitions; instead, registration must be managed by teachers or school staff to maintain appropriate oversight.

Email communication for teachers, and Discord communication for students are the recommended methods of tournament communication.

Teacher-Led Participation: Emphasize the importance of teacher-led participation in school esports, providing resources and support for teachers to effectively manage and guide their teams. NZ Esports will provide to all AATOs, training materials, workshops, or webinars that AATOs can offer to schools to help teachers understand their roles and responsibilities in facilitating school esports involvement.

Student Involvement: Where appropriate, AATOs should encourage the involvement of students for tournament opportunities, such as student-led casting and community broadcasting, tournament administration, and volunteer opportunities that provide development to students.

Team Eligibility: Teams should be composed entirely of students attending the represented school. Exceptions may be made on a case-by-case basis to allow for schools who otherwise would not be able to field a full roster to combine with nearby schools. Tournament organisers should ensure that these exceptions do not enable the formation of super teams, and only to be granted to promote the growth of underserved schools.

Live Engagement: Best efforts should be made to host any level of in-person competition where students can interact, compete, and connect with each other. Live events must always comply with appropriate health and safety requirements and NZ Esports can assist in this process.

COMMITMENT TO TE TIRITI O WAITANGI

As part of NZ Esports wider commitment to ensuring the principles of Te Tiriti O Waitangi are being met, AATO applicants must demonstrate reasonable efforts to engage and collaborate with Māori entities, seeking appropriate cultural support, guidance, and consultation where and when it is required. Examples of these efforts may include but are not limited to:

- Providing resources, learning material, promotional material, formal correspondence, and any forms of verbal, written and/or digital communication in English and Te Reo Māori when requested.
- Providing evidence of engagement and collaboration with kura kaupapa Māori, Wharekura, Kura-Ā-iwi, whānau, hapu and iwi in a culturally appropriate manner.
- Nominating a delegated representative/s that is proficient in Te Reo Māori Me Ōna Tikanga to advocate on behalf of the AATO regarding cultural responsibilities.
- Ensure that cultural values are always upheld in accordance with Te Tiriti O Waitangi and NZ Esports Core values.

EDUCATION AND PROMOTION

MĀTAURANGA ME TE WHAKATAIRANGA

- a. NZ Esports will develop and distribute educational materials for schools, outlining the importance of participating in sanctioned competitions run by AATOs and the benefits of the NZ Secondary School Esports trademark and brand.
- b. NZ Esports will actively promote AATOs to schools and encourage their involvement in school esports competitions under the NZ Secondary School Esports name.
- c. NZ Esports will work closely with AATOs to provide support, resources, and training opportunities, fostering collaboration and continuous improvement in school esports.

MONITORING AND ENFORCEMENT

AROMĀTAITANGA ME TE WHAKAMANA

- a. NZ Esports will monitor AATOs for compliance with the policy and take appropriate action in case of violations, including revoking AATO status and the associated trademark license, and applying disciplinary procedures as necessary.
- b. Schools, students, and parents will have access to the [NZ Esports Complaints](#) channel to report any concerns or issues related to AATOs and their events.
- c. In the case of high-risk disputes involving matters such as child abuse, sexual misconduct, or other serious allegations, these disputes must be escalated and handled through the [NZ Esports disciplinary process](#). This approach ensures that such disputes are addressed consistently and fairly, with the expertise and resources necessary to conduct thorough investigations and apply appropriate disciplinary actions. Involving NZ Esports in the resolution of high-risk disputes also provides a centralized point of contact for schools, students, and parents, and promotes transparency and accountability across the esports community.